CRYSTAL-GAZING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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In my paper *Babylonian Elements in the Levitic Ritual* (JBL 19, 56; cf. JHUC, No. 163, p. 48a), I discussed the passage in Ezek. 21:26, *The king of Babylon stands at the fork of the road to practice divination; he shakes the arrows, consults the teraphim,* inspects the liver. The Polychrome Bible says (Ezekiel, p. 137, l. 35): Arrows variously inscribed were thrown into a vessel, shaken, and one drawn out, the inscription on which decided the question. This *belomancy,* or divination by means of variously marked pointless arrows, was also practiced by the pre-Mohammedan Arabs and by certain tribes of the North American Indians.

Grotius *ad loc.* (1644) quoted St. Jerome’s remarks on this passage: *Ritu gentis suae oraculum consulet, ut mittat sagittas suas in pharettram et commisceat eas inscriptas sive signatas nominibus singulorum, ut videat, cujus sagitta exeat, et quam prius civitatem debet oppugnare. Hanc autem Graeci belomantian sive ἡράδομαντιαν nominant* (cf. also Gesenius’ *Thes.* 1224a). The divinatory shafts (Arab. *azlâm*) used by the ancient Arabs were without pointed heads and without feathers; so we can hardly call them *arrows:* we might just as well describe drumsticks or Chinese chop-sticks as pointless arrows. German *Pfeil* is the English *pilch,* i.e. the pointed head of an arrow. The gambling game of the North American Indians, played with sticks bearing different marks, is called *stick-dice* (cf. CI s. v. and EB 11 14, 473b). At the great Pænestine sanctuary of Fortune the oracular replies (*sortes Præ-“

1 For the abbreviations see above, p. 75, n. 1.
2 For *tiraphim,* more correctly *tharihim,* see JBL 33, 106, n. 12; cf. AJSL 33, 48; RE 6, 9, 11.
nestinae) were transmitted by means of lettered blocks; see Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series XXVI, Nos. 9-10, p. 45 (Baltimore, 1908).

Herodotus (4, 67) says that the Scythian diviners used large bundles of willow-wands (μαντεάνται βάσδουμε ιενηγιοτελληγοί). Greek ιέηα is the German Weide, English withy, withe. German Buchstabe, a letter of the alphabet, denoted originally a stick of beechwood inscribed with runes for the purpose of divination; these wands were scattered on a white garment and then picked up and combined. To read is in German: lesen, i. e. to pick up, to pick out. Also Lat. legere means both to collect and to read. According to Tacitus (Germania, 10) the runes were engraved on pieces of the branches of a fruit-bearing tree (cf. also Num. 17: 24). Beechnuts are edible, and Lat. fagus, beech, Greek φυγός, Doric φαγός, is connected with φαγέω, to eat. The nuts of the beech-tree are called beech-mast or buck-mast, and mast means in German: fattening. Tacitus says: Virgam frugiferae arbori decisam in surculos amputant eosque notis quibus disdudam discretos super candidam vestem temere ac fortuito spargunt.

Surculi (or sorticulae) would be a more appropriate translation for Arab. azlām than sagittae. Heb. הִיִּכֵּֽיִם in Ezek. 21: 26, on the other hand, denotes real arrows with pointed metal heads. But Heb. qilqāl bāh-hiyyēm does not mean he shook the arrows, although ג has τω ἁκαβαράν ῥάβδον, Ι commisscens sagittas. צ qēsēt bē-girāwā, he shot arrows (𝙎_queryset gērā), may have thought of a symbolical act like the one described in 2 K 13: 14-19 where Elisha on his deathbed bids Jehu’s grandson, King Joash of Israel (798-783 B. C.), shoot an arrow through an open window eastward, calling it an arrow of Jahveh’s victory, an arrow of victory over the Arameans. Oeifele’s explanation (ZAT 20, 314, 1. 7) that the King of Babylon shot an arrow at the liver of the sacrificial animal is untenable.

RV renders qilqāl bāh-hiyyēm in Ezek. 21: 26: he shook the arrows to and fro, but AV has he made the arrows bright. This is more correct. In Eccles. 10: 10, which is regarded by several exegetes as the most difficult passage of the Book, qilqāl certainly

4 See Weigand’s Deutsches Wörterbuch, fifth edition (Giessen, 1909) 1, 299.301; 2, 56.

6 The name Buckingham was derived by the historian William Camden (c. 1555) from the beeches predominant in the woods of Buckinghamshire.
means, not *to shake*, but *to grind*, polish, whet. The old pessimist (c. 100 B.C.) says:

9 He who quarries stones, may be hurt by them; he who splits wood, may cut himself.  
10 If he has not ground the face, the hewer must exert great force.  

(a) 9 by them  
(b) 10 he has dulled the iron, that is,  

The Hebrew text should be read as follows:

9 *mekhats avonim za'arev-hom*  
10 *sem-lam finim qalakl*  

Bahem after *ie' açêb* is enclitic; it should be read *bahm = bâm* (cf. gloss a) and German *lahm*, lame, or Ethiop. *lähm*, bull, Amhar. *làm*; Dillmann², p. 80; JBL 34, 49, l. 3. Issakén is derived from *sakkîn*, knife (BA 3, 580, l. 26). I published this explanation twenty-six years ago, but I have just noticed that Moses Mendelssohn suggested the same derivation; see *Der Prediger Salomo von dem Verfasser des Phädon* (Anspach, 1771) p. 127. Also Hahn (cf. AJSL 32, 141) said that *sakân* meant *to cut*, wound, hurt; it was connected with *sakâk* from which *sakkîn*, knife (Prov. 23:2) was derived. But *sakkîn* (or *šâkin*) in Prov. 23:2 means *muzzle* (JBL 33, 290). There is, of course, a post-Biblical word *sakkîn*, knife, Aram. *sakînâ*, which has passed into Arabic as *sikkîn*.—At the end of the second line we must supply *hak-šôçêb* which means both *stone-cutter* and *wood-cutter*.—The Piel *qêhâ* is not intransitive, but

¹ *Ludwig Levy, Das Buch Qoheleth* (Leipzig, 1912) renders: *so muss man die Kräfte sehr anstrengen;* E. Podœchard, *L'Ecclesiaste* (Paris, 1912) translates: *Alors on doit redoubler de force.* The second half of v. 10 must be combined with the second half of v. 19; both are misplaced *glosses* to the secondary (Stoic) passage 7:12; see Haupt, *Qoheleth* (Leipzig, 1905) p. 18; *Ecclesiastes* (Baltimore, 1905) p. 25. We need not read *hak-καστιρ*, but *hakštër* should stand at the end of this hemistich: *tîrôn hokmâ hakštër* means: *The advantage of experience is efficiency;* he who has acquired adequate knowledge and skill is efficient. Syr. *dî-lâ šâšrâ* means *inefficient, ineffectual;* cf. also Assyr. *küšru = küdaru*, fitness (AJSL 32, 66).
means *he blunted*, dulled (so, correctly, Hahn and Graetz).—The *yē-hū* after *qehā hab-barzel* means *that is*. This was inserted by a tertiary glossator who regarded *im-lō fanīm qilqāl* as an explanation of *im-qehā hab-barzel*; cf. the second *yē-hū* in Kimhi’s comments on Ezek. 21:26, cited below, n. 7, and the translation of Matt. 27:46 in Delitzsch’s NT in Hebrew. In Shirwāni’s *Agrôn* (a Hebrew-Persian dictionary compiled by Moses of Shirwān in 1459) the Hebrew explanations added to Persians words are always preceded by *šē-hū* (Bacher’s *yē-hū*, ZAT 16, 231, 1. 2 is due to an oversight).

If *lō-fanīm qilqāl* were not preceded by *im*, the *lō* before *fanīm* would be strange (2 S 3:34; Num. 16:29 are different). Hahn’s explanation that *lō-fanīm* means *non-face = back* is, of course, impossible. Scholz (1901) renders: *Er, der Nicht- Erste schüttelt (die Loose) und ermutigt die Scharen* (cf. JBL 32, 111, n. 13). In my translation of Ecclesiastes, published (1891) in JHUC, No. 90, I regarded *yē-hū lō-fanīm qilqāl* as an explanation of *im-qehā hab-barzel*, but I am now convinced that *im-lō fanīm qilqāl* is the original reading. *Fanīm* is a double plural derived from *pānī, an old plural of pū, mouth* (AJSL 22, 258). Also Syr. *pātā, face, and pūmā, mouth, are used of the edge of a sword* (Heb. *pi-hārb*, but *pēnē-hārb* in Ezek. 21:21). The *face* of the ax-head is the front part in contradistinction to the back. The *face* of a hammer is the striking surface of the head, and the same term is used of the edge of a cutting-tool. To *grind* means to *smooth or sharpen* by friction, give a smooth surface or edge to a thing. The intransitive adjective *qalāl* means *smooth and glossy, polished, burnished*. We find *nēhōšt qalāl*, burnished bronze, in Ezek. 1:7 and Dan. 10:6. After the edges of tools have been ground on a revolving grind-stone a whetstone may be used for sharpening and polishing them. In Arabic we have the causative *cāqala*, to grind, polish, with partial assimilation of the causative *s* to the *q* (see Mic. 98). In 1 S 13:21 *gillēšôn* seems to be a corruption of *qalqēl šīnnōt*, sharpening of the teeth (of a saw).

*Qilqāl* certainly means *he ground, he polished*. Also *heq barūr* (Is. 49:2; cf. Jer. 51:11) is not a *smooth arrow, or a sharpened arrow*, but a *polished shaft* (so Cheyne in the Polychrome Bible). The king of Babylon did not shake the arrows, but he polished them for the purpose of scrying. *You can induce pic-
toria hallucinations by gazing into a glass or crystal sphere or some equivalent medium such as a sword-blade, or a polished arrow-head, or a polished finger-nail. Crystal-gazing is practiced all over the world; it has been used for the purpose of divination from times immemorial (EB 11 7, 567). In his article on Ink-, Oil- and Mirror-gazing Ceremonies in Modern Egypt (JAOS 36, 40) Worrell cites David Kimhi's (c. 1200) remarks on Ezek. 21: 26. Kimhi says of the acts performed by the king of Babylon: All this belongs to acts of divination, and the interpretation of qīlgāl is as in yē-hù lō-fānim qīlgāl, that is, they grind and polish the surface of the iron of the arrow until it is very bright; then the diviners gaze on it, just as they gaze on the thumb of the hand, on the nail, because of the brightness of the nail; so they gaze on a sword, and so also on a mirror, and so they gaze on the liver because it has brightness (possesses gloss or a reflecting surface). Kimhi's explanation is quoted by Worrell from Daiches' interesting monograph on Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the later Jewish Literature, printed in the publications of the Jews' College, London, 1913.

The liver could be used for this purpose just as well as a hand painted with black soot and oil, as described in the Hebrew magical texts Nos. 2-4 and 6, published by Daiches. EB 11 7, 567 states that the tribes of the Northwest-Indian frontier use the liver of an animal for scrying. Gazing on the smooth shiny surface of a liver is no doubt a more primitive form of divination than the elaborate system of hepatoscopy which we find in the cuneiform omen-tablets (contrast EB 11 20, 103; JBL 35, 46). The primary connotation of Heb. rā'ē, the older name (1 S 9:9) for nābī, prophet (TOCR 1, 271) may have been gazer, crystal-seer (contrast JBL 28, 53; 35, 56. 126/7. 223). Grotius (1644) concluded his remarks on ra'ā bak-kāḇēḏ with the statement: Nec dubitantum puto quin artes illae a Chaldaeis ad Lydos, a Lydis ad Hetruseos venerint (cf. JBL 19, 57). Marcus v. Niebuhr remarked at the end of the preface to his Geschichte Assurs und Babels (Berlin, 1857) with reference to

Kimhi says: בול הז ממטיש הקוסれ וירע לקלקל כוכב היהו לא الطل קקל ידוהו סמחראם מכלבשין מין ירזי התוך ער שירתו בחרי זירא וירא עב עזיל הקוסם כב יראים בתוך וירא עב עזיל הקוסם ובכר שיש ולא נחרית.
the Turanian population between the Euphrates and the Indus: Das nächste ist eine gründliche Erforschung des Baskischen. Schwieriger, aber wichtiger, ist der Versuch, ob dieser Schlüssel das Rätsel des Etruskischen löst (cf. op. cit. pp. 144. 423).

Just as rōʾē, seer, is connected with marʿā, mirror (Ex. 38:8; Arab. mirʿāt) so we have from the stem of hōzē, seer (Arab. hāzī) in Syriac the noun mahzītā, mirror (cf. ZAT 34, 144) = Ethiop. mahčēt (with partial assimilation of the z). The ancient mirrors were of polished metal, so there was no essential difference between a polished arrow-head and a speculum. We have small looking-glasses with long handles (e. g. laryngeal mirrors and dentists' mirrors). Also Heb. meʿōnēn, diviner, may be a synonym of rōʾē and hōzē, gazer, scryer, crystal-gazer; it is a Piʿel from the stem of ʿāṣē, eye (Mic. 48, 1. 5). In Text 2 published by Daiches is ʿaiṭān is used for scrying. In Text 1 the nail of the right thumb of a boy is polished and rubbed with pure olive oil, and the boy gazes on this polished nail (cf. PSBA 20, 85). The spirits conjured by this crystal-gazing are called sārē bōhn, the princes (or angels; cf. Dan. 10:13. 20) of the thumb, or sārē qippōrān, princes of the nail. In the cuneiform ritual texts (ZR 216, 44; 218, 2) the burū = seer (JBL 19, 57) is called bēl qūpur ubānī annī, the master of the nail of this finger (Daiches, op. cit. p. 29). The explanation of Ezek. 21:26 given by Kūmāh and preserved in AV is undoubtedly correct; so there is no reference to belomancy in OT.

Nor is there any allusion to rhabdomancy, i. e. divination by a rod or wand, especially a dousing- or divining-rod. It is true, AV renders Hos. 4:12* (cf. JBL 35, 185/6, also 180) : My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them, but the meaning of this line, at the end of which we must supply qāṣm, oracle, is:

My people consult their tree,
its branches give answers to them.

The oracular answer was given by the rustling of the branches of the tree (cf. JBL 35, 24. 45. 67; contrast ibid. 47). At the

*Thereupon the boy shall gaze steadily at the palm (lit. inside) of the hand. Also Syr. ʿaiṭīn means to eye, to look.

In Gen. 12:6 and Deut. 11:30 an oracular tree is called elôn mòré, tree of an oracle-giver, and in Jud. 9:37 we find elôn me’ônênim, tree of the seers (cf. above, p. 89). Mòré appears in Ethiopic as márì, diviner (ZAT 29, 283, n. 2; contrast NBSS 38, n. 2). Certain Jews in Arabia say mèrì instead of mòré, just as Russian Jews pronounce ô as è, e. g. Mèšè for Mòšè, Yiddish rêt for German rot (AJSL 19, 234). In Ethiopic we find å for è in several foreign words, especially before a following r, e. g. Ùalârijòs = Valerius (or Valerianus).

Heb. maqqél (from qaláł) means a switch or twig. Heb. qalâ’, to sling, and saqál, to stone, are derived from the same root (JBL 34, 184; 35, 323). We use to sling also in the sense of suspending loosely (cf. Arab. istaqálla bi-l-hámli and Assyr. šuqallulu, JBL 35, 322). The original meaning of maqqél, twig, is hanging loosely; cf. the German schwanken, schwenken, schwingen = to swing; also Schwuppe, switch (contrast ZAT 11, 170). For forms of the verba mediae geminatae conformed to the stems primae n cf. my remarks on Syr. márśā, pestle (for marrēšā, from rašāš) in VHOK 232, n. 4.

In 2 S 5:22-25 we read that when David enquired of Jīvū, he was told, When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the baca° trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then Jahveh has gone out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines (cf. EB 3353, § 2, ad fin.). The rustling of the trees was regarded as the sound of the march of Jīvū and His host; cf. Josh. 5:14; 1 K 22:19; 2 Macc. 2:25, 10:29; Matt. 26:53, and the quotation from Doughty in EB 166: The melauka are seen in the air like horsemen tilting to and fro. We find similar ideas in connection with the Germanic raging host which is called in Sweden

*The translations mulberries, balsam-trees, poplars, asps (EB" 2, 766* ) are unwarranted.
Odens Jagt. The Wild Huntsman is a reflex of Odin or Woden, the chief god of the Northern pantheon. In Lebrecht Dreves’ poem Waldandacht (set to music by Franz Abt) the conclusion of the first stanza Früh morgens, wenn die Hähne krühn is Der liebe Gott geht durch den Wald. This is also the refrain of the third stanza (cf. Gunkel, Genesis³, p. 19; BL 74, n. 24). Pope says that the poor Indian saw God in clouds or heard Him in the winds.

The two triplets in Hos. 4 should be rendered as follows:

4, 16 Like a recalcitrant heifer { } is Israel,  
like a {refractory} ram in the pasture;
17 Wedded to idols is Ephraim,  
resting in a company of tipplers.
18 They are wanton, [departing from me,]  
preferring [ ] disgrace to their glory.
14b They go aside with the harlots,  
they lie with the hierodules;¹⁰
13a On the tops of the mountains they sacrifice,  
on the hills they bring fragrant offerings.¹¹
12a My people consult their tree,  
its branches give answers to them.

I have published a translation of the following two triplets in AJSL 32, 72, and the Hebrew text is given there on p. 69. The two secondary pentastichs in Hos. 4:1-5, which should be prefixed to the genuine triplet in 4:16-18, are translated in AJSL 32, 73 (Hebrew text on p. 72). Also 6:4a (What shall I do to thee, O Ephraim? What shall I do to thee, O Israel?) is a gloss to 4:16. The Hebrew text of Hos. 4:16-18+14b. 13b. 12a, apart from the secondary and tertiary additions, should be read as follows:

¹⁰ Cf. Am. 2:7; Herod. 1, 199 (ἠθανατοφόρος) and Strabo 272; Martin Hartman, Der islamische Orient (Berlin, 1909) 2, 7.203.211.
¹¹ Cf. Driver’s notes on the translation of Leviticus in the Polychrome Bible, p. 63, l. 10; see also JBL 35, 205.214. Heb. qēţōrē, sweet vapor of sacrifice (German Opferduft; cf. Ps. 66:15) corresponds to the Greek κνίσα, Lat. nidor (= cnidos). The meaning of the verbs qīţēr and hiquţēr is not to burn incense, but κνίσαν.
The OT contains some allusions to divinations by means of listening to the rustling of trees or scrying and crystal-gazing, but no reference to rhabdomancy and belomancy (contrast DB 3, 152b; 4, 598b; EB 1117; JBL 35, 225, below).