

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

Notes, Critical and Lexicographical.

PROF. DUNCAN B. MACDONALD.

HARTFORD, CONN.

I. I Sam. II. 24. The Massoretic text reads: **כִּי לֹא טוֹבָה הַשְּׁמֵעָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי שָׁמַע מֵעֲבָרִים עִם יְהוָה**: A. V. and R. V. accept this text and translate, "Ye make the LORD's people to transgress." This is simply impossible. Wellhausen accepts the text and Ewald's explanation, in *Umlauf setzen, verbreiten*. Budde accepts the text and, presumably, this rendering. Driver also accepts the rendering, but has a *caveat* that "the integrity of the text is reasonably open to suspicion." The LXX. render τοῦ μὴ δουλεύειν λαὸν θεῶ; they had apparently the same text and could make nothing of it.

Driver notes that **הַעֲבָרִים** in this sense is always accompanied by an "indication of the locality *in or through* which the proclamation is 'made to pass.'" I would add to that another consideration which makes the text impossible for me. If we adopt this rendering, **עִם יְהוָה**, to use the language of Arab grammarians, is *maf'ul bihi* to **שָׁמַע**, and **מֵעֲבָרִים** is a *hāl*, i. e. "I hear the people of Yahweh in the state of persons spreading." But the *hāl* must come last, and therefore the order would be **עִם יְהוָה מֵעֲבָרִים**. The point is that **עִם יְהוָה מֵעֲבָרִים** is not a clause consisting of subject and predicate in which the predicate could be made to precede. Even though that were the case, the construction would still be difficult, as the predicate is only made to precede for a definite reason, and there is none here. Further, the juxtaposition of the two participles is exceedingly harsh and awkward. I would suggest, then, to read, **אֲנִי שָׁמַע בְּנֵי מַעַם יְהוָה**. The **מַעַם** in **מֵעֲבָרִים** is got from the preceding **מַעַם** in **שָׁמַע** and **ר** in some forms of the archaic alphabet is hardly distinguishable from **ז**.

II. I Sam. iv. 15, **וְעֵינָיו קָמָה**; I Kings xiv. 4, **קָמוּ עֵינָיו**. This phrase seems to indicate some form of blindness, but its occurrence in Arabic has not, apparently, been noticed. Lane (*Suppl.*, p. 2996, c) quotes from Abū Zayd in the *Lisān* (s. **سَد**) **عَيْنٌ قَائِمَةٌ** *An eye [blind, or white and blind, but still whole: or] that has become white and blind but not burst: and from the Mughrib of al-Mufaṣṣṣ and the Miṣbāḥ of al-Fayyūmi:—sightless, but with the black still remaining.*

III. Num. xi. 4. הַאֲסַפְסָף is generally explained as = הַאֲסַפְסָף from אָסַף with the א dropped out of pronunciation as in הַאֲזַקִּים and בְּאֲזַקִּים. This is not quite satisfactory, as the א which drops out in אֲזַקִּים does not belong to the root, but is formal; nor is the sense derived by connection with אָסַף very good. Lane (p. 1368, c) suggests the Arabic سَفَسَفٌ, "anything that is bad, paltry, mean," used of poetry, disposition, affair, action, saying, etc. To the examples quoted by Lane, I would add *Fihrist*, p. 91, l. 28, where it is opposed to جَبَدٌ and used of poetry.

IV. Prov. xii. 3 b. וְשֵׁרֵשׁ צְדִיקִים בִּלְיָמוֹת is commonly rendered "but the root of the righteous shall never be moved." This takes שֵׁרֵשׁ in its first sense of root, and the figure is somewhat confused. It is intelligible to speak of the "root of the righteous," but how a root can מוֹט, 'sway, stagger, slip,' is not clear. In Job xiii. 27 we read שֵׁרְשֵׁי רַגְלִי תַחְחֶקָה and שֵׁרְשֵׁי רַגְלִי is taken generally as meaning "my feet" or "the soles of my feet." Did שֵׁרֵשׁ, שֵׁרְשֵׁים come to have itself the meaning *foot, feet*, and are we to translate the passage in Proverbs, "but the foot of the righteous shall not slip?" Compare ψψ xxxviii. 17; xciv. 18, etc.

V. מוֹפֶת. In the new English *Gesenius*, now appearing in parts, מוֹפֶת is referred to a root אָפַת and with that root is given the following etymology:

"Meaning dub. √ whence Arabic اُفَّت [a misprint for اُفَّت] calamity, and also wonder, portent; according to Thes. Arabic √ = اُفَّت suffer evil."

Here there are several points to which exception can be taken. First, Gesenius (*Thes.*, p. 143) does not refer اُفَّت to a root اُفَّت but to a root اُفَّت (a mistake which he probably got from the Calcutta *Qāmūs*), and secondly, it is wrong to speak of a root اُفَّت, since اُفَّت is simply the perfect passive (like قِيلَ) of a root اُوف. See the root in Lane; and notice that it does not mean to *suffer evil* generally, but is used mostly of crops, and means *to be smitten with a blight, blast, taint, canker*, or the like.

Last, it is true that on p. 143 of the *Thesaurus* Gesenius gives מופת to the root אפת, but on p. 612 he takes it all back, and refers the word to the root פה (Barth appears to do the same, *Nominalbildung*, § 172, c) through a form מופאת, and to this withdrawal he again directs attention on p. 72 of the *Corrigenda*.

But it may be worth while to inquire further whether there is any such word in Arabic as اُفْت and what we know generally about the root اُفْت. It is unlucky that this root did not fall within Lane's definition of "classical words and significations commonly known to the learned among the Arabs," and was therefore excluded from his First Book and, in the end, from his *Lexicon*. We are thus forced back on the Arabic lexicographers, and I shall give in translation all that I have collected from such of them as are accessible to me. I may say that the only Arab lexicon which has been printed and is not accessible to me is the *Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Hadīth* by Ibn al-Athīr [d. A. H. 606], which appeared at Cairo a year or two ago. The root اُفْت is lacking completely in the *Ṣaḥāḥ* of al-Jawharī [d. A. H. 393], the *Asās* of az-Zamakhsharī [d. A. H. 538], and the *Miṣbāḥ* of al-Fayyūmī, who finished his work in A. H. 734. Nor can I find any trace of اُفْت in the *Fiqh al-Lughā* of ath-Tha'ālibī [d. A. H. 429], or the *Kitāb al-Faṣḥ* of Tha'lab [d. A. H. 291], or the *Mu'arrab* of al-Jawāliqī [d. A. H. 465], or the *Kitāb al-Aḳḏād* of Ibn al-Anbārī [d. A. H. 328], or Dozy's *Supplément* with Fleischer's *Studien* and von Kremer's *Beiträge*, the only European contributions of which account can be taken in such a matter as this.

In the *Lisān al-'Arab* of al-Mukarram [d. A. H. 711] the root اُفْت occurs and runs as follows:

اُفْت from such and such, like اَفَكَ, i. e. he turned

him; and اُفْت is the highly bred of camels and its feminine is the same. Abū 'Amr said اُفْت is the highly bred; and Tha'lab said اُفْت, with فَت, is the swift she-camel, and it is she who overcomes camels in journeying, and he recited from Ibn Aḥmar;—

* كَاتِي لَمْ أَقْلِ عَاجِ لَأَفْتِ * تَرَاوِحَ بَعْدَ هَزَّتْهَا الرِّسِيمَا

As though I had not said, 'Ājīn [a chiding cry] to a swift she-camel who alternated after her Hizza [a sharp pace] the Rasīm [another sharp pace].

And in a MS. is الأفت with *Kasr*—so the *Tahdhiv*.

And there is the saying of al-'Ajjāq :—

✽ إِذَا بَنَاتُ الْأَرْحَبِيِّ الْأَفْتِ ✽ [قَارَبْنَ أَقْصَى غَوْلِهِ بِالْمَتِّ]

Whenever the daughters of the Arḥabite, the swift she-camel, [draw near to the extremity of its extent through advance in journeying.]

Ibn al-A'rābī said :—He means by الأفت the she-camel with which is such patience and endurance as is not with other than her, as Ibn Aḥmar said. And Abū 'Amr said, الأفت is the highly bred ; he said that it stood so in a MS. that was recited [or read] to Shamir—✽ إِذَا بَنَاتُ الْأَرْحَبِيِّ ✽ الأفت. Ibn al-A'rābī said :—I do not know whether this is dialectal or a mistake.

It will be noticed here that the root أفك is simply a by-form to أفك and that besides that by-form there only exists, according to this lexicon, a noun الأفت or الأفت, meaning a swift, highly bred camel or she-camel. It should be noticed, too, how elaborate is the care with which these meanings are established by means of old authorities, Ibn al-A'rābī, Tha'lab, Abū 'Amr, Ibn Aḥmar. This is the method of Arabic lexicography. A word or a meaning is regarded as of no value if it is not based on a quotation from the works of some one who was born at least not after the establishment of al-Islām in Arabia, or on the authority of some early lexicographer of repute.

Next in chronological order comes the *Qāmūs* of al-Firūzābādī [d. A. H. 816], and there we shall find something, if not exactly what we are looking for.

الأفت with *Fath* is the she-camel with which is such patience and endurance as is not with other than her, and the swift camel which overcomes the camels in journeying and the highly bred of camels ; and sometimes it has *Kasr*. And نَاهِيَّةٌ and العَجَبُ. And an encampment of the tribe of Hudhayl. And with *Kasr* it is [the same as] الأفت, and أَقْتَهُ عَنْهُ is, 'he turned him.'

It will be noticed that the greater part of what stands here is exactly as in the *Lisān*, with the omission of all authorities. This is the method of al-Firūzābādī throughout, and his dictionary is simply an enormous vocabulary, and, in consequence, is not regarded as of any authority in itself. What he adds to the *Lisān* is the point of interest for us. It is that **الْأَنْت**, or, apparently, **الْإَنْت** = **دَاهِيَةٌ** and **العجب**.

As to **أَيْكَةٌ**, its common meaning is certainly *calamity*; and **دَاهِيَةٌ**

[See, too, the *Fiqh*, p. 322, l. 7 of Bayrūt ed.] and **أَنْكَةٌ** or **أَفْكَةٌ** are given in Lane as having that meaning; but there is another possibility.

According to Lane, (p. 927, *b*) you can say **دُهَيْتُ**, *I was turned, or kept from a thing, or an affair, by deceit or guile*. This *to be turned from* is exactly the force which we have already found assigned to **أَنْت** as a by-form of **أَفَكٌ**. **دَاهِيَةٌ**, then, would mean *one who so turns another*, and

دَاهِيَةٌ *the stratagem, deceit that turns anyone*; and this last may be the meaning that al-Firūzābādī, or his authority, intended to assign to

الْأَنْت. The case of **العجب** is more difficult, but it is certain, at least, that it does not mean *portent*, nor, in the first instance, *a wonder*. **العجب** is more immediately *the act or state of wondering*; and if a *wonder* had been meant we should have expected **العجيب** or **العجيبية**. But it is hard to bring *wondering* into any connection with the root, and there is a possible connection for a *wonderful occurrence*.

According to Lane (p. 70, *a*) **الْمُؤْتَفِكَةُ** and **الْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ** occur in the *Qur'ān* of the cities overthrown by God upon the people of Lot. You can, then, say also **اِئْتَفَكَتِ الْبَلَدَةَ**, *the land, or district, was, or*

became, overturned, or subverted, and **أَفْكَةٌ** or **أَنْكَةٌ** means *a punishment sent by God whereby the dwellings of a people are overturned*. All these are evidently allusions to the story of the overthrow of the people of Lot and go back to the root-meaning of **أَفَكٌ** *to turn away, or back*. It might then be possible to say **أَفَكٌ**, or its by-form **أَنْت**, of a wonderful occurrence, but only as an allusion to the passage in the *Qur'ān*.

Thus the possibility of **مُؤْتَفِكَةٌ** going back to this **أَنْت** seems to be effectually blocked.

In order to give absolutely all the evidence, I shall now translate the corresponding article in the *Tāj al-'Arūs*, the commentary on the *Qāmūs* by Sayyid Murtaḍā [d. A. H. 1205].

الأفت with *Fath* (the mention of *Fath* is unnecessary, our Shaykh [*i. e.* al-Firūzābādī] said it) is the she-camel with which is such patience and endurance as is not with other than her (Ibn al-A'rābī and Ibn Aḥmar said it); and (الافت is) the swift camel which overcomes the camels in journeying (from Tha'lab, and the feminine is the same, and he quoted from Ibn Aḥmar:—

كأني لم أفل عاج لأنت * تراوح بعد هزتها الرسيما *

and (الأفت is) the highly bred (Abū 'Amr said it and it was so in a MS. which was recited [or read] to Shamir, and the overtaker of other than it) of camels; (and the feminine is the same) and sometimes it has *Kasr*, (it stood so in a MS. of the *Tahdhīb* and he quoted from al-'Ajjāj.

إذا بنات الأرحبي الأنت *

And (الأفت with *Fath* is) a calamity, and a wonderful occurrence, and an encampment of the tribe of Hudhayl; and (الافت) with *Kasr* is (a dialectal form for) الأفك ,

and (they say) أفته عنه (like أفكه whenever it) is, he turned him.

Here all is practically as in the *Lisān*, with the addition of what the *Qāmūs* has alone, and with everything arranged so as to form a running commentary on the *Qāmūs*. But it will be noticed that for what is in the *Qāmūs* alone the *Tāj* names no additional authorities, neither Ibn al-A'rābī, nor Abū 'Amr, nor any of the others are quoted in support of these usages. This is exactly what we should expect if أفنت is a by-form to أفك in the sense of داهية and عجب, used, as we have found, in allusion to the Qur'ānic story of how God overturned the city of the people of Lot.

Since working this out, I notice that in the last edition of the German *Gesenius* (edited by Buhl) the existence of أفنت in the required sense is said not to be *gut bezeugt*. We certainly might have better evidence for it, for example, if it were in the *Lisān*, but the real point is that it is post-Qur'ānic.