

Ugaritic *NŠB* and Punic *ŠLB*

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[No satisfactory etymology has been proposed for Ugar. *nšb* even though its meaning is reasonably clear ("haunch" or "brisket"). A comparison with Punic and Hebrew *šlb* is instructive. In the Marseille Tariff inscription, *šlb* is part of an animal that has been offered as a sacrifice. Heb. *š'labīm* on the other hand is an artisan term and refers to the "cross-pieces" of the lower stands of the temple furniture described in 1 Kgs 7. On the basis of an important observation by B. Levine that there was a "transposition of anatomical terminology and the vocabulary of the crafts", one may compare Ugar. *nšb* / *ktp* and *šlbm* ... *ktp* (1 Kgs 7, 28-30, 34). *nšb* and *šlb* can be phonetically related, with an interchange of *n* and *l* and metathesis of *n/l* and *š*].

Although there is a good measure of agreement among scholars concerning the meaning of Ugar. *nšb* and Punic *šlb*, nobody has been able to find satisfactory etymologies for these words or suggest convincing cognates, especially for Ugar. *nšb*¹. In the course of an examination of the texts in which the Ugaritic word is found, it occurred to the present writer that perhaps there was a relationship between Punic and Heb. *šlb* and Ugar. *nšb*. But before the arguments for this possible relationship are set forth, each word must be studied separately.

1. Ugar. *nšb*

A noun *nšb* occurs four times in the Ugaritic texts: *KTU* 1.1.V:6; 1.114: 10,13; 4.247:18². *KTU* 1.1.V.6 is so badly broken that it can be excluded from the discussion. Lines 10-13 of *KTU* 1.114 read as follows:

'ttrt t'db nšb lh
w'nt ktp
bhm yg'r tgr bt il
h/n lm/ kllb³ t'dbn nšb
linr t'dbn ktp

1. For an attempt to connect Ugar. *nšb* with M. Heb. *šibbēb*, "hew, cut", Ar. *sabba*, "cut", and *š'labīm* in Hos 8,6 cf. K. J. Cathcart-W.G.E. Watson, "Weathering a Wake: A Cure for a Carousal: A revised translation of *Ugaritica V* text 1", *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* (= PIBA) 4(1980)42.

2. References are to M. Dietrich-O. Loretz-J. Sanmartin, *Die Kitalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit* (AOAT 24) (= *KTU*). Neukirchen-Vluyn 1976.

3. For the reading of the first three words of this line, see D. Hillers, Review Note on *UF*, 1, *BASOR* 198(1970)46; and *KTU*.

Athtart served a haunch to him,
 Anat a shoulder.
 The gatekeeper of El's palace roars at them:
 Behold you have served a haunch to the dog,
 you have served a shoulder to the cur⁴.

Virtually all scholars agree that the parallelism *nšb//ktp* in both occurrences is a strong indication that *nšb* must denote part of an animal in the form of a cut of meat. Meanings proposed for *nšb* include "brisket" and "haunch". Some such meaning is supported by the other text where *nšb* occurs, namely in *KTU* 4.247: 16-18 in a list of meat portions:

šl't alp mri
šr bmt alp mri
tn nšbm

sides of prime beef
 ten rump steaks of prime beef
 two haunches.

The evidence therefore supports the statement by M. Pope in one of the earlier studies of *KTU* 1.114: "The word *nšb* which stands here in parallelism with *ktp*, 'shoulder', designates some sort of edible meat, presumably a choice cut"⁵. A few scholars have interpreted *nšb//ktp* in a different manner. Thus in the *Supplement to the Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome 1967, p. 554). C. H. Gordon gave *nšb* the meaning "stick", assuming that *ktp* designated "weapon, club". However, it must be observed that this was based on a preliminary study by Gordon where, in lines 12-13, the text was read as follows: *lmgr lb t'dbn nšb*. Nevertheless, in the footnote to his discussion, he recognized that both *nšb* and *ktp* "designated primarily parts of the body", and that *nšb* is associated with meat in *KTU* 4.247:18. Yet another interpretation has been offered by A. Caquot, M. Sznycer, and A. Herdner⁶, who understand *nšb* to mean "net" on the basis of Syr. *nešbā*⁷, and later Heb. *nišbim/in*, "snare, net"⁸. Among the scholars who accept the meaning "haunch" or "brisket", several have offered possible etymologies. J. C. de Moor relates Ugar. *nšb* to Ar. *našiba*, "to stick fast (said of a bone in the flesh)"⁹. J. Gray suggests a connection with Ar. *našaba*, "swell, grow"¹⁰, but this is scarcely possible from the point of view of phonetics.

2. Punich šlb

This word occurs four times in the well-known Marseille Tariff inscription (*KAI* 69), in lines 4, 6, 8, 10. As the inscription is repetitive, it will serve our purposes to examine here lines 3-4:

4. Recent detailed comment on this text can be found in Cathcart-Watson, *PIBA* 4(1980)35-58; B. Margalit, *Ma'arav* 2(1979)65-120; and M. Dietrich-O. Loretz, *UF* 13(1981)88-98.

5. M. Pope, "A Divine Banquet at Ugarit", in J. M. Efrid. ed., *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays*. Durham, N. C. 1972, p. 182.

6. *Textes Ougaritiques. I. Mythes et Légendes*. Paris 1974, p. 312 note c.

7. J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Oxford 1903, p. 353.

8. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Jerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. London 1903, p. 938.

9. "Studies in the New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra I". *UF* 1(1969)171. Cf. also H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Wiesbaden 1971, p. 964, "stick, adhere".

10. "Canaanite Religion and Old Testament Study in the Light of New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra", in C.F.A. Schaeffer, ed., *Ugaritica VII* (Mission de Ras Shamra 18). Leiden 1978, p. 95.

(3) *b'lp kll 'm šw't 'm šlm kll lkhn m ksp 'šrt 10 b'hd wbkll ykn lm 'lt pn hmš't z š [r mšql šš m't 300]* (4) *wbšw't qšrt wyšlt wkn h'rt whšlbn whp'mm w'hry hš'r lb'l hzbh*

In the case of an ox, whether offered as a whole offering or a sin-offering or a whole-offering: the priests shall be paid silver in the amount of ten, 10, shekels for each one. In the case of the whole offering, they shall have, in addition to this tariff, meat weighing three hundred, 300, shekels. In the case of the sin-offering, ankles and shoulder joints. The skin, *ribs*, feet and the rest of the meat shall be for the person offering the sacrifice¹¹.

The Punic Carthage Tariff inscription, *KAI* 74, is very similar in contents to the Marseille Tariff inscription, and it is generally agreed that the word *hšlbn* (with prosthetic aleph) should be read in line 4. Now Punic *šlb/šlb* is usually rendered "rib" (Rosenthal, Donner and Röllig) or "joint" (R. S. Tomback¹²) on the basis of Biblical Heb. *šēlabbīm*, "cross-pieces" (or the like), which will be discussed below. It is highly unlikely that Punic *šlb/šlb* can be connected with Syr. *šūlābā*, "bird's fat"¹³; Syr. *šūlāpā/šūlābā*, "rump-fat of partridges, pheasants, or pigeons"¹⁴; Syr. *šalbā/šalwā*, "narrow mountain pass, defile, ravine"¹⁵; or Syr. *šalwā/šelwā*, "cave, chasm, hollow"¹⁶.

What is more important to note at this juncture is that Punic *šlb/šlb* is part of an animal that has been offered as a sacrifice, and Ugar. *nšb* is also part of an animal that has been slaughtered for a feast.

3. Heb. *šlb*

As already indicated above, a noun *šālāb**, pl. *šēlabbīm* occurs three times in 1 Kgs 7,28-29, part of a rather difficult passage in which there is a description of the ten bronze laver stands and bronze basins for the temple. Vv. 28-29 are translated as follows in the Jewish Publication Society version:

The structure of the lower stands was as follows: They had insets, and there were insets within the frames [*šēlabbīm*]; on the insets within the frames [*šēlabbīm*] were lions, oxen, and cherubim. Above the frames [*šēlabbīm*] was a stand; and both above and below the lions and the oxen were spirals of hammered metal.

However, with J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman¹⁷, it seems better to understand the *šēlabbīm* as "cross-pieces", so that one should speak of "frame-pieces between the crosspieces" rather than "insets within the frames". Montgomery and Gehman are surely correct in insisting on the relevance of the Cypriote wagons found at Enkome and Larnaka for an appreciation of the meaning of the terminology in the passage in 1 Kgs 7.

In Ex 26,17 and 36,22 there is a pual participle *mēšullābōt* meaning "joined, bound, fastened to", which must be taken as a denominative verb from *šālāb**. The two passages in Exodus are almost identical and give instructions for the making of the tabernacle. Finally, one should not ignore the LXX τα ἐξεχόμενα and Vulg. *iuncturae* as translations of *šēlabbīm*¹⁸.

11. Our translation is only slightly different from that of F. Rosenthal, *ANET*³, p. 656; cf., for detailed commentary, H. Donner-W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (= *KAI*). Wiesbaden 1962-4, II, pp. 84-85.

12. *A Comparative Semitic Lexicon of the Phoenician and Punic Languages*. Missoula 1978, p. 317. Note the translation "côtes (?)" in J. G. Février, "Remarques sur le grand Tarif dit de Marseille", *Cahiers de Byrsa* 8(1958)38 and 41; and "costole" in M. Guzzo Amadasi, *Le iscrizioni fenicie e puniche delle colonie in occidente (Studei Semitici 28)*. Rome 1967, pp. 177-178.

13. Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary*, p. 565. Cf. Tomback, *Lexicon*, p. 317.

14. Payne Smith, p. 565.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 578. Cf. *BDB*, p. 1016.

16. Payne Smith, p. 578.

17. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC). Edinburgh 1951, pp. 175-178.

18. In later Heb. one finds *šēlabbīōt*, "wedges", *šēlabbīm/in*, "rungs of a ladder".

4. Some Comparative Considerations

On the basis of an important observation made by B. A. Levine¹⁹, some interesting suggestions might be made concerning Ugar. *nšb*, Heb. *šālāb* and Punic *šlb/šlb*. Commenting on the Marseille Tariff inscription, Levine identifies "clear evidence of the transposition of anatomical terminology and the vocabulary of the crafts"²⁰. For example, in line 4 of the Punic text there is a word *yšlt*, "shoulder joints"²¹, which is a phonetic variant of Heb. *'aššilāh*, pl. *'aššilōt* (note a constr. *'aššilē* in Ex 13, 18), meaning "armpits" in Jer 38, 12; "arm-joints", "shoulders", in Ez 13, 18, but which in Ez 41, 8 is an architectural term of disputed significance²². In Ez 41, 8, *šēlā'* is an architectural term, as it is elsewhere in Hebrew, but it also has the anatomical meaning "rib" (note also Ugar. *šl't* in *KTU* 4.247:16, quoted above). Most apt therefore is Levine's further observation that the *š^elabbim* in 1 Kgs 7, 28-29 are artisan terms, but in the Punic texts are anatomical terms. However, he may not be correct in his assumption that *šlb* is originally an artisan term. Turning to Ugar. *nšb*, "haunch", it was noted above that it was found twice in parallelism with *ktp*, "shoulder". It is most interesting to note therefore, without exaggerating the significance, that in 1 Kgs 7, 30, that is, in the verse after the mention of the *š^elabbim*, there are mentioned *k^etēpōt*, "shoulder-pieces", "brackets". Clearly these *k^etēpōt* are artisan terms, used to describe the supports of the laver. *kātēp* is used in this precise sense in 1 Kgs 7, 30 and 34 only, just as *šālāb*, "crosspiece", is found exclusively in 1 Kgs 7, 28-29. Thus we have Ugar. *nšb//ktp* used as terms for parts of an animal, while *šlbm* and *ktp* are artisan terms in 1 Kgs 7, 28-30.

So far we have attempted to demonstrate that Ugar. *nšb* and Punic *šlb* have similar meanings, occurring as they do in contexts that have common elements. The next step is to see whether the two nouns can be phonetically related and shown to be cognate. This means arguing for a combination of the interchange of *l* and *n*, and metathesis of *n//l* and *š*. It is not difficult to provide examples of the interchange of *l* and *n* in Semitic languages²³. The phenomenon is attested, for example, in Akk. *lamšu/namšu; lamšatu/namšatu*, "fly"; Akk. *kursinnu*, "fetlock, lower leg", but Heb. *qarsōl*, "ankle", Aram. *qaršūlā*²⁴. Cf. Donner-Röllig on *qsr* in *KAI* 69:4. In West Semitic, note Ugar. *ḥsn* but Heb. *ḥāsil*, "grasshopper"²⁵; Phoen. *špl* but Ugar. — Heb. *špn*, "North, Zaphon"; Heb. *liškāh/niškāh*, "hall"; and so forth. It is simple enough to provide examples of metathesis, for they are found in all Semitic languages²⁶: Heb. *šimlāh* and *šalmāh* "coat"; *kebeš* and *kešeb*, "young ram"²⁷; Ar. *qaml^{un}*, Old Aram. *qml*, but later Aram. *qalm^etā'* and Syr. *qalmā*, "louse"²⁸; Akk. *dīšpu*, Heb. *d^ebaš*, "honey"; Akk. *simmiltu*, Heb. *sullām*, "ladder"; Akk. *ḥaštu*, Heb. *šahat*, "pit". What is really difficult to find is a few good examples of both the interchange of *l* and *n* and metathesis taking place in the same word. There is a possible example in Heb. *šallahat* and Ar. *šahⁿun*, "dish", if these two nouns are

19. "Punic Evidence for the Term ŠLM", in *In the Presence of the Lord* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 5). Leiden 1974, pp. 118-122.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

21. Cf. Tombaek, *Lexicon*, p. 128, who notes Syr. *yašilā'*, "elbow", in addition to Heb. *'aššil^{*}/aššilāh*, "joint, shoulder".

22. Cf. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Hermeneia). Philadelphia 1983, p. 372, who opts for "top terrace".

23. Cf. C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der Semitischen Sprachen*. Berlin 1908, I, pp. 219-234; S. Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*. Wiesbaden 1964, p. 32; W. von Soden, *Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik* (AnOr 33). Rome 1952, p. 35, § 34b. *id.*, *Erganzungsheft zum Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik* (AnOr 47). Rome 1969, p. 6**; J. Friedrich, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik* (AnOr 46) Rome 1970, pp. 21-22, § 56; A. Fitzgerald, "The Interchange of L, N, and R in Biblical Hebrew", *JBL* 97(1978)481-488.

24. Cf. Donner-Röllig, *KAI* II 85 on Punic *qsr*(*KAI* 69:4).

25. M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* (BiOr 17). Rome 1965, p. 58.

26. Brockelmann, *Grundriss* I, pp. 267-278; Moscati, *Introduction*, p. 63; Von Soden, *Grundriss*, p. 35, § 36 + *Erganzungsheft*. But note the warning given by J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*. Oxford 1968, pp. 96-101.

27. Also *kibšāh* and *kišbāh*, "young ewe-lamb".

28. Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (AnOr 19). Rome 1967, p. 49.

cognate²⁹. Another somewhat different piece of evidence may be found in the Ugar. *lkmn wšnm*, equivalents of the Kassite divine names *Šuqamuna* and *Šumaliya*. *Šnm* and *Šumaliya* refer to the same deity, but of course the linguistic origin of *Šumaliya* is obscure, though we find it in a Semitic context. Still, *-iya* could be an ending, and with the initial *š* and the presence of *m*, there is at least the possibility of variation here between *n* and *l*.

Finally, there is a possibility that the real root of Punic and Heb. *šlb* is *lšb/nšb*. According to J. Barr, "Hebrew greatly prefers the sequence *l-p* over the sequence *l-b*. No true verb has the latter: *hlp* and *klb* are noun roots only, *šlb* is probably a denominative verb, and *glb* is commonly taken to be a loan-word"³⁰. Of course Ugar. *nšb*, Punic *šlb* and Heb. *šālāb* are nouns, and no verbal root is known, but we suggest that Northwest Semitic may have had a root *lšb/nšb*.

Without underestimating the difficulties in the proposal to relate Ugar. *nšb* and Punic *šlb*, we consider the suggestion the most acceptable put forward so far.

29. Cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss* I, p. 220; Köhler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon*, p. 804; Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexicon*, p. 962. K. J. Cathcart, "Notes on Some Hebrew Words for Vessels and their Cognates", *RSO* 47(1973)55-56.

30. *Comparative Philology*, p. 179, and references there to J. H. Greenberg, "The Patterning of Root Morphemes in Semitic", *Word* 6(1950)162-181; and K. Koskinen, "Kompatibilität in den dreikonsonantigen hebräischen Wurzeln", *ZDMG* 114(1964)16-58.