

THE MEANING OF ḤAYYŪT IN 2 SAMUEL 20, 3

WHEN David returned to Jerusalem he put away the concubines with whom Absalom had consorted into 'alm^enūt ḥayyūt, which the EVV marg. render *widowhood of life*. The noun ḥayyūt is found only here in the Old Testament but is known in New Hebrew meaning *living, support*,¹ and here is apparently pointed as a feminine abstract form from the root ḥāyāh, *lived*.

The LXX translate the phrase by χῆραι ζῶσαι, which led Wellhausen² to read the consonantal text as 'almānōt ḥayyōt, *living widows*, which, by a not inconsiderable extension of meaning, is then understood to mean women whose husbands, while yet living, have abandoned them. This very doubtful reading has been followed by a number of scholars, including Budde,³ Nowack,⁴ and Kittel.⁵ Caspari,⁶ whilst following this reading, thinks 'alm^enūt was perhaps originally lāmūt, and Segal⁷ proposed 'alm^enūt ḥay or 'alm^enūt ḥayyim, neither of which adds anything to an understanding of the meaning, whilst both have the disadvantage of requiring an unsupported emendation of the consonantal text.

Arabic provides a clue to the understanding of this word in its verb ḥayiya, ḥayya, which, in the Ist and Xth forms, means *felt shame*, and gives a verbal noun ḥayā'uⁿ,⁸ *shame, bashfulness, or repentance*. A

¹ Cf. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, i, 1903, p. 452b.

² *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis*, 1871, p. 206.

³ *Die Bücher Samuel* (in Marti's *Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum A.T.*), 1902, p. 297.

⁴ *Richter, Ruth und Bücher Samuelis* (in Nowack's *Handkommentar zum A.T.*), 1902, p. 232.

⁵ In Kautzsch-Bertholet's *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, i, 1922, p. 482; cf. S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*, 2nd ed., 1913, p. 341.

⁶ *Die Samuelbücher* (in Sellin's *Kommentar zum A.T.*), Bd. VII, 1926, p. 633.

⁷ *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) x, 1919-20, p. 234.

⁸ Cf. E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Bk. I, Pt. 2, 1865, p. 681c. Although this word is not recorded in the cognate languages, its confirmed use in Arabic goes back at least to Jarīr before the end of the first century of Islam (cf. *Tāj al-'Arūs*, x, 106), and verbal forms of the root occur in the Qur'ān, Sur. II, 24, and Sur. XXXIII, 53 (twice), and the verbal noun of the Xth form in Sur. XXVIII, 25. (It is of interest to note that Fluegel's version, which in each case gives the longer, Hijāz, form, disagrees with the (guaranteed) version of Amīrī which gives, surprisingly, the Tamīm dialectical variant, written with only one yā.) The root idea seems to be that of 'recoiling', and so 'twisting away from anything', and, like the related *taḥawwā*, *gather, coil itself* (Lane, *ibid.*, p. 679a) perhaps lies behind the Arabic *ḥayyatuⁿ*, *snake, serpent*, found in Aramaic as *ḥīwē* (Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 452a). It should be realized that although the English word *shame* can have more than one meaning, the specific sense of the Arabic *ḥayā'uⁿ* is *modesty*, and is used particularly of sexual reticence. David's action was, perhaps, not so much one of cruel abandonment for revenge, as a discreet concealment from the common gaze.

Hebrew equivalent of this noun might well be written and pointed as in our passage, and the sense of the phrase under discussion then understood as signifying *a widowhood of shame*, which suits the context well.¹

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SOME OBSCURED RUBRICS AND LECTIONARY ALLUSIONS IN THE PSALTER

IN his recent book *In the Beginning* (p. 35) Professor S. H. Hooke points out that the members of the school or guild of scribes to whom we owe the compilation of the Pentateuch and the assignment of the Psalms to their proper use at the great religious occasions of the Hebrew sacred year were priests whose interests centred in the temple and the cult, and whose attitude towards the material with which they were dealing was liturgical rather than historical. It seems clear that the arrangement of the Psalter was determined by the cycle of the ecclesiastical year and the needs of public worship, perhaps the worship of the early synagogues, and in this article an attempt will be made to show the importance of the liturgical factor as an aid to the exegesis of certain Psalms. The preface to Ben Sirach shows that in the second century B.C. the Egyptian Jews had as a permanent institution the public reading of the Law. The earliest lectionary system of which we know is the system whereby the whole Pentateuch was read in the synagogues in a triennial cycle, and it is probable that the Psalter was similarly arranged in a triennial cycle for purposes of public worship.

Dr. J. Rabinowitz in an article entitled 'Does Midrash Tehillim reflect the Triennial Cycle?' (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 26) claims that reasonable proof exists for this theory as to the arrangement of the Psalter. He says:

There is a certain amount of evidence in the Talmud which points to the fact that there existed at one time in Palestine the custom of reading the book of Psalms in a triennial cycle on sabbath afternoons corresponding to the triennial cycle of the Pentateuch which is mentioned definitely in the Talmud and which has been established by the brilliant researches of Theodor and Büchler.

This evidence can be summarized as follows: The comparison of the five books of Moses with the five books of Psalms; the correspondence of the number of Psalms with the number of sabbaths in three lunar years; the fact that just as the midrashim to the Pentateuch are homilies based on the pericopes of the Torah read during the triennial cycle, so

¹ Cf. Ps. 74¹⁹, where *hayyūt*, *shame*, might conceivably be understood for the Massoretic *hayyat* in either or both halves of the line.