Shu’ah

(For fuller discussion of the lexical field as a whole see the ‘Overview of SAHD entries for “Deliverance” words’ on this site)

Introduction

Grammatical Type: noun/adj.

Occurrences: Total 2 OT, 0x Sir, 1x Qum, 0x inscr.

A.1 The only occurrence at Qumran in the citation of Is 32.5 in a pesher of Isaiah, 4Q165 6.3.

B.1 It is unlikely that Is 22.5 should be included within the list of occurrences of this lexeme. Most interpret the noun here as a ‘cry’, and HAL (1340) class it as a hapax legomenon. The Vg, nevertheless, translates it as *magnificus*, implying that it saw some connection with the other two occurrences (Is 32.5; Jb 34.19).

B.2 Another occurrence of שׁוֹעַ has been posited in Job 34.20 by the emendation of יְגֹעֲשׁוַּעָם to יִגְוְעוַּשׁוֹעִים (Fohrer 1989: 463-64, following Hölscher and others: cf. Driver and Gray: 258; BHS). But it remains uncertain and can play no part in the argument here.

Text doubtful: none.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 A detailed bibliography of the debate over the root is contained in HAL:1340.

In Hebrew the biliteral root is probably also attested in a number of PNs with a medial u-vowel: the form שׁוע, occurs in Gn 38.2, 12; 1Ch 2.3 and a feminine form שׁועָא in 1Ch 7.32; also the compound (f.) name שׁוּעָה, and the theophorous names אֲבִישׁוּע, אֱלִישׁוּע and מָלִישׁוּע. Further possible occurrences of this element in extra-biblical PNs are noted by Propp:617: Canaanite/Phoenician שֶבֶן and Phoenician שֶבֶן. Of three possible Ugaritic cognates שֶׁנֶּבֶן ‘as a title or epithet of Keret (KTU 1.14 iv 37 and par.) and, apparently, of dead and deified kings of Ugarit as the recipients of offerings in the sense ‘hero, noble’ (so DULAT:892-93). as earlier Gibson 1978:160; cf. Akk. šuwa’u = šu u/šu as a synonym of šarru, AHw: 1295) is the most likely to be related to the meaning indicated by the parallelism in Is 32.5 and Job 34.19. HAL, like many before it, prefers to associate שׁוֹעַ with senses of Ar. wasiʿa such as ‘noble, generous’, and Ges18:1335 persists with this, even though on the previous page it has given pride of place to the Ugaritic and Akkadian parallels in its treatment of the root. Even if the etymology of שׁוֹעַ is based on Ar. wasiʿa is preferred, however, it cannot support an association of שׁוֹעַ with the core group of ישע lexemes, since they are no longer regarded as cognate with Ar. wasiʿa (see [שׁוֹעַ] 1. Root and Etymology). Such an association would only be possible with ששׁוַע, whose form and meaning (sometimes ‘help’, perhaps related to ‘generosity’) could be linked to a Hebrew root שׁוֹע. Yet the study of ששׁוַע has found that its predominant meanings concern the effects of such help rather than the help itself (see 7, Conclusion) and its root, if not שׁוֹע, is more likely to be a by-form of that than the root from which the noun שׁוֹע is derived.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 n.m. of type qāl (BL §61n)

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 שׁוֹע is the subject of the verb אמר niph with לוכד and לוכד, ‘villain’ (the construction is more common with קרא niph, as in the previous stich) (Is 32.5); and of }
niph with סֵי and לֹא + ע ל poor’, lowly’ (Job 34.19); if the emendation of Job 34.20 is accepted, also of ע ל qal.

4. Versions
   a. LXX: σιγάω impv (?Is 32.5); ἁδρός pl (Jb 34.19);

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

b. Peshitta: prwq’ (Is 32.5); no equivalent (Jb 34.19);
c. Targum: תקיף pl (Is 32.5); שועא (Jb 34.19);
d. Vulgate: maior (Is 32.5); tyrannus (Jb 34.19).

A.1 The LXX to Jb 34.19 and the Vg both here and in Is 32.5 interpret שועא as denoting someone powerful, like Tg in Is 32.5.
A.2 The Pesh to Is 32.5 infers a connection with the verb ישע ‘to save’.
A.3 The Tg שועא at Jb 34.19 has a formal similarity to the Hebrew noun, and its meaning ‘protector’ suggests that the Targumist here also sees a connection with the Hebrew verb ישע ‘to save’. But Jastrow (1538), who gives no other occurrences of it, infers the meaning ‘protector’ from the occurrence of the same word in Pr 30.19 in the sense ‘rock’, which is more widespread in Syriac. It may be better to see שועא here as borrowed from the Heb. original.

B.1 σιγάω in the imperative at Is 32.5 is perhaps an attempt to interpret what was said in the context of the passage.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)
   A.1 שועא is found in parallelism with נדיב ‘noble, generous’ (Is 32.5), where שועא is contrasted with the state of a כיל י ‘villain’, and in parallelism with שרים ‘officials’ (Jb 34.19), where שועא is contrasted with the state of the ל ‘poor’.

6. Exegesis
   A.1 Is 32.5 is part of a passage which promises a change in the behaviour and values of society when a king and his officials practice justice in government. No longer will those who act in an ungenerous and oppressive way (as vv. 6-7 clarify the senses in which כיל י and the otherwise unattested כיל י are being used here) be spoken of as נדיב, ‘noble, generous’, and שועא. This seems to be meant as a contrast to the behaviour of present or previous kings and officials. In any case שועא is clearly a term of approbation, like נדיב, which is implied not to be deserved by those to whom it is currently being applied. נדיב, which is much more frequent than שועא, is used both of high social rank (e.g. 1Sm 2.8) and, less often, of good character (Pr 17.7): the parallelism in Pr 19.6 suggests that generosity especially was meant. The description of the שועא, for whom שועא is an inappropriate designation, in v. 7 points to characteristics of deceit and active exploitation of the poor rather than a lack of generosity, so that שועא seems to refer to a person who is truthful and does not take advantage of the weak to enlarge his own wealth, a person, that is, who lives according to accepted moral values. This would permit, like נדיב, a normal application of שועא either to a person’s character or to his social status.

A.2 The context of Job 34.19 points conclusively to the ‘social’ interpretation of שועא (Fohrer:463-66; cf. Joüon 1937: 205-06). In his challenge to Job’s questioning of God’s perfect justice Elihu cites the fact that God does not hesitate to denounce and condemn the high and mighty in human society (vv. 16-20): kings, leaders (נר), officials
and the (cf. also in v. 20). The point of the challenge is social standing and power, not moral probity, so both נדיב and must be understood in this way here. Some (e.g. Dillmann, Driver and Gray, Pope, NRSV) translate with ‘rich’ here, no doubt because of the association with ל, but the latter is not decisive for the meaning of נדיב in the context of the verse as a whole: the question of wealth is nowhere raised and power is what is at issue. נדיב itself may mean ‘lowly’ or ‘weak’ as well as ‘poor’ (cf. TDOT 5: 208-30).

7. Conclusion

A.1 In one of its two occurrences (Is 32.5) נדיב is a term of approbation and might be understood to designate either moral character or social status, but in the other (Job 34.19) social status is clearly meant. As a meaning which fits both passages the latter is to be preferred. It also corresponds to the closer of the two proposed cognates and to several of the versinal renderings (Tg and Vulg at Is 32.5; LXX and Vulg at Job 34.19: cf. also LXX at Ps 72(71).12; Job 29.12 [mistakenly ] δυνάστου). ‘Great man’ would be an adequate translation. It follows that נדיב has no obvious connection with the root ישו (this is true even if it is regarded as meaning ‘generous’ in Is 32.5: see the end of 1. Root A.1 above)), and therefore it is not a member, even loosely, of the ‘deliverance’ word-group.

Bibliography


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