

שׁוֹעַ

(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 2x OT, 0x Sir, 1x Qum, 0x inscr.

A.1 The only occurrence at Qumran in the citation of Is 32.5 in a peshet 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 מְגַעְשׁוֹעַ to יְגַעְשׁוֹעַ (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 שׁוֹעַ, occurs in Gn 38.2, 12; 1Ch 2.3 and a feminine form שׁוֹעָא in 1Ch 7.32; also the compound (f.) name בַּת־שׁוֹעַ and the theophorous names אֶל־שׁוֹעַ, אֶבְרֵי־שׁוֹעַ, יְהוֹשׁוֹעַ and מְלַכֵי־שׁוֹעַ. Further possible occurrences of this element in extra-biblical PNs are noted by Propp:617: Canaanite/Phoenician אֲדוֹנֵשׁ and Phoenician שַׁעֲבַעַל. Of three possible Ugaritic cognates *t*’ 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. *šuwā’u* = *šū’u/û* 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. *wasi’a* 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 based on Ar. *wasi’a* is preferred, however, it cannot support an association of שׁוֹעַ with the core group of ישַׁע lexemes, since they are no longer regarded as cognate with Ar. *wasi’a* (see [יַשַׁע] 1. Root and Etymology). Such an association would only be possible with תְּשׁוּעָה, whose form and meaning (sometimes ‘help’, perhaps related to ‘generosity’) could be linked to a Hebrew root שׁוֹעַ understood in this way. Yet the study of תְּשׁוּעָה 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 ישַׁע, is more likely to be a by-form of that than the root from which the noun שׁוֹעַ is derived.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 n.m. of type qāl (BL §61n)

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 שׁוֹעַ is the subject of the verb אמר niph with לֹא and לְ + כִּילִי ‘villain’ (the construction is more common with קרא niph, as in the previous stich) (Is 32.5); and of נכר

niph with לָא and עַל + דָּל 'poor', 'lowly' (Job 34.19); if the emendation of Job 34.20 is accepted, also of גִּיעַ qal.

4. Versions

a. LXX: στυάω impv (?Is 32.5); ἀδρός pl (Jb 34.19);

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

b. Peshitta: *prwq* ' (Is 32.5); no equivalent (Jb 34.19);

c. Targum: תַּקִּיף pl (Is 32.5); שׁוּעָא (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 שׁוּעַ as denoting someone powerful, like Tg in Is 32.5.

A.2 The Pesh to Is 32.5 infers a connection with the verb יִשַׁע 'to save'.

A.3 The Tg שׁוּעָא 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 יִשַׁע '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 שׁוּעָא here as borrowed from the Heb. original.

B.1 στυάω 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 שׁוּעַ is found in parallelism with נָדִיב 'noble, generous' (Is 32.5), where שׁוּעַ is contrasted with the state of a פִּילִי 'villain', and in parallelism with שְׂרִיפִים 'officials' (Jb 34.19), where שׁוּעַ is contrasted with the state of the דָּל '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 נָבֵל and the otherwise unattested פִּילִי are being used here) be spoken of as נָדִיב, 'noble, generous', and שׁוּעַ. This seems to be meant as a contrast to the behaviour of present or previous kings and officials. In any case שׁוּעַ is clearly a term of approbation, like נָדִיב, which is implied not to be deserved by those to whom it is currently being applied. נָדִיב, which is much more frequent than שׁוּעַ, 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 פִּילִי, for whom שׁוּעַ 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 שׁוּעַ 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 נָדִיב, a normal application of שׁוּעַ 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 שׁוּעַ (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 (נָדִיב), officials

and the שׁוֹעַ (cf. also אֶבְיָר in v. 20). The point of the challenge is social standing and power, not moral probity, so both נָדִיב and שׁוֹעַ must be understood in this way here. Some (e.g. Dillmann, Driver and Gray, Pope, NRSV) translate שׁוֹעַ with ‘rich’ here, no doubt because of the association with לָדַ, but the latter is not decisive for the meaning of שׁוֹעַ in the context of the verse as a whole: the question of wealth is nowhere raised and power is what is at issue. לָדַ 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) שׁוֹעַ 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 versional 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 שׁוֹעַ has no obvious connection with the root יִשַׁע (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.

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