

AMOS 6:5b
A POSSIBLE CASE OF AN INTERCHANGE OF LETTERS
IN THE PALEO-HEBREW SCRIPT

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I

The second half of Amos 6:5, כְּדוֹיֵד חִשְׁבוּ לָהֶם כְּלֵי שִׁיר, has received quite a lot of scholarly attention as to its meaning and connection to the previous half-verse. The difficulties with this short sentence range from the meaning of the verb חִשְׁבוּ with the object כְּלֵי שִׁיר, “musical instruments”; to the first word כְּדוֹיֵד, which raises questions with regards to its very originality in the verse and to its syntactical function within it,¹ as well as to the *plene* spelling of the personal name דְּוִיד, typical of Late Biblical Hebrew, a later stage than the Hebrew of the book of Amos.² Paul makes convincing arguments for retaining the MT as it is and for the lack of necessity to emend the text,³ understanding these words as speaking of David and of musical instruments, fashioned by the pleasure-seeking people of Samaria (vv. 1-7), whom the prophet criticizes.

Additional difficulties arise when the MT of Amos 6:5b is compared to its Greek translation. The Septuagint offers a far from

¹ Scholars debate whether it should be considered as part of the first half of the verse, contra the Masoretic punctuation; for this opinion see e.g. F.T. Anderson & D.N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 563; J. Jeremias, *The Book of Amos* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 108.

² For a survey of the various issues addressed by scholars see S.M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 206–207; M. Weiss, *The Book of Amos* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 1:195–196 (in Hebrew).

³ Paul, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 206–207.

literal translation of MT's Hebrew that introduces an entirely new theme to the verse:

MT כדויד חשבו להם כלי שיר

LXX ὡς ἐστῶτα⁴ ἐλογίσαντο καὶ οὐχ ὡς φεύγοντα

The Septuagint speaks neither of David nor of musical instruments, but rather has a text which translates into English as "they considered them as permanent and not as fleeting".⁵ Although the Greek rendering differs greatly from that of the MT content-wise, we will attempt to demonstrate that the two texts are not representative of two independent textual or literary traditions of Amos' prophecy, but on the contrary, the LXX variant belongs to the same textual tradition as its MT counterpart.⁶

A contextual examination of both MT and LXX to Amos 6:1-7 shows that in respect to the half-verse in question, MT fits much better within its context of hedonism and excessive pleasure-seeking than the LXX. Moreover, the proposal to reject the MT reference to David as secondary based on his name not appearing in the LXX should be rejected. We should note that not only David is missing in the LXX, but so are the musical instruments, with which he is connected. Weiss is correct in his assertion that the entire verse in the LXX, which differs greatly from the MT, should be considered when one comes to explain the differences between the wording in the MT

⁴ Some manuscripts have the equivalent form ἐστηκότα.

⁵ Translation taken from NETS: G.E. Howard (trans.), "The Twelve Prophets", in A. Pietersma & B.G. Wright (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 793.

⁶ Contra Anderson & Freedman, *Amos* (above, n. 1), who offer no suggestion as to the cause of the difference between the MT and the LXX, saying "we can hardly speculate where it [the LXX rendition – SJG] may have come from or how it got into the text" (564).

and that reflected in the LXX.⁷ In addition, one can see a representation of the Hebrew words כלי להם⁸ חשבו by the LXX's ἐλογίσαντο καὶ οὐχ ὤς, leaving a problem only with the first and last words: כ(ב)דויד and שיר. Finally, an attempt to explain such a change by an interchange within the Greek language or script is unproductive.

The combination of these two factors, the textual and the contextual, brings us to two conclusions: (a) the LXX variant of Amos 6:5b is secondary to the reading attested in MT; (b) this transformation already took place in the LXX's *Vorlage*, due to a textual phenomenon (or phenomena) that occurred in a text transmitted in a Hebrew script.⁹

We are left, therefore, with two issues of retroversion. A few suggestions have been offered by scholars regarding the textual connection between the Hebrew שיר and the Greek φεύγοντα. Of the possible solutions given to this issue, those that attempt to combine Greek meaning with Hebrew textual probability, while retaining as much as possible a resemblance to the Hebrew word שיר, are to be preferred. Among these, one should note the suggestion of the honoree of this volume, included in the forthcoming *Hebrew University Bible* volume, reading שור/שור.¹⁰ It is, however, the other crux in Amos

⁷ Weiss, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 1:196.

⁸ Read as כלא (= οὐχ ὤς). See e.g. J.G. Eichhorn, "Abweichungen der griechischen Uebersetzung des Propheten Amos vom hebräischen Text", in idem (ed.), *Repertorium für Biblische und Morgenländische Litteratur* 6 (1780), 247.

⁹ On this issue see Weiss, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 1:196, who claims that the Greek rendition of these words might have resulted from the translator misunderstanding the first (probably corrupted) word, which in turn led to a translation totally different than the Hebrew.

¹⁰ See S. Talmon & M. Segal (eds.), *The Hebrew University Bible: The Minor Prophets, Part 1: Hosea – Jonah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, forthcoming), ad loc. For a similar reading by Friedrich Dingermann (in his PhD dissertation, which was unavailable to me)

6:5b, which this article aims to discuss: the translation of כדויד by ὡς ἐστῶτα. As ὡς is a standard equivalent of כִּי, what remains to be explained is the translation of דויד by ἐστῶτα. The verb ἵστανμι, from which the participle ἐστῶτα is derived, means “to stand, make to stand”, and the most common Hebrew equivalent to its occurrences in the Septuagint is the root ע-מ-ד,¹¹ including several examples, such as Zech 3:1, where the LXX has ἐστῶτα for the Hebrew עִמָּד.¹²

Despite this overwhelming evidence, only a few scholars have opted for retroverting this LXX variant as a Hebrew form derived from the root ע-מ-ד, while most have tried to find other solutions to this crux.¹³ The most prominent one is the rendering כדויר,¹⁴ based upon Isa 29:3. In Isa 29:3 the Hebrew כדויר has the LXX equivalent ὡς Δαυιδ, reflecting the *Vorlage* כדוד (reminiscent of the MT in Amos 6:5), seemingly created by a ר/ד interchange. This is indeed an elegant reconstruction, yet it is unclear how דויר is related to ἵστανμι. None of the dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew give such a meaning to דויר, usually understanding כדויר (כ) in Isa 29:3, as in Isa 22:18, as “circle,

as well as additional retroversion options and suggestions, see Weiss, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 1:195–196; 2:364.

¹¹ The second-most popular equivalent is the semantically related verb ק-ו-ם; cf. E. Hatch & H.A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 689–692.

¹² Cf. also Exod 33:10; Ezek 3:1; Dan 8:3, 6; 1 Chr 21:16.

¹³ Two exceptions are F. Praetorius, “Bemerkungen zu Amos,” *ZAW* 35 (1915), 20; H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, trans. W. Janzen, S.D. McBride & C.A. Muenchow (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 272.

¹⁴ For the various opinions of scholars, including those suggesting כדויר, see Weiss, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 2:363–364.

ball, round".¹⁵ Such is also the opinion of the modern commentators of Isaiah.¹⁶ Neither does Weiss' suggestion to infer in Amos 6:5 an original reading from the verb ד-ו-ר , understood as "sat permanently",¹⁷ stand scrutiny.¹⁸

I propose that the translator of the LXX might in fact have translated in this verse a Hebrew form from his *Vorlage* that was derived from the root ד-מ-ע , perhaps the participle מד(ו)ע , which he rendered by a form from the equivalent Greek verb ἵσταναι . Admittedly, this proposal is given by Wolff as a possible supporting argument for the originality of כדויד in the verse.¹⁹ However, Wolff, who rejects its originality, does not offer any explanation or reason for this difference between the two versions.

The problem of relating the MT form דויד to the form עמד is that, *prima facie*, the consonants seem too different for the former to be corrupted to the latter. However, this difficulty can be greatly diminished when one considers the possibility of letter interchange in the ancient Hebrew script. It is, therefore, my suggestion that the form ἕστῶτα in the LXX to Amos 6:5 is a rendering of a Hebrew

¹⁵ See BDB, 189; HALOT, 217; M.Z. Kaddari, *A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006), 491 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶ See e.g. S.D. Luzzatto, *Il Profeta Isaia* (Padova: Antonio Bianchi, 1855), 263–333 (Hebrew section); H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, trans. T.H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 65; J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (rev. ed.; WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 448. See also J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 336.

¹⁷ Weiss, *Amos* (above, n. 2), 2:363.

¹⁸ ד-ו-ר occurs twice in the Biblical Hebrew (Ezek 24:5; Ps 84:11) and only once with the meaning of "dwelling" (Ps 84:11). The equivalent Aramaic verb occurs 7 times, all in the book of Daniel (2:38; 3:31; 4:9,18,32 [x2]; 6:26). None of these occurrences has the meaning of "dwelling securely, permanently" as suggested by Weiss.

¹⁹ Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (above, n. 13), 272–273. See discussion above.

Vorlage מ(ו)ע, which resulted from a combination of two textual interchanges in the ancient Hebrew script from the form דויד: an interchange of ν/τ in the first letter and of $\mu/(\iota)$ ²⁰ in the middle one.

II

The existence of textual variants caused by a graphic interchange between two or more letters has been acknowledged for many years, almost from the very beginning of the practice of textual criticism of the Bible. This possibility of variant readings resulting from the exchange of certain letters with other similar looking letters, appears in the basic textbooks and comprehensive studies of this field,²¹ and therefore needs not be further elaborated here.

Within this field, some attention has been given to cases in which a textual interchange between letters is highly unlikely in the square script, but much more possible in the Paleo-Hebrew script. This issue has been raised by Samuel D. Luzzatto in his commentary on Isa 11:15,²² Ezek 3:12, 5:2 and 9:4²³ and has been discussed by others, such as Felix Perles.²⁴ Two examples of this phenomenon have been discussed at length by Shemaryahu Talmon: the interchanges between

²⁰ For the interchange of either ν/μ or $\mu/(\iota)$ see below, n. 30.

²¹ See e.g. F. Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Theodor Ackermann, 1895), 50–61; idem, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments: Neue Folge* (Leipzig: Gustav Engel, 1922), 28–39; F. Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1920), 103–133; J. Kennedy, *An Aid to the Textual Amendment of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 12–121; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 243–252.

²² Luzzatto, *Isaia* (above, n. 16), ad loc.

²³ S.D. Luzzatto, *Commentary on Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Proverbs and Job* (Lemberg: Menckes, 1876; reprinted: Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), ad loc. (in Hebrew).

²⁴ Perles, *Analekten* (above, n. 21), 50–53. See further below.

א/ת and י/ז.²⁵ There are also some pairs of letters that resemble each other in both scripts,²⁶ yet as the square script is later and was the prevalent script for the majority of the period of the transmission of the Bible, and is the script in all but a few of the Hebrew textual witnesses of the Hebrew Bible in our possession today,²⁷ the square script is considered to be the default. Therefore, evidence of an interchange of letters that are only interchangeable within the scope of the Paleo-Hebrew script is vital in proving that an interchange in the Paleo-Hebrew script took place involving these sets of ‘doubly-interchangeable’ letters. One should note that evidence from the Judean Desert scrolls²⁸ proves that this script was still in use²⁹ as late as the second or first centuries BCE.

²⁵ For discussion and examples see S. Talmon, “The Ancient Hebrew Alphabet and Biblical Text Criticism”, in P. Casetti, O. Keel & A. Schenker (eds.), *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 497–530; idem, “The Ancient Hebrew Alphabet and Biblical Text Criticism”, in A. Caquot, S. Légasse & M. Tardieu (eds.), *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux on l’honneur de M. Mathias Delcor* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1985), 387–402. For an updated and combined version of these two articles see S. Talmon, *Text and Canon of the Hebrew Bible: Collected Studies* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 125–170.

²⁶ For examples see e.g. Perles, *Analekten: Neue Folge* (above, n. 21), 35–38.

²⁷ The Samaritan Pentateuch and the few biblical scrolls from the Judean Desert written in the Paleo-Hebrew script are the main examples of this minor group.

²⁸ Eleven biblical scrolls written in the Paleo-Hebrew script have been found in Qumran. See the “Categorized List of the ‘Biblical Texts’” in E. Tov (ed.), *The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series* (DJD 39; Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 165–183.

²⁹ Whether because the ‘new’ square script had not yet completely taken over or in order to maintain a sense of antiquity in the transmission of Scripture. For a thorough discussion and some texts written in this Hebrew script from as late as the first centuries CE (mostly coins and seal impressions), see J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1987), 112–124.

We come now to the subject of the interchange between these two sets of letters: ם/ו and ץ/ד. Although ו and ם are quite distinguishable in the square Hebrew script, when observing their Paleo-Hebrew form, it is possible to imagine that these two letters, both having a hook-like form, were interchangeable (see *fig. 1*, below).³⁰ While some examples for ם/ו interchanges are offered by Kennedy, the only one I find fully convincing is חצים, in 2 Sam 22:15 vs. חציו, in its parallel in Ps 18:15.³¹ To this example we may add another example from parallel texts within the MT: אלישוע (1 Chr 14:5) vs. אלישמע (1 Chr 3:6).



Fig. 1
The letters ם (left) and ו (right) in Paleo-Hebrew script
(From the Siloam Inscription)

The interchange of ץ/ד is even less documented in the scholarly literature. In fact, a short discussion by Kennedy seems to be the only reference to this possibility.³² Kennedy offers several examples, the

³⁰ Kennedy, *Aid* (above, n. 21), 68, mentions their similarity in the “Pheonician” (sic!) and the Egyptian-Aramaic alphabets. However, he does not define these categories. The only explanation given is by a synoptic table of the alphabet attached to the inner cover of his book. The “Phoenician” section of this table includes a variety of sources of scripts, ranging from the Mesha Stele and the Siloam Inscription (written in Paleo-Hebrew) to scripts from Sidon and other actual Phoenician locations. One should also note that as two labial consonants, the ם/ו interchange might be assisted by phonetic similarities.

³¹ Both references brought incorrectly; notice correct references here. The final ו in the form חציו in Ps 18:15 may have been influenced by the following (יפיצם)ו. The resulting additional pronoun (3rd person singular) is not reflected in the LXX.

³² Kennedy, *Aid* (above, n. 21), 57–58.

most convincing of which are 1 Sam 14:9, where MT has עד הגיענו, while LXX reads εἰς ἃν ἀπαγγείλωμεν, reflecting עד הגידנו, and Job 28:13 with MT's עֶרְכָּה, "her value", translated by the LXX as ὁδὸν αὐτῆς, "her way", reflecting the Hebrew דרכה. Kennedy explains the provenance of this interchange not in a similarity in the Paleo-Hebrew script, but in the Palmyrene and Egyptian Aramaic ones. This is not surprising, considering their dissimilarities both in pronunciation and in their shape in the square script.

Here too Kennedy's examples may be supplemented with an additional instance:

MT 2 Sam 5:9	(וישב דוד במצדה ויקרא לה עיר דוד) ויבן דוד סביב מן המלוא
4QSam ^a	ויבנה עיר [סביב מן] המלוא
1 Chr 11:8	ויבן העיר מסביב מן המלוא ³³

The sentence and its context allow for both readings, with David as the subject (mentioned in the MT and implied in 4QSam^a and Chronicles) and the city as the direct object (mentioned in 4QSam^a and Chronicles, but only implied in the MT). It is possible that the two readings דוד and עיר were created, in accordance with the context, by the interchange of ד/ע in the first letter, in addition to two other common interchanges of י/ו and ר/ד in the second and third letters, respectively.³⁴

³³ P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 136, credits this difference between 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles to "graphic confusion" yet does not explain its nature. See also R. Braun, *1 Chronicles* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1986), 154; A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1989), 80, 85.

³⁴ These two interchanges are both very commonplace, as these two sets of letters are liable to interchange both in the square and the Paleo-Hebrew scripts. See E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem:

It is my contention that since these two letters, ט and ץ, differ greatly in the square script and the phonemes they represent differ in pronunciation, one must turn elsewhere for an explanation, to a field where a similarity can be found. Such a field is the Paleo-Hebrew Script. The Paleo-Hebrew letter ץ is shaped like a circle and the ט like a triangle, usually with a small stem. Although the circle and the triangle are two distinct geometric shapes, differentiated in most paleographic finds, there are some cases where the ט's stem is hardly visible and its triangular shape is somewhat round, making the ט appear quite like an ץ. For example, in the Shiloah (Siloam) Inscription (see e.g. the word בעוד of line 1 in *fig. 2*) and Lachish letter 4 (see עבדך of line 3 in *fig. 3*) a similar looking ט and ץ appear even in one and the same word.³⁵



Fig. 2
Detail from the Siloam Inscription
The word בעוד (line 1)



Fig. 3
Detail from Lachish Letter 4
The word עבדך (line 3)

The evidence brought above shows that both graphic interchanges of מ/ו and ץ/ט are possible and moreover, are attested in one and the same stage of Hebrew script. We can, therefore, imagine a text of Amos 6:5 written in the Paleo-Hebrew script in which the letters of the

Simor, 1997), 163. This example, as in the case under discussion in Amos 6:5b, involves a multiple-letter interchange. Although less probable and more difficult to prove, such complex variants are attested; see e.g. Tov, *TCHB* (above, n. 21), 255–256.

³⁵ For both texts, see S. Ahituv, *Echoes From the Past* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 19–25, 69–76 (respectively).

proper name $\text{דוד}(\text{י})$ ³⁶ had interchanged³⁷ and were read as עמד , thus enabling its LXX rendition as $\epsilon\sigma\tau\tilde{\omega}\tau\alpha$.

³⁶ The *plene* spelling of David's name is a Late Biblical Hebrew phenomenon, and could possibly be a result of a later stage of transmission than the creation of the variant reflected in the LXX. However, it seems to me also possible that either in this later script, or in the Paleo-Hebrew one, not only ד , but also the two letters י written close to each other, could be read as a ligature for the letter ד ; see e.g. the examples for י / ד interchanges adduced by Delitzsch, *Lese- und Schreibfehler* (above, n. 21), 120–121.

³⁷ Whether in textual reality or only in the scribe's vision and mind, thus creating what Tov designated as a "pseudo-variant"; see Tov, *Septuagint* (above, n. 34), 162.

עמוס ו 5: מקרה אפשרי של חילוף אותיות בכתב העברי הקדום

שירה ג' גולני

הצלע השנייה של עמוס ו 5, "כדויד חשבו להם כלי שיר", זכתה לתשומת לב במחקר ממגוון היבטים וביניהם זיקת נוסח המסורה (נה"מ) של הכתוב לתרגומו היווני. תרגום השבעים (תה"ש) לפסוק מציג תמונה שונה מזו שבנה"מ. ניתן להסביר את ההבדלים בין השניים בתהליכים טקסטואליים במסירת הנוסח העברי. המאמר מתמקד במילה הראשונה בצלע, "(כ)דויד", שתרגומה היווני משקף את השורש ע-מ-ד, ומציע כי היא נשתבשה בעת מסירת הטקסט העברי לפני תרגומו ליוונית. הפתרון להיווצרות שיבוש בין הצורה העברית לזו המשתקפת מן היוונית במקרה זה נמצא בחילופי אותיות דומות בכתב העברי הקדום (בעוד שאינו סביר במסירה בכתב העברי המרובע). הדיון בעמוס ו 5 תורם אפוא דוגמה חדשה לתופעה – המוכרת במחקר – של חילוף אותיות בכתב דעץ.