The lexicography of the OT has been considerably enriched by L. Köpf's recent contributions of Arabic etymologies and parallels that shed new light on the actual meaning of many Biblical passages 1). In addition, he has set up certain guiding principles that allow for further pursuit of such comparative studies while at the same guarding against certain pitfalls and fallacies likely to arise in this type of research 2).

Stimulated by Köpf's findings and, at the same time, trying to adhere to his method as closely as possible, the present author believes that he has discovered some additional etymologies part of which he presents in these lines.

1) The etymology of the root אָסָף is still doubtful. It is usually connected with arab. habba “to be excited” 3) while Thomas derived it from an onomatopoetic root אָס “to huff and puff” (“heftig atmen”) 4).

The use of the root in Ugarit proves that it originally denoted “to love” in a sexual sense 5). Thus it may be related to arab. 'ibāb which means both “(human) skin” and “(raw) leather”. In the latter sense it appears in Hos. xi 4 and certainly in Ct. iii 10; Solomon’s litter is not inlaid with “love”, but with leather, as a matter of course, which makes the emendation והלב unnecessary.

Two more Semitic roots combine the concept of “carnal knowledge” with “skin”. Heb. נש is corresponds to arab. bashar, although in Heb. it stands for “flesh” while in arab. it is used for “skin”. נש is also a term for “penis” in Lev. xv 2 f. and Ex. xvi 26 and

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2) In V.T. VI (1959) 286 ff.
3) S. Köhler-Baumgartner, Lexicon 15.
4) In Z.A.W. 57 (1939) 57 ff.
xxiii 20. Arab. bashara means "to lie with, cohabit with ...". An analogy is offered by דל which occurs only once in the OT -Job xvi 15-where it signifies "skin". Arab. jild means the same, but cf. also jald "penis" and jalada "to deflower, violate, rape".

For this reason we are justified in assuming that the root אבה has undergone a similar evolution.

2) Kopf 1) finds in in Jud. vi 5 arab. 'ahl "family". This root seems also hidden in the obscure in Hos. i 9 which is usually explained as a scribal error for אל כל האלבים. But while it is hard to see how even the clumsiest copyist could be guilty of such a slip, he may have easily misunderstood לבק עם האלבים as an abbreviation of לבק עם 'ahl means also "father, head of a family"; so the sense of the passage is obvious: Yahweh does no longer consider Himself Israel's father.

3) Obscure as is the meaning of the passage Hos. ix 10 ff., it is rather obvious that the picture of a "fig" or a "fig-tree" does not make the least sense in a context which speaks of shameful lust. In arab., however, bakāra stands for "young she-camel", which reminds us of Jer. ii 23 f. where Jeremiah compares Israel to a "she-camel" whose lust na'ah "no one can hinder". This was also the original meaning of אבה in our Hosea-passage, only that it may have been a gloss explaining cf. arab. rasisa "the beginning of a fever-or a passion" (especially of love). Perhaps the text had originally ברשותה.

In view of the context may be considered an error for לבק מכם "like lustful ones"—here referring to animals in rut.

4) In the Story of the Fall in Genesis the Tree of Life plays, at best, rather a secondary role. Thus most students assume that two different narratives are interwoven in this report. However, this theory becomes unnecessary if we connect הוהי in our passage with the root היה "to make known", rather than היה. היה is related to arab. wahā "to reveal", especially in a super-natural sense; 'al-wahy is a term not infrequently used for the Koran. טע ותדה מוב רעים. רעים is simply a gloss explaining עונת היהים in this special sense. The alleged "awkwardness of the construction" disappears as soon as we understand היהים as a noun derived from the Hif'il; היהים often means "to reveal". רעים simply stands for "everything".

1) V.T. IX 249 f.