A FORENSIC CONNOTATION OF BÖŠ

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The connotation of böš has been treated very briefly by Bultmann 1) and in more detail recently by Seebass 2). Both stress the objective aspect of the situation which gives rise to "shame" or "disgrace", hence their use of "Schande, beschämt sein, zuschanden werden", etc., rather than the feeling, "Scham(fühl)". In contrast Pedersen 3) emphasises the psychological aspects, particularly contrasting "shame" with "honour". Our comments below will support the objective aspects.

While Bultmann states that αἰσχρονω is mainly used in the context of the judgement of God, this requires major modification in that several instances of bôš, and in the Septuagint αἰσχρονω 4), are in contexts relating to "shame" that one has received at the hands of men. To be preferred is the general description given by Seebass 5):

"bôš bringt demgegenüber zum Ausdruck, dass jemand, eine Person, eine Stadt, ein Volk, ein Berufsstand o.ä., etwas galt und die ehemals angesehene Stellung und Geltung gestört ist. Jemand hat etwas auf eine Macht hin, sie sei eine andere Person, ein Staat oder ein Gott, riskiert und sich damit hervorgewagt und wird nun in diesem Sich-Hervorwagen getroffen, so dass er ins Gegenteil, in Schande, gerät und sich schämen muss."

Both Bultmann and Seebass list words with which bôš and αἰσχρονω are commonly associated, although they do not discuss further the semantic field. What is overlooked by them is the common usage in

1) R. Bultmann, "αἰσχρονω", TWNT 1 (1933), pp. 188-90. Pp. 188 f. discusses LXX linguistic usage, in which bôš is referred to.
3) J. Pedersen, Israel I-II (London, 1926), pp. 239-44.
4) He does not discuss ways in which the LXX context of instances of αἰσχρονω may suggest that the translators' understandings (taking account of possible variation between translators) differed from that of the Hebrew.
5) op. cit., col. 571.

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forensic settings. It is true that Bultmann does refer to the judgement of God, but he does not develop this. More explicitly Seebass refers to 13 occasions in Psalms "in der Bitte eines Klagegedichtes (z.B. 'lass mich nicht . . .')" in which he elaborates the connotation:

"Wie es bei einer Bitte vor dem König darauf ankommt, dass die Loyalität des vielleicht unbedeutenden Bittstellers nicht beschämmt wird, sondern Anerkennung findet und damit Gehör für seine Sache schafft." 6).

This can be developed further by observing the particular settings. Generally the context is a cry for deliverance from enemies who are illtreating the suppliant. Frequently these enemies are saying that his God has forsaken him or are otherwise speaking maliciously and slanderously. Thus the suppliant cries not only for deliverance, but also for vindication, requesting that the enemy be put to shame (e.g., Psalm xxii 6-9; xxv 2, 3, 19, 20; xxxi 2-5, 15-19; xxxv 1-28, especially 4, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 24, 26; lxx 3, 4; lxvi 10-13; lxxvi 14-17). In each of these cases we may see a possible connotation, "may my accusers be shown to be in the wrong", "let me not be shown to have been in the wrong to have trusted in you", "may my enemies admit to having been mistaken (always culpable) in their estimate of me".

A similar use is seen also in Isaiah where again bōš occurs in a forensic context, or in a context of salvation in which forensic metaphors occur. Thus in Is. xliv 9-11 the makers of idols assemble and stand (for judgement) and "are put to shame" (or "shown to have been in the wrong") 7). In xliv 24, at the conclusion of a trial speech 8), Israel is to be vindicated. That this is the sense of the verb bīḏiq here is suggested by the disputation setting. Thus, for example, Schoors 9) comments generally, without specific exegesis: "the prophet gives to God's salvific acts a forensic overtone. What takes place now is like a great legal contest in which nations and gods are involved." We here differ from most modern exegetes who translate "triumph" 10), "find salvation" 11); but compare Bonnard,