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HIPHIL FORMS OF QWR IN JEREMIAH VI 7

This note will argue that the most appropriate interpretation of the two related verbs in Jer. vi 7, ha-qir and heqera, is one which is based upon the qwr root and suggests the abundant flow of water. The Hebrew text refers to the wickedness of Jerusalem in a simile:

kehaqir bwrl memeha
ken heqerâ ra-cdtdh

It is generally assumed that, despite two different forms, the parallelism of the lines requires both to be understood as forms of the same Hebrew root. W. Rudolph identified the root as qzvr. However, more recent studies have preferred the interpretation of the two verbs as hiphils of qrr "keep cool". This is understood as the preservation or production of fresh water. A preference for the root qrr rather than qwr, seems to be based upon a similar interpretation in the LXX and Vulgate and upon the assumption that qwr refers only to the act of digging and is not associated with water. As the context concerns the production of water, the qrr root is preferred. The following objections may be raised to this interpretation:

(1) qwr occurs elsewhere only in the qal stem and only in the parallel passages of 2 Kings xix 24 and Isa. xxxvii 25. The following words are attributed to Sennacherib:

 yanî qarti wršâltî mayîm zârîm7 I dug and I drank strange waters.

The qwr root is clearly associated with waters. Indeed, unlike cognates such as krh and hpr, which both regularly take objects to

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specify what is created by the digging, e.g. a well or a pit, qwr does not seem to require such an object. Instead, it indicates mayim zārim as its object. Therefore, the translation "dig", which by itself makes no reference to the goal of obtaining water, is inadequate. The emphasis is on the water which is sought rather than the process by which it is obtained. Thus a translation such as "tap" might be more appropriate. In any case, the association of qwr with water is demonstrated.

(2) Ugaritic preserves the cognate qr, which functions as a substantive. In word pairs, it is associated with my, "water". It appears in contexts which describe a source of water. Like the Hebrew māgōr, qr suggests a well, a pool, or a spring. In the Keret epic (KTU 1.16 [CTA 16] i 27) it occurs in the construction qr 'nk as a description of weeping, perhaps "the well of your eyes" or "the fountain of your eyes". It has been more specifically identified as a carstic source, a fountain which "bubbles" up. Thus nominal forms of the qwr root in both Ugaritic and Hebrew are associated with water.

(3) On the other hand, the qrr root has no other attestations as a verb in Biblical Hebrew. In nominal forms, such as the adjective qar and the noun qārā, it is often not associated with water but with a variety of objects, such as rūāh "spirit" (Prov. xvii 27), yôm "day" (Nah. iii 17), and mezārim "winds" (Job xxxvii 9).

(4) The LXX and the Vulgate seem to follow the "cold" interpretation with the verb ἐρέω "make cool, refresh", and the expression frigidam facit/fecit "makes/made cold". However, the Peshitta translates with the verb knēš, "collect, gather", and Targum Jonathan uses mqyym "guarantees" and ḥwerykow ṭąqyymow "continue and are established". Thus the Aramaic versions suggest a tradition of interpretation which recognized the root qwr.

Therefore, it is preferable to identify the hiphil verb forms in Jer. vi 7 with the root qwr. The hiphil force may be understood as allowing the objects, here the water and the evil of Jerusalem, to participate in the action. Thus the water and the evil are made available, i.e. they flow forth from their source. The context of Jer. vi requires an increase of evil to the point of God's action in judgement. The verb may be translated as overflowing or even bursting forth with water and, in the parallel metaphor, with evil. The translation of the simile should be: