BW²-YS² ("TO GO OUT AND TO COME IN")
AS A MILITARY TERM

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In honour of Dr C. J. Labuschagne on the occasion of his retirement as Professor of Old Testament at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

1. For many years now there has been a discussion about the meaning of the word-pair bw²-ys² in 1 Kgs iii 7: l? 'd¢ ÿ wb². O. Eissfeldt (in A. Bertholet [ed.], Die Heilige Schrift des AT 1 [4th edn, Tübingen, 1922], p. 500) translates "und weiss nicht aus noch ein", and is followed in this sense by E. Würthwein (Das erste Buch der Könige [Göttingen, 1977], p. 30); others render 1 Kgs iii 7b by "je ne sais pas agir en chef" (R. de Vaux, Les Livres des Rois [Paris, 1949] p. 34); "I know not how to go out or to come in" (J. Gray, I & II Kings [London, 1972²], p. 122); "Ich weiss nicht aus- und einzugehen" in the sense of "nicht alltäglichen Geschäfte bewältigen können" (M. Noth, Könige I [Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968], pp. 42, 51); "und verstehe nicht aus- und ein zu ziehen" in the sense of "to rule a people" (M. Rehm, Das erste Buch der Könige [Würzburg, 1979], pp. 41, 45).

J.G. Plöger, Literarkritischen, formgeschichtliche und stilkritische Untersuchungen zum Deuteronomium (Bonn, 1967), however, believes that the words used here belong to the category of military (and political) language (p. 180). He does so partly on the basis of the story in 1 Kgs iii 5-15 and 2 Chron. i 10, and the subsequent passage about armaments in 2 Chron. i 14-17. Taking this view, he goes against P. Boccaccio, "I Termini contrari come espressioni della totalità in ebraico (I)", Biblica 33 (1952), pp. 173-90, who finds here the meaning "to rule the people" (pp. 179, 183). Plöger does not give a translation of his own for the word-pair bw²-ys², either in 1 Kgs iii 7b or in the other places where these words (indicated by him) are used as military terms. This is a pity
because, by representing this word-pair only as "to go our and to come in/to return", he causes it to lose in content and meaning.

2. It is certainly possible to find a more satisfactory translation for the word-pair bureau, in 1 Kgs iii 7 and related texts. We begin with the verses where the word-pair occurs in military and political contexts, as they are listed by Plöger, pp. 178-81. Boccaccio, pp. 180-4, presents almost the same texts, but adds a sub-division in four categories: literal meaning; general meaning implying "contact"; expression of deeds advantageous to the people; and expression of the total of the public activities of one person. The following are the relevant verses: Plöger: Num. xxvii 17 (bis), 21; Josh. xiv 11; 1 Sam. xviii 13, 16; 1 Sam. xxix 6; 2 Sam. v 2; 1 Kgs iii 7; 2 Chron. i 10; 1 Kgs xv 17 // 2 Chron. xvi 1. Boccaccio adds Deut. xxviii 6, 19; xxxi 2; 2 Sam. iii 25; 2 Kgs xi 8 // 2 Chron. xxiii 7; 2 Kgs xix 27 = Isa. xxxvii 28; Jer. xxxvii 4; Ps. cxxi 8. We add Josh. vi 1.

The first conclusion to be drawn from this summing up is that neither the use of the verbs in the Qal of Hifil, nor a combination of the verbs with pny has any consequence for their meaning (against Boccaccio, p. 183). The meaning "to go to war" of the verb to, in a military sense, has already been accepted for a long time (see THAT I, p. 757). In its combination with bureau this meaning is worked out in a positive sense. The meaning of the word-pair leans towards "being the commander", "to lead the army"; even in the still more positive sense of "leading the army successfully" or "going to war (successfully) as a commander" (see A. van der Lingen, "I Koningen 3:4-15", Woord in Beweging I [Kampen, 1984], p. 263). This refinement of the meaning of the word-pair can be illustrated by the story of David's rise to power:

1 Sam. xviii 5: "David went to war" (to) and "was prosperous"

1 This article deals only with the specifically military-political sense, though some related verses will be dealt with in § 4.

2 The sequence of the word-pair has been reversed in Deut. xxviii 6, 19; 2 Chron. xxiii 7; Jer. xxxvii 4.

3 1QIsa here has qwmkh sblkh wiys kh wbwkh with word-pairs. In our view, the meaning suggested in the present article so faded in the centuries before 1QIsa was written that qwmkh was added in order to obtain the opposition between the two word-pairs. A contrary view is advanced by Boccaccio, p. 184, n. 2, who postulates haplography and wishes to correct the MT by adding qmk. He is followed by H. Wildberger, Jesaja 3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982), p. 1419. The reading of 1QIsa has no implication for the MT of Isa. xxxviii 28.