The root *nwp* in the polel form appears in the Hebrew Bible only once: "ynwpp ("will wave", Isa. x 32). In the parallel passage of the Isaiah A scroll from Qumran, the verb is in the qal form: "ynwp. The question is which of the two is preferable? And how may the determining of the original form contribute to the understanding of the poem in vss 28-32? The usual answer is that, since the root is not found in the Hebrew Bible in the qal formation, the reason for the change may be a scribal omission of the *p*. But there may be another explanation for the difference between the two versions. The author of the poem may have deliberately used a form which would connect, by word-play, the meaning of the place name *nb* with a word that had a similar sounding, i.e. *ynwp*. Among the Arad inscriptions from the 6th century BCE an ostracon was found in which the word *wbbgydm* was employed for *wbrqydm* ("put in somebody's charge", lines 14-15) and *bnbškm* for *bnpškm* (literally: "By your soul", a form of solemn warning, line 18). This means that in the 6th century BCE, at least in the kingdom of Judah, a *p* was sometimes pronounced in such a way that it sounded like a *b*. The phenomenon is known already in several earlier North-West Semitic inscriptions, where the word *nbš* was regarded as a phonetic alternative for *nps*.

The change from *b* to *p* and vice versa occurs in few places in the Bible: "šbyt ("tribes of") in 2 Sam. vii 7 is parallel to "şbty ("judges of") in 1 Chr. xvii 6. It is obvious also from the LXX, "ἀρχηντας των κράτων, in 1 Chr xxviii 1, "the officers of the judges", "şry hšwptym for the M.T. şry hšhtym, "the officers of the tribes", that in the M.T. and in the Hebrew text from which the LXX was translated, *p* and *b* sounded alike.

Three explanations may account for this textual phenomenon: (a) a West Semitic phonetic change; (b) a particular dialect of Judah; (c) the use of the stops *b* and *p* with the vowel /o/ in a closed syllable yields, in certain cases, a sound variant of the same phoneme. Any of the explanations will account for the
phenomenon but, nevertheless, they are hardly adequate for the passage at hand.

Many of the oracles which include toponyms, employ word-play in connection with the names mentioned in the oracle. \textit{wbtqw} \textit{tq\textasciitilde w shpr} ("in Tekoa blow a shofar", Jer. vi 1) is a typical example.\footnote{1} This also obtains in our text, in which there are at least two clear cases of word-play: \textit{\textasciitilde brw mcbrh} "They cross over the pass" (v. 29); and \textit{\textasciitilde nyyh \textasciitilde ntwt} "Answer her, Anathoth" (v. 30).\footnote{2}

It is not impossible that the author of Isa. x 28-32 had in mind the same intention. The stich in verse 32 is the main point of the poem, since waving a hand towards an object had the symbolic signification of a threat.\footnote{3} Coming to the place-name \textit{nb} and looking for a word with which to compare it, he chose the verb form \textit{ynwp} whose \textit{p} would sound like \textit{b} in contemporary speech.\footnote{4} Since the whole poem is expressed within a setting of messengers' everyday, spoken language,\footnote{5} the sound shift fits this setting well. Thus, apparently, the listener heard this stich as: \textit{\textasciitilde wdh hywm bnp\* l\textasciitilde md ynw}\textit{p ydw l hr byl (ht)-sywn or nb and ynw}\textit{b*}.\footnote{6}

There still remains the question why the author did not write down the consonant he wished us to hear, as it is written in the Arad letter? Perhaps here lies the difference between an educated author like the biblical writer and a soldier from Arad, who wrote down what he heard without thinking too much about linguistic issues.

If the above description is correct, we may assume that there were more cases of interchange of the stops \textit{b} and \textit{p}, these interchanges had not been recorded because the writing was done by skilled scribes (with the exception of the cases mentioned above). If the suggestion is accepted, than it is reasonable to assume that \textit{ynwp} was the original form, and \textit{ynwpp} is secondary and due to a later scribal misunderstanding of the author’s intention.

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\footnote{2}{Y. Aharoni, "Three Hebrew ostraca from Arad", \textit{BASOR} 197 (1970), pp. 16-28; \textit{Arad Inscriptions} (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1975), letter no. 24, p. 48.}