

STUDIA ORIENTALIA
EDITED BY THE FINNISH ORIENTAL SOCIETY
55:11

ana urdūti kabāsu = כּבַּשׁ לַעֲבֹד

BY
JONAS C. GREENFIELD

HELSINKI 1984

JONAS C. GREENFIELD (Jerusalem)

ana urdūti kabāsu = כבש לעבד*

In the collection of papyri that has become known as the Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri (= *BMAP*)¹ papyrus number eight does not belong in an apparent manner to the archive that centers about Ananiah ben Azariah and his family. It became part of this archive, it would seem, since Zakkur bar Meshullam who played an important role in *BMAP* 8 was also involved in the affairs of the family of Ananiah ben Azariah, especially in those of Ananiah's daughter Yehoyishma. In *BMAP* 8 Uriah bar Mahseiah declared that he had adopted Yedoniah bar Taḥwa, a serving lad that Zakkur had given him, and for whom a (conveyance) document — now lost — had been written. Uriah states, "I shall not be able, I Uriah, son or daughter of mine, brother or sister of mine, or (any) man of mine to subjugate him as a slave." The phrase used for "subjugate as a slave" is *kbš^cbd*.² He further stated that neither he nor any one else acting in his name was empowered to mark Yedoniah as a slave (*l' šlyṭn lṁšnth*) or to make him a slave (*lṁ^cbdh^cbd*). The formal declaration of adoption is *bry yḥwh* "he shall be my son".³ The only parallel to this situation in the Elephantine documents may be found in *BMAP* 5 in which Tapmut, wife of Ananiah bar Azariah, and her daughter Yehoyishma were manumitted by Zakkur's father Meshullam. In *BMAP* 5, 11.6-7 we read that no one will have the power *lṁšntky wlmzky mrdt ksp* "to mark you (as a slave) and to dispense of you for money". The phrase *kbš^cbd* is not found in this text.

Of interest is the fact that those who have commented on *BMAP* 8 have not noted that the same phrase as *kbš^cbd* was found in Biblical Hebrew. Perhaps Kraeling's phrasing "the verb is at home in the sphere of enslavement. Subduing of enemies for which *kbš* so often appears in the O.T. usually involved enslavement." misled them. The Hebrew version of the phrase is *kbš l^cbd* and it occurs first in Jeremiah 34:11.16.⁴ The background is simple — after the nobles and people had entered a covenant to emancipate their bondsmen and women and had actually liberated them, they changed their mind, took back their bondsmen and women and forced them into service once again *wayyikbēšūm la'ābādīm wēlišfāḥōt* "they subjected them to slavery". The prophet rebukes them for their actions.⁵

The phrase is found again in Nehemiah 5:5. In this chapter (vs. 1-4) the populace complains to Nehemiah of social inequity: in order to have grain to eat and money to pay levies and debts they must indenture their children, mortgage their fields, vineyards and houses. In v. 5 they declare (NJPS) — "Now we are as good as our brothers and our children as theirs; yet here we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery — some of our daughters are already subjected — and we are powerless, while our fields and vineyards belong to others." (*wəhinneh 'anaḥnū kōbēššim 'et bānēnū wə'et-bēnōtēnū la'ābādīm wə-yeš mibbēnōtēnū nikkāšōt*). This declaration had a strong effect on Nehemiah who censured the nobles and prefects, accused them of pressing claims on loans made to their brothers and thus selling their fellow Israelites to the nations.⁶ The nobles and prefects promised to return the property that they had taken from the people. The assembly supported Nehemiah and he put the nobles and prefects under oath to comply.

The third use of the term is found in II Chronicles 28:10 — in this chapter, vs. 5-8, we read that the Israelites fought victoriously against the Judahites in the days of Ahaz and Peqah son of Remaliah and captured a great many of them. A prophet named Oded went out to meet the army on its return to Samaria (v. 9) and rebuked the soldiers saying, "do you intend to subjugate the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem to be your slaves?" (*wə'attā bēnē-yēhūdāh wiyrūšālayim 'attem 'ōmērīm likboš la'ābādīm wəlišfāḥōt lākem*). The soldiers paid heed to his words and (v. 14) released the captivity and the booty in the presence of the officers and those congregated.⁷

It is clear from the various passages in which *kbš l'abd* occurs that the phrase is used of a person in a disadvantaged position — that they either have been indentured (Jeremiah, Nehemiah) or are captives. But it is the passage in Nehemiah that sheds most light on the status of those who are *nikbāššim*: they need not be retained by their owners but may be sold to others. In other words they lose whatever semblance of freedom that they may have kept while being indentured.

From the chronological point of view the earliest occurrence of this phrase may be found in a recently published Neo-Assyrian text CT 53, 128.⁸ It is a difficult text whose opening lines are very fragmentary, but the obverse ll. 5'-7' can be restored *i-su-ri [i-ba-āš-š]i LÚ ša sal al-ma-tú [a-na an-t]i-šú ik-bu-su-u-ni* "perhaps there is a man who has subjugated a widow as his slave girl" followed in ll.8'-9' [*hu-ur*]-*dī DUMU lu-u DUMU.SAL a-na ĪR^{MEŠ}-u-ti ik-bu-su-u-ni* "(or) has subjugated a posthumous son or daughter to slavery". The

phrase *ana urdūti kabāsu* would match Hebrew and Aramaic *kbš l'bd*. It may be argued that this is a perfectly good Neo-Assyrian phrase, but Neo-Assyrian uses simply *kabāsu* for "to subjugate, press into service" as was essentially noted by A. L. Oppenheim some years ago.⁹ This use of *kabāsu* may be found in ABL 537, a letter of Šamaš-bēl-ušur to Sargon: 11.7-9 ...*ṣābē ikabbusū dullu eppušū* "...they will subjugate the force so that they do the work" and then 11.12-13 *la ikabbusū dullu la eppušū* "they will not be subjugated, they will not do the work". In a phrase found in four letters of Assurbanipal we find the same phrase ...*šumma* ^{id}*harru sikra šumma nišē ammūte kubsa* "either close the canal or subjugate these people". This is from ABL 543, rev. 11-12 which then states *lizzizūni dullu lēpušū* "let them go and do the corvee work" (11.17-18).¹⁰ These examples, and others, show that *kabāsu* alone means "to press into service" while the phrase *ana urdūti kabāsu* has a West Semitic model.

One of the stumbling blocks in tracing the Aramaic influence on Neo-Assyrian is the paucity of Aramaic material in the period when Neo-Assyrian flourished. Nevertheless, one may point to words and expressions that have entered from Aramaic into Neo-Assyrian (and the reverse is indeed also true) and even formulae and modes of addressed were borrowed.¹¹ Hebrew must be brought into the picture since, as is apparent from II Kings 18:26/Isa. 36:11, Aramaic was the normal language of diplomatic communication and in all likelihood of general communication throughout the West.¹² Careful consideration of phrases found in Neo-Assyrian texts will reveal this influence. Thus the use of the phrase *šuma šakānu* as "to inscribe a name", rather than in its usual meaning "to establish fame" found on one of the Kapara inscriptions from Guzana and on the Tell Fekherye bilingual is such a sign, for the phrase is well known from West Semitic sources.¹³ Another example would be *ana bēt ramenišū epēšu* "to acquire as one's own" found in four land grants of Assurbanipal also has an Aramaic source.¹⁴ It is often the addition of a known expression that may mark its origin. Thus Kaufman noted that the unique *šulmu ina birtešunu issakanu* in Tell Halaf 106 matched Aramaic *šmw šlm bynyhm* of the Aramaic tablet AO 25.341 first published by P. Bordreuil, since the normal expression is *šulmu (ina) birtešunu*.¹⁵ The phrase *ana urdūti kabāsu* provides another example of this linguistic symbiosis.

N O T E S

* I owe a debt of thanks to Simo Parpola for discussing some of the problems dealt with in this article with me and for providing me with the correct reading of CT 53, 128.

- 1 E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic papyri* (New Haven, 1953).
- 2 The exact statement is *ykbšnhy* ^c*bd*, the scribe was not careful for the form of the verb is wrong since we would have expected *nkbšnh*, but this is not the first example at Elephantine of scribes not writing the King's Aramaic. It is therefore also quite possible that the correct idiom would be in Aramaic *kbš* ^c*bd* as in Hebrew.
- 3 For *šnt* see my remarks in H. J. Nissen & J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (XXV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Berlin, 1982), pp. 474-475; for *bry yhwš* my remarks in "Aramaic studies and the Bible" in Congress Volume, Vienna 1980 (*VTS* 32, Leiden, 1981), pp. 122-123.
- 4 As noted above (note 2), the difference between the Hebrew and Aramaic forms may not exist.
- 5 For variant views on certain aspects of this incident cf. M. Kessler, "The law of manumission in Jer. 34", *Biblische Zeitschrift*, NS 15 (1971), pp. 105-108; N. Sarna, "Zedekiah's emancipation of slaves and the sabbatical year" in *Orient and Occident, Essays presented to C. H. Gordon* (AOAT 22, 1973), pp. 143-149; N. P. Lemcke, "The manumission of slaves — the fallow year — the sabbatical year — the Jubel year", *VT* 26 (1976), pp. 38-59.
- 6 An interesting comparison can be made with the complaint of the oil-pressers to Irmulu in *KAV* 197 recently treated by J. N. Postgate, *Taxation and conscription in the Assyrian Empire* (Rome, 1974), pp. 363-367.
- 7 For ^c*zb* as "released" see my remarks in *Studies in Hebrew and Semitic languages*, ed. by G. B. Sarfatti & al. (Ramat-Gan, 1980), p. xxxvi.
- 8 This text has been dealt with recently by F. M. Fales, *Cento lettere neo-assire, traslitterazione e traduzione, commente e note* (Venezia, 1983), pp. 54-57. I owe the reading offered here to Simo Parpola.
- 9 Cf. A. L. Oppenheim, "Studies in Assyrian lexicography I", *Orientalia*, NS 11 (1942), pp. 119-133, for *kabāsu*, see pp. 131-133. Oppenheim proposed both "to submit to somebody" and "to arrest" as translations of various citations, but I think that the "to subjugate, be subjugated (to slavery or service)" fits better. The *CAD* "K" p. 9, *kabāsu* 3 d) proposes "to come in" but this does not account for the occurrence of *kabāsu* and *dullu epēšu* together which would indicate a connection between the two.
- 10 Cf. *ABL* 273:12-13; 1108:r.12-13; 1244:r.5. The verb *uzuzzu* functions very much like Aram. *qwm* as an auxiliary verb.
- 11 Cf. W. von Soden, "Aramäische Wörter in neuassyrischen und neu- und spät-babylonischen Texten. Ein Vorbericht III", *Orientalia*, NS 46 (1977), pp. 183-197. See my remarks in the article cited above note 2 and most recently F. M. Fales, "Assyro-Aramaica: Three notes", *Orientalia*, NS 53 (1984), pp. 66-71, who deals with an exchange in both directions.
- 12 See H. Tadmor, "The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western impact" in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (above n. 2), pp. 449-470, and "Treaty and oath in the Ancient Near East" in *Humanizing America's iconic book*, eds. G. M. Tucker & D. A. Knight (Chico, Calif., 1982), pp. 127-172.
- 13 Cf. J. C. Greenfield & Aaron Shaffer, "Notes on the Akkadian-Aramaic bilingual statue from Tell Fekherye", *Iraq* 45 (1983), pp. 109-116, p. 114 for this point.
- 14 J. C. Greenfield, "Iranian or Semitic?" in *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg* (Teheran-Liege, 1975), pp. 311-316, especially p. 316.

- 15 S. A. Kaufman, "An Assyro - Aramaic *egirtu ša šulmi*" in M. de Jong Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East in memory of J. J. Finkelstein* (Hamden, 1977), pp. 119-127, especially p. 123.

