

## Short Notes

In the story of Joseph's revealing himself to his brothers (Gen xlv 1), the Bible says that he could not  $\text{לִהְתָּאֲפֹק}$ . This word is typically translated: "refrain himself" (KJV), "control himself" (NIV);<sup>1</sup> thus, this verse is translated: "Then Joseph could not *refrain himself* before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me" (KJV). However, merely two chapters before this incident (xliii 31), we find the same word, in a different declension:  $\text{וַיִּתְאָפֵק}$ . Here too, KJV and NIV translate in the same manner: "refrained himself" (KJV), "controlling himself" (NIV). Nonetheless, in this context, their translation scarcely makes any sense: "And he washed his face, and went out, and *refrained himself*, and said, Set on bread" (KJV). Once he washed his face and got out, why did he have to refrain himself? The Syriac translation, found in the Peshitta, appears to address this issue. It translates, in both instances,  $\text{ܐܠܚܘܨܘܢܐ}$ , meaning "strengthen himself".<sup>2</sup> Yet again, this translation is very problematic when we come to consider the meaning of the instance found in chapter xlv.

We should therefore try to look for a different denotation, which can confront both instances and perhaps all biblical instances of the root  $\text{אפק}$ . In the KBS dictionary (v. 1, p. 80), two meanings are attested to the root  $\text{אפק}$ : 1. to pluck up courage, to venture. 2. to control oneself. The authors compare these two meanings to the Arabic  $\text{افق}$  = to surpass, to excel.

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<sup>1</sup> These English translations probably derive from the Latin Vulgate: "cohibere" which is perhaps based on the Greek translation found in the LXX:  $\text{ἀνέχεσθαι}$  or  $\text{ἐγκρατεύεσθαι}$ , See: *Origenis Hexaplorum* (ed. F. Field), Tom. I., Oxford 1875, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Ibn Janah in his Book of Roots (translated to Hebrew from Arabic by J. Ibn Tibbon), B. Z. Bacher's edition, Berlin 1896, p. 45.

However, in Lane's dictionary (p. 68), there is an additional explanation for this root: "A *side*; meaning a *lateral*, or an *outward* or *adjacent*, part or portion ...; or a *remote side*".<sup>3</sup> In modern Arabic,<sup>4</sup> we find similar meanings: افاق = distant lands, faraway countries, remote regions. افاق = البلاد the outlying portions of the country, and one who comes from a distant land is called افاقي. If so, it seems that in Arabic, a key meaning of the root has to do with *outward*. Comparable denotations should perhaps be attested to some Ugaritic texts; "m . ʔl . mbk. nhrm // qrb . ʔapq . thmtm" (KTU 1.4 IV, 21–22). The word mbk seems to be analogous to ʔapq and both appear to mean: the origin, their departure location.<sup>5</sup>

I would therefore like to propose that meaning of the root ʔpq is close to the meanings: outward, depart. Let us therefore employ this etymology in several biblical instances of the word. The word וַיִּתְאַפֵּק in Haman's departure from the Persian palace, is usually explained: "refrained himself" (KJV). However, a much better explanation for the verse in Es. v 10: "וַיֵּצֵא הַמֶּן ... וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן ... וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הַמֶּן וַיָּבֹא אֶל בֵּיתוֹ", would be that Haman got out, but when he saw Mordecai he was full of indignation against Mordecai, but then he *got out* and came home". Similarly, one should not interpret Is. lxiii 15: "הַמּוֹן מֵעֵד וְרַחֲמֵיךָ אֵלֵי הַתְּאַפֵּקוֹ", as the KJV

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<sup>3</sup> According to Lane, the meaning excel, attested to this Arabic root, is another derivative of this primary meaning: "He attained the utmost degree, [as though he reached the افق (or horizon, or furthest point of view)]". Similar phenomenon occurs in the English words: exceed, excel which bear the Latin prefix ex.

<sup>4</sup> See H. Wehr, *Arabic English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Ithaca, New York 1976, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> See S. Rin, *Alilot ha-elim : kol shirot Ugarit*, Philadelphia 1996, pp. 47, 187. Accordingly, it is possible that the Hebrew אפיקים, cf. אפיקי מים, (2 Sam xxii 16; Ezek xxxii 6; Jon i 20, iv 18; Ps xviii 16. xlii 2; Song v 12) signifies not the strength of the water's current (see: Ben-Yehuda Dictionary, pp. 347–348), but rather that they originated from somewhere.

did: "... the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?", but rather: "the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies went toward me". Comparably, *להתאפק על עלילות* [רשע] which is found in 1QH 14<sup>9</sup>, and *יתאפק עד ימוחץ* (Si 32<sup>22</sup>), should be explained similarly.

If we adopt this etymology, the two instances of *אפק* in Joseph's story will make much more sense: hence the verse in Gen. xlv, "ולא יכל יוסף", "ולא יתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו ויקרא הוציאו כל איש מעלי", would be translated: "And Joseph could not *go out*, because of all the people who were standing by him; and he cried, Get everyone out from me!". Accordingly, the verse in chapter xliii: "וירחץ פניו ויצא ויתאפק ויאמר שימו", "ולחם", should be translated: "And he washed his face, and got out and left,<sup>6</sup> and said, Set on bread!".

If we accept this suggestion, we should also consider whether the words *יפק* and *יפיק*, should not be interpreted similarly, denoting to something which comes out, which is produced. Cf. "כי מצאי <מצאי>" "אשרי אדם מצא חכמה ואדם יפיק תבונה" (Pro. iix 35); "מצא חיים ויפק רצון מיהוה". Knowing the Aramaic and Arabic root *npq*, which mean to go out, to issue, we should not rule out<sup>7</sup> that there is a Semitic root *pq* which is part of the semantic field of verbs which denote "going out" etc.

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<sup>6</sup> The word *ויצא* might be an interpretive lexical gloss (see: E. Tov, "תחיבות, גלוסות, תחיבות", In *The Bible In Light of Its Interpreters: Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume* [Hebrew], ed. S. Japhet. Jerusalem 1994, pp. 38–57), which is not uncommon in the Bible, or perhaps a tautology, cf. Gen xxxix 12 + 15.

<sup>7</sup> See: A. Zaborski, "Biconsonantal Roots and Triconsonantal Root Variation in Semitic: Solutions and Prospects", *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau*, Wiesbaden 1991, pp. 1675–1703.

