

חצר המטרה

אבנר רמו

Presbycusis is the medical name for age-related hearing loss. The loss is most marked at high frequencies. Patients having this condition often hear sibilant letters' sounds as those of the dental letters: ט (t) or ת (th) or ד (d). Therefore it is not surprising to encounter such substitutions in the Bible.

Among the sibilants, the letter צ (ts) sound is particularly difficult, and several languages have no letter for this sound (e.g. Old Phoenician, Greek, Persian, and English).

The following are examples of biblical exchanges between the letters צ (ts) and ט (t).

In the Book of Samuel we also read:

ואת-העם אשר-בה הוציא, וישם במגרה ובחרצי הברזל ובמגזרת הברזל
“And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron” (2Sam 12:31; see also 1 Ch 20:3).

Yet in the Book of Exodus we find:

ויקח מידם ויצר אתו בחרט, ויעשהו עגל מסכה;
“And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molten calf” (Ex 32:4).

It appears that חרט (kheret) is the same as חרץ (kherets).

Similarly, we read in the Book of Kings: ויצר ככרים כסף בשני חרטים - “and (he) bound two talents of silver in two bags” (2 Ki 5:23).

Yet in the Book of Samuel we find: ואת עשרת חרצי החלב האלה, תביא לשר-האלף - “And bring these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand” (1 Sam 17:18).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that חרצי החלב (kharitsei hakhalav) mean “cheeses.” Yet the comparison between these verses suggests that חרצי (kharitsei) is the same as חרטי (kharitei) - “bags of.”

In the Book of Numbers we read:

ואם ביום שמע אישה, יניא אותה והפר את-נדרה אשר עליה, ואת מבטא שפתיה אשר אסרה על-נפשה-ויהוה יסלח-לה.
“But if her husband disallow her in the day that he hears it, then he shall make void her vow which is upon her, and the clear utterance of her lips, wherewith she had bound her soul; and *YHWH* will forgive her” (Num 30:9; see also Num 30:7; Lev 5:4; and Ps 106:33).

However, four verses later we find:

ואם-הפר יפר אתם אישה, ביום שמעו-כל-מוצא שפתיה לנדריה ולאסר נפשה לא יקום:
אישה הפרם, ויהוה יסלח-לה.

“But if her husband make them null and void in the day that he hears them, then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips, whether it were her vows, or the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband had made them void; and *YHWH* will forgive her” (Num 30:13; see also: Deu 23:24; Jer 17:16; Ps 89:35).

It should be noted that all four biblical words from the root **בטא** (b,t,a) are associated with “lips” and it seems likely that the word **מבטא** (*miyta*) is the same as **מוצא** (*motsa*). This transformation could have occurred as a result of a **צ** (ts) - **ט** (t) exchange combined with the previously discussed shift of **ו** (v) - **ב** (v).

In the Book of Isaiah we read:

היתפאר הגרזן על החצב בו:

“Should the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith?” (Is 10:15).

Yet in the Book of Deuteronomy we find:

ואשר יבא את-רעהו ביער לחטב עצים, ונדחה ידו בגרזן לכרת העץ

“As when a man goes into the forest with his neighbor to hew wood, and his hand fetches a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree” (Deu 19:5).

It appears that **חטב** (*khataṽ*) is a variant of **חצב** (*khatsav*).

In the Book of Genesis we read:

וכמו השחר עלה, ויאיצו המלאכים בלוט לאמר: קום קח את-אשתך ואת-שתי בנותיך,
הנמצאת-פן-תספה,

“And when the morning arose, then the messengers hastened Lot, saying: Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters that are here; lest you be swept away” (Gen 19:15).

Yet in the Book of Samuel we find:

ולאביגיל אשת נבל, הגיד נער-אחד מהנערים לאמר: הנה שלח דוד מלאכים מהמדבר לברך
את-אדנינו, ויעט בהם.

“But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying: 'Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he flew upon them” (1 Sam 25:14).

The Greek translators wrote here: “and he turned away from.” However, as both these verses are about messengers, we may assume that **ויעט** (*vaya't*) is a variant of **ויאץ** (*vayats*) - “hastened.” If this suggestion is correct then we have here, in addition to **ע** (a') - **א** (a) exchange, a substitution of the letter **ץ** (ts) by the letter **ט** (t).

In the Book of Isaiah we read:

הלך צדקות ודבר מישרים; מאס בבצע מעשקות, נער כפיו מתמך בשחד, אטם אזנו משמע
דמים, ועצם עיניו מראות ברע.

“He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil” (Is 33:15).

The phrase: **אֵטֵם אֲזִנּוֹ** (*otem azno*) appears also in two other biblical verses (Ps 58:5; Pro 21:13), where the Greek translators wrote: “plugging (or blocking) his ear.” The other phrase that appears in this verse **עִצְמוּ עֵינָיו** (*o'tsem eynav*) appears also in Is 29:10 and it was translated by the Greeks as: “close (or shut) eyes.” The similarity in meaning and sound between **אֵטֵם** (*otem*) and **עִצְמוּ** (*o'tsem*) suggest that this is the same Hebrew word but the transformation here includes a **צ** (ts) - **ט** (t) exchange and a **ע** (a') - **א** (a) vowel letters switch. In the Book of Numbers we find the Phrase: **נֹאֵם הַגִּבּוֹר שְׂתָם הָעַיִן** “**the saying of the man whose eye is opened**” (Num 24:3, 15). However, the meaning of phrase **שְׂתָם הָעַיִן** (*shtum haa'in*) which appears only here could actually be “whose eye is shut.” If this is indeed the case then the word **שְׂתָם** (*shatom*) may have been an intermediary stage between **אֵטֵם** (*otem*) and **עִצְמוּ** (*o'tsem*).

In the Book of Deuteronomy we read:

כִּי שָׁמְרוּ אִמְרֹתְךָ, וּבְרִיתְךָ יִנְצְרוּ
“**For they have observed your word, and keep your covenant**” (Deu 33:9; see also: Pro 4:13).

Yet in the Book of Jeremiah we find:

הֲיִנְטֵר לְעוֹלָם, אִם-יִשְׁמֵר לְנֶצַח
“**Will He bear grudge for ever? Will He keep it to the end?” (Jer 3:5; see also: Cant 1:6).**

The similarity in meaning of **נִצָּר** (*natsar*) and **נָטַר** (*natar*) suggests that these are variant spelling of the same word. If true then we may consider the possibility that in biblical Hebrew the letter **צ** (ts) and **ט** (t) may substitute each other.

In the Book of Kings we read:

וַיִּצְבּוּ לָהֶם מִצְבּוֹת וְאֲשֵׁרִים עַל כָּל-גְּבֵעָה גְבֵהָ, וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רֵעֵן.
“**And they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every leafy tree” (2 Ki 17:10; see also 2 Sam 18:18).**

Yet in the Book of Hosea we find:

גִּפְן בּוֹקֵק יִשְׂרָאֵל, פְּרִי יִשׁוּה-לוֹ; כָּרֵב לִפְרִיו הִרְבָּה לְמִזְבְּחוֹת-כְּטוֹב לְאֶרֶץ, הִיטִיבוּ מִצְבּוֹת.
“**Israel was a luxuriant vine, which put forth fruit freely: as his fruit increased, he increased his altars; the more goodly his land was, the more goodly were his pillars**” (Hos 10:1).

The Greek translator wrote here: “they built steles” and it appears that he assumed that here **הִיטִיבוּ** (*haitivu*) is the same as **הִיציבו** (*haisivu*) - “they set up.” The comparison between these verses supports the Greek translator’s assumption.

In the Book of Genesis we read:

וַיִּנְחַם יְהוָה כִּי-עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ; וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים-לְבוֹ.

“And it repented *YHWH* that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart” (Gen 6:6; see also: Ps 147:3; Pro 15:13).

Yet the Psalmist wrote:

מקצה הארץ אליך אקרא-בעטף לבי;

“From the end of the earth will I call to You, when my heart faints” (Ps 61:1).

Similarly we read in the Book of Isaiah:

והמה מרו ועצבו את-רוח קדשו;

“But they rebelled, and grieved His holy spirit” (Is 63:10; see also: Is 54:6).

Yet the Psalmist wrote:

ותתעטף עלי רוחי; בתוכי ישתומם לבי.

“And my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled” (Ps 143:4; see also: Is 57:16; Ps 77:4; 102:1; 142:4).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that תתעטף (*tita'teph*) is the same as תתעצב (*tita'tsev*) - “grieved.” If this assumption is correct than we have here a צ (ts) - ט (t) exchange, in addition to a ב (v) - פ (ph) exchange.

In the Book of Genesis we read:

ותאמר רבקה אל-יצחק, קצתני בחיי מפני בנות חת;

“And Rebekah said to Isaac: I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth” (Gen 27:46).

Yet in the Book of Job we find:

נקטה נפשי בחיי;

“My soul is weary of my life” (Job 10:1).

The understanding of the translators suggests that they assumed that נקטה (*naqta*) is the same as נקצה (*naqtsa*).

In the Book of Nehemiah we read:

ויהי כאשר צללו שערי ירושלם לפני השבת

“And it came to pass that, when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath” (Neh 13:19).

Yet, ten chapters earlier we find:

ואת שער העין החזיק שלון בן-כל-חזה, שר פלך המצפה-הוא יבננו ויטללנו,

“And the fountain gate repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of the district of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it” (Neh 3:15).

It therefore appears likely that the Hebrew and Aramaic טלל (*talal*) is the equivalent of the Hebrew צלל (*tsalal*).

In the Bible we also find examples of exchanges between the letters צ (ts) and ד (d).

The Psalmist wrote about: **הדרת-קדש** - “The beauty of holiness” (Ps 29:2; see also: 91:9; 1 Ch 16:29; 2 Ch 20:21).

Yet in the Septuagint this term appears as: “Holy courts” which suggests that the translators assumed that **הדרת** (*haderot*) is misspelled **חצרת** (*khatserot*) - “courts.”

However, exchanges between **צ** (ts) and **ד** (d) can also be found within the Hebrew biblical text. Here are few examples:

In the Book of Judges we read:

ויעש לו אהוד חרב ולה שני פיות-גמד ארכה; ויחגר אותה מתחת למדיו, על ירך ימינו.
“And Ehud made him a sword which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he girded it under his raiment upon his right thigh” (Jud 3:16).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that the Hapax legomenon **גמד** (*gomed*) means “a cubit.” The Greek translator wrote here: “a span”, a measure that relates to the palm of the hand. Another measure that relates to this body-part is **קמץ** (*qomets*) - “a handful” (Lev 2:2; 5:12; 6:8; Num 5:26). However, if here in addition to a **צ** (ts) - **ד** (d) exchange, an exchange between the velars **ג** (g) - **ק** (q), also occurred, then we may assume that **גמד** (*gomed*) is the same as **קמץ** (*qomets*).

The Psalmist also wrote:

שלח ידיך ממרום: פצני והצילני ממים רבים; מיד בני נכר.
“Stretch forth Your hands from on high; rescue me, and deliver me out of many waters, out of the hand of strangers” (Ps 144:7).

הנותן תשועה, למלכים: הפוצה את-דוד עבדו--מחרב רעה.
פצני והצילני מיד בני-נכר:
“Who gives salvation to kings, who rescue David His servant from the hurtful sword. Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of strangers” (Ps 144:10-11).

It is highly likely that a scribe who copied the Book of Psalms wrote here **פוצה** (*potseh*) instead of **פודה** (*podeh*) - “redeems” (e.g. Ps34:23).

The Psalmist also wrote: **בצדקתך תצילני ותפלטני; הטה-אלי אזנך, והושיעני** - “Deliver me in Your righteousness, and rescue me; incline Your ear to me, and save me” (Ps 71:2). The association between “Deliver me” and “save me” is found also in verses Ps 51:16 and Ps 59:3.

Yet we also find in the Book of Psalms: **אלהים בשמך הושיעני; ובגבורתך תדינני** - “O God, save me by Your name, and right me by Your might” (Ps 54:3).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that **תדינני** (*thedineni*) is a **ל** (l) - **נ** (n) letter-substitution and a **צ** (ts) - **ד** (d) erroneous letter-exchange of **תצילני** (*thatsileni*) - “save me.”

In the Book of Deuteronomy we read:

ולאשר אמר, ברוך מבנים אשר; יהי רצוי אחיו וטבל בשמן רגלו.
ברזל ונחשת מנעלך; וכימיד דבאך.

“And of Asher he said: Blessed be Asher above sons; let him be the favored of his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

Iron and brass shall be your bars; and as your days, so shall your strength be” (Deu 33:24-25).

Yet in the Book of Job we find:

אם-ימות גבר, היחיה: כל-ימי צבאי איחל-עד-בוא חליפתי.

“If a man dies, may he live again? All the days of my service would I wait, till my relief should come” (Job 14:14).

The comparison between these verses suggests that צבאי (*tsvai*) is the same as the Hapax legomenon דבאי (*dvai*). If the understanding of the Greek (and English) translators is correct then its meaning is: “my strength.” If this interpretation is correct than we have here a צ (d) - ז (ts) letter exchange.

In the Book of Genesis we read: נע ונד תהיה בארץ - “A fugitive and a wanderer shall you be in the earth” (Gen 4:12; see also: Gen 4:14).

Yet in the Book of Lamentations we find: “Yea, they fled away and wandered; [men] said among the nations: They shall no more sojourn here” (Thr 4:15).

The comparison between these verses and the understanding of the English (but not the Greek) translator suggest that the Hapax legomenon: נצו (*natsu*) is a misspelled נדו (*nadu*) - “are wondering.”

In the Book of Nehemiah we read:

לכה ונועדה יחדו

“Come, let us meet together” (Neh 6:2; see also: Am 3:3; Ps 48:5).

Yet five verses later we find:

ועתה לכה ונועצה יחדו.

“Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together” (Neh 6:7; see also: Ps 71:10; 83:6).

The content of these verses suggest that at least some of the נועצה (*nivatsa*) words should be comprehended as נועדה (*nivada*) meaning “let us meet.”

In the Book of Samuel we read that for bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem:

ויסף עוד דוד את-כל-בחור בישראל, שלשים אלף.

“And David again gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand” (2 Sam 6:1).

Yet when the Chronicler repeats this tale he writes:

ויועץ דויד, עם-שרי האלפים והמאות-לכל-נגיד.

“And David consulted with the captains of thousands and of hundreds, even with every leader” (1 Ch 13:1; see also 2 Ki 6:8; 2 Ch 30:2).

The comparison between these verses suggests that it is more likely that on this occasion David did not consult (**ויועץ** - *vaivaets*) but just (**ויועד** - *vivaed*) - “met” with his people. It appears that the Chronicler had written **ויועץ** (*vaivaets*) instead of **ויועד** (*vivaed*) in several more verses (2 Ch 20:21; 25:17; 30:2, 23).

In the Book of Exodus we read:

ושרץ היאר צפרדעים, ועלו ובאו בביתך, ובחדר משכבך ועל-מטתך; ובבית עבדיך ובעמך, ובתנור וּבמשארותיך.

“And the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into your house, and into your bed-chamber, and upon your bed, and into the house of your servants, and upon your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading-troughs” (Ex 7:28).

Yet in the next chapter we read: **“and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields”** (Ex 8:9).

It is rather odd that we are told that the frogs came into the houses and into the rooms, yet they were later removed from the houses and the courts. It is therefore suggested that here **חצרת** (*khatseroth*) - “courts” had replaced **חדרת** (*khaderoth*) - “rooms.”

The Psalmist wrote: **ישב במארב חצרים-במסתרים יהרג נקי** - **“He sits in the ambush in courts; in secret places does he slay the innocent”** (Ps 10:8).

Yet in the Book of Judges we read: **“And the liers-in-wait were sitting in the [inner] chamber”** (Jud 16:12; see also: Jud 16:9).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that here **בחדר** (*bakheder*) is a **צ** (ts) - **ד** (d) exchange error of **בחצר** (*bakhatser*) - “in the court.”

The Chronicler wrote:

ויתן דויד לשלמה בנו את-תבנית האולם ואת-בתיו וגנזכיו ועליתיו וחדרו הפנימים
“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch [of the temple], and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof” (1 Ch 28:11).

Yet in the Book of Kings we find:

וּחצר הגדולה סביב, שלשה טורים גזית, וטור, כרתת ארזים; ולחצר בית-יהוה הפנימית, ולאום הבית.

“And the great court round about had three rows of hewn stone, and a row of cedar beams, [like as] the inner court of the house of YHWH, and the court of the porch of the house” (1 Ki 7:12; see also: Eze 8:16; 10:3; 40:19, 23, 27, 28, 32, 44; 42:3; 43:5; 44:17, 21, 27; 45:19; 46:1; Est 4:11; 5:1).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that **ולחצר בית-יהוה הפנימית** (*velakhatser beith-YHWH hapenimith*) is a **ד** (d) - **צ** (ts) exchange error of: **ולחדר בית-יהוה הפנימית** (*velekheder beith-YHWH hapenimith*) - “and to the inner room of the house of YHWH.”

In the Book of Kings we read: **ותבא בת-שבע אל-המלך החדרה** - “And Bath-sheba went to the king into the chamber” (1 Ki 1:15).

Yet in the Book of Jeremiah we find:

ויבאו אל-המלך חצרה, ואת-המגלה הפקדו בלשכת אלישמע הספר; ויגידו באזני המלך את כל-הדברים.

וישלח המלך את-יהודי לקחת את-המגלה, ויקחה מלשכת אלישמע הספר; ויקראה יהודי באזני המלך, ובאזני כל-השרים העמדים מעל המלך. והמלך יושב בית החרף, בחדש התשיעי; ואת-האח לפניו מבערת.

“And they went to the king into the court; but they had deposited the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king.

So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king.

Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month; and the brazier was burning before him” (Jer 36:20-22).

However, the content of these verses and the comparison between these verses suggest that here **חצרה** (*khatserah*) is a **ד** (d) - **צ** (ts) exchange error of **חדרה** (*khedrah*) - “the room.”

Understanding of: **חדר** (*kheder*) - “room” as: **חצר** (*khatser*) - “court” and vice-versa could have a major impact on our understanding of several biblical terms.

We read about the Prophet Jeremiah:

וירמיהו הנביא, היה כלוא בחצר המטרה, אשר בית-מלך יהודה

“And Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house” (Jer 32:2; see also: Jer 32:8, 12; 33:1; 37:21; 38:6, 13, 28; 39:14, 15; Neh 3:25).

It is not clear how the Greek (and English) translators determined that **חצר המטרה** (*khatsar hamatarah*) means “the court of the guard.”

However, the reading of: **והוא עודנו עצור בחצר המטרה** - “while he was yet shut up in the court of the guard” (Jer 33:1; see also: Jer 39:15), suggests that **חצר המטרה** (*khatsar hamatarah*) is a misspelled **חדר המעצרה** (*khadar hamaa'tsarah*) - “the shutting up room.”

This is not the first Biblical mention of a royal jail, and already in the Book of Genesis we read that Joseph was kept in: **מקום, אשר-אסורי (אסירי) המלך אסורים** - “the place where the king's prisoners were bound” (Gen 39:20).

In 1369 King Charles V instructed Hugh Aubriot to build near his residence at Hotel St. Paul, a royal fortress. The work was finished in the Thirteen -Eighties by his son Charles VI and the fortress became known as the “Bastille.”



La Bastille 1715

At the base of each of its six newer towers there was a “cachot” or “dungeon” - a room for those in keep.