

ISRAELITE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The old rhetorical question 'what's in a name?' is a very meaningful question when the names are from ancient Israel, for names in the Old Testament frequently signal information regarding genealogy, lineage, place of birth, as well as events, sociological relationships and obligations. The following article is particularly important to translators in that it emphasizes the problems related to the translation of names as well as pointing out the sociological importance of the mišpāhāh and the bēt-'āb. The traditional English terms used to translate various sociological Hebrew terms very often convey a wrong impression of the particular social or kin unit involved. Ed.

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Names and social structure

In ancient Israel a man's name supplied important information about his place in society. This is illustrated by the procedure by which the first king of Israel was selected by lot. 'Then Samuel brought all the tribes (*šēbeṭ*) of Israel near, and the tribe (*šēbeṭ*) of Benjamin was taken by lot. He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families (*mišpāhāh*), and the Matrite *mišpāhāh* was taken by lot. Then he brought the Matrite *mišpāhāh* near man by man, and Saul ben-Kish was taken by lot' (1 Sam. 10: 20 f.). The sortilege was evidently done with a systematic recitation of names, not with the persons themselves; for Saul was in hiding. The same procedure was available for criminal detection. Achan was discovered in this way. The field was narrowed from nation to *šēbeṭ* to *mišpāhāh* to *bēt* (house) to the individual *geḇer* (Joshua 7: 16-18). The same hierarchical system is seen in reverse in the conventional way of stating a person's name. In 1 Sam. 9: 1 Saul's name is given in full as *šā'ul ben-kīš ben-'ābī'el ben-šerōr ben-b'kōraṭ ben-'apiaḥ ben-'iš-y'mīnī*. Even with these seven items, the name of his *mišpāhāh* (*maṭrī*) is not used. Joshua 7: 1 introduces Achan as '*ākān ben-karmī ben-zaḥdī ben-zeraḥ l'maṭṭē-y'hūdāh*.

Achan's act in violating tabu is an act of the people ('*am-yiśrā'el*) as a whole. These six parts of a full personal name correspond to six levels in social structure. Membership in the nation, however, is not usually specified in the name, which goes back to the tribe. The name has the form of a genealogy; and the socio-political structure of Israel corresponds to a genealogical tree, real or schematic. The *mišpāhāh* as well as the tribe may be

specified either by the gentilic (*zarḥi*) or the personal name of the eponymous ancestor (*zerah*). The correspondences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Names and Social Structure*

Israel		' <i>am</i>	people, nation
Benjamin	Judah	<i>šēbeṭ/maṭṭeh</i>	tribe
Matrite	Zarhite	<i>mišpāhāh/elep</i>	phratry
Aphiah			
Becorath			
Zeror			
Abiel	Zabdi	<i>bēṭ-'āb/geber</i>	family
Kish	Carmi		patronymic
Saul	Achan	<i>'iš/geber</i>	personal name
Each part of a man's name has its own signification.			

(1) His *given name* was traditionally selected by the mother, less commonly by the father, who could choose to alter the mother's suggestion. Such names were often symbolic, embodying some birth-potent. Naming was often accompanied by oracular comment on the name, often with folk-etymologies or plays on words, with prophecy of the person's destiny. Divine revelation before conception or birth might both announce the destiny and supply the appropriate name. This practice is seen in an extreme form in the extraordinary names given to their children by Isaiah and Hosea. It is generally necessary for a translator to gloss such names in order to bring out the point of the story.

A birth-name could be replaced later on by an event-name. Abraham, Sarah, Edom, Israel and Jerubbaal are but the best known of numerous examples. A practice evidently borrowed from Egypt along with other court ceremonial was the taking of a throne-name on a monarch's accession. Often the original name is almost completely forgotten. The only known examples are from the kingdom of Judah; perhaps Israel did not accept the system. Here are some examples: David (Elhanan), Solomon (Yediyah), Uzziah (Azariah), Jehoahaz (Shallum), Jehoiakim (Eliqim), Zedekiah (Mattaniah).

We need not enter further into the field of general onomastics, which is an enormous subject in itself.

(2) The *patronymic* was generally used along with the given name, except for very famous people. There is a touch of formality in the conventional *X ben-Y*, where Y is X's real father. The patronymic can be used by itself as a name, sometimes in contempt: *ben-yiṣay* (1 Sam. 20: 27), *ben-r'malyāhū* (Isa. 7: 4), *ben-ṭāb'el* (Isa. 7: 6). 1 Kings 4: 7-19 gives a list of twelve prefects in charge of the twelve administrative districts of Solomon's half-kingdom of Israel. Five are named by their patronymic alone, and this can hardly be pejorative. The ingenious suggestion has been made that an early copy of the document was torn down the side, removing the given names. But it is more likely that the list follows the style found at Ugarit, where a class of top administrators consistently appears on the tablets under patronymics alone.

Names of the form *X ben-Y* are sometimes met in which Y is a distinguished remote ancestor. Jesus was called ben-David. This is a reminder that *bēn* 'son', referred not only to a real son but also to any descendant.

Sons of a polygamous marriage could be distinguished by their matronymics; for example, *'aḏoniyyāh ben-Ḥaggīṭ* (1 Kings 1: 5). Extant examples are confined to kings' sons, polygamy being more likely in the royal family. The nomenclature may reflect the important position held by the queen mother or dowager in the Israelite court. In any case it does not prove that Israelites sometimes used matrilinear descent. Uterine brothers (sons of one mother) constituted a sub-family within the larger complex, as the stories of Jacob's children show.

An upstart whose father was not known was a 'man without a name'. Such a person could be called after his home town. *Šamgar ben-'ānat* (Judges 3: 31) did not have a mother called Anath; he came rather from the town of Anath. It is important to recognize these cases when translating into a language that has different classifiers for person and place names.

(3) The name of the paternal *grandfather* often appears as Z in names of the form *X ben-Y ben-Z*. For instance, the artisan who worked on the tabernacle was *bēsal'ēl ben-'ūrī ben-ḥūr* (Exod. 31: 2). His tribe, Judah, is also given. We infer that Hur was his grandfather from the fact that Hur is not one of Judah's phratries (see below).

The practice of naming a child after his grandfather gives rise to names of the form *X ben-Y ben-X*. This became the fashion in the fourth century. Compare Luke 1: 61. It explains why several holders of an hereditary office have the same name, the best-known example being the several Sanballats who were governors of Samaria.

When extended further such a name becomes a genealogy, as we have seen in the case of Saul. Luke gives the name of Jesus in this form, going back to Adam (3: 23–38).

Names in genealogical tables

The analysis of names can be approached from the other end. The socio-political organization of Israel is shown in various census lists and genealogical tables. Comparison with the meagre histories of the tribes in their beginnings shows that these relationships were meant to be taken as genetic. The availability of the fiction of adoption, however, meant that legal and political relationships could be dressed up as family connections, social relationships and obligations being as real as biological connection. The slight variations met between one account and another probably reflect historical changes in political orientation. The difference between a *šēbeṭ*, 'tribe', and a *mišpāḥāh*, 'sub-tribe' or 'phratry',¹ is nearly always made precisely, with careful use of terms. Numbers 26 is typical, and yields the following details of tribal organization, augmented by Exod. 6: 16–19 and Num. 3: 14–20.

Few historical notices of these persons and groups have survived. Gen. 38 shows that Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah were the actual sons of Judah. So these tribal structures correspond to the real or supposed genealogical

Table 2. *Tribe and Phratry*¹

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Phratry</i>	<i>Sub-phratry</i>		
Reuben	Hanoch Pallu Hezron Carmi	Eliab	[Nemuel [Dathan [Abiram	
Simeon	Nemuel [=Jemuel] Jamin [Ohad] Jachin Zerah [=Zohar] Shaul			
Gad	Zephon Haggi Shuni Ozni [=Ezbon] Eri Arod Areli			
Judah	(Er) } (Onan) } died without issue Shelah Perez Zerah	Hezron Hamul		
Issachar	Tola Puvah Jashub [=Iob] Shimron			
Zebulun	Sered Elon Jahleel			
Joseph	Manasseh	Machir	Gilead	Iezer Helek Asriel Shechem Shemida Hepher Zelophehad

¹ 'Phratry' refers to one of the varieties of unilateral kin groups along with lineages and sibs. Anthropologists use 'phratry' to refer to the groupings of sibs into larger units in which the unilateral principle obtains. Phratries (brotherhoods) may be patrilineal or matrilineal, but are patrilineal in the case of Ancient Israel. Marriage does not take place between phratries. (Ed.)

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Phratry</i>	<i>Sub-phratry</i>	
Joseph (cont.)	Ephraim	Shuteleh Becher Tahan	Eran
Benjamin	Bela	Ard Naaman	
	[Becher]		
	Ashbel		
	[Gera]		
	Ahiram		
	[Naaman]		
	[Ehi]		
	[Rosh]		
	Shephupham [=Muppim]		
	Hupham [=Huppim]		
	[Ard]		
Dan	Shuham [=Hushim]		
Asher	Imnah		
	(Ishva, perhaps a doublet of the following)		
	Ishvi		
	Beriah	Heber Malchiel	
Naphtali	Jahzeel		
	Guni		
	Jezer		
	Shillem		
Levi	Gershon	Libni Shimei	
	Kohath	Amram Izhar Habron Uzziel	
	Merari	Mahli Mushi	

relationships of the descendants of Jacob/Israel. The connection with some of the place-names appearing in the lists is often problematical.

The family tree is traced, in most cases, for three generations, corresponding to the primary levels of people, tribe, and phratry. This means that a typical six-unit name states the first three and the last three generations of an individual's genealogy. Since Israelite citizenship is usually obvious, five names are generally enough. In any case all intervening generations are omitted. Such a name embodied the most important facts about a man's sociological relationships and obligations. It lists the basic groups to which

he belonged in the socio-political ordering of national-tribal structure. The most important groups were not the tribe (one of the twelve or thirteen) and not the small family given by the patronymic. The most important big group was the phratry (*mišpāhāh*). The most important small group was the extended family (*bēt-'āb*, 'ancestor-house'). All names between these two units could be omitted.

Another omission leaves a four-unit name, consisting of personal name (given name plus patronymic), family name, and phratry name. In Elihu's name (Job 32: 2) the family name, if that is what it is, appears as a gentilic. Ram is his phratry, not 'family' as in RSV. In Tola's four-unit name (Judges 10: 1) the last item is his tribe, not phratry. If Dodo is titular head of his family (*rō's bēt-'āb*), he would most likely be his actual grandfather. The same is the case with Bezalel (Exod. 31: 2).

Another possibility with a four-unit name is the omission of the grandfather's name, as in Korah ben-Izhar ben-Kohath ben-Levi (Num. 16: 1). All generations are omitted between the second and third after the tribal progenitor and the last two.

Briefer still, and very common, is the three-unit name consisting of personal name (given name plus patronymic) and tribal affiliation; for example, Jeroboam ben-Nebath, an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11: 26). The purpose of this nomenclature is to indicate a man's place in the political structure of the nation, not his pedigree. And the designation 'Ephraimite' may be geographical, not genetic. It is in keeping with this function that the name of the phratry is generally, and the name of the tribe often, a gentilic, not the ancestor's personal name. Or the genealogical chain is not continued right up to *ben-yehūdāh* but finishes with 'belonging to the tribe of Judah' or 'of the Buzite phratry'. But when the form *X ben-Y ben-Z* is used, Z could be X's grandfather, or his phratry eponym, or his tribal eponym. And any number of generations may come between Y and Z. It follows from this that chronological calculations cannot be safely based on a man's name by taking it as a complete genealogy, unless the relationships are established by other evidence.

It is a token of the breakdown of old tribal structures with sedentary, and especially urbanized life, that the three-unit names already specify a man's town rather than his phratry or tribe even early in the monarchy (2 Sam. 23).

The phratry in Israel

Turning back to the social structure shown in Table 2, seven tribes—Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali—are traced for three generations. The sons of Jacob/Israel are consistently designated ancestors of tribes (*šēbet*); his grandsons are ancestors of phratries (*mišpāhāh*).

This usage is sustained throughout the Old Testament, with few exceptions. Only in Amos 3: 1 is Israel called a *mišpāhāh*; Egypt is so designated in Zech. 14: 18. In both places there is emphasis on the community of nations as a set of brothers. The Table of Nations in Gen. 10 does not use the category 'tribe'. It uses *mišpāhāh* (verses 5, 18, 20, 31) for a major subdivision of a nation or race. The same terminology is found in Gen. 12: 3; 28: 14;

36: 40. (To complete the survey, we may note that Gen. 8: 19 uses *mišpāhāh* for a species of animal.)

The complete nation is an 'am, 'people', or *gōy*. A tribe is rarely called 'am. In Gen. 28: 3 Israel is called an assembly of peoples (*kʰal 'ammim*) equivalent to *kʰal gōyim* in Gen. 35: 11. The exactitude with which the terminology is used is further seen in the fact that a tribe is rarely called a *mišpāhāh*. Dan (Judges 13: 1; 18: 2, 11, 19) and Judah (Judges 17: 7) are the only instances. Their confinement to the book of Judges may indicate a real isogloss with *šēbeṭ* (which has another isogloss in *maṭṭeh*) but it is worth noting that Num. 26: 42 gives only one phratry for Dan, so tribe and phratry were identical in this one case. Hence the hendiadys *šēbeṭ* and *mišpāhāh* in Judges 18: 19.

In Num. 26 (Table 2) four generations are given for the tribes Judah, Benjamin, Asher and Levi. Five are given for Joseph through Ephraim, six through Manasseh. Any such sub-tribal group may be called a *mišpāhāh*, except that Manasseh and Ephraim are never so called. Each is a *šēbeṭ* after the provisions of Gen. 48. Judges 20: 12 is the only place where a canonical tribe (Benjamin) is said to consist of 'tribes'. In Joshua 13: 29 Manasseh is called a half-tribe (*hʰsī šēbeṭ*). In other words, for Joseph the system is slid down one generation, the third as well as the second generation being head of a 'tribe'. For Judah, however, both third and fourth generation can be viewed as the origin of a *mišpāhāh*, since Hezron and Hamul as well as Perez constitute a phratry. The same with Levi. Both its three sub-tribal groups (Gershon, Kohath and Merari) and also each of their subgroups is a *mišpāhāh* in Num. 26: 57. But in Num. 3: 14–20 the larger groups have the tribe-like names of *bʰnē-geršōn*, etc.; and in Num. 4: 18 Kohath is called 'a tribe of phratries'.

This sliding from one level to another in the hierarchy explains the different arrangements of the Benjamin phratries. In Num. 26: 38 the Bela phratry has two subgroups, Ard and Naaman: but in Gen. 46: 21 these two names are listed with Bela in the same rank.

According to these lists (Table 2) there must have been about sixty phratries in Israel. Although our knowledge of Israelite demography is slight, in populous times a typical *mišpāhāh* must have had at least 10,000 members, by a conservative estimate. This is too large to be called a 'family', as in English translations, or even a clan (de Vaux). Too large also to constitute the residents of a single town, as de Vaux suggests, misled by the fact that the town did replace the phratry soon enough in monarchical times as the most important sub-tribal unit, at least for the centralized administration of the united kingdom.

Even so, old customs and relationships persisted; and here there can be no doubt that the phratry, rather than the tribe, was the most important single group in Israelite society. When Abimelek organized his rebellion, he appealed to the loyalty of the whole *mišpāhāh* of his mother's *bēt-'āb* (Judges 9: 1). He was immediately conscious of membership in and of solidarity with this group. The *mišpāhāh* set the bounds of recognized kinship, and was generally endogamous (Gen. 24). Judges 21 tells of exceptional remedies and resort to legal fictions in the emergency shortage of women in

a tribe. In Joshua 13–17 the *mišpāhāh* was the unit for land apportionment by lot. The area was proportional to the population (Num. 33: 54). This land was then inalienable, that is, it must remain within the *mišpāhāh*. As a territorial unit this *mišpāhāh* land determined a man's location, so the inclusion of his *mišpāhāh* in his name, seen above, served as his geographical address (compare Judges 10: 1), and vice versa. No person not of the *mišpāhāh* could own land within this area, not even an Israelite. He was a *gēr* (or *tōšāb*), a resident alien. There were, of course, ways of getting around this by adoption; and this was a tribute to the hold of family relationships on Israel's economic system. So tenacious was the hold of a *mišpāhāh* on its land, that women could inherit if they were the only heirs (Num. 27: 1–11). This raised a very serious problem in the event of their marriage, for the family name was indissolubly linked with the family patrimony. For this the *bēt-āb* was probably the main unit. When the sole survivors of a *bēt-āb* were females, special measures were needed (Num. 36). They must marry within the *mišpāhāh* *matteḥ 'abihen* (Num. 36: 6, 8[12]); and their husbands must take the name of their wives' *bēt-āb*. (They already had the same phratry name.) That is, their children's *bēt-āb* name would be the wife's patronymic, not the father's as was usual. In other words, the husband in such a marriage forfeited his own patronymic as the *bēt-āb* name of the next generation.

If a man's name was threatened with oblivion because he died childless, the levirate marriage enabled a posthumous heir to be produced. Land inheritance was involved here also.

There were other measures for keeping the land of a *mišpāhāh* intact. One was the institution of Jubilee, when the land was restored to its original distribution (Lev. 25: 10). Another was the duty of the *gō'el*, a kinsman from within the *mišpāhāh* (Lev. 25: 49), a significant specification. His duties were: (i) to perform levirate marriage; (ii) to redeem any member of the *mišpāhāh* who fell into debt-slavery (Lev. 25: 47–55); (iii) to execute blood vengeance (Num. 35), a responsibility of the *mišpāhāh* as a whole (2 Sam. 14: 7); (iv) to redeem land alienated through poverty (Ruth; Jer. 32). The order of precedence for this obligation was: brother, father's brother; father's brother's son; any other male member of the *mišpāhāh*. Thus Boaz is identified as a member of the deceased Elimelech's *mišpāhāh* (Ruth 2: 1, 3); hence his eligibility to marry Ruth. The closer *gō'el* reneged on his duty and waived his privilege because he did not wish to impair his own patrimony (Ruth 4: 6); for his sons would have the name of Mahlon, not his own, as patronymic.

It may be added that *'elep*, generally translated 'thousand', is a rare gloss for *mišpāhāh*. Mic. 5: 1 shows that it is a unit within a tribe. Judges 6: 15; 1 Sam. 10: 19; 23: 23 all suggest that it stands to the tribe in the same relationship as a phratry. It is used mainly in connection with the military muster, the fighting men from each *mišpāhāh* constituting an army unit called an *'elep* (Num. 1: 16). This word is found also in Edomite and Ugaritic.

The smaller units within a *mišpāhāh* were the *bēt-ābōt*, 'father-houses'. Numb. 1: 18 ignores the tribe in its analysis of the community (*kol-'adaṭ-b'nē-yisrā'el*) into *mišpāhōt* and *bēt-ābōt*. Each *bēt-āb* had a patrimonial estate (*naḥ'lāh*) (Judges 21: 24). Since the scope of a *bēt-āb* is nowhere

defined, its limits and typical size are not known. As an ancestral group, perhaps it could be called a clan. The name *bēt-'āb*, 'house of a father', does not indicate how far back in family history the 'father' is to be found. The commonly accepted opinion is that it was an extended family, composed of all living persons, except married females, descended from a person still living, and including the family slaves. A married woman joined her husband's *bēt-'āb*, except under the special circumstances mentioned above. The *pater familias* was the *rō'š-bēt-'āb*. It is not clear whether the living brothers of a *rō'š-bēt-'āb* were all members of the same *bēt-'āb*, but since the *nah^alāh* was divided among the sons at the father's death, it is more likely that each brother became the head of a new *bēt-'āb*. Such a unit would be too small to be called a clan. And such units would be numerous, several to a village, many in a *mišpāhāh*.

Roland de Vaux says, 'Each clan [*mišpāhāh*] was ruled by the heads of its families, the *z'kēnīm* or "elders".' There is no passage in the Old Testament that establishes the identity of 'elders' with 'heads of father-houses', although persons designated by either title can be found doing similar duties. De Vaux's opinion is the result of his belief that the *mišpāhāh* comprised the residents of a small municipality. But if the *mišpāhāh* was the large unit we have identified above, the set of *rā'šē-bēt-'ābōt* would be too numerous to constitute a workable council. Nor is there any evidence that the *mišpāhāh* was a unit in local government. It can be shown, nevertheless, that the holders of public office were usually drawn from the ranks of the heads of father-houses, for example, the tribal chief (*nāšī'*) (Num. 1), judges, and captains of military units. Here there is a similarity to elders, who figure mainly as members of a town council, although sometimes the elders of Israel functioned as a kind of national assembly. It is not likely that any man still under the authority of his father could hold such office. Although details are not clear, it seems that the economic, political, military and judicial structuring of Israelite society was closely related to, and evidently derived from, the old tribe-phratry-family system.

Under monarchical government, this system was transformed into a different polity based on village units with a centralized administration in economic and judicial affairs. The old tribal levy disappeared. The *mišpāhā* is not mentioned after the time of David, and does not figure at all in the sociology of the book of Deuteronomy. In a few texts it comes to be used as virtually equivalent to a *bēt-'āb*. It can be a group of close relatives who eat the passover together (Exod. 12: 21), though this may reflect a time when it was a phratry ceremony rather than a domestic one. A whole phratry can be saved by the virtue of one member (Joshua 6: 23; Judges 1: 25), or destroyed by one member's sin (Lev. 20: 5). A unique usage in 1 Chron. 4: 21, where a guild of craftsmen is a *mišpāhāh* (they could, of course, be a single family) misled de Vaux into his conclusion that the *mišpāhāh* was small.

The expression *bēt-'ēm*, 'house of a mother', matches *bēt-'āb*, and has aroused speculation that some families used a system of matrilinear descent. It may be significant that it turns up in Moabite society (Ruth 1: 8) and in Aram (Gen. 24). In the latter, when Abraham's servant asks the girl about her family (verses 23, 38) (*bēt-'āb*), she goes and tells her *bēt-'ēm* (verse 28).

Rebeka's mother was a widow, which may explain the term. Her brother was head of the house. But this same Laban later claimed his daughter's children as his own (Gen. 31: 43). This was not because he had no sons (Gen. 31: 1); but it may be connected with an adoption of Jacob. This is not enough evidence to prove matriarchal society among Israel's neighbours.

Kinship terminology

Within a family Hebrew kinship terminology was simple. The basic terms

'āḇ	father	'ēm	mother
bēn	son	baṭ	daughter
'aḥ	brother	'āḥōṭ	sister

were used in various combinations, as shown in Table 3. A man's father's sister, if married, and a man's mother's brother were not relatives ('uncle' and 'aunt'). A man's father's brother was his uncle (*dōd*) and his wife an aunt (*dōdāḥ*). Another special term is *bēkōr* for the first-born son; and the eldest daughter could be called *bēkirāḥ* (Gen. 19: 31; 29: 26; 1 Sam. 14: 49).

Table 3. *Kinship terminology*

		1		1
g ₁	'aḇi-'āḇ	'ēm-'āḇ	'aḇi-'ēm	'ēm-'ēm
g ₂		'āḇ		'ēm
g ₃		ego		'aḥi-'āḇ
g ₄	ben		baṭ	'aḥōṭ-'āḇ
g ₅	ben-bēn	baṭ-bēn	ben-baṭ	baṭ-baṭ
				ben-'aḥi-'āḇ
				ben-ben-'aḥi-'āḇ

Many kinship terms had a specific and a general use within family relationships. This may pose problems for a translator into a language that does not have this two-fold reference. Examples:

'iš	husband	man
'iššāḥ	wife	woman
bēn	son	any male descendant
'āḇ	father	any male ancestor
'aḥ	brother	any male member of the <i>mišpāḥāḥ</i>
ba'al	husband	owner

To illustrate the wider use of 'brother'. David had to go to a patrilineal festival (*zeḇaḥ mišpāḥāḥ*) with his 'brothers' (1 Sam. 20: 29). He calls the elders of Judah 'my brothers' (2 Sam. 19: 13). Abram says to Lot (his nephew) 'we are brothers' (Gen. 13: 8).

Kinship terms were also used for non-kin relationships.

The word 'son' indicates an attribute, as in 'a son of peace' for a peaceful person.

As already seen, 'son of X' can mean that a person is a resident of a place X.

A similar expression denotes guild members. 'A son of a potter' is a

craftsman, simply 'a potter', though as likely as not his father would be a potter.

Kin names were used as honorifics. A female interpreter of dreams could be addressed as 'mother'. Elijah's disciples called him 'father'. No blood relationship, not even adoption, is involved. A lover calls his sweetheart 'sister' in the Song of Songs, an Egyptian fashion also. 'King's son' was a dignified title of an Israelite official.

The use of the name 'son' was important in the process of legal adoption (and also renunciation). In this sense 'son of God' could be a royal title, and a hint of a greater messianic reality. The dignity of 'sister' was important for a woman's status and legal rights in Hurrian society, and supplies background for Abraham's and Isaac's subterfuges.

Kin terms were also used with strictest protocol to express social and political stratification. In international suzerainty treaties the suzerain is 'father', the vassal is 'son'. In parity treaties the two parties are 'brothers'. Appreciation of this usage illuminates many biblical incidents and diplomatic correspondence, e.g., 1 Kings 9: 13; 20: 30-34. Since fellow-townsmen could be addressed as 'brothers' (Gen. 19: 7) blood relationship could be made clear by saying 'our brother, our flesh' (Gen. 37: 27).

BOOK REVIEWS

The Inspired Word, by Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J., translated by Francis Martin, O.C.S.O., Burns and Oates, London, 1967, Herder and Herder, 63s.

We feel that many readers of *The Bible Translator* will be grateful for having their attention drawn to this book. In volume 18 No. 1, January 1967, an article was reprinted by the author which was in a sense a summary treatment of the theme of this book. At the same time a notice appeared about the American edition. The appearance now of an English edition on the eastern side of the Atlantic affords an opportunity for a fuller assessment.

The book merits a wide welcome. It is seldom that English speaking readers of theology have an opportunity of sharing the fruits of thinking which first appeared in Spanish. Fr. Schökel hails from Latin America. He is widely known as an Old Testament scholar who teaches at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and he is a Bible translator—several of his translations of Old Testament books into Spanish have been published.

What we have here are the reflections of one who teaches and translates the Scriptures on the meaning of his work 'in the light of language and literature'. In writing he says that he kept in mind 'the educated Christian public who have become aware of the modern Biblical movement'. He has taken for granted a fairly high standard of education, but Bible translators should not be discouraged on this account!

Of particular interest to many readers will be the chapter on Bible translation which contains a number of suggestive ideas and a firmly stated conclusion. Bible translation is the unavoidable consequence of the fact that the divine word has become incarnate in human speech. Since its original concretization in one language, one author, one work, the word of God