

Nehemiah's reaction, and his threat, becomes clear. This interpretation is further supported by the end of verse 21: "From then on, they did not come back on the Sabbath" (not only "at night"). That is why the French common language translation used the phrase "installed themselves" in verses 20-21, and its German counterpart "set up their camp"; both are preferable to the simple "spend the night."

We may add finally that older Hebrew scholars, aware of the contextual problem, confirmed the interpretation defended here. To give just one example, J. Reuchlin early in the 16th century proposed the following translation of the verb *lin* in Nehemiah 13.21: "Why do you remain outside the wall?"

Conclusion

From comparative studies in other semitic languages, we learn that the meaning "to spend the night" is well attested in Accadian and Ugaritic for roots related to Hebrew *lin*. We may therefore accept that this is the primary sense of the root in question.

Nevertheless we should bear in mind not only the fact that words may have more than one meaning, but also the fact that the vocabulary of any language is constantly developing, so that the present meaning of a word is often a long way from the original sense of its root. In the case of *lin* we may admit that its basic sense is "to spend the night", and that this reflected very well the life of nomads in constant movement from one place to another. But even if this sense is quite appropriate in a number of biblical contexts, it is none the less true that the meaning of the term gradually widened, as shown by other contexts in which translations such as "to camp", "to instal oneself", and "to stay (for a shorter or longer time)" are absolutely required. We should also note the metaphorical use of the term, illustrated for example in Job 39.28, where it is said that the eagle "makes its home" (NRSV) in the rocks.

To sum up, the essential message for the translator is to remember that this verb is used in different senses, and that only a careful study of the context will show which sense is appropriate in each case.

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A further note on *YHWH*

After a full issue of *The Bible Translator* (October 1992) has been devoted to the problem of rendering the names of God, it might seem that all that can be said has been said. Nevertheless some small additions may be in order.

Phonetics. It is sometimes argued that the form *Jehovah* is a made-up composite form which bears little resemblance to *Yahweh*, the presumed

Hebrew pronunciation. Yet the consonants are the standard King James Version transliteration, J=Y, H=H, V=W; and the vowels inserted, e-o-a are not far afield from the presumed original mid-low vowels a-(e)-e. If we accept such equivalents as *Yitschak* = "Isaac" without any problem, this appears to be "straining at a gnat". (It has also been observed that Clement and Theodoret rendered the Name in Greek as *iaoue*, which might indicate a three-syllable word "Yahoweh".)

The rabbis. A Pharisaic rabbinical rule given in the Mishnah, coming from around New Testament times, states:

The blessing of the priests—how so?

In the provinces they say it as three blessings,
and in the sanctuary as one blessing.

In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written,
but in the provinces with a euphemism.

In the provinces the priests raise their hands as high as their shoulders,
but in the sanctuary they raise them over their heads.

(Translation by Neusner, 1988, page 458.)

This would seem to indicate that the proper pronunciation of *YHWH* was still known to the priests, but that this knowledge disappeared after the destruction of the Temple. The Name was allowed to be uttered only in the Temple, and apparently only by the priests; ordinary worshippers and devout people elsewhere had to use a euphemism. Thus the Septuagint and other versions, as well as the public reading of the Hebrew scriptures, had to use a euphemism (*Adonai* or *kurios*) lest God's holy Name be uttered in an unworthy manner!

Our Lord. Jesus and his well-taught disciples apparently used *Adonai/kurios* for *YHWH*, since *YHWH* does not appear in the New Testament. But the Mishnah quotation above would probably indicate that he was familiar with the Temple pronunciation of the Name. His attitude toward Pharisaic quibbles is well documented in the gospels, so should we perhaps assume that he considered this difference a minor matter not affecting our love for God or man? Or perhaps a matter in which he adapted to the local Jewish culture of his day?

Northern Khmer. In the Northern Khmer (Thailand) Old Testament we are trying to make God's revealed name known, but in ways that are sensitive to the local culture and the discourse patterns of the language. Thus at the beginning of a book or a section we have tended to identify God as "Divine Jahowa," but after that we have tended toward use of an honorific divine pronoun to refer to him. In Yahwistic Psalms we have generally put in the name at the first reference in the psalm, and then divine pronouns thereafter. In contexts that seem to call for a proper name we have used the name.