ONCE AGAIN ABBREVIATIONS

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Although the recognition of abbreviations in the early MSS of the OT is nothing new,¹ a few fresh examples, however, in addition to those already published,² are welcome for the light which they throw on the transmission of the Hebrew text and on the way in which when corrupt it may occasionally be restored.³

I

Abbreviations are by no means uncommon in extra-Biblical inscriptions and legends on seals, weights and coins, and so on, whether Ugaritic or Phoenician, Hebrew or Aramaic:

(i) Ugaritic: łyb¹ b (for bn) Pšb¹ (Yeivin in Kedem 2 [5705] 34)

(ii) Phoenician:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>f.</th>
<th>s.</th>
<th>(Dunand, Byblia Grammata 248–249 i 3, 152 ii 1);</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ב</td>
<td>ב</td>
<td>(Cooke, N.–S.I. 5, 18);</td>
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<tr>
<td>לאה</td>
<td>לאה</td>
<td>(ib. 20, 14, 16; s.p. 67);</td>
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<tr>
<td>לוח</td>
<td>לוח</td>
<td>(ib. 29, 14);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כרכ</td>
<td>כרכ</td>
<td>(Honeyman, JEA 26 [1942] 64/13);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| הר | הר | (Aimé–Giron, BIFAO 38, 23–25).

and Ṣ f. לם

Other apparent examples of abbreviation may be seen in early Phoenician inscriptions, which read אֱלֶבֶתל ... בַּירִיםל and אבֶבֶתל ... בַּירִיםל (Albright in JAOS 67 [1947] 156–158 iii 1; v 3; iv 1). Here, however, ב may be a phonetic reduction of ב as Albright argues, especially if, or when, no divider separates the words. But ב is not thus reduced to ב before other names beginning with ב, e.g., in יָיִיםל בַּירִיםל (Cooke, N.–S.I. 3, 1), although the evidence of

¹ Cp. Textus 1 (1960) 112 n.1 and 125 n. 43; cp. Praetorius in ZDMG 53 (1899) 683–692, who makes the interesting suggestion that pāšeq may often be a relic marking an abbreviation in the text, and Bennett in Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible (1963) 702, who may be added to the authorities there cited.

² In Textus 1 (1960) 112–131. I am much indebted to Prof. W.D. McHardy and the Rev. J.A. Emerson for several of the instances of abbreviations noted here.

³ Abbreviations in this article: f. = “for”, r. = “read”, w. = “with”, m. = “misread”. The mark of abbreviation is added throughout the article, although it is not found in ancient texts, for the convenience of readers.
this inscription cannot be accepted without reserve, as it is not contemporary with the others. Only the discovery of fresh texts can settle this question.

Whether initial or medial abbreviation may be seen in such legends on seals as נס ים and סנהד (Sukenik in *Kedem* 1 [5702] 46) is uncertain; for the א may not have been omitted by the engraver for lack of space but may have been dropped from the names themselves (cp. הָאָרָיִם beside חָרָיִם).

(iii) **Hebrew:**

**On Israelite stamps:**

- **תִּמְשָׁל** f. (Ginsberg in BASOR 109 [1948] 20–22)
- **נָמֶס** f. or the like (Torrey in AASOR 2–3 106/6).

**On an Israelite jar:**

- **מַגָּד** f. (Birnbaum ap. Crowfoot, *Samaria-Sebaste* 3 24);

**On Jewish coins from the 4th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.:**


(iv) **Aramaic:**

**On a slave’s hand** f. (Cowley, *Aram. Pap.* 28 4, 5, where it is written out as אָר, the name of the letter so inscribed);

**In an inscription** f. (Kandahar 4); (Cowley, *Aram. Pap.* 28 4, 5, where it is written out as אָר, the name of the letter so inscribed);

**On coins of Alexander the Great:**

- **יָרָנָה** f. or the like;
- **יָרָנָה** f. (?!);
- **יָרָנָה** f. or the like;
- **יָרָנָה** f. (?!);
- **יָרָנָה** f. (?!);

(Torrey, *Demianhidr* 9/4, 5, 11–12, 10/7, 13/10).

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4 Both speculative and dubious. See Avigad in IEJ 8 (1958) 113–119.
5 *Textus* 1 (1960) 123; cp. 2 Ki. 18:2 (יד) w. 2 Chr. 29:1 (יד). 6 Cp. Diringer, *Iscrizioni* (Firenze 1934) 309–338 for another instance of this abbreviation(?).
7 *Textus* 1 (1960) 120.
10 Apparently Elephantine, as the district in which the slave will have been registered. The practice of tattooing an owner’s name on a slave’s hand is often mentioned in Babylonian texts (see: Von Nicolo—Ungnad, *Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden, Beilheft zu Band I: Glossar* 160). The same form of abbreviation occurs in one of the Judaean Scrolls (s.p. 89).
On potsherds: יד and ידה f. דר יָד ‘wine’.
וכ f. καρθον (measure of wine) (Szyner in Semitica 12 [196 12] 11).

Attention may be drawn especially to an Aramaic inscription found at Arebsun and dated ca. 2nd century B.C., which begins לַלֵּה אוֹר בֵּין “on day 6 of (the month of) Tammuz” (Lidzbarski ESE I 70). This justifies the suspicion that יָד נַב יָד כַּל “mine is vengeance” is a Massoretic misvocalization of an original יָד נַב יָד כַּל for a day of vengeance” in the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 32:35, where the Sam., LXX and TO, have this clearly preferable reading).

This selection of abbreviations is instructive as it contains examples of most of the types here cited, more or less plausibly, as appearing in the O.T. They include abbreviations for terms designating numbers and units of measurement as well as commodities, common nouns, and names of both places and persons. The omitted letter or letters may be initial or medial or final. The identification of the names is of course often conjectural. The loss of the initial letter may be doubtful (for the reading of the name is then far from clear), and the use of only a single medial letter (p) for a name is strange; but none of these are unnatural, as even a single letter may serve as an owner’s mark, however arbitrary the choice may seem to be.

II

In searching for abbreviations in the MT, the readings in parallel passages and the renderings of the ancient Versions must be scrutinized in order to discover the principles which scribes and copyists may have followed. Only when these have been established can the second stage of the enquiry be safely approached: that of conjecturally assuming an abbreviation in the attempt to restore the true text in a corrupt passage.

1. A very common abbreviation is the omission of the fem. sing. as well as of the masc. and fem. plur. terminations attached to nouns and verbs:

Is. 6:13: מַמְלָכָה (MT) f. מַמְלָכָה (1 QIsa) 16
2 Chr. 10:25: מַמְלָכָה = מַמְלָכָה (MT) f. מַמְלָכָה (LXX: καθηνη)
Prov. 12:27: הַמּוֹן יָדָן (MT) f.
17 ָּדָן (Eitan in HUCA 14 [1939] 6);

14 Cp. Diringer, Iscrizioni (Firenze 1934) 303–307 and Moscati, Epigrafia (Roma 1951) 107–110, where other instances of single letters are collected.
15 Textus 1 (1960) 114–118.
16 Brownlee in VT 1 (1951) 296–298 and Walker, VT 7 (1957) 413.
17 Cp. Textus 1 (1960) 118. Or rather קְרֵי (cp. Arab. partes rei, aquam in aliquem
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Prov. 30:14: מַחְבֵּד (MT) f. מַמְלֹא־מַמְלֹא (MT).
Ps. 78:49: מִלּוֹא־מִלּוֹא (MT) f. מִלּוֹא־מִלּוֹא (VSS w. 1 Heb. MS).

Thus too an original אָכָם וְיָדָיו has been misread אָכָם וְיָדָיו אָכָם וְיָדָיו (MT) instead of "knowing not otherwise than to do evil" (Eccl. 4:17; de Jong).

2. All kinds of pronouns as well as pronominal suffixes can be shown to have been on occasion abbreviated or omitted with a view to abbreviation:

Ps. 47:17: מִמָּשָּׁם f. מִמָּשָּׁם (MT) f. מִמָּשָּׁם (Derenbourg in ZAW 5 [1885] 163);

Eccl. 6:10: יִשַּׁבְּתֵךְ (MT) f. יִשַּׁבְּתֵךְ (Driver ap. Kittel; cp. 2:22);
Gen. 25:28: יִשַּׁבְּתֵךְ (MT) f. יִשַּׁבְּתֵךְ (VSS);
Hab. 3:4: יֶנְעוּ (MT) f. יֶנְעוּ (LXX, S);
Job 6:20: יֶנְעוּ (MT) f. יֶנְעוּ (VSS);
Lam. 1:9: יֶנְעוּ (MT) f. יֶנְעוּ (VL, V).

3. The various divine names, being extremely frequent and obvious, were often, if not normally, abbreviated, as errors in reading them will usually have been easily avoided:

2 Chr. 30:27: מַהֲוַת שֵׁם (MT) f. מַהֲוַת שֵׁם (Rudolph w. LXX);
Jer. 6:11: יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT) f. יִשְׂרָאֵל (LXX) f. יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT with other VSS);
Jer. 27:18: יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT w. V, S, T);
Jud. 6:17: יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT w. all VSS) f. יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל;
Jer. 25:33: יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (LXX) or יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT);
Ps. 55:17: יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (MT) f. יָמִית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (Duhm).

4. Other proper names, whether of persons or of places, will have been abbreviated only if they were very known or had been recently mentioned in the immediate context:

2 Ki. 22:18: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT w. all VSS) f. יִשָּׁרָאֵל (Syro-Ambros. Vs.);
2 Chr. 21:2: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT) f. יִשָּׁרָאֵל (LXX, S, Heb. MSS);
2 Chr. 28:27: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT) f. יִשָּׁרָאֵל (LXX, S, Heb. MSS);
2 Chr. 36:14: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT) f. יִשָּׁרָאֵל (LXX, S, Heb. MSS);
2 Sam. 21:8: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT w. LXX, V) f. מִשְׁרַיִם (LXX, S, T);
Jer. 28:1: יִשָּׁרָאֵל (MT w. all VSS) f. יִשָּׁרָאֵל;

locum collegit); hence יָכָּב יָכָּב “and collects oil with his right hand” or “and his right hand collects oil” (Prov. 27:16; see JRAS. 75 [1948] 164–9).

18 Textus 1 (1960) 122–123.
19 Unless the fem. sing. suffix is intended to have collective force (see: G.‐K. §§ 135p, 145k).
20 Textus 1 (1960) 119–120.
21 Cp. Ps. 34:7, where the reverse error perhaps occurs.
22 Textus 1 (1960) 121.
2 Chr. 36:10:coln (MT w. T) f. יַּעֲקֹב (LXX, V, S). In this way (Is. 60:1) has been misread (MT, S) instead of יַעֲקֹב (LXX, V, T).

5. The omission of the final radical letter as a form of abbreviation may be assumed in a number of places where the ordinary view is that it has been omitted simply per incuriam, especially if the word is one that occurs very often:24

Jer. 15:11:ךְּנָנ (MT w. V, S, T) f. חַּנָּנ (Duhrm w. LXX).
Ps. 1:23:ךְּנָנ (MT w. all VSS) f. חַּנָּנ (Peters, Ecclesiasticus 96 n. 12, where the phrase marks a gloss on 40:21–26).

Many instances of this type can be found in late MSS, for example in בְּנִי הָּאָמְר (Peters, Ecclesiasticus 96 n. 12, where the phrase marks a gloss on 40:21–26).

One example has survived as a curious relic in the Masoretic text, namely מְשִׁיאוֹן, which has evidently arisen out of an abbreviated מְשִׁיאוֹן for מְשִׁיאוֹן (2 Sam. 23:30).

6. The omission of a medial letter or letters by way of abbreviation, is so well attested that it cannot be doubted. As it is found also in legends on coins, it may be accepted as part of current practice. The following examples may suffice to prove it:

Gen. 43:23:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT, V, S, T) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (Sam., LXX).
Ex. 3:6:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT w. VSS) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (S).
Josh. 11:4:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Ruth 2:18:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX, MSS);
2 Chr. 2:9:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (Bertheau w. VSS; cp. 1 Ki. 5:25);
Is. 42:16:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Is. 53:12:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX; cp. 1QIš);
Jer. 46:12:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Jer. 49:1:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX) for מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT);
Zech. 6:10:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (Sellin) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (Procksch);
Ps. 62:9:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Prov. 3:24:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Prov. 22:2:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) or מְשִׁיאוֹן (LXX);
Eccl. 3:12:מְשִׁיאוֹן (MT) f. מְשִׁיאוֹן (T, Heb. MSS; cp. 2:24);

What is not always clear in many cases is whether the abbreviation consisted of only the initial letter(s) or of both the initial and final letter(s). Each instance must be judged on its merits, and even then many must inevitably remain uncertain. A clear case of doubt may be seen in Jer. 43:2: יַּעֲקֹב (MT, LXX).


25 Cp. Mal. 2:9, where a similar expression supports this emendation of an unintelligible phrase.
(MT) instead of אֲלֵישָׁף (LXX), where both readings make equally good sense.

Two extreme instances are: Is. 40:1–2: יִכְּגַּבְּרֶה יְמִינְּךָ (LXX) instead of יִכְּגַּבְּרֶה (MT w. V, S, T; cp. 1QIsα), which alone yields a suitable sense;
and Jer. 29:11: אֲלֵישָׁף (LXX) for אְבֹרֹת הָעַלּות (MT w. V, S, T), where again the Hebrew text with the majority of the VSS must be preferred to the Greek translation. These misrenderings of the Septuagint, however, are valuable as affording definite proof of the presence of abbreviations in the Heb. text before them.

7. Often only the initial letter or two initial letters are deemed enough for an abbreviation; but as a rule these suffice only when the abbreviated word is very well known or has occurred in the immediate context:
Gen. 24:28: א ק ב (MT w. LXX, V, TO);
Gen. 36:2: ל ב מ (MT w. V, TO, TY) f. ב (Sam., LXX, S);
Jud. 8:10: ב כ פ מ (MT w. all VSS) f. ב כ פ מ (Cheyne in EB 2 [1902] 1720);
1 Sam. 10:3: ב כ פ מ (MT) f. ב כ פ מ (LXX);
Is. 43:4: א ג מ (MT) f. א ג מ (cp. T);
Prov. 3:13: א ג מ (MT) f. א ג מ (1 MS Ken.);
Job. 22:30: א ג מ (MT) f. א ג מ (Ibn Parchon);
Is. 43:19: ב מ (MT w. all VSS) for מ (IQIsα);
Hos. 3:2: ב מ (MT w. V, S, T) f. ב מ (LXX);
Prov. 18:4: ב מ (MT) or י מ (LXX w. Heb. MSS.; cp. 10: 11);
Prov. 24:28: ב מ (MT w. V) or י מ (Heb. MSS w. LXX, S, T);
Gen. 15:18: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (Brown in EB 2 [1902] 1690);
Jud. 1:16: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (LXX MSS, VL and Copt.);
1 Sam. 10:13: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (Wellhausen; cp. T);
1 Ki. 22:34: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (LXX);
2 Chr. 18:33: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (LXX, V);
Jer. 37:4: ב מ (MT) or י מ (LXX);
Jer. 1:26: ב מ (MT) for ב מ (cp. Jer. 1:33);
Hab. 3:4: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (LXX, S, V, T);
Ps. 89:51: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (Naor; cp. T);
Job 33:28: ב מ (MT) f. ב מ (Heb. MSS; cp. 33:18; 36:12);
12 Disproved by 24:53.
17 As required by the gender of the numeral אֶלְישָׁף (Wellhausen).
19 Then לְשׁוֹנֵי רוֹבִים צֶרֶן = “many peoples”, not “mighty peoples”; for רוּבִים, רוֹבִים “many” may be prefixed to the term which it qualifies (Jer. 16:16; Prov. 7:26; 19:21; 31:29; Neh. 9:28). The Syr. צֶרֶן “many” may be similarly prefixed (Noldak-Crichton, Compendious Syriac Grammar [London 1904] § 211 B).
Prov. 11:9: דבש (MT) for דבש (LXX);
Eccl. 3:17: דבש (MT) f. דבש (Houbigant).

So may have been misread דבש (Prov. 11:15) or דבש (Is. 24:19) for the inf.
abs. דבש, so that the need to postulate a dubious grammatical form disappears;
and דבש is read דבש (1 Ki. 10:17, LXX and T) or דבש (2 Chr. 9:16, V and S).

8. A. In all languages abbreviations or ciphers for numbers are an almost
universal usage. Hebrew can be shown to have fallen in with it, although
numbers may or even must have been very often fully written out in words.30

In some places one or other of the divergent numbers is demonstrably right:
1 Chr. 5:13: שֵנֶה (LXXB) f. שֵנֶה (MT);
Jer. 38:10: שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (MT) f. שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (1 MS Ken.);
Jer. 52:28: שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (MT) f. שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (Cornill);
Ezra 7:35: שֵנֶה שֵנֶה or שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (MT)31 f. שֵנֶה שֵנֶה (Esdra.
A 8:63, LXXB and LXXA).32

Elsewhere evidence is not available to reach a decision between variant
numbers:
Gen. 7:11: שָׁבַע (MT) or שָׁבַע (Sam., LXX, S);
Gen. 7:11: שָׁבַע (MT, V) or שָׁבַע (LXX);
1 Sam. 11:8: שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (MT or שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (LXX));33
1 Chr. 16:8: שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (MT or שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (LXX);
2 Chr. 23:1: שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (MT) or שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (LXX);
2 Chr. 11:21: שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (MT w. LXX Luc, V, T) or שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (LXXB);34
Ezra 8:12: שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (MT) or שָׁבַע שָׁבַע (S).

This practice will explain why Shephatiah’s sons are said in one place to
be 80 and in another 70. The initial ש is here used as a cipher for these figures
(שָׁבַע and שָׁבַע). In one of these passages, indeed, a triple error results
from this unfortunate usage: what appears in the Hebrew text as 77 (Ezra
8:35) is reproduced as 76 or 72 in different MSS of the Greek translation
(Esdra. A 8:63: B: 76; A: 72), since ש may stand for all the three figures
שָׁבַע. The correct figure is apparently 72, as a multiple of twelve
is required.

An interesting divergence occurs in the number of bat of water contained in
the great basin known as the “molten sea” in Solomon’s temple: this is given
in one passage as 2000 (1 Ki. 7:26), and in the parallel as 3000 (2 Chr. 4:5).

30 Textus 1 (1960) 125-128.
31 Possibly so read to give a multiple of seven as the perfect number (Ryle).
32 Because a multiple of twelve is required.
33 So also Josephus Ant. Jud. 11, v, 2 § 137.
34 So also Josephus ib. 8, x, 1 § 250.
Here an original שֶׁלֶם אֲלֵם and was then corrected to שֶׁלֶם אֲלֵם in the first passage and to שֶׁלֶם אֲלֵם in the other.

In the same way the Biblical רְבָּעֵפֶת (Gen. 29:5) must have been written רְבָּעֵפֶת; for an apocalyptic writer has taken it over as רְבָּעֵפֶת (א) when he speaks of the earth as yielding its fruit ten thousand-fold in grapes and wine (2 Bar. 29:5).35

B. The use of the letters of the alphabet in their alphabetical order for numbers is rare in the OT, though found as the normal practice on coins of the First Revolt (A.D. 66–73), and mentioned in literature soon afterwards.36 It must, however, have been current long before this, since it is known to the LXX. They translate בֹּקֶר “to the back of” (to which a paseq is prefixed) as ἐπὶ τὸ τέταρτον “to the fourth”, having read כ, the fourth letter of the alphabet which serves as a numerical symbol for “four”, although this makes nonsense of the sentence (Josh. 15:7).

C. The recognition of numerical abbreviations in the MT may facilitate the solution of a historical problem: this is the date of the embassy of the kings of five neighbouring states (Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon) to Zedekiah king of Judah for the purpose of persuading him to join their coalition against Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.

According to the MT “in the year of the accession of Jehoiakim” (Jer. 27:1) the Lord bade Jeremiah send a warning to these kings that He would deliver all their countries to the Babylonians; at the same time the prophet warned Zedekiah that he too would come under the Babylonian yoke. Here Jehoiakim must be an error for Zedekiah (LXX), due to the misleading re-collection of the preceding chapter which deals with him (Jer. 26:1) The following verses confirm the correction (Jer. 27:3, 12, 20). Then “it came to pass the same year, in the year of the accession of Zedekiah..., in the fourth year, in the fifth month” (Jer. 28:1) that a certain Hananiah prophesied that the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar would be broken and that the captives deported and the vessels of the Temple carried off by him would be restored “within two full years” (Jer. 28:3–4). Jeremiah denounced this prophecy as false, and in due course Nebuchadrezzar captured and sacked Jerusalem and deported its inhabitants to Babylon.

These statements raise two problems: (i) how can “the year of the accession of Zedekiah” in 597 B.C. be equated with the “fourth year of his reign”, i.e., 594–593 B.C.; and (ii) what does “within two full years” (R.V.) precisely connote?

35 Rendel Harris in Expositor 5 i (1895) 448–449.
36 Mishnah Shekalim 3:2.
The relevant dates are the following:

- reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah .......................... 608–597 B.C.
- reign of Jehoiakim (3 months);
- first capture of Jerusalem on 2 Adar (15/16 March) and deposition of Jehoiakim ........................................ 597 B.C.
- accession of Zedekiah in Nisan (March–Apr.);
  - first full year of Zedekiah, reckoned from the following New Year, beginning in Tishri (Sept.–Oct.); 597–596 B.C.
  - Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish in Tebet (Dec.–Jan.);
  - Nebuchadrezzar’s return to Babylon in Shebat (Jan.–Feb.), met by Elamite (?) opposition;
  - embassy of five kings to Zedekiah and prophecy of Hananiah in his fifth month, i.e., Shebat (Jan.–Feb.); .......... 596 B.C.
  - Nebuchadrezzar back in Babylon in Kislev (Nov.–Dec.) — Tebet (Dec.–Jan.); 596–595 B.C.
- death of Pharaoh Necho II king of Egypt .................. 595–594 B.C.
- accession of Psammetichus II in Egypt; Babylonian army mobilized for Syrian campaign in Kislev (Nov.–Dec.); .......... 594 B.C.
- visit of Zedekiah to Babylon in his fourth year .......... 594–593 B.C.
- death of Psammetichus II ............................... 589 B.C.
- siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar .......... 588–586 B.C.
- second capture and destruction of Jerusalem in Adar (Feb.–March) and deportation of Jews to Babylon in Ab (July–Aug.) 586 B.C.

The dating of the reigns of the kings of Judah is a matter of very great difficulty, especially because the method of reckoning both the beginning of the calendar-year and the number of the king’s regnal year is uncertain. The probability is that at this time the year was reckoned not from Nisan to Nisan (March–Apr.) but from Tishri to Tishri (Sept.–Oct.), and that the king’s regnal years were reckoned not from the date of their accession but from the beginning of the following New Year.37

The LXX have no date at the beginning of the first passage (27:1), and in

the second passage (28:1) they have “in the fourth year of Zedekiah” for the MT’s “in the year of the accession of Zedekiah... in the fourth year”. The omission of the date in the former passage is wrong for a) the last king who has been mentioned is Jehoiakim (Jehoiakin’s brief reign does not come into the question), so that a notice that Jehoiakim (as well as Jehoiakin) has been replaced by Zedekiah is essential; b) the writer goes on to describe events occurring in this king’s reign. Consequently, as said above, the correction of Jehoiakim to Zedekiah puts the Hebrew text right; and a notice to the same effect must be assumed to have accidentally fallen out of the Greek text (cp. the Syro-Hex. which has the same notice as the MT).

In the second passage, therefore, the MT’s “in the same year, in the year of the accession of Zedekiah, in the fourth year” must be wrong, for the reason given above. Further, the difficulty cannot be evaded by supposing that Zedekiah’s fourth year was near the year of his accession; for in fact it is on towards half-way through his reign of nearly eleven years. Another, though not necessarily fatal, objection is that if “in the year of the accession of Zedekiah” is accepted as the genuine text of the first passage and only “in the fourth year, in the fifth month” (sc. of the same king, namely Zedekiah) is retained in the second passage, Jeremiah will have worn the yoke for four years. Such behaviour would be peculiar, though perhaps not impossible in comparison with the three years during which Isaiah walked “naked and barefoot” (Is. 10:3); but the text gives no hint of such a long time for Jeremiah’s symbolic act.

The LXX, seeing the difficulties, read “in the year of the accession of Zedekiah” in the first passage; and, dropping “in the year of the accession of Zedekiah”, they read “in the fourth year of Zedekiah, in the fifth month” in the second passage. Their reading may be accepted in the first passage; but their way out of the difficulty in the second passage only raises another difficulty, in addition to that mentioned above.

That the embassy of the five kings took place in Zedekiah’s fourth year, i.e., 594–593 B.C., would be very unlikely if not impossible; for in that very year he was absent from Jerusalem on a visit to Babylon (whether voluntary or compulsory is not known; Jer. 51:59). Presumably his loyalty to his Babylonian overlord was suspect, and the probable reason for his visit would be to allay any suspicions that might have or actually had arisen. Here however caution is necessary, as the month of the king’s departure from Jerusalem and the length of his residence in Babylon are both unknown; but the journey there and back and the visit itself will certainly have taken up a considerable amount of time, possibly the greater part of the year.

Contrariwise, the natural time for the embassy would be the beginning of
the new reign, when the conspirators might hope to win the support of the unfortunate Jehoiakim’s successor. The preferable course, then, is to accept “that year, in the year of the accession of Zedekiah..., in the fifth month” as basically sound; for “that year” will be the year described not only here but in the previous passage as the beginning of the reign.

What then can be done with the additional “in the fourth year”, which cannot be harmonized with that date? Here the principle of abbreviation may be invoked. If an abbreviated בֵּשָׁה (beshah) is assumed as the reading of the original text, the error will have arisen through taking this as standing for בֵּשָׁהוֹ המִצְאוֹת (beshah mizqo’at) “in the fourth year” instead of בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה (beshah v’yishkana) “in the first year”, which is required by the context. Accordingly, the original reading will have been “that year, in the year of the accession of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the first year, in the fifth month”. This statement of the date may seem verbose; but the addition of “in the first year” is required to justify “in the fifth month”; otherwise the reader may be uncertain whether this means the fifth month from the date of the new king’s accession or from that of the beginning of his first full year.

A small grammatical point remains. That בֵּשָׁה is put in the construct state points to the use of a cipher for the number in the original text; for Jewish scribes, such as those in Egypt, write הָעָשָׁה “in the year of H” See for this construction is used correctly also in בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה “in the year one” (2 Chr. 36:22; Dan. 9:1, 2; 11:1), where עָשָׁה is regarded as a noun meaning unitas or the like; and it has survived incorrectly in the occasional occurrence of the faulty בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה (Jer. 46:2; 51:59) for בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה (Jer. 45:1; 36:1).

If then the embassy is assigned to the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, or rather exactly to the fifth month of his first year, what does Hananiah mean when he prophesies restoration בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה “within two full years” (Jer. 28:3, 11; RV)?

This Hebrew phrase can mean either “while there were yet two years (to run)” (LXX and V at v. 3), or “(somewhere) in the course of two years” (Th. at v. 3, as it seems), or “within two years”, or “just within, towards the end of two years” (cp. T’s “at the end of two years”), as in modern English usage. Only the V’s post duo annos at v. 11 is grammatically impossible.

Apparently the only passage decisive for its meaning occurs in the story of Joseph, where what is predicted as going to happen בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה “within three days” is subsequently said to take place בֵּשָׁהוֹ וַיִּשְׁכָּנָה “on the third day” (Gen. 40:13, 20), i.e. towards the end of the specified period. If then

is here translated “towards the end of two full years”, the history of these events can be satisfactorily reconstructed.

In 597 B.C. Nebuchadrezzar captured Jerusalem, replaced Jehoiakin by Zedekiah and deported him with the bulk of the people to Babylon. The capture of the city can now be dated by a recently discovered Babylonian text on 2 Adar (15/16 March), and the captivity of Jehoiakin has been shown to have begun on 10 Nisan (22 April) from calculations based on the Biblical text (cp. Ez. 40:1). The rest of the king’s accession-year would not be included in numbering the years of his reign; for, as said above, at this period his reign was regarded as beginning at the following New Year. If then the year began in Nisan (March–Apr.), Hananiah’s prophecy in the fifth month of Zedekiah’s first year would have been spoken in Ab (July–Aug.) of the same year; as however the year was then apparently held to begin in Tishri (Sept.–Aug.), the prophecy would probably have been delivered in Shebat (Jan.–Feb.) of the next year, namely 596 B.C. Hananiah’s false prophecy arose out of the embassy of the five kings, for which such a date would have been eminently suitable.

In Tebet (Dec.–Jan.) of 597–596 B.C. Nebuchadrezzar was at Carchemish, apparently without the main body of his army, which is not mentioned in the Babylonian account, but which was probably not far off, especially if the purpose of the Babylonian king’s journey was to receive homage and tribute from a number of Syrian princes. In the same month, however, he started back home, presumably because he had heard that Elamite (?) forces were appearing along the river Tigris and might cut his route back to Babylon unless he checked or repelled them. These events would provide the very opportunity for which the conspirators were looking; as soon, then, as the king’s back was turned, they took concerted action to induce Zedekiah to join their alliance. Hananiah’s prophecy was surely connected with the embassy; perhaps he had been won over by the kings or perhaps he was short-sighted enough to see in their coalition a chance that the Babylonian yoke might be shaken off. Further, Nebuchadrezzar’s return to Babylon might perhaps have been to some extent brought about by rumours, which might also have reached the west, of smouldering discontent at home; for in the coming winter, in Kislev (Nov.–Dec.) and Tebet (Dec.–Jan.) of 596–595 B.C., a serious revolt broke out in Babylon which he suppressed only with the loss of a considerable number of his troops (?) and the capture of the rebel leader.43

41 D.J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (1956) 33.
43 Wiseman, op. cit., 36.
However, when the five kings and their representatives arrived in Jerusalem, the false prophet Hananiah came forward promising success: the restoration of the exiles and the recovery of the treasures carried off after the capture of Jerusalem on 2 Adar (15/16 March) of the preceding year, \textit{i.e.}, 597 B.C. This restoration would take place, according to his prophecy, within, \textit{i.e.}, towards the end of two full years, reckoned from the fall of Jerusalem on the date just given, or from the actual deportation. The promised restoration would thus fall in 595 B.C. Thus the allies would have a year during which Nebuchadrezzar was otherwise engaged, from the opening months of 596 B.C. when the Elamites (?) were causing trouble till the winter of 596–595 B.C. when he was occupied with the Babylonian revolt, for the maturing of their plans. This would give them ample time to gain the support of other neighbouring states, and possibly also of the Egyptians, in any open attempt that they might hope to make to throw off the Babylonian yoke.

In Egypt Pharaoh Necho II had taken no action against Babylonian threats since 601 B.C.; the confederate kings might therefore have reason to suppose that he was failing and that he would soon be succeeded by a more vigorous king. Such expectations, if indeed they harboured them, were fulfilled: the old king died in 595/594 B.C. and his son Psammetichus II, who succeeded him, at once showed his mettle. Unfortunately, what they could not foresee was that, instead of supporting their coalition and embroiling himself with the Babylonian empire, he immediately plunged into an Ethiopian or Nubian war which effectively prevented him from intervening in the north. He died in 589 B.C., before the last siege and final capture of Jerusalem in 588–586 B.C.

Thus Hananiah was proved a false prophet, and Jeremiah's warnings were found to be fully justified.

9. Common formulae and quotations\textsuperscript{44} may be expected to be represented in abbreviations.

For example, such an expression as שֶׁשֶׁיָּדְקֵן \textit{“old and feeble”} (2 Chr. 36:17) is in itself plausible enough but does not suit the context, which requires a phrase denoting all the world; the two terms, therefore, must describe not likes but opposites. This result can be obtained by postulating an original \textit{�יִךְ יָדְקֵן misread as above but intended to be read יָדְקֵן יִשְֹרָאֵל “old man and infant”, which is actually implied by S and Aq. (Rudolph). Or again, the formula in \textit{יִשְֹרָאֵל מָנוּחַ} is defective; it has no subject, and the line is rhythmically two beats short. May the original text have been \textit{יִשְֹרָאֵל מְלֹא א贼 or מְלֹא הַמָּלְכֹּת or מְלֹא הַמָּלְכֹּת אָדוֹן (Ps. 72:15)? For such expressions must have been so well known (cp. 1 Ki.

\textsuperscript{44} Cp. Prov. 6:3; see: \textit{Textus} 1 (1960) 128.
1:25, 31; Dan. 3:9) that scribes may not have seen any need to write them out. By this simple assumption sense is won and the rhythmical structure of the verse restored, even if the exact formula originally used cannot now be recovered. Another example may perhaps be seen in רִיצְיָן (MT) for רִיְצָן (Prov. 22:11; Toy w. LXX and T), which occurs elsewhere (Ps. 87:2; cp. Ps. 37:28; 146:8; Is. 61:8).

III

The Juddan Scrolls support the contention that quite early Hebrew texts must have had abbreviations in more or less common use; their frequency will have depended on the idiosyncrasies of individual scribes.

For example, evidence for the practice of abbreviating units of measure is present in ס for סָמָא se‘âh, a well known measure for grain (Milik in Qumrân 3 [1963] 37–38). One instance of abbreviating a Biblical quotation may be found in נַחֲשׁוֹן (רָדִיר) (I Q. Flavius Josephus 1:8:13), standing for נַחֲשׁוֹן (רָדִיר) (cp. Deut. 4:35; 39; 7:9; Is. 40:3). These are early texts, dated ca. 1st century A.D.; but the same practice can be traced in a medieval copy of one of the Scrolls, dated ca. 10–11th century A.D. CD viii, 6 (ed. Rost = ed. Rabin viii, 6) has standing for נַחֲשׁוֹן (רָדִיר) or נַחֲשׁוֹן (רָדִיר) (according to the reading preferred), i.e. נַחֲשׁוֹון (רָדִיר) as it is written (cp. CD ix, 8 ed. Rost = ed. Rabin vii, 19).46

Once the names of the letters serving as abbreviations are written out, namely אבִי = אבִי, אֱלֹהִים = אֱלֹהִים, and אָלֹף יְדָלָה = אָלֹף יְדָלָה (CD xix, 1 ed. Rost = ed. Rabin xv, 1).

IV

A few passages may now be examined in the light of the principles of abbreviation here expounded, to see what fresh interpretation of them may be possible.

Gen. 6:3: בּוֹשֶׁם יְהוָה בָּאָרָר

This passage has long been a crux interpretum; and even taking it to be equivalent to בּוֹשֶׁם יְהוָה בָּאָרָר “because even he is flesh” is open to the objection that בּוֹשֶׁם יְהוָה בָּאָרָר “which” is not found elsewhere, and indeed can hardly be postulated in this book. Can it stand for בּוֹשֶׁם יְהוָה בָּאָרָר “(as for) his

45 W. Brownlee in BASOR 114 (1949) 10 v. R. Marcus in JNES 11 (1952) 209. Otherwise “he (is) God” is a compound phrase treated as a single nominal unit in the gen. case (cp. Brockelmann, GVGSS 2 § 345a).

46 Textus 1 (1960) 120, like דִי for כ in the Aramaic Document quoted above p. 77.
flesh, even it is flesh” *i.e.*, “his flesh is mere flesh”, meaning that, as man is nothing but mortal man, his life will be limited to 120 years?

2 Chr. 3:1: אֵאָרָם הָעָרוֹת לִדוֹדָה

Here two abbreviations are concealed, namely the omission of the final radical letter of a defective verb 47 and the use of ח ח for the divine name. 48 The text may then be read אָשֶׁר נָרָא ח ח אָשֶׁר נָרָא ח ח ח ח “where the Lord appeared to David”, as indeed the LXX have taken it.

2 Chr. 25:8: אָמְרָה בָּאָה בָּתָא עָפָה הָעָרוֹת לִדוֹדָה

Nothing can be made of this clause as the text stands; but if it is read אָמְרָה בָּאָה בָּתָא עָפָה הָעָרוֹת לִדוֹדָה 49 “if in these men thou gainest support for the battle” (sc. if Amaziah thinks to win victory by hiring a large Ephraimite force, he deceives himself), it at once becomes intelligible. The LXX’s ἐν ὑπολάβῃς κατασχοῦσαι ἐν τούτων confirms this interpretation of the text, which has also the advantage of conforming to the consonantal text and so avoiding any elaborate reconstruction of it such as Rudolph’s (in which the *ductus literarum* is totally disregarded).

Is. 38:8: אָשֶׁר רָאִית הַמְשַׁמֵּשׁ אֵאָה בָּשָׁמָה

Here the subject of the verb is missing. Clearly רָאִית ח ח must be read (for the word to which ח must refer is perfectly clear, as it has been mentioned at the very end of the immediately preceding clause), so that the sentence may be translated “which the shadow had gone down on the dial of Ahaz with the sun”. The subject can hardly be the sun (LXX, S, T), whence has been “corrected” to the שָׁמָּה (Houbigant), because of its awkward position after “on the dial of Ahaz”; and the shadow moves in conformity with (ב) the movement of the sun.

Jer. 32:20: לְבָדָה לְבָדָה

The LXX’s καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις “and (among) the sons of earth”, which yields a forgotten Hebrew phrase.

Ps. 4:9: לְבָדָה לְבָדָה

These two phrases look like doublets, especially as the half-verse is rhythmically overweighted. Possibly then an early pre-Septuagintal copyist (for both are represented in the LXX), uncertain of what an abbreviated לְבָדָה was intended to indicate, put לְבָדָה and לְבָדָה together into the text to be on the safe side. Both are tolerably well known phrases, so that no difficulty can originally have been anticipated from the abbreviation.

Ps. 9:7–8: לְבָדָה לְבָדָה

Every one has seen that the mysterious לְבָדָה belongs, as the acrostic arrange-
ment shows, not to the end of v. 7 but to the beginning of v. 8; but no one has seen what it can mean in this position. May it be another instance of יְהֹוָה יִשְׁתַּחְשָׁה which has been recognized twice elsewhere? The meaning will then be, if the words are literally translated: “(as for) this place, so Yahweh has taken his seat for ever”. The “place” is, as often, either Jerusalem or the Temple, where the Psalmist pictures himself to be sitting; the י before יְהֹוָה is in apodosis after a nominal clause, and יֵשׁ is used loosely with the preceding יֹשּׁבְנוּ as indirectly governed by it (although reckoned as one rhetorical beat, this is a not impossible restoration of the text).

Job 32:9: לא יֵשׁ יִשְׁתַּחְשָׁה.

The half-verse is rhythmically defective, and a doubt may be expressed whether וַיָּדְעוּ יִשְׁתַּחְשָׁה “old men” demands. Possibly therefore an original וַיָּדְעוּ יִשְׁתַּחְשָׁה “great in days” = “aged men” may be conjecturally read. The LXX’s πολυχρόνιοι and the V’s longeavi support the conjecture. That this idiom does not actually occur will explain why it has been missed; and, although the Hebrew יֵשׁ is not used in any such connection, the Syr. יֵשׁ shows that the phrase here postulated is possible.

Job 33:22: לָקָפְתָּה?

This expression is supposed to mean “to the slayers”, a unique expression further, the slayers ought to have been mentioned before the pit, and the half-verse is rhythmically defective. The remedy lies with the LXX’s έν θανατώ, which suggests לַקָּפְתָּה יֹשָׁבֲנֵה “to the place of the dead” (Ball, BH3), with which the parallel לשפיח perfectly agrees; this too has been missed because it is an unique expression.

Prov. 15:14: וַיִּהְבֶּהוּ יְהֹוָה אֵלָה

An originally abbreviated ג is will explain both יִהְבֶּהוּ (K.) “face” and יִהְבֶּהוּ (Q.) “mouth”, which must be preferred with the following verb; and all the VSS have it.

This same abbreviation has caused a mistake also in יָהִיר (Num. 33:8), which has been wrongly read as יָהִיר (MT w. LXX) in place of יָהִיר (Heb. MSS, Sam., S, V, TO); this, too, is the form which occurs everywhere else (Ex. 14:2, 9; Num. 33:7).

50 Jer. 7:4 and 2 Chr. 8:11; see Textus 1 (1960) 122.
51 Cp. 2 Ki. 11:1; Jer. 51:58; Na. 2:9 (si vera lectio); Ps. 77:1; 78:56 (if the athnach is put back from יְהֹוָה to יָהִיר); 115:5–7; Dan. 11:5.
52 Gen. 25:23, where however the contrast with “young” shows what יָהִיר here connotes; cp. TO at Gen. 19:11; 44:12.
54 Driver-Gray Job (Edinburgh 1921) ii, 247–248.
Another difficulty caused by this name is that it has defied all attempts to find any such place in Egyptian sources; and this raises the question whether it is indeed an Egyptian place-name, especially since a Semitic etymology is ready to hand. Elsewhere the LXX render it by ἀπεναντία τῆς ἐπαύλεως “opposite the stading, country-house, (military) quarters, unwalled village” or the like (Ex. 14:2, 9); obviously the Arab. خبر pecorum sepimentum, and حارة urbis vicus lie behind this translation. The verb from which these nouns are derived is attonitus fuit, fluctuavit, and another term coming from it is multis via per deserti tractum ducens, ut eius exitus ignotus sit (Freytag). These terms suggest a Hebr. והיוה “unwalled settlement on the desert edge, desert track” or the like, so that this would be a Semitic expression for “the opening of the tracks”, i.e. the place where the last settlements are left behind and the desert tracks open out before the traveller. That in both places והיוה is closely connected with “the edge of the wilderness” (Ex. 13:20; Num. 33:6) lends colour to the explanation here proposed.

Prov. 16:11: המים אומרים לוחות יוהו
The addition of המים here mars the sense and spoils the parallelism with המים; the suggestion may therefore be made that המים has been misread as המים and that this has been wrongly filled out to make המים as found in the MT.

Eccl. 9:1: ואתכלוהו מותי אללי כלב ואחרכלוהו
The construction of אתכלוהו is awkward, and the suggestion may be hazarded that אתכלוהו “and my heart (mind) has explored, all this”. The LXX’s σύμπαν τοῦτο ἔδωκε εἰς καρδίαν μου, καὶ καρδία μου σύμπαν ἵδον τοῦτο (cp. S) agrees with this conjecture.

Lam. 2:18: עשק ללב אלהי-אדני
As the feminine Zion is addressed, both ללבן and עשק and עשק are grammatically impossible; if however עשק ללב מלח = עשק לְמ לְאָלֶהי-אדני “cry with a full heart to the Lord” is read (cp. Eccl. 8:11), a plausible sense may be obtained, even though no VS supports either reading of the text; for something of the sort is demanded by the context.

The conviction that abbreviations must have been widely used in Hebrew MSS over a long period of time is strengthened by the recognition of the same

55 Cp. Syr. ṣeṭa, conventus (Brockelmann Lex. Syr. 2:230); cp. Ps. 84:11 where וְאָלֶהי “I have chosen” may be an error for וַּאָלֶהי or קַסֵּר “in my home”, as the contrasted הבָּדַר “in thy courts” suggests; see JTS 44 (1943) 16. Cp. Beeston in Museum 67 (1954) 311–313.
56 Cp. Arab. bdar “tried, knew by experience” (Dathe; see Margoliouth in Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible 3, 28 and Driver in JBL 55 [1936] 108); hence ut curolie intelligerem (V, following MT).
abbreviation as reflected in the diverse renderings of the same expression in two proverbs by ancient interpreters. In the one רָעָת (Prov. 12:4: = V) has been taken as דַּרְכֵּב יִתְנַחַם (LXX, S, T). In the other the MT’s reading of רָעָת (Prov. 14:30; LXX, V, S) is replaced in T by יְדִיעָת יִתְנַחַם. At first sight “rot in the bones” seems strange, if not absurd, and “rot in the wood” is attractive as making obvious sense, especially as rgb is applied to wood in other passages (Is. 40:20; Job 41:19). The parallelism however in כִּשָּׁה לַאֲפָרִים יִרְכֹּב לְבֵית יְהוֹדָה (Hos. 5:12) suggests that רָעָת denotes a disease;⁵⁸ and the S’s הַרְכָּב יֵאָמָה and also lepra leonina⁵⁹ confirms this suspicion. The two clauses may then refer to symptoms of true leprosy. (Hansen’s disease). This is of two kinds, lepromatous and non-lepromatous; the latter may heal itself, but the former is marked by nodules which penetrate deep into the skin and, if untreated, tend to ulcerate and discharge pus until eventually the ulceration reaches the bone which then dies and sloughs off.⁶⁰ Accordingly Hosea may be assumed to be describing the final stages of true leprosy; and the Lord in his wrath is depicted as the cause of decay in the body politic of Ephraim and Judah⁶¹ comparable to the ravages of leprosy in the human body. So in the two proverbs here discussed a wife who brings shame and ruin on her husband is compared to leprosy destroying the bone, and jealousy gnawing at the heart is similarly compared to leprosy eating into the bones of a man’s body. True leprosy is mentioned in Egyptian sources ca. 1500 B.C. and is called the “Phoenician malady” by Greek writers on medicine, so that references to it are not out of place in the OT. If then the law prescribing the expulsion of a person afflicted by פִּרְצָה from the camp refers to leucodermatous diseases, it will also have required the expulsion of sufferers from true leprosy, on the principle that a law importing the lesser will have imported also the greater malady.⁶² Possibly, however, the Syriac translation ought not to be pressed too far: then necrosis of the bones will be meant.

In conclusion, the recognition of hidden abbreviations in the MT can thus be used for the recovery of the original text without emendation. The method,

58 Contrariwise רָעָת “water-skin” (Job 13:28; Syr. בֶּלֶט and per metathesim Arab. ترية) and רָעָת “trembling” (Hab. 3:16; Arab. ترية) must be kept distinct.
60 Cp. Ps. 31:11, where again leprosy (lepra leonina) may be meant.
however, must be used with circumspection and due regard for the rules. These are, briefly, that only certain categories of terms are subject to abbreviation, namely:

terminations, including pronominal elements; independent pronouns; particles; common nouns of frequent occurrence especially those for numbers and measures; other nouns when they have recently been mentioned; names of persons and places which occur often, especially the divine names; occasional sentences, such as formulae and quotations, and expressions recurring frequently in any given book.

At the same time modern readers must never forget that ancient texts were not written down to be read at sight, for amusement or relaxation. Reading was an esoteric art confined to the learned classes (priests, lawyers and scribes) who generally knew the text by heart, and the written word was merely a memoria technica to be consulted to refresh the memory or look up what had been said if or when it failed.

Additional Abbreviations.

As the Hebrew names may be abbreviated, so the Ass. (ii) Be- dubbed (Deimel Panth. Bab. 74) and the Nabat. נביי שמך appears as בניו של 하 של העה (Cantineau, Nabatéen II 73).

Other Hebrew abbreviations may be: אאאא (Ps. 119: 90), as well as read as ורמשים ורמשים (Is. 53:3, LXX) and read as במה (Deut. 33:15, Hempel; cp. LXX). The omission of the pronominal affix in the verb may not improbably be postulated in ניק for ניק (Gen. 49:4; LXX, Sym., Th., Sam.), perhaps also in ניק for ניק (Neh. 6:9; Begrich) and ניק for ניק (Eccl. 4:2, Horst; cp. JBL 73, 130).