

בעל = בשת; בעלים = גללים

אבנר רמו

According to the Chronicler, one of David's valiant men was: **אביאל הערבתי** (*aviel haa'rvathi*) - "**Abiel the Arbathite**" (1 Ch 11:32). This name appears in the Book of Samuel as: **אבי-עלבון הערבתי** (*avie'lvon haa'rvathi*- "**Abi-albon the Arbathite**" (2 Sam 23:31)

The Greeks translated here **אבי-עלבון** - "**Abi-albon**" to "Abiel" which means "God is my father" and it is possible that they assumed that **עלבון** (*elvon*) in the Book of Samuel is an order type error of: **בעל** (*baa'l*) - "**Baal**" and therefore "corrected" the name.

In the Book of Judges we read:

ויהי כאשר מת גדעון וישבו בני ישראל ויזנו אחרי הבעלים; וישימו להם בעל ברית לאלהים.
"And it came to pass, as [soon as] Gideon died, that the children of Israel again went astray after the Baalim, and appointed **Baal-berith** to be their god" (Jud 8:33).

However, one chapter later we find:

וישמעו כל-בעלי מגדל-שכם; ויבאו אל-צריח בית אל ברית.
"And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard thereof, they entered into the hold of the house of **El-berith**" (Jud 9:46).

The writer of the Codex Alexandrinus wrote here: "the house of Baal-of-Covenant" and the translation suggest that this writer (unlike the one who wrote the Codex Vaticanus) understood that a certain scribe of the Hebrew Bible "corrected" here **בעל** (*baal*) to **אל** (*el*) - "God."

In the Book of Samuel we read:

אלה שמות הגברים אשר לדוד: ישב בשבת תחכמוני ראש השלשי,
"These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: **Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite**, chief of the captains" (2 Sam 23:8).

The Greek translator wrote here: "Lebosthe the Chananite", but as this unique name does not appear anywhere else in the Bible it cannot be determined what the correct name was.

It seems that already the Chronicler assumed that this is a corrupt name and he wrote:

ואלה מספר הגברים אשר לדוד: ישבעם בן-חכמוני ראש השלושים (השלישים)
"And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had: **Jashobeam, the son of a Hachmonite**, the chief of the captains" (1 Ch 11:11).

The Greek translator wrote here: "Iesebaal son of Hachamani" which suggests that he believed that even the Chronicler eared and **ישבעם** (*yashva'm*) is a letter-substitution error of: **אשבעל** (*eshbaa'l*) - "**Eshbaal**" (e.g. 1 Ch 8:33; 9:39). Alternatively, it is a letter-substitution and a letter-deletion error of: **אישבעל** (*ishbaa'l*).



The name **אש בעל בן בדע (*esh baal ben beda*) engraved on a clay container from the 10th century BC found near Beith-Shemesh**

The biblical Hebrew word **בעל** (*baa'l*) has several meanings, including being a generic term for various foreign gods. This word is also a component of the names of several personalities (including Israelites) and locations. It seems that at several periods the worship of **בעל** (*baa'l*) became so rife among the Israelites, that several Prophets strongly protested against it and regarded it as **בשת** (*bosheth*) - "shame."

It appears that the anti-Baal campaign reached such a degree that several biblical writers had even changed personal names that included this component. For example, we read: **ירבעל הוא גדעון** (*yerubaa'l hu gido'n*) - "**Jerubbaal**, [who] is **Gideon**" (Jud 7:1; see also Jud 6:32; 8:29, 35; 9:1, 2, 5, 16, 19, 24, 28, 57; 1 Sam 12:11), yet the writer of the book of Samuel refers to him also as: **ירבשת** (*yerubesheth*) - "**Jerubbesheth**" (2 Sam 11:21; yet the Greek translator wrote here; "Ierobaal").

The Chronicler refers to one of King Saul's sons as: **אשבעל** (*eshbaa'l*) - "**Eshbaal**" (1 Ch 8:33; 9:39) but the writer of the Book of Samuel calls him: **איש-בשת** (*aish-bosheth*) - "**Ish-bosheth**" (2 Sam 2:8, 10, 12, 15; 3:8, 14, 15; 4:5, 8, 12).

The Chronicler also tells us that the name of King Saul's grandson is **מריב בעל** (*meriv baa'l*) - "**Merib-baal**" (1 Ch 8:34; 9:40), yet the writer of the Book of Samuel refers to him as: **מפיבשת** (*mefibosheth*) - "**Mephibosheth**" (2 Sam 4:4; 9:6, 10, 11, 12, 13; 16:1, 4; 19:25, 26, 21; 21:7, 8). According to the Chronicler among the sons that were born to King David in Jerusalem was: **בעלידע** - "**Beeliada**" (1 Ch 14:7), yet in the Book of Samuel his name is: **אלידע** - "**Eliada**" (2 Sam 5:16; 1 Ch 3:8). It appears that the writer (or a late scribe) of the Book of Samuel assumed that the meaning of the name of this son of David must have been "**God knows**" rather than "**Baa'l knows**."

In the Book of Jeremiah we read: **שמתם מזבחות לבשת-מזבחות לקטר לבעל** - “You set up altars to the **shameful thing**, even altars to offer to **Baal**” (Jer 11:13; see also: Hos 10:6). It is likely that a scribe who did not like here the phrase: **מזבחות לקטר לבעל** - “[You set up] altars to offer to **Baal**”, entered a “correction”: **מזבחות לבשת** - “altars to the shameful thing” just prior to these words.

In the Book of Kings we read: **ויאמר אליהו לנביאי הבעל** - “And Elijah said to the prophets of **Baal**” (1 Ki 18:25; see also: 1 Ki 18:19). Yet in the Greek translation of the Book of Kings we find here: “shame.” This suggests that in the Hebrew Vorlage of the translators the word **בעל** - “**Baa’l**” here was already replaced with the word **בשת** (*bosheth*) - “shame.” Alternatively, the Greek translators themselves were aware of this replacement process and sometimes applied it to their translation.

It appears that King David had two groups of mighty men. One had thirty participants, but the more prestigious one contained only three men. According to the Chronicler one was: **ישבעם בן-חכמוני, ראש השלושים (השלישים)** - “Jashobeam, the son of a Hachmonite, the chief of the captains” (1 Ch 11:11). The Greek translator believed that his name was: “Iesebaal son of Hachamani” or in Hebrew: **ישבעל בן החמני** *yeshbaa’l hakhamani*. If the Greek translator is correct, then it appears that David’s senior mighty man was a gentile (e.g. Lev 26:30; Is 17:8; 27:9; Eze 6:4, 6; 2 Ch 14:4; 24:4, 7), and it is not unlikely that the Chronicler (or a late scribe) tried to conceal this fact by tinkering with his name.

In the Book of Samuel his name appears as: **ישב בשבת תחכמני ראש השלשי** - “Joshebbasshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains” (2 Sam 23:8). In several places in the Bible the word **בעל** *baa’l* (the god Baal) was replaced by **בשת** *bosheth* - “shame” (e.g. Jud 7:1 ver. 2 Sam 11:21; 1 Ch 8:33 ver. 2 Sam 2:8). It is therefore suggested that in verse 2 Sam 23:8 the words: **ישב בשבת תחכמני** are a letter-insertion, a letter-substitution, and mis-division to words of **ישבשת החמני** *yeshbosheth hakhamani*. According to the Greek translation of the Book of Samuel (but not of the Book of Chronicles), he was the head of the group of three mighty men.

In the Hebrew Bible we also find the plural form of Baa’l which is **בעלים** (*baa’lim*) - “**Baalim**” (Jud 2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6, 10; 1 Sam 7:4; 12:10; 1 Ki 18:18; Jer 2:23; 9:13; Hos 2:15, 19; 11:2; 2 Ch 17:3; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3; 34:4).

The Greeks mostly translated **בעלים** (*baa’lim*) to “Baalim”, but in several verses they translated this word to: “idols” (Jer 9:13; 2 Ch 17:3; 28:2). Another biblical word that was mostly translated to Greek as “idols” is **גללים** (*gilulim*) - “idols” (Deu 29:16; 2 Ki 17:12; 21:21; 23:24; Eze 18:12). We may therefore conclude that the Greek translators believed that the words **בעלים** (*baa’lim*) and **גללים** (*gilulim*) has the same meaning.

In several verses, words from the root **גלל** mean “dung” (1 Ki 14:10; Eze 4:12, 15; Zep 1:17), which may suggest that for denigrating the **בעלים** - “**Baalim**” some of the biblical writers (or late scribes) replaced this word with **גללים** (*gilulim*).