

Postscript: Caveats on Errata of Haste

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The most beautiful act of scholarship is a public change of mind in view of new or overlooked evidence. It was what distinguished the great W. F. Albright from many of his contemporaries and successors in ancient Near Eastern studies. In the magnanimous spirit of Eilat Mazar's decision to change her reading of the so-called Temech seal, let me follow up with a confessional note about my own errors, which some readers have caught and (*inshallah*) some have yet to catch.

I would like to thank a few careful respondents for criticisms of my article, each of which I find particularly relevant to my stated concern that the immediacy of the information age has hastened scholarly analysis at the expense of (a) thoroughness and (b) the opportunity for collaborative vetting to avoid certain elementary mistakes before they reach print. Many of us are indebted to collegial readers who notice those little errors before they go to press. In the haste to respond to *BAR*'s request for a quickly-written analysis of Mazar's reading, I have made a few similar mistakes in my reply. In place of a rewrite, I have asked the editors of *BAR* to retain these mistakes in the original article so that I may isolate them and emphasize exactly how these missteps sometimes creep into a new brand of Internet scholarship governed by the media's culture of instant gratification and how a wonderful community of attentive readers actually allows for a kind of instant peer review that traditional print media sometimes belabor.

Let me begin with the references to bullae from Yigal Shiloh's City of David excavations. I mistakenly cited a dubious corpus (the so-called burnt archive) published by Nahman Avigad, rather than the Jerusalem bullae published by Yair Shoham.¹ Since I am uncomfortable with extending the same credibility of provenanced items to unprovenanced corpora like the burnt archive, this was not only a mistake of citation, but also a gravely sloppy incorporation of contaminated data. I think this further bolsters my earlier concerns that when we sometimes rush to judgment, the need to keep pace with the 24-hour media (the proverbial flow of traffic) may compromise the circumspection of our expertise and skills. For the *šin*, then, substitute the inappropriate references to Avigad with the corrected reference to City of David bulla B4. For the *mem*, see instead the City of David bullae B2, B7, B12, B15, B18, B19, and B32. For specimens from Jerusalem with *pes* with down left curving tails, see B9, B10, B39, and B44. I hope this clarifies my improper citations of unprovenanced materials and the inaccurate references to the City of David as their find-spots. The scary part of this confessional is the fact that no scholar has yet to notice that I credited Avigad with Shiloh's discovery! One attentive reader, Michael Welch, correctly noticed that my mistake of attribution (which he actually missed) gave the appearance of wishing to have it both ways (which he caught), i.e. to cite some unprovenanced materials (Avigad's bullae) while methodologically avoiding other unprovenanced inscriptions, viz. those with names of women.

Another oversight involves the omission of an argument on behalf of my vocalization of the name *Šlomit* and my interpretation of the name as feminine. The seal characters *šlmt*

could be read either as *Šlomit* or *Šlomot*.² *Šlomît* appears as a female name in Lev 24:11 and 1 Chron 3:19.³ Massoretic *Šlômît* in Ezra 8:10, *Šlomît* in 1 Chron 23:18, and *Šlomît* in 26:25 (*gere*), 28 (*ketib*; these are evidently the same person) are all masculine. The *Šlomît* in 2 Chron 11:20 is a little trickier and one could read it as either masculine or feminine (although the Greek leans masculine). Martin Noth, who authored an authoritative prosopographical study of Hebrew names, considered *Šlomît* the feminine form of masculine *Šlomi*,⁴ although that does not explain the ostensible masculine instances of *Šlômît*/*Šlomît* (but let's return to that in a moment). In the LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Greek transliterates the Massoretic feminine name *Šlomît* in Lev 24:11 and 1 Chron 3:19 as Σαλωμιθ (*Šalōmith*), which is not too bad a rendering (the *shewa* may not have appeared in Hebrew yet, judging from Origen's transliterations). The masculine names tell a different story, however. The male forms of Massoretic *Šlomît* in Greek appear as Σαλιμουθ (*Šalimouth* in Ezra 8:10), Σαλωμοθ, (*Šalōmōth* in 1 Chron 23:18; 26:25, 28), and Σαλημοθ (*Šalēmōth* in 2 Chron 11:20). The Greek transliterations understand every instance of feminine *Šlomît* as an authentic female name, whereas the original Hebrew text that the LXX is transliterating seems to render an original variation of the name *Šlomôt* for each male instance. In other words, there is apparently no male *Šlomît* in the original Hebrew, at least not in the Hebrew manuscript(s) available to the LXX translators. The name *Šlomôt*, by contrast, is indeed a masculine name,⁵ so we come back to the original question of the seal owner's gender. If the epigrapher wishes to read the seal's *šlmt* as *Šlomit*, then the name is most likely feminine. If one prefers to read *Šlomot*, then the name is most likely masculine. Either reading is permissible since the seal's Hebrew does not include any *matres lectionis* to settle the question of vocalization. I like to think the seal reads *Šlomit*, but perhaps that is just the optimist in me.

¹ Yair Shoham, "Hebrew Bullae." Pp. 29-57 in *Excavations at the City of David, 1978-1985, Vol. VI: Inscriptions*, ed. D. T. Ariel. Qedem 41 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2000). All references to City of David bullae cited in the postscript may be found in this volume.

² For sake of simplicity, I am avoiding references to *matres lectionis* (extra consonants employed to aid vocalization) for the seal's text, as the Massoretic *matres* in the biblical attestations might represent Persian or Hellenistic augmentations to the orthography.

³ The fragmentary remains of the biblical manuscripts from Qumran preserve only one exemplar of *Šlomît* (Lev 24:11), but the extant fragments of Ezra and Chronicles unfortunately do not preserve the relevant passages with names for comparison. Frank L. Benz notes the name *šlmt* in Phoenician, which he posits is feminine; see *idem, Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1972) 180. Avigad also cites a *Šlomit* in an unprovenanced bulla, the curious palaeography of which strikes me as a possible forgery. See *idem, Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive*. Qedem 4 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1976) seal 14.

⁴ Martin Noth, *Die Israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart, 1928) 165, n. 6.

⁵ See Noth, *Die Israelitischen Personennamen*, p. 38-39, with reference to name 1343.