REVIEWS EDITOR ANNOUNCEMENT

On behalf of the readers of The Bible Translator, Technical Papers, I should like to thank Rev. Harold Scanlin for his dedicated service as Reviews Editor since July 1993. Drawing upon his expertise in biblical studies, and especially his in-depth knowledge of textual criticism and of the Dead Sea Scrolls, he chose books for review and scholars to review them that significantly enhanced the contribution of The Bible Translator to its readers.

I am pleased to welcome Rev. Scanlin’s successor, Dr Roger L. Omanson. Dr Omanson is a New Testament scholar who was a UBS translation consultant in West Africa 1975-79; he taught New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary 1979-1987; and since 1987 has been a UBS interregional translation consultant. He is presently the UBS Consultant on Scholarly Editions and Helps.

Reviews of new publications in biblical studies and translation and related areas are invited and may be sent to Dr Roger L. Omanson, 6417 Lime Ridge Place, Louisville, KY 40222, USA, or e-mail: rlomanson@cs.com.

Phil Noss
UBS Translation Services Coordinator
The tree known in Hebrew as "bērōṣ" is relatively common in the OT, occurring 20 times. A variant "bērōṣ" occurs in Song 1.17; this may be an Aramaic or Northern Palestinian form of the same. No clear consensus has emerged as to how this particular tree’s name should be translated, but four options are discernible:

1) “cypress” - one of the options cited by F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. This is the meaning of the word in the Talmud and modern Hebrew.

2) “pine” - So NIV. This is more specifically Pinus halepensis “Aleppo pine.”

3) “juniper” - So L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, and D. J. A. Clines. This is more specifically Juniperus phoenicia “Phoenician juniper,” based on an equation with the Akkadian burāšu “juniper.”

4) “fir” - So AV and RV, one of the options cited by Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

All these options are conifers and evergreens.

We should note that there are other words in biblical Hebrew that are sometimes advanced as having the meaning of the above. Thus “cypress” is tē’aššur, “pine” is ‘ōren, and “juniper” ‘arār, and possibly ‘almug / ’algum.

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2 Ibid., 141a, has “cypress or fir.”
3 M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Talmud (N. Y.: Chareb, 1926), 191a.
5 Flora and Fauna (United Bible Societies), 162.
9 F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, op. cit., 141a, has “cypress or fir.” M. Zohary, Plants of the Bible, 106, notes “whenever beresh is coupled with Lebanon and erez (cedar) it probably refers to Cilician Fir Abies Cilicia.”
11 L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, op. cit. (Vol. 4; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 1546a, NIV, NASB. These two versions also render tirzah in Isa 44.14 as “cypress.”
12 So NIV, CEV, ‘ōren is the modern Hebrew for “pine.” The Septuagint translated tīdhar by penē “pine” in Isa 60.13; Saadya Gaon in his 10th century translation into Arabic rendered tirzah by “stone pine” (M. Zohary, Plants of the Bible, 113); in the same work Zohary suggested ‘es semen is “Aleppo Pine,” ibid., 114.
The obvious question to be asked is whether biblical Hebrew had two or more words for the same tree.

Translational inconsistency

The most striking feature of the way bërōš has been translated is not the variety of translations, but the way in which the term has apparently been rendered inconsistently within a given translation.

Among ancient translations the Septuagint exhibits considerable variation, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Septuagint</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Kgs 5.8(22)</td>
<td>peukinos adj. “made of pine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Kgs 5.10(24)</td>
<td>peuké “pine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Kgs 6.15</td>
<td>peukinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Kgs 6.34</td>
<td>peukinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Kgs 9.11</td>
<td>peukinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Kgs 19.23; Isa 37.24</td>
<td>kyparissos “cypress”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Chr 2.8(7)</td>
<td>arkeuthinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Chr 3.5</td>
<td>kedrinos adj. “made of cedar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 41.19</td>
<td>kyparissos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 55.13</td>
<td>kyparissos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 60.13</td>
<td>kyparissos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 27.5</td>
<td>kedros “cedar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 31.8</td>
<td>pitus “pine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hos 14.8(9)</td>
<td>arkeuthos “juniper”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zech 11.2</td>
<td>pitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variant bërōš</td>
<td>kyparissos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cant 1.17</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ps 104.17; Isa 14.8; 2Sam 6.5; and Nah 2.3 (4) are omitted from this list as the Septuagint does not translate by tree names. In the last two cases the Hebrew text is commonly considered to be corrupt.

In the Septuagint peuké / peukinos / pitus “pine” is the preferred choice with seven occurrences, to kyparissos “cypress” with four. We should note that kedros / kedrinos “cedar” and arkeuthinos / arkeuthos “juniper” also occur.

We should note that the Septuagint is consistent within books, except for 2 Chronicles and Ezekiel. The rendering of 2Kgs 19.23 may be governed by that of the parallel in Isa 37.24.

We should further note that in the Vulgate abies / abiegnus “fir” is the clearly preferred choice, with fifteen occurrences to a single instance of arceuthinus “juniper” in 2Chr 2.8 (7).

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1 Some of the identifications are of course made with specific species.
2 The parallel 2Kgs 19.23 // Isa 37.24 is only counted once in this and other enumerations.
3 This and other citations exclude the variant bērōt in Cant 1.17.
4 We should also note that the Septuagint is not totally consistent in its rendering of ’erez “cedar.” It has kedros / kedrinos 63 times, and kyparissos / kyparissinos 5 times, but it is noteworthy that this variation is not as varied or as widespread as its treatment of bërōš.
5 This appears to be a direct translation of the Septuagint arkeuthinos “made of juniper.”
The same translational diversity is also observable in the majority of English translations. Only AV, RV “fir” and NIV “pine” are consistent throughout. Translational diversity among other major English translations is illustrated below: (Changes between NEB and REB and TEV and CEV are highlighted in bold).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>RSV/NRSV</th>
<th>NEB</th>
<th>REB</th>
<th>JB</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>JPS</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>CEV</th>
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<td>2Sam 6.5</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>fir</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>1Kgs 5.8</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
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<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
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<td>pine</td>
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<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
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<tr>
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<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
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<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>junip</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>cypr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps 104.17</td>
<td>fir</td>
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<td>Isa 14.8</td>
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<td>Ezek 27.5</td>
<td>fir</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hos 14.8</td>
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<td>Nah 2.3</td>
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<td>cypr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variant</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>fir</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
<td>cypr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEB and REB exhibit the least variation with one deviation from the standard. JPS has two, (N)RSV three, and NASB four deviations from the standard. No clear pattern to these deviations is discernible. JB has eight occurrences each of “juniper” and “cypress.” TEV and CEV exhibit the most variation, each using four different tree names.

Geographical considerations
An examination of the OT passages where bêrôš occurs enables us to see, albeit very partially, the geographical distribution of the tree.

1) It grew in Lebanon.

The Tyrian King Hiram sent Solomon cedar and bêrôš logs for the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem (1Kgs 5.8-10; 9.11; 2Chr 2.8). Solomon would not have imported the timber if sufficient quantities of good quality timber had been growing nearer home. This may be an argument for rejecting “pine.”

Ps 104.17 refers to storks nesting in the bêrôš, the immediate context is that of Lebanon (Ps 104.16). Isa 14.8 and 60.13 place the bêrôš in Lebanon. Isa 37.24

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1 In this subject the NRSV is the same as the earlier RSV.
2 NEB and REB have “in their tops,” an emendation of bêrôšîm to bêrô’sām.
3 GNB has “evergreen.”
4 CEV has “glorious.”
(parallel 2Kgs 19.23) refers to the Assyrian King Sennacherib cutting cedar and bêrôš in Lebanon, given the presence of cedar a high altitude may be implied. Hos 14.8 arguably fits a Lebanese context too, compare 14.5-7 and in Zech 11.2 bêrôš occurs immediately after a reference to Lebanon and cedars.

2) The bêrôš timbers from Sinir, that is, Mount Hermon in the Antilebanon range, were used in ship-building at Tyre (Ezek 27.5).

Description of the tree
There is no detailed description of the bêrôš in the OT, but several incidental details should not be overlooked.
1) It must have been sufficiently high for a stork to nest in it (Ps 104.17).
2) The implication of Ezek 31.8 is that it had broad boughs.
3) It is a “luxuriant” (Hebrew ra’anân) tree (Hos 14.8). We should note the reference to “your fruit” immediately following.

Uses of the wood
A number of the uses of bêrôš wood are given.
1) It was used to make musical instruments, at least according to the Masoretic Text of 2Sam 6.5. Though we should note that the parallel 1Chr 13.8 and also the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scroll 4QSama do not have this.
2) It was used to cover the floor of Solomon’s temple (1Kgs 6.15).
3) It was used to make doors for the temple (1Kgs 6.34).2
4) It was used to panel (hippâh) the main hall (habbayit haggadôl) of the temple (2Chr 3.5).
5) It was used in boat-building; the whole ship except for the mast, oars, and deck was made of this wood (Ezek 27.5). Clearly its planks must have been of considerable size.
6) It was used to make spears (Nah 2.3). Clearly a straight shaft was required here.
7) If bêrôt in Cant 1.17 is a variant form of bêrôš then it was used to make rafters. These must have been able to take a reasonable weight.

None of the evidence cited above enables us to make a categorical identification with any of the four original options, though the fact that fir is vulnerable to rot and insect infestation and comparatively short-lived presents us with a good case for eliminating it, at least in examples of architecture and ship-building3.

Bêrôš as an equivalent of Egyptian ‘aš
Though there is no etymological connection with bêrôš we should briefly discuss a tree mentioned in Egyptian texts as growing in Syria and Lebanon and known as ‘aš. V. Loret proposed that ‘aš was pine or fir, and when qualified by maa “true” it

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2 We should note the observations of R. Meiggs, op. cit., 408, 419. The Assyrians nearly always used cedar or cypress for the doors of palaces or temples; in Greece, op. cit., cypress was the preferred choice for temple doors; there is no recorded instance of a temple door of fir. The doors of St. Peter’s in Rome were made of cypress. Egyptian use of ‘aš wood for monumental doors is evidence to Meiggs that this term is not fir, see further page 7.
3 R. Meiggs, op. cit., 56, 416.
referred to the Cilician fir Abies cilicia. L. Manniche notes that a small calcite jar in the tomb of Tutankhamun (1336-1327 BC) was labelled “fir resin,” and it still contained a small amount. Loret argued that ancient Egyptian representations of ‘aš wood are not red (as would be expected of cedar) but yellow; texts imply that ‘aš was a straight, tall tree, while cedar was squat and often had a twisted trunk. Since one of the principal uses of ‘aš wood was for flagstaffs erected against the faces of pylons of temples, which might require lengths of more than 30 metres, he argued that such timbers could not come from cedars whose massive girth limits their height; furthermore, most cedars have more than one main stem.

Despite Loret’s assertion “cedar” is sometimes advanced as the identification of ‘aš, even though it is qualified by the term “so-called.” For some the term ‘aš is broader than just one species being the equivalent of “conifer.”

Etymological considerations

Etymology is sometimes used as a means to establish the identification of flora and fauna. Botanical terms are frequently borrowed, but we should not assume that there is an exact correspondence when terms are borrowed from one language to another. As F. N. Hepper has observed, “… through the ages man has tended to switch a well-known name from one plant product to another more attractive or readily available one.” Etymological considerations especially when relating to trees are notoriously unreliable, compare the commonly cited example of Greek ϕεγος “oak,” Latin fagus hence English “beech,” and Russian бузина “elder.”

There is no doubt that the Akkadian burāšu provides the clearest etymological parallel to bēroš. We have seen earlier that the identification “juniper” is made. The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary defines the range of the burāšu: it grew in the West, that is, on Mount Amanus in Syria; it also grew in Urartu, in what is now Eastern Turkey; and was planted in Assyria. It was used in roofing, and the wood apparently had sweet-smelling properties. It was used to make beds, chariots, doors, and columns. The tree produced products—“seeds,” “leaves,” “oil,” “water,” and even “flour.” An aromatic substance was obtained from the tree which was used in fumigation. The identification with juniper is supported by the fact that the berry-like fruit of the tree is called kirkirānu while the cones of other conifers are called terinnatu.

The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary further points out: “The designation burāšu for the conifers used in Urartu for roof beams may represent a transfer from...”

1 V. Loret, ASAE 16 (1916): 51.
4 V. Loret, op. cit.; R. Meiggs, op. cit., 406.
5 R. Meiggs, op. cit., 405-409. He counters Loret’s arguments by noting that cedars growing close together will grow to the height required by the Egyptian flagstaffs; cedars with more than one stem are exceptional. Cedar was found among the timbers from the boat found near the pyramid of Cheops (2593-2570 BC); there was no evidence of fir.
6 R. O. Faulkner, A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 49. M. Serpico, op. cit., notes that the distribution of cedar is particularly significant. The more restricted distribution of Abies cilicia may lead to a modification of Loret’s theory that ‘aš was more commonly fir.
10 A. L. Oppenheim, Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, B (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1965), 328b; ibid., K 352a 2/c doubts whether kirkirānu is pine or juniper seeds (1971).
the real juniper, whose wood is not suitable for such purposes. Since juniper is ubiquitous in the hills to the West and North of Mesopotamia, the frequent references to ‘Mountain of burāšu-trees’ could indicate that several conifers were designated by this term.”1

A conclusion

From the Akkadian evidence a wider definition than purely the equation of burāšu with “juniper” seems to be emerging. If this observation is true for Akkadian then could it not also be true for Hebrew? We can apply this observation both specifically and generally. Specifically, we do not have to accept that because Akkadian burāšu equals Hebrew bērōš, then Hebrew bērōš must mean “juniper.” Generally, Hebrew bērōš may in fact be wider than a single species, be it “cypress,” “pine,” “juniper,” or “fir.”

The “translational inconsistency” that we have noted in many of the main English Bible translations has to be explained. We cannot suppose that all were influenced by the translational inconsistency of the Septuagint. The translational inconsistency evident in many English versions suggests that a contextual rather than a concordant approach was preferred.

If we also take a contextual approach we may advance a variety of renderings for bērōš, yet there may be another conclusion that can be drawn.

That the bērōš grows in the Lebanon and Hermon mountains points to an identification with a conifer, the implied fruit of Hos 14.8 may be a reference to “cones,”2 and its greenness in the same verse may point to the tree being “evergreen.” Bērōš may be the equivalent of the Egyptian ’aš, which is sometimes given the general meaning “conifer.” The question should thus be posed if at least in some cases bērōš may be simply the Hebrew for a “conifer” or an “evergreen” tree. Indeed in Hos 14.8, the only place in the OT where God is compared to a tree and where botanical exactitude is not in focus, such a rendering of bērōš may be preferable, witness “evergreen” of TEV.

If it is true that bērōš is a generic term referring to a class of trees rather than a specific species, translators need not struggle to find specific lexical items to fit each context. “Conifer” or “evergreen” may suffice in some or all of the passages listed above.

This raises a further question as to whether other botanical and zoological terms should be understood generically rather than specifically in the OT. It is beyond the scope of this article to investigate this point, but it could be a fruitful field for further research.

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1 A. L. Oppenheim, Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, B 328b.
2 F. N. Hepper in Illustrated Bible Dictionary (London: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 1587a, considers these cones as producing edible pine nuts and thus advances the “stone pine” Pinus pinea here. See also F. N. Hepper, Encyclopaedia of Bible Plants (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 32, 122.