



Dec. 30, 1981

Dear Bro. Cowart,

Words for bee, wasp, hornet, and fly are kicked around among the Semitic languages with frequent exchanges of smooth, middle, and rough sounds, but rarely crossing the border from one order to another: labials, linguals and palatals usually keep their proper places.

Hence dabara, zabara are freely interchanged,
but also with the same meaning zubab, dubab, zabub and (here is the surprise zabul, and especially zaburu, daburu

How can a labial (b) change to a liquid (r, l) or vice versa?

That d-s-r should be exchangable with d-b-r is at first glance offensive, yet the swapping of labials and sibilants does occur:

witness the well-known Arabic word, borrowed from the Persians, for a legal document--daftar (Gk. diphthera, leather), also occurs as dastar

In Indo-european languages the shift from a dental (t,d,th) to a labial (p,b,f) is spectacular:

Gk. pent- (Mod.Gk. pend-)

Lat. quint- (here the initial Gk. labial p = Lat. guttural qu-)

(The distinction between the two "fives" is the conventional way of dividing the Celtic languages)

But the ^{=s} ending is what we notice here (Slav. pyat-), since sibilants are dentals (foreigners often pronounce our th as an s or z).

In Germanic languages the final -t of five is a labial--f or v:
fünf = five (n drops out, Eng. vowel lengthened to compensate? Perhaps not, since O.E. is fyf)

Handwritten notes:
= b
Mod. Gk. on
Span. b = v

THE POINT IS THAT A LABIAL LIKE B IN ZEBUB (Bel-zebub, god of flies), can conceivably be exchanged for a sibilant as in d-s-r. Since as we see from the Wörterbuch, deseret itself rings a large number of changes, Why not? But it has yet to be conclusively demonstrated. A bit of searching might be fun. This is all off the cuff--no time for deep stuff.

Yours truly, mistakes and all,

Handwritten signature: Hugh Wibley