

afofalsmōn is derived from the Greek *ὀποβάλαμον*.¹ It is supposed also that Old-Testament Hebrew *bāsām* refers to the balsam, and might represent the prototype of Greek *balsamon*, while others deny that the Hebrew word had this specific meaning.² In my opinion, the Greek *l* cannot be explained from the Hebrew word.

Twan Č'en-ši's description of the tree, made from a long-distance report, is tolerably exact. The *Amyris gileadensis* or balsam-tree is an evergreen shrub or tree of the order *Amyridaceae*, belonging to the tropical region, chiefly growing in southern Arabia, especially in the neighborhood of Mecca and Medina, and in Abyssinia. As will be seen, it was transplanted to Palestine in historical times, and Twan was therefore justified in attributing it to Fu-lin. The height of the tree is about fourteen feet, with a trunk eight or ten inches in diameter. It has a double bark,—an exterior one, thin and red, and an interior one, thick and green; when chewed, it has an unctuous taste, and leaves an aromatic odor. The blossoms are biflorate, and the fruit is of a gray reddish, of the size of a small pea, oblong, and pointed at both ends. The tree is very rare and difficult to cultivate. Twan's oil, of course, is the light green, fragrant gum exuded from the branches, always highly valued as a remedy, especially efficacious in the cure of wounds.³ It was always a very costly remedy, and Twan's valuation (equaling its weight in gold) meets its counterpart in the statement of Theophrastus that it sells for twice its weight in silver.

Flavius Josephus (first century A.D.)⁴ holds that the introduction of the balsam-tree into Palestine, which still flourished there in his time, is due to the queen of Saba. In another passage⁵ he states that the opobalsamum (sap of the tree) grows at Engedi, a city near the lake Asphaltitis, three hundred furlongs from Jerusalem; and again,⁶ that it grows at Jericho: the balsam, he adds in the latter passage, is of all ointments the most precious, which, upon any incision made in the wood with a sharp stone, exudes out like juice.

From the time of Solomon it was cultivated in two royal gardens.

¹ J. LEVY, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 137.

² E. LEVESQUE in *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Vol. I, col. 1517. The *rapprochement* of *bāsām* and *balsamon* has already been made by D'HERBELOT (*Bibliothèque orientale*, Vol. I, p. 377), though he gives *basam* only as Persian. The Arabic form is derived from the Greek.

³ Jeremiah, VIII, 22. Regarding its employment in the pharmacology of the Arabs, see LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. I, pp. 255-257.

⁴ *Antiquitates judaicae*, VIII. vi, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IX. i, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV. iv, i.