

elaborate ladies' saddle

כָּר

1. Statistics

Torah: 1. Nebiim: 0. Ketubim: 0. Total: 1.

2a. Literal Use

כָּר in Gen. 31:34 is a hapax legomenon in the Hebrew bible (not recognised as such by Cohen, *BHL* and Greenspahn, *HLBH*). In Gen. 31:34 the narrator describes how Rachel hid the household gods (הַרְפִּים), which she had stolen when Jacob and his family had been obliged to flee to Canaan, in the כָּר הַנֶּמֶל to prevent discovery by her father Laban. The older interpretation to the effect that כָּר הַנֶּמֶל would describe the straw for the camels (wrongly based on the Vulgate) has been abandoned since at least the early 19th century (Hartmann 1809). Undeniably it is a camel's saddle of considerable dimensions, probably mainly intended for women, in which all kinds of objects could be kept. The use of such a camel's saddle as a seat in the tent was not uncommon (Dalman, *AuS*, Bd. 6, 19, 46, 53). It is therefore not a saddle in the current sense of the word, but a kind of sedan or litter (cf. Gunkel 1902). According to Soggin 1997 it must have been a rather elaborately worked chair for women ('Es handelt sich vermutlich um den grossausgearbeiteten Frauensattel, eine Art Sessel'). See further section 9.

2b. Figurative Use

Not attested.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

Klein, *CEDHL*, 285: 'saddle . . . PBH [= Postbiblical Hebrew] bolster, pillow' . . . related to Aram. כָּר, כָּרָא (= bolster, pillow), Arab. *kūr* (= camel saddle), *karr* (= mat).'

EGYPTIAN: The word occurs as a West-Semitic loan in Egyptian, as a designation of a donkey saddle (Hoch, *SWET*, 326-7).

AKKADIAN: *karru* (a word for throne), *CAD* (K), 222 *karru* C.

Possibly it is simply a *pars pro toto* use of the word *karru* A, 'knob, pommel', a costly ornament of chairs for dignitaries, cf. R. Frankena 1972; *CAD* (K), 221-2; Salonen, *Möbel*, 94-6.

POSTBIBLICAL HEBREW: כַּר, 'bolster, mattress' (Jastrow, *DTT*, 663).

JEWISH ARAMAIC: כַּר, כַּרְא, 'bolster, mattress' (Jastrow, *DTT*, 663; Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 598; Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 268).

SAMARITAN ARAMAIC: כַּר, 'saddle' (Tal, *DSA*, 407).

SYRIAC: *kārtā*, 'a burden for the back, a load' (Payne Smith (Margoliouth), *CSD*, 228; 'sarcina . . . onus' (Brockelmann, *LS*, 323); 'bundle, pack, load' (Sokoloff, *SLB*, 657).

CLASSICAL ARABIC: *kūr* 'camel saddle', *kūrat* 'bundle of clothes' (Lane, *AEL*, 2637; *WKAS* (K), 429).

ETHIOPIC: In several Ethiopic dialects *kor* 'saddle' occurs, but this is regarded as an Arabic loanword (Leslau, *CDG*, 289).

5. Ancient Versions

Ⲅ and other Greek versions: Ⲅ ⲥⲁⲓⲓⲙⲁ 'pack-saddle' (Lust *et al.*, *GELS-L*, 421; *LSJ*, 1580).

ⲱ^T: כַּר 'saddle' (Tal, *DSA*, 407).

Ⲙ: All targumim have עבִיטָא 'sumpter saddle' (Jastrow, *DTT*, 1037); Levy, *CWT*, 197 'Kamelsattel, Kamelzelt, ein kleines Zeltchen, welches auf den Rücken der Kamele angeschnallt wird u. in welchem die Frauen sitzen', but Levy, *WTM*, Bd. 3, 609 simply 'Sattel'; Dalman, *ANHT*, 304: 'Kamelsattel'; Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 840 'basket saddle of a camel'.

ⲥ: 'abūtā, Payne Smith (Margoliouth), *CSD*, 398: 'a camel's saddle for women tented over with a framework'; Brockelmann, *LS*, 507: 'clitellae (cameli)' (= camel's sumpter-saddle).

Ⲏ: *stramen* 'litter'.

6. Judaic Sources

The כַּר was obviously a mattress or bolster according to the rabbis, cf. Krauss, *TA*, Bd. 1, 64; Bd. 2, 123.

7. Illustrations

A 19th century drawing of a ladies' camel saddle is found in Riehm 1884, 811,



On a relief of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser II a woman is seated on a box-like saddle on a camel (Dercksen 2009, 90).

8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.]

9. Conclusion

The addition of כַּר as well as the cognates indicate that כַּר in itself does not mean 'camel-saddle'. It could be any saddle on any riding animal, or even merely a mattress or bolster. However, the height of the camel, the circumstance that in this particular case it was a woman who was transported on it, and the fact that Rachel was able to hide several cultic images in it, invoking a woman's right to privacy to prevent Laban from discovering them, render the hypothesis that we are dealing with an object resembling the domed Arabian ladies' camel saddle very likely. Several authors have provided fairly accurate descriptions of this type of spectacular saddle over which outdoors a dome-like tent (→ אֲרֵגוֹ) was extended to keep the women from the heat of the

sun and from impudent stares. Cf. Burckhardt 1831; Layard 1854; Wilson 1884; Doughty 1888; Montagne 1937; Van Selms 1967; Staubli 1991; Dercksen 2009. It was not uncommon to place such a saddle, without cover, as a woman's seat inside a tent (Dalman, *AuS*, Bd. 6, 46). It was probably a privilege of prominent persons to travel in such a relatively comfortable way.

10. Bibliography

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of *Discoveries at Nineve*, New York 1854, 63, 72 – *LHA*, 371: ‘*sella camelina*, sc. magna corbis in dorso cameli fixa, in qua mulieres iter facientes sedent’ – *LMHC*, 468: ‘*sella camelina*, quae jumento alligitur’ – MHH, 531: כַּרְאָה אִיכָף [כַּסְתָּהּ] הַגַּמֶּל – Montagne 1937: R. Montagne, ‘Contes poétiques bédouins’, *BEO* 5 (1937), 33-119 (Pl. II and VIII) – *NIDOT*, vol. 2, 713: ‘Camel’s saddle bag; saddle’ – Riehm 1884: E.A.C. Riehm, *Handwörterbuch des biblischen Altertums*, Bd. 1, Bielefeld 1884, 811 – Rosenberg 1905: H. Rosenberg, ‘Zum Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter’, *ZAW* 25 (1905), 333 – Salonen, *Möbel*, 94-6 – Staubli 1991: T. Staubli, *Das Image der Nomaden im alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbarn* (OBO, 107), Freiburg 1991, 126-33, esp. 129, Fig. 5 and Abb. 113-117 – Hoch, *SWET*, 326-7 – Gesenius, Roediger, *TPC*, 715: ‘*lectina camelina*’ . . . i.e. *sellae*, s. *pilenti* genus, quod camelorum clitellis superne alligatum et velo cortinave obumbratum mulieribus et infantibus transportandis inservit. Plurima harum sellarum nomina apud Arabes celebrantur’ – Van Selms 1967: A. van Selms, *Genesis* (PredOT), vol. 2, Nijkerk 1967, 124 – Wilson 1884: Wilson, *PPSE*, vol. 4, 153.

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