brazier

1. Statistics


Attested in Jeremiah 36:22, 23[bis].

2a. Literal Use

The status absolutus of this noun is given alternately as *חֵר (like חֵר I 'brother' and חֵר II 'aha!', and 'alas!'; so e.g. TPC; BDB; LHA; DCH) or *חֵר (with article: חֵר; ח'; see BL §263m; GB; KBL; HALAT; HAHAT). Fem., cf. Jer. 36:22

The word occurs in Jeremiah 36:22, 23[bis] only. It figures prominently in the story of the scroll (מַלְכִּי, Jer. 36:2 → המלך ג'יימ, v. 20), written by Baruch ben-Neriah, as dictated by Jeremiah, which culminates – after its promulgation to the people in the temple and to the king’s dignitaries in the secretary’s chamber in the royal palace – in it being read by Jehudi ben-Nethaniah (cf. v. 14) to king Jehoiakim himself in the court (v. 20), in the winter house/room (רַעב, v. 22, cf. Amos 3:15), in the ninth month (November/December) (cf. De Vaux, IAT, t. 1, 290). Before him the king had the חֵר which had been kindled (הברך, הדר, v. 22).

Thus GKC §117(1) (read Jer 36:22 instead of Jer 36:23 ad loc and in the Index, p. 585), cf. Joüon, GHB §125(j) (p. 370, ‘Remarque’); ‘The brasier before him was burning’, BDB, 29a. Others read חֵר ‘and the fire’ for חֵר (e.g. HALAT, 97b; BHS ad loc; the remark ‘cf חֵר’ is misleading): ‘the fire in the brasier before him had been kindled’; or, with ב (בבב בבב ב), חֵר for חֵר: ‘während die geheizte Kohlenpfanne vor ihm brannte’ (Giesebrecht 1907, 200, who disposes of the reading חֵר of ב as ‘eine unmöthige, ja komische Weitschweifigkeit bei einer einfachen Sache’).

The חֵר is used by Jehoiakim to destroy the scroll bit by bit: every three or four columns (→ חֵר) that had been read by Jehudi, were cut off by him with a penknife (→ חֵר) and thrown (חֵר), inf. abs. as the continuation of a preceding finite verb, cf. GKC §113(2) into the fire that was in the חֵר (לִפְאַה הַלֶּחָּה), until the entire scroll was consumed (לִפְאַה הַלֶּחָּה) in the fire that was in the חֵר (לִפְאַה הַלֶּחָּה, v. 23 [bis]).
There may have occurred some interchange of לָע and לֶב in v. 23 by assimilation: probably (the first) לָע לֶב should be read as לֶב לָע, like (the second) לָע לֶב, cf. יְהִי (bis), מ super arulam (for לָע לֶב; the second time in arula, for לָע לֶב). י and ל, however, only have d’l for לֶב (see ad 5. for their rendering of לָע). For לָע followed by לֶב, cf. Lev. 1:7 and 6:5f. [12f.] (לָע הָוָה לָע וָלָע), Jer. 11:16 (set [לָע Hiph.] fire to the tree [לָע לָע]), and Ezek. 21:36 [31] and 22:20 (with לָע ‘blow’). More often לָע is followed by ב, with לָע Hiph. (Jer. 17:27, 21:14 etc.), מ (Ezek. 30:8, 14, 16, etc.) or מ (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, etc.), or by ה, with מ (2 Kgs 1:10.12, etc.) or ה (Lev. 9:24; 10:2; Num. 16:35; 21:28, etc.).

Nothing is said about the size of the לָע, nor of the material from which it was made, of the kind of fuel that was burnt in it or of its movability. Kelso (CEVOT, 34) thinks that, as a king, Jehoiakim probably would have used a metal brazier, but a ceramic one ‘must not be completely ruled out’. As several columns of the scroll could be thrown into the לָע all at once and finally the whole scroll was consumed in it, the לָע must have been of some size (‘olla magna’, Gesenius & Roediger, TPC, 69a), not just a small fire pot or spirit stove, and not ‘super prunas suspensa’ (Zorell, LHA, 30a): the fire was in/on the pan, not under it. Perhaps the use of the preposition ב ‘on’ also points to a fire-pan with a fairly wide and flat bottom, cf. the fire pot or kept (up)on the altar, Lev. 1:7; 6:5f. [12f.], and מ translating לָע with arula ‘small altar’ (in Jer. 36:23, however, the RSV and other modern versions translate: ‘the fire <that was> in the brazier’; but Giesebrecht: ‘auf der Kohlenpfanne’ [bis]).

Some authors translate לָע as ‘hearth’ (see bibliography below), but this is unlikely. The king was seated (ב, v. 22) and the לָע was positioned before him (לָע, v. 22), so he must have bent over to throw the leaves he had cut off in the fire. Because leather does not burn well, it is likely that the scroll was made of papyrus (→ לָע). Since a leaf of papyrus is very light, the distance between the king’s hand and the brazier cannot have been large, otherwise the pages would have fluttered around erratically. This argues in favour of a brazier on legs. Cf. King & Stager, LBI, 34: ‘This was probably a copper or bronze, three-legged hearth’.

N.B.: לָע in Isa. 44:16 מַאֲמַר לָע has been interpreted, already from י onwards, as an interjection: ‘aha!’ (cf. Ezek. 25:3, 26:2, etc.), probably correctly so.
2b. Figurative Use
Not attested.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew
Not attested.

4. Cognates
Semitic: Perhaps Hamito-Semitic *ʼah ‘fire’ (Egyptian 3ḥt; cf. Orel & Stolbova, HSED, 7).

Egyptian: A loan from Egyptian ḥ ‘brazier, firepan’ (Erman & Grapow, WÄS, vol. 1, 223) seems likely (Müller 1900, followed by e.g. Kelso, CVOT, 16, No. 34; Lambdin 1953, 146; Ellenbogen, FWOT, 21; HALAT, 28; HAHAT, 32; CEDIL, 16; NIDOT, vol. 1, 349), even though normally Egyptian ḥ does not correspond to Hebrew ﬀ. However, the latter argument is not conclusive because in this case two different laryngals in one short word were involved. The Egyptian ḥ was used for grilling (sacrificial) meat, burning incense and warming rooms. Especially the latter circumstance suggests that it was a fairly large brazier. The circumstance that it was also used to bake the typical flat bread of the Near East (in Egyptian: ṭ ‘brazier bread’) ties in with the translation of ﬀ, see below section 5.

Phoenician, Punic: Some authors refer to Punic ḥt šmm (KAI No. 145:4) but the meaning of this is hardly ‘the braziers of heaven’ and a connection with Hebrew ﬀ is highly uncertain (KAI, Bd. 2, 142; DISO, 9).

5. Ancient Versions
ﬀ and other Greek versions: ﬀ Jer. 36:22.23 [bis] ἐσχάρα (cf. → νάσσα, 5.) - LSJ, 699a: 1. ‘hearth, fire-place’; 2. ‘pan of coals, brazier’; etc.; GELS-L, 182b: ‘grate, grating’ (Ex. 27:4 etc.) and ‘hearth, fire-place’ (Prov. 26:21 ἐσχάρα ἄνθρωπον καὶ ζώλα πυρί for πύλης τοῦ πυρὸς ἀνεμός ‘<as> charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire’). Cf. Curtis, AFT, 290: ‘... unleavened, or flat, breads (ἄρτος ἰώμας) were baked on a brazier in ashes (γνησίως and συνδίτης) or charcoal (ἀπανθροπός) – sometimes called simply “brazier-bread” (ἐσχάρωριτῆς)’. GELS-M, 294: ‘1. hearth . . .; 2. grid or lattice-work forming the base of various structures’.
Jer. 36:22 'and the fire (before him they lit)'. For מָּפָּר possibly read מָּפָּרָא, because מָּפָּר is the normal rendering of מָּפָּר, but harmonisation cannot be excluded. Jer. 36:23 [1e] מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּר, 'onto the fire of charcoal'; a well-attested variant reading is מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּרָא מָּפָּר, 'onto the fire of charcoals' (plural, harmonising), for מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר. Jer. 36:23 [2e] מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר, 'onto the fire which was over the charcoals' for מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר. מָּפָּר (plur. מָּפָּר) – Jastrow, 223a: ‘burning, glowing coal’; Dalman, ANHT, 82b (sg. מָּפָּר): ‘glühende Kohle’ (Lev. 16:12; 2 Sam. 22:9). So the כ thinks of a fire of glowing charcoal, but omits to specify the container.

Jer. 36:22 wnwr' symyn hww qdmwhy, ‘and they placed a fire before him’, perhaps inspired by כ; Jer. 36:23 [1e] wsdh bgwmr' dwwr' 'and he threw it in the charcoals of the fire' (cf. Rom. 12:20) for מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר, 'burning, glowing coal'; גוֹּמִר, ANHT, 82b (sg. מָּפָּר): ‘glühende Kohle’ (Lev. 16:12; 2 Sam. 22:9). So the כ thinks of a fire of glowing charcoal, but omits to specify the container.

Jer. 36:22, 23 [bis] arula[m] - 'small altar' (Lewis & Short, LD, 169); in v. 22 plena prunis 'full of coals' for מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר מָּפָּר.

6. Judaic Sources

The rabbis did not know the meaning of the word anymore. Their guesses are recorded b. Shab., 20a (cf. Levy, WTM, Bd. 1, 54a).

Several medieval Jewish commentators, however, describe the מָּפָּר as a metal brazier or frying pan (Rubiato Díaz et. al. 1991, 375).
7. Illustrations
Whereas clay burners were extensively used among Palestinians (Dalman, AuS, Bd. 4, Abb. 5, 6, 11, and Bd. 7, Abb. 34, 52a, 96, 98-100; Avitzur, 108-9, 116-7), metal braziers were too expensive for common people.

8. Archaeological Remarks
‘The most common means of heating was, therefore, the brazier’, ‘in classical times there were no special devices for heating the home except the usual small portable fires with charcoal, the braziers’ (Forbes, SAT, vol. 6, 31, cf. 16f., 30, 61 [Rome], and 65 [Egypt, Mesopotamia], all mentioning charcoal; in ancient Palestine, however, wood and straw were preferably used, ibid., 15f., 64); charcoal (םיח; פ) was a costly fuel, cf. j. Ter., 45d; ‘Abod. Zar., 41a; Exod. R., 42 (99a); ‘It was also used in the portable stove or brazier in the King’s palace’ (ibid., 20, with notes 126-131). According to Kelso, the king probably would have been using a metal brazier, but ‘the common Israelite would employ a pottery one just as does the poor Arab today’. However, as ‘ceramic work, when highly decorative, could compete with metal ware’, a brazier of clay must not completely be ruled out (Kelso [34, p. 16], referring to the elaborately decorated incense altar found at Taanach and the cult shrines at Beth-shan and Megiddo; cf: ‘carrying <fire> in clay hearths’, Forbes, op. cit., 6, 2). For Kelso’s remark on ‘the stove family’, → פינ, 8.

9. Conclusion
Many mysteries still remain around פ which is de facto a hapax legomenon, though not recognised as such by Greenspahn, HLBH and Cohen, BHL. In Jer. 36:22, but also in v. 23, confusion and interchange with פ and/or פ could have taken place in the textual tradition, see Section 5 on the ancient versions.

Analysis of the context learns that the פ which was standing before the king was probably a metal brazier on three or four legs. As it is not said in v. 22 that the king ‘was seated before the פ’ but that somehow the פ ‘was positioned before the king (פפ), it seems most likely that a movable brazier or fire-pan had been placed in front of the king, cf. Vulg. et posta erat arula coram
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eo and Pesh. wnwr' symyn hww qdmwhy; cf. Giesebrecht: 1907, 200: ‘während die geheizte Kohlen-pfanne vor ihm brannte’. The Egyptian word from which ברז was probably taken over suggests a fairly large brazier, as does the number of leaves the king cut off and burnt in the ברז.

Also the ancient versions, especially א, point in the direction of a fairly wide firepan (Section 5), as do some medieval Jewish commentators (Section 6). The rendering ‘brazier’ may be adopted therefore with a fair amount of confidence.

10. Bibliography
