

רִמָּה

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Introduction

Grammatical Type: n.

Occurrences: Total 15x OT, 0x Sir, 5x Qum (1QM 5.6, 7, 6.15, 9.12, 4Q381[4QapPs^b] 78.3), 0x inscr.

Text Doubtful:

A.1 The last three letters of רִמָּהִים in 4Q381 78.3 are marked as unclear by Schuller who comments (1986:227), “The end of the line is very difficult to read since the leather has become very dark.”

B.1 [nil]

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 According to *HAL* (1159) רִמָּה is a “Primärnomen”. In support of this may be given its wide attestation within West and South Semitic. All authorities agree in connecting it with Arm רִמָּחָא and Syr *rwḥ* ‘spear’ (Robinson 1855:982, Ges.:762, BDB:942, Zorell:775, KB:894, Aistleitner 1967:195, Ahituv 1968:975, *HAL*:1159). It should be noted that the gender of רִמָּה is unattested in Hebrew, but that Syr *rwḥ* is feminine, and, according to Levy (1867-68:426), Arm רִמָּחָא is masculine.

A.2 A direct connection is widely recognized between רִמָּה and Arb *rumḥ* (Brockelmann:734, BDB:942, Ges.:762, Zorell:775, KB:894, Aistleitner 1967:195, Ahituv 1968:975, *HAL*:1159). This word is understood by Freytag (1830-37, Vol. 2:190)

as “Lancea qua utuntur ad percutiendum, non ad coniciendum”. This seems to indicate a weapon that remained in the hands during combat. Robinson (1855:982) also gives the Arb verb ramḥa “to pierce with a lance, to lance” as cognate, and Arb ramḥ.

A.3 BDB (942), Ges. (762), Brockelmann (734), Zorell (775), KB (894), and Aistleitner (1967:195) quote Eth ramḥ as cognate. *HAL* (1159) supports this and also quotes Tigre remḥ “Stab der mohammedanischen Priester, aus Holz mit Eisenspitze oder ganz aus Eisen”. Other Semitic cognates meaning “lance” exist in Sabaic rmḥ (Beeston:117), and Mandaic (Drower-Macuch:430).

A.4 Ges. (762), and Brockelmann (734) suggest that Eg mrḥ ‘spear’ is cognate. Erman & Grapow (1928:112), KB (894), Ahituv (1968:975), and *HAL* (1159) are more precise about the relationship and see the Eg word as coming from Semitic. Likewise, Černy (1976:90) sees Coptic mereh ‘spear, javelin’ = Eg mrḥ as a “loan-word from Semitic, cf. רִמָּה, [Arb] rumḥ, ‘spear’”. See also Aistleitner (1967:195) and *UT* (437-38). Albright (1934:44) regards the Canaanite form from which Eg mrḥ (vocalized murḥa) has been loaned as *rumḥa. The connection of this Eg word with רִמָּה has received some confirmation in the occurrence of an Ug word mrḥ ‘spear, lance’ regarded as cognate with רִמָּה (Al-Yasin 1952:76, Aistleitner 1967:195, *UT*:437-38, Caquot et al. 1974:134, Driver & Gibson 1978:152, Healey 1983:48). *UT* (438) notes that Ug mrḥ is feminine. However, the occurrence of Ug mrḥ means that any relationship between Eg mrḥ and Hebrew רִמָּה is probably indirect. For more details of mrḥ see Müller (1893:303).

A.5 Brockelmann (734) also cites Gk λόγχη as a possible cognate. KB sees Gk λόγχη as possibly derived from Eg mrḥ, while *HAL* (1159) sees λόγχη as more probably derived from some Semitic form. Brown (1971:12-13) and Levin (1995:281) regard רִמָּה as a complete correspondence to λόγχη, but this must be regarded within their larger theories of repeated historical (Proto)Semitic and (Proto)Indo-European mutual influence. Lewy (1895:179) opposes the view that the words are cognate, citing further literature.

A.6 HAL (1159) suggests that since רָמַח is never written with Waw we must ask “ob es in Qumran wie im MT die Form *qutl* hatte”. Carmignac (1955:346) believes that at Qumran the pronunciation was different from that of the Masorettes, but we may ask whether the use of vowel letters is sufficiently understood to conclude this.

B.1 Brown (1971:13) regards Gk *ῥομφαία* as derived from רָמַח, though there is very little basis for this.

B.2 Haupt (1910:712) gives Akk *nir’amtū* as cognate, and this is cited as a possible cognate by Ges. (762). The fact that this word is not attested in *AHW* and *CAD*, along with the required metathesis, makes this an unlikely cognate.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 רָמַח is a segholate noun and is always spelled defectively (despite Yadin 1962:135). Nevertheless the initial o/u vowel is attested by both Masoretic and cognate pronunciation.

B.1 [nil]

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 In Jdg 5.8 רָמַח is the joint subj of the niph of רָאָה. Obj לָקַח (Nu 25.7), הָכִין (2Ch 26.14), כָּתַתָּה (Jl 4.10), and מָרַק (Jr 46.4). In the last two cases the action of the verb is only applied to the metal of the spear. In 1Kg 18.28 it is by means of רָמַחָיִם that it is said of the prophets: וַיִּהְיוּגִדְדוּ. Also mediated by the preposition Beth is the verb שָׁלַק Hiph ‘cause to go up in flame’ (Ezk 39.9). This action has particular reference to the wooden shaft of the spear. In Neh 4.10 (despite the Waw), 15, and 1QM 6.15 people are said to have hold of the רָמַח, (Hiph חִזַּק). This again may point to a hand-held weapon. It is the nomen rectum following the Qal participle of עָרַךְ (1Ch 12.9), נָשָׂא (1Ch 12.25,

2Ch 14.7), and אָחַז (2Ch 25.5). In each case the expression is a designation of a soldier who uses a רֶמֶח and a shield.

A.2 In Nu 25.7, 1QM 5.6, 6.15 we find the phrase בְּיָדָם or בְּיָדָם with reference to רֶמֶח. These occurrences may indicate that a רֶמֶח was always a hand-held weapon, or at least that it was constantly connected in people's minds with the hand. However, even javelin's were held in hands initially.

B.1 [nil]

4. Versions

A.1 LXX has δόρυ 'spear' in pl in Jr 46(26).4, 1Ch 12.9, 2Ch 11.12, 26.14, and in sing in 2Ch 25.5. 2Ch 14.7 has δύναμις ὀπλοφόρων αἰρόντων θυρεοὺς καὶ δόρατα for MT's רֶמֶחַ צָנָה נִשְׂאָ לַיָּד. This involves translating MT's sing רֶמֶח by a pl, and the presence of a slight expansion in ὀπλοφόρων. Similarly, LXX 1Ch 12.25 has θυρεωφόροι καὶ δορατοφόροι for MT's רֶמֶחַ צָנָה נִשְׂאָ. LXX Ezk 39.9, Neh (i.e. 2 Esdras 14) 4.7, 10, 15 has λόγχη in pl. The reading at Jdg 5.8 is complicated. The Cambridge LXX has λόγχη as equivalent of רֶמֶח. However, Codex A et al. have a doublet involving the double use of σιρομάστης "barbed lance" (Lust et al. 1996:423; Muraoka 1993:213; see also Driver 1913:xliv). σ(ε)ιρομάστης occurs also in Nu 25.7 and in pl in 1Kg 18.28 and Jl 4.10. Dorival (1994:463) says that Nu 25.7 is the earliest attestation of σιρομάστης, but that it is improbable that the word was coined by the LXX. By derivation "un *siromástes* est un 'explorateur' (-*mástes*) de 'silo' (*sirós*), une 'sonde à silo'". Dorival cites both military and agricultural uses of the word, and then concludes (1994:463), "Faut-il traduire par 'sonde à silo' ou par 'lance à pointe de fer'? Il est probable qu'au III^e siècle, le mot n'est pas encore usé: chacun de ses éléments garde

son sens...On doit ajouter que ce mot a peut-être été choisi parce qu'il évoque le mot du TM: *siromástes* fait écho à *rōmah*." (See also Liddell & Scott 1940:1600).

A.2 Aq κοντός 'pole' (Nu 25.7, Jr 46.4). This may be used because a רִמָּה was a long spear (see 1QM), and to distinguish it from הַיָּנִי, which Aq generally renders by δόρυ. Sym uses δόρυ (Nu 25.7).

Josephus represents רִמָּה by σιρομάστης in his discussion of 1Ch 12.25 = *Antiquities* VII, 2.2(55), 2Ch 11.12 = VIII 10.2(247), 14.7 = VIII 12.1(291). On Nu 25.7 = *Antiquities* IV 6.12(153) he uses ῥομφαία. His choice is thus independent of LXX.

A.3 Pesh translates רִמָּה by its cognate *rwmh*' (Nu 25.7, Jdg 5.8). *rwmh*' is used in pl (1Kg 18.28, Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10, Neh 4.7, 10, 15, 1Ch 12.25, 2Ch 14.7). *rwmh*' is used in pl to represent sing רִמָּה in Ezk 39.9 where other weapons that are listed are also made pl. Pesh 2Ch 25.5 translates רִמָּה by *syp*' 'sword', and in 1Ch 12.9 this same equivalence (in pl) may be maintained if we supposed that Pesh is reversing the order of a pair of items as it translates them (as it frequently does). Otherwise 1Ch 12.9 attests the translation of רִמָּה by pl of *skr*' 'shield'. In 2Ch 11.12, 26.14 due to the minuses in the Pesh of Chronicles רִמָּה is not translated.

A.4 All Tg authorities use the same word in Nu 25.7: TgO, TgPsJ and TgFrg (Klein 1980) have רִמָּה, TgNeo has רִמָּה, and the Samaritan Tg has רִמָּה. Jdg 5.8, 1Kg 18.28, Ezk 39.9 have רִמָּה in pl. Tg 2Ch 25.5 has מִרְנִיחָא 'spear', and this same word occurs in pl in 1Ch 12.9, 12.25, 2Ch 11.12, 14.7, 26.14, Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10.

A.5 Vg uses *hasta* 'spear' in Jdg 5.8, 1Ch 12.9, 25, 2Ch 25.5, and in pl in 2Ch 11.12, 14.7 and 26.14. Vg has *lancea* 'light spear, lance' in pl five times: Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10, Neh 4.7, 10 and 15. It has pl of *contus* 'long pole' in Ezk 39.9, and *lanceola* 'small lance' in 1Kg 18.28. In Nu 25.7 in slight accord with Josephus Vg has *pugio* 'dagger'.

B.1 [nil]

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 רִמָּח is an offensive weapon and frequently occurs in the context of other items of armour, though it never occurs in the same context as תְּגִיטָה.

In Jdg 5.8 רִמָּח is coordinated with מִגָּן, which precedes. Likewise in Neh 4.10 and 2Ch 26.14 the words are coordinated (both pl). In Neh 4.10 רִמָּח precedes, and in 2Ch 26.14 מִגָּן does. In 1QM 9.12 people are equipped with מִגָּן and רִמָּח (both pl). In Chronicles people are often equipped with רִמָּח וְצִנָּה. The צִנָּה, in contrast to מִגָּן, seems to be a larger shield. This pair occurs in 1Ch 12.9, 25, 2Ch 11.12 (both words in pl), 14.7, 25.5 (רִמָּח precedes צִנָּה). The spear was thus used as an offensive weapon by people who also possessed a shield. In particular the use of the larger shield (צִנָּה) indicates that at least some of those who used a רִמָּח were not highly mobile troops, and thus supports the idea that a רִמָּח is a large spear, used by heavy troops, which is retained during combat, not thrown. Both מִגָּן and צִנָּה occur in a list of seven armour nouns, with רִמָּח as the final item (Ezk 39.9). In this list objects are set alight שֶׁלֶק hiph mediated by Beth. Beth occurs before the last four items, and before the first one נְשֶׁק ‘armour’, but not before the clearly defensive items מִגָּן and צִנָּה. It may be that נְשֶׁק is a superordinate term for offensive weapons and is introducing the final four items, the resumption of the use of Beth marking this syntactically in the list. This list does not include חֶרֶב, because there is no combustible element in this weapon. The omission of תְּגִיטָה may therefore be significant in that it is probably omitted due to its semantic overlap with רִמָּח.

In four other places הַרְבַּח 'sword' occurs with רֶמַח. In 1Kg 18.28 and 4Q381(4QapPs^b) 78.3 הַרְבַּח (pl) is coordinated syndetically with רֶמַח (pl), and in Neh 4.7 asyndetically. In each case הַרְבַּח precedes רֶמַח. In JI 4.10 הַרְבַּח־לַח is the A parallel to רֶמַח־חַיִּים. Spear users would utilise swords once hand-to-hand combat began. In 1QM 5.6-7 we have the sequence רֶמַח וְכִידָן, where, since כִּידָן in the War Scroll certainly denotes a sword, a similar remark may be made as with הַרְבַּח. In Neh 4.7, 10 the pl of קֶשֶׁת 'bow' is coordinated in a list with רֶמַח־חַיִּים (see also Ezk 39.9).

B.1 [nil]

6. Exegesis

A.1 Yadin (1962:135) describes how the רֶמַח was used by heavier troops. In 1QM 5.7 the רֶמַח is said to be seven cubits in length, of which the socket (סֹגֵר) and blade (לְרֹחֵב) take up half a cubit. In 1QM 6.14, 9.12 the רֶמַח of other groups is said to be eight cubits (though the word for cubits is restored). Yadin discusses in detail the description of the seven cubit spear (135-39). The iron for the spear in 1QM was of a lower quality than that for the sword (136). In 1QM the רֶמַח seems to denote the Roman *hasta*, which was not a throwing weapon (139), though it is slightly longer than the standard *hasta*. Any connection with the *pilum* is denied. In contrast to this Driver (1965:183) says that the רֶמַח corresponds to the *pilum* "a missile weapon nearly 7 feet long", and the חֲנִיָּה to the *hasta*. Driver is probably mistaken since there is no evidence that רֶמַח was a thrown weapon. For a discussion of the רֶמַח in 1QM see also Kuhn (1956:29-30). De Vaux (1960:51) maintains that in contrast to 1QM, in biblical times the רֶמַח "ne devait guère dépasser la taille d'un homme, comme en Égypte et en Assyrie".

A.2 In Jl 4.10 the מִזְמָרָה ‘pruning knife’ is said to be the material from which a רֶמֶח is formed when tools of peace-time are converted into weapons for war. In Is 2.4 and Mc 4.3 תְּנִיּוֹת appears in the reverse relationship to מִזְמָרָה, namely what a מִזְמָרָה is made from in a time of peace. This suggests semantic overlap between רֶמֶח and תְּנִיּוֹת.

B.1 [nil]

7. Conclusion

A.1 Etymological, versional, syntagmatic and exegetical evidence points towards understanding רֶמֶח to mean “spear” or “lance”. At Qumran the רֶמֶח was certainly a large hand-held spear, and the evidence from Arb cognates and Aq’s κόντος, may point in the same direction for biblical occurrences. The use of the large shield צָנָה with רֶמֶח also may indicate a weapon used by heavy troops. However, a comparison of the saying in Jl 4.10 with that in Is 2.4 and Mc 4.3 indicates that a רֶמֶח could be an equivalent of a תְּנִיּוֹת. It is likely that the latter had a larger semantic range, including also smaller weapons, but that there was some overlap between the two terms. There is no evidence that a רֶמֶח was ever thrown. It is also possible that רֶמֶח was a hyponym of תְּנִיּוֹת, which itself also served the function of denoting smaller spears that were thrown.

A.2 Eight of the fifteen biblical occurrences of רֶמֶח are pl, whereas only three of the 47 biblical occurrences of תְּנִיּוֹת are pl. It is possible that one lexeme was used more frequently to represent the pl, while the other was used more frequently to represent the sing, though neither of the lexemes was used in sing or pl to the exclusion of the other.

A.3 It is clear from the use of רֶמֶח as the logical or grammatical object of verbs such as מָרַק and שָׁלַק hiph that רֶמֶח could denote specifically both the point and the shaft of a spear, as well as denote the spear as a whole.

B.1 [nil]

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