<div align="center">פֶּרֶק</div>

(For fuller discussion of the lexical field as a whole see the 'Overview of SAHD entries for "Deliverance" words' on this site)

Introduction

Grammatical Type: noun

Occurrences: (Total: 2) 2x OT, 0x Qum,0x Sir, 0x inscr.

Text doubtful:

B.1 Smith (1911: 355) mentioned a proposal to emend the rare word in Nah 3.1 to a word פֶּרֶךְ with a closer meaning to the preceding כחשׁ. But it is preferable to retain the transmitted text, which may well be supported by 4Q169 f3 4ii 1, as well as by several of the versions. The failure of LXX and Sy to understand it is no reason to emend it. Duhm (1911: 67, also cited by Smith) prefixed וַ to פֶּרֶק to pair it with the [הֶרֶג] which he arbitrarily inserted before פֶּרֶק to balance the metre. Smith (1911: 334-35) also favoured a connection, but with כחשׁ: it is, however, more likely that they belong to separate lines.

Qere/Ketiv: none

1. Root and Comparative Material [see also the corresponding section of the entry for the verb פָּרַק.]

A.1 Nouns from the root PRQ occur sporadically in several Semitic languages, and with some frequency in certain dialects of Aramaic and in post-biblical Hebrew.

A.2 In Ugaritic the form *prqt* in KTU 4.205:3-4 is now thought to mean 'loose, open, ungathered' (of garments: cf. Olmo Lete and Sanmartin 2004: 681).

A.3 In Akkadian only *pīrqu* is attested, first (by metathesis from *paqrū* or *baqrū*) at Nuzi in the sense 'vindication' and then, more relevantly, in late Babylonian for 'redemption, where it is plausibly seen as an Aram. loan-word (von Soden 1965-81: 867).

A.4 In post-biblical Hebrew פֶּרֶק [vowels certain?] occurs frequently with the meanings 'joint, limb' (and then of comparable parts of inanimate objects), 'section, chapter' (of a book) and '(period of) time, season' (cf. Jastrow 1971: 1239-40 for instances: the meaning 'part, section' is also claimed by Dupont-Sommer for some Jewish magical texts [cf. Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 943]). A meaning 'load' is given for one passage (Yalk. Lam. 1000; cf. Jastrow 1971: 1240). A different word, פֶּרָקוֹן (ibid., p. 1240), is used for 'redemption'.

A.5 In Jewish Aramaic פִּרְקָא occurs with similar meanings to פֶּרֶק, but also once for a 'cross-roads' (TgJ Ob 14, based on the Heb.) and several times for a 'session' of a school (Jastrow

1971: 1240: presumably derived from the meaning '[period of] time'). פֻּרְקוֹנָא is used for 'redemption', and likewise פּוּרְקָנָא (also for the payment itself). פַּרְקוּתָא is attested once (TgJ 1Sm 4.18, pres. in the sense 'neck', as in the Heb.).

A.6 In Syriac Payne Smith 1903 lists no less than 16 derivatives of *prq*, most of them nouns (465) and many of them related to Christian teaching about redemption and salvation. The latter clearly reflect a post-biblical development in the language and will not be discussed in detail. Potentially older meanings are attested for *pūrāqāʾ* (ibid., p. 439: 'looseness; division of a text'), *parīqūtāʾ* (p. 460: 'distance, separation'), *perqāʾ* (p. 465: 'piece of cloth, bandage'), *peʿrāqāʾ* (ibid.: 'division, joint'), *perqūnāʾ* (ibid.: 'small piece of cloth'), *pāraqtāʾ* (ibid.: 'the back of the neck'), *mapreʿqāʾīt* (p. 293 (adv.): 'at a distance') and *mapreʿqūtāʾ* (ibid.: 'separation, removal'). It is of course possible, and even likely, that the Christian theological terms were based on an older secular (or Jewish) use of such words for 'redemption', as seems to be attested for other dialects of Aram. That apart, the nouns appear to refer to 'separation' and 'that which has been separated from something else' (even 'back of the neck' may be a specific case of the meaning 'joint', for which cf. *peʿrāqāʾ*). The CAL database (consulted 11.7.2009) adds the sense 'garment' for *perqāʾ*.

2. Formal Characteristics

Noun: segholate, probably (cf. cognates) *qitl* (Bauer and Leander 1922: §61a"- g").

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 פֶּרֶק is never the subject of a verb. It follows the adj. מלא in Nah 3.1, which describes a city (Nineveh: cf. v. 7).

A.2 פֶּרֶק is preceded by the preposition על after the verb עמד Qal in Ob 14, which implies that it refers to a place, and the continuation להכרית את־פליטיו indicates that it was a place for an attack on fugitives.

4. Versions

a. LXX:

ἀδικία (Nah 3.1)
διεκβολή (pl., Ob 14)

Jewish revisers:
Aquila: ἐξαυχενισμός (Nah 3.1)
Symmachus: ἀποτομία or μελοκοπία (Nah 3.1)
            φυγαδεία (pl., Ob 14)
Theodotion: nil

b. Peshitta

mqbtʾ (Ob 14)

'wl' (Nah 3.1)

c. Targum: TgJon

ביזא (Nah 3.1)
פרקא (Ob 14)

d. Vulgate:

dilaceratio (Nah 3.1)
exitus (pl., Ob 14)

A.1 LXX interprets contextually with a general negative word in Nah 3.1 and this is followed closely by Sy. Its διεκβολή in Ob 14 could mean (LSJ, p. 423) either 'mountain-pass' (so Sy) or 'exit from a city' (so Vulg).

A.2 Tg 'plunder' and Vulg 'tearing apart' in Nah 3.1 interpret more precisely and in ways that correspond to meanings of the verb פרק. Vulg used *lacero* to render the verb in Ps 7.3 and the presence of the root טרף in close proximity both here and there may have contributed to its interpretation (perhaps with help from Aquila and Symmachus, which point to wounding.).

A.3 At Ob 14 Tg renders with the Aram. equivalent, which generally means 'part, section' (above, **1.A.5**), a meaning that scarcely fits the context: but Cathcart and Gordon 1989: 101 give 'at the crossroads' here.

5. Lexical/Semantic Fields

A.1 In Nah 3.1 פֶּרֶק occurs in close proximity to expressions for hostility (כחש, דמים) and especially with the noun טֶרֶף, which is used metaphorically both here and in the two preceding verses (2.13-14) to refer to the Assyrians' captured treasures. In 2.13 טֶרֶף is the object of מלא Piel, just as פֶּרֶק is governed by the adj. מלא here. Elsewhere the object of מלא (as a verb) is (*inter alia*) חָמָס, 'violence' (Ezk 7.23), and מֶטֶּה, 'perversion (of justice?)' (Ezk 9.9., both with עיר as subject as here.

A.2 The phrases which occur in close proximity to פֶּרֶק in Ob 14 are less informative. The combination of עמד Qal with על is frequent and used in a variety of contexts, but 1Kg 20.38 (על־הדרך) and Jr 6.16 (על־דרכים, cf. NRSV 'crossroads') may have particular relevance. כרת Hiph. seems not to be used elsewhere with פליט, but the latter is found with the similar נכה Hiph. in narrative contexts (Josh 8.22; Jdg 12.4-5, located at מעברות הירדן, 'the fords of the Jordan'), and Ezk 7.16 speaks of פליטים taking refuge in the mountains (הרים).

6. Exegesis

A.1 Commentators and translations generally adopt different meanings for the two occurrences of this word, although both have a context of war. Ob 14 is part of a passage which is critical of the behaviour of the Edomites after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, and פֶּרֶק is understood to mean a place where the Edomites waited (in ambush?) to capture the fleeing inhabitants. Both Bewer 1911: 27, 42 and Wolff 1977: 37: (on the translation and textual note see B.1) waver between 'breaches (in the wall of the city)' and 'parting of the ways' (for the latter cf. BDB: 830, Marti 1904: 236, van Hoonacker 1908: 306-07 [cf. Ar. *frq, fariq*]), citing versional and etymological support for these renderings.

A.2 Neither Smith (1911: 334-35, 355) nor Rudolph (1975: 174-76) has any doubt about the meaning 'plunder' in Nah 3.1; in favour of it they cite the accusations in 2.10, 12-13 and parallels in Assyrian and Old Testament sources. Rudolph draws attention to the use of the verb in Ps 7.3 to refer to the action of a wild animal.

B.1 Rudolph deduced the meaning 'narrow pass' (which Marti had also considered) for Ob 14 from the sense 'split' which he (mistakenly) attributed to the verb פָּרַק, thinking of a point of entry to the Edomite mountains. LXX and Vulg., which he also cited, scarcely support this meaning and it is also contrary to the impression given by v. 13 that the Edomites are being criticised for activities in the vicinity of Jerusalem itself.

B.2 Wolff translated פֶּרֶק as 'way of escape' (1977: 15), which might be an acceptably imprecise way of showing his uncertainty between the two senses mentioned under A.1. But his attempt to give an etymological justification for this, based on the occurrence of the verb פָּרַק in Gn 27.40, in a meaning 'Ausschliff' ('escape route'?), is only very loosely related to that passage. Renkema (2003: 182-83) similarly renders with 'the escape route' and provides a full discussion of the evidence, including the descriptions of similar perils for fugitives in La 4.18-19, 5.8-9. But his attempts to bolster the case for his translation with 'the notion of division contained in the verb פרק' and the (mis)interpretation of פָּרַק in La 5.8 as meaning 'to escape' (183, n. 282) are based on fragile foundations.

7. Conclusion

A.1 There is no doubt about the meaning 'plunder' in Nah 3.1 and it fits well with the idea of 'violent removal' which is common in uses of the related Heb. verb.

A.2 In Ob 14 the exact meaning remains uncertain. Modern commentators generally see פֶּרֶק as a word for a place, and this has the support of the ancient Versions and, at first sight, the context. More specific interpretations such as 'breach' or 'fork' (on a road) can appeal to meanings of cognates in other languages, but they do not easily correlate with clearly attested meanings of the verb in Heb. Perhaps it would be best to understand the word here in the sense which it has in Nah 3.1, i.e. 'plunder': the Edomites are then accused of waiting by piles of what they had taken from the city (cf. v. 13) to take prisoner the fleeing inhabitants.

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