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The Word פָּרָשׁ in the Old Testament

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ACCORDING to the prevalent view, there are two Hebrew nouns פָּרָשׁ: one meaning *horse*, of the form קָמַל, the plural of which should, according to rule, be פָּרָשִׁים; the other meaning *horseman*, of the form קָמַל, plural פָּרָשִׁים. The traditional vocalization of the plural is, however, uniformly פָּרָשִׁים; in other words, it knows only one word פָּרָשׁ, and that with constant *a* in the first syllable. Partly on this ground, doubtless, Schwally¹ has questioned that פָּרָשׁ ever has the meaning *horse* in Hebrew, casting doubt upon the integrity of the text of such Old Testament passages as have been held to establish that fact.

The true state of the case would seem to be exactly the opposite of that assumed by Schwally. There is only one word פָּרָשׁ in Hebrew, but the meaning is properly *horse*, not *horseman*.

It is customary to adduce in support of the conventional view the two Arabic words فَرَس *horse* and فَارِس *horseman*. فَارِس, however, is of course not a participial formation from a verb فرس *to ride*, but, on the contrary, (like Hebrew בּוֹקֵר from בָּקַר) denominative from فَرَس. Nor can there be any talk of coördinate formations of the types קָמַל and קָמַל coinciding in the Hebrew in the singular פָּרָשׁ, for there is no known Semitic root from which they can be derived; cf. Nöldeke, *ZDMG*, xl. p. 737 (against Delitzsch, *Prolegomena*, p. 95), and Fränkel, *Fremdwörter*, p. 99. It follows

¹ On Jer. 46, *ZATW*, viii. p. 191, "Die Bedeutung 'Pferd' für פָּרָשׁ ist nicht hinlänglich gesichert."

that if there be two words פָּרָשׁ in Hebrew, one must be denominative from the other (as Gesenius, *Lehrgebäude*, p. 512). But that the Hebrews would have derived one noun from another in such fashion that the denominative could only with the greatest difficulty be distinguished from its base, is in the last degree improbable. And even admitting that the ר had not then been gutturalized, the Old Testament offers no instance, so far as I am aware, of a denominative קָמַל from a form קָמַל. Denominatives of the form קָמַל are דָּוָן, דָּוָן, דָּוָן from דָּוָן, דָּוָן from דָּוָן, מָלַח from מָלַח, קָשָׁת from קָשָׁת, קָשָׁת from קָשָׁת, and רָקוּחַ from רָקוּחַ; רָמַדָּר *caravaneer*² is not an Aramaizing formation, but an

² Such, and not *mare*, is the meaning of רָמַדָּר. Cf. Syriac ܪܡܢܐ "pastor vel possessor gregis" from ܪܡܢܐ "grex equorum [i.e., of course, the drove of a horse-caravan]; per extens. grex quicumque," Brun, *Dict. Syr.-Lat.* p. 646 (where "heb. רַמְדָּר" should be corrected to רָמַדָּר). See also Nöldeke, *Syr. Gram.* § 84, "ܪܡܢܐ = Heerde von Pferden"; and Brockelmann, *Lex. s. v.* ܪܡܢܐ is the Persian رام, which has been Arabicized as رَمَق; so that König's "רָמַדָּר ramakatur [رامكة]," *Lehrgebäude*, II. 1, p. 410 c, is doubly erroneous. Is there, I wonder, any better ground for the *gattāl* vocalization of רָמַדָּר and רַמְדָּר (some kind of a mule) of the Talmud than the misinterpretation of the word for *caravaneer* or *muleteer* in Esther, with its correctly transmitted vocalization? The expression בני הרמכים = the *caravaneers* as a class, just as בני הנביאים = the *prophets* as a class. In Esth. 8¹⁰ the author labored to say that the despatches were transmitted by means of the convoys of the official transports, (in apposition:) the *caravaneers*: בני הרמכים האחשתינים בני הרמכים, literally, by the hand of the official riders of the transport, the sons of the *caravaneers*. רָמַדָּר is generic for *pack-animal(s)*; so 1 K. 5⁸, where the term סוּסִים covers all *war-horses*, whether of cavalry or chariotry; in Mic. 1¹³ מַרְכָּבָה *carriage* refers of course to a litter: רתם המרכבה לידש שבט לידש, *Strap the litter to the mule of the inhabitress of Lachish*, where the current interpretations would require אָסָר instead of רתם (with which compare the Arabic رَتِيمة, mnemonic thread wound around the anger) and המרכבה לידש instead of המרכבה לידש. The clause הרצים בסוסים (Esth. 8¹⁰) is an erroneous gloss based on 3^{12, 15}, as is also הרצים of 8¹⁴. All that is proved regarding the word רַמְדָּר by the Targum's מחולידין ואתקידה פסת כף תגלדין (which transfers the word רַמְדָּר from the Hebrew text and supplements it with an impossible definition), is that the word was both unfamiliar and unintelligible to the translators. For the rest, cf. Wellhausen, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, February, 1902, p. 189.

Aramaic loan-word. Had the Hebrew formed a word for *horseman* from פָּרָשׁ *horse*, it would doubtless have been, like Arabic *فارس*, of the form *קַפְּרָשׁ*.

That the literal meaning of פָּרָשׁ in the text of the Old Testament is everywhere *horse*, a brief survey of the usage will, I think, conclusively show.

פָּרָשׁ occurs in the singular three times, in each case with unmistakable meaning *horse*. Ez. 26¹⁰: *מִקּוֹל פָּרָשׁ וְגַלְגָּל וְרוֹכֵב*: *תִּרְעַשְׁנָה הַחֲמַתָּךְ*, *Thy walls shall shake with the thunder of steed and wheel and chariot*, that is, with the clatter (and snorting and neighing?) of horses, the rattle of wheels, and the clang of chariot metal; cf. Jer. 47⁸ 8¹⁰ 2 K. 7⁶. Cornill's excision of פָּרָשׁ וְגַלְגָּל is not merely unwarranted, but detracts materially from the force of the original.³ It is the same stock rhetorical phrase that we have in Jer. 4²⁰: *מִקּוֹל הָעֵיר* פָּרָשׁ וְרִמָּה קֶשֶׁת בְּדַחַת כָּל הָעֵיר, where in spite of the absence of the preposition before רִמָּה קֶשֶׁת, this last is better construed as coördinate with the entire phrase *קוֹל פָּרָשׁ*, rather than as dependent on the word *קוֹל*, for *קוֹל רִמָּה קֶשֶׁת* would give no very good sense. The correct interpretation is, *All the land* (reading with the Greek *ἡαῖρ* for *העיר*) *is in flight before (a) the sound of the war-horse and (b) the Bowman's dart*. Lastly, the singular פָּרָשׁ occurs in Nah. 3³, where פָּרָשׁ מַעֲלָה, when restored to its proper place, is parallel to *סוּם דֹּדָר* and is correctly interpreted *rearing steed*.⁴

³ According to Cornill (*Ezechiel*, p. 340 f.), besides disturbing the parallelism, the words פָּרָשׁ תִּלְגָּל "sind auch sachlich anstößig; die קוֹל geht nicht von den Reitern aus, sondern von den Wagen." So Cornill excludes the words because on the interpretation 'Reiter' they yield no satisfactory sense, and then Schwally (*l.c.*) disallows the meaning 'Pferd' because the integrity of this passage has been questioned by Cornill.

⁴ דֹּדָר, both here and in Jud. 5²², is not to gallop, but to fall heels over head. The original of Nah. 3²⁻³ is as follows:

רַעַשׁ אִימֹן	קוֹל שׁוּמ
וְסוּם דֹּדָר	פָּרָשׁ מַעֲלָה
מִרְקָדָה	וּמִרְכָּבָה
וּבִרְקַת הַנִּיחַ	וְלֹהֵב חֵרֵב
וְכַבֵּד פָּנָי	חֵרֵב חֲלָל
לְנִיחָה	וְאֵץ קֶשֶׁת

The plural פֶּרָשִׁים is used in twofold fashion :

(1) With primary sense, as a simple distributive or collective plural of פֶּרָשׁ = *horses*. So 1 S. 8¹¹: *The king whom the children of Israel choose shall take their sons and set them upon his chariot (בְּמִרְכָּבוֹ), and upon his horses (בְּפִרְשָׁיו), and others of them shall run before his chariot*; the reference here is to the personal equipage and retinue of the king. 1 K. 5⁶ (= 2 Chron. 9²⁵): *Solomon had four thousand (read so with the Chronicler for M's erroneous forty thousand) head of horses for his chariots (לְמִרְכָּבוֹ; מִרְכָּבָה is good old Hebrew nomen generis, of which מִרְכָּבָה is nomen unitatis) and twelve thousand cavalry-horses (פֶּרָשִׁים). 1 K. 10²⁵ (= 2 Chron. 1¹⁴): *Solomon collected chariotry and cavalry (פֶּרָשִׁים וְרִכְבָּי, see below), and he had fourteen hundred chariots (רִכְבָּי) and twelve thousand cavalry-horses (פֶּרָשִׁים). This passage harmonizes very well with the one just referred to, 1 K. 5⁶, and would seem to establish the meaning of אֲרִיָּה as head and not span; four thousand is just about the requisite number of horses for the maintenance of an efficient force of fourteen hundred chariots: 4000 + 1400 = 24. The Chronicler misread וּמִרְכָּבוֹת for לְמִרְכָּבוֹ of 1 K. 5⁶, where nothing is said of the number of Solomon's chariots.⁶**

*The crack of the lash, and the thunder of wheels!
Bearing steed, and tumbling horse,
And bounding chariot!*

*And gleam of sword, and flash of spear,
And host of bleeding, and mass of corpses,
And no end to the bodies of the dead!*

דָּדָה of Jud. 5²² is *nomen vicis* = a somersault. הִלֵּם עֵקֶב is, of course, *kick*.

עֵקֶבֵי מוֹם
אֶבְרִיז

אֶז הִלְמִי
מִדְּדֹרֹת דָּדוֹת

*Then (in the torrents of the Kishon) the horses' heels made havoc,
As over and over rolled his men.*

I hope to return to the subject of the root דָּדָה in another place.

⁶ The comparison of the incorrect וּמִרְכָּבוֹת of Chronicles with the correct לְמִרְכָּבוֹ of Kings is sufficient to show that 2 Chron. 9²⁵ is derived from 1 K. 5⁶, and is not a later doublet of 2 Chron. 1¹⁴, on the basis of which doublet in turn, 1 K. 5⁶ was inserted in the Book of Kings (as Kittel). Only, the

1 K. 20²⁰: Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, escapes because of his chariot- and cavalry-horses (עַל סוּם וּפָרָשִׁים); סוּם and פָּרָשִׁים must be given the same construction if we abide by the text.⁶ Observe that the genus is סוּם (singular), but פָּרָשִׁים (plural). Ez. 27¹⁴: The Tyrians buy from Togarmah סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים וּפָרָדִים (chariot-) horses and riding-horses and (pack-) mules. Ez. 38⁴: סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים chariot-horses and cavalry-horses. Hos. 1⁷: I will not deliver them with bow and with sword and with battle, with chariot-horses and with cavalry-horses (בְּסוּסִים וּבְפָרָשִׁים). With the same meaning סוּסִים and פָּרָשִׁים are coupled in Joel 2⁴ Hab. 1⁸ and Jer. 46⁴: אִסְרוּ אֶת הַפָּרָשִׁים וְעַל הַסּוּסִים, of course, *Harness the (chariot-) horses and mount the (cavalry-) steeds!* the entire verse refers to preparations *in situ*, and *Get up, ye "horsemen"!* would be קוּמוּ. Several passages, owing to the fragmentary and to some extent corrupt condition of the context, are exceedingly difficult of interpretation. Yet such as it is, the context leaves no doubt as to the meaning of פָּרָשִׁים. Is. 28²³: The sensible man *has a care to* (cf. פָּחַץ) *the wheel of his wagon, and his riding-horses are not injured in the hoof* (read יִדְקֶן); the original of the preceding part of the verse was probably to the effect that *he does not overwork his threshing-animals* (הַשׂוֹר יִדְשֵׁן לְהַשׂוֹר יִדְשֵׁן?); לָחַם יִדְקֶן would then be a glossator's erroneous caption. Is. 21⁶: *For thus said my lord unto me, "Go set the watchman, let him report what he sees; and if he descry one riding (point רִכַּב) a פָּרָשִׁים, or riding an ass, or riding a camel, let him give strict atten-*

number four thousand of 1 K. 5⁶ will have been raised to forty thousand since the Chronicler employed that book, or in manuscripts which did not influence the text he used. Deliberate tampering with the text of the older historical books since their employment by the Chronicler can, of course, be shown elsewhere.

⁶ Kittel's "[entkam] mit (einigen) Berittenen auf einem Wagenpferd" is no sort of a translation of עַל סוּם וּפָרָשִׁים. Benzinger thinks וּפָרָשִׁים was added by a reader who desired to save some cavalry-men besides the king. An apostate reader! Klostermann alters to וְיָא וּפָרָשִׁים. Burney holds that "פָּרָשִׁים must be thought to be loosely connected on to סוּם by the ׀ as forming a concomitant factor to the king's escape. . . . But the text would be greatly improved by the addition of עָמַר after פָּרָשִׁים."

tion." And the lookout (read *הַרְאָה* for *אָרִיָּה*) cried "Upon the watchtower (*מִצְפֵּה* cs.) of my lord I remained throughout the day, and at my post I stood all night long; and behold there came one riding a *צֶמֶד פָּרָשִׁים*, and he spoke and said, *Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the statues of her gods are crashed to the ground!*" — *My dearly beloved, that* (the above oracular parable) *which I have heard from Jahweh Sebaoth, the God of Israel, I have told you.* *אִישׁ* a man of v.⁹ is a gloss (lacking in the Greek) correctly indicating that the vocalization of *רָכַב* is *רִכַּב* and not *רָכַב*, just as in 22⁶ the vocalization *רִכַּב* is indicated by means of the generic *אָדָם* *people*. That the correct vocalization in v.⁹ is *רִכַּב*, and that only one rider is seen approaching, appears from the number of *וּפֶתַח רֶמֶס*, which must be referred to *רָכַב* as antecedent. And if this is the proper vocalization in v.⁹, it must be the same in v.⁷; a single courier is awaited with news of Babylon, who may come on horse-back, donkey-back, or camel-back. It follows that unless the reading be corrupt in both v.⁷ and v.⁹ (which there is no reason for supposing and, in view of 2 K. 9²⁶, strong reason for denying), *צֶמֶד פָּרָשִׁים* is the designation of a single specimen of the genus *פָּרָשִׁים*; in other words, it is a compound like *שְׂעִיר עֵיִם*. The question thus narrowed down is not difficult to answer. *צֶמֶד* in this connection must be a *she*, and *צֶמֶד פָּרָשִׁים* a (riding-) *mare*. This gives us the only satisfactory explanation of the text of 2 K. 9²⁶: *כִּי זָכַר אֲנִי וְאַתָּה אֶת רֶכְבִּים צֶמְדִים אַחֲרַי אַחֲאֵב אֲבִיו וַיְהִי וְג'* *For call to mind myself and thyself riding mare-back behind Ahab, his father, when Jahweh etc.* It is, of course, not to be imagined that the sex of the animal is consciously emphasized in either of these passages; the Arab speaks of 'his mare' as we speak of a 'horse.' Is. 22⁶: *בְּרֶכַב אָדָם פָּרָשִׁים*; as pointed out above, *אָדָם* is a gloss indicating the vocalization *רִכַּב*, which, if the text be unimpaired, is quite correct; *רֶכַב פָּרָשִׁים* would be *riders* (collective, 'Reiterei') of *horses*; cf. 2 K. 7¹⁴, *שְׁנֵי רֶכַב סוּסִים*, *two horsemen*. But perhaps we should read *רֶכַב וּפָרָשִׁים*; see the following verse.

(2) The generic *פָּרָשִׁים* *horses* is used tropically as the technical term for *cavalry*, just as the generic *רֶכַב* *chariots*

is used for *chariotry*, and the generic סוּם *horse* for the entire *mounted force*, and precisely as in English we speak of 'horse and foot.' סוּם is the name of the animal as such; employed as a riding-horse, he becomes פָּרָשׁ. Accordingly, the two kinds of סוּם 'horse' are סוּם רֶכֶב *chariot-'horse'* and פָּרָשִׁים *cavalry*, Ex. 14⁹; no writer in his senses would speak of a mounted force as consisting of *chariot-horses and cavalry-men*, and if סוּם רֶכֶב be tropical for *chariotry*, why not פָּרָשִׁים tropical for *cavalry*? Ex. 14²⁸: Pharaoh's סוּם consists of פָּרָשִׁים וּפָרָשָׁיו *his chariotry and his cavalry*. So, in spite of the construction, we must interpret in the editorial verse 15¹⁹. Observe also the parallelism in Is. 31¹: on the one side סוּסִים, on the other רֶכֶב and פָּרָשִׁים. In Ez. 26⁷ it is difficult to determine whether we should render *with chariot-horses and chariots and cavalry-horses*, or, pleonastically, *with horse and with chariotry and with cavalry*. 1 S. 13⁶: the Philistines fight against Israel with *thirty thousand chariotry and six thousand cavalry*; as in the one case the unit is the *chariot*, so in the other it is the *horse*. 2 S. 8⁴ (= 1 Chron. 18⁴): *And David took from him one thousand chariotry and seven thousand cavalry* (read so, with the Chronicler and the Greek, to make the latter half of the verse intelligible) *and twenty thousand infantry, and David demolished⁷ all the chariots but one hundred, which he retained*. In 2 S. 10¹⁸ we must read with the Chronicler (1 Chron. 19¹⁸), *David slew of Aram seven thousand chariotry* (here of course = *charioteers*) *and forty thousand foot*; the number *forty thousand* of itself favors the Chronicler's text, and the infantry must in any event be accounted for. פָּרָשִׁים = *cavalry* (but not *horsemen*): coupled with רֶכֶב, Gen. 50⁹ Ex. 14^{17. 18. 26. 28} Josh. 24⁶ 1 K. 1⁵ 9¹⁹ = 2 Chron. 8⁶ 1 K. 9²² = 2 Chron. 8⁹ 2 K. 2¹² 13^{7. 14} 18²⁴ = Is. 36⁹ Is. 22⁷ Dan. 11⁴⁰ (*chariots, horse, and ships*), 1 Chron. 19⁶ 2 Chron. 12³ 16⁸; without רֶכֶב, Ezra 8²² Neh. 2⁹. Of course the word is the same in all these passages. But אֲבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו of 2 K. 2¹² and 13¹⁴ establishes the point that פָּרָשִׁים in these

⁷ On טָקַד cf. Neo-Hebrew and Aramaic; it cannot here mean *to hough*, for רֶכֶב is never the animal.

connections is a merely formal plural with secondary, collective sense: *My father, my father, the chariots (or chariot) of Israel and the horsemen thereof!* spoken of Elijah and of Elisha, is absurd; *the chariotry of Israel and the cavalry thereof*, unexceptionable.

The distinction which, in reducing the language to terms of our own thought, we are forced to draw between פִּרְשִׁים in its primary sense of *riding-horses* and in its secondary sense of *cavalry*, did not occur to the ancient writer, so that in particular cases (such as, e.g., 1 K. 10^{26a}) it is not easy to determine whether the rendering should be the one or the other. However, that פִּרְשִׁים was never used by the writers of the Old Testament with conscious reference to the horse-men, appears certain from the positive evidence of 2 S. 1⁶: the writer permits himself indeed to speak of the *charioteers* as הַרִכָּב, but the *cavalry-men* as distinguished from the 'horse' are בְּעָלֵי הַפִּרְשִׁים! The phrase is thoroughly idiomatic, and there is not the slightest ground for dropping בְּעָלֵי, as do Wellhausen, Driver, H. P. Smith, and Nowack,⁸ except the mistaken one that פִּרְשִׁים means *horsemen*; the Greek οἱ ἰππάρχαι represents our Hebrew, otherwise it would have ἰππεῖς, only it mistranslated בְּעָלֵי commanders instead of *men of*. Nor is it easy to see how the word בְּעָלֵי could have crept into the text, whether on Wellhausen's improbable theory or in any other manner; for it runs directly counter to the traditional view of the meaning of פִּרְשִׁים; it is Hebrew against Aramaic.

The only Old Testament passages which seem to militate against the view above set forth are Ez. 23⁶⁻¹²: פִּרְשִׁים רִכְבֵי in both verses. That there is something wrong with these passages appears at a glance. If פִּרְשֵׁ ever did mean *horseman* in Hebrew, it is not in the least likely that Ezekiel would have felt called upon to so inform his hearers. This is not a case of 'acervation of terms,' but of bald definition. One or the other of the two terms must be an interpolation; and in view of the parallel clauses of the context and the

⁸ So also Budde in *SBOT*; in the later *KHC* he inclines to read בְּעָלֵי סוּסִים.

phraseology of v. 23 and 38¹⁵, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the interpolation is פָּרָשִׁים. It is not disputed that the interpolator understood פָּרָשִׁים as meaning *horsemen*. But what with פָּרָשִׁים *cavalry* on the one hand, and Aramaic פָּרְשָׂא *horseman* on the other, the blunder is not to be wondered at.

There remains the question as to the form of the word פָּרָשׁ and the proper vocalization of the plural. Is the traditional vocalization correct, and have we here an animal-name of the form קָפָל, such as אֵיָהּ *hawk*, אֵיָל *hart*, קֵיָהּ *kite*? In view of the Arabic فَرَس *horse*, on the one side, and the Aramaic פָּרְשָׂא *horseman* on the other, we must conclude that the Hebrew word is of the form קָפָל, and the traditional vocalization of the plural an error due to the influence of the Aramaic. The plural will therefore be פָּרָשִׁים.⁹

* The construct singular, if we had occasion for it, would naturally be פָּרָשׁ. For the rest, that the Masoretic pointing פָּרָשׁ וְנָלִל of Ex. 26¹⁵ intends the construct state (Ewald², § 339 a; Olshausen, § 183 a; Stade, § 217 a; Ges.-Kautzsch, §§ 84 b, 130 b; König, *Syntax*, p. 420) is extremely doubtful; cf. Böttcher, i. p. 304, and especially p. 525.