Introduction

Grammatical Type: n.f.

Occurrences: Total 6x OT, 0x Sir, 2x QumB (1QIsa² 22.6, 49.2), 1x inscr (Lachish ostracon 13.3).

Text Doubtful:

A.1 Written as שְפָּא in 1QIsa² Is 22.6 (for other cases of Aleph for MT He in 1QIsa² see Kutscher 1974:163-64). 1QIsa² Is 49.2 has שְפַּתִּוּבָא, i.e. pl for MT sing.

A.2 Lachish ostracon 13.3: 4 שְפָּא. This occurrence is viewed as pl by Ges.-18 (109), Clines (“pl. perh.” 1:418a), Lemaire (1977:130) and is vocalised as pl by Torczyner (1938:159-60). Davies (1991:6) marks the Shin and the “4” as uncertain. There is also a word-divider between זאת and שְפָּא which is marked as uncertain. The reference is marked as uncertain in HAL (93).

B.1 In Jr 5.16 BHS and BHK propose that instead of שְפָּה we should read פִּיהוּ שֶרֶף. The latter emendation is also recorded in Clines (1:418a) and Ges.-18 (109).

B.2 In Dt 32.41 it is suggested by BHK that there may be an occurrence of שְפָּה. BHK proposes to read פָּהשְ שֶרֶף in place of שְפָּט שֶרֶף. The same emendation is found in Greßmann (1905:78), and is said there to go back to an oral communication from Gunkel.

B.3 Clines (1:418a) suggests the emendation משׁהָ שֶתֶּ ‘the rods, i.e. arrows, of your quiver’ for MT אֹמֶר שֶתֶּ (Hb 3.9). The context has שֶתֶּ ‘bow’ in support of the emendation, although the verse is more likely to be drawing the comparison between speech and arrows drawn in Pr 25.18 and Sir 51.5.

Qere/Ketiv: none.
1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 שְפָּה is the equivalent of Akk ispatu ‘quiver’ or ‘bow case’ (in CAD 7:257), Ug utpt, Eg ispt and Hurr ispanti. Akk may be the source of the word in other languages. The following are explicitly said to be loanwords: Ug utpt by KB (95), Ellenbogen (1962:45), HAL (93); Eg ispt by Ehelolf (1923:46-47), Albright (1934:10), Ges.-18 (109), Ellenbogen (1962:45), HAL (109); Hurr ispanti by von Brandenstein (1939:58), CAD (7:257), HAL (93; see also Ellenbogen 1962:46, n. 3); Hebrew שְפָּה by Ellenbogen (1962:45).

A.2 Akk ispatu is sometimes written with the gis or kuš determinative preceding (AHw:397). The former is written before wooden objects, and the latter before leather objects.

A.3 Ehelolf (1923:46-47) says that Akk ispatu comes ultimately from Sum and gives an etymology. According to him the word used originally to refer to the bow case, before it developed to be used of an arrow case. Ellenbogen (1962:46) offers an alternative Sum etymology of Akk ispatu.

A.4 Hoch (1994:40-41) gives the various Hieroglyphic spellings of the Eg word through the 18th-20th dynasties. He holds that the word is probably not of Semitic origin, though it has come to Eg through Semitic, and the Eg form resembles Hebrew שְפָּה more than it does the Ug or Akk forms.

B.1 Lawson Younger (1997:566) incorrectly reads HAL or Albright (1934) and says that Albright derived שְפָּה from Eg ’sp’t.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 Whatever its ultimate etymology, שְפָּה now has the structure qatl-h.

B.1 [nil]

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 Subj תִּרְנֶה (Jb 39.23). The meaning of this verb is not clear. BDB (943) suggests that *רָנָה ‘rattle’ is onomatopoeic. HAL (1162) gives it as “klirren”. 11QtgJob uses תִּרְנֶה from the verb to “hang up”.

A.2 Obj נשא (Is 22.6), מלא piel (Ps 127.5).

A.3 nomen rectum of בנ (La 3.13).

B.1 [nil]

4. Versions

A.1 LXX Is 49.2 φαρέτρα. In pl in Is 22.6 since sentence changed from sing “and Elam took up the quiver” to pl οἱ δὲ Ἄιλαµίται ἐλαβον φαρέτρας. LXX Jb 39.23 reads only: ἐπ’ αὐτῷ γαυριᾶ τόξον καὶ μάχαιρα. Similarly with Jr 5.16 first half of verse is omitted and whole verse reads πάντες ἰσχυροί. Janzen (1973:97, 117) explains short LXX reading in Jr 5.16 as haplography. LXX La 3.13 has removed MT’s metaphor by translating “he brought into my kidneys the sons of his quiver” as εἰσήγαγεν τοῖς νεφροῖς μου ἱοὺς φαρέτρας αὐτοῦ “he brought into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver”. LXX Ps 127.5 reads μακάριος ἀνθρώπος ὃς πληρώσει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν αὐτοῦ ἐξ αὐτῶν “happy is the man who fills his desire from them”. Translation of נשא by “desire” may link it with the verb שאף ‘pant’ or ‘long for’. The translation may have been caused by a failure to recognize the metaphor being used. Compare also Tg.

A.2 Ps 127.5 Aq, Sym, Thd φαρέτρα ‘quiver’.

A.3 Pesh Jb 39.23, Ps 127.5, Is 22.6, 49.2 qτρq ‘quiver’. In Is 22.6 with seyame (pl marker) in manuscript 7a1 and probably in 12a1. La 3.13 reads ‘י בקיו ”why “he made his arrows enter into my kidneys”. This understands בקיו to mean “his arrows”. Pesh Jr 5.16 (7a1) reads: ggrθ ὑκ πτyhref. McKane (1986:124) thinks that Pesh Jr 5.16 has used ggrθ “their throats” assimilating to Pesh Ps 5.10, which reads ὑκ πτyhref ggrθwn. Pesh Jr 5.16 does not therefore attest a non-Masoretic Vorlage.

A.4 Tg Is 22.6 uses יכז ‘weapons’ or ‘armour’. Tg Jb 39.23 (Díez Merino 1984) like Is 22.6 has יכז. Tg Is 49.2, Jr 5.16 has יכז respectively. The second word of these phrases, “weapons” or “armour”, is cognate with יכז. In this phrase it may have become specialised to mean “quiver” (Jastrow:37). Tg La 3.13
explains metaphor of MT using the phrase גֵרֵי חֵקִית “the arrows of his quiver” to represent בְּנֵי אָשֶׁר. Tg Ps 127.5 (Díez Merino 1982) “his school” is clearly interpretative.


A.6 Vg always has pharetra ‘quiver’, except Ps 127.5 iuxta LXX which uses desiderium ‘desire’. In La 3.13 Vg translates בְּנֵי אָשֶׁר by filias pharetrae suae “the daughters of his quiver”. The reason for the feminine, “daughters”, is uncertain.

B.1 11QtgJob at Jb 39.23 שְפָּתֹ was translated by French “lance” (van der Ploeg and van der Woude 1971). This meaning is rejected by Borger (1977:102-05), and seems without warrant.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 שְפָּה is in the semantic field of military equipment, and is accoutrement to offensive weapons. It may also be viewed as part of the semantic field of archery. In Is 49.2, Ps 127.5 and La 3.13 שְפָּה is brought into close connection with חֵץ ‘arrow’. The last two examples have חֵץ in the preceding verse. In La 3.12-13 there is a link between שֶׁת and שְפָּה ‘bow’. There is a looser contextual link between שֶׁת and חֵץ in Is 22.6 and שְפָּה in Is 22.3.

A.2 שְפָּה is brought into connection with בָּנִים in the phrase שְפָּתֹ אַבְנֵי (La 3.13), and in the context of Ps 127 (cf. בְּנֵי נְשָׁרִים in v. 4). A looser connection may be made between the reference to eating up sons in Jr 5.17 and the use of שְפָּה in Jr 5.16.

B.1 [nil]

6. Exegesis

A.1 On Is 22.6 Wildberger (1978:819) says “Ps 127.5 spricht bildhaft vom Füllen des Köchers, man erwartet also, daß hier von seinem Entleeren gesprochen
würde...Aber wenn man den Köcher aufhebt, geschieht das ja auch, um Pfeile herauszunehmen.”

A.2 In Jr 5.16 an is likened to an open grave although it is not directly an instrument of death, nor is its orifice expansive. The simile may be used because the quiver is the source of numerous deadly arrows. Thus Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard (1991:90) translate, “Its quiver is like an open grave; all within it are warriors.”

A.3 The general military context of the Lachish ostraca favours the view that is found there. It may be a list of equipment. The possible use of the sign “4” immediately after may also indicate that it is a pl.

B.1 [nil]

7. Conclusion

Given the parallels in other languages, the versional renderings, and the military contexts of its use, the meaning of as “quiver” seems secure. It is possible, however, that bows and arrows were kept in the same case in some periods, and therefore, since in Akk ispatu also has the less common meaning of “bow case”, the possibility that this is the meaning in some Hebrew occurrences should not be ruled out.

Bibliography


Sokoloff, M. 1974. The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI. Jerusalem.


