Introduction

Grammatical Type: n m.

Occurrences: Total 9x OT, 1x Sir (46.2b), 5x Qum (1QM 5.7, 11, 12, 14, 6.5), 0x inscr.

Text Doubtful:
A.1 [nil]

B.1 Briggs & Briggs (1906:310) propose that for MT סגר in Ps 35.3 the original was probably כידון. “In unpointed text כדן might have been mistaken for סגר, if letters were transposed כנד.” This emendation must be rejected because of the occurrence of סגר in 1QM 5.7.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 The etymology of כידון is unknown or disputed. Since the discovery of 1QM, where כידן clearly denotes a type of sword, etymologies that gave it the meaning “javelin” etc. have been rejected. Zorell (354) and HAL (450) attempt no etymology, while Ges. (343) is cautious.

A.2 occurs in RH (BDB:475, KB:433), e.g. M. Kelim 11.8. Here Blackman (1964:85) understands it as “spear” with the alternatives “javelin” and “lance” (1964:86), whereas Bunte (1972:216-17) breaks with traditional understanding of the Mishnah and, on the basis of 1QM, translates כידון as “Krummsäbel”.

P.J. Williams
(revised 1998)
A.3 כִּיתּון may be connected with the prop noun כִּית (1Ch 13.9), the parallel of which (2Sm 6.6) has נָכוֹן, LXX (Ms B) Νωδαβ (see Margel 1920). Tur-Sinai (1951:284) suggests that כִּית is a “metamorphosis” of נָכוֹן by oral or written tradition. HAL (450) supports a possible connection between כִּית and 1Ch 13.9.

B.1 BDB (475) derives כִּית from the root כִּית, said possibly to correspond to Arb käda ‘labour, take pains, strive, struggle with’, and Arb kayd ‘war’. Levy (317) compares Arb kayd and BH כִּית “Verderben”. KB (433; see also Ges.:343) compares Arb kadda and Eth kēda meaning “stossen, thrust”.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 Since the etymology of כִּית is unknown, its formal characteristics cannot be stated with certainty. If it has an etymology within Hebrew, the final syllable אַן or אֶן may be an afformative (for this compare the nouns in Joüon & Muraoka 1993, Vol. 1:262-63). In 1QM the word is always spelled כידן, as Jr 50.42 כִּית. Elsewhere in MT the final syllable is always plene. The consistent plene spelling of the first syllable may suggest that the root is כִּית, rather than כִּית.

A.2 The form רַחבו “its width” (1QM 5.13), referring to כִּית, indicates that it is masculine.

B.1 Carmignac (1955:358; cf. Carmignac 1958:81) denies that an /o/ sound could have existed in the final syllable of the word at the time of 1QM, on the grounds of the defective spelling כִּית. He suggests that the pronunciation of Hebrew must have varied with time. Nevertheless, variation in spelling is not definitely linked with pronunciation, and variation in pronunciation does not have to be diachronic.

3. Syntagmatics
A.1 כִּידוֹנ is obj of חזק hiph (Jr 6.23, 50.42), נָטָה hiph (Sir 46.2). It is governed by נָטָה (Josh 8.18 (2x), 26). It is part of a multiple subj of רָנָה (Jb 39.23), a verb whose meaning is unclear. BDB (943) suggests that רָנָה ‘rattle’ is onomatopoeic; HAL (1162) gives it as “klirren”. 11QtgJob uses נַחְלָה from the verb to “hang up”.

נוף hiph in Sir 46.2b explains נָטָה in 46.2a, which itself recalls the verb in Josh 8.

נוף ‘wave’ is used with the following instruments as logical or grammatical objects: חֶרֶב (Ex 20.25), הפך (Dt 23.26), בַּרְזֶל (Dt 27.5, Josh 8.31), נָשָׁן (Is 10.15). All but the last are instruments for cutting, נָשָׁן is only used for thrusting in 2Sm 18.14 (though Driver 1913:330 emends נָשָׁן to נַחְלָה, and therefore the use of נוף hiph in Sir probably supports the meaning “sword”, and suggests that this meaning in 1QTM is not an innovation.

The use of חזק hiph may indicate that the weapon was retained during combat.

A.2 Nomen rectum after שלח (Jb 41.21), אורך (1QM 5.12), יד ‘handle’ (1QM 5.14), חזק hiph participle (1QM 6.5). For this last verb see A.1 above; nomen regens before נָטָה (1Sm 17.6).

A.3 In 1QM 5.11 בֹּרֶל is predicate following הבידונים as subj.

A.4 יד + ב is used adverbially to, or as predicate for כִּידוֹנ (Josh 8.18 (2x), 1QM 5.6 predicate).

B.1 [nil]

4. Versions
a. LXX:
ασπίς (1Sm 17.6, 45);
γαϊσος (Josh 8.18 [2x]);
ἐγχειρίδιον (Jr 50[27].42);
ζιβύνη (Jr 6.23);
μάχαιρα? (Jb 39.23);
πυρφόρον (Jb 41.21);
ρομφαία (Sir 46.2);
zero (Josh 8.26).
b. The Three:
Aq:
 ἀσπίς (Jb 41.21);
 γαῖσος (Josh 8.18a);
 θυρεός (Jr 6.23, 50.42);
Sym:
 ἀσπίς (Josh 8.18a);
ζιβύνη (Josh 8.26);
θυρεός (Jr 6.23, 50.42);
Thd:
 ἀσπίς (Jb 39.23);
 θυρεός (Jb 41.21).
c. Pesh:
trpns (1Sm 17.6);
nyzk (Josh 8.18 [2x], 26, Jr 6.23 [pl], 50.42 [pl], Jb 39.23, 41.21, Sir 46.2);
skr (1Sm 17.45).
d. Tg:
מסתמה (1Sm 17.6);
נן (Jb 39.23 11QtgJob);
דמעא (Josh 8.18 [2x], 26, 1Sm 17.45, Jb 39.23, 41.21);
תריס (Jr 6.23, 50.42).
Vg:
clypeus (Josh 8.18a, 26, 1Sm 17.6, 45, Jb 39.23);
hasta (Jb 41.21);
romphea (Sir 46.2);
scutum (Jr 6.23, 50.42);
zero (Josh 8.18b).

A.1 In the LXX there is a confusing number of semantically distinct equivalents for כִּידוֹן. Several point towards a javelin or spear: γαίσος ‘javelin’ (Liddell & Scott 1940:335), ‘spear, javelin’ (Lust et al. 1992:86), ζιβύνη ‘(hunting-)spear’ (Lust et al. 1992:195), πυρφόρον ‘flaming weapon, javelin with combustibles tied to it’ (Lust et al. 1996:413, see also Walters 1973:124-25). Others point to a knife or sword: ἐγχειρίδιον, ῥομφάια, μάχαιρα. The last equivalent is less certain than the others: LXX Jb 39.23 reads ἐπ’ αὐτῷ γαυριᾷ τόξον καὶ μάχαιρα where MT has כִּידוֹן חֲנִית לַהַב שָפָה עָלָיו אַתִּרְנֶה. Moatti-Fine (1996:136) takes μάχαιρα to be the equivalent of כִּידוֹן; Molin (1956:334) agrees, although his incomplete quotation of LXX and MT gives the wrong impression about equivalences. The use of ἀσπίς to refer to an item on Goliath’s back is unlike the other renderings. Gallling (1966:165-66) holds that the LXX erroneously translated כִּידוֹן in 1Sm 17.6 as ἀσπίς because a different term is used for “Lanze” in the following verse. Josh 8.26 is absent from LXX. The wide range of equivalents in the LXX points to one of several possibilities: that כִּידוֹן was poorly understood, that it was a general word for some types of arms, or that its meaning was in transition. In this last case it is most probable that it was changing from denoting a “spear” to denoting a “sword”. Molin (1956:334) considers the use of γαίσος and ζιβύνη, Germanic and Thracian words respectively, as an indication that “this foreign weapon could not be described by a genuine Greek word”.

A.2 In a considerable number of places the Three take כִּידוֹן to denote a shield. The Antiochene text also has ἀσπίς in 1Sm 17.6, 45 (Fernández Marcos and Busto Saiz
1989). The reading of γαίσος in Aq Josh 8.18 is questionable according to Field because of Aq’ s reading at Jb 41.21, Jr 6.23, 50.42.

A.3 Pesh generally supports the meaning “spear” or “javelin”. trpns’ ‘lorica e laminis contexta’ (Brockelmann:291) and skr’ ‘shield’ denote defensive items of armour. Pesh 1Sm 17 may have been influenced by LXX.

A.4 Tg generally supports the meaning “spear”, though both תריס and המסחפא mean shield (Levy 1867-68, Vol. 2:51, 560).

A.5 In 11QtgJob to Jb 39.23 Van der Ploeg & Van der Woude (1971:77) note the word נך, and give it the meaning “javelot”, comparing Arb nzk “percer quelqu’un avec une lance”, which they say is denominative from nayzar “lance courte”. Jb 41.21 is not extant in 11QtgJob.

A.6 Only in Jb 41.21 does Vg not point towards “shield”. Here hasta ‘spear’ is probably used because the context requires an offensive weapon. Vg Josh 8.18b omits נך along with many other words from MT, perhaps by homoioteleuton.

A.7 Josephus (Antiquities VI 9.1[171]) represents the נך in 1Sm 17.6 by δόρυ.

A.8 The equivalent “shield” occurs in several versions, including Tg, which is unlikely to be dependent on LXX. It is possible that this understanding arose by independent exegetical attempts to find an item appropriate for Goliath’s back in 1Sm 17.6.

B.1 Molin (1956:334) incorrectly identifies malleus in Vg Jb 41.20 as equivalent of נך. It is rather the equivalent of חוטם.

B.2 Molin (1956:337) suggests that ἄσπις in LXX 1Sm 17 may denote a scimitar, since a scimitar resembles a serpent (or adder), which is also a meaning of ἄσπις. This rendering may have been misunderstood by Vg, and thus have caused its translation by clypeus and scutum. Nevertheless, this proposal is improbable since within LXX ἄσπις serves as an equivalent of מרב, and, moreover, the meaning “scimitar” is unattested elsewhere for ἄσπις.
B.3 Galling (1966:166) wrongly gives LXX Josh 8.18 as γαῖος.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 כִּידוֹן is an offensive weapon. It occurs frequently in the context of other items of armour, as in the following pairs or lists: כִּידוֹן וּכּוֹבַע (1QM 5.6-7), כִּידוֹן וּמִצְחָה (1QM 6.5 contrast מִצְחָה וּכִידוֹן also in 6.5), כִּידוֹן וּמִגֶּן (Jr 6.23, and with defective spelling 50.42), כִּידוֹן וּמִגֶּן (1Sm 17.45), and מֻנְעָה וּכִידוֹן (Jb 39.23). In 1Sm 17.6 כִּידוֹן occurs in a list following כּוֹבַע ‘helmet’, מֻנְעָה ‘greave(s)’ (BDB:595), and preceding חֲנִית ‘spear’ (17.7). In Jb 41.21 כִּידוֹן is the B parallel to חֲנִית. In 1QM 5.12 there is reference to בחיתו “its two sides”. It also has ספות ‘lips’ (thus Duhaime 1995:109, though Kaiser 1982:166 takes them as “Rillen” - sappōτ), שעון ‘head’ (point?), in 5.13 a בטן ‘belly’ (see Exegesis), and in 5.14 a יד ‘handle’.

B.1 [nil]

6. Exegesis

A.1 1QM 5.11-14 gives a detailed description of the כִּידוֹן. Its length is one and a half cubits, its width four finger-breadths, its בטן four thumb-breadths, and up to its בטן are four hand-breadths. It is uncertain whether its ivory handle is included in the calculation of length. Kuhn (1956:30) considers its inclusion unlikely. Molin (1956:334-37), Kuhn (1956:28-30), Yadin (1962:124-131), Driver (1965:183-87), and Gmirkin (1996:120) discuss כִּידוֹן in 1QM in detail.

Van der Ploeg (1955:380) and Yadin (1962:126) take בטן to denote a sheath or scabbard. Yadin (1962:125) understands the כִּידוֹן of 1QM to be “a straight double-edged sword, not a ‘sickle sword’” (see also Ahituv 1968:974). Yadin’s identification of the כִּידוֹן with the Roman gladius ‘Spanish sword’ is accepted by Gmirkin (1996:120) with the
modification that it could be the *gladius* of the second rather than of the first century B.C. Dupont-Sommer (1961:178) denies a connection with the Roman *gladius*.

Driver (1965:183-87), following Kuhn (“die Ausbuchtung” 1956:29) and Molin (“Bogenstück” 1956:337), understands בטן to be part of the כידון, since a כידון of four finger-breadths in width would not require a scabbard of four thumb-breadths. The בטן is the “bulge” or “curve” of the blade (thus also Dupont-Sommer 1961:178). Duhaime (1995:109) understands בטן as “the lower part of the sword” citing Van der Ploeg and Molin, as against Yadin, with approval. Driver (1965:183-87), followed by Kaiser (1982:165), characterises it as a curved dagger, Lat *sica*, Dupont-Sommer (1961:178) as “curved like a scimitar or, better still, like the ‘harpe’”. Whether or not בטן means “sheath” is connected to whether or not כידון is curved: “Wenn בטן ‘Scheide’ bedeutet...entfällt die Erklärung des Kidon als Sichelschwert, da dieses niemals eine Scheide hat” (Galling 1966:166). Carmignac (1955:358) identifies certain reliefs as depicting the כידון. Yadin (1962:125) believes that steel was the material used for the כידון in 1QM.

A.2 Since the discovery of 1QM several scholars have suggested that כידון in BH also denotes a type of sword (Carmignac 1955:357-59, Molin 1956:337, *HAL*:450). De Vaux (1960:50) takes the word in the Bible to denote “un cimeterre”, Stoebe (1973:318) holds “Sichelschwert” as the most likely meaning in 1Sm 17.6, and Weippert (1977:61) probably supports the understanding “Krumm-Schwert”. McCarter (1980:292) understands כידון in 1Sm 17.6 as “scimitar”, or more specifically “a heavy, curved, flat-bladed, Oriental sword with a cutting edge on the outer (convex) side of the blade”. Nevertheless, when commenting on חרב in 1Sm 17.51 (1980:294) he sees this as a generic term for “sword” referring to Goliath’s scimitar, which was earlier denoted by כידון, a term specifically for “scimitar”. This theory is perhaps less natural since both terms occur in 1Sm 17.45. Carmignac (1955:358-59) compares 1Sm 17.6 with Iliad xi 29 ἀμφὶ δ´ ὀφίωσιν βάλετο ξίφος, where Agamemnon throws his sword onto his shoulders. This phrase recurs in Iliad ii 45, iii 334, xvi 135 and xix 372. Other Homeric
references to the carrying of swords on shoulders are: Odyssey ii 3, iv 308, viii 416, x 261-62, xiv 528, xx 125, xxi 119, Iliad iii 17-18, xv 714. Bochart (1692, Part 1:138), after citing these instances, asks why a “jaculum” should not likewise be hung on a belt round the shoulders of a giant. The comparison fits even better if כידון is no longer understood as a javelin. Beekes (1995:93) finds Homer’s phrase to refer merely to the placing around the shoulders of the carrying-strap of the sword, not of the sword itself. Bochart (1692, Part 1:135-41) discusses כידון in the Bible at length.

In the description of Goliath’s equipment in 1Sm 17.5-7 there is no mention of a חרב. Nevertheless, Goliath’s חרב is used to behead him in v. 51. In v. 45 David charges the Philistine with coming בְּכִידוֹן וּבַחֲנִית בְּחֶרֶב, while in v. 47 he says that God does not save בְּחֲנִית בְּחֶרֶב. The absence of כידון from Israelite weaponry may have caused the omission of כידון in the latter phrase, since it is talking about deliverance for the Israelites. Alternatively, v. 47 may suggest that כידון is subsumed under the category of חרב. It is slightly awkward to understand both terms in verse 45 as referring to swords, unless different types of sword are denoted. If the כידון of 17.6 is the חרב of later in the passage the sudden appearance of the חרב can be explained.

A.3 Vg 1Sm 17.6 paraphrases et clypeus aereus tegebat umeros eius “and a bronze shield was covering his shoulders”. tegebat corresponds to MT’s בין “(was) in between”, which could be used with reference to pieces of armour other than a shield.

A.4 With the exception of Josh 8 the weapon is not recorded in the hands of Israelites. This may suggest a foreign weapon.

B.1 Bardtke (1955:407) understood חרב in 1QM as “Wurfspeer”, but this was during the early period after the discovery of the scroll, and has not been accepted in later discussion.

B.2 Kaiser (1982:166) inexplicably takes בֶּן as “Klinge”.

7. Conclusion
A.1 In the light of the meaning “sword” in 1QM the conclusions of some modern lexicons remain doubtful. These include Ben Yehudah (2339)IMALAMMIN, Zorell (354) “prob. breve iaculum, hasta”, Alonso Schökel (330) “Jabalina, venablo” (but for Sir 46.2 “Bastón de mando”). The meaning “sword” fits all biblical occurrences, though it is not demanded by them. It is still disputed whether 1QM describes a straight sword or a scimitar. HAL (450) and Fohrer (1963:490, 526) “Sichelschwert” adopt the latter meaning for OT occurrences, although this cannot be regarded as certain.

A.2 To judge by the variety of equivalents within the LXX its translators were not all aware of the meaning of כידון. An objection to the supposition that 1QM preserves the correct biblical meaning could be that if the meaning of the word could not be remembered at the time of the LXX, a fortiori it would be less likely to be remembered at the time of the writing of 1QM. However, if Gmirkin (1996) is correct in assigning a second century B.C. date to the weaponry in 1QM then the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness may be sufficiently early to avoid this objection. If the LXX translators were not native Hebrew speakers, or were less educated than the author of the War, or if the word was better known in Palestine than in Egypt, the objection would likewise be avoided.

B.1 Clines (3:271) glosses כידון as “javelin” in both 1QM 6.5 and Jb 39.23. This meaning cannot be defended for 1QM 6.5.

B.2 Nunnally (1997:199) says that the use of כידון in 1QM to denote a sword is the result of a “confusion”. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the meaning in 1QM has arisen by misunderstanding of previous texts.

Bibliography


Tur-Sinai, N.H. 1951. The Ark of God at Beit Shemesh (1 Sam. vi) and Peres Uzza (2 Sam. vi; 1 Chron. xiii). *VT* 1:275-86.


