(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: vb Qal, Piel, Hithpael

Occurrences: (Total: 11) 10x OT, 1x Qum, 0x Sir, 0x inscr.

Qum: Qal/Piel (1x) – 4Q215 f1 3.2

Text doubtful:

**B.1** Ps 7.3: On the basis of the Versions Grätz (1882-83: 169-70) and others (cf. Briggs and Briggs 1907: 52-53, 57) inserted יִפְרֹק before פַּרַק of MT (cf. LXX, Sy) and Gunkel (1926: 25) read יִפְרֹק (cf. Tg., Vulg.). The former proposal, which was adopted by Kraus (1978: 190-91; cf. **BHS, HAL**), is claimed to be required by the meaning of פַּרַק elsewhere (esp. in Ps 136 and La 5). The latter (which Anderson [1972: 94] also mentions favourably) can point to a close parallel in Is. 5.29 (with פָּרָה). But LXX may have been trying to make sense of a text like MT which it did not understand on the basis of the similar passages cited, and there do seem to be a number of places (see below) where פַּרַק means something other than ‘save’.

The other emendation is more attractive, but it is by no means certain (even unlikely) that Tg. and Vulg. were based on a different Vorlage from MT (compare modern translations which render similarly without departing from MT [EÜ, NRSV; cf. Seybold]). MT should probably be retained, with the participle being understood in the sense ‘rend’, either adjectivally (cf. AV, RSV) or as a nominalised subject of יִפְרֹק (but the latter involves a less likely stichometry).

Qere/Ketiv: none

**1. Root and Comparative Material**

[For cognate nouns see the corresponding section of the entry for פֶּרֶּק.]

**A.1** A verb PRQ is widely attested in Semitic, with meanings that are distinct (this is true even within particular languages) but close enough for it to be plausible to suggest a Grundbedeutung from which all the others are derived (see the final para. of this section).

**A.2** In North-West Semitic the earliest occurrences are in Ugaritic, in a formulaic idiom *yprq lšb* (KTU 1.4.4.28; 1.6.3.16; 1.17.2.10), which was formerly understood to refer to the ‘opening’ of ‘the passage of the throat’ (see the earlier refs. in HAL: 916) but which is now known to mean ‘he unknitted (his) brow’, from a broader sense ‘release, slacken’ (Olmo Lete and Sanmartin 2004: 681; for the newer understanding of *lšb* see p. 505). In later Hebrew the most common meanings are ‘remove’, ‘separate’ and ‘take to pieces’ (for other meanings see Jastrow 1971: 1238-39). In Aramaic there is one early occurrence in a fragmentary portion of
the Sefire treaties (KAI 222B 34), for which Hofstijzer and Jongeling 1995: 943 proposed ‘cut off (water-supply?)’, but the context is damaged and unclear (HAL: 916 has ‘zerstören’, Ges18: 1083 ‘auflösen, befreien’) and no secure conclusions can be drawn. In early Jewish Aramaic פְּדָה is used of the ‘removal’ or ‘cancellation’ of sins (Dn 4.24) and as the rendering for Heb. יֵצָּא (4Q157=ΩJob f1 ii 9, prob. Jb 5.7), יהָד (11Q10=ΩJob 23.6, Jb 33.28) and יְזָר (ibid. 27.9, Jb 36.15), implying the meaning ‘save, redeem’. The contexts in 4Q541 f24 ii 3 and 4Q546 f8 1 are badly damaged and unclear (but see DJD 31: 252-54, 360, which suggests ‘redeemed’ [i.e. ‘forgave (faults)’] for the former passage). In Nabataean the sense ‘redeem’ is attested (Hofstijzer and Jongeling 1995: 943, curiously distinguishing this lexeme from its other Aram. examples: the occurrence cited is the legal text presented in Fitzmyer and Harrington 1978: 164-69 [64 i 10]), while in Jewish magical texts it means ‘loosen’ (a demon: better ‘remove’?) according to Hofstijzer and Jongeling 1995: 943. In other Jewish Aramaic texts, especially the Targums, the meanings ‘redeem’ and ‘rescue’ are most common, but ‘remove’, ‘fall apart’, ‘untie’ and ‘divide’ are also attested (exx. of the latter in Jastrow 1971: 1239; cf. CAL s.v. and van Zyl 1972). Samaritan Aramaic knows the meanings ‘redeem’, ‘go away’, ‘unload’, ‘dismantle’, ‘be discharged’ and (uniquely) ‘be specified’ (CAL s.v.). In Syriac the meanings ‘remove’, ‘rescue, free’ and also ‘withdraw’ (intrans.) are widely recognised and Payne Smith (1903: 464) also gives, ‘break off’ (CAL adds ‘disown’, ‘chatter’, ‘borrow money’, ‘dismantle’, presumably from the larger Thesaurus). CAL offers ‘redeem, dismantle’ as the main senses in Aramaic, perhaps because they are in its analysis the most widely attested meanings. But ‘dismantle’ (i.e. ‘take to pieces’ [cf. above on MH]) is likely to be a particular instance of the broader sense ‘separate, remove’, which can also be seen as the basis of the originally technical sense ‘redeem’.

A.3 The verb is comparatively rare in East Semitic, with only a few examples, with the sense ‘separate’, being cited (von Soden1965-81: 829).

A.4 In South Semitic Arabic faraqa means ‘separate, divide’, while in Epigraphic South Arabian and Ethiopic the main sense is ‘set free’, with ‘decide’ (Soqotri) and ‘perforate’ (Tigre) being noted in Ges18: 1083, as isolated further meanings.

B.1 It has been suggested that the basic meaning of PRQ is ‘split, divide’ (HAL: 916; cf. Reiterer 2003: 111), because of the occurrences in Akkadian and Arabic. Certainly the appearance of these meanings in such widely separated parts of the Semitic-speaking region is noteworthy. But perhaps more weight should be given to the antiquity of the sense ‘set free’ in South Semitic and the rarity of the verb in Akkadian. The more extensive evidence in Aramaic especially, where ‘remove’ is more prevalent (as well as its likely specialised derivative ‘redeem’), should also be noted. The sense ‘loosen’, which probably lies behind the Ugaritic occurrences and also appears in Aramaic, may well derive from the same general idea. Be that as it may, it is not too difficult to see a relationship between the broad groups of meanings outlined so far, since all involve a basic idea of ‘coming apart’ by some kind of decisive action. There are a few isolated senses which occur in some languages, alongside the more widespread core of meanings, but their explanation is best left as a problem for specialists in those languages.
2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 Triliteral strong verb

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 The subject of פָרֵךְ in all forms is most often a human figure or group: Esau (Gn 27.40), Laban (4Q215 f1 3:2), a hostile or friendly individual (Ps 7.3; La 5.8: in both cases a [nominalised?] part.) or the Israelite people (Ex 32.2, 3, 24). It may also be God (Ps 136.24) or a non-human entity (1Kg 19.11 [יִרְאוּ]; Ezk 19.12 [כְּפָרֵךְ: possibly symbolising a human opponent, see 6. Exegesis A.2]; Zc 11.16 [רֵעִים]).

A.2 The object of פָרֵךְ, where specified (none explicit in Ps 7.3 and La 5.8, but in both cases the speaker[s] is/are implied), may be human (Ps 136.24 ['us' = Israel]; 4Q215 f1 3:2 ['him' = Ahiyot, the father of Bilhah and Zilpah]), but is most often a thing (Gn 27.40; Ex 32.2, 3, 24 [implied]; 1Kg 19.11 [ירֵעִים]; Ezk 19.12; Zc 11.16).

A.3 In associated adverbial phrases the most common syntagm is מן, ‘from’, followed by an expression referring to (part of) a person: Gn 27.40 (מעלֵצוארכה); Ps 136.24 (מצרינו); La 5.8 (מידם), all with Qal: a similar separation is implied by phrases in the near context in Ex 32.2 (אשׁרֵבאזניֵנשׁיכם, 3 (אשׁרֵבאזניהם); 4Q215 f1 3:2 (וילךֵבֶּשְׁבוּ). In Ps 7.3 פָרֵךְ is associated with the expression כאריה and the verb טרף.

4. Versions

a. LXX:

qal ἐκλώ (Gn 27.40)
     λυτρώσα mid. (Ps 7.3, 136.24; La 5.8)

piel διαλώ (1Kg 19.11 [OG])
     ἐκστρέφω (Zc 11.16)
     περιαιρόμαι (Ex 32.2)

hithpael ἐκδικάκω pass. (Ezk 19.12)
     περιαιρόμαι (Ex 32.3, 24)

Jewish revisers:
Aquila: διαλώ pass. (Ezk 19.12)
Symmachus: ἐκλώ (Gn 27.40); διαλώ pass. (Ezk 19.12); διωσπάω/διωσπαράσσω (Sy dpšh)
     (Ps 7.3)
Theodotion: διαχέω/διαχύνω pass. (Ezk 19.12)

b. Peshitta

qal ʿbr aph. (Gn 27.40)

prq pe. (Ps 7.3, 136.24; La 5.8)

piel ʿrq pa.? (Zc 11.16)

prq pa. (Ex 32.2; 1Kg 19.11)

hithpael ʿr′ aph. (Ex 32.24)

prq pa. (Ex 32.3); itpa. (Ezk 19.12)

c. Targum (see also the useful review of all the occurrences of Aram. פָּרָךְ in TgIs by van Zyl 1972):

qal פָּרָךְ aph.—TgO (Gn 27.40)

פרך pe.—TgNeo (Gn 27.40)

פרך pa. (Gn 27.40 [TgPsJ]; Ps 136.24; La 5.8)

פשח pe./pa. (Ps 7.3)

piel פָּרָךְ pa. (Zc 11.16: obj. ‘remnant’)

פרך pe. — TgNeo (Ex 32.2)

פרך pa. (Ex 32.2 [TgO, TgPsJ]; 1Kg 19.11)

hithpael פָּרָךְ (Ezk 19.12)

פרך pa. — TgO, TgPsJ, TgNeo (Ex 32.3, 24)

d. Vulgate:

qal lacerō (Ps 7.3)

redimo (Ps 136.24; La 5.8)

solvo (Gn 27.40)

piel dissolvo (Zc 11.16)

subvertō (1Kg 19.11)

tollo (Ex 32.2)

hithpael defero? (Ex 32.3: free)

fero (Ex 32.24, in past tense)

marceo (Ezk 19.12)
A.1 In most LXX renderings verbs meaning ‘remove, take apart’ are used: only in Psalms and Lamentations does the middle of ὀλυτρόω appear (for the qal), implying the meaning ‘redeem, ransom’. In Ezk 19.12 ἐξιδικηθήσαν (Ziegler’s reading) most likely means ‘were punished’ or ‘suffered vengeance’ (Muraoka 2002: 160) in view of the context and Septuagintal usage elsewhere (esp. Zc 5.3): since ἐκδικάζω often represents ἔξω (1Kms 15.2; Ho 1.4 etc.; Zp 1.8 etc.; Jr 15.3 etc.; cf. also ἐκδικήσεις for פָּרֵץ in Ezk 9.1) the translator may well have had or assumed a slightly different Vorlage (metathesis) which would fit the underlying sense of the passage well.

A.2 The limited extant evidence from the Three points towards a tendency to replace the divergent renderings with ‘physical’ verbs: hence διάλυω or διαχύω/διαχύνω in Ezk 19.12 and whatever dpsḥ represents in Ps 7.3.

A.3 The Vulgate follows a similar tendency to give a physical rendering of פָּרֵץ, probably following Symmachus (and Tg?) in the contextually appropriate use of lacero in Ps 7.3 (cf. dilaceratio in Nah 3.1 for the noun פָּרֵץ). But in Ps 136.24 and La 5.8 redimo retains the sense given to פָּרֵץ by LXX. In Ezk 19.12 the use of marceo, ‘wither’, is probably derived from the context.

A.4 In the Targumim Aram. פָּרֵץ, with its wide range of meaning, is used in seven of the ten occurrences, though there is some variation in the Pentateuch between the different texts. The occasional use of other verbs may point to a recognition that BH פָּרֵץ had some senses not found in Aram., though it is hard to envisage this for עָדָי aph., ‘remove’, in Gn 27.40. It is more probable with מָכַר pa., ‘destroy’, מִלְכָּל יִת., ‘be exiled’(?), and פָּשׁח ‘strip, tear off’. The use of פָּכַר, ‘split’ or ‘break open’ (McNamara, Hayward and Maher 1994: 128), in Neofiti in Ex 32.2 is very odd, not only because of the divergence from the other Targumim but because in the two following occurrences of Heb. פָּרֵץ in Ex 32 Neofiti like them has the Aram. equivalent. The verb פָּכַר occurs only here in Neofiti and never in Onkelos or Jonathan, but it is much more frequent in Pseudo-Jonathan, where it represents Heb. פָּרֵץ, מֶלֶשׁ, נָמָל ת. ה.t., פָּשָׁח, פָּטַח, פָּרַץ, פָּרַץ and לָכַד נֵמָל, פָּרַץ Hi., generally in relation to the destruction of buildings (cf. also TgQoh 3.3 for פָּרֵץ). But it is not used by TgPsJ here and it would be more appropriate to some other occurrences of Heb. פָּרֵץ than to this one. It is most likely a scribal error.

A.5 In the Peshitta too prq, with its wide range of meanings, was generally found adequate (again in seven cases out of ten). The exceptions are Gn 27. 40 (’br aph.), Ex 32.24 (r’ aph.) and Zc 11.16 (’rq pa.?), but the sense given is similar.

5. Lexical/Semantic Fields
A.1 The varied uses of BH פרך are reflected in the wide range of words which occur in parallel with it or in close proximity to it, as well as those which are used in similar contexts elsewhere in BH.


A.3 In Ex 32 פרך is followed by נחל (v. 24), while in comparable passages סער Hi. (Gn 35.2) and התחפשה (neg.), ירד Hi. and נצל Hith. (all Ex 33.4-6) are used.

A.4 In 1Kg 19.11 שבר Pi. occurs in the following phrase, with a similar object (סער || התחפשה).

A.5 In both Ezk 19.12 and Zc 11.16 אוכל occurs in an adjacent clause, although the contexts are otherwise somewhat different.

A.6 In Ps 7.3 as given by MT תרף is a parallel expression and נצל Hi. is an antonym.

A.7 By contrast in La 3.8 פרך occurs in a phrase very similar to אוכל במציא at the end of Ps 7.3 (compare also, e.g., Jud. 18.28 and other passages in BDB: 664; with מראה Jdg 12.3 etc. [BDB: 446]). Likewise the context in Ps 136.24 is very similar to Ps 44.8, where ישוע Hi. is used: cf. Dt 33.7 (רדה + הושע) (דיבור).

6. Exegesis

A.1 The uses in Ex 32 are said to ‘assume strong resistance’, so that there is a need for violence in the removal of the jewellery by the men (v. 2: so Houtman 1993-2002, 3: 636).

A.2 Violence is also implied in Gn 27.40, Ezk 19.12 and Zc 11.16, where פרך is used metaphorically of either the overthrow of political power or (in Zc 11.16, part of a passage that is based on Ezk 34.1-10) of the cruel use of political power (see Gunkel 1910: 314 and Westermann 1981: 540 [with a comparison to 2Ki 8.20-22]; Cooke 1936: 210, 212, and Zimmerli 1979: 398; Rudolph 1976: 201, 203, and Petersen 1995: 98-99).

A.3 Cogan appropriately renders the verb ‘rending’ in 1Kg 19.11 and draws attention to comparable theophanic passages (2001: 449, 453; on theophany cf. Jeremias 1965); the association in the verse with שבר (which Skinner 1910: 373 notes to be an alternative to פרך in the image of Gn 27.40) and the use of נצל with הצרים in Nah 1.6 support such a rendering against the weaker ‘splitting’ of NRSV.
A.4 In Ps 5.7 too (see Text Uncertain) פרק is probably used as a continuation of the violent animal metaphor in the first part of the verse (so Gunkel 1926: 25, and even Briggs and Briggs 1907: 52-53, 57, who prefer to emend with LXX).

A.5 There is good reason to carry over the idea of violent separation into the probably later (in the main) salvific use of the verb in La 5.8 and Ps 136.24 (a post-exilic psalm: cf. esp. v. 26), as Gunkel saw (1926: 577-78, ‘entriss’; so also Kraus 1978: 1078-81).

B.1 In view of the clear evidence of a violent meaning it is a mistake to interpret occurrences of פרק on the basis of a predominantly positive sense (so Propp 2006: 549, who sees the sense in Ex 32 as ironic; Provan 1991: 129, who cites parallels in Judges [using ויבשׁו Hi.] without noting the difference; Kraus 1978: 190-91, 194, who cites this as a reason for emending with LXX).

B.2 There is also no need to see the salvific use of the verb as due to Aramaic influence (so BDB: 830, for La 5.8 and Ps 136.24), as it can be explained adequately from the idea of violent removal found elsewhere.

B.3 Zimmerli’s attribution of התפרקו (and ויבשׁו) in Ezk 19.12 to secondary redactional activity based on the symbolism of v. 11a (1979: 391, 398) is improbable, as it does not explain the plural forms and the meanings of the verbs do not fit מנהמ(ה) as well as MT פריר(ה) (taken collectively) or the attractive emendation of it to בֱּדִיה (cf. LXXCat and e.g. Cooke 1936: 210, 212).

B.4 NEB’s rendering of Zc 11.16b7 by ‘and throw away their [REB ‘the’] broken bones’ (cf. Redditt 1995: 127, though פרש is the object of פרק, not the ‘subject’) is based on Driver’s unnecessary proposal that פרס here means ‘fragment’, like pirsu in Akkadian (1934: 381). Driver originally took פרק in its normal sense of violent removal, with פרש representing the result of the action, hence ‘rend in pieces’. Dissatisfaction with the syntax presupposed may have led the NEB translators to adopt the unparalleled meaning ‘throw away’ for פרק. In fact ‘tear off their hooves’ is perfectly acceptable sense and reflects the shepherd’s determination to consume every last piece of meat from the animal (so Rudolph 1976: 201, 203, citing Dalman 1928-37, 6: 230; Petersen 1995: 86, 88).

7. Conclusion

A.1 In BH פרק always refers to violent ‘removal’, with the presupposition that there is some resistance to the action: hence it may be translated ‘pull (off or away)’, ‘tear’ (off or away). In most cases the object is not a person but a thing.

A.2 Occasionally it is used with a personal object (Ps 136.24; La 5.8; 4Q215 f1 3.2), where it joins the lexical field of ‘deliverance’; but most likely even here it retains its sense of violent removal and is not simply a synonym of (any of) the other lexemes in the group.
A.3 It is probably only in the Qal that this salvific use developed (no earlier than the Babylonian exile), though 4Q215 f1 3.2 could theoretically be a Piel. It is difficult to see any distinction of meaning between the other occurrences of the Qal and the Piel, though the Piel in 1Kg 19.11 accompanies the Piel of another verb in a context of great upheavals in the natural world and it might therefore imply an intensification of the meaning there. The opposition between the Piel and the Hithpael in Ex 32 is probably due to the fact that the Piel in v. 2 denotes the action of (male) Israelite family heads in relation to their dependants, whereas the Hithpael in vv. 3 and 24 refers to the actions of these dependants themselves and so has a reflexive component in its meaning. In Ezk 19.12, by contrast, the Hithpael must be used in a passive sense.

B.1 Suggestions, based on comparative philology, that the underlying meaning of BH קָרָס is ‘break’ (Gesenius 1835-58: 1131) or ‘split, divide’ (see Root and Comparative Material, B.1) do not correspond to the majority of occurrences in BH and should be discarded.

B.2 In a few places, where persons are the object, LXX and Vulg. render by verbs meaning ‘redeem’. This is probably due to a semantic development in Aramaic, perhaps combined with the theological interests of the translators. The more widespread use of Aram. קָרָס in Tgg. and Sy need not imply such an understanding of the Heb. in all cases, in view of the many other meanings that קָרָס could bear in Aram. (cf. Root and Comparative Material A.2 and van Zyl 1972). There is no reason to suppose that קָרָס ever had the technical sense ‘redeem’ in BH.

Bibliography


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