

מחרשת/מחרשה

plough(-point)

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Introduction

Grammatical type: n.f.

Occurrences: 3× HB (0/3/0); 0× Sir; 0× Qum; 0× Inscr. (Total: 3)

Nebiim: 1 Sam 13:20 (2), 21 (1).

Qumran: — (see B.1 [below](#))

A.1 While the first occurrence of מחרשתו in 1 Sam 13:20 (מַחְרֶשֶׁתּוֹ, with *pataḥ* as the third vowel) is a form of *מַחְרֶשֶׁת/*מַחְרֶשָּׁה, the second occurrence (מַחְרֶשֶׁתּוֹ, with *ṣ^erē* as the third vowel) is a form of *מַחְרֶשָּׁה. The Masoretic vocalization of 1 Sam 13:20-21 suggests that the second occurrence of מחרשתו is a form of the same noun as מַחְרֶשֶׁת in 13:21.¹ T^j supports the Masoretic vocalisation and translates the two forms with *ṣ^erē* by forms of the same noun (עוֹשֶׁפָּא), while it represents the single form with a *pataḥ* instead of the *ṣ^erē* with a form of a different noun (פְּרֶשָּׂא). However, most of the ancient versions treat the first occurrence of מחרשתו in 13:20 and מַחְרֶשֶׁת in 13:21 as forms of the same noun (see [section 4](#)). The latter option becomes more attractive as soon as one notices that the series of agricultural implements in 13:20 (מַחְרֶשֶׁתּוֹ, אָתוּ, קַרְדָּמוֹ, מַחְרֶשֶׁתּוֹ) partially corresponds to the series in 13:21 (מַחְרֶשֶׁת,

מחרשתו, [שֶׁלֶשׁ קִלְשׁוֹן], קִרְדָּמִים, קִרְבָּן). Consequently, the first occurrence of מחרשתו in 13:20 and מחרשת in 13:21 are sometimes treated as forms of the same noun.²

A.2 Of course, the twofold occurrence of מחרשתו in a single series of utensils (1 Sam 13:20) has raised questions. Since part of the utensils mentioned in 13:20 reoccur in the same order in 13:21 (מחרשת/מחרשה, אֵת, קִרְדָּם), the latter verse was sometimes used as a basis for emending the text of 13:20. Julius Wellhausen assumed that the second מחרשתו, the fourth item of the list in 13:20, originally corresponded to הִדְרָבָן at the end of 13:21. He pointed to the fact that the ancient Greek and Syriac translations read forms of the same noun (LXX: δρέπανον, ‘sickle’; s: ܪܥܥܬܐ, ‘ox goad’) where MT reads מחרשתו (13:20) and הִדְרָבָן (13:21).³ Wellhausen’s proposal to read דְּרָבָנוּ at the end of 13:20 was taken over by many others.⁴ Other scholars, however, assumed that the reading τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ, ‘his sickle’, goes back to Hebrew חֲרָמָשׁ, since δρέπανον represents Hebrew חֲרָמָשׁ, ‘sickle’, in Deut 16:9; 23:26 (= 23:25^{LXX}). These scholars regarded the reading מחרשתו as secondary.⁵

Dominique Barthélemy argued that there is insufficient reason to replace מחרשתו by a different word on the basis of the readings of LXX and s. The earliest translators seem to have experienced the same problems with the Hebrew text as modern scholars. They translated the second occurrence of מחרשתו differently from the first. The translators of LXX and s decided to use a noun that they used also to render הִדְרָבָן, the last utensil mentioned in 13:21. Barthélemy maintained that the first and second מחרשתו in 13:20 derive from two different nouns, *מחרשת and *מחרשה. The two nouns must have had different meanings, but neither the earliest translators nor modern scholars could retrieve exactly to what kind of sharp utensils the two terms initially referred.⁶ DCH shares Barthélemy’s suggestion that the two occurrences of מחרשתו in 13:20 refer to two different agricultural utensils and translates them as ‘plough’ and ‘goad’, respectively.⁷

B.1 The sectarian composition Serekh ha-Yahad (Community Rule, ca. 100 BCE?) contains an enigmatic phrase: כִּי אֵין בְּסִינֵי מַחֲרָשׁוֹ.⁸ The passage describes the characteristics of those who may not enter the community of the faithful. Although the interpretation of the phrase is disputed, it is clear that מַחֲרָשׁוֹ is not an alternative form of מחרשתו.⁹ It has been proposed to regard מַחֲרָשׁ as a noun meaning ‘ploughing’.¹⁰ If סִינֵי is taken as equivalent to Aramaic סוּן/סִיין, ‘mud’, the whole phrase can be taken as a proverbial saying: ‘For in the mud of wickedness (is) his ploughing.’¹¹

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 ROOT: Both *מַחְרֶשֶׁה and *מַחְרֶשֶׁת/*מַחְרֶשֶׁה are commonly assumed to derive from *חרש* I, ‘to plough’, ‘to engrave’.¹² These nouns have some Semitic cognates denoting an agricultural implement, as will be shown below. The Hebrew verb *חרש* I stems from proto-Semitic *ḥrt* and has cognates in Ugaritic, Akkadian and many other Semitic languages (see below).¹³ It must be distinguished from *חרש* II, ‘to manufacture’,¹⁴ which stems from proto-Semitic *ḥrš*, just like Ugaritic *ḥrš* and Phoenician *ḥrš*, ‘craftsman’, ‘artisan’.¹⁵ Contrary to Hebrew *חרש* I, ‘to plough’, ‘to engrave’, Hebrew *חרש* II refers to the work of the craftsman or artisan.

A.2 AKKADIAN: The Hebrew verb *חרש* I has a cognate in Akkadian *erēšu*, which means ‘to seed by drilling seed into a furrow by means of a seeder-plow, to cultivate or plant (a field)’.¹⁶ Among the derivatives of this verb are *mērešu* and *mēreštu*, which mean ‘cultivation’ or ‘cultivated land/field’.¹⁷ Derivatives relating to a utensil are not attested.

A.3 UGARITIC: The Ugaritic cognate of Hebrew *חרש* I is *ḥrt* ‘to plough’.¹⁸ The Ugaritic noun *mḥrtt* (*KTU* 1.6:IV.3, 14; 6.14:3) is usually interpreted as ‘ploughed field’.¹⁹ However, O. Loretz proposed to regard it as a *nomen instrumenti* denoting the ploughshare or the plough as a whole.²⁰

A.4 ARABIC: The Arabic verb *ḥarata* is a cognate of Hebrew *חרש* I and means ‘to plough, to cultivate’. The Arabic noun *miḥrāt* designates a plough.²¹ In Old South Arabian, however, *mḥrtt* refers to ploughed, cultivated land.²²

A.5 ETHIOPIIC: The Ethiopic (Ge‘ez) verb *ḥarasa* is a cognate of Hebrew *חרש* I and means ‘to plough’. The noun *māhras* is translated as ‘ploughshare’ or as ‘plough’.²³

A.6 POSTBIBLICAL HEBREW AND JEWISH ARAMAIC: In the Mishnah, the Tosefta and the Talmudim, the word מַחְרֶשֶׁה is virtually always spelled with a *yod* as *mater lectionis*: מחרישה. The term occurs ca. 70 times and denotes the plough in its entirety.²⁴ Not surprisingly, the word occurs in a context relating to ploughing (*חרש* qal).²⁵ The מחרישה is said to ‘shake’ (זָעַזַע, pilpel of זָעַע) clods of earth and stones.²⁶ The implement is regarded as indispensable.²⁷ The expression יָתֵד שֶׁל מַחְרֶשֶׁה, literally ‘the *pin* of the plough’, denotes the sharp metal plough-point.²⁸ The Tosefta refers to יְתֵדוֹת הַמַּחְרֶשֶׁה, ‘plough-points’, that were attached to the plough’s חֶרֶב, ‘tail-piece, handle’.²⁹ In the Babylonian Talmud, the expression מַחְרֶשֶׁה דְּכַסְפָּא does not represent a plough, but a strigil made of כַּסְפָּא, ‘silver’.³⁰ Such a strigil was used for scraping the skin; cf. the meaning ‘to engrave’ of the verb *חרש* I. In modern Hebrew the word מחרישה means ‘plough’.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 *מַחְרֶשֶׁת³¹/מַחְרֶשָּׁה³² is a *miqṭal* form with a feminine termination.³³

A.2 *מַחְרֶשָּׁה is a *maqṭil* form with a feminine termination. Many *maqṭil* forms denote a utensil.³⁴

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 In 1 Sam 13:20, מַחְרֶשֶׁתוֹ and מַחְרֶשֶׁתוֹ represent the first and fourth objects of the verb לָטַשׁ, ‘to forge’, ‘to hammer’, ‘to sharpen’. The other objects are (2) אֹתוֹ and (3) קֶרְדְּמוֹ (all marked by the accusative particle אֵת). 1 Sam 13:21 indicates that the price for מַחְרֶשֶׁת as well as some other agricultural utensils was a פִּים → פִּים. Apparently, the price was paid for either producing or repairing them (see [below](#)).

4. Ancient Versions

A.1 In the following survey, ‘20¹’ represents the first occurrence of מַחְרֶשֶׁת (MT: מַחְרֶשֶׁתוֹ) in 1 Sam 13:20, while ‘20²’ represents the second occurrence (MT: מַחְרֶשֶׁתוֹ). ‘21’ represents the word מַחְרֶשֶׁת in 13:21.

a. Septuagint (LXX) and other Greek versions

θέριστρον, ‘reaping-hook’:³⁵ 20¹ (most manuscripts of LXX).

θεριστήριον, ‘reaping-hook’:³⁶ 20¹ (Antiochene text of LXX³⁷).

θερίζειν, ‘to reap’,³⁸ ‘to harvest’:³⁹ 21 (LXX).

ἄροτρον, ‘plough’:⁴⁰ 20¹ (Aq, Th⁴¹), 21 (Aq⁴²).

ῥῖνις, ‘ploughshare’:⁴³ 20¹ (Sym⁴⁴).

δρέπανον, ‘sickle’:⁴⁵ 20² (LXX).

δίκελλα, ‘two-pronged fork’:⁴⁶ 20² (Sym⁴⁷).

b. Peshitta (S)

ܡܚܪܫܬܐ (magg^elā), ‘sickle’:⁴⁸ 20¹, 21.

ܡܫܥܬܐ (massāsā), ‘(ox) goad’:⁴⁹ 20².

c. Targum (T^J)

פֶּרֶשֶׂא, ‘goad’, possibly also ‘ploughshare’:⁵⁰ 20¹.

עוּשְׂפָא, ‘adze’, ‘carpenter’s axe’, etc., used for chipping:⁵¹ 20², 21.

d. Vulgate (V)

vomer, ‘ploughshare’:⁵² 20¹, 21.

sarculum, ‘hoe’:⁵³ 20².

A.2 As the surveys show, the two occurrences of מחרשתו in 1 Sam 13:20 MT have two different counterparts in all the ancient translations. Aquila, s and v treat the first occurrence of מחרשתו (20¹) as a form of the same noun as מחרשת (21) and translate the second form (20²) differently. In LXX, the words representing מחרשתו (20¹) and מחרשת (21) are derivatives from the same root. On the other hand, the translation of T^j suggests that the second occurrence of מחרשתו (20²) is a form of the same noun as מחרשת (21). This corresponds with the Masoretic vocalization.

A.3 T^j translates each of the implements mentioned in 1 Sam 13:20-21 consistently: *מחרשת/*מחרשה is translated by פֶּרֶשָׂא (1x); אֵת is translated by סַכַּת פֶּדְנָא (2x); קֶרֶדֶם is translated by כּוּלְבָה (2x); *מחרשה is translated by עוֹשֶׁפָּא (2x); דֶּרְבֵּן is translated by זִקְתָּא. The fact that Hebrew אֵת was rendered as סַכַּת פֶּדְנָא, ‘plough-point’ (→ אֵת), seems to suggest that *מחרשת/*מחרשה was not interpreted as such. Therefore, it may be best to translate פֶּרֶשָׂא as ‘goad’.

A.4 Most of the ancient translations assume that the first occurrence of מחרשתו in 1 Sam 13:20 represents an implement used for ploughing (Aq, Th, Sym, v, possibly T^j). LXX and s, however, interpret the word as an implement used for harvesting. In the case of LXX there is reason to believe that the translators of 1 Samuel misinterpreted the verb חרש as relating to harvesting instead of ploughing.⁵⁴ The only verse in 1 Samuel in which the verb I חרש has the meaning ‘to plough’ is 8:12, where we find the phrase: וְלַחֲרֹשׁ חֲרִישׁוֹ וְלִקְצֹר קִצִּירוֹ (MT), literally: ‘to plough the ploughing and to harvest the harvest’. Most manuscripts of the LXX render the phrase as *καὶ θερίζειν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τρυγᾶν τρυγητὸν αὐτοῦ*. Both *θερίζειν θερισμὸν* and *τρυγᾶν τρυγητὸν* can be translated as ‘to reap the harvest’, not as ‘to undertake the ploughing’.⁵⁵

There is insufficient reason to suppose that the Greek translation of 1 Sam 8:12 goes back to a Hebrew text that differs from MT.⁵⁶ The translation of the first occurrence of מחרשת/מחרשה in 13:20 by *θέριστρον*, ‘reaping-hook’, and the rendering of מחרשת in 13:21 by *θερίζειν*, ‘to harvest’, seem to be due to the same confusion regarding the meaning of חרש and its derivatives. In the Antiochene text of LXX *καὶ θερίζειν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τρυγᾶν τρυγητὸν αὐτοῦ* is preceded by *καὶ ἀροτρίαν τῆς ἀροτρίαισιν αὐτοῦ* ‘and to undertake the ploughing’.⁵⁷ Apparently, the additional phrase was inserted to assimilate the LXX to the Hebrew text.⁵⁸

In 1 Sam 8:12, s remains close to the Masoretic reading וְלַחֲרֹשׁ חֲרִישׁוֹ וְלִקְצֹר קִצִּירוֹ (MT).⁵⁹ In the case of 1 Sam 13:20-21, however, the reading of s (حِجْلًا, ‘sickle’) seems to have been influenced by the Greek translation of the first מחרשת/מחרשה (13:20) by *θέριστρον/θεριστήριον*, ‘reaping-hook’.

5. Lexical/Semantic Fields

A.1 The nouns *מַחְרָשָׁה* and *מַחְרֶשֶׁת*/*מַחְרָשָׁה* are regarded as derivatives of the verb *חרשׁ*, ‘to plough’, ‘to engrave’. In the Hebrew Bible, the verb is used ten times for ploughing in a literal sense⁶⁰ and four or five times for ploughing in a figurative sense.⁶¹ After a → *על*, ‘yoke’, was fasted over the necks of two animals and attached to the plough, the animals pulled (*משך* *qal*; Deut 21:3) the plough.⁶²

A.2 The nouns *מַחְרָשָׁה* and *מַחְרֶשֶׁת*/*מַחְרָשָׁה* occur only in two lists of sharp utensils (1 Sam 13:20-21). The other items in the lists are → *אֵת*, → *קֶרֶדֶם*, possibly *שֵׁלֶשׁ קִלְשׁוֹן* (→ *קִלְשׁוֹן*), and → *דֶּרֶבֶן*.

6. Exegesis

6.1 Literal Use

A.1 In view of the meaning of *חרשׁ*, ‘to plough’, ‘to engrave’, it is likely that one of the occurrences of *מחרשת/מחרשה* in the list of utensils in 1 Sam 13:20 denotes an implement used for ploughing. Most dictionaries interpret either *מַחְרָשָׁה* or *מַחְרֶשֶׁת*/*מַחְרָשָׁה* as ‘ploughshare’.⁶³ In the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmudim, the noun *מַחְרָשָׁה* designates the entire plough, while the cognates in Arabic and Ethiopic (and possibly in Ugaritic) also denote a plough (see [above](#)).

Most of the ancient translations assume that the first item in the list of 13:20 represents a plough (Aq, Th), or its cutting part (Sym, v, possibly T^j). Since the plough is one of the most important agricultural utensils, it is indeed not unlikely that it is represented by the first item in the list.⁶⁴ In view of the evidence from the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmudim, it is attractive to revocalize the first occurrence in 13:20 as *מַחְרֶשֶׁתוֹ* (with *ṣ^erē*) and to maintain the vocalization of the parallel item *מַחְרֶשֶׁת* in 13:21 (see [above](#)).

A.2 Ploughs were largely made of wood, as is shown by the burning of *כְּלֵי הַבָּקָר*, ‘equipment of the oxen’, which had just been used for ploughing a field (1 Kgs 19:19-21), and the use of *כְּלֵי הַבָּקָר*, ‘equipment of the oxen’, for its wood (*עֵצִים*; 2 Sam 24:22). However, 1 Sam 13:19-22 demonstrates that ploughs also comprised a sharp element made of metal, apparently the so-called ‘plough-point’. The latter passage records that in the time of Saul and Jonathan the Israelites were subject to rigid constraints. The Philistines maintained a monopoly that enabled them to dominate the Israelites and to prevent them from producing their own weapons. According to many scholars, the monopoly concerned the production and/or repair of iron implements.⁶⁵ However, the MT does not say explicitly that the implements involved were made of iron. It reveals only that among the Israelites there was no *תָּרַשׁ*, ‘craftsman’ (13:19), who produced (*לָטַשׁ*; 13:20) utensils for them.⁶⁶ Only

the renderings of חָרֵשׁ in LXX (τέκτων σιδήρου) and V (*faber ferrarius*) specify that the craftsmen concerned were iron smiths.⁶⁷ Actually, archaeological evidence from consecutive centuries demonstrates that in ancient Israel implements of bronze and implements of iron were used in the same contexts. Bronze plough-points and iron plough-points were also excavated in the same excavation layers (see [below](#)). The suggestion of LXX and V that the Philistines maintained an iron monopoly is an attractive option, but the MT may imply that the Philistines forbade all metallurgical activities among the Israelites.⁶⁸

The structure of the ancient Israelite ploughs is not described in the Hebrew Bible or other contemporaneous sources. However, a reconstruction is possible on the basis of contemporaneous illustrations from Mesopotamia and Egypt and archaeological finds from Israel/Palestine (see [below](#)). Further, some terminological information can be found in the Mishnah, the Tosefta and the Talmudim, especially in m. Kelim 21:2.⁶⁹ In the latter passage, the word מַחְרֶשֶׁה does not occur, but the following terms are used to denote elements of the plough: עַל ('yoke'), קְטֵרֵב ('cross-bar?'), עֵז ('collar-piece?'), עֲבוֹת ('thick ropes?'), חֶרֶב ('tail-piece' or 'handle'), בִּרְדָּ ('knee-shaped beam'), יָצוּל ('handle' or 'cross-piece'), עֵין שֶׁל מִתְּכָה ('metal ring'), לְחִיין ('guides'), עֲרִיין ('plough-flanks' or 'mouldboards'). Unfortunately, it remains unclear to which elements of the plough some of the Hebrew terms refer.⁷⁰ Also, it is dubious whether the ancient Israelite plough consisted of the same elements as the plough type to which this section of the Mishnah refers.

A.3 Philip King and Lawrence Stager give the following description of the way in which ploughing was performed in ancient Israel:

Plowing prepared the ground for sowing in late October-November, after the first rain (*yôreh*) had softened the earth. A field was plowed twice, once to loosen the crusty soil before the seed was broadcast, and then at right angles to the first plowing to cover the seed. The metal-tipped scratch plow did not turn over the soil the way a moldboard plow does but simply scratched a shallow furrow by breaking and loosening the soil.⁷¹

Like the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian ploughs, ancient Israelite ploughs were usually pulled by a pair (צֶמֶד) of oxen (בָּקָר: 1 Sam 11:7; 1 Kgs 19:21; Amos 6:12; Job 1:3, 14; 42:12). A female cow could also be used for ploughing, as is shown by the remark that in specific situations a cow that had not yet carried a yoke or pulled a plough was used (פָּרָה, 'cow': Num 19:2; 1 Sam 6:7; עֵגְלָה, 'heifer': Deut 21:3; cf. Judg 14:18; Hos 10:11). Donkeys could also be used to work the land (cf. Isa 30:24: עֲרִים, 'male donkeys'), but it was forbidden to let an ox (שׁוֹר) and a donkey (חֲמֹר) pull a plough together (Deut 22:10).⁷²

A.4 If the second occurrence of מחרשתו in 1 Sam 13:20 is left unemended,⁷³ only one of the two occurrences may be assumed to designate a plough(-point).⁷⁴ A classical translation of the second occurrence is ‘mattock’.⁷⁵ Stephen Cook supposed that the first of the near-homonyms derives from I חרש, ‘to plough, to engrave’, while the second derives from II חרש, ‘to manufacture’ (see [above](#)). According to Cook, the first noun clearly refers to a plough, while the second noun, which can be translated as ‘crafted/forged tool’, can best be interpreted as an equivalent of the parallel term דִּרְכָן, probably ‘goad’ (end of 13:21).⁷⁶ However, the interpretation of the final item in the list of 13:20 remains uncertain, as Cook admits.⁷⁷ Actually, the interpretation as a ‘goad’ is not attractive, since the presence of a metal point at the end of goads was not essential.⁷⁸ The noun can still be seen as a derivative of I חרש and may refer to a tool that is used for ‘engraving’ the soil, wood, etc. The noun may represent a hoe (cf. *sarculum* in V),⁷⁹ or a mattock, or an adze, etc. (cf. עוֹשֶׁפָּא in T^J). Dominique Barthélemy maintained the word, but decided to leave it untranslated.⁸⁰

B.1 Only rarely is none of the occurrences of מחרשת/מחרשה in 1 Sam 13:20-21 identified with a plough or an element of it.⁸¹

6.2 Figurative Use

Nihil.

6.3 Pictorial Material

A.1 The lack of ancient pictures of ploughs from the Levant (Syria-Palestine) is compensated by images from Mesopotamia and Egypt. The ploughs are commonly depicted as drawn by two oxen.⁸² The images show two types of plough:

- Simple ploughs without a seed drill drawn by a pair of animals and guided by a single man, who may hold a stick or goad or whip to drive the animals.⁸³ In such cases, the seeding was done after the first ploughing. The distinction between the two procedures is illustrated by images displaying a sower who works at some distance from the ploughman and his plough.⁸⁴
- Ploughs provided with a seed drill, drawn by a pair of animals and guided by a single man, who is assisted by another man, who takes care of the seeding process.⁸⁵

The depicted ploughing scenes are Mesopotamian or Egyptian, but there are good reasons to believe that the ploughs of the Israelites were quite similar to the ploughs on the images. In ancient Israel, ploughs were not yet provided with a seed drill and the sowing took place after the first ploughing of the ground.⁸⁶ Therefore,

the Israelite ploughs were probably of the same type as the simpler ploughs of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians.



FIGURE 1: Egyptian ploughing scene, burial chamber of Sennedjem, 13th century BCE

The ploughs of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian depictions have the following features in common:

- A wooden beam connects the plough with a yoke that was fastened over the necks of the pulling animals.
- The essential part of the plough is a wooden beam protruding forward in the direction of the animals, at the bottom of the plough. The beam may be curved and is provided with a sharp metal point that makes furrows in the ground.
- The plough includes a wooden handle or a pair of handles, serving to steer the plough. Usually, the steering handle is part of the same beam as the wood to which the plough-point was affixed.

A.2 Photographs from the early twentieth century show traditional ploughs with construction styles that hardly differed from the ancient Near Eastern structures.⁸⁷ Recent film recordings show a way of ploughing that gives an impression of the ways in which ploughing was performed in the ancient Near East.⁸⁸



FIGURE 2: Plough shop in Beersheba, October 16, 1924
Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, Collectie Vriezen

6.4 Archaeology

A.1 Of course, the wood of ancient Near Eastern ploughs has usually decomposed completely, but many metal plough-points have survived. The archaeological evidence from Israel/Palestine shows that in the twelfth century BCE bronze plough-points began to be replaced by iron plough-points, although the use of bronze plough-points appears to have continued for several centuries.⁸⁹ Oded Borowski offers an excellent description of the excavated plough-points:

The plow-point was an elongated tool, 20-30 cm long, with a pointed tip for soil penetration. The other end was shaped like a pipe, ca. 8-10 cm wide. A wooden shaft, which was part of the plow-handle, was inserted into this end.⁹⁰

Nowadays, the designation ‘ploughshare’ is commonly used for the curved blade of the so-called mouldboard plough, which turns over the soil. It is confusing to denote the cutting element of the ancient Israelite scratch ploughs as ‘ploughshare’, since its form and function were quite different from the ploughshares of mouldboard ploughs. Therefore, Borowski’s designation as ‘plough-points’ is preferable.⁹¹

7. Conclusion

A.1 It is justified to interpret מחרשת/מחרשה as a term denoting the ancient Israelite ‘plough’ or ‘plough-point’. In the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmudim, the word מַחְרֶשֶׁה denotes the plough as a whole. It is possible that one of the occurrences of מחרשת/מחרשה in 1 Sam 13:20 also designates the entire plough, but it cannot be excluded that at this earlier stage it represented only the metal plough-point. If in 1 Sam 13:20 the first occurrence of מחרשתו represents a plough, the form must probably be revocalized as מַחְרֶשֶׁתוּ. The vocalization of the parallel term מַחְרֶשֶׁת in 13:21 can be retained and this form can be translated as ‘ploughs’ or ‘plough-points’. The reasons to replace the second occurrence of מחרשתו in 1 Sam 13:20 by a different word are debatable. If we leave the text unemended, it is not possible to identify the item with any certainty. The noun may denote a hoe, a mattock, an adze, or another implement.

Notes

- 1 ↑ If מחרשת in 13:21 were a plural form of *מַחְרֶשֶׁת/*מַחְרֶשֶׁה, the expected vocalisation in 13:21 would be מַחְרֶשֶׁת (with *games*). Cf. מַעְרָכֹת in Lev 24:6, מַאֲכָלוֹת in Prov 30:14, and the similar plural forms of other nouns mentioned in BL, 490 aζ.
- 2 ↑ DCH V (מ-נ), 229-30. See also the discussion in 4. A.2 and 6.1.
- 3 ↑ Wellhausen 1871: 84.
- 4 ↑ See BHK¹, BDB, 361, and the literature mentioned in Barthélemy, CTAT 1: 180.
- 5 ↑ See BHK^{2/3}, KBL, 515, Ges¹⁸, 661, and the literature mentioned in Barthélemy, CTAT 1: 180-81. In other contexts, δρέπανον represents Hebrew מַחְרֶה (Isa 2:4; 18:5; Mic 4:3; Joel 4:10) or Hebrew מַגֵּל (Jer 50:16 = 27:16^{LXX}; Joel 4:13). Remarkably, no scholars seem to have suggested reading מִזְמֶרְתוּ or מִגְלוֹ instead of מחרשתו at the end of 1 Sam 13:20. Stoebe (1973: 254) proposed reading חֲרִיצוֹ instead of מחרשתו (cf. 2 Sam 12:31).
- 6 ↑ Barthélemy, CTAT 1: 181. Similarly: Cook (1994), who retained the MT as the *lectio difficilior*.
- 7 ↑ DCH V (מ-נ), 229-30.
- 8 ↑ The reading is found in 1Q28/1QS III:2 (Burrows 1951: Plate III; Charlesworth 1994: 12) and 4Q257/4QpapS^c III:3-4 (DJD XXVI, 73, damaged).
- 9 ↑ For unknown reasons, the noun מחרש in the Community Rule is mentioned under the lemma *מַחְרֶשֶׁת/*מַחְרֶשֶׁה in Ges¹⁸, 661.

- 10 ↑ DJD XXVI, 76.
- 11 ↑ See Charlesworth 1994: 13 (with different translations in n. 44); DJD XXVI, 76-77. See also the lemma *מַחְרֵשׁ in *DCH* V (נ-מ), 229.
- 12 ↑ BDB, 361; KBL, 515; *DCH* V (נ-מ), 229; *HALOT*, 572.
- 13 ↑ For cognates of חרש in Old Canaanite, Official Aramaic, Palmyrenean and Phoenician, see *DNWSI*, 407, 408.
- 14 ↑ Loewenstamm 1959; *TDOT* V 222-23. For חרש II, see Ges¹⁸, 402 (חַרְשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וּבָרָזָל in Gen 4:22 and חַרְשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת in 1 Kgs 7:14); cf. the noun חָרָשׁ, ‘craftsman’, ‘artisan’.
- 15 ↑ For Ugaritic *ḥrš*, ‘craftsman’, ‘artisan’, see *WUS*, 108; *UT*, 399 (# 903); *DULAT*¹, 370-71; *DULAT*³, 366; *KWU*, 47. For Phoenician *ḥrš*, ‘craftsman’, ‘artisan’, see *DNWSI*, 408.
- 16 ↑ *CAD* 4 (E), 285-89. Similarly: *AHw* I, 238-39.
- 17 ↑ *CAD* 10 (MII), 23-25. Similarly: *AHw* II, 645-46).
- 18 ↑ *WUS*, 108-09; *UT*, 399 (# 905); *DULAT*¹, 371-72; *DULAT*³, 367; *KWU*, 47.
- 19 ↑ *WUS*, 108; *DLU*, 268; *UG*, 267; *DULAT*¹, 537-38; *DULAT*³, 531.
- 20 ↑ Loretz 1993. After a discussion of the various translations, the interpretation as ‘plough(share)’ is rejected in Dietrich & Loretz 2005, 228-30 (*bmḥrtt* in *KTU* 6.14:3 interpreted as ‘from the agricultural field’; cf. *TUAT.NF* 6: 86). *KWU*, 71, assumes the meaning ‘Ackerland’ (cultivated land) for the occurrences in *KTU* 1.6:IV.3, 14, but prefers the translation ‘Pflug’ (plough) for the occurrence in *KTU* 6.14:3.
- 21 ↑ Lane, 541-542; Wehr, 166.
- 22 ↑ *SD*, 71; *DOSA*, 192.
- 23 ↑ *CDG*, 243.
- 24 ↑ In addition to the occurrences mentioned in the following notes, the word מחרישה occurs in m. Bava Batra 2:1, 12, 13; t. Shabbat 6:8; t. Bava Qamma 2:6; t. Bava Metzi ‘a 9:18; t. Bava Batra 1:2, 14; t. Kelim Bava Metzi ‘a 5:7; t. ‘Ohalot 15:13; b. Ta’anit 25b; b. Bava Qamma 30a; b. Bava Batra 17a, 18a, 19a, 26a, 27b, 82b; y. Pe’ah 2, 17a; 6, 19c; y. Kil’ayim 7, 30d; y. Nazir 7, 55d; y. Bava Qamma 3, 3c; y. Bava Metzi ‘a 9, 12b (together with קורדום; cf. → קרדם in 1 Sam 13:20-21); y. Bava Batra 2, 13ab; 7, 15c. In m. Shevi’it 5:6 and b. ‘Avodah Zarah 15b, reference is made to כְּלֵי מַחְרֵשָׁה וְכָל בְּלֵיָהּ, ‘the plough and all its implements’.
- 25 ↑ m. ‘Ohalot 17:1-3.
- 26 ↑ m. Shevi’it 3:7; t. Shevi’it 3:4; y. Shevi’it 3, 34bd; m. ‘Orlah 1:3; y. ‘Orlah 1, 60c.
- 27 ↑ According to m. Bava Metzi ‘a 9:13, a creditor who wants to take a pledge from a debtor may take a כֶּר, ‘pillow’, by day and must give it back by night (cf. Deut 24:12-13) and may take a מַחְרֵשָׁה by night and must return it by day. Apparently, the כֶּר and the מַחְרֵשָׁה were seen as essential. The rule is quoted in b. Bava Metzi ‘a 113a, y. Bava Metzi ‘a 9, 12a, and b. Temurah 6a.
- 28 ↑ m. Shabbat 17:4 quotes Rabbi Yose as saying that on the Shabbat ‘all utensils may be moved except for the large saw and the plough-point’ (כל הכלים נטלין חוץ מן המסר הגדול ויתד של מחרשה). The saying occurs also in t. Shabbat 14:1; b. Shabbat 123b, 157a; b. ‘Eruvin 35a; y. Shabbat 17, 16a. Further, the expression יתד של מחרשה occurs also in b. ‘Eruvin 86a.
- 29 ↑ t. Kelim Bava Batra 1:7, which refers also to the עֵיין, ‘eye’, as an element that could be detached from the plough. In m. Kelim 21:2 the terms חרב and עֵיין are also used for parts of the plough (see [above](#)).

- 30 ↑ Jastrow, *DTT*, 764, *WTM* III, 82, with reference to b. Ketubbot 68a, b. Bava Metzi 'a 113b. According to b. Bava Metzi 'a 113ab, Raba son of Rabbah interpreted the word מחרשה in m. Bava Metzi 'a 9:13 (see [above](#)) as 'strigil', not as 'plough'.
- 31 ↑ This form is proposed in BDB, 361; KBL, 515; *HALOT*, 572; Ges¹⁸, 661.
- 32 ↑ This form is proposed in *DCH* V (מ-נ), 229.
- 33 ↑ BL, 490 aζ.
- 34 ↑ BL, 492 qζ, sζ; Meyer 1969: 34-35.
- 35 ↑ *GELS*, 328, with reference to Van der Meer 2008: 592-96. In all the other verses (Gen 24:65; 38:14, 19; Isa 3:23; Song 5:7), θέριστρον is translated as 'light summer garment' or 'veil'.
- 36 ↑ LSJ, 793; *GELS*, 328.
- 37 ↑ Fernández Marcos & Busto Saiz 1989: 36; Taylor 1992: 42.
- 38 ↑ LEH¹, 204.
- 39 ↑ *GELS*, 328.
- 40 ↑ Adrados, *DGE*, 521; LEH¹, 62; *GELS*, 92.
- 41 ↑ Field 1875: 507.
- 42 ↑ Field 1875: 508.
- 43 ↑ LSJ, 1849; Montanari, *BDAG*, 2184.
- 44 ↑ Field 1875: 507-08.
- 45 ↑ Adrados, *DGE*, 1167; LEH¹, 121; *GELS*, 178.
- 46 ↑ LSJ, 430; Montanari, *BDAG*, 530. Adrados, *DGE*, 1094: 1) 'azada de dos puntas, laya', 2) 'piqueta, azuela para demolición'.
- 47 ↑ Field 1875: 507-08.
- 48 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 250; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 709.
- 49 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 285; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 793. *SLB* gives as a second translation 'part of plow'.
- 50 ↑ Jastrow, *DTT*, 1243, distinguishes פֶּרֶשָׁא I, '[driving] goad' (T^J Judg 3:31), from פֶּרֶשָׁא II, '[breaker, crusher,] ploughshare' (1 Sam 13:20). *WTM* IV, 145, and Dalman, *ANHT*, 354, suggest that פֶּרֶשָׁא means 'ox goad' in Judg 3:31 as well as 1 Sam 13:20. See further the discussion in section [A.3](#).
- 51 ↑ Jastrow, *DTT*, 1059. *WTM* III, 711 (Hebr. עוֹשֵׁף): 'der spitze Theil eines Instrumentes, welcher zum Bohren und Pflügen diene, der andere scharfe Theil dieses Instrumentes diene zum Holzspalten.' According to m. Kelim 13:3, the → קֶרֶם has an עוֹשֵׁף 'paring/chipping edge' and a בֵּית בְּקוּעַ 'splitting/chopping edge'.
- 52 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 2014; *OLD*, 2103.
- 53 ↑ *OLD*, 1691. Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1631, describe *sarculum* as 'an implement for loosening the soil, weeding, etc., a light hoe.'
- 54 ↑ For the distinctive character of the transmitted LXX text of 1 Samuel, see Hugo 2015: 129-32; Hugo 2016: 222-23.
- 55 ↑ *GELS*, 328, 689. For the precise meaning of θείρειν θειρισμὸν and τραγᾶν τραγεγδόν, see also Grillet & Lestienne 1997: 196-97.
- 56 ↑ Grillet and Lestienne (1997: 197) suggest that the Hebrew source used by the Greek translators read ולקצר חרישו ולקצר קצירו instead of ולקצר קצירו ולבצר בצירו (MT). See also DJD XVII, 59.

However, in addition to the deviating Greek rendering of מחרשת/מחרשה in 1 Sam 13:20-21, reference must be made to a fragment of 4Q51/4QSam^a showing the letters [ולחר]ש חר[ישו] at the expected position (DJD XVII, 58). The Greek translation seems to be due to confusion about the meaning of Hebrew חרש; see Wirth 2017: 5.

- 57 ↑ Fernández Marcos & Busto Saiz 1989: 22; Taylor 1992: 25.
- 58 ↑ McCarter argues that the Antiochene text of LXX reflects the initial Hebrew reading (reconstructed as חרשו ולקצר קצירו ולבצר בצירו). This leads to the artificial assumption that the shorter readings of MT and the rest of LXX are ‘haplographic, each in its own way’ (McCarter 1980: 155).
- 59 ↑ S reads *wndbrwn dbrh wnhšdwn hšdh*. The verb *דבר* (*dbr*) is a common translation of Hebrew *חרש* with the meaning ‘to plough’ (see Deut 22:10; 1 Kgs 19:19, etc.), while *השד* (*hšd*) is a standard translation of the verb *קצר* (see 1 Sam 6:13; 2 Kgs 4:18; 19:29, etc.).
- 60 ↑ Deut 22:10; 1 Sam 8:12; 1 Kgs 19:19; Isa 28:24; Jer 26:18; Amos 6:12; 9:13; Mic 3:12; Job 1:14; Prov 20:4.
- 61 ↑ Judg 14:18, Hos 10:11, 13; Ps 129:3; Job 4:8.
- 62 ↑ For other terms used in connection with ploughing, see Borowski 1987: 48, 51-53.
- 63 ↑ Gesenius, *TPC* I, 530; BDB, 361; GB, 416; Zorell, 428; KBL, 515; *DCH* V (נ-ג), 229; *HALOT*, 572; Ges¹⁸, 661.
- 64 ↑ Compare the rule in m. Bava Metzi ‘a 9:13 implying that a creditor may not take a *מחרשה* as a pledge during the day. See [above](#).
- 65 ↑ Klein 1983: 127-28; Van der Steen 2008: 67; 2009: 69.
- 66 ↑ The verb *לטש* means ‘to forge’, ‘to hammer’, ‘to sharpen’. 1 Sam 13:20-21 was often assumed to relate to the repair of metal implements (e.g., McCarter 1980: 232; Klein 1983: 128), but is likelier that the passage has their production in mind. See Stoebe 1973: 254-55.
- 67 ↑ However, see also *כל מן דברול* ‘each iron implement’ in 1 Sam 13:21 T^J.
- 68 ↑ McNutt 1990: 19, 144, 205, 238. Cf. also Dietrich 2015: 50.
- 69 ↑ In addition to m. Kelim 21:2, see the evidence discussed in 1.A.6. t. Kelim Bava Metzi ‘a 5:7 mentions a *ב(ו)רית מחרשה*, ‘hoop of the plough’. The *בִּרְךְ הַמַּחֲרָשָׁה*, ‘knee of the plough’, is also mentioned in m. ‘Ohalot 17:1-3 and b. Ta’anit 25b.
- 70 ↑ For the disputed translation of the terms, see *WTM*; Jastrow, *DTT*; Dalman, *ANHT*; Krauss 1911: 172-73, 553-56; Danby 1933: 636; Bunte 1972: 372-75. A drawing in Albeck’s edition of the Hebrew text (1959: 93) shows which elements of the plough were assumed to be designated by the terms *חֲרָב*, *בִּרְךְ*, *יָצוּל* and *עֲרִיץ*.
- 71 ↑ King & Stager 2001: 92 (cf. 88).
- 72 ↑ See also Borowski 1987: 52.
- 73 ↑ For emendation proposals and Barthélemy’s objections, see [above](#).
- 74 ↑ Gesenius, *TPC* I, 530, translated one of the occurrences as *vomer*, ‘ploughshare’, and the other as *cultrum*, ‘knife’, *dens aratri*, ‘plough-point’.
- 75 ↑ KJV, ASV, NJPS. In these translations, not only the final item of the list in 13:20 (MT: *מַחֲרָשָׁתוֹ*) is translated as ‘mattock’, but the first item of the list in 13:21 (MT: *מַחֲרָשֵׁת*) is also translated as ‘mattocks’, undoubtedly because these forms have the *š^ere* vowel in common.

- 76 ↑ Cook 1994. In *DCH*, where the first occurrence of מחרשת/מחרשה in 13:20 is translated as ‘ploughshare’, the second occurrence is also interpreted as ‘goad’ because of the parallelism with דָּרְבָּן (*DCH* V (נ-ו), 229-30).
- 77 ↑ Cook 1994: 252, 254, n. 11.
- 78 ↑ See Stoebe 1973: 254.
- 79 ↑ In NASB not only מחרשת/מחרשה at the end of 13:20 but also דָּרְבָּן at the end of 13:21 is translated as ‘hoe’.
- 80 ↑ Barthélemy, *CTAT* 1: 181.
- 81 ↑ Fokkelman (1986: 45) identified the first occurrence of מחרשת/מחרשה in 1 Sam 13:20 with a scythe, probably due to LXX θέριστρον. Like many others (see [above](#)), Fokkelman replaced the second occurrence in the same verse by חֶרֶם, ‘sickle’.
- 82 ↑ Wiggermann (1999: 189-90, 228) remarks that if one ox is depicted this must be due to artistic convention, ‘since one ox cannot pull a plough in a straight line’ (190). Differently: Borowski 1987: 51; Seidl 2003-2005: 514.
- 83 ↑ Egyptian: Fig. 1 in the present article; *ANEP*, 25 (fig. 84), 27 (fig. 91), 37 (fig. 122); *BRL*², 255 (fig. 66/2); Borowski 1987: 53 (fig. 5), 58 (fig. 8), 60 (fig. 10); Mesopotamian: Wiggermann 1999: 228 (fig. 7a, 7b).
- 84 ↑ Mesopotamian: Lambert 1979: 22-23, regarding Plate VII fig. 63; Wiggermann 1999: 228 (fig. 7c), 230 (fig. 9); Egyptian: Borowski 1987: 53 (fig. 5); Nicholson & Shaw 2000: 270 (fig. 11.2).
- 85 ↑ Only Mesopotamian: *ANEP*, 25 (fig. 86, cf. 88); Borowski 1987: 55 (fig. 6; cf. 56 fig. 7); Wiggermann 1999: 228 (fig. 7d); Seidl 2003-2005, 514.
- 86 ↑ Borowski 1987: 53-56. However, Borowski (47-48, 53-54) shows that also in Israel the relationship between ploughing and sowing was close, since ploughing was done for the sole purpose of sowing (cf. Isa 28:24).
- 87 ↑ See Figure 2 and Dalman, *AuS* 2, plates 18-39. See also the discussion in Dalman, *AuS* 2, 64-115; Borowski 1987: 48; King & Stager 2001: 92.
- 88 ↑ Several informative recordings have been uploaded on YouTube (e.g. from [Egypt](#) and [India](#)).
- 89 ↑ For the gradual replacing of bronze implements by iron implements in Israel/Palestine during the twelfth to tenth centuries BCE, see McNutt 1990: 209-11.
- 90 ↑ Borowski 1987, 51, with several drawings of plough-points (50-51, fig 3, 4) and a survey of the sites where they were discovered (49, 51). For a similar description as well as drawings of plough-points, see *BRL*², 255 (fig. 66/1). Excellent drawings of two iron plough-points excavated in Kinneret are offered in Fritz 1990: 366-67 (Plate 116). For a photo of an iron plough-point and other iron implements from Tel Mique-Ekron, see King & Stager 2001: 93.
- 91 ↑ Cf. also Wright 1943: 35; Dietrich 2015: 28.

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For the abbreviations applied → [List of Abbreviations](#)

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