

## פָּרַק

(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 יָצִי before פָּרַק of MT (cf. LXX, Sy) and Gunkel (1926: 25) read יִפְרָק (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 פָּרַק 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 פָּלַט). 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 פָּרַק 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 יִטְרֶף (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 פָּרָק.]

**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 lsb* (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 *lsb* 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 Hoftijzer 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 פִּרְק is used of the ‘removal’ or ‘cancellation’ of sins (Dn 4.24) and as the rendering for Heb. נָצַל (4Q157=TgJob f1 ii 9, prob. Jb 5.7), פָּדָה (11Q10=TgJob 23.6, Jb 33.28) and חָלַץ (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 (Hoftijzer 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 Hoftijzer 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 Soden 1965-81: 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 Trilateral strong verb

## 3. Syntagmatics

**A.1** The *subject* of פָּרַק in all forms is most often a human figure or group: Esau (Gn 27.40), Laban (4Q215 fl 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 [רוּחַ]; Ezk 19.12 [מִטָּה: possibly symbolising a human opponent, see 6. Exegesis A.2]; Zc 11.16 [רַעָה]).

**A.2** The *object* of פָּרַק, 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 fl 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 [הַרִים!]; Ezk 19.12; Zc 11.16).

**A.3** In associated adverbial phrases the most common syntagm is מִן, ‘from’, followed by an expression referring to (part of) a person: Gn 27.40 (מֵעַל צוֹאֲרֵךְ); Ps 136.24 (מִצְרִינּוֹ); La 5.8 (מִיָּדָם), all with Qal: a similar separation is implied by phrases in the near context in Ex 32.2 (אֲשֶׁר בְּאֲזִנֵי נְשִׁיכָם), 3 (אֲשֶׁר בְּאֲזִנֵיהֶם); 4Q215 fl 3:2 (וַיִּלַךְ בְּשִׁבְיָ). In Ps 7.3 פָּרַק is associated with the expression כִּאֲרִיָּה and the verb טָרַף.

## 4. Versions

### a. LXX:

qal      ἐκλύω (Gn 27.40)  
          λυτρόω mid. (Ps 7.3, 136.24; La 5.8)

piel      διαλύω (1Kg 19.11 [OG])  
          ἐκστρέφω (Zc 11.16)  
          περιαίρομαι (Ex 32.2)

hithpael    ἐκδικέω pass. (Ezk 19.12)  
          περιαίρομαι (Ex 32.3, 24)

### Jewish revisers:

Aquila: διαλύω pass. (Ezk 19.12)

Symmachus: ἐκλύω (Gn 27.40); διαλύω pass. (Ezk 19.12); διασπάω/διασπαράσσω (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    ʿtʿ 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. פּרַק in TgIs by van Zyl 1972):

qal     עדי aph.—TgO (Gn 27.40)  
       פּרַק pe.—TgNeo (Gn 27.40)  
       פּרַק pa. (Gn 27.40 [TgPsJ]; Ps 136.24; La 5.8)  
       פּשַח pe./pa. (Ps 7.3)

piel     גמר pa. (Zc 11.16: obj. ‘remnant’)  
       פּכר pe. — TgNeo (Ex 32.2)  
       פּרַק pa. (Ex 32.2 [TgO, TgPsJ]; 1Kg 19.11)

hithpael    טלטל ith. (Ezk 19.12)  
             פּרַק pa. — TgO, TgPsJ, TgNeo (Ex 32.3, 24)

d. Vulgate:

qal     *lacero* (Ps 7.3)  
       *redimo* (Ps 136.24; La 5.8)  
       *solvo* (Gn 27.40)

piel     *dissolvo* (Zc 11.16)  
       *subverto* (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 λυτρόω appear (for the *qal*), implying the meaning ‘redeem, ransom’. In Ezk 19.12 ἐξεδίκηθήσαν (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 ἐκδικέω often represents פָּקַד (1Kms 15.2; Ho 1.4 etc.; Zp 1.8 etc.; Jr 15.3 etc.; cf. also ἐκδίκησις for פְּקֻדָּה 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 διαλυω or διαχέω/διαχύνω in Ezk 19.12 and whatever *dpšh* represents in Ps 7.3.

**A.3** The Vulgate follows a similar tendency to give a physical rendering of פָּרַק, 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 פְּרָק). But in Ps 136.24 and La 5.8 *redimo* retains the sense given to פָּרַק by LXX. In Ezk 19.12 the use of *marceo*, ‘wither’, is probably derived from the context.

**A.4** In the Targumim Aram. פָּרַק, 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 פָּרַק had some senses not found in Aram., though it is hard to envisage this for עָרַי aph., ‘remove’, in Gn 27.40. It is more probable with גָּמַר pa., ‘destroy’, טָלַטַל ith., ‘be exiled’(?), and פָּשַׁח, ‘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. פָּרַק 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. עָקַר, הָרַס, נָתַץ and כָּרַת Hi., generally in relation to the destruction of buildings (cf. also TgQoh 3.3 for פָּרַץ). But it is not used by TgPsJ here and it would be more appropriate to some other occurrences of Heb. פָּרַק 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 (‘*t*’ aph.) and Zc 11.16 (‘*rq* pa.’), but the sense given is similar.

## 5. Lexical/Semantic Fields

**A.1** The varied uses of BH פָּרַק 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.2** In Gn 27.40 רוּד, ‘be restless, stray’ (rather than ‘break free’ [Gunkel, Westermann, NRSV]), occurs in the preceding clause. Synonyms for the ‘removal’ of a yoke are שָׁבַר (Jr 2.20), סוּר (Is 14.25) and חָתַת (Is 9.3: see further Reiterer 2003: 113).

**A.3** In Ex 32 פָּרַק is followed by נָתַן (v. 24), while in comparable passages סוּר Hi. (Gn 35.2) and שִׁית (neg.), יָרַד Hi. and נָצַל Hith. (all Ex 33.4-6) are used.

**A.4** In 1Kg 19.11 שָׁבַר Pi. occurs in the following phrase, with a similar object (|| סִלְעִים) (הָרִים).

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

**A.6** In Ps 7.3 as given by MT טָרַף is a parallel expression and נָצַל Hi. is an antonym.

**A.7** By contrast in La 3.8 פָּרַק occurs in a phrase very similar to אֵין מְצִיל at the end of Ps 7.3 (compare also, e.g., Jud. 18.28 and other passages in BDB: 664; with מוֹשִׁיעַ Jdg 12.3 etc. [BDB: 446]). Likewise the context in Ps 136.24 is very similar to Ps 44.8, where יָשַׁע Hi. is used: cf. Dt 33.7 (הִיָּה + עֲזָר).

## 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 פָּרַק 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 שָׁבַר (which Skinner 1910: 373 notes to be an alternative to פָּרַק in the image of Gn 27.40) and the use of נָתַץ with הִצְרִיחַ in Nah 1.6 support such a rendering against the weaker ‘splitting’ of NRSV.

**A.4** In Ps 5.7 too (see Text Uncertain) פָּרַק 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 פָּרַק 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 יָשַׁע 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 הִתְפָּרַקוּ (and וַיִּבְשּׁוּ) 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 מָטָה as well as MT פָּרִיהָ (taken collectively) or the attractive emendation of it to בָּדִיהָ (cf. LXX<sup>Cat</sup> and e.g. Cooke 1936: 210, 212).

**B.4** NEB's rendering of Zc 11.16b by 'and throw away their [REB 'the'] broken bones' (cf. Redditt 1995: 127, though פָּרְסִיהֶם is the object of יִפְרַק, not the 'subject') is based on Driver's unnecessary proposal that פָּרַס here means 'fragment', like *pirsu* in Akkadian (1934: 381). Driver originally took פָּרַק in its normal sense of violent removal, with פָּרְסִיהֶם 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 פָּרַק. 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 פָּרַק 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 פָּרַק 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. פָּרַק in Tgg. and Sy need not imply such an understanding of the Heb. in all cases, in view of the many other meanings that פָּרַק could bear in Aram. (cf. Root and Comparative Material A.2 and van Zyl 1972). There is no reason to suppose that פָּרַק ever had the technical sense ‘redeem’ in BH.

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