

A Lexical Analysis of בָּרָד and מְהֵתִיִצֵב of In Zechariah 6:3-5 The Meaning בָּרָד of In Zechariah 6:3

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Abstract

In the Zechariah, there are various visions and prophecies that are so difficult to be understood today. And this can be biased if every Bible's learner interprets it as he pleases. In this research, which uses the Lexical Analysis approach, will discuss about the meaning of the words בָּרָד and מְהֵתִיִצֵב of In Zechariah 6:3-5.

With in-depth observation and also making language comparisons, it can be concluded that:

בָּרָד in Zechariah 6:3 should be translated as dappled, a literal or concrete definition. Old Testament does not give any specific color with regard to the dappled. However, it seems that the color of horses in Zechariah 6:1-8 has a function to distinguish one chariot from the other chariots.

מְהֵתִיִצֵב in Zechariah 6:5 should be interpreted in the sense of readiness to serve God, a metaphorical extension of the concrete definition, 'to stand'. The four spirits are going forth after serving the Lord of all the earth in the heavens. It implies that the four spirits are belonged to God. In the heavens, they are serving God and when going to the earth, they carry God's mission.

Keywords: Lexical Analysis, Zechariah Prophet, Literal

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew word בָּרָד is used in Zechariah 6:3 in the form masculine plural and has a function as adjective to the horses. Typically, it is translated as 'dappled' or 'spotted'. In this brief lexical study, we will examine if such a translation of בָּרָד is correct for this context and determine if there is any further significance to the word

which might aid us in theological interpretation.

II. Usage in the MT

בָּרָד occurs a total of 4 times in the MT, including the use in Zechariah 6:3. A summary of its usage as classified by meaning is given below. For each definition, the various references are divided into their occurrence. An example

of each definition is also provided.

A. Summary of Usage

1. Mottled (a male goat) Gn. 31:10; 31:12.
2. Dappled (a horse) Zc. 6:3; 6:6

B. Observations

Commenting on the above list, we notice that the most definitions of **רָרָ** are ‘dappled’ and ‘mottled’. The usage of this word appears in three contexts. First is this word has an adjective function to the animal, either goat or horse. Next, this type of color only appears in the vision or dream context. The last context is **רָרָ** only occurs in comparison to other colors context. For instance, in the book of Genesis, it appears together with stripped and spotted.

On the other hand, in the vision of Zechariah, it emerges with other colors such as red, black and white. While considering these contexts, it seems that this color is belonged to the animal only in the vision or dream context and it has a function to describe current reality with immediate result in the future. Jacob, in the Genesis, was asked to leave Laban and return to his native land immediately. It happens also in the book of Zechariah.¹

III. Usage in Ancient Translations

By using ancient translations of the Hebrew, such as Septuagint, we can arrive

at the possible synonyms for our word of study, **רָרָ**. These synonyms, while sometimes giving previously unseen meanings, are most often helpful in confirming the findings based on contextual usage.

A. Septuagint

In the Septuagint, the portion of Zechariah 6:3 in which we are interested reads, “καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄρματι τῷ τετάρτῳ ἵπποι ποικίλοι ψαροί”.

The word used to translate the root **רָרָ** is ψαρός (normal nominative masculine plural) meaning speckled, dappled or like a starling.

A number of the other MT passages using **רָרָ** are also translated in the Septuagint by ψαρός. These are other Greek words used, however, such as ποικίλος (diversified or manifold) and σποδοειδής ῥαντός (ashen sprinkled). Using Hatch and Redpath’s concordance, perhaps we can arrive at some possible synonyms for in **רָרָ** this context.

B. List of Synonyms

Possible synonyms of **רָרָ** are listed below along with their basic definition.

- **רָרָ** – BDB and PONS translation are strong. On the other hand, HALOT and

¹ Further information see commentary.

Holladay see that this word as skewbald (horses).

- שָׂרֵק - BDB: sorrel. HALOT: sorrel, foxy-red, light red.

C. Observations

All of the synonyms connect to the definition of our word, בָּרֵד. Nevertheless, based on this study, it is difficult to find the information from the list of synonyms for two reasons. Firstly, בָּרֵד only occurs 4 times in the bible and this list of synonyms could lead someone astray.

For instance, the word אָמַץ could lead someone to textual problem either it refers to the color (skewbald) or strong. It seems that Septuagint choose the last meaning as their translation. In regard to the second synonym, Kennicott seems to see אָמַץ as the synonym of שָׂרֵק. Therefore, there is suggestion to consider אָמַץ as red. On the other hand, some English bible translations, such as KJV and TEV, use שָׂרֵק as the synonyms of בָּרֵד, to define the meaning in Zechariah 1:8 as ‘speckled’ or ‘dappled’.

They seem to base their translation on the reading of LXX (ψαροί) that attempts to bring the color of this horse into conformity with those described in Zechariah 6:2-3. However, since these are two different and unrelated visions, the usage of synonyms could lead to fallacy.

IV. Cognate Languages

By examining those languages which are related to Hebrew, we might be able to discover the history of the root בָּרֵד and shed further light on the meanings provided above. The following cognates come from the lexical entries of HALOT.

A. List of Cognates

Cognates to the Hebrew root בָּרֵד are listed below with a basic definition.

- Syriac: *baÒrdaÒ* – speckled black and white.
- Arabic: *abrad* – spotted

B. Observations

There is a basic thread which runs through this list of cognates. Both Syriac and Arabic denote a common denominator in the idea of ‘speckled’ or ‘spotted’, although Syriac gives particular colors such as black and white. This is likely the concrete definition of based בָּרֵד solely on a concordance study.

V. Conclusion

בָּרֵד in Zechariah 6:3 should be translated as dappled, a literal or concrete definition. Old Testament does not give any specific color with regard to the dappled. However, it seems that the color of horses in Zechariah 6:1-8 has a function to distinguish one chariot from the other chariots.

The Meaning מִהֲתִצַּב Of In Zechariah 6:5

I. Introduction

The Hebrew verb יִצַּב is used in Zechariah 6:5 in the form of a *hithpael* infinitive construct (מִהֲתִצַּב). Regarding to the English versions, they convey similar translation such as presenting themselves (ESV and NET Bible) and standing (NAS). In this brief lexical study, we will scrutinize the most suitable translation of יִצַּב for this context.

II. Usage in the MT

יִצַּב appears a total 48 times in the MT, including the use in Zechariah 6:5. A summary of its usage as classified by meaning is given below. For each definition, the various references are divided into the forms, although they appear only in one stem (*hithpael*), in which they occur. An example of each definition is also supplied. A few notes are presented concerning the common prepositions used verb and other important syntactical data.

A. Summary of Usage

1. The Basic Meaning: Stand.

In a place: Without preposition:

1 Sam. 3:10; 2 Sam. 18:30; 2 Ch. 11:13

Denotes location or position: with preposition כ

Ex. 19:17; Num. 22:22; Ju 20:2, Dt 31:14, 31:14,

Denotes location or place preposition: with מן Ex. 2:4, 2 Sam. 18:13; 21:5 Denotes particular place: “in the middle of” or “among”. It is followed by תְּוֹהוּ 1 Sam. 10:23, 2 Sam. 23:12; 2 Ch. 11:14

Denotes particular place: “beside” or “on”. It is followed by preposition עַל Nu 23:3, 23:15; Hb. 2:1, Psalm 36:5. Denotes particular place: “there”. It is followed by preposition מִפְּנֵי Ex 34:5; Nu 11:16. In front of a person (God or man): Stand before: with preposition לְPsalm 5:6; Jos. 1:5; Dt. 9:2; Jb. 41:2 Stand against: with preposition כִּנְיָן and אֵיךְ 2 Ch. 20:6 With preposition כִּנְיָן Dt. 7:24; 11:25. Stand Against: With preposition לְPsalm 94:16

2. The Other Meaning: To deliver.

In the context of salvation: It is followed by the verb רָצָה Ex. 14:13; 1 S 12:7, 12:16, 2 Ch 20:17

3. The Other Meaning: To present.

Terrestrial things Jb. 38:14. Present oneself before: It is followed by preposition לְפָנַי Ex 8:16, 9:13; Jos 24:1; 1 S 10:19; Pr 22:29; 22:29

4. The Other Meaning: To prepare

a. In preparation to fight or argue

1 Sam 17:16, Psalm 2:2; Je 46:4; 14; Jb. 33:5

5. The Other Meaning: To be ready
Readiness for service. It is followed by God
or Lord. Zech. 6:5; Jb. 1:6; 2:1; 2:1

B. Observations

Commenting on the above list, we notice that the most common definition of צב is 'to stand'. However, there are special meanings such as to deliver, present, prepare and be ready. All uses are in *Hithpael* stem and most of the meanings are determined by prepositions.

In general, the various definitions can all be explained by expanding on one concrete and specific denotation. This common denominator is the idea of 'stand'. When considering the preposition יָצַבְתִּי, the meaning could be 'present'.

The metaphorical meanings such as 'to prepare', 'be ready' and 'to deliver'. When צב is used in the context of meeting with God, it has a meaning readiness for service. Therefore, this meaning should be placed in Zechariah 6:5. Occurring in the *Hithpael* stem, with preposition מִן and עָלַי, has this particular definition.

III. Usage in Ancient Translations

By using ancient translations of the Hebrew, such as the Septuagint, we can arrive at the possible synonyms for our word

of study, צב. These synonyms, while sometimes yielding previously unseen meanings, are most often helpful in confirming the findings based on contextual usage.

A. Septuagint

In the Septuagint, the portion of Zechariah 6:5 in which we are interested read, "οἱ τέσσαρες ἄνεμοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐκπορεύονται παραστήναι τῷ κυρίῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς".

The word used to translate the root צב is παραστήναι (infinitive aorist active of the verb παρίστημι) meaning 'to heal'.

A number of the other MT passages using צב are also translated in the Septuagint by παρίστημι. There are other Greek words used, however, such as ἀνθίστημι (set oneself against), διαμένω (remain or continue in an activity), ἐπιβαίνω (go up or board), ἐφίσταται (stand over), ἵστημι (stand), καθίστημι (to set, to constitute), κατασκοπεύω (spy out), λειτουργέω (to serve, to minister), παρίστημι (to present, to stand by), στηρίζω (to establish), συμπαρίσταμαι (to stand up for somebody against somebody), συνάγω (to gather together). Using Hatch and Redpath's concordance, perhaps we can arrive at some possible synonyms צב for in this context.

B. List of Synonyms.

Possible synonyms of יָצַב are listed below along with their basic definition.

- בָּשַׁל – Qal: To cook, to boil. Piel: to cook, to boil. Pual: to be boiled. Hiphil: to ripen.
- הִתְהַלֵּךְ - Hithpael: to walk to and fro. Hiphil: to lead, to bring. Qal: to walk, to go. Niphal: to be gone. Piel: to walk.
- יָצַב – Hithpael: to stand.
- יָצַב – Hiphil: to place, to establish. Hophal: to be left
- נָצַב – Niphal: to stand, Hiphil: to cause to stand, Hophal: to be fixed.
- עָמַד - Qal: to stand, to stop. Hiphil: to set up, to raise. Hophal: to be placed.
- עָרַךְ – Qal : to set in order. Hiphil: to value, to tax
- צָבָא – Qal: to wage war, to fight, to serve. Hiphil: to muster.
- קָוַם – Qal: to arise, to stand. Piel: to confirm. Polel: to raise up. Hithpolel: to rise up. Hiphil: to raise, to build, to set. Hophal: to be raised up.
- רָגַשׁ – Qal: to be in tumult
- שָׁקַל – Qal: to weigh. Niphal: to be weighed.
- שָׁרַת – Piel: to minister.

C. Observations

Most of the synonyms either connect to one or another definition of our word, יָצַב, such as “to stand” or “to present” also carry denotations of ‘to fight’ and ‘to serve’.

However, in the list of the synonyms, we cannot find the meaning of deliverance. It is likely that the literal meaning of יָצַב is to stand or to present. However, the context will determine the special meanings for that word. In conclusion, this study does confirm that individual definitions given in part II above are correct and attested to elsewhere.

IV. Cognate Languages

By examining those languages which are related to Hebrew, we might be able to discover the history of the root יָצַב and shed further light on the meanings provided above. The following cognates come from the lexical entries of HALOT.

A. List of Cognates.

Cognates to the Hebrew root יָצַב are listed below with a basic definition:

- Aramaic
Jewish Aramaic: To establish
- Arabic: To be firm

B. Observations

There are only two cognates for יָצַב, Jewish

Aramaic and Arabic. There is a common denominator in the idea of “establish” or “firm”. This definition is different with the concrete definition of **צב** based solely on a concordance study.

CONCLUSION

צב in Zechariah 6:5 should be interpreted in the sense of readiness to serve God, a metaphorical extension of the concrete definition, ‘to stand’. The four spirits are going forth after serving the Lord of all the earth in the heavens. It implies that the four spirits are belonged to God. In the heavens, they are serving God and when going to the earth, they carry God’s mission.

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