

The Notions of Buying and Selling in Semitic Languages.

By B. Halper, M. A., London.

It is well known that in Arabic the notions of buying and selling are expressed by the same verbs. Thus شَرَى = *he bought* as well as *he sold* in the First and Eighth Conjugations. Similarly بَاعَ (بَيْعٌ) signifies (in the First and Eighth Conjugations) *he bought* and *sold*. It is true that in actual practice and usage the former verb is more frequently met with the signification of *he bought*, whereas the latter usually denotes *he sold*. Moreover شَرَى in the Eighth Conjugation as a rule means *he bought*, and in this case it is analogous to Syriac ܫܪܝ *he bought* and ܫܝܝ *he sold*, where to some extent Syriac *Pēal* would correspond to Arabic Eighth Conjugation and *Paʿel* to Arabic First Conjugation. Nevertheless in many cases the context alone can decide whether any of these verbs denote *he bought* or *sold*. Furthermore the same verbs not infrequently signify *he exchanged*, *took in exchange*. Thus we very often meet expressions like أَخْطَرَ الْغَانِي بِالْبَاقِي وَأَشْتَرَى الْعَظِيمَ بِالصَّغِيرِ *he staked that which is vanishing for that which is permanent, and took in exchange that which is great for that which is small*. (Kalilah wah Dimnah, p. 139 of CHEIKHO's edition, 1905). Again we have

سَعَى إِلَيْكَ بِي الْوَأَشَى فَلَمْ تَرْنِي
 أَهْلًا لِتَكْذِيبِ مَا أَلْقَى مِنَ الْخَبْرِ
 وَلَوْ سَعَى بِكَ عِنْدِي فِي أَلَدِّ كَرَى
 طَيْفُ الْخَيَالِ لَبِعْتُ النَّوْمَ بِالسَّهْرِ

The calumniator slandered me to you, but you deemed me not worthy so as to declare false the report which he brought; yet had the phantom of imagination slandered you to me in my most pleasant drowsiness, I should certainly have exchanged sleep for wakefulness. (Al-Fakhri, p. 92 of DERENBOURG's edition, 1905. أَلَدِّ, line 3, of that edition is certainly a misprint for أَلَدِّ).

This latter meaning of *شَرَى* and *بَاعَ* appears to be the primary one, and enables us to account for the fact that two apparently contrary significations should be implied in one and the same verb. Before coins with their conventional value were introduced, buying and selling merely meant exchanging one article for another. And in this case which of the parties in the transaction should be called *buyer* and which *seller* entirely depends on the point of view. If A gave B a lamb and took a calf in exchange, he is the buyer with reference to the calf and the seller with reference to the lamb.

A close examination of the radical meaning of some of these verbs reveals the fact that the notions of buying and selling are in some way, more or less remotely, connected with that of *moving* and *passing*. Thus *شَرَى* = *he was in commotion*. *مَارَ* (*mediae Waw*) denotes *he was in commotion, moved to and fro, reeled*, whereas *مَارَ* (*mediae Yā*) = *he brought or conveyed provision* (*طَعَامَ*). *يَمُورُ* as Imperfect of this latter verb also occurs, and this proves that radically both verbs were identical. In Syriac *ܡܘܪ* (Imperfect *ܡܘܪܝܢܐ*) means *he bought*. The fact that even in Syriac *ܡܘܪ* is often applied to the buying of provision is probably due to a later restriction of usage. In Hebrew neither *שָׂרָה* nor *בָּאָה* occurs, and verbs ordinarily used for *buying* are quite distinct from those employed for *selling*. But *הָלַךְ* in Qal = *he passed on, away, or through*, and in Hiphil it denotes *he changed, exchanged*. One is therefore led to the conclusion that the original meaning of all these verbs probably was *he moved, passed*. Out of this the signification of *he exchanged* developed, as in a transaction the articles pass from one hand to another.

The verb *מָוַר* in Hebrew has hitherto only been recognised in Hiphil alone, and only with the signification of *exchanged, changed*. But if more attention would be paid to this verb, it would be found that there are one or two passages in the Old Testament which cannot be satisfactorily explained, unless this supposition be abandoned.

To start with the translation of *בְּהִמְיֹר אֶרֶץ* in *עַל-כֵּן לֹא-יִירָא בְּהִמְיֹר אֶרֶץ* in *פְּסַלְמִים* (ψ 46 3) has caused great difficulty to commentators and grammarians. The old explanation that this passage means *therefore we fear not, though the earth should change, and though the mountains should totter into the midst of the seas* is far from being adequate. The difficulty of the intransitive use of the Hiphil has been overcome by taking *אֶרֶץ* as the object of *בְּהִמְיֹר*, the latter being impersonal, as is now and again the case. It is then rendered *though He (God) should*

make the earth change. So OLSHAUSEN and many others. But the lexical difficulty is by far greater. The verb הָמִיר is never found to signify *it was destroyed*, to which it ultimately amounts in this verse if the ordinary explanation be adopted. הָמִיר in all other places denotes *he changed, exchanged*, either for the better or worse, and this sense is certainly unsuitable here. A clever emendation has been suggested by KROCHMAL and adopted by GRAETZ, and that is to read בְּהִמּוֹג *when it melts away*, an expression which often occurs in Psalms. BRIGGS reads בְּהִמּוֹת *when it roars* (with a loud, rumbling sound of earthquake). This suggestion, although it apparently has the support of Greek Version, is not a natural expression in Hebrew, where בְּרַעַשׁ would be more likely to represent Greek ταρασσεσθαι. CHEYNE² thinks that ταρασσεσθαι is a textual error for ἀλλάσσεσθαι.

But if we connect בְּהִמּוֹר in this passage with Arabic مَارَ *it moved to and fro, was in a state of commotion*, we could render it by *therefore we fear not, though the earth should quake*. The passage would then have a striking parallel in يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا وَتَسِيرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا *On the day when the heaven will be in a state of commotion, and the mountains will travel to and fro* (Qorān LII 9, 10). The use of בְּהִמּוֹר here would then be identical with that of תַּחֲלִיפִם *Thou causest them to pass away* (ψ 102 27), for these two verbs are synonymous in every respect.

Another passage which caused still greater difficulty is כְּבוֹד הַקְּמִים כְּלוֹן וְגַהְלוֹ וְכַסְיִים מְרִים קְלוֹן *Wise men inherit glory, and fools . . . disgrace* (Prov 3 35). מְרִים in this verse has usually been parsed as Hiphil participle of רָם. Apparently this is the only possible way of parsing this word. But the difficulties involved are numerous. The grammatical construction requires that we should take קְלוֹן as the subject and כְּסִיִּים as the object of מְרִים, as it is quite indefensible to take כְּסִיִּים as subject, since a noun in the plural cannot be followed by a participle in the singular which is its predicate. Then on the other hand the parallel clause demands that we should take כְּסִיִּים as the subject, in the same way as הַקְּמִים is. Although the first alternative is not satisfactory, it has found many supporters among modern commentators; nevertheless for the reason just stated it cannot be seriously maintained. Then the lexical difficulty applies equally to both explanations. הָרַם as a rule means *he lifted up, exalted, took away, removed out of the way, offered as a gift*. None of these meanings is here applicable. EWALD's rendering *disgrace exalts*

² *Book of Psalms*, 1904.

the fools, which he explains as meaning that through disgrace fools become conspicuous as warning examples, is hardly convincing, as it requires too much to be read into the simple words. RASHI and many other mediaeval Jewish commentators disregard the difficulty of the use of the singular, and explain מְרִים as meaning *they take for themselves*. But to say the least the word לוֹ is absolutely necessary if such an explanation be adopted. For the case of וַיִּקְצֹר רוּחַ מְרִים אִזְלַת (Prov 14 29), which is apparently analogous, simply means *and the impatient man makes folly prominent*, that is to say, he often displays his folly.

In view of all these difficulties several emendations have been suggested. The synonyms of נָחַל are יָרַשׁ and קָנָה (the latter only to some extent), and it has been proposed to substitute either of these verbs for מְרִים. But neither of these suggestions can be textually defended. The corruption of such easy words as יָרַשׁ, יָרַשׁם, יָקִנוּ and יָקִנוּ is hardly conceivable. מִכְתָּרִים, which has been suggested, is very likely, but the sense yielded by this emendation is unsuitable here. Apart from this all emendations which involve an important change in this word are condemned by the fact that the Greek Version has here ὑψωσαν which proves that MT is substantially correct. It only remains now to consider DYSERINCK's suggestion to read מְמָרִים, that is to say, to suppose that מ fell out between the two מ's of מְמָרִים and מְרִים (Cf. אִם-יִמָּאֵן instead of אִם מִמָּאֵן Ex 10 4). It is also thought that support to this suggestion is found in בְּבוֹדֶם בְּקִלְוֹן אָמִיר (Hos 4 7). But a proper understanding of the meaning of הָמִיר proves how utterly untenable this suggestion is. If we had מְמָרִים in our text the sense would have been just the reverse of what is required here. A verb denoting *he bought* takes the object bought in the accusative, and the price at which it is bought is introduced by ב known technically as ב *pretii*. Similarly a verb which signifies *he sold* takes the object sold in the accusative, and the price at which it is sold is introduced by ב *pretii*. Now הָמִיר and its synonym הִחְלִיף always take the accusative of the article given in exchange, and its equivalent which is taken in return has ב *pretii* affixed to it. Thus in Lev 27 we have this construction of הָמִיר several times. Cf. also Jer 2 11b, ψ 106 20. In Neo-Hebrew where הִחְלִיף takes the place of הָמִיר, we have הִחְלִיף שׁוֹר בַּפְּרָה אוֹ הַמּוֹר בַּשּׁוֹר (Kid. 38^a, Baba Meṣ. 46^b). Hos 4 7, to which reference has been made, clearly means *I shall* (or, as it is usually emended, *they*) *exchange their glory for disgrace*. It is of course quite impossible to render here *they give their disgrace in exchange*. מְמָרִים would necessitate the insertion of בְּבוֹדֶם and the affixing

of קָלוֹן to בּ. But then the rhythm of the verse would be disturbed, and the idea conveyed would be illogical, for fools have no glory to give in exchange.

Although the following suggestion might at first sight appear fanciful and far-fetched, it nevertheless deserves consideration. We know that ܘܕ in Syriac denotes *he bought*. In Arabic مَازَ also has a similar meaning. Now since in Hebrew the Hiphil of מוֹר signifies *he exchanged*, it is not unlikely that Qal should mean *he took in exchange, bought, acquired*. This is the case with other verbs of a similar character. Cf. ܐܒܝܫܘܬܝܐ and ܐܒܝܫܘܬܝܐ, ܫܪܝܐ and ܫܪܝܐ, ܐܝܫܬܪܝܐ and ܐܝܫܬܪܝܐ, ܐܝܫܬܪܝܐ and ܐܝܫܬܪܝܐ, which were explained above. I should therefore like to propose to parse מְרִים here as a Plural Participle Qal of מוֹר with the signification of *he acquired*. The rendering would then be very simple: *And fools acquire disgrace*. This clause would then be in every respect parallel to the first, and the text would remain unaltered. The reader should bear in mind that this suggestion does not involve the introduction of a new verb into Hebrew, but merely deduces from the already existing Hiphil a meaning suitable for the Qal—a meaning which is well established in the cognate languages.

I might mention by the way that this parsing of מְרִים had already been suggested by L. H. LÖWENSTEIN. But, as he assigns to מְרִים the same meaning as to מְמַרִים, all the objections raised against emending the text to מְמַרִים apply with equal force to this suggestion. It is only after a thorough understanding of the nature of this class of verbs that this suggestion becomes of any value.

A few words must be said concerning the form of מְרִים. The ordinary form of the active Participle Qal of the *mediae* Waw verbs in Hebrew is קָם. It is therefore very likely that the punctuators not knowing of the usage of the Qal of מוֹר took the consonants מְרִים to be a Hiphil participle of רִים, and punctuated them accordingly. We should therefore alter the punctuation into מְרִים. But grammatical theories depending on emended texts can only be accepted with the greatest caution. For Hebrew grammar we have no evidence beyond that which was transmitted to us by the Massoretes. It will therefore not be out of place, I hope, to consider whether the massoretic punctuation cannot be justified. The ordinary active Participle of the regular strong verbs is in Hebrew קוֹטֵל for the transitive verbs and קוֹטֵל and קוֹטֵל for the intransitive ones. In Arabic it is قَاتِلٌ and in Syriac ܩܬܝܠܐ. The ע"ו verbs have in Arabic قَاتِلٌ, as if from قَاتَلٌ, and in Syriac ܩܬܝܠܐ (Feminine ܩܬܝܠܐ). In He-

brew, however, according to the rules given by grammarians, קָם corresponds to קוּמַל, מָת to מָפֵץ, and בּוֹשׁ to יָגַר. Nevertheless we have הַקּוּמִים (2 Kings 16 7), הַלְלוּם (Isa 25 7) and בּוֹסִים (Zech 10 5). Now since in the regular strong verb the *a* is heightened to *o* in Hebrew, the forms הַקּוּמִים *etc.* are more in accordance with the formation of קוּמַל. But this latter form originally was a فَعْلٌ or فَعِلٌ, and thus it is evident that forms like קָם became fixed before the heightening took place, and that forms like מָת ought not to be confined to intransitive verbs alone. As an actual participle besides מָת there is לָגִים (Neh 13 21). Then adjectives used as nouns like יָד are of frequent occurrence. BARTH¹ thinks that most of these forms are derived from the perfect stem فَعَلَ. Now as may be seen from Arabic مَارَ (*mediae Yā*) the older form of מוֹר is מִיר. The active participle Qal מִר is therefore quite probable.

¹ *Nominalbildung* § 9 b.