

## Miszellen

### Two Epigraphic Notes\*

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#### A. The Terms קרחה “Qarḥoh” and חמת היערן “the Wall of the Ya‘aran” in the Mesha Inscription

The following lines of the Mesha inscription (21-22) describe the first building projects undertaken by Mesha, king of Moab in Dibon: אנך בנתי קרחה חמת. העפל “It was I (who) built Qarḥoh, the wall of the ya‘aran and the wall of the *ophel*.” Mesha begins the account of his building operations in Dibon with the word “Qarḥoh”, which is also cited in the inscription’s opening lines: ואעש הבמת. לקרחה. לכמש. זאת. “I (who) made this high place for Chemosh in Qarḥoh” (3).<sup>1</sup>

In 1868, the Mesha Stele was discovered in the village of Dhiban, which is identified with biblical Dibon. If this stone was actually placed close to the high place that Mesha erected in honor of his deity Chemosh, then the Qarḥoh is probably the name of one part of the city of Dibon. Lines 24-26 of the inscription declare: ובר. אן. בקרב. הקר. בקרחה. ואמר. לכל. העם. עשו. לכם. אש. בר. בביתה. ואנך כרתי. המכרתח. לקרחה. באסרי. ישראל. “And there was no cistern inside the town at Qarḥoh, so I said to all the people: ‘Let each of you make a cistern for himself in his house!’ And I cut beams for Qarḥoh with Israelite captives.”<sup>2</sup> In this manner, Mesha ensured that the Qarḥoh in Dibon had some water supply. According to B. Mazar, “Qarḥoh” is derived from the Akkadian word *kirḥu* or *qirḥu*, meaning a fortress or a fortified temple. Hence, he hypothesizes that this term may refer to an *acropolis*, which is a royal municipal fortress.<sup>3</sup>

Qarḥoh is mentioned in the laments on the destruction of Moab in Isa 15 and Jer 48. Isaiah gives the following account: “He went up to the temple to weep, Dibon [went] to the outdoor shrines. Over Nebo and Medeba Moab is wailing; On every head is baldness (*qārḥāh*), Every beard is shorn. In its streets, they are girt with sackcloth; On its roofs, in its squares, Everyone is wailing, Streaming with tears” (Isa 15:2-3;

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<sup>1</sup> The translations from the Mesha stele are based on W.F. Albright in J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (third edition with supplement), Princeton 1969, pp. 320-321.

<sup>2</sup> On the role of Israelite captives in digging cisterns for Mesha, see Y. Yadin, *Excavations at Hazor 1968-1969*, IEJ 19 (1969), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> See B. Mazar, *Mesha*, Encyclopaedia Biblica, IV, Jerusalem 1962, Col. 923 (Heb.); G.W. Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* (SHANE 1), Leiden 1982, p. 16.

see the parallel text in Jer 48:37-38).<sup>4</sup> The lament may contain a pun on words, consequently, the word *qārḥāh* may indicate not only plucking out hairs from the head but also the fortified part of the city, paralleling the streets, roofs, and squares subsequently mentioned.<sup>5</sup>

The Bible mentions the expression “wall of the ophel” twice. It is referred to once in describing Uzziah’s reign: “It was he who built the Upper Gate of the House of the Lord; he also built extensively on the wall of the Ophel.” (2 Chron 27:3). It is again mentioned in Nehemiah in connection with the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem: “After him, the Tekoites repaired a second stretch, from in front of the great jutting tower to the wall of the Ophel.” (Neh 3:27).<sup>6</sup> These two sources demonstrate that the word Ophel signifies a citadel. Thus, for example, Isaiah’s prophecy compares the Ophel with a watch-tower: “For the castle shall be abandoned, the noisy city forsaken; Citadel and tower shall become bare-places forever” (Isa 32:14). Micah compares the Ophel to a tower [*migdāl*]: “And you, O Migdal-eder, outpost of fair Zion” (Mic 4:8). The Bible refers to an Ophel located in Samaria, and in Jerusalem. The reference to Samaria proves that Elisha and Gehazi lived in the Ophel (2 Kgs 5:24). The above-mentioned phrase “wall of the ophel” referring to the Ophel in Jerusalem is also cited in connection with Manasseh’s building projects: “Afterward he built the outer wall of the City of David west of Gihon in the wadi on the way to the Fish Gate, and it encircled Ophel; he raised it very high.” (2 Chron 33:14).<sup>7</sup> The Book of Nehemiah states that the Temple servants were living on the Ophel (Neh 3:26, 11:21), illustrating that some inhabitants of Jerusalem lived in the Ophel. Based on these citations, we can conclude that the Ophel was a technical term for a section of the city fortress, apparently the *acropolis* built in the various capital cities of Palestine as Samaria, Jerusalem and Dibon.<sup>8</sup>

The expression חמת היערן “the wall of the ya‘aran” has not yet been clarified. Most interpreters compare this phrase with Ecclesiastes and hence connect it to a forest: “I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees.” (Ecc 2:6). For example, Albright translated the sentence as follows: “It was I (who) built Qarḥoh, the wall of the forests, and the wall of the citadel.”<sup>9</sup> Ullendorff rendered it as: “I built Qrḥh, the walls of the parks.”<sup>10</sup> However, von Zyl interpreted it as:

<sup>4</sup> The translations of the biblical passages are taken from *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Philadelphia and Jerusalem 1985.

<sup>5</sup> For the connection between the Mesha Stele and the Prophecies about the destruction of Moab, see Y. Elitzur, *The Moab Prophecy and the Moabite Stone*, Bar Ilan I (1963), pp. 58-65 (Heb.).

<sup>6</sup> In light of the description in Nehemiah 3, most scholars have identified the Ophel as being located south of the Temple Mount. See Y. Tsafrir, *The Walls of Jerusalem in the Period of Nehemiah*, *Cathedra* 4 (1977), pp. 31-42 (Heb.).

<sup>7</sup> In connection with this wall, see D. Bahat, *The Wall of Manasseh in Jerusalem*, *IEJ* 31 (1981), pp. 235-236; R. Reich and E. Shukron, *Light at the End of the Tunnel*, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 25/1 January / February 1999; pp. 22-33, 72.

<sup>8</sup> See S. Yeivin, *Ophel, the Ophel*, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, VI, Jerusalem 1971, cols. 320-321 (Heb.).

<sup>9</sup> See W.F. Albright in J.B. Pritchard (ed.) above note 1.

<sup>10</sup> See E. Ullendorff in D.W. Thomas, *Documents from Old Testament Times*, New York 1958, p. 197. It was also translated in this manner by K.P. Jackson & J.A. Dearman, *The Text of the Mesha Inscription*, in J.A. Dearman (ed.), *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, Atlanta 1989, p. 98.

“I build kericho, the wall of the orchard the wall of the hill.”<sup>11</sup> Gibson translated it as: “I carried out repairs at (qarhō) on the parkland walls as well as the walls of the acropolis.”<sup>12</sup> Donner and Röllig also pursued this line of thought and rendered it: “Ich habe Qerihō gebaut, die Mauer der Parks und die Mauer der Akropolis.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, there were those who found it difficult to accept the explanation that Mesha surrounded his garden with a wall. Thus, Cooke did not translate the word ya‘aran and instead left it in the original: “I built QRḤH the wall of Ye‘arim and the wall of the Mound.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, H. Raviv has noted that the exact meaning of the wall of the ya‘aran has not yet been clarified.<sup>15</sup>

In my opinion, B. Mazar alludes to a definition of this expression. He notes that the phrase “wall of the ya‘aran” in the Mesha inscription should be compared to the expression *bêt hayyā‘ar* (‘the Forest House’) in Isa 22, which describes how the kingdom of Judah used the Forest House as an arsenal: “You gave thought on that day, to the arms in the Forest House” (Isa 22:8).<sup>16</sup> Isaiah mentions several buildings in Jerusalem in the chapter and it appears that, in this case, he meant the ‘Lebanon Forest House’. The Book of Kings describes its construction: “He (Solomon) built the Lebanon Forest House with four rows of cedar columns, and with hewn cedar beams above the columns. Its length was 100 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. It was paneled above with cedar, with the planks that were above on the 45 columns – 15 in each row. And there were three rows of window frames, with three tiers of windows facing each other. All the doorways and doorposts had square frames – with three tiers of windows facing each other” (1 Kgs 7:2-5).

According to the Book of Kings, the King of Judah used the Lebanon Forest House as a treasury: “All King Solomon’s drinking cups were of gold, and all the utensils of the Lebanon Forest House were of pure gold” (1 Kgs 10:21). Verse 17 in the same chapter states: “and 300 bucklers of beaten gold – three *minas* of gold to each buckler. The king placed them in the Lebanon Forest House.” Isa 22:8 shows that in addition to using the Lebanon Forest House to store ceremonial arms such as bucklers of beaten gold in the building known, it was also utilized as the main armory of the kingdom of Judah. Some scholars have therefore hypothesized that the ‘Lebanon Forest House’ was a military warehouse; others believe that ceremonial processions connected with the royal court in Jerusalem proceeded from this hall.<sup>17</sup> In my opinion, the ya‘aran mentioned in the Mesha inscription was a structure similar to the Lebanon Forest House in Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> See A.H. von Zyl, *The Moabites*, Leiden 1960, p. 191.

<sup>12</sup> J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, I, Oxford 1971, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> See H. Donner & W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, Band II, Wiesbaden 1964, p. 169; K. Galling, *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels*, Tübingen 1979, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> G.A. Cooke, *A Text-book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford 1903, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> See H. Raviv, *A Commentary on selected Inscriptions from the period of the Monarchy in Israel*, Jerusalem 1975, p. 26 (Heb.).

<sup>16</sup> See Mazar (ibid., n. 2). Gibson and Ahituv also noted this parallel. See Gibson (ibid., n. 13), p. 81 and S. Ahituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1992, p. 259.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion and the bibliography on “The Lebanon Forest House”, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, II, Jerusalem 1954, cols. 80-81 (Heb.).

'The Lebanon Forest House' was unique in that it had a central hall with three or four rows of cedar columns, as described above. Such a building style is unknown in Canaanite architecture as well as in northern Syrian architecture, which provided the model for the construction of Solomon's palace.<sup>18</sup> Consequently D. Ussishkin had proposed that we compare it to a structure discovered in Ararat.<sup>19</sup> Findings preserved from a structure discovered in Kition, Cyprus, published in 1976, show that the ninth century BCE Phoenician building had four columns of stone pedestals supporting wooden columns.<sup>20</sup> We can therefore compare the 'Lebanon Forest House' in Jerusalem with the Phoenician building discovered in Cyprus.<sup>21</sup> It seems that the building's name was related to the many wooden beams that upheld it.

It is therefore possible that colonnaded structures, which functioned as treasuries and armories, were built in Jerusalem and Dibon. Such a structure was called the 'Lebanon Forest House' or ya'aran, due to the many wooden beams it contained.<sup>22</sup> Mesha cites three building enterprises that he undertook in Dibon: The Qarḥoh, the wall of the ya'aran, and the wall of the ophel. Since Mesha declares that he built both the Qarḥoh and the wall of the ophel, they cannot denote the same site – the *acropolis* in Dibon. Inasmuch as the inscription states that the high place of Chimosh stood in the Qarḥoh, it may refer to a fortified temple, and not to an *acropolis*.<sup>23</sup> One meaning of the Accadian word *Kirḫu* is an enclosure sanctuary.<sup>24</sup> The inscription in the Mesha stele apparently refers to three sites that the king had fortified in Dibon: the קרחה *Qarḥoh* – the fortified high place of Chimosh; the חמת היערן "wall of the ya'aran" – the wall enclosing the treasury and armory; and the חמת העפל "wall of the ophel" – the acropolis within which Mesha's palace was probably built. The royal structures in Dibon can consequently be compared with King Solomon's building projects – the Temple in Jerusalem, the 'Lebanon Forest House', and his own palace.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> D. Ussishkin, *King Solomon's Palace and Building 1723 in Megiddo*, IEJ 16 (1966), pp. 174-186.

<sup>19</sup> D. Ussishkin, *King Solomon's Palaces*, BA 36 (1973), pp. 92-94.

<sup>20</sup> See V. Karageorghis, *Kition*, London 1976, pp. 117-119, Fig. 18.

<sup>21</sup> See R. Reich, *Palaces and Official Buildings in the Iron Age*, in Hanah Katzenstein et al. (eds.), *The Architecture of Ancient Israel*, Jerusalem 1987, p. 174 (Heb.).

<sup>22</sup> On trees on Lebanon on the Temple Mount during the First Temple period, see S. Lev-Yadun, S.N. Liphschitz, Y. Waisel, *Ring Analysis of Cedrus libani Beams from the roof of El-Aqsa Mosque*, EriS 17, Jerusalem 1984, p. 93 (Heb.).

<sup>23</sup> On the fortified temples that were prevalent throughout Palestine and Syria during the Canaanite period, see A. Mazar, *Temples during the late Middle Bronze and the Iron Age*, in Hanah Katzenstein et al. (eds.), see above n. 22, p. 138-141. On the Qarḥoh's position in Dibon, see J.A. Dearman, *Historical Reconstruction and Mesha Inscription*, in Dearman (above, n. 10), pp. 171-174; also W.H. Morton, *A summary of the 1955, 1956 and 1965 Excavations at Dhiban*, *ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>24</sup> See *The Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD), Vol. VIII, K, pp. 404-405.

<sup>25</sup> Concerning the fact that only three buildings are mentioned in 1 Kgs, see Ussishkin, above, notes 18, 19.

## B. The Term דלת *dælæt* in Lachish Ostrakon IV and Proverbs 8:34

The following sentence is inscribed on Lachish Ostrakon IV, lines 3-4: כתבתי על הדלת ככל אשר שלחתי אלי ירהי ... “And when Jehudi read three or four columns (*ḏlātôt*) ...” They consequently interpret the inscription on the ostrakon as: “I have written on the column of the scroll.”<sup>26</sup> I would like to point out that the word דלתחי *“daltotay”* in Proverbs 8:34 should also be understood in the same manner.<sup>28</sup> Prov 8:34: “Happy is the man who listens to me, coming early to my gates each day, waiting outside my doors (*lišqod ‘al daltotay*)” has been understood, up until now, to signify the plural of an ordinary *dælæt* – a door, which “rotates on an axis at the entrance to a house”.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the meaning of the phrase *lišqod ‘al daltotay* is unclear. Rabbinic literature explained *daltotay* as the doors of synagogues and houses of study.<sup>30</sup> Traditional commentators accepted this interpretation.<sup>31</sup> Modern commentators have also applied the usual definition of the word *dælæt* to this verse.<sup>32</sup>

In my opinion, we have here a case of a Paronomasia i.e. a dual meaning being used in the Bible. In other words, the writer is employing a stylistic method in order to confer two meanings upon one word.<sup>33</sup> Based upon Paran’s definitions of the various categories of Paronomasia (see n. 33), this verse belongs to his second category wherein according to the context the author conceived of one meaning and according to the literary parallel it acquired a second meaning as well.<sup>34</sup>

I submit that in this context the author intended the more uncommon biblical meaning of the word *dælæt* – a written column of a scroll.<sup>35</sup> We are acquainted with this

<sup>26</sup> H. Torczyner (Tur-Sinai), *The Lachish Letters (Lachish I)*, London, New York and Toronto 1938, pp. 80-81.

<sup>27</sup> For reservations on the interpretation of *dælæt* in the Lachish ostraca as a column, see M. Burrows, *I Have Written on the Door (Lachish letter 4)*, JAOS 56, 1936, pp. 491-493.

<sup>28</sup> Tur-Sinai did not explore the possibility of interpreting the verse in Proverbs in this manner. See Tur-Sinai, *Mishlei Shlomo*, Tel Aviv 1947 (Heb.). M. Dahood also did not examine this verse, see M. Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology*, Roma 1963.

<sup>29</sup> E. Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*, Vol. II, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1947, p. 949 (Heb.).

<sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy Rabbah, 7, 2 and parallels.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see Rashi’s and Ibn Ezra’s interpretation of this verse.

<sup>32</sup> C.H. Toy, *The Book of Proverbs*, ICC, Edinburgh 1899, pp. 179-183; R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible, N.Y. 1965, pp. 69-73; W. McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL, London 1970, pp. 343, 358-359; R.E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, Nashville, 1998, xlii, 53-54.

<sup>33</sup> D. Yellin, *Paronomasia in the Bible*, Tarbiz V, 1933, pp. 1-17 (Heb.) A. Vizer, *Paronomasia in the Book of Proverbs*, Sefer Niger, Jerusalem 1959, pp. 140-147 (Heb.). and M. Paran, *On Ambiguity in the Bible*, Beer Sheva I, 1973, pp. 150-161 (and the bibliography cited there in n. 1) (Heb.).

<sup>34</sup> Paran, *ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> For this definition and how it may have evolved, see E.Y. Kutscher, *Words and their History*, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 24-25 (Heb.). For the possibility of also explaining Job 38:8 using this definition, see N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Language and the Book*, vol. 1, Jerusalem 1954, p. 416 (Heb.) *idem*, *The Book of Job*, Jerusalem 1954, p. 317 (Heb.).

definition from Jeremiah 36:23: “And when Jehudi read three or four columns (*d<sup>l</sup>lātôt*), [the king] would cut it up with a scribe’s knife and throw it into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed by the fire in the brazier.” Such a definition is also found in a Ugaritic text<sup>36</sup>, in Assyrian texts<sup>37</sup>, and in Lachish Ostrakon IV.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, the author wished to use the common meaning of the word *dælæt* in the literary parallel, comparing it to a doorpost (*m<sup>e</sup>zûzāh*), which is a common biblical pair.<sup>39</sup>

The word *lišqod* in this verse also seems to have a double meaning since the root שקד in Classical Biblical Hebrew parallels the meaning of the root שמר (see Psalms 127:1, Ezra 8:29). In post-biblical language, however, the root is used in connection with the study of the Bible or books. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls use the word *lišqod* as follows: והרבים ישקודו ביחד את שלישיית כול לילות השנה לקרוא בספר ולדרוש משפט “And the Congregation shall watch (*višqodû*) in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the Book and to study the Law” (IQS, Col 6, line 7). The Mishnah is even clearer: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה “Be alert (*šāqūd*) to study the Law” (Avot 2:14). As we can see, this word’s later meaning already appears in our verse.

To conclude, I believe that the beginning of the verse in Prov 8:34 should be understood as signifying: “Happy is the man who listens to me *lišqod* ‘al *daltotay*” – to study my scrolls i.e. the Torah or other religious writings.<sup>40</sup> The word *daltotay* should consequently be translated, in context, as columns that are written in a scroll<sup>41</sup>, and not according to the common meaning, which had only embellished this proverb.

In Medieval and Modern Hebrew the terms relating to בית *bayit* (house) and to ספר *sefær* (book) have the same semantic field. It is no coincidence that the words (1) עמוד *‘ammûd* (pillar, page), (2) כותרת *kôtaeræt* (capital, heading), (3) מפתח *mafte<sup>a</sup>h* (key, Index) and (4) שער *ša<sup>a</sup>ar* (gate, title page), are used for describing items in the house and in a book. We can add to this list the word דלת, that already in Late Biblical Hebrew had the meaning of a door, as well as of a column. This

<sup>36</sup> Text 5:142 and see C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, Roma 1965, pp. 198, 385.

<sup>37</sup> A.R. Millard, *An Assessment of the Evidence for Writing in Ancient Israel*, in: *Biblical Archaeology Today*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 307.

<sup>38</sup> Some scholars connect the rare meaning of the word *dælæt* to two additional Phoenician inscriptions. See C.F. Jean; J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions sémitiques de L’ouest* (DISO), Leiden 1965, p. 58; H. Donner; W. Röllig, above note 14 pp. 61, 194, and see the discussion in: J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, vol 1, Leiden, New York and Köln 1995, pp. 250-251.

<sup>39</sup> Ex 21:6; Judg 16:3; 1 Kgs 6:31; and Isa 57:8.

<sup>40</sup> The expression *yôm yôm* is used in Isaiah in a similar context, see “they seek me daily (*yôm yôm*)” 58:2.

<sup>41</sup> Paran, *ibid.*, n. 32, p. 161, states “translations cannot assist us in the case of a text wherein the writer intended a double-meaning. This is rooted in the very nature of the translation (...) which can only translate one of the meanings.” Prov 8:34 is an extreme case – all the translations and dictionaries contained only the meaning of the literary parallel and not that of the context since apparently the former was more prevalent.

parallelism consequently endeavors to compare building a house with writing a book.

*Abstract:*

1. Mesha's building activities can be compared to those of Solomon in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6:7). They both built a sanctuary (QRḥḥ), where the high place dedicated to Kemosh was established, the treasure house called *YA'ARAN*, and his palace on the acropolis (OPHEL). The term KRḥḥ should probably be derived from the Akkadian *Qirḥu* – *Kirḥu*. One of the meanings of that word is 'enclosure wall of sanctuary'.

2. The term *dalacet* in Prov. 8:34 should be understood in light of Jer 36:23 and Lachish Letter 4, as a column of a scroll. The meaning of the verse is, 'blessed will be the man who study my scrolls...'

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