

Polysemy or Homonymy in the Root(s) *r^ʿh* in Biblical Hebrew: A Cognitive-Linguistic Approach

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Introduction: Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive linguistics studies language structures as reflections of the way in which people think.¹ Language is viewed, then, not as an autonomous sign-system but as a tool with which people conceptualise their experiences. This has serious consequences for the way in which one studies both actual linguistic utterances and the (lexical) structure of language (if I may make this Saussurean distinction here). Linguistic realisations will be seen as 'meaning complexes' that are capable of structuring experiences into meaningful conceptualisations. As far as the lexical meaning of single expressions is concerned, one will focus on effects of prototypicality, of polysemy and of diachronic changes that cause this polysemy, all characteristics of lexical organisation that reflect the way people think.²

Cognitive semantics has provided sufficient evidence for the existence and the functioning of these cognitive processes in language and has shown that these processes are fundamentally language-independent. In applying cognitive semantics to Biblical Hebrew, I therefore do not aim at gathering new examples supporting these claims, but rather at examining how the results of this approach can provide new insights in the way the Hebrew language functions.

In the present article, I propose to apply the insights of cognitive semantics to the study of the Hebrew verb — and root — *r^ʿh*, examining whether this approach could help elucidate some of the problems with which the meaning(s) of the verb presents us.

1. Current lexicographical treatment of the root(s) *r^ʿh*

Cognitive grammar has argued that the meaning of a word should be understood against the background of one or more domains, a domain being a set of "mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts or conceptual complexes"³ one needs to possess in order to understand the meaning of a term or expression. Each term in turn profiles a certain part of this domain, drawing attention to some of its elements and leaving others out of the picture. The verb *rā^ʿāh* most often functions against

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¹ For a very thorough introduction into cognitive linguistics, see Langacker, R.: *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume I: Theoretical Prerequisites*, Stanford, 1987.

² see Geeraerts, D.: *Diachronic Prototype Semantics. A Contribution to Historical Lexicology*, Oxford, 1997.

³ Langacker, op.cit., p.147.

the background of a domain we could term as ANIMAL HUSBANDRY. In this domain it profiles both the relation between a shepherd and his flock and the relation between the flock and their pasture-grounds (translatable into English as 'to shepherd' and 'to graze' respectively).

Exegetes are nonetheless confronted with a dozen texts⁴ in which none of these readings applies. Furthermore, in Late Biblical Hebrew, two nouns (*r^ecûṭ* and *ra^cyôn*) show up that both morphologically derive from a root *r^ch*, but many scholars doubt whether this root could be equated with the ANIMAL HUSBANDRY one. Lexicographers have therefore proposed to identify two or even three homonymic roots (and verbs) *r^ch*. They tend to categorise the multiple readings of the roots/verbs as follows.

The root *r^ch* (I) has to do with animal husbandry; to this root belong the verb *rā^cāh* ('to shepherd / to graze', both literally and figuratively) along with the nouns *mir^cæh*, *mar^cûṭ* and *r^ecî*, all meaning 'pasture'. The root *r^ch* (II) has a primary meaning 'to associate with'; the verb *rā^cāh* in a limited number of texts⁵ and a number of nouns including *re^ac* 'friend' and *mere^ac* 'close friend, best man' are thought to belong to this root. The root *r^ch* (III) finally means something like 'to take pleasure in, to desire'. Some lexicons do not mention a verbal realisation of this root; others⁶ point to Hos 12:2 as a possible instance of a verb *r^ch* (III). The main reason, however, for distinguishing this root are the Late Hebrew nouns *r^ecûṭ* and *ra^cyôn* 'desire'.

The distinctions between the three roots are not as clear-cut as presented here, and there is quite some discussion on the exact extent of each root. Gesenius (765f.) for example takes *r^ch* (I) to have originally meant 'to occupy oneself with, to take care for', which reading might have been at the origin of a number of instances which others would rather classify under *r^ch* (II). Gesenius moreover notes — as do Koehler & Baumgartner (1175, 1177) — that the line between this reading 'to occupy oneself with' and the reading of *r^ch* (II) 'to have dealings with' is a thin one indeed. Also the possible link between *r^ch* (I) and the root *r^ch* (III) 'to desire' has been characterised in a number of different fashions. Gesenius (765f.), König (447) and Zorell (780), to begin with, distinguish no separate root *r^ch* III. They consider the two nouns *r^ecûṭ* and *ra^cyôn* to be derivatives from *r^ch* (I)'s reading 'to occupy oneself with' (in this case, mentally). Fürst (2: 377) follows a quite solitary course when he takes *r^ch* (II) 'to associate oneself with' to be the origin of a meaning 'to think, to ponder' (via the intermediate meaning of 'joining together, knotting together'). This derived meaning of *r^ch* (II) is then to be found back in the nouns *r^ecûṭ* and *ra^cyôn*. Brown, Driver & Briggs (946) and Koehler & Baumgartner (1177) both distinguish a separate root *r^ch* (III), which they believe to have entered Biblical Hebrew in its late phase. As to its origin, they point to an Aramaic root *r^c* meaning 'to take pleasure

⁴ Judg 14:20; Isa [11:7?]; 44:20; Jer 17:16; 22:22; Hos 12:2; Psa 37:3; Job 24:21; Prov 13:20; 15:14; 22:24; 28:7; 29:3. Hos 9:2 should probably be read *jd^cm*, as is suggested by the Greek LXX and as would fit the parallelism with *jkḥš* better.

⁵ Judg 14:20; Psa 37:3; Prov 13:20; 22:24; 28:7; 29:3; Job 24:21.

⁶ BDB 946.

in, to desire', that has cognates in other Semitic languages and is related to Hebrew *ršh* 'to want'⁷.

2. Polysemy or homonymy?

In what follows I will propose a new understanding of the lexical structure of the root *r^ch*, based on the principles of cognitive semantics and on a close look at the semantic meaning of the root in different instances. My contention will be that there is no need to distinguish three homonymic roots, but rather, that it is possible to view the different readings as polysemous variations within one root.

One could however raise the objection that the distinction between homonymy and polysemy is of little importance for the concrete meaning of texts. From a semantic point of view, and as far as the meaning of words in concrete texts is concerned, it may suffice to note that the root(s) and, more concretely, the verb(s) *r^ch* have different readings, without bothering too much about the question whether these readings are the result of a far-reaching polysemisation of one verb or rather stem from different original homonymous verbs. This objection is surely valid. The distinction between homonymy and polysemy itself is not an absolute one, since after all it "depends on an estimate of semantic relationships"⁸, and on the possibility to trace either certain diachronic changes that may have caused the polysemy of a word or etymologically different roots that lie at the origin of homonymy. Which semantic relationships are related closely enough and which are too far apart to be accounted as belonging to one word is a matter of appreciation — certainly for us that are not native speakers. The line therefore between both is by definition vague. Resorting to diachronic arguments to settle the discussion does not help us much further either in the case of Biblical Hebrew semantics. Both the absolute and the relative chronology of Biblical Books, parts of Books, and even verses within each Book, are highly debated issues in classical exegesis, in which no unanimity has been reached, not even for the very large lines of the Hebrew Bible's development. Moreover, many of the different readings of the verb *rā^cāh* are present synchronously within the corpus of Biblical Hebrew, so that diachronic changes giving rise to this polysemy should have taken place in a 'prehistoric' phase of Hebrew, and can only be reconstructed hypothetically.

Would it therefore not be better to content ourselves with simply registering the existence of various readings of the root, *c.q.* verb? Where, in the next pages, I study the root's possible etymology and diachronic development, and propose a new view on the lexical structure of the root, I do so because I believe a better insight in the lexical structure of the root might help explain some of the related verb's difficult instances.

⁷ Most commentators follow this proposal and take the nouns *r^cūt* and *ra^cyôn* to be late aramaisms. So already Knobel, A.: *Commentar über das Buch Koheleth*, Leipzig, 1836, p.125f. See also Fredericks, D.: "Qoheleth's Language. Re-evaluating its Nature and Date." ANTS 3, Lewiston, 1988, p.237; not so Lys, D.: *L'ecclésiaste ou Que vaut la vie? Traduction, introduction générale, commentaire de 1/1 à 4/3*, Paris, 1977, pp.161f.

⁸ Barr, J.: "Three Interrelated Factors in the Semantic Study of Ancient Hebrew," ZAH 7, 1994, 33-44, here p.41.

3. Lexical structure of the root $r^c h$

3.1. *Shepherding and walking after animals*

When studying the semantic structure of $r^c h$, it is natural to take its most frequent readings as our starting-point, viz. the readings of the verb $rā^c āh$ linked with the domain of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, designating both the shepherd's activity towards the flock and the flock's residing in the pasture. It stands to reason that the latter reading was metonymically derived from the former. Because of the contiguity existing between the shepherd's activity on the one hand and the condition of the flock on the other, the verb took on the reading of 'to graze'. This leaves us with 'to shepherd' as the central meaning of the verb. In some instances the verb designates the shepherd's general care for the animals⁹; whereas in others, the reading is more specific, designating the concrete activity of tending the sheep, i.e. of taking them out into the pasture and letting them graze. The relation between both readings probably runs diachronically from the latter to the former, i.e. from the specific to the more general. The fact that the verb metonymically developed a reading 'to graze' — with animals as subject — indicates that the verb in its earlier reading — with shepherds as subject — also stressed the going out into the pasture.

The two readings connected with the domain of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, both developed a metaphorical reading: Kings and gods in the Ancient Near East are often said 'to shepherd' their people, and the people are now and then said to 'graze safely' in their land. In both cases the people are conceptually structured as a flock, the gods or the rulers being their shepherds. Much could be said about the cognitive import of such a structuring, but this falls outside the scope of the present paper.¹⁰

It is not obvious how the readings connected with the ANIMAL HUSBANDRY domain are to be related with the 'problematic' instances of the verb mentioned above (see n.4) nor with the two Late Hebrew nouns $r^e c ūt$ and $ra^c yōn$. The picture does become clearer, however, when we keep in mind the very simple (encyclopaedic) fact that shepherds very often walk after their animals¹¹, especially when they are tending them in the pastures (as opposed to when they are travelling with the flock¹²). The reason is simple: Only by walking after the flock can the shepherd make sure that no animals separate from the flock and go astray, while the animals themselves often well know which way they should go. 'Walking after' is therefore at least an important semantic feature of the verb $rā^c āh$ — as cognitive semantics understands it¹³ —

⁹ Cf. KBL³ 1174, s.v., A.3.

¹⁰ For a in-depth treatment of pastoral metaphors, see my doctoral dissertation: Van Hecke, P.: *'Koppig als een koe is Israël en JHWH zou het moeten weiden als een schaap in het open veld?' (Hos 4:16) Een cognitief-linguïstische analyse van de religieuze pastorale metaforiek in de Hebreeuwse bijbel*, Leuven, 2000.

¹¹ Cf. Dalman, G.: *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina. 6. Zeltleben, Vieh- und Milchwirtschaft, Jagd, Fischfang*, Hildesheim, 1964, pp.249f.

¹² If at least this distinction can be made, for while grazing, the animals move, and while they travel, they in the meantime feed on the vegetation they find on their way.

¹³ Cognitive semantics refuses to make a distinction between the semantic or lexical aspects of a word's meaning and so-called encyclopaedic aspects. (see Langacker, op.cit., pp.154-166) In this

if it is not even its earlier meaning. How exactly this meaning could explain some of the problems connected with the lexical structure of the verb and with some concrete verses will be dealt with shortly, but first we should gather some evidence in favour of the proposed meaning (aspect) of the verb. To begin with, my proposal's most serious flaw is that, as far as I can see, no single instance can be pointed at where the verb would straightforwardly and literally mean 'to walk after'. (As I will show, there are a number of texts in which a metaphorical reading 'to walk after' would fit the context very well.) We do not lack texts however from which it becomes clear that a shepherd did indeed walk behind his animals¹⁴. In Gen 32:18 the animals of the flock are called *ʿelləh lʿfānəkā* 'those before you', whereas in v. 20 of the same chapter shepherds are described as *haholʿkīm ʿahʿrē hā^{ca}dārim* 'those walking after the flocks'. In the same way, Jacob in Gen 33:14 tells his brother Esau that he will be travelling slowly *lʿrəgəel hamm^elā^ʿkāh ʿašer lʿfānaj* 'after the belonging [=the flock] that is before me'. In Cant 1:8 also, the lady of Song of Songs is summoned to go out *b^eiq^ebē haššoⁿ* 'in the footsteps of the flock'. 1 Sam 11:5 finally tells how Saul came back from the fields *ʿahʿrē habbāqār* 'after his cattle'. It should therefore come as no surprise that God calls David, a former shepherd, 'from behind his flock' (2 Sam 7:8 = 1 Chr 17:7; also Psa 78:71); the same thing happens with the shepherd-prophet Amos (Am 7:15). In the Damascus-document from Qumran (11:5) we find a very explicit reference to the shepherd's going after his flock: *ʿal jelek ʿiš ʿaḥar habb^ehemāh lir^{ec}ōtāh* '[on the sabbat] no man may walk after the cattle so to shepherd them [unless within 2000 cubits from the city-walls]'. All this may make clear that shepherds very often follow after their sheep, and that 'walking after' is at least an important feature of shepherding and hence also of the semantic meaning of *rā^cāh*. Scholars seem to be very reluctant to include this aspect of shepherding in a metaphorical structuring of God as shepherd; that God should walk after his people seems to run counter to the idea most people have of God.¹⁵ Even Dalman, who goes out of his way to demonstrate that shepherds more often than not walk after their animals, is very clear about the fact that in the case of God, one should portray him as a shepherd *preceding* the flock¹⁶. Nevertheless, a correct understanding of God walking after his people as a shepherd after his flock, viz. in order to keep a watchful eye on them and to keep them together, makes perfect sense.¹⁷ In this regard I would

vein we may say that the fact that shepherds follow after their sheep while shepherding is of semantic importance for the verb's meaning.

¹⁴ Dalman, op.cit., pp.253f.

¹⁵ As de Robert, Ph.: "Le berger d'Israël. Essai sur le thème pastoral dans l'Ancien Testament," Cahiers théologiques, 57, Neuchâtel, 1968, p.41 rightly remarked: "C'est dans cette perspective qu'il faut comprendre l'expression 'devant qui ont marché mes pères', qui suggère la conduite du berger à l'arrière de son troupeau."

¹⁶ Dalman, op.cit., p.254: "Aber wenn Gott sein Volk wie Vieh [...] leitet, um sich einen Namen zu machen, möchte man ihm als dem Volke vorangehend denken. Auch der Gott, welcher bis zum Tode leitet (*niheg*) (Psa 48,15) und die Menschen wie der Hirt seine Herde führt (*ἐπιτρέφων*, Sir. 18,13) ist doch wohl im Bilde der Vorangehende [...]."

¹⁷ Compare with a prayer from Assurbanipal's library (quoted in Dürr, L.: *Ursprung und Ausbau der israelitisch-jüdischen Heilantserwartung. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Berlin, 1925, p.119) in which the king of Assur is called "the faithful king who carries a rod [in order to

like to point to Gen 48:15 which links God's shepherding to man's walking before God:

hā^{ʔe}lohîm ʔāšer hithall^ekū ʔābotaj l^efānāw ʔabrāhām w^ejīšāq
hā^{ʔe}lohîm hāro^cəh ʔotî me^côdî ^cad hajjôm hazzəh

The God *before whom* my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, *walked*,
 the God who has *shepherded* me, from of old and up to this very day.

When we keep in mind that a shepherd (often) walks after his flock, this verse makes all the more sense and even becomes a crucial element in the discussion on the meaning of the expression 'to walk before God', as I have demonstrated elsewhere¹⁸.

3.2. Semantic parallels for *r^ch* in Hebrew and cognate languages

That shepherding includes walking after animals obviously does not mean that the verb *rā^cāh* itself ever had a reading 'to walk after'. I would however like to suggest that such a reading is not inconceivable. True, no instances of such a reading can be discerned in the Biblical texts. But as far as semantic change is concerned, we can with good reason learn from the development of similar words both within the Hebrew language and in cognate languages, as Jonas Greenfield has demonstrated¹⁹. From a cognitive-linguistic point of view such an approach certainly is valid: the fact that a certain semantic change has taken place in one word in the language can be a good indication — without predictive power however — that a similar change is likely to have taken place in another. If, for example in English, the verb 'to chase' has taken on a reading of 'to desire something strongly, to want to attain something', it is not surprising to see that a cognate verb such as 'to run after' underwent a similar change. The same is true for words, expressions and metaphorical structurings across languages: the generalised metaphors ARGUMENT IS WAR or LOVE IS A FIRE — classical examples from the Lakovian school — function just as well in Dutch and many other languages as they do in English.²⁰

3.2.1. Akkadian *redū* and Hebrew *rādāh*

An interesting case for our present investigation is the Akkadian verb *redū*. The verb is of particular interest to us because it displays a wide array of readings²¹, including

drive the flock/people, PVH], the shepherd of Assur who walks after you.”

¹⁸ Van Hecke, P.: “Are People Walking After or Before God? On the Metaphorical Use of הלך אחריך and לפניך.” forthcoming in OLP and Van Hecke, P.: “Shepherds and Linguists. A Cognitive-Linguistic Approach to the Metaphor ‘God is Shepherd’ in Genesis 48,15 and Context,” in: Wénin, A. (ed.): *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, BETL, Leuven, 2001, pp.479-493.

¹⁹ Greenfield, J.: “Etymological Semantics,” ZAH 6, 1993, 26-37, here pp.30ff. Greenfield explains: “I would like to show that the examination of the possible semantic extension of a root can be aided by a) not limiting oneself to Biblical Hebrew and b) by examining similar words in the cognate languages.”(p.30).

²⁰ See e.g. Lakoff, G.; Johnson, M.: *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago / London, 1980.

²¹ Cf. von Soden, W.: *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden, 1972, pp.965ff.

‘to accompany’, ‘to bring somebody somewhere’, ‘to drive animals’²², ‘to steer a ship’, ‘to drive a cart’, ‘to lay claim to something, to claim’, ‘to pursue somebody’, ‘to direct, to rule’, ‘to follow a deity (to revere)’ and a number of others. The common element in all of these readings is ‘going after’ and hence ‘to lead someone/something before you’. It seems therefore appropriate to view this common element as the ‘schema’ of the verb’s category, in the way Langacker has described this concept²³. In the case of driving animals, of pursuing and of driving a ship or cart this schema is readily recognised, and also the link between ‘going after’ and ‘accompanying’ is not hard to picture. In other readings this aspect of meaning also works well. At first sight ‘bringing someone’ involves preceding that person rather than following him. As I have shown for the Hebrew expression *hālak ʾaḥar(ê)* however²⁴, one can also bring somebody somewhere by following him, especially if one doubts the other person’s willingness to go where you intend him to go. In the same vein one should also understand someone’s giving direction from behind. Through a figurative shift, the meaning of ‘to go after’ may evolve into a reading of ‘to desire strongly’ (so in English and in many other languages) and even ‘to claim’. Even if one is not ready to accept the existence of this common schema, the verb is instructive for our present inquiry simply because of the different readings it gathers. The fact that a reading connected with ANIMAL HUSBANDRY (namely ‘to drive animals’ e.g. into their pastures or in caravans) features as one of the verb’s readings, along with the others mentioned, opens perspectives for the lexical structure of the verb under investigation here, as we will see. One may correctly object that comparing *rāʿāh* to Akkadian *redū* is not methodologically sound, since *redū* does mean ‘to drive animals, to go after animals’, but not necessarily ‘to shepherd’ in a more general sense, as does *rāʿāh*. Taking a look at *redū*’s Hebrew cognate, viz. *rādāh*, may be clarifying. Compared to the Akkadian, the Hebrew verb did not develop as many readings; its most common meaning in Biblical Hebrew is ‘to rule’, often though not necessarily in an oppressive manner²⁵. There are a number of instances of the verb, however, that led scholars to posit a different *Grundbedeutung* for the verb. In Gen 1:28 to begin with, man receives the mission to *rādāh* the animals of the earth. There is no discussion that the reading here is ‘to rule over’, but the question is how this ‘ruling’ should be understood. Ever since the work of Lohfink²⁶, there seems to be little disagreement that the verb’s original

22 Von Soden for example points to the expression *rēd alpi*, which he translates as “Rindertreiber” [‘ox-driver’], but also other animals including donkeys, horses, camels and sheep are mentioned as the object of *redū*.

23 Langacker, op.cit., p.371: “A schema [...] is an abstract characterization that is fully compatible with all the members of the category it defines [...]; it is an integrated structure that embodies the commonality of its members, which are conceptions of greater specificity and detail that elaborate the schema in contrasting ways.”

24 Van Hecke, *Are People Walking After or Before God?*

25 Cf. Koch, K.: “Gestaltet die Erde, doch heget das Leben! Einige Klarstellungen zum *dominium terrae* in Genesis 1.” In Geyer, H. e.a. (eds.): *Wenn nicht jetzt, wann dann? FS Kraus*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1983, 23-36, p.33.

26 Cf. Lohfink, N.: *Unsere großen Wörter. Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahre*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 1977, pp.167f. and Zenger, E.: *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken. Untersuchungen zur*

meaning is not ‘to thread down’, but rather ‘to travel around with the flock’, on the basis of the Akkadian use. Koch elaborates on this proposal and points to two other texts in which this reading shows up. First, there is the use of the verb in the ‘shepherd metaphor’ of Ez 34, in which the shepherds’ bad behaviour is summarised as follows: “You have *rādāh* them with violence and with oppression” (v.4). This occurrence of the verb in a text which clearly draws on the ANIMAL HUSBANDRY domain shows that the verb here “describes the normal ruling of a shepherd over his flock”²⁷. Koch finds the clearest indication of the origin of the verb *rādāh* in the domain of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, in the parallel between *rā‘āh* and *rādāh* in Psa 49:15. These texts all illustrate that the verb is a “common expression for the guiding, shepherding and caring behaviour of man towards his animals”²⁸.

I do not so much as think that the *Grundbedeutung* of the Hebrew verb is ‘to shepherd’ but rather, more generally, ‘to go after’. It is not clear how an original meaning of ‘to shepherd’ could evolve into the more current reading ‘to rule violently’. It seems to me that the reading ‘to rule’ grew out of a reading ‘to go after, with hostile intentions’ either as a conqueror after his captives, or as a victor in war chasing the defeated that flee before him. In a number of verses this is even the reading — and the translation — to be preferred over the traditionally accepted reading of ‘to rule’. I limit myself to pointing to some exemplary cases. In Isa 14:2c the prophet promises that *w^ehaju šobim l^ešobêhem w^eradu b^enogsêhem* [They will capture those who captured them and will *rādāh* those that chased them.]. It is clear that a reversal of roles is taking place here. In the first half of the verse this reversal is even indicated by the use of twice the same verb (“take captive those who took them captive”); in the second hemistich *rādāh* is paralleled to the verb *nāgas* meaning ‘to chase, to drive’ which is sometimes used to indicate the ruling of a slave-driver or a driver of captives (cf. Exod 3:7; 5:6; Job 3:18). This parallel, along with the parallel with *šabāh* ‘take captive’ from the first hemistich indicates that *rādāh* should also be understood as ‘chasing, driving’ here, the driving of subdued prisoners being probably intended. A few verses later in verse 6, the prophet says of the oppressors’ staff and rod that *rodah bā’af gōjim murdāf b^elī ḥasāk* [it ruled the peoples in anger with a persecution that none restrained]. The verb *rādāh* is specified here by an internal object *murdāf* that — however difficult its morphological form — derives from the root *rdp* whose central reading in Hebrew is ‘to persecute’. The verb *rādāh* should therefore be understood as ‘to chase, to persecute’ here.²⁹ A final example I would like to draw attention to, is Isa 41:2 which reads : *jitten l^efānaw gōjim um^elakim jard* [He (i.e. God) gave peoples before him, and made him rule over kings”. The parallel ‘to give before’ shows that here

Komposition und Theologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte, SBS 112, Stuttgart, 1983, p.91: “Das Wort bezeichnet eigentlich das Umherziehen des Hirten mit seiner Herde, der seine Herde auf gute Weide führt, der die Tiere gegen alle Gefahren schützt, [...]”

²⁷ Koch, art. cit., p.32: “[...] während das Verb, für sich genommen, anscheinend das normale Walten des Hirten über seine Herde umreißt.”

²⁸ Koch, art. cit., p.33.

²⁹ Making the emendation of *murdaf* into *mirdat* proposed by Gray, G.B.: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1928, p.253, unnecessary.

also *rādāh* – whichever form of the verb one would wish to read here – should be understood as an oppressive following after, an image that is strengthened by the rest of the verse in which the oppressed peoples are compared to dust and to chaff that is pushed on (*nāḡaf*). This short treatment of *redū* and *rādāh* indicates that within one and the same semantic structure of a verb, readings as far apart as ‘to shepherd’, ‘to pursue’, ‘to revere a god’ and ‘to claim’ may feature together, with the schema linking them to each other being ‘walking after’. While in Akkadian — if we may take this language with all its regional and chronological variants as one unit — the verb has a wide range of readings, the Hebrew use of the verb puts a very clear accent on the reading of ‘to rule’, although the readings of ‘to shepherd’ and ‘to chase’ are not absent.

3.2.2. Hebrew *rādaf*

Let us now turn to one more cognate verb, viz. the Hebrew verb *rādaf*. This verb is the most common term to designate ‘following after’ in Hebrew. Its literal readings vary from ‘following with a hostile intention, chasing, pursuing’ (thus in the great majority of cases) to more neutral ‘following after’ (Jos 2:5,7; 2 Kgs 5:21). The verb does have a number of readings that are of particular interest to us here. In Judg 3:28 Ehud comes to the Israelites after having killed the king of Moab and tells them: *ridfū ’aḥ^araj* [Follow after me]”. Since the usual hostile reading of the verb does not apply here, most commentators are ready to follow the Greek text that seems to presuppose a reading *r^edū ’aḥ^araj* [Come down after me]. In his commentary, Gray too seems to agree with the “Greek” proposal, but he nevertheless points to an Arabic word *rādip* (‘riding pillion’), which “suggests that the Hebrew cognate may also mean ‘come after’ in the sense of ‘accompany’”³⁰. This reading probably also stands at the origin of two metaphorical uses of the verb in which an abstract notion is said to follow after people. In Psa 23:6 the psalmist concludes the famous shepherd-psalm saying *’ak tōb wāḥæscæd jir^ffūnī kōl-j^emē ḥajjāj* [Surely goodness and grace will follow me all the days of my life]³¹, whereas the sage in Prov 13:21 warns that *ḥattā’im t^rraddef rā’ah* [Evil follows sinners]. The authors in these cases structure “goodness and grace” and “evil” respectively as something that will accompany men wherever they go, as something that they will experience all along the way of life. Like its synonymous expression *ḥālak ’aḥar(ē)* ‘to go after’ and like many expressions in contemporary languages, the verb *rādaf* in Hos 2:9 also designates an amorous running after lovers. The verb finally has an interesting and quite frequent reading of ‘chasing after, desiring’ with inanimate or abstract nouns as object. The goal of someone’s dealings is often structured as a destination to be reached, as was shown by the Lakovian cognitive-linguistic school (PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS). The destination can either be seen as a fixed terminal point of a journey (e.g. ‘I arrived where I wanted’) or as something that is moving itself (e.g. ‘We all pursue happi-

³⁰ Gray, J.: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, NCB, Grand Rapids, 1986, p.252.

³¹ In a personal communication Dr. Marjo Korpel suggested that the following of goodness and grace may again pick up the shepherd metaphor that was worked out in the first verses of this psalm. The fact that God is shepherd and should be thought of as following after men, may have motivated this image of goodness and grace following after men, too.

ness, but sometimes it simply seems to escape us.’). It is the latter structuring that is instantiated by the metaphorical use of the Hebrew verb *rādāf*. The object of this ‘chasing, pursuing’ are often virtues³², or their negative counterparts when negative behaviour is described³³. The semantic structure of *rādāf*, as we have presented it here, shows some clear parallels with the previous word we discussed above, viz. *redū/rādāh*. Indeed, the readings ‘to chase militarily, to accompany, to desire’ were also found in the semantic structure of *redū/rādāh*.³⁴ We may therefore conclude that the verb *rādāf* is also characterised by a schema ‘to go after’ that is elaborated in a number of contrasting ways so as to form the different attested readings of the verb.

3.3. ‘Walking after’ as *rā^cāh*’s schematic meaning

With this picture of the semantic structure and development of *rādāh* and *rādāf* in mind, we may now return to the central verb/root of our investigation, viz. *rā^cāh/r^ch*. As we have argued before, walking after the flock is one of the major occupations in a shepherd’s job, and hence we may think the semantic aspect ‘going after’ to be of some importance for the meaning(s) or *rā^cāh*. If ‘going after’ is an important aspect of *rā^cāh*’s central verbal meaning viz. ‘to shepherd’ and if we find in the stock of Semitic languages two other verbs with ‘to shepherd’ as one of its readings and a central schema of ‘walking after’, it is justifiable to at least presume that a similar schema is present in the verb *rā^cāh* as well and that semantic specifications took place in the verb *rā^cāh* that are comparable to the ones we discovered in *rādāh* and *rādāf*.

Our working hypothesis will then be that in instances in which the reading ‘to shepherd’ clearly does not apply, a schematic reading ‘to walk after’ — together with its developments as we know them from the semantic structure or *rādāh* and *rādāf* — should be taken into consideration.³⁵

4. Problematic instances of the verb *rā^cāh*

In this paragraph, I will deal with the different ‘problematic’ instances of the verb *rā^cāh*, viz. those instances that caused commentators, translators and lexicographers problems of interpretation, examining whether a schematic meaning of ‘walking after’ can resolve some of these problems.

³² *š^cdāqāh* ‘righteousness’: Deut 16:20; Isa 51:1; Prov 15:19; 21:21; *hæsæd* ‘loyalty’: Prov 21:21; *šālôm* ‘peace’: Psa 34:15; *ṭōb* ‘goodness’: Psa 38:21.

³³ *reqīm* ‘vain things’: Prov 12:11; 28:19; *rā^cāh* ‘evil’: Prov 11:19.

³⁴ Any indication of a use of the verb *rādāf* in an ANIMAL HUSBANDRY context is missing in the Hebrew Bible, but not so in Akkadian. In some rare cases the verb is used to designate the shepherd’s walking after his animals. The text ABL 757, for example, reads in line 13: *ana birte radābi ša bule* ‘while walking after bulls’.

³⁵ Within the scope of the present contribution my treatment of the different passages is necessarily limited. I hope to provide a more full discussion on a different occasion. For more background to the scholarly discussion on these pericopes I refer to the bibliography.

4.1. *Jeremiah 17:16*

Let us take Jer 17:16 to begin with. The verse reads: *wa^anî lo³ ʾastî mero^cʾəh ʾah^arækā* [And I, I did not grow weary from *rā^cāh* after you]. This utterance is addressed by the prophet to God. When we read the verb *rā^cāh* as ‘to shepherd’ it is very hard to imagine what this verse could mean. Scholars have therefore proposed a number of textual emendations, often supported by biblical versions whose translators apparently did not understand the verse either.³⁶ The Septuagint, however, translates ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἐκοπίασα κατακολουθῶν ὀπίσω σου [I did not get tired following after you], rendering *rā^cāh* as *κατακολουθέω*, which very straightforwardly means ‘to follow’. If the Stuttgart Bible, in its critical apparatus, wonders what the LXX might have read to come to such a translation, my suggestion is that they read just what stands there, if we take *rā^cāh* to have had a schematic meaning of ‘going after’: “I did not grow weary of following after You [God]”. The more literal Hebrew expression for following after (*hālak ʾaḥar[ē]*) is used quite often to describe reverence or faithfulness to a deity; the structuring of the prophet’s relation to God as ‘walking after God’ is therefore not exceptional. Two remarks about the metaphorical use of the expression *hālak ʾaḥar(ē)* are in place here. First, the expression is mostly used metaphorically when speaking of idolatry, i.e. of following after foreign gods. Only in very polemical texts directed against the service of foreign gods is it also used to structure Israel’s relation to God himself.³⁷ Second, the expression clearly originated in the domain of AMOROUS RELATIONS: walking after gods is engaging in an illicit love-affair. These two remarks also pertain to the verb *rā^cāh* in the verse under investigation here, which in my opinion has the same reading of ‘following after God’. Our verse opens with *wa^aʾanî*, which is a quite emphatic way of starting a sentence in Hebrew and should probably be read adversatively here: “I for one, ...”. The prophet thus contrasts his own behaviour to the one described in v.13, where it is said that those who leave God will be put to shame. The mention of the prophet’s following after God therefore contrasts with the apostasy and idolatry of others, exactly as is the case with the expression *hālak ʾaḥar(ē)*. Even the domain of MARITAL/AMOROUS RELATIONS that forms the background for the metaphorical structuring of man’s relation to gods as ‘walking after’ possibly comes into the picture: at two occasions the apostasy of the others is described as *ʿāzab* ‘to leave’ in this pericope (v.13). This term is every now and then employed to designate someone’s infidelity with regard to the marital partner³⁸. It should be clear then that *rā^cāh* has the schematic meaning of ‘going after’ here, structuring the prophet’s relation to God as following God, a relation which stands in

³⁶ Bright, J.: *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AncB 21, Garden City, 1965, p.116, note f.f: “Hebrew has “As for me, I did not press from being a shepherd (*mērō^cʾeh*’ after thee”, from which only a forced meaning can be derived.” Bright goes on giving some proposed emendations. Cf. also the discussion in Holladay, W.: *Jeremiah 1 (Hermeneia)*, Philadelphia, 1986, pp.505f.)

³⁷ As I have shown in Van Hecke, *Are People Walking After of Before God?*. In this article I pointed to the fact that the expression used to describe the people’s relation to God does not have an autonomous meaning but invariably contrasts with idolatry, which in some instances is described with the same expression.

³⁸ Cf. Judg 2:12; Prov 2:17. See also *ʿzb* in ThWAT V 1200-1208 (Gerstenberger), esp. 1205f.

sharp contrast to the apostasy of the people described in v. 13: as the others left God as their marital partner in order to be involved with idols, the prophet did not cease to walk after God as after a beloved. The presence of the preposition ^ʾ*aḥar*(*ē*) after the verb *rā^cāh* corroborates this proposal.

4.2. *Isaiah 44:20*

In Isa 44:20, which reads *ro^cāh ʾefær leb hûtal hiṭṭāhû* [He who *rā^cāh* ashes, a deceived heart leads him astray], the verb *rā^cāh* has ‘ashes’ as its object. Again, a reading of *rā^cāh* as ‘to shepherd’ makes little sense; scholars³⁹ and translations⁴⁰ have therefore suggested to understand *rā^cāh* as ‘to feed on’, or as a form of *r^ch* (II) ‘to have dealings with’⁴¹. My suggestion is again that *rā^cāh* means ‘to go after’ here, more specifically in its already described metaphorical use of ‘to go after gods’. There is little doubt that the ‘ashes’ metaphorically refer to idols. The preceding verses describe the stupidity of those that make statues of idols. What the prophet thinks is most ridiculous of all is that those people use wood to make their statues, the same wood they need for warming themselves and for cooking their meals. Such gods are nothing but ashes, since they are made of the same wood which in other occasions is simply burnt to ashes. When Isaiah then concludes with a warning against those who *rā^cāh* ashes, I think we are to understand the verb as designating the ‘going after’ gods, i.e. idolatry.

4.3. *Jeremiah 22:22*

Another difficult case is Jer 22:22, which reads *kōl-ro^cajik tir^cāh rūaḥ ūm^e ʾahabajik bašš^ebî jelekû* [The wind *rā^cāh* all your shepherds, and your lovers go into captivity]. It again does not make much sense to read ‘to shepherd’ here. But if we take a reading ‘to go after’⁴² we do get a better picture of what is meant.⁴³ As I see it, the verse presents, in parallel, two sides of the same reality. In the second hemistich the lovers are said to go into captivity, whereas in the first, the wind is structured as the oppressor driving the captured before him: it is the wind that drives the oppressed and as a result they go into captivity⁴⁴. That the *wind* is said to chase those people calls for an explanation. In my opinion, being chased by the wind indicates that people are so scared that they flee even without anybody pursuing them: a breath of wind is enough to make them panic and run off. This interpretation is supported by parallels in Lev 26:17,36,37 and Prov 28:1 in which texts people are

³⁹ see e.g. Oswalt, J.N.: *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, Grand Rapids, 1998, p.184 to mention just one recent example.

⁴⁰ See e.g. RSV, NIV.

⁴¹ Elliger, K.: *Deuterocesaja*, BK 11/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978, p.414.

⁴² As Bright, op.cit., p.142 correctly notes: “the wind shall ‘shepherd.’ I.e. drive away.”

⁴³ Thus making Dahood’s interpretation (Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography X, *Biblica* 53, 1973, 386-403, here p.392f.) of *tir^cāh* as the plural of a *qtlt* verb-formation (with *ro^cēkâ* as its subject) unnecessary. Dahood proposed this interpretation because commentators could not furnish evidence for a reading ‘to drive away’ of the verb *r^ch*. I believe I do provide, in the present pages, the necessary evidence, thus supporting Bright’s proposed reading.

⁴⁴ Compare with the parallel between *rādāh* and *šābāh* in Isa 14:2, where capturing is also put into parallel with going after.

said to flee with no one pursuing — even the noise of a leaf chased by the wind is enough to make them flee.

4.4. Proverbs 13:20; 28:7; 29:3

In Prov 13:20; 28:7 and 29:3 we find uses of the verb $rā^cāh$ very similar to each other. The proverbs all make statements about those that $rā^cāh$ fools, gluttons and harlots. Most scholars do not have any problem interpreting the verb as ‘keeping company with’ in these cases, a reading they usually ascribe to a root r^ch (II), different from the one dealing with ANIMAL HUSBANDRY. As we have seen in the case of $redū$ and $rādāh$ however, a verb with a schematic reading of ‘going after’ may also develop a more specific reading ‘to accompany, to keep company with’ and even ‘to have dealings with’. I contend the same development from ‘going after’ to ‘accompanying’ has taken place in the verb $rā^cāh$. There is no need, then, to posit a second root r^ch . My contention is corroborated by the fact that in Prov 13:20 $rā^cāh$ parallels with $hālak$ $ʔæt$ ‘to walk with’, pointing to a similar metaphorical structuring: $holek$ $æt-h^akamīm$ $yəḥkām$ $w^ro^cəh$ $k^sīlīm$ $jerôa^c$ [He who goes with wise people, will be wise, and he who $rā^cāh$ fools will come to harm.]. Having dealings with somebody is in both cases structured as walking either with or after this person. Both parallel verbs are moreover rendered by the same Greek word in the Septuagint: $συμπορευόμενος$ ‘walking with’, underlining the equivalence of both verbs in the eyes of the Greek translator. It is noteworthy that in the two other cases (Prov 28:7 and 29:3) the Septuagint did not take up the same translation again, but simply rendered $ro^cəh$ as $ὄς δὲ ποιμαίνει$ ‘he who shepherds’, thereby falling back onto the most obvious translation and indicating that the translators did not know of a second root r^ch ‘to have dealings with’.

Prov 22:24 $ʔal$ $titra^c$ $ʔæt-ba^c$ al $ʔāf$ $w^ro^cəh$ $ʔis$ $ḥemôt$ $lo^ʔ$ $tābô^ʔ$ [Do not $rā^cāh$ with an angry man, and with a furious man you will not come] parallels the only instance of the $hitpa^el$ of $rā^cāh$ to the expression $bô^ʔ$ $ʔæt$ ‘to come with’, possibly indicating that $rā^cāh$ should be understood as ‘going after, viz. accompanying’ here as well.⁴⁵

4.5. Job 24:21

A particular instance of this development of the schematic meaning ‘to walk after’ into ‘to accompany’ and even into ‘to have dealings with’, is to be found in Job 24:21: $ro^cəh$ $ʔaqārāh$ $lô^ʔ$ $teled$ $w^almānāh$ $lô^ʔ$ $j^jeṭīb$ [He $rā^cāh$ the barren who did not give birth, and the widow with whom man did not deal well.]. Suggestions to interpret the verb-form r^ch abound in scholarly literature⁴⁶, all of them dividing the

⁴⁵ The fact that this is the only instance of the verb in $hitpa^el$ should make us a little suspicious about the originality of the present reading. Possibly this form is a late denominative of the noun re^ac , but more likely it is another case of the specified reading of ‘to walk after’, viz. ‘to have dealings with’. In the same Book of Proverbs we find the same verb three times — the cases I discussed just before — in the qal with absolutely similar readings. It is not unconceivable then that the $hitpa^el$ form here is the result of a mere dittography of t . If one accepts the $hitpa^el$ as being original — for which the presence of the participle $ʔæt$, if original, would speak — the form could be an indication of the autonomization of this reading “to have dealings with”. Since however this is the only instance in case, we should refrain from making any such suppositions.

⁴⁶ See Hartley, J.E.: *The Book of Job*, NICOT, Grand Rapids, 1988, p.351 n.4.

verse into two chiasmic hemistichs with each a verb (*ro^cæh* and *j^ejeḥib*, respectively) and an object. I agree with the interpretation behind the Dutch Bible translation *KBS*, however, that the latter expression *lô² j^ejeḥib* is an asyndetic relative clause and should be rendered ‘with whom one did not deal well’, in the same way as its parallel *lô² teled* ‘who did not give birth’ in the first hemistich. Both the *‘aqārāh* and the *‘almānāh* are then objects of the same verb *ro^cæh*. The verbal form *r^ch* therefore should be read as deriving from *rā^cāh*. The verb’s meaning in this case is again best understood as ‘to have dealings with’ as the metaphorical development of ‘to accompany’. The major difference with the cases discussed in the preceding paragraph is that the connotation is not negative here. Rather, the verb expresses the care that God has for the barren and the widow. The verse on the whole should not be read, then, as the negative conclusion of the preceding verses, but as the positive opening of the following, speaking of God’s salvific acts.

4.6. *Hos 12:2; Psa 37:3; Prov 15:14*

Hos 12:2; Psa 37:3 and *Prov 15:14* again present a group of related cases. *Hos 12:2* reads: *‘æfrajim ro^cæh rūaḥ w^erodef qādīm* [Efraim *rā^cāh* wind and pursues the eastern winds.]. The parallel between *rā^cāh* and *rādaf* here indicates that we can again posit a schematic meaning ‘to go after’, this time in the more specific reading of ‘pursuing a goal’, or ‘desiring’. As I mentioned above (p.58), structuring man’s desires as his walking after certain goals is very common in many languages, purposes being regarded as destinations. On the same occasion, I remarked that this goal need not be structured as a fixed, unmoving destination man attempts to reach, but can equally be understood as a moving object itself which the pursuer is trying to get at. As in the case of *rādaf*, it is the latter structuring that is instantiated by the verb *rā^cāh* here. In that regard, the object of the following mentioned here, viz. the wind, is about the worse goal one can imagine: the wind is a very fickle goal to pursue, perpetually changing direction, and yet at the same time, invisible and elusive and thus a goal which one will never be able to lay hands on. ‘Walking after wind’ could therefore be paraphrased as ‘to have desires and aspirations that are both constantly changing and impossible to reach’. In *Prov 15:14* *rā^cāh* stands in parallel to *baqqeš* ‘to search’, the whole verse presenting a clear (in this case antithetical) parallel further juxtaposing “an intelligent heart” to “the mouth/the face of fools” and “insight” to “folly”:

An intelligent heart	looks for	insight,
and the mouth/face of fools	<i>rā^cāh</i>	folly.

The verse’s parallel again points in the direction of a reading ‘to desire, to pursue’ for the verb *rā^cāh*, grown out of the schematic meaning of ‘to go after’. Moreover, in *Isa 51:1* and *Psa 34:15* the same verb *baqqeš*, that is here juxtaposed to *rā^cāh*, is twice paralleled with *rādaf*, that other verb schematically meaning ‘going after’ and having a metaphorical reading of ‘to desire’. *Isa 51:1* parallels those pursuing righteousness to those seeking the Lord [*rodḥē ṣædæq m^ebaqqešē² donāj*]; whereas in *Psa 34:15* the two verbs even have the same object: *baqqeš šālôm w^eroḏ^efehū*

[Seek peace and pursue it.]". Our verse Prov 15:14 is very similar to these two cases so that there should be little doubt that the same reading 'going after, desiring' as was proposed for *rādāf* also pertains for *rā'āh* in this verse.⁴⁷ In Psa 37:3 *b'eṭaḥ badonāj wa'ca-seh-tōb š'e-kōn-ærceš ūr'e'cæh ʔa-mûnāh* [Trust in the Lord and do good, settle in the land and *rā'āh* faithfulness.], finally, "*rā'āh* faithfulness" parallels with "do good". The reading to be preferred here therefore is again 'to go after', viz. 'to desire, to strive for', as many commentators and translators do.

5. Conclusion

Taking into account that 'going after' is indeed an important semantic attribute of the most current reading of the verb *rā'āh*, viz. 'to shepherd', and that in Semitic languages two verbs exist which have 'going after' as their schematic meaning and 'driving animals' as one of their specified meanings, I proposed to examine the possibility of a schematic meaning 'going after' for the verb *rā'āh* as well⁴⁸. In all of the 'problematic' instances of the verb *rā'āh*, this conjectured schematic meaning of 'to go after' yields very satisfactory results. The specifications of the schema showing up in the different contexts where *rā'āh* features, are moreover in keeping with the ones I distinguished in the two other verbs discussed above, viz. *rādāh* and *rādāf*, and with the ones I have identified elsewhere⁴⁹ with regard to the expression *hālāk ʔaḥar(ē)*. In Isa 44:20 and Jer 17:16, the verb occurs in a religious context and acquires the specified reading of 'to follow after God/gods, to revere them'. In Jer 22:22, the schematic meaning developed into the specification 'to drive captives' fitting the context of the verse of exile. Prov 13:20; 28:7 and 29:3 present us with yet another specified reading of 'to go after' for the verb *rā'āh*, viz. the reading 'to accompany, to have dealings with' which we also encountered for the verbs *rādāf* and *redū*. Prov 22:24 shows a similar case, the *hitpa'el* possibly pointing to an autonomous lexicalisation of this reading. In Job 24:21, the same reading shows up with even a further specification, namely that of positive care for the person with whom one has dealings. In Hos 12:2; Prov 15:14 and Psa 37:3, finally, the schematic meaning of 'going after' metaphorically developed into the specified reading of 'to desire, to strive after'. I therefore contend that there is no need to posit two or three different homonymic roots and verbs *rā'āh*, since all instances of the verb can be adequately interpreted on the basis of the proposed schematic meaning of the verb 'to go after'. Even more, some instances cannot be satisfactorily understood, in my opinion, without falling back on the proposed schema and its different specifications.

⁴⁷ There is no need then to accept D.W. Thomas's emendation of *jr'h* to *jd'h* (on the basis of 10:32) in order to arrive at a reading of 'seeking, desiring'. (see: Textual and Philological Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs, in Noth, M.; Thomas, D.W. (eds.): *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, SVT 3, Leiden, 1955, pp.284f.)

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note here that Orel, V.; Stolbova, O.: *Hamito-Semitic Etymological Dictionary. Materials for a Reconstruction*, HdO 1. Abt. 1. 1/18, Leiden, 1995, p.449, propose a translation 'drive, chase' for the Hamito-Semitic root **ri'*, to which the verb under investigation belongs. The analysis carried out in the present paper confirms this proposal with regard to the Hebrew.

⁴⁹ Van Hecke, *Are People Walking After or Before God?*

Two objections might be formulated against my proposal. First of all, one might ask where the noun rea^c and cognates should be inserted in this presentation of the semantic structure of $r\bar{a}^c\bar{a}h$. Does this noun not call for a root $r^c h$ (II)? It might suffice to refer here to Bauer & Leander's proposition⁵⁰, which was also endorsed in *TWAT*'s excellent treatment of the noun. The authors of the *Historische Grammatik* plainly state that the noun rea^c 'friend' derives from $ro^c\bar{a}h$ 'shepherd'. We could call this development metonymic. Through the contiguity of the concept of SHEPHERD and KINSMAN — in pastoral societies all kinsmen are shepherds — the term for the former metonymically also came to designate the latter. In a later phase the term rea^c acquired the more general reading of 'friend'. Is there not any connection then between this noun and the verb $r\bar{a}^c\bar{a}h$ in its reading of 'to accompany, to have dealings with'? As far as I can see, they both have different origins, but it is not inconceivable that the existence of the noun with a reading 'kinsman, friend' may have co-motivated⁵¹ the development of the verbal meaning 'to have dealings with'. Judg 14:20 might even contain a verbal form that is denominatively derived from $merea^c$, itself a transformation of the noun rea^c ⁵².

A second objection to the proposed semantic structure of $r^c h$ could be that the Late-Biblical nouns $r^{e\bar{c}}\bar{u}t$ and $ra^c y\bar{o}n$, according to many scholars, should be ascribed to a root $r^c h$ (III), a purported aramaism drawing on an Aramaic root $r^{c\bar{c}}$ 'to desire'.⁵³ First of all, it should be remarked that the textual evidence for the existence of an Aramaic root $r^{c\bar{c}}$ 'to desire' which would pre-date the Hebrew words $r^{e\bar{c}}\bar{u}t$ and $ra^c y\bar{o}n$, is very restricted and unconvincing⁵⁴. But even if one would accept its existence, it is unclear what its origin could be. Some propose that the root is cognate to Hebrew $r\bar{s}h$ 'to want', whereas others contend that the root is parallel to Hebrew $r^c h$ ⁵⁵. It might be an interesting topic of inquiry to examine whether the semantic development I discerned in the Hebrew verb/root $r^c h$ also took place in Aramaic, which is at least conceivable. Howsoever it may be, on the basis of the analysis of the verb $r^c h$ I presented above it should be clear that there is no reason to look for the origin of the nouns $r^{e\bar{c}}\bar{u}t$ and $ra^c y\bar{o}n$ outside the Hebrew language, since the two nouns are in perfect keeping with the specified reading of $r^c h$ 'to strive after, to desire' in Hebrew. The possible existence of an Aramaic root — be it the result of a comparable semantic evolution or an independent root in its own right — could of

50 BL § 61. d''': "רעה 'Genosse' stammt wohl von רעה (vgl. beduinisch [ar]ra'ī 'Genosse', urspr. 'Hirte, also hebr. רעה, [...] Das seltsame רעה ist vielleicht eine erst von den Masoreten geschaffene Mischform zwischen רעה und רע; in Wirklichkeit wird רעה wohl überall רעה zu lesen sein, so tatsächlich nach bab. Punctuation Pr 27,10."

51 D. Geeraerts in his recent book on diachronic prototype semantics (op. cit., p.60), has clearly demonstrated that the development of new meanings is not necessarily motivated by just a single existing meaning; rather, "new meanings frequently arise through the joint influence of several existing ones".

52 BL § 61. d''':

53 Wagner, M.: *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch*, BZAW 96, Berlin, 1966, p.106f.

54 Cf. Hofstijzer, J.; Jongeling, K.: *Dictionary of the Northwest Semitic Inscriptions*, HdO, 1. Abt. 21/1-2, Leiden, 1995, s.v. $r^c y\bar{s}$.

55 Cf. Koehler, L.; Baumgartner, W.: *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*, Leiden, 1953, 1124.

course conjointly have motivated the development of $r^{\epsilon}c\hat{u}t$ and $ra^{\epsilon}y\hat{o}n$, but, semantically speaking, there is nothing un-Hebrew about the nouns as such.

In conclusion, I bring together the different remarks on the semantic development and resulting structure of $r^{\epsilon}h$ in a single chart. Two remarks concerning this overview should be made. First, the arrows in the chart indicate semantic developments. Since it is impossible to date any of these developments — with the exception of the nouns $r^{\epsilon}c\hat{u}t$ and $ra^{\epsilon}y\hat{o}n$ — the direction of the arrows indicates nothing more than a logical order and a possible relative chronology of the semantic changes that took place. Second, the nature of the changes is concisely marked in the chart by the following abbreviations: spec. = specification of an abstract schema; meto. = metonymy; meta. = metaphor. In order not to overload the chart, the semantic changes based on taxonomic categorisation (viz. specialisation and generalisation) are not mentioned (they are usually not difficult to distinguish, however).

Abstract:

Lexicographers usually discern two or even three homonymic roots $r^{\epsilon}h$ in Biblical Hebrew, although the borders between the different roots do not seem to be very sharp. In this article, which methodologically draws upon the insights of cognitive linguistics, the thesis is advanced that there is only one root $r^{\epsilon}h$ in Biblical Hebrew having an intricate polysemous semantic structure. On the basis of the close scrutiny of several of the root's instances and considering the semantic structure of some related roots both in Hebrew and in Akkadian, it is shown that the root has a schematic meaning of 'to walk after'. This schematic meaning is instantiated in a number of greatly divergent concrete meanings as 'to shepherd', 'to have dealings with' and 'to desire'. The correct insight in the semantic structure of the root is shown to provide adequate and satisfactory interpretations of the different problematic instances of the root biblical scholars have been confronted with (Isa 44:20; Jer 17:16; 22:22; Hos 12:2; Psa 37:3; Job 24:21; Prov 13:20; 15:14; 28:7; 29:3). Also the different nominal instances of the root can be adequately attributed their position within the semantic structure of the root. The question of whether one should distinguish between different homonymic roots $r^{\epsilon}h$ or rather posit a single polysemous root therefore proves to be of crucial importance, in this case, for the correct interpretation of the semantic value of the instances of the root.

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