

David Sperling

hgr I and hgr II

There exists a difference of opinion among lexicographers¹ regarding the relationship between biblical Hebrew hgr, "to gird (oneself) with,"² and rabbinic hgr, which has the same meaning, as well as "to

¹ Among the lexicographers separating hgr I and hgr II are M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 424; G. Dalman, Aramäisch-Neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch (Hildesheim, 1967), p. 137; M. Zuckermann, Supplement enthaltend Uebersicht Register und Glossar zu Tosefta (1881), p. lxvi. Among the scholars relating the verbs are L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament (Leiden, 1967), p. 279; and J. Levy, Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim (Berlin und Wien, 1924), p. 14. Levy connects the verbs on the basis that the concepts umgürten, umspannen lead to anstossen, stolpern. His argument is that "hgr anstossen, als ob die Hand und desgleichen gebunden, gelähmt wäre; higger jemandem dessen Füße gebunden sind, wodurch er am Gehen verhindert ist." In and of itself a semantic development from "to bind" to "to be lame" cannot be faulted. Thus the common Akkadian term for "cripple," kubbulu/kumbulu, is related by von Soden (AHw., pp. 419, 497) to kabālu, meaning "to bind." Similarly, apud Hallo, "The Lame and the Halt," Eretz-Israel 9 (1969), p. 68, Sumerian expresses the semantic range of "lame," by using verbs meaning "to bind." However, unlike qšr, hgr does not mean "bind" in a general sense, but rather "gird." More telling, aside from the comparative material here presented, is the fact that in biblical Hebrew the "girding" described by hgr is generally of the type which facilitates movement rather than impedes it. See, e.g., II Kings 4:29, 9:1. The same holds true for 'zr (Job 38:3, 40:7) and šns (I Kings 18:46).

² See Ginsberg, JAOS 70 (1950), p. 158.

limp, to halt, to stumble, to be lame." This second set of meanings is reflected in the substantive higger, "a lame person," and its Aramaic and Syriac correspondents higra/hagira/hagir. Involved in this problem as well are the Akkadian verb egēru, "to twist," and the Aramaic-Syriac verb hgr.³ This paper attempts to demonstrate that Hebrew hgr I in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, meaning "to gird," is to be separated from hgr II, which is only rabbinic. hgr II, it will be seen, is related to the Aramaic-Syriac hgr as well as to Akkadian egēru, while hgr I is to be dissociated from these.

Turning first to the Aramaic-Syriac material, we note that the Peshitta uses several verbs to render biblical Hebrew hgr. These are kbn,⁴ 'sr,⁵ lbš,⁶ hzq,⁷ rm,⁸ zwn,⁹ and mh' b.¹⁰ For example, II Sam. 3:31 hgrw šqym is translated by the Peshitta as 'tkbnw šq', while II Sam. 21:16 whw' hgrw appears as 'swr hw' and Dan. 10:5 wmtnyw hgrwym as whswhy hzyqyn. For 'zr, the biblical Hebrew synonym of hgr I, the Peshitta employs 'sr,¹¹ cšn,¹² hzq,¹³ and kbn.¹⁴ Thus the Peshitta to Ps. 93:1 translates ht'zr by t'cšn. For wt'zrny of Ps. 18:40, the Peshitta has Syriac thzqny. Similarly the hapaxlegomenon šns¹⁵ in I Kings 18:46 is translated by

³ Ugaritic hgr occurs twice, both times in unclear contexts (IK:148; SS:17) and can therefore not help clarify matters. Arabic hgr, though compared by Koehler-Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, p. 279, does not mean "to gird," but rather "to prevent, restrain, hinder, prohibit." (See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 516.) "To gird," is expressed in Arabic by qld. Note that Hebrew hgrw hrb is translated qld šyp by Alfasi in *Kitāb jamīc al-Alfāz* I (ed. Skoss), p. 520. For the concept "lame, cripple," Arabic uses crq. Note Alfasi's statement, (p. 520): "wpy 'lmšnh yšmw'n 'l'crg higger--in the Mishnah they call the 'cripple,' 'higger.'"

⁴ Isa. 15:3, 22:12; Jer. 4:8, 6:26, 49:3; Ezek. 7:18, 27:31; Joel 1:8, 13; Lam. 2:10.

⁵ I Sam. 25:13; I Kings 20:11; II Kings 3:21, 4:29, 9:1; Prov. 31:17.

⁶ I Sam. 2:18, 4:16.

⁷ Lev. 16:5.

⁸ Ps. 45:4.

⁹ Deut. 1:41.

¹⁰ Isa. 32:11.

¹¹ Jer. 1:17.

¹² II Kings 1:8; Ps. 65:7.

¹³ II Sam. 22:40; Ps. 18:33; Job 30:18.

¹⁴ Ps. 30:12.

¹⁵ = Ugaritic šns (VAB B:12).

Syriac 'sr. In no case¹⁶ does the Peshitta employ Syriac hgr to translate Hebrew hgr.

A similar situation confronts us when we turn to the Aramaic of the Targum. Biblical Hebrew hgr is rendered by the Targum's zrz,¹⁷ 'sr,¹⁸ and qmr.¹⁹ Note Isa. 15:3 hgrw sq=Targum ysrwn sqyn, Ex. 29:9 whgrt 'wtm=Targum tzrz ythwn. Hebrew 'zr appears in the Targum as 'sr, zrz, tqp, and scd.²⁰ The hapaxlegomenon šns of I Kings 18:46 is translated by Aramaic zrz. Finally, Hebrew 'sr, when used in the sense of "to gird,"²¹ is translated 'sr by both the Targum and the Peshitta. Thus, an interdialectical distribution for the concept "to gird" would never include Aramaic-Syriac hgr, but rather one of the verbs mentioned above. This may be seen clearly if we tabulate the attested phrase, "girded with weapons":

Hebrew

Aramaic

hgwr kly mlh^{mh}22

mzrzyn bm'ny qrb'23

¹⁶ II Sam. 18:46 is no exception. The Peshitta's use of hgr to render the problematic wyhgwr mmsgwrwm must be viewed in the light of the parallel passage in Ps. 18:46 which reads wyhrgrw. That passage is translated by the Syriac verb kl' (= Akkadian kalû), which means "to restrain, to impede." It is thus a synonym of Syriac hgr in its transitive sense. The seeming exception thus proves the rule. Cf., however, Cross and Freedman, "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving," JBL 72 (1953), p. 33, n. 104.

¹⁷ Judg. 18:11; II Sam. 20:8, 5:13; II Kings 4:29, 9:1; Ps. 45:4. Like biblical hgr, zrz is associated with facility of movement rather than the reverse. The rabbinic substantive zryz can mean "quick, zealous, industrious." Its opposite is špl (see Jastrow, op. cit., pp. 413, 4617), which is to be related to biblical šplwt ydym (Eccles. 10:18). See further H. L. Ginsberg, Koheleth (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 124, and note that šplwt ydym = Akkadian nīd api, "laziness, negligence," literally "throwing down of the arm."

¹⁸ I Sam. 2:18; II Sam. 3:31, 6:14, 20:8, 21:16; I Kings 3:21; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 4:8, 6:26, 49:3; Ezek. 7:18, 27:31; Joel 1:8, 13.

¹⁹ Lam. 2:10.

²⁰ 'sr--II Kings 1:8; zrz--Ps. 18:33, 30:12, 65:7, 93:1; Job 30:18; tqp--Isa. 8:9, 50:11; Jer. 1:17; scd--Isa. 45:5.

²¹ Job 12:18; Neh. 4:12 (4:18 in Peshitta).

²² Judg. 18:11.

²³ Targum a.1.

Syriac

Akkadian

mzrzyn bm'ny qrb'²⁴

kakkē ēteziḥ²⁵

Aramaic-Syriac hgr, therefore, has no connection with biblical Hebrew hgr. As an intransitive verb Aramaic-Syriac hgr means "to be lame, halt, to limp, to stumble, to hobble," and the like. Its semantic equivalent in biblical Hebrew is psh. Hence wypsh in II Sam. 4:4 is translated w'ythgr by the Targum and w'thgr by the Peshitta. It is not surprising then that the Aramaic-Syriac substantive hgyr' is used to translate pisseeḥ²⁶ in Lev. 21:18; II Sam. 19:27; and Isa. 35:6. Rabbinic Hebrew higger, clearly related to the Aramaic-Syriac substantives ousts its biblical semantic equivalent. Thus in explaining Lev. 21:18, the Midrash²⁷ comments, pisseeḥ-byn higger bšty rglyw byn higger brglw 'ht, "(the disqualification of a lame priest for temple service includes) a person lame in both of his legs or in one of his legs."

Since, as we have seen, there is no connection between Aramaic-Syriac hgr²⁸ and biblical Hebrew hgr, we must reject any connection between the

²⁴ Peshitta a.1.

²⁵ kakkē ēteziḥ namurru labiḥ--"he girt himself with weapons, was clad in awesomeness," (passage cited in CAD, E, p. 426). A more exact parallel would be *unūt tāḥāzi ēteziḥ, "he girt himself in implements of war." For the identification unūt tāḥāzi = kly mlhmh, see Streck, Asb., p. 647. Other Akkadian words for "girding" are ebēḥu (CAD, E, p. 8), šapāru/šitpuru (CAD, E, p. 434b; BWL, p. 23; TCL III, p. 6:21). See also ebēṭu (CAD, E, p. 13, lexical section). In addition, Hebrew hgr hgrh, "to gird (oneself) with a girdle," can be expressed in Akkadian by nēbeḥa ezēḥu (AnSt 6 [1956], p. 154:82), nēbeḥa rakāsu, or simply by nēbeḥa labāṣu (see AHW, p. 773). Other Akkadian correspondents of hgrh include šibbu (e.g., KB VI/1 84:54,55; Gilg. VIII: ii:5 [see AHW, p. 729a]; OIP 2, VI:16), misarrum/mi/eserru(m)/musarrum (see AHW, p. 685b), mēzeḥu (= Hebrew mzh).

²⁶ = Akkadian pešū. See AHW, p. 856b; Hallo, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁷ Sifra, Emor II:3.

²⁸ hgr II also corresponds to biblical Hebrew nhk rglym (II Sam. 4:4, 9:3). Thus the Talmud (TB M.Q. 28b) refers to Pharaoh Necho midrashically as prch hgyr'. In this it agrees with the Targum and the Peshitta to II Kings 23:29.

rabbinic substantive higger and the biblical hgr. Consequently we must likewise reject any alleged development from "to gird" (supposedly the same as "to bind") to "a bound (in regard to foot, hence crippled) one."²⁹ An examination of the antonyms of the respective verbs is instructive in this regard. Thus the regular antonym of hgr I (and of its synonym 'zr') is pth³⁰ in biblical sources and ntr³¹ in the Talmud. The antonym of hgr II, however, is pšt. This is clear from such passages as higger bywm r'swn wntpšt bywm šny,³² "a cripple on the first day who became ambulatory on the second," and the similar passage šhyw hgryn Cd hprq wkšhgyC hprq ntpštwn ...šhyw pštyn Cd hprq wkšhgyC hprq nthgrw,³³ "They were lame until puberty and at puberty became ambulatory... they were ambulatory until puberty and at puberty became lame."

It need scarcely be demonstrated that the verb ntpšt, here translated "became ambulatory," literally means "straightened out." The verb pšt is a well attested antonym of words meaning "twisted, crooked." The Talmud, therefore, can describe a ram's horn as a šwpr pšt opposed to a šwpr kpwp.³⁴ Similarly pšt is an antonym of qmt, "to wrinkle." This can be seen in a regulation recorded in the Tosefta: sdyn hmqmt mpštyn 't qmtyw wr'wyn 't nqCw,³⁵ "(To examine) a wrinkled sheet, we straighten its wrinkles and examine its 'affliction.'"

The antithesis between pšt and hgr II shows that a higger is not a "bound man" but a "crooked man." Thus a higger when cured has undergone a process of straightening described by pšt, while an ambulatory individual upon becoming lame is said to have become

²⁹ See note one and Cross-Freedman cited in note sixteen.

³⁰ See especially I Kings 20:11 and Ps. 30:12. Cf. Isa. 45:1 with II Kings 4:29, 9:1.

³¹ TB Shabbat 9b (cf. *ibid.* 10a): "Rabbi Hanina said 'msytyr hgrw--as soon as he opens his girdle.'" In biblical Hebrew ntr and pth occur in synonymous parallelism in Isa. 58:6 and Ps. 105:20.

³² TB Hagigah 2a.

³³ Tosefta Eduyot 1:14. See further TB Hagigah 6a, 9a; TB Arakin 2b.

³⁴ TB RH 26b: "Rabbi Levi said, 'The law requires šl r'š hšnh wšl ywm hkpwrwm bkpwpyn wšl kl hšnh [= ša kal šatti!'-Racc. 76: 19] bpšwtyn that the rams' horns for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur must be bent but the ones used throughout the year (on fast days) must be straight.'"

³⁵ Tosefta Negaim 1:8.

crooked, nthqr. This last fact clarifies the relationship between hgr II and Akkadian egēru. The Akkadian verb is well attested in the meaning "to twist" in both the transitive and intransitive senses.³⁶ For example, in the omen series Šumma Izbu, anomalies can be described as kīma pillurti itgurū or equally as kīma pillurti itlupū,³⁷ with both phrases meaning "twisted like a cross." Further, egēru is equated with šapāšu,³⁸ "to wrestle." The adjective egru means "twisted, perverse" in both the physical and moral senses.³⁹

Both hgr II and egēru may be used of speech. Thus an OB text speaks of foreign countries ša šadūšunu nesū lišānšunu egurū,⁴⁰ "whose mountains are distant, whose languages are distorted." The term lišānu egretu is very similar to hgr pwm' whgr mml which the Ps-J Targum to Ex. 4:10 uses to translate kbd ph wkbd lšn⁴¹ and which is identical with Syriac hgr lšn'. It is relevant in this last connection to point out that wtrwn lšn 'lm (Isa. 35:6) is translated by the Peshitta as wntpšt lšnh dp'q'. As might be expected, Akkadian can say lišānu šušuru,⁴² literally "to straighten the tongue."

³⁶ CAD, E, pp. 41-42; AHw, p. 190.

³⁷ Leichty, TCS IV, p. 85:13-14, 16-18.

³⁸ CAD, E, pp. 41-42, lexical section. Note that the function of a muštapsu is described by the I/3 of egēru in ARM I, 5:5f. On this passage, see M. Held, JCS 15 (1961), p. 13. On šapāšu, see ARM XV, p. 225; AHw, p. 686; W. Moran, "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy," Biblica 50 (1969), p. 47:15-17 (= ARM X, 4:15-17). It may not be out of place to note that the phrase ina šitpušu (for šitpuši) ele'ika, "I shall defeat you in wrestling," found there recalls the Hebrew sequence śrh...ykl in Gen. 32:29.

³⁹ CAD, E, p. 47; AHw, p. 190. The term egru is somewhat synonymous with galpu, "slanting, crooked, dishonest" (CAD, S, p. 86), and is associated with it and lā šēmû, "disobedient," in an unfortunately broken passage in AfO 19 (1959), p. 65:53.

⁴⁰ CAD, E, p. 42; see von Soden, ZA 41 (1933), p. 170, n. 3. The expected stative plural in our passage is egrēt.

⁴¹ The Peshitta to this passage uses cṭl which can hardly be separated from eṣēlu/eṣlu/uṣṣulu, all referring to lameness or heaviness of movement. On the relationship of eṣēlu to Hebrew cṣl see CAD, E, p. 341.

⁴² CAD, E, p. 361; AHw, p. 662. The expressions are not semantically equivalent. The lišānu in the Akkadian passage refers to language or to statements rather than to the physical capacity or incapacity of the tongue. The curing of dumbness (kadibbidû, see Ebeling, Handerhebung, p. 74:1; AHw, p. 419 or šibit pī, see CAD, S, p. 164) is expressed by pašāru.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that the antithesis egeru/ešeru= hgr/pšt is attested in regard to mobility of the legs as well as in regard to facility of speech.⁴³ This may be seen in the passage šî linnigirma anāku lūšir, "may she hobble but may I walk straight."⁴⁴ In other words the development from "to twist, to be twisted," to "to hobble" as seen in egeru is similar to that of pasālu,⁴⁵ "to twist, contort, distort." In the II guttulu form, pussulu refers to a crippling defect. Note the equivalencies:⁴⁶

Á.ŠU.GÌR.KUD=kuššudu
 Á.ŠU.GÌR.KUD=uṣṣulu⁴⁷
 Á.ŠU.GÌR.KUD=pussulum

⁴³ hgr II can be used for other parts of the body as well. Thus a break in the bone of the paschal lamb must be kdy šth' hyd mhgri, "large enough for a hand to be impeded by it," in order for an offender to be culpable for its breakage according to TP Pesahim VII 35b. The verb may be used of even a fingernail. According to TB Bekorot 37b, a ritual slaughtering implement is rendered unfit for use if it has a fault large enough--kdy šthgr bh sprn--for a fingernail to be impeded. Note Rashi's comment, a.l., štckb bh sprn, and cf. his comment on Ps. 76:11. More figurative is the use of hgr II in Ex. Rabbah 43:1. Though listed by Jastrow, op. cit., under hgr I, it belongs under hgr II. The passage in question reads "God intended to destroy them (the Israelites)--myd hthyl hgr btph--(Moses) immediately stumbled into prayer [cf. Levy, op. cit., 'er fing an im Gebete anzustossen']. This is the meaning of wyhl mšh (midrashically understood as 'Moses profaned...[deriving wyhl from hll, 'to profane'] šcmd bqlwt r's, '[due to the critical nature of the situation] he stood up to pray without the requisite seriousness [demanded by Jewish ritual law]')." With qlwt r's, cf. gaqqada qullulu, "to have slight regard for," (ARM II, 113:29-31; von Soden, "Zum akkadischen Wörterbuch 67-80," OrNS 24 [1955], p. 389). The proper prayerful attitude is one of kobed r's, with which cf. gaqqada kubbutu, "to show respect" (citations in AHW, p. 417).

⁴⁴ CAD, E, p. 42. Cf., however, the same passage in ibid., p. 355. See further Labat, TDP, 142:1.

⁴⁵ For pasālu see Leichty, TCS IV, p. 157:70. The commentary there has pasālum:kub-bu-[lu?], but cf. AHW, p. 838. See further von Soden, "Zum akkadischen Wörterbuch 31-40," OrNS 18 (1949), pp. 399-401.

⁴⁶ BWL, p. 306, n. 76. The Akkadian equivalent of Á.ŠU.GÌR is mešrētu. See AHW, p. 649.

⁴⁷ On the character of the sibilant see CAD, E, p. 341.

One qualification must be made with regard to the conclusions reached in this study. Akkadian does not use the verb egēru as widely as Aramaic-Syriac and rabbinic Hebrew employ hgr II to express difficulties of bodily movement. This may be explained by the existence of a variety of terms in Akkadian which serve that purpose. Among the relevant Akkadian terms are kuššudu,⁴⁸ ussulu, pussulu, pessû, akû,⁴⁹ hummuru,⁵⁰ kubbulu/kumbulu,⁵¹ ḥašḥašu,⁵² šamāmu,⁵³ šābulu,⁵⁴ and amāšu.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ See BWL, 46:7.

⁴⁹ See CAD, A¹, p. 284; CAD, E, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Associated with kubbulu in MSL 8/1, p. 9.

⁵¹ Leichty, TCS IV, pp. 37:62, 62:83, 84.

⁵² AHW, p. 333.

⁵³ E. Ritter, "Magical-Expert (āšīpu) and Physician (asû)," AS 16 (1965), p. 305; Labat, TDP, 238:67.

⁵⁴ TCS IV, p. 63:85, 86, 155:39,40, 215:115.

⁵⁵ Labat, TDP, 80:1; AHW, p. 42.