

pouch, purse

צָרוֹר

1. Statistics

Torah: 2. Nebiim: 2. Ketubim: 3. Total: 7.

Three occurrences of צָרוֹר with apparently different meanings are left out of consideration: 1 Sam. 9:1; 2 Sam. 17:13; Amos 9:9.

2a. Literal Use

In Gen. 42:35 צָרוֹר is used twice in the construct state with כֶּסֶף ‘silver, money’ (the second time in double plural, cf. Brockelman 1956). It is a designation of a kind of money pouch here. Joseph had ordered to put the money with which his brothers had bought grain surreptitiously back into their → שֶׁק or → אֲמִתָּהָה (Gen. 42:25, 27; 43:32; 44:1). Apparently the צָרוֹר was smaller than these containers. Every brother – distributive use of אִישׁ – finds his money pouch in his own sack. Apparently it was not unusual to include the purse with the payment. Possibly the latter consisted in small silver bars (German ‘Hacksilber’, a common tender) which were wrapped up in a piece of cloth, the root being צָרַר, ‘to tie up, bind in, wrap’. צָרוֹר־הַכֶּסֶף in Prov. 7:20 has the same meaning. Here the ‘loose woman’ who wants to seduce the unsuspecting young man assures him that her husband will not come home for some time because he is on a business trip and has taken with him the צָרוֹר־הַכֶּסֶף. A money purse was taken along only if someone was planning to do important business which would occupy him for some time.

Less well-filled is the צָרוֹר in Hag. 1:6 where the general economical depression is sketched with some catching phrases recalling the wording of curses (cf. Lev. 26:26; Hos. 4:10; Mic. 6:14; Zech. 8:10). The situation is so desperate that the wages of a daily labourer (הַמְשָׁתֵכֵר) are insufficient for his daily sustenance. He earns his money אֶל־צָרוֹר נִקְוֵב, so to say, for a purse with holes (pass. part. Qal נִקְבַּ/√ ‘to perforate’). The imagery is recognisable: uncoined, sharp-edged pieces of silver cause wear on the bottom of the purse the top of which is tied up. Exactly because the text mentions a purse with holes in it, Hag. 1:6 is rightly seen as the first biblical evidence for the use of a money purse (Loewe 1955).

In these cases it is unclear how and where the purse or satchet

was kept, but Song 1:13 suggests that normally it was attached to a string around the neck and worn on the most safe place, directly on the skin of the breast, hidden by the garment. Not unlike the neck wallets tourists wear nowadays. Like the signet ring (\rightarrow חוֹתֶמֶת), it was not removed, not even at night, when people were sleeping in the nude (cf. Cant. 5:3; *KTU* 1.2:III.20). In Song 1:13 צָרוֹר is a pouch containing myrrh. The ‘bride’ compares her beloved to a צָרוֹר הַמֵּר which rests (ipf. $\sqrt{\text{לין}}$) between her breasts. In the ambiguous language of love it is he who is represented by the pouch (cf. v. 12). As the myrrh is resting on her breast, so is his head resting lovingly on her breast, he is like a permanent perfume to her, adorably close. A pouch or bag to wear treasured objects on the breast was very common, cf. the pictures in the literature cited under section 7 as well as Keel 1986 who interprets צָרוֹר הַמֵּר as an amulet: ‘Seine intime und sichere Zugehörigkeit zu ihr schützt sie. Er verleiht ihr Lebenskraft und Ansehen.’ (cf. Fabry, *TWAT*, Bd. 6, 1120). Others deem it more likely that צָרוֹר הַמֵּר is a bundle or posy (e.g. Garrett 2004; Stoop-Van Paridon 2005), but this is difficult to reconcile with the other occurrences of the word. Because it was the girl’s intention to intoxicate her lover with her fragrance, it is unlikely that the צָרוֹר was made of leather. Rather it was made some kind of fabric. Initially myrrh is an oily resin exuding from the incised stems and branches of the *Commiphora abyssinica* (Berg.) shrub, but eventually it solidifies and can be crushed into granules which give off their perfume when warmed (Feliks 1968; Zohary 1982; Exum 2005).

2b. Figurative Use

In Job 14:17a צָרוֹר is used in a figurative sense, as a term describing the ‘pouch’ in which Job’s transgression (פִּשְׁעוֹ) is ‘sealed’ ($\sqrt{\text{חָתַם}}$). Both the fact that a word for a relatively small container is used and that thrice a singular is chosen to describe Job’s sin (Job 14:16-17) would seem to indicate that Job does not have the feeling that he has to account for much. In v. 17b it is stated that his iniquity must be ‘plastered over’ ($\sqrt{\text{טָפַל}}$, meaning somewhat uncertain). This partially explains the image of a pouch in which something precious is tucked away or hidden, but exegetes differ of opinion with regard to the question whether this hid-

ing is for the better (God will not come back to it) or the worse (God keeps it in store for the day of judgment, cf. Hos. 13:12). Job 14:13 would seem to indicate that Job is still hoping for a positive verdict.

Tur-Sinai 1957 and Clines 1989 erroneously state that the sealing ($\sqrt{\text{חהם}}$) of the צָרוֹר means that we are not dealing with a pouch here, but with a kind of napkin-ring around a folded document. If one tucks away something of great value or importance in a צָרוֹר it is certainly possible to draw its string extra tight and to seal it with a clay bulla or stick it down with wax (cf. Lambert 1960; Fohrer 1963; Wildberger 1972; Hartley 1988).

Nabal's wife Abigail is confident that if someone would rise up to pursue David and to seek his life ($\text{לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ}$, 1 Sam. 25:29a), David's נַפֶּשׁ will be safely bound 'in the pouch of the living' ($\text{בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים}$, v. 29b) kept close to God's heart, but that God will sling out ($\sqrt{\text{קלע}}$, v. 29c) the נַפֶּשׁ of his enemies like a slingstone. Several exegetes connect the צָרוֹר הַחַיִּים with 'the book of life / of the living' (Ps. 69:29, cf. Exod. 32:32; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16) which entails understanding צָרוֹר as a tied-up document. This interpretation seems unlikely if one takes into consideration a) the fact that nowhere in the O.T. צָרַר describes tying up a document (not even in Isa. 8:16, cf. Wildberger 1972), and that b) the careful structure of the verse (cf. Fokkelman 1986) indicates an antithetical correspondence between the content of v. 29b and v. 29c. David's נַפֶּשׁ is protected by putting it *into* the צָרוֹר הַחַיִּים, the enemy's נַפֶּשׁ is hurled *out* of the sling.

Cuneiform texts from Nuzi have thrown new light on this passage (Oppenheim 1959; Eissfeldt 1960; Abusch 1981; Glassner 2000). A number of small pebbles corresponding to the number of sheep entrusted to a shepherd was enclosed in a 'pouch' of clay. Every pebble represented a sheep. On the outside a few lines of text and a seal impression identified the shepherd's master. Subsequently the clay ball was baked in the sun so that its contents could not be changed without breaking it. When the shepherd returned from pasturing his flock, the owner broke into the clay ball and established how many full-grown sheep were missing. Usually this was offset against the number of new-born lambs.

Because part of the increase of the herd represented the wages of the shepherd (cf. Isa. 40:10), unaccountable loss was deducted from his earnings. This background definitely favours the translation ‘pouch of the living’ over ‘pouch of life’ in 1 Sam. 25:29 and also excludes the magical interpretation proposed by Marmorstein 1925 (cf. Fabry, *TWAT*, Bd. 6, 1121).

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

SEMITIC: The $\sqrt{\text{צָרַר}}$ with the basic meaning of ‘to be narrow, tight’, and/or transitive ‘to make narrow, tighten’, is attested in many Semitic languages (cf. *TWAT*, Bd. 6, 1113; *HALAT*, 987, 990; Klein, *CEDHL*, 556-7).

AKKADIAN: *šurāru* ‘Beutel’ (Salonen, *Hausgeräte*, Teil 1, 192) is regarded as a loan from Aramaic by Von Soden, *AHw*, 1113 (‘Bündel, Geldbeutel’).

UGARITIC: Connection with Ugar. *šrrt* ‘peaks, heights’ (Del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín, *DULAT*, 791) is unlikely.

POSTBIBLICAL HEBREW: צָרוּר: Levy, *WTM*, Bd. 4, 224: ‘Bündel, Päckchen, Beutel’; Jastrow, *DTT*, 1300 ‘knot, bundle, bag’.

JEWISH ARAMAIC: צָרָא: Levy, *WTM*, Bd. 4, 224: ‘Bündel, Päckchen, Geldbeutel, Geld’; Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 471: ‘money bag, purse’; Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 974: ‘bundle, money bag, security money’.

צָרִירָא: not ‘Bündel, Strauss’ (so Levy, *CWT*, 338), or ‘handful, bunch’ (so Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 470), but ‘pouch (for frankincense)’.

SAMARITAN ARAMAIC: צָרִירָא, צָרָא ‘bundle’, according to Tal, *DSA*, 745, but ‘purse’ is just as well possible.

SYRIAC: *šrārā*: Payne Smith (Margoliouth), *CSD*, 485: ‘a bundle, packet, money-bag, purse; a knot, tie’; Costaz, *DSF*, 305: ‘bourse, sac, *purse, bag*’; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1304-5: ‘small packet, purse, bag’; *šrārōnā* ‘small purse, small bag’ (Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1305).

MANDAIC: *šraria* ‘Geldbeutel’ (Macuch, *MD*, 397).

CLASSICAL ARABIC: *šurrat* ‘purse for money’ (Lane, *AEL*, 1672); ‘petit sachet dans lequel on met la poudre d’or . . . [ou] les drogues

et les épices dont on se sert pour assaisonner des viandes' ('small sachet in which people put gold dust ... [or] drugs and spices which people use for seasoning meat' (Dozy, *SDA*, t. 1, 826). *ṣarīrat* 'coins wrapped in a purse' (Wehr, *DWMA*, 510).

5. Ancient Versions

⊖ and other Greek versions: Gen. 42:35 ὁ δεσμός τοῦ ἀργυρίου 'the money-girdle' (*GELS-L*, 99: 'band, bond, bundle'; *LSJ*, 880: 'band, bond (with a wide variety of meanings). ἄλλος: κόμβος, 'roll, band, girth' (*LSJ*, 975). Also in 1 Sam. 25:29, Hag. 1:6 and Prov. 7:20 ⊖ has δεσμός. The ἀπόδεσμος is also a 'girdle' (*GELS-L*, 49: 'bundle'; *LSJ*, 880: 'band, breastband, girdle, bundle'). In Job 14:17 βαλλάντιον 'bag, purse' (*GELS-L*, 76; *GELS-M*, 112; *LSJ*, 304) is preferred. Apparently most of these Greek renderings reflect the Hellenistic world.

⊡^T: צררה כספיהון 'their money-purses'.

⊡: Gen. 42:35 צרר כספיה ^{⊡^O} 'his money-purse'; דכספא ^{⊡^N} 'money-purse'; קטר כספיה ^{⊡^{PsJon}} 'the knot with his money'.

1 Sam. 25:29 עלמא חיי בגנו 'in the storehouse of eternal life', in accordance with the rabbinical interpretation, cf. Van Staaldoune 2002.

Job 14:17 מרודי בספר דוכרניא חתים 'sealed in the book of records (of) the rebellious'.

Prov. 7:20 no ⊡.

Song 1:13: the elaborate paraphrase connects צָרוֹר with the binding of Isaac.

⊡: Gen. 42:35 *ṣrārā dkaspeh* 'his money-purse'.

1 Sam. 25:29 *bṣrārā dhjê* 'in the pouch of life/the living'.

Hag. 1:6 *ṣrārā nqībā* 'a perforated purse'.

Job 14:17 *ḥtūm bṣrārā* 'sealed in a purse'.

Prov. 7:20 *ṣrārā dkaspā* 'a money-purse'.

Song 1:13 *ṣrārā dmūrā* 'a sachet of myrrh'.

⊡: Mostly *sacculum* 'small bag' (Hag. 1:6; Job 14:17; Prov. 7:20), but *fasciculus* 'bundle' in 1 Sam. 25:29 (*fasciculum viventium* 'bundle of the living') and Song 1:13. Gen. 42:35 *ligatas pecunias* 'the money bound in (the opening of the sacks)'.

6. Judaic Sources

In rabbinic sources the literal meaning of צָרוֹר is still attested. The pouch was used to keep precious things like pearls (Krauss, *TA*, Bd. 1, 200). A possible allusion to 1 Sam. 25:29 is found in Sir. 6:15 (16), צָרוֹר חַיִּים אֹהֵב אֱמוּנָה, ‘A faithful friend is a pouch of life’. There is no connotation of future bliss here. In 1QH^a 10:20 (22) the singer exults with an obvious allusion to 1 Sam. 25:29, אִידְכָּה אֲדוֹנָי כִּי שָׂמַתָּה נַפְשִׁי בַצָּרוֹר הַחַיִּים ‘I give you thanks, Lord, because you have put my soul in the pouch of the living’. The context indicates clearly that he feared for his life because ‘vicious men have sought my soul’, so he does not apply this phrase to the afterlife, as was the case in later Judaism (e.g. b. Shab., 152b; b. Hag., 12b; b. Meg., 14b; Sifre Num., 139; Deut. R., 10:4; Qoh. R., 3:25; Midr. Ps., 30:3; for an exceptional reference to terrestrial life, cf. Num. R., 11:5). A sixth-century CE Jewish epitaph (CIJ 661:4-5) from Tortosa, Spain, confirms this late interpretation: בָּא נַפְשָׁה בַצָּרוֹר הַחַיִּים ‘May her soul come into the pouch of the living’. The inscription is trilingual. In the shorter Greek and Latin versions this phrase is missing, probably because the translator was unable to render the biblical metaphor for a public unacquainted with its background. On Jewish graves one often finds the abbreviation תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צָרוּרָה בַצָּרוֹר הַחַיִּים which stands for ‘May his soul be bound up in the pouch of the living’.

7. Illustrations

Illustrations in Eissfeldt 1960, Fig. 1-7; Abusch 1981, 5, Pl. 2; Keel 1986, 69, Fig. 20.

8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.]

9. Conclusion

The צָרוֹר was an object which meant much to its owner. Its sole purpose was to put away precious matters: gems, silver bars, money, expensive perfumery. Both context and cognates suggest that the צָרוֹר was a small pouch or purse, usually tied with a string through its upper part. The cord went around the neck so that the צָרוֹר rested on the naked breast to prevent robbery,

under garments during the day, but because its contents were so precious, also during the night if people slept in the nude. This lent a special aura of intimacy to the צָרוֹר and explains why it could become a metaphor for one's beloved. The circumstance that Joseph put the purses of his brothers surreptitiously back in their donkey-sacks should probably be seen as exceptional.

Although it is possible that the צָרוֹר was sometimes made of leather, its use as a device to release a pleasant scent when warmed by the skin suggests that in some cases textile was the preferred material. Despite some renderings of the ancient versions there is no hard evidence for the fairly popular translation 'bundle'.

Its status as a container for precious items made the צָרוֹר also an ideal metaphor to express the feeling that some immaterial things were too precious (David's life) or too important (the evidence of Job's presumed misbehaviour) to treat them carelessly. The expression בַּצָּרוֹר הַחַיִּים in 1 Sam. 25:29 should be translated 'in the pouch of the living'. Initially this had nothing to do with the afterlife. Only in later Judaism it was interpreted in this way.

10. Bibliography

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