

רֵעַם $r^e\bar{e}m$; רֵעַם $r\bar{e}m$; רֵעַם $r^e\bar{e}m$

I. Semitic Equivalents: 1. Akkadian and Sumerian; 2. Ugaritic; 3. Old Aramaic; 4. South Semitic. II. Ancient Hebrew: 1. OT; 2. Other Texts. III. Versions.

I. Semitic Equivalents. The Hebrew primary noun $r^e\bar{e}m$ derives from the Common Semitic *qitl* form $*ri'm$, as is shown by the occasional Akkadian writing $ri'-mu^1$ and Arab. $ri'm^{um}$ (alongside $r\bar{im}^{um}$). Metathesis of ' and $*i$ in nouns with ' as the second radical is common.² A feminine form appears only in Akkadian: $r\bar{im}u(m)$ vs. $r\bar{im}tu(m)$.³ The Heb. fem. PN $r^e\bar{u}m\hat{a}$ in Gen. 22:24 is unrelated,⁴ although there may be a connection with the form chosen by the LXX^L recension, along with the scribal error Ρηνρα in LXX^A. Also unrelated to $r^e\bar{e}m$ are $r\bar{a}'m\hat{o}t$ (I), "corrals(?)," and the verbal form $w^e r\bar{a}'m\hat{a}$, "will be high," in Zec. 14:10b (cf. $r'm$ in *KAI*, 279.3, which Donner reads as the masc. sg. act. qal ptcp. of $r\bar{u}m$, with ' as *mater lectionis*).⁵ We have no information about the etymology of the toponym $r\bar{a}'m\hat{o}t$ (II) associated with many geographical sites.

1. *Akkadian and Sumerian.* Akk. $r\bar{im}u(m)$ I (Assyr. $r\bar{e}mu$ II) and the fem. $r\bar{im}tu(m)$ have been identified since Hilzheimier as meaning "wild ox, aurochs" (*Bos primigenius*).⁶ The Sumerian equivalent *am* has the same meaning.⁷ The aurochs, the ancestor of the domestic ox, was wild game, hunted especially by the Neo-Assyrian kings;⁸ by contrast, the arna or wild water buffalo (*Bubalis arnee*; domestic species: *Bos bubalis*), which many identify with Heb. $r^e\bar{e}m$ and is clearly meant by Akk. *apsas\hat{u}* < Sum. *abzaza*, was not native to Mesopotamia, but was known only as an import from the Indus region from the time of Sargon I to approximately the time of Šusin.⁹ The

$r^e\bar{e}m$. E. Bilik, "The Re'em," *BethM* 54 (1972/73) 382-86; B. Clark, "The Biblical Oryx," *BAR* 10/5 (1984) 66-70; M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography X," *Bibl* 53 (1972) 386-403, esp. 389; Y. Felix, "Ox, Oryx, Bull," *Leš* 44 (1979/80) 124-36; A. H. Godbey, "The Unicorn in the OT," *AJSL* 56 (1939) 256-96; J. J. Hess, "Beduinisches zum Alten und Neuen Testament," *ZAW* 35 (1915) 120-31, esp. 121-23; J. W. Klotz, "The Lion and the Unicorn," *Concordia Journal* 5/6 (1979) 213-15; G. Rausing, "The Ancestry of the Unicorn," *Meddelanden från Lunds Universitets Historiska Museum 1971-1972* (London, 1973) 188-97; A. Salonen, *Jagd und Jagdtiere im alten Mesopotamien. AnAcScFen* B/196 (1976).

1. *MSL*, VIII/2, 74:49.

2. *BLe*, §61c".

3. On the absence of endings in the Hebrew names for animals, see Michel, I, 74.

4. See I.2 below.

5. *KAI*, II, 336.

6. M. Hilzheimier, *Die Wildrinder im alten Mesopotamien. MAOG* II/1 (1926); B. Landsberger, *Die Fauna im alten Mesopotamien. ASAW* 42/6 (1934), esp. 89; *AHw*, II, 986; Salonen, 247-50.

7. Salonen, 167-74; on the figurative usage of *am* in literature, see W. Heimpel, *Tierbilder in der sumerischen Literatur* (Rome, 1968), 79-121.

8. J. Clutton-Brock, *Sumer* 36 (1980) 37-41; W. Heimpel, *RLA*, V, 234-35.

9. R. M. Boehmer, *ZA* 64 (1975) 1-19.

terms for the impressive and dangerous wild ox, with its long, menacing horns (cf. the lexical entry *am.gub.ba*, etc. = *qar-na-nu*, "having large horns," as well as the examples in Heimpel; also Dt. 33:17¹⁰), serve as epithets for gods and kings.¹¹ A temple may be called *bît rīm mātātīm*, "house of the wild ox of the lands [viz., Enlil]" or simply *rīnum*, "wild ox."¹² In Sumerian a temple can be compared to an *am*, "wild ox."¹³

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2. *Ugaritic*. The model of Sem. **ri'm* indicates that Ugar. *r'm* should be vocalized as *rī'mu*, with ' representing syllable-ending *aleph*. Earlier interpretations suggesting that *r'm* has *u* as a thematic vowel (*ru'mu* or *ru'-maum*,¹⁴ corresponding to Masoretic *r'ēmâ* in Gen. 22:24) may be considered outmoded.

Ugar. *r'm* also means "wild ox";¹⁵ here too "water buffalo" is impossible.¹⁶ The wild ox was common in ancient Syria; it was considered the embodiment of unbridled strength, and was often hunted.¹⁷ One text speaks of "a bowl . . . on which are (depicted) myriads of wild oxen," recalling a Late Bronze gold bowl from Ugarit, depicting a royal hunt for wild oxen and antelopes.¹⁸

Mythological texts use the word *r'm* with some frequency. The cow of the goddess 'Anat "bore a bull (*'br*) for Baal, a wild ox (*r'm*) for the Cloud Rider."¹⁹ Baal hunted these animals "on the shores of Šmk, which is full of wild oxen."²⁰ After Baal's death, 'Anat sacrifices seventy wild oxen, as well as many other wild and domestic animals.²¹ "The strongest sinews of a wild ox" are employed to make a bow for 'Anat.²² Along with other dangerous animals, "wild oxen" serve as metaphors for the battling gods Mot and Baal.²³ To describe Mot's appetite, another text speaks of "a pond to which wild oxen (long to) come, a spring at which hinds (*'ylt*) long to arrive."²⁴

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10. See *MSL*, VIII/2, 10:50a-52; Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 81-97, 103, 121. See also II.1 below.

11. For Sum. *am* see Salonen, 168ff.; for Akk. *rīmu(m)/rīmtu(m)* see K. L. Tallqvist, *Akkadische Götter-Epitheta* (Helsinki, 1938), 165-66; *AHW*, II, 986; Salonen, 248ff. For royal epithets see Seux, 250, 386; *AHW*, II, 986; Salonen.

12. For the former see *Altorientalische Bibliothek*, 22, III:7; for the latter see *RA*, 64, 95:5, 161; *AHW*, II, 986.

13. Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 83-87.

14. For the former see Z. S. Harris, *JAOS* 57 (1937) 151; for the latter see H. L. Ginsberg, *Or* 5 (1936) 185; D. Marcus, *JANES* 1 (1968) 54 n. 45.

15. J. C. de Moor, *Seasonal Patterns in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu*. *AOAT* 16 (1971), 199.

16. Cf. H. L. Ginsberg, *JANES* 5 (1973) 131 n. 4.

17. *KTU*, 1.10, II, 9, 12.

18. *KTU*, 1.4, I, 41-43; for the bowl see *Syr* 15 (1934) pl. 16, reproduced in *BRL*², 151.

19. *KTU*, 1.10, III, 21(36).

20. *KTU*, 1.10, II, 9, 12; on the construction see E. Verreet, *UF* 18 (1986) 381-82.

21. *KTU*, 1.6, I, 19.

22. *KTU*, 1.17, VI, 21.

23. *KTU*, 1.6, VI, 18.

24. *KTU*, 1.5, I, 17; cf. 1.133, 7. On the translation see Verreet, 381.

3. *Old Aramaic*. In the third line of the Old Aramaic inscription of King Aśoka (268-233 B.C.E.), from Kandahar (Afghanistan), the word *r'm* is disputed both textually and semantically.²⁵ Textually clear but semantically obscure is the expression *br'mn 2 pthn* in the ledger of a Jewish merchant in early Hellenistic Egypt.²⁶ In 11QtgJob 39:9-10 Heb. *r'e'em* is represented by *r'm*. The word *wrym*[] in Aram. En. 89:6 is discussed elsewhere.²⁷ The Syrian version uses Syr. *raymā* not only for *r'e'em*, but also for *dīšōn* (I), “a kind of antelope (?), bison (?)” in Dt. 14:5.

4. *South Semitic*. The meaning of Arab. *ri'm*^{un}/*rīm*^{un}, “white antelope (*Antilope leucoryx*),”²⁸ is purely metonymic and has no bearing on Hebrew usage. For example, Hess suggests that a semantic shift from “wild ox” to “gazelle” (!) is occasioned by the fact that both are white. In Ethiopic (Geez) *rē'im/rē'em* means “wild bull, rhinoceros, unicorn.”²⁹ Hommel is probably correct in calling the form a borrowing from Hebrew, especially in light of the phonetic variant *rē'em*; the borrowed meaning would support this theory.³⁰

II. Ancient Hebrew. For Heb. *r'e'em*, too, the exegetical evidence suggests “wild ox” as the most likely meaning.³¹ The theory (based on Arabic) that it means “white antelope” overlooks the fact that lexical equivalents can have different meanings in individual languages.³² It is true that the more slender animal, like the wild ox, was hunted by kings;³³ but — especially because there are other Hebrew terms for various species of antelope — it would be unsuitable in the paradox of Job 39:9-12 and probably also as representative of a hostile world in Isa. 34:7 and Ps. 22:22(21). The water buffalo and bison, unlike the wild ox, had probably vanished from Syria too long before the 1st millennium to be a vivid memory.³⁴ In a positive sense, *r'e'em* symbolizes laudable strength (Nu. 23:22; 24:8; Dt. 33:17; Ps. 92:11[10]; 1 En. 90:38 cj.); representing hostile powers, it has negative valence (Isa. 34:7; Ps. 22:22[21]; Job 39:9-12); the occurrences in Ps. 29:6 and Aram. En. 89:6 are neutral.

1. *OT*. In the OT comparison to a *r'e'em* — like all animal comparisons — appears first in sayings characterizing tribes or nations. In Dt. 33:17a, a predicative clause that has no counterpart in the Joseph saying in Gen. 49:22-26, the subject of the predication

25. *KAI*, 279.

26. *AP*, 81.110.

27. See II.2 below.

28. Lane, I/3, 1204.

29. W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez* (Wiesbaden, 1987), 458.

30. F. Hommel, *Die Namen der Säugthiere bei den südsemitischen Völkern* (Leipzig, 1879), 367.

31. *GesB*, 736-37; *BDB*, 910; König, 426; *KBL*², 864-65; *KBL*³.

32. Contra S. Bochart, *Hierozoicon* (London, 1683); cf. F. S. Bodenheimer, *Animal and Man in Bible Lands* (Leiden, 1960), 53.

33. See I.1 above and the bowl from Ugarit described in I.2 above.

34. On the water buffalo see *GesTh*, III, 1248-49; but cf. I.1 above. On the bison see K. Budde.

— the tribe of Joseph (?) or Ephraim (?)³⁵ — is called a “firstborn bull,” whose horns are the horns of a *r'ēm*,³⁶ with which he gores “(the) peoples” and “the ends of the earth” (the goring wild ox is common metaphor in Sumerian literature³⁷). In this metaphorical language with overtones of magic, both the domestic ox (*šôr*) and its wild counterpart (*r'ēm*) portray the tribe’s invincibility in battle.³⁸

The first of the two older Balaam oracles over Jacob/Israel (Nu. 24:8a) contains the expression *k'ētô^apô^t r'ēm lô*. Here *r'ēm* serves either as a predicate of Jacob/Israel (“he [El] has as it were the horns of the wild ox”)³⁹ or as a metaphor for El, who here brings Israel out of Egypt (“like the horns of a *r'ēm* is he [El] to him [Jacob/Israel]”).⁴⁰ The latter interpretation recalls Akk. *rīmu(m)/rīmtu(m)* used as a divine epithet and Ugar. *r'm* as a metaphor for deities. In either case it is Jacob/Israel on whom — as in Dt. 33:17a — the strength of the *r'ēm* bestows superiority in battle over “(the) nations that are his foes.” Nu. 24:8a is incorporated word for word in the second of the two later Balaam oracles (23:22). There is no reason to doubt that in Dt. 33:17a; Nu. 24:8; 23:22 *r'ēm*, like Akk. *rīmu(m)* and Ugar. *r'm*, refers to the aggressive wild ox, characterized in Akkadian texts as *kadru*, “proud, impetuous.”⁴¹

The noun *r'ēm* occurs three times in the Psalms; here the usage is less specific. In the context of a hymn, Ps. 29:6 describes the storm god Yahweh as making Lebanon skip “like a calf” and Sirion “like a young wild ox” (*k'mô^b ħen-r'ēmîm*); cf. Akk. *rīmu(m)* as an epithet of Ellil and Ugar. *r'm* in connection with Baal.⁴² The mention of wild oxen in connection with Lebanon and Sirion may be due to the presence of these animals there; the Assyrian king Ashur-bel-kala hunted wild oxen in regions as distant as Lebanon.⁴³

Ps. 92:11a(10a) is a narrative clause in a hymnic psalm of thanksgiving; it both expresses and explains the speaker’s trust, using the singular metaphor “my horn” to refer to the psalmist so as to add the vivid *kir'ēm*, “like (that of) the wild ox.” In individual laments and thanksgivings, the “enemies,” whom we met already in Nu. 24:8 and Dt. 33:17, are now the unspecified enemies of the devout individual and of Yahweh (vv. 10,12[9,11]).

In Ps. 22:22b(21b), an individual lament, the *rēmîm* follow the dog (v. 21b[20b]) and the lion (v. 22a[21a]), representing the forces that threaten the psalmist, who prays for God’s defense against these hostile powers, which are introduced by the catchword “sword” (v. 21a[20a]).

35. H.-J. Zobel, *Stammespruch und Geschichte*. BZAW 95 (1965), 37.

36. See I.1 above.

37. See the examples in Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 97-101, 104-5.

38. On the juxtaposition of *šôr* and *r'ēm* cf. Ugar. *r'm* in *KTU*, 1.17, VI, 21 and 23; see M. Dahood, *RSP*, I, 334, no. 508.

39. M. Noth, *Numbers*. OTL (Eng. trans. 1968), 170.

40. Cf. NRSV and many other versions.

41. *MSL*, VIII/2, 10:50a (see I.1 above); *AHW*, I, 419; *CAD*, K, 32; for Sumerian parallels see Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 104-7.

42. For the Akkadian see Tallqvist, *Götter-Epitheta*, 166; for the Ugaritic see I.2 above.

43. W. Heimpel, *RLA*, V, 234.

Isa. 34:7 and Job 39:9-12 name *r^eēmîm* or *r^eēm* along with other impressive and dangerous animals as representatives of a hostile world. In Isa. 34:7 this symbol of menacing power together with domestic cattle (whose mention is redundant) will become a helpless sacrifice to Yahweh on his eschatological day of slaughter, with Edom as the primary target. The paradox asserted in Job 39:9-12 centers on the notion that the wild ox does not behave like its domestic counterpart, the ox; in the context of God's reply to Job, the passage suggests that God can tame the representative of a hostile world.⁴⁴

2. *Other Texts.* The reading *btw'pwt r'm* instead of *btw'pwt tw'r* in Sir. 45:7 (B) reflects a textual corruption based on Nu. 23:22 and 24:8: the resemblance of Jacob/Israel to a wild ox is transferred to Aaron.

In a visionary anticipation of the deluge, Aram. Enoch (= 4QEn^e) 89:6 describes Noah's ship "sailing over the surface of the water and all cattle . . . elephants, and wild ox[n] (*wrymy*['])." In 1 En. 90:38 *nagar*, "word," makes no sense in the context; one proposal is to substitute Heb. *r'm*, "which the Greek transcribed as ῥῆμ, read by the Ethiopic as ῥῆμ = *nagar*."⁴⁵ This *r^eēm* may be identified as one of two messianic figures.⁴⁶

III. Versions. The LXX translates *r^eēm* as *monókerōs* everywhere except Isa. 34:7, where it uses *hoi hadrof*, "the strong"; the Vg. uses *unicornis* (Isa. 34:7; Ps. 21[22]:22; 28[29]:6 *iuxta* LXX; 91[92]:11 *iuxta* LXX) or *monoceros* (Ps. 91[92]:11). The source of this translation is disputed. It might have been suggested by (Babylonian) profile images of the wild ox,⁴⁷ natural examples like the rhinoceros (note *rhinókerōs* in A and a *héteros*⁴⁸ in Job 39:9, *rinoceros* in Vg. of Nu. 23:22; 24:8; Dt. 33:17; Job 39:9-10; Ps. 28[29]:6 *Psalmi iuxta Hebraicum*, and in Saadia's discussion of Job 39:9), fantastic imagery deriving from Hellenistic speculation,⁴⁹ or even Dnl. 8:5ff. The AV translation "unicorn" derives from LXX.

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44. O. Keel, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob*. FRLANT 121 (1978), 63ff.; H.-P. Müller, *BZ* 32 (1988) 210-31, esp. 218-19.

45. S. Uhlig, *JSHRZ* V/6, 704, following others.

46. M. A. Knibb, *Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978), 2:216.

47. Hess, 121.

48. J. Ziegler, *Iob* (1982), 392.

49. B. Reicke, *BHHW*, III, 2173-74.