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TOWARD THE RECOVERY OF *POḤAR, "COMPANY," IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

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T HE equation of *paḥad* in the phrase *paḥad yiṣḥāq* (Gen 31:42, 53) with Palmyrene Aramaic *pḥd* and Arabic *faḥiḏ*, both referring to tribal groups (a nuance derived from an original meaning "thigh"), proposed by Albright in 1946,[1] was the subject of three independent refutations published in the spring of 1972.[2] In the intervening quarter-century the suggestion had been widely and — in view of the unusual phonetic correspondence which it supposed (*/ḏ/ > (Hebrew)/d/ [3]) — uncritically accepted; and in at least one case the proposed meaning of *paḥad* was extended to other passages as well. The recent undermining of that extension has prompted the following note.

The passage where I propose to restore a Hebrew *pōḥar* [4] is Ps 64:2b, *mpḥd ʾwyb tṣr ḥyy*, usually translated, "preserve my life from fear of the enemy," or

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[1] *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1940), 327 n. 71; Anchor ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), 248 n. 71. (For the connection of thigh and kinship, see W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage* [Boston: Beacon, 1966] 38.) Reference to the same word, in its meaning "thigh" (Job 40:17, where it is borrowed into Hebrew from Aramaic [BDB, 808c; F. Rosenthal, *Die Sprache der palmyrenischen Inschriften und ihre Stellung innerhalb des Aramäischen* (MVAG 41/1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1936), 24 n. 7]) was already made in the midrash *Leqaḥ Ṭob* (ed. S. Buber; Wilna: Romm, 1880-84, 81; cited by J. Braslavi, "*pḥd yṣḥq* and the Blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh," *Beth Miqra* 14 [1962] 38). There Gen 31:42 is taken to refer to an oath by the thigh (as in Gen 24:2-3). In modern times (1941) D. Moiel cited the Arabic cognate and took Jacob's oath to refer to his descent from Isaac (cited by Braslavi, ibid., 40).

[2] D. R. Hillers, "Pahad Yiṣḥāq," *JBL* 91 (1972) 90-92; B. A. Levine, "*Pḥd yṣḥq*," *Enṣiqlopedya Miqraʾit*, 6. 452; S. E. Loewenstamm, "*Ṣlpḥd*," ibid., 738.

[3] G. Garbini (*Il Semitico di Nord-Ovest* [Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale di Napoli, 1960] 195-96) sought to demonstrate that the final /ḏ/ in Arabic was a secondary development, and that Akkadian *puḥadu*, "lamb," demonstrates the originality of the /d/. The assumption, going back to Albright, that the Akkadian word for lamb is cognate to the Arabic word for thigh is arbitrary and implausible. Hillers' view that the Ugaritic *pḥd* is simply a collective is borne out by the large number of collective terms for animals (see P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1965], § 135b; S. Rin, "ʾ.. as an Absolute Plural Ending," *BZ* 5 [1961] 256 n. 6).

[4] Vocalization as a *quṭl*-type noun (following Ginsberg, see n. 29 below) is plausible in view of the Akkadian and Syriac cognates, with the helping-vowel *a* due to the preceding guttural (as in, e.g., *pōꜥal*).

the like,[5] with the phrase "fear of the enemy" taken to refer to "the alarm which he excites."[6] The meaning of the translation in context is expressed aptly by A. Weiser:

> Knowing to what a high degree fear is able to deprive man of all clear thought and sound judgement, he first of all asks God to deliver him from the terror which his enemies strike into his heart.[7]

By itself this meaning appears sensible, and the phrase has accordingly provoked little comment over the centuries.[8] BH^3 reports no variant readings in the versions and manuscripts. The ancient versions felt no need to paraphrase, nor do the medieval, nor most of the modern commentaries pay any attention to it. Only in modern times do a few scholars appear to have sensed a difficulty in the clause 2b thus understood, apparently considering it an exaggeration for the psalmist to consider his life endangered ("preserve my life") by his fear. Such a consideration appears to underlie translations of phd $^{\flat}wyb$ as "the dread enemy"[9] or the "danger of the enemy."[10] But not everyone will grant that this difficulty is real, since exaggeration might be expected in an individual lament.[11]

But another problem appears when the clause is considered in relation to its context, for vs. 2b appears to stand in synonomous parallelism to vs. 3: $tstyrny$ $mswd$ mr^cym // $mrg\check{s}t$ pw^cly $^{\flat}wn$, "Shelter me from the council of the wicked, from the gathering of evildoers."[12] Both the verbal idea "protect me" and the object "from the X of the wicked" are present in vss. 2b and 3a, and the latter in vs. 3b as well. What disturbs the otherwise complete synonymy of the three clauses is the position of phd, "fear," in apparent parallelism with two nouns

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[5] So already the LXX and Targum, as well as Saadya, KJV, and most modern European translations.

[6] A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1957), 357. E. M. Poteat (*IB*, 4 [New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1955] 355) entitles vss. 1-2 "A Prayer for Freedom from Fear."

[7] *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 458.

[8] The same phrase occurs later in 4QpNah 3-4 ii 5 (see J. M. Allegro, *Qumrân Cave 4: I (4Q158-4Q186)* [Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan, 5; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968] 38, no. 169). For its Akkadian equivalent, *adirat nakrim*, see *CAD* A/1, 127c.

[9] *NAB*, following R. Kittel, *Psalmen* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1914), 236; and H. Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934) 120.

[10] A. B. Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1905), 144: "Gefahr" (cf. *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* [Hildesheim: Olms, 1968], 6. 265 [Job 40:22] and 4. 317 [Jer 30:5]). In *Miqra Kifšuto* (New York: KTAV, 1969), 3. 239 [Jer 30:5], he cites Jer 48:44. Cf. *The New English Bible* (Oxford/Cambridge: Clarendon/Cambridge University, 1970): "threats of the enemy."

[11] For the classification, see H. Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 172; for the fear of death in individual laments, ibid., 185. For exaggeration, see O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York/Evanston: Harper and Row, 1965) 116.

[12] The translation is Dahood's (*Psalms II* [AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968] 103), following C. A. Briggs (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1906] 1. 77, 79), though many preceded them in recognizing the basic meanings "council, group," in swd and $rg\check{s}h$.

meaning basically "council, group," *swd* and *rgšh*.[13] To remove this difficulty, one is led to seek a similar meaning for *pḥd* as well, a solution which would simultaneously obviate the earlier one.

M. Dahood attempted this in a way which is consistent with his general approach, retaining the MT and seeking a fitting cognate elsewhere in the Semitic languages. He translated *pḥd* as "pack" and adduced "Ugar. *pḥd*, 'flock'; Palmyrene *paḥdā*, 'family, clan, tribe,'" citing Albright's suggestion of 1946.[14] Now that the latter has been refuted, Dahood's view is left without etymological basis. Yet the parallelism seems to demand the meaning "company," and it remains to be seen whether this meaning can be obtained in a more defensible way.

The solution in my view is to emend *pḥd* to **pḥr*, cognate to Canaanite *pḥr/ mpḥrt*, and Akkadian *puḥru*, all meaning "assembly, gathering."[15] In the handful of examples at our disposal from the oldest Northwest Semitic sources, use of the term is restricted to the divine assembly, but in Akkadian and Syriac the usage is broader. In Syriac *puḥrā* is used for one particular type of gathering, a banquet, rendering Greek συμπόσιον in Ben Sira 31:31.[16] In Akkadian the term is used not only for other types of assembly or gathering (judicial, ghosts), but also comes to mean simply "totality, all."[17] In one lexical text *puḥur niši*, "gathering of men," is given as the definition of *ummānu*,[18] a term used for such groups as an army, a work crew, or a mob. In a prayer[19] not unlike Ps 64:1-2, Assurbanipal entreats the god Nabû: "May [the company (?) of] my [ill-]wishers ([*puḥur ḥadd*]*ânū'a*[20]) not continually threaten my life," and implores him not to "abandon me in the company of my ill-wishers (*puḥur ḥaddânū'a*), nor abandon my life in the company of my adversaries (*puḥur bēl ṣassia*)."[21] Gathering for inimical purposes is expressed by the verb (*paḥrū-ma*) in another Akkadian individual lament.[22]

The suggested emendation **pḥr* is graphically unobjectionable, since the

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[13] See the preceding note.

[14] Dahood, *Psalms I* (AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) 81-82; *Psalms II*, 104.

[15] See C. Gordon, *UT*, 19. 2037 (cf. 2036); H. Donner and W. Röllig, *KAI*, § 4:4; W. von Soden, *AHW*, 876-77.

[16] R. Paine-Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879), 3085a.

[17] *AHW*, 877a, *sub* B and C; cf. *CAD* E, 126b; Ḥ, 23a; W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (London: Oxford, 1960 [hereafter *BWL*]), 192:8.

[18] Cited by Lambert, *BWL*, 286:90, with reference to the meaning "mob."

[19] P. Jensen, *Texte zur assyrisch-babylonischen Religion* (Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek, 6/2; Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1915); translations only in D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927), 2. § 1123-1129; and A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zürich/Stuttgart: Artemis-Verlag, 1953) part 2, no. 39.

[20] Luckenbill's restoration of *puḥru* here is plausible because of its occurrence with *ḥaddânu* throughout the text and the text's recurring contrast of the company of ill-wishers, etc. with the company of the gods (*puḥur ilāni*, as in the preceding line).

[21] Jensen, *Texte*, no. 23, obv. 6, rev. 3-5. For translations, see the works cited above in n. 19, and *CAD* Ḥ, 23a; *CAD* K, 258b; and *CAD* Ṣ, 88-89.

[22] Lambert, *BWL*, 32-33:58.

similarity of *daleth* and *reš* often led to their erroneous interchange.[23] Idiomati-
cally, the restored phrase is consistent with several others referring to evildoers
in groups (some of the terms mean "council"), such as *swd mr^cym* and *rgšt
pw^cly ʾwn* in the following verse, *mwšb lṣym* (Ps 1:1), *^cdt mr^cym* (22:17),
qhl mr^cym (26:5), *^cdt ^crysym* (86:14), *hmwn ^crysym* (Isa 29:5).

With the joining of vs. 2b to 3, vs. 2a ("Hear, O God, my voice in my dis-
tress!") is set off as a brief introductory address, such as one finds in a few other
psalms. Psalm 109, for example, begins: "God of my praise, do not be silent!"[24]

This is not the first attempt to restore **phr*, "company," in biblical Hebrew.[25]
Dahood sought to identify a verbal cognate of the root **phr*, "gather," in *bhr*
(*l/ʾl*), allegedly "join (with), associate (with)," in 1 Sam 20:30 and Eccl
9:4a.[26] But this ignores the semantic distinction between "join oneself with"
(expressed by e.g., *nwsp ^cl* in Exod 1:10 and *ʾ/hthbr ^cm* in 2 Chr 20:35, 37)
and *phr*, "gather," which always takes a multiple subject (when intransitive) or
object (when transitive). Restoration of the noun itself was contemplated by
I. L. Seeligmann[27] in Deut 33:3 where for *ʾp hbb ^cmym* of the MT he considered
a reading *lʾpyw phr ʾlym*, "a congregation of gods goes before him." In view
of the parallel *kl qdšym*, "all his holy beings," such a meaning, as widely recog-
nized, is called for (*^cmym* is a substitute for *ʾlym*, as Seeligmann noted). How-
ever, Seeligmann himself did "not profess to know the original word obscured by
hbb," and numerous other suggestions have been made for obtaining the requi-
site meaning.[28]

A clearer case was made by H. L. Ginsberg for Isa 14:13. There he
emended *bhr mw^cd*, "on the mount of assembly," to *b\<p\>hr mw^cd*, "in the
assembled company [of the gods]," on the basis of Ugaritic *phr m^cd* in a similar
mythological context.[29]

It is no source of comfort that all attempts to recover a Hebrew noun **phr*,
"company," to date, including the present one, have involved emendation. How-

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[23] F. Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des ATs* (Munich: Ackermann, 1895) 35-36;
E. Würthwein, *The Text of the OT* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957) 72.

[24] Ps 109:1b. Cf. the similarly short introductory *stichoi* in Pss 130:1b; 146:1b.

[25] In *Yehezkel Kaufman Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960) 53 n. 13, H. L.
Ginsberg contemplates reading *pah^nr(ū)* [MT *pah^nd(ū)*], "a metathetic cognate of the Arabic
fariha, 'to be glad,' " in Hos 5:3 and Isa 60:5. The posited root is homonymous, not cog-
nate, with the one which we are considering. (Ehrlich had sensed a similar meaning in
Hos 3:5, connecting it with the same expression *phd ʾl* in Jer 2:19 and translating "in
stürmischer Freude zueilen;" he did not refer to a cognate root but to a semantic parallel
in the use of *hrd ʾl* [2 Kgs 4:13]; see Ehrlich, *Randglossen* 4. 238; *Miqra* 3. 172.)

[26] Qoheleth and Northwest Semitic Philology," *Bib* 43 (1962) 361-62.

[27] "A Psalm from Pre-regal Times," *VT* 14 (1964) 76, 78, 81.

[28] In addition to Seeligmann, see F. M. Cross, Jr. and D. N. Freedman, "The Blessing
of Moses," *JBL* 67 (1948) 200; A. Rofé, *Israelite Belief in Angels in the Pre-Exilic
Period as Evidenced in Biblical Traditions* (Jerusalem: Unpublished Hebrew University
dissertation, 1969) 97.

[29] In *Hebräische Wortforschung* (VT Sup 16 [Leiden: Brill, 1967] 79-80); *JAOS* 88/1
(1968) 51. The Ugaritic passages are *UT* 137: 14, 16-17, 20, 31.

ever, the use of Ugaritic as a text-critical tool for just such a purpose is well-established,[30] and in our case the demands of parallelism seem clear enough, and the emendation so negligible, as to justify confidence in the proposal.

That the same emendation should be made in the other passages in which Dahood rendered *pḥd* as "pack" or the like is unlikely. Dahood's list includes ten cases,[31] and several further examples virtually identical to his could be added.[32] In these passages the noun *pḥd* refers to something from which one flees or must be protected by sword, or which has a sound, or to some similar phenomenon more concrete than fear. Ought we to read in these cases, too, *pḥr*, "company," with the nuance of "mob, gang," or the like?

On methodological grounds alone one hesitates to assume that the same scribal error occurred so often, especially since a contributory factor in such an error would presumably have been the word's rarity.[33] One may, however, grant that a word which occurred more than a dozen times in the Bible may occasionally have gone unrecognized by a scribe.[34] It is also true that the meanings suggested by Dahood ("nighttime pack," "sudden pack") are intrinsically plausible, and can even be shown, on the basis of semantic parallels,[35] to have existed as motifs in biblical literature. But this is no argument for their presence in the verses in question, not only because there are equally convincing semantic parallels to the meanings previously seen in these passages operating with the translation "fear,"[36] but primarily because none of the other passages under consider-

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[30] See H. L. Ginsberg, "The Ugarit Texts and Textual Criticism," *JBL* 62 (1943) 109-15. The recent essay of S. Segert ("The Ugaritic Texts and the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* [ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971] 413-20) overlooks this use.

[31] Isa 24:18; Jer 48:43; Ps 14:5 and its variant 53:6; 64:2 (herein discussed); 91:5; Prov 3:25; Job 15:21; 22:10; 39:22; Cant 3:8. The list is compiled from Dahood, *Psalms I*, 81-82; *Psalms II*, 20, 104, 331; *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1965), 69.

[32] Jer 49:5; Job 3:25; Lam 3:47; Prov 1:33; Jer 30:5. Isa 24:17 and Jer 48:44 cannot be separated from their adjoining verses cited by Dahood.

[33] Cf. Seeligmann, "A Psalm," 81.

[34] This is possible. In 1QIsa[a] 16:14 and 17:12, *kbyr(ym)*, a word which occurs ten times in the MT of the Bible, and not in rabbinic Hebrew, is replaced by *kbwd* and *kbdym*, respectively; the word's only other recognizable occurrence in Isaiah (discounting *k⁾byr*, Isa 10:13 *keṭīb*) is also different in 1QIsa[a] from the MT (*kbrym* replacing *kbyrym*, Isa 28:2). See E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1959 [Hebrew]), 25, 185-86.

[35] Cf. Ps 22:13-17. If Dahood had not insisted that the pack was one of dogs rather than humans, one might also cite *gdwd pt⁾m* (Jer 18:22) and passages which speak of human gangs assailing their victim at night (Judg 20:5; 16:2; Neh 6:10).

[36] Terrifying dreams at night: Job 4:13-14; 7:13-14; 33:14-16; note that corresponding to Ps 91:5 *pḥd* // *ḥṣ* is Job 6:4 *ḥṣy* // *bᶜwty*; cf. also Akkadian *puluḥtu ša lilāti*, "terror of the night" (E. Ebeling, *Die akkadische Gebetsserie "Handerhebung"* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953] 40:11) and seeing fear and terror at night (passages cited in *CAD* G, 72b); sudden fright and calamity; Jer 15:8; Prov 6:15; 24:22. For the meaning of "calamity" or "danger," see n. 39 below.

ation requires the meaning "company, mob, pack," or the like.[37] None is marked by parallelism or other contextual features so suggestive as those in Ps 64:2-3. Some, in fact, are associated contextually with fear,[38] and for others, the meanings "object of dread" and/or "danger" are well-enough established as meanings of *phd* [39] to obviate the need for a meaning "company."[40]

In sum, we have argued on the basis of parallelism that *phd* in Ps 64:2b should be emended to *phr, and the stich be translated thus: "Save my life from the company [i.e., council, gang, or the like] of the enemy." Only in Ps 64:2b can a strong case be made for this emendation. Together with its only other plausible occurrence known to date, Isa 14:13, *phr has now been found twice in biblical Hebrew. While one would wish for the additional confidence inspired by more examples, they do not seem available; *phr will have to be considered a rare word in Hebrew, like several other words recovered by emendation with the help of the cognate languages and which were until recently misunderstood.[41]

[37] Briefly noted by Hillers, "Pahad Yiṣḥāq," 92 n. 18.

[38] Prov 3:25; cf. 3:24. Jer 48:43 cannot be understood differently than 49:5 where *phd . . . mkl sbybk* is probably synonymous with *mgwr msbyb* in Jeremiah and elsewhere (on this phrase see most recently W. L. Holladay, "The Covenant with the Patriarchs Overturned," *JBL* 91 [1972] 305-20; also D. L. Christensen in this issue, pp. 498-502). What is true of Jer 48:43 must apply to Isa 24:18 too.

[39] BDB, 808c; recognized by Dahood, *Psalms I*, 189.

[40] What of Gen 31:42, 53? Shall the thought be entertained that *phd yshq* originally read *phr yshq, "(he swore by) the pantheon of Isaac," i.e., all of Isaac's gods? (For the polytheism of the patriarchs, see Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960] 221-23; M. Haran, "The Religion of the Patriarchs . . . ." *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 [1965] 32-40; B. Mazar [ed.], *World History of the Jewish People* [New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1971] 2. 224-33. Contrast E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB 1; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964] XLVIII-LII.) Swearing by a group of gods is widely attested, and references to a group of gods, not only a single god, as "the gods of so-and-so," are also found, some of them referring to "god(s) of the father" as in Genesis 31 (*CAD* I/J, 94 *sub* (b) 1' and especially 95 *sub* 4'). But when referring to gods, *phr / puhru* is a formal concept meaning "assembly, pantheon," and the association of an assembly with a single individual would, to my knowledge, be anomalous. All this is, in fact, idle speculation, since "fear" as an epithet for a deity is unexceptional. Hillers cites Syr. *dehlā* ("Pahad Yiṣḥāq," 92). The same usage is attested in Heb. *mōrāʾ* (Isa 8:12-13) and *yirʾāh* (in rabbinic Heb.; noted by A. Kahana, *Peruš Madaʿi* on Genesis [Zitomir: A. Kahana, 1904] 95).

[41] I have in mind words such as *bṣqln* (U. Cassuto, "Daniel e le spighe: Un episodio della tavola I D di Ras Shamra," *Or* 8 [1939] 242), *sps(y)g* (H. L. Ginsberg, "The North Canaanite Myth of Anath and Aqhat," *BASOR* 98 [1945] 21 n. 55), and *šrʿ* (H. L. Ginsberg, "A Ugaritic Parallel to 2 Sam 1:21," *JBL* 57 [1938] 209-13), none of which has been located more than once in the Hebrew Bible, but nevertheless command widespread assent.