



Edward Percy Moran: A Fair Puritan wearing an apron 1897

In the 2nd Book of Kings we read that after the returning messengers of King Ahaziah told him about the man that they encountered:

וידבר אלהים-מה משפט האיש אשר עלה לקראתכם; וידבר אליכם את-הדברים האלה. ויאמרו אליו, איש בעל שער, ואזור עור אזור במתניו; ויאמר, אליה התשבי הוא.

“And he said to them: What manner of man was he that came up to meet you, and told you these words?

And they answered him: He was a hairy man, and girl with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said: It is Elijah the Tishbite” (2 Ki 1:7-8).

In this 9th century BC event the Bible refers for the first time to: **אזור** (*ezor*) translated to Greek and English as “belt” or “girdle.” The actual word used here by the Greek translators is ζώνη (*dzoney* or *zoni*).

The word **אזור** (*ezor*) - “belt” appears also in eleven other biblical verses (Is 5:27; 11:5; Jer 13:1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11; Eze 23:15; Job 12:18). From the root of this word: **אזר** (a,z,r) there is also a biblical verb that is mentioned in several other verses (1 Sam 2:4; 2 Sam 22:40; Is 8:9; Jer 1:7; Ps 18:33, 40; 30:18; 65:7; 93:1; Job 30:18; 38:3; 40:7; Neh 4:12), meaning: “to girdle.

The well-known frequent exchanges between the letters r and n in words loaned from other languages, and the similarity in sound between the Hebrew **אזור** (*ezor*) and the Greek ζώνη (*zoni*) suggests that these words are related, although this relationship may have been mediated through the Phoenician language, the mechanism of the transfer currently remains unknown.

A derivative of the Greek ζώνη (*zoni*) is ζωνάριον (*zonarion*). This word is apparently the source of the Arabic word: زنار (*zunār*) - “girdle” and the Talmudic Hebrew: סינר (*sinor*) - “apron.” It should be pointed here that exchanges between the sibilants ז (z) and ס (s) are not rare in loan words, as well as in the Hebrew Bible itself (e.g. Job 12:18; Neh 4:12).