

”ידות” - מלה אמיתית או מלת רפאים?

אבנר רמו



The common Hebrew word for “hands” is **ידיים** (e.g. Gen 27:22; 2 Sam 17:2; 2 Ki 9:35; Is 13:7; 35:3; Jer 47:3; 48:37; Eze 7:17; 21:12; Pro 6:10, 17; 24:33; 30:28; Job 4:317:9; Ecc 10:18). Yet in several verses we encounter the word **ידות** (*yadoth*) and we may wonder if this word is just a grammatical error of the word **ידיים** - “hands.”

The fact that the Greeks translated the word **ידות** as “hands”, as “fold”, and as “tenths”, suggests that already in their time, the exact meaning of this word was not known. Furthermore, while the Chronicler repeats in 2 Ch 23:1-21, the narrative which appears in 2 Ki 11:4-20, he does not relate to verse 2 Ki 11:7, which contains the word **ידות**. This may indicate that the exact meaning of this word had probably been lost prior to the 4th century BC.

In the Book of Zachariah we read: **ואשא עיני וארא, והנה איש; ובידו חבל מדה** - “And I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold a man with a measuring line” (Zec 2:5).

Yet in the Book of Genesis we find:

וישא משאת מאת פניו אלהם, ותרב משאת בנימן ממשאת כלם, חמש ידות; “And portions were taken to them from before him; and Benjamin's portion was five times so much as any of theirs” (Gen 43:34).

It is not clear how the Greek (and the English) translators determined that here חמש ידות means “five times.” However, the comparison between these verses suggests that here חמש ידות is a letter-deletion and a letter-substitution error of בחמש מדות - “by five measures.”

Similarly, we read in the Book of Daniel:

וכל דבר חכמת בינה אשר-בקש מהם המלך-וימצאם עשר ידות על כל-החרטמים האשפים אשר בכל-מלכותו.

“And in all matters of wisdom of understanding, that the king asked of them, he found them ten times [better] than all the magicians [and] the enchanters that were in all his realm” (Dan 1:20).

Here again the comparison between these verses suggest that וימצאם עשר ידות על כל-החרטמים האשפים is a letter-deletion and a letter-substitution error of: וימצאם בעשר מדות מעל כל-החרטמים והאשפים - “and he found them by ten measures above all the magicians and the enchanters.”

We read in the Book Nehemiah:

וישבו שרי-העם בירושלם; ושאר העם הפילו גורלות להביא [] אחד מן-העשרה לשבת בירושלם עיר הקדש, ותשע הידות בערים [].

“And the princes of the people dwelt in Jerusalem; and (to) the rest of the people they cast lots, to bring one [] of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts in [the other] cities” (Neh 11:1).

The Greek and the English versions of this verse indicate that the translators believed that in the Hebrew version of this verse, the last word was האחרות - “the other” which is now erroneously missing (e.g. Gen 29: 27, 30; 47: 3, 19; Lev 14: 42).

In addition, the comparison between these verses suggest that here ותשע הידות is a letter-substitution error of: ותשע המדות - “and the nine measures.” This understanding forces us to conclude that להביא אחד מן-העשרה is a word-deletion and a grammatical error of: להביא מדה אחת מן-העשר - “to bring one measure out of the ten.”

We read in the Book of Jeremiah:

הנה ימים (באים) נאם-יהוה; ונבנתה העיר ליהוה ממגדל חננאל [] שער הפנה. ויצא עוד קוה (קו) המדה נגדו, על גבעת גרב; ונסב געתה.

“And behold, the days are coming, said YHWH, that the city shall be built to YHWH from the tower of Hananel [to the] gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall [yet] go out [straight forward] (against it) to Gareb’s hill, and shall turnabout to Goah” (Jer 31:38-39).

Yet in the Book of Job we find:

איפה היית ביסודי-ארץ; הגד אם-ידעת בינה.
מי-שם ממדיה כי תדע; או מי-נטה עליה קו.

“Where was you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have the understanding.

Who determined its measures, do you know? Or who stretched upon it a line?” (Job 38:4-5).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that the last word of verse Job 38:5, now missing, was **המדה** - “the measuring (line).” We should also notice that in these verses the term: **ממדי הארץ** - “the measures of the earth” is discussed.

Now in the Book of Genesis we find: **“the land is large enough”** (Gen 34:21; see also: Jud 18:10; Is 22:18; 33:21; Ps 104:25; Neh 7:4; 1 Ch 4:40). In the Greek (and the English) translation of these verses there is a complete disregard to the word **ידיים** (*yadaim*). However, the comparison to verses Job 38:4-5, suggests that **ארץ רחבת-ידיים** is a letter-deletion and a letter-substitution error of: **ארץ רחבת-ממדים** - “a land with wide measures.”

In the Book of Samuel we find:

ויען איש-ישראל את-איש יהודה ויאמר, עשר-ידות לי במלך וגם-בדוד אני ממך, ומדוע הקלתני

“And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said: I have ten parts in the king, and we have also [more right] in David than you, and why you despise me” (2 Sam 19:44).

However, the reading of: **אב ואם הקלו בך** - “In you they made light of father and mother” (Eze 22:7; see also: Is 23:9), suggests that here **ומדוע הקלתני** means: “and why you treated me as I am a light weight?” (see also: Gen 8:8; Ex 18:22; 1 Ki 12:4, 9, 10; 2 Ch 10:4, 9, 10).

In addition, it seems that the English translator of verse 2 Sam 19:44, believed that this is a corrupt verse, and to “amend” it, he also inserted additional words. The Greek translator wrote here: “I have ten hands in the king, and I am firstborn rather than you, and indeed in David I am over you.” However, the logic of this narrative suggests that the words:

עשר-ידות לי במלך וגם-בדוד אני ממך is a letter-deletion and a letter-substitution error of: **עשר-מטות לי במלכה וגם-בכור אני ממך** - “and he said: I have ten tribes in the kingdom, and I am also older than you, (and why you treated me as I am a light weight?)”

In the Book of Nehemiah we read:

וראשי הלויים חשביה שרביה וישוע בן-קדמיאל ואחיהם לנגדם, להלל להודות, במצות דויד איש-האלהים-משמר לעמת משמר.

“And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward against ward” (Neh 12:24; see also: Neh 12:46).

Yet sixteen verses earlier we find:

והלויים, ישוע בנוי קדמיאל שרביה-יהודה מתניה: על-הידות, הוא ואחיו.

“Moreover, the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren” (Neh 12:8).

The comparison between these verses and the understanding of the English (but not the Greek) translator suggests that here **הידות** (*huidoth*) is a letter-deletion error of **ההודיות** (*hahoyadoth*) - **“the thanksgiving.”**