

להב חרב וברק חנית

אבנר רמז



In the Book of Nahum we read: **ולהב חרב וברק חנית** - “and the flashing sword and the glittering spear” (Nah 3:3, see also: Jud 3:22; Job 39:23).

Yet in the Book of Genesis we read:

וישכן מקדם לגן-עדן את-הכרבים, ואת להט החרב המתהפכת, לשמר את-דרך עץ החיים.
“And He placed at the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that the unusual term **להט החרב** (*lahat hakherev*) is a letter-substitution error of **להב החרב** (*lahav hakherev*) - “the flashing sword.”

Similarly to verse Nah 3:3 we find in the Book of Habakkuk the expression:
לנגה ברק חניתך - “at the shining of your glittering spear” (Hab 3:11).

In the Book of Ezekiel we read:

**אמר, חרב חרב הוחדה וגם-מרוטה.
למען טבח טבח הוחדה, למען-היה-לה ברק מרטה**
“Say: A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished:
It is sharpened that it may make a sore slaughter, it is furbished that it may glitter” (Eze 21:14-15).



In the Book of Jeremiah we read:

ערכו מגן וצנה, וגשו למלחמה.
אסרו הסוסים, ועלו הפרשים, והתיצבו בכובעים; מרקו הרמחים, לבשו הסרינות.
“Make ready buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.
Harness the horses, and mount, you horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, put on the coats of mail” (Jer 46:3-4).

However, the comparison between these verses and the understanding of the English (but not the Greek) translator suggest that the rare word **מרקו** (*marqu*) is a letter-substitution error of **מרטו** (*martu*) - “furbish.”

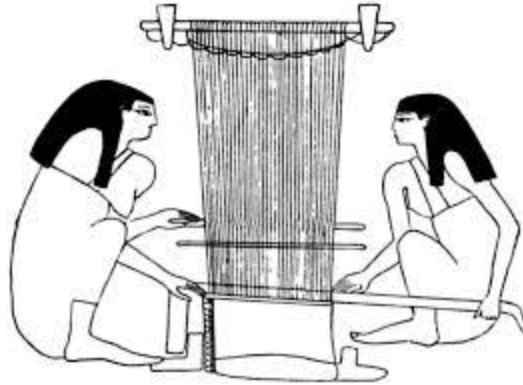
We can conclude from these verses that the blades of combat implements were kept in a sharpened and glittering condition.

In the Book of Samuel there is a detailed description of the armed Goliath, and among his awesome war's implements we read about: **והץ (ועץ) חניתו, כמנור ארגים** - “And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam” (1 Sam 17:7).

Goliath's spear is described again in the Book of Samuel (2 Sam 21:19), and we are told here that indeed his spear is like the “weavers' beam”, but in addition we are told that Goliath's killer is the son of **יערי ארגים** - “Jaare-oregim,” an odd name meaning: the “forests of the weavers.” The Chronicler recounts these details, but this time the killer of (the brother) of Goliath is the son of **יעור (יעיר)** - “Jair” (1 Ch 20:5).

The Chronicler also tells us about an Egyptian that had a spear that also looked like a “weavers' beam,” (1 Ch 11:23), but when this Egyptian is described in the Book of Samuel the description of his spear is lacking (2 Sam 23:21).

As there is no other biblical mention of **מנור ארגים** (*menor orgim*), it is not clear what this term actually means, or how it was determined to mean: a “weavers' beam.” Furthermore, there is no biblical description about the craft of weaving.



Weaving in ancient Egypt

The only (male) weavers that are mentioned in the bible are Egyptians (Is 19:9), but in Israel we hear only about: “**the women wove coverings for the Asherah**” (2 Ki 23:7). Therefore, their “**weaving beam**” (if indeed they employed such a tool) could not have been too heavy. In any case, it would be odd to compare the shaft of Goliath’s spear to a tool employed by females.

We may therefore need to reevaluate Goliath’s spear. A **spear** is a pole weapon consisting of a shaft, usually of wood, with a pointed head, usually of bronze or iron.



Assyrian spearmen

The Massoretic marginal note to 1 Samuel 17:7 indicates that the editors assumed that the word **והץ** (*vekhets*) was the misspelled **ועץ** (*veets*), and this word was translated as “shaft.” However, it is possible that the original word was rather **וחד** (*vekhod*) - “and the point.”

If the point of Goliath’s spear also glittered, then it may have looks like a lighted candle, or in Hebrew: **כמאור נר** (*kemeor ner*).



This interpretation suggests that instead of reading **וּחֵץ חֲנִיתוֹ כַּמְנֹר אֲרָגִים** we should read:
וּחֵץ חֲנִיתוֹ כַּמְאֹר נְרִים - “And the point of his spear was like a candles’ light.”