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PQD, the Levites, and Numbers 1-4

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One of the difficulties in studying the Levites of the Hebrew Bible, is clearly understanding their place in ancient Israelite society. This difficulty is compounded by the awareness that many of their activities and functions change over time, influenced by such variables as historical situation, access to the centers of power, sociological status, and theological perspective. However, one piece of evidence which leads to seeing the Levites as associated with militaristic activities results from the study of the usage of *pqd* in relationship to the Levites, in particular when the people are being »numbered« for war in Num 1—4.

In an analysis of *pqd* and the Levites, there are two areas which must be discussed. The first is the understanding of the word *pqd*. Much has been written about the meaning of *pqd* and some of the history will be reviewed here. However, as E. A. Speiser suggests, it is a difficult word to understand.[1] The second area, more pertinent to the discussion here, is how the term is employed in conjunction with the Levites.

The Meaning of PQD

The etymology of the word *pqd* has been widely discussed. It is a common Semitic root which appears in such languages as Akkadian, Ugaritic, Aramaic, Canaanite, Phoenician, and Hebrew. The difficulty arises when one tries to translate this term and to trace a common meaning. It soon becomes clear that it is questionable as to whether »to number«, a common translation, is an acceptable or consistently appropriate translation of *pqd*, especially when used in Num 1—4 in relation to the Levites. It also becomes obvious that while the term may have a common general meaning, it has specific and unique connotations in some languages.

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[1] »To be sure, there is probably no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble as *pqd*.« E. A. Speiser, Census and Ritual Expiation in Mari and Israel, BASOR 149 (1958), 21.

The common starting place in discussing the etymology of a Hebrew word is to examine its antecedents in other, older Semitic languages, such as Akkadian, Assyrian or Babylonian. Indeed, Speiser has contended that for *pqd* the Hebrew and Akkadian terms are identical etymologically.[2] A glance at W. von Soden's *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* indicates that the root *pqd* is common in Akkadian.[3] The term has the basic understanding of »to take care of«, »to entrust«, »to change«, »to commission«, and »to hand over«.[4] By extension, according to several linguistic studies, the meaning becomes »to oversee«, »to rule«, »to inspect«, »to muster«, »to assign«, or »to appoint«.[5] The difficulty with the Akkadian evidence is that while there is clearly a loosely defined »semantic field« of meaning, there is not clarity on the »root« meaning or on the limits of the »extended« meanings.

Pertinent examples of the usage of the root appear in two texts from Mari. These are letters from Šamši-Addu (ARM I,42) and Kibri-Dagan (ARM III,19) to other officials about military preparations.[6] In these letters, there are references to a position of »inspector« who is in charge of being sure that the military inscription is going as it should.[7] The root is also applied to divination and examining omens. According to J. Denner, it becomes a *terminus technicus* for liver inspection.[8] What is important in these examples are the associations of *pqd* with militaristic and cultic activities.

The consideration of Ugaritic is of limited assistance, since the term appears only once and since its meaning must be derived from context

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[2] Speiser, 22.

[3] W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, 1965–1981, 2, 824–827.

[4] Von Soden, 2, 824–827. For other studies of the root in Assyrian, see W. Mass-Arnolt, Assyrisch–Englisch–Deutsches Handwörterbuch, 1905, 2, 820–822; H. Zimmern, Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für Babylonischen Kultureinfluss, 1917, 10; J. Stamm, Die Akkadische Namengebung, MVÄG, 44, 1939, 181; and W. von Soden, Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik, AO 33, 1952, 109.113.122.

[5] See for example, J. Van Hooser, The Meaning of the Hebrew Root פקד, Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1962, 32–35; R. Holler, The Meaning of PQD, M. A. thesis, McCormick Theological Seminary, 1957; and J. Scharbert, Das Verbum PQD in der Theologie des Alten Testaments, BZ N. F. 4 (1960), 209–226.

[6] G. Dossin, Correspondance de Šamši-Addu ed de ses Fils, ARM I, 1950, 92–97, (ARM I.42, esp. ln. 5). This first letter is concerned with the establishment of an army with precise instructions to Iasmah-Addu (Šamši-Addu's son) on how to recruit men for the army. J. Kupper, Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan, ARM III, 1950, 36–37 (ARM III.19, esp. ln. 5). This letter contains orders from king Kibri-Dagan to recruit men for an army.

[7] In an article discussing these two texts, Kupper provides the translation of »inspecté« for the Akkadian *paqâdum* (J. Kupper, Le recensement dans les textes de Mari, StMar 4 [1950], 101–102.104).

[8] J. Denner, Pqd, ein terminus der Leberschau, AfO 7 (1931–1932), 186.

and linguistic parallels. The term appears in one of the *KRT* texts (UT 127,14). *pqd* is translated by C. H. Gordon as »to give oracles«.[9] Alternatively, G. R. Driver translated the term as »to desire«.[10] However, an examination of the text (UT 127,14–15) shows that *pqd* should be seen in association with the lines that follow, not those which precede it (as per Driver). Indeed, J. Gray suggests *'wypqd krt.ṯ'* as parallel to *yš'u.gh wyṣḥ* (»and he raises his voice and shouts«) in the following line.[11] Thus, an understanding of «to command« seems appropriate.[12]

The evidence from Aramaic and Canaanite languages is also limited.[13] H. Donner and W. Röllig list only three texts in which the root occurs. One occurrence (KAI 119,3) is a late (1st century B. C. E.) neo-Punic inscription in which a *mpqd* (»deputy« or »delegate«) is mentioned.[14] The root appears a second time (KAI 233,17) in a fragmentary, Aramaic ostracon from the mid-7th century. Unfortunately, the ostracon is broken immediately after the root. Donner and Röllig provide the translation of »establish«, »command«, or »commission«.[15] The third usage appears in an earlier, mid-8th century, Aramaic inscription (KAI 224,4.10.13). The inscription relates to the arrangement of a contract between two unidentified individuals. In this text *pqd* occurs three times with the sense of »officer« or »official«.[16]

More Aramaic documents with the root *pqd* are found in the collections of A. Cowley and S. R. Driver, and most of these date to the fifth century B. C. E. One document is concerned with the settlement of a claim over what is understood by Cowley as a »deposit« (*pqd*).[17] Another papyrus text refers to a »Mazdaean« who is »set over« (*pqd*) a province in Egypt.[18] Driver reports on a series of letters from ʾAršam to various officials. Whenever *pqd* occurs in these letters, Driver translates it as »officer«.[19] Finally, *pqd* appears in the Ahiqar papyri. In Saying 20

[9] C. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, AnOr 38, 1965, 470, para. 19, 2090.

[10] G. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, 1965, 45.162.

[11] J. Gray, The KRT Texts in the Literature of Ras Shamra, 1964, 28.

[12] H. Ginsburg, The Legend of King Keret, BASOR.S 2–3, 1946, 31.48.

[13] The limited nature of the evidence can be seen by looking at Charles-F. J. and J. Hoftijzer, Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest, 1965, 233–234; and J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic inscriptions, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Erste Abteilung, Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten, 21, 1995, 2, 932–933.

[14] H. Donner and W. Röllig, KAI, 1971–1976, I,22; II,124–126. See also J.-G. Février, L'inscription punique ›tripolitaine 37‹, RA 50 (1956), 185–190.

[15] Donner and Röllig, I,46–47; II,282–291; III,40.

[16] Donner and Röllig, I,44–45; II,264–274, esp. 267.

[17] A. Cowley, Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B. C., 1923, 57–60. This is text #20.

[18] Cowley, 132–135. This is text #37.

[19] G. Driver, Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B. C., 1957, passim. See letters 1,2,4,6,7,8,9,11,12,13.

(line 103) there is a discussion of the necessity of obeying a royal command or order (*pqd*). Saying 94 (line 192) speaks about a lord or master who commands or entrusts (*pqd*) someone in regard to water.[20] So in these Semitic languages, the nominal form of the word is translated as »official« or »officer«, and the verbal form is translated as »to establish«, »to command«, or »to commission«.[21]

The root appears also in a Phoenician inscription from Idalion (CIS I,88).[22] The inscription refers to the »care«, »commissioning«, or »dedicating« of a statue for Milkyaton, the King of Kition and Idalion.[23] In his discussion, A. van den Branden links the usage of the term in this Phoenician text to the usage of the term in Hebrew. Specifically, he refers to Ex 38,21; Neh 3,31; and Ez 43,21 for help in understanding the usage of *pqd*. In the latter two cases, van den Branden sees references to a gate into the sacred area of the temple and to the people in charge of the overseeing of the gate.[24] In the case of Ex 38,21, where the »work« (*ʿbd*) of the Levites is discussed[25], van den Branden sees a close parallel, in structure as well as verbal content, to the Phoenician inscription.[26] He thus sees the Phoenician inscription as referring to someone who is »in charge of« a statue to the god Rešeph.[27]

The Semitic parallels of *pqd* show no single understanding or satisfactory translation of the root. However, some help in working with the Hebrew term is provided. The term is used for militaristic activities, specifically in recruiting an army. The term also has the sense of an official or an overseer in relation to cultic activities. Thus, both militaristic and cultic activities are known usages of the term *pqd* in its semitic background.

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[20] Cowley, 223.225.237.247. See also James M. Lindenberger, The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar, John Hopkins Near Eastern Studies 14 (1983), 84.190.346.

[21] Donner and Röllig, III,40; Driver, Aramaic, 103; Jean, 233—234; and Hoftijzer, 2, 932—933. There is also at least one occurrence of *pqd* in late Hebrew materials. It appears in a small letter found in a cave in Wadi Murabba'at. The letter (text #44) is from »Šim'on ben Kosba« in regard to whether they can transport goods by caravan on the sabbath. Here *pqd* is translated as »ordered«. See P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, Les Grottes de Murabba'at, 2 vols., DJD II (1961), 1, 161—162.

[22] E. Renan ed., CIS, Vol. 1, 1881, 101—104; N. Slouschz, Thesaurus of Phoenician Inscriptions, 1942, 96—98 (Heb.); A. van den Branden, L'inscription phénicienne d'Idalion CIS I,88, in: Studi sull'Oriente e la Bibbia, 1967, 55—70; M. G. G. Amadasi and V. Karageorghis, Fouille de Kition III. Inscriptions Phéniciennes, 1977, 178—184.

[23] Amadasi, 180. See also, for translation of the term *pqd* in Phoenician, G. A. Cooke, A Text-Book of North-Semantic Inscriptions, 1903, 72—75; and Z. S. Harris, A Grammar of the Phoenician Language, 1936, 138—139.

[24] Van den Branden, 66—68.

[25] J. Milgrom, Studies in Levitical Terminology I, 1970, 60—87.

[26] Van den Branden, 66—68.

[27] Van den Branden, 67.

Although the term *pqd* is used rather frequently in Hebrew, there is no consensus in translating the term, and much ink has been expended in the discussion and debate over meaning.[28] In the Hebrew Bible the root is used, in some form, 378 times and appears in all segments of the text. The root has a primary understanding consonant with the languages previously examined. Nevertheless, as will be seen, there are some difficulties in translating the term from Hebrew. The major He-

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[28] The following are some of the discussions on *pqd* which are not specifically mentioned or cited elsewhere in this article (listed in alphabetical order). Many of these pieces are of related or marginal interest to this article but are not always directly relevant. The list is divided into three parts: general discussions on the meaning of *pqd*; discussions which focus on the theological sense of *pqd* as »visitation« (of God); and discussions about the later usage and translation of *pqd*. The following are general discussions: W. F. Albright, Notes on Egypto-Semitic Etymology, II, AJSL 34 (1918), 215—255; N. Ararat, The Second Commandment: ›Verily, I the Lord Your God am a Zealous God‹, BetM 36 (1990—1991), 170—176 (Heb.); M. Dahood, Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography VIII, Bib. 51 (1970), 400; J. H. Eaton, Proposals in Psalms XCIV and CXIX, VT 18 (1968), 557—558; J. N. Epstein, Eine Nachlese zu den Aḥiqarpapyri, OLZ 19 (1916), col. 204—209, esp. col. 206; D. M. Fouts, A Suggestion for Isaiah xxvi 16, VT 41 (1991), 472—475; H. Gese, Geschichtliches Denken im alten Orient und im Alten Testament, ZThK 55 (1958), 127—145; J. Gray, I and II Kings, 2nd ed., 1970, 560; S. E. Loewenstamm, »mᵉpaqad«, in: Encyclopedia Biblical, 1968, vol. 5, col. 218—221 (Heb.); J. C. Lübbe, Hebrew lexicography: A new approach, Journal for Semitics 2 (1990), 1—14; T. N. D. Mettinger, The Nominal Pattern ›Qetulla‹ in Biblical Hebrew, JSS 16 (1971), 2—14; W. Schottroff, »פקד«, in: THAT vol. 2, 1976, col. 466—486; and B. Stade, Miscellen: Anmerkungen zu 2 Kö. 10—14, ZAW 5 (1885), 275—300.

The following authors discuss the theological idea of *pqd* as a »visitation« often of the deity, in which the visitation can be either positive or negative: C. Begg, Yahweh's ›Visitation‹ of Zedekiah (Jer 32,5), EThL 63 (1987), 113—117; H. Fürst, Die Göttliche Heimsuchung, 1965; Y. Hocherman, Etymological Studies in Biblical Language, BetM 30 (1984/85), 484—493 (Heb.); K. Koch, Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?, ZThK 52 (1955), 1—42; M. Köckert, Prophetie und Geschichte im Hoseabuch, ZThK 85 (1988), 3—36; T. McComiskey, Prophetic Irony in Hosea 1.4: A Study of the Collocation פקד על and its Implications for the Fall of Jehu's Dynasty, JSOT 58 (1993), 93—101; J. Scharbert, Formgeschichte und Exegesis von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen, Bib. 38 (1957), 130—150; and H. Witzenrath, Das Buch Rut, StANT 40, 1975.

The following authors are concerned with translation of *pqd* into Greek, or other languages, and its usage in later texts: J. Carriera, O êxodo e a lingaugem da libertação, Did(L) 7 (1977), 239—258; H. Gehman, Ἐπισκέπτομαι, ἐπίσκεψις, ἐπίσκοπος, and ἐπισκοπή in the Septuagint in Relation to פקד and other Hebrew Roots, VT 22 (1972), 197—207; B. Grossfield, The Translation of Biblical Hebrew פקד in the Targum, Peshitta, Vulgate and Septuagint, ZAW 96 (1984), 83—101; M. Lowe, A Hebraic Approach to the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Imm. 24/25 (1990), 109—117; and R. Menahem, *Epitropos/Paqid* in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Imm. 24/25 (1990), 118—131.

brew lexicons are uniform in their rendering of *pqd* as »to attend to«, »to look after«, or »to appoint«.[29] However, it is when secondary and extended meanings are given, that problems arise; and it is among these secondary meanings where one finds the translation of *pqd* as »to number« or »to be counted«.[30]

It is not at all clear how the meaning, »to number« derives from the primary and common Semitic understanding of »to watch over« or »to attend to«. Indeed, J. B. Van Hooser and Speiser both argue that »to number« is not an acceptable meaning of *pqd*.[31] This difficulty of translating *pqd* as »to number« seems to be subtly acknowledged in the F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs lexicon. There, »to muster« is listed as a fourth derivation from »to attend to«, in the sense of »to pay attention to«. Within this fourth derivation, the lexicon reads as follows: »pass in review, muster (nearly = number)«.[32] One must assume, therefore, that »to number« is an attempt to provide a modern equivalent for *pqd* and that it does not necessarily convey the original meaning.

Van Hooser has put the discussion of *pqd* into perspective by noting three separate areas of usage for the word: the general «to look at, take care of«; the military »to look at, to inspect, enroll, muster«; and the legal »to look at politically, to rule, oversee«.[33] He sees these categories maintained not only in the common Semitic usage but also in the MT and in the Greek of the LXX.[34] It is within the second category (military) that the usage in Num 1−4 is placed by Van Hooser, yielding an understanding of »to muster«.[35] In this he agrees with Speiser who uses the term »to enroll«.[36]

More recently, G. André produced an extensive study of *pqd*. She deferred offering a definition of the term until she completed a linguistic

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[29] L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner eds., Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, 1953, 773; F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, eds., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, 1972, 823; L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament, 3rd ed., 1967−1990, 899−903; and Scharbert, Das Verbum, 210.

[30] Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexicon, 774; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 823; and Koehler and Baumgartner, Hebräisches, 902.

[31] Van Hooser, 1; and Speiser, 21.

[32] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 823. Similarly, Koehler and Baumgartner place »to be counted« at the end of their discussion under the category of a »Hotp« perfect (Lexicon, 774) or under the category of »Hitpael« (Hebräisches, 902).

[33] Van Hooser, 61. Scharbert also notes that »to muster« carries a military connotation (212).

[34] Van Hooser, 90. Van Hooser provides an extensive discussion of the use of *pqd* in the MT, debating passages which reflect the specific categories (93−119).

[35] Van Hooser, 114.

[36] Speiser, 23.

and grammatical study of *pqd* in the MT. Thus, at the end of her volume, she poses the question, »What does Hebrew *PQD* in the Old Testament mean?« She answers, »It is the proposal of this dissertation that the basic meaning of PQD is ›to determine the destiny‹«, and, she continues, »It remains a proposal since the investigation is incomplete.«[37] In spite of the length of André's study, it remains unclear how »determine the destiny« becomes an apt translation. Simply put, the »destiny« of the object or person subject to the verb *pqd* is not tied to the word itself.[38] Rather, it is the *activity* of *pqd* which is its fundamental meaning.

Support for a militaristic context for the usage of *pqd* is easily discernible in Num 1–4, when Moses oversees the preparations for war.[39] The same perspective is presented in two early Hebrew inscriptions. One inscription from Arad (#24) is dated to 605–595 B. C. E., the period just before the destruction of the Iron Age Citadel.[40] The inscription talks about men »given to the care of« (*pqd*) Eliashab for the defense of the city.[41] The other inscription comes from the courtyard of a house at Tel ʿIra and dates to the end of the Israelite Period (7th century).[42] The inscription is a »roll call« or »census« (*pqd*) »used for military administrative purposes.«[43] I. Beit-Arieh compares it to the »registrations« of Jehoshaphat (II Chr 17,14–19), Amaziah (II Chr 25,5), and Uzziah (II Chr 26,11–13).[44] Y. Garfinkel argues that the term *mpqd* in this Tel ʿIra inscriptions should be read as »guard« (like *mšmr*)

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[37] Gunnel André, Determining the Destiny: PQD in the Old Testament, CB.OT 16, 1980, 241. See also G. André, »פקד – paqad«, in: ThWAT vol. 6, col. 708–723.

[38] The following are some reviews of André's book, Determining the Destiny, which point out the difficulties in her analysis and conclusions: J. Barr, Rev. of André, G.: Determining the Destiny, BoL 1981, 65–66; A. Fitzgerald, Rev. of Determining the Destiny by Gunnel André, CBQ 44 (1982), 472–473; R. P. Gordon, Rev. of Determining the Destiny by Gunnel André, VT 32 (1982), 349–351; M. Ottoson, Rev. of Determining the Destiny by Gunnel André, SEA 46 (1981), 164–168; and J. A. Soggin, Rev. of G. André Determining the Destiny, Henoch 8 (1986), 91.

[39] This material will be discussed more further on in this article.

[40] Y. Aharoni, Arad Inscriptions, 1981, 9.34. See also Y. Aharoni, Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad, BASOR 197 (1970), 16–42, esp. 16–28.

[41] Aharoni, Arad, 48. Aharoni notes that the text reads *bet* not *pe* (*bqd* not *pqd*). However, he argues that the confusion of *bet* and *pe*, which are switched twice in the inscription, is a »general phonetic phenomenon« typical of the period in Judah. Hence, he reads *pqd*. See also A. Lemaire, L'ostracon ›Ramat-Négeb‹ et la topographie historique du Négeb, Sem. 23 (1973), 15–16; and D. Pardee, Letters from Tel Arad, UF 10 (1978), 321–322.

[42] I. Beit-Arieh, A First Temple Period Census Document, PEQ 115 (1983), 105.108.

[43] Beit-Arieh, 108.

[44] Beit-Arieh, 105.

rather than »census«. He uses Ez 43,21; Neh 3,31 and II Chr 31,13, where *mpqd* appears, to support his argument. He also refers to the Phoenician inscription from Idalion (CIS I,88) as a parallel.[45] Regardless, the military association of *pqd* is clear.

Some of the same materials can be used to demonstrate the cultic association of the term *pqd*. In Ez 43,21, while the translation of this verse is difficult, it is clear that *mpqd* is related to the temple and associated events.[46] Similarly, in Ex 38,21, the meaning is not totally clear, but *pqd* is related to cultic material and persons.[47] Thirdly, in Num 3,36, the descendants of Levi are »in charge of« (*pqd*) the tabernacle and its parts. Thus, *pqd* is clearly associated with cultic activities and persons.

Levites and PQD in Numbers 1–4

This brief etymological survey has shown that the understanding of *pqd* is relatively consistent in the various Semitic languages and that problems tend to arise when extended meanings are offered. Furthermore, the categorization of usages by Van Hooser appears to be cogent. Thus, since the passage of primary concern here (Num 1–4) is clearly focused on military affairs, it would be proper to understand *pqd* as »to muster« or »to enroll«. The question now is whether or not, and how, it is appropriate to apply that understanding to passages connected with the Levites.[48]

In Num 1, Yahweh speaks to Moses and orders him to count (*spr*) the people of Israel (v. 2).[49] The reason for the counting is spelled out in verse 3 – the males above twenty years-of-age are to be enrolled (*pqd*) in preparation for war (*sb'*). The text then records the process of mustering men from all twelve tribes (Num 1,17–46). However, Levi is not included as one of the twelve tribes.[50] Furthermore, Num 1,47.49

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[45] Y. Garfinkel, The meaning of the word *MPQD* in the Tel 'Ira Ostracon, PEQ 119 (1987), 21.

[46] See Garfinkel, 19–23. See also, L. H. Vincent and M. A. Steve, Jérusalem de l'ancien Testament, 4 vols., 1954, vol. 1, 249.

[47] See also van den Branden, esp. 65–69; and Denner, 185–187.

[48] For a discussion of military enrollment in Israel and for parallels in Mari, see G. E. Mendenhall, The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26, JBL 77 (1958), 52–66, esp. 56.

[49] There is little question that *spr* means »to count«, or »to measure«, with the secondary meaning of »to write«. See Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexicon, 665–667; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 707–709; and Koehler and Baumgartner, Hebräisches, 723–725.

[50] Obviously this is one of the occasions when problems arise with the listing of twelve tribes. At some points (e. g., Gen 35,23; Ex 1,2–5; Deut 33; I Chr 2,1–2) Levi is considered one of the twelve tribes or one of the sons of Jacob. On other occasions, such as the one here, Levi is not listed among the twelve (see also Num 34,13–19; Jos 21,8–10; Ez 48,1–29). The usual rationales for this switch are either that Levi has become a religious community and it is no longer a »regular« tribe, or that Levi has

explicitly state that the Levites are not to be mustered with those twelve tribes.

To understand this exclusion of Levi one must examine the explanation provided for the exclusion and take into account the fact that the Levites later are indeed mustered. The exclusion is curious when one notes the Hebrew phrasing in the passage. It is *not* said that the Levites are not to be mustered at all, but that they are not to be mustered »in their midst« (*btwkm* — Num 1,47). That »in their midst« refers to the twelve tribes, excluding Levi, becomes clear when Num 1,49 and 2,33 are examined. There, the Levites are not to be mustered »in the midst of the sons of Israel« (*btwk bny yśr'l*).

This exclusion of the Levites from mustering (*pqd*) must also take into account that the Levites are indeed mustered on other occasions (Num 1,50; 3,15.39; 4,23.27.37.41.45.46.49; 26,57). It is thus quite obvious that the exclusion of the Levites is not an exclusion of them from mustering, but an exclusion from mustering them with (or in the midst of) the twelve tribes.[51]

A similar exclusion is made in Chronicles. In I Chr 21,1—6 David is taking a census or numbering (*spr*) Israel, and, in verse 6, Levi and Benjamin are expressly omitted from the mustering (*pqd*).[52] However, as in the Numbers passage above, the word *btwkm* is added as a qualifier (I Chr 21,6), suggesting that a separate mustering of Levi and Benjamin may take place at another time. This happens for Levi in I Chr 23,3, where the Levites are counted (*spr*) and again in I Chr 23,24, where the Levites are mustered (*pqd*).[53] Thus, as in Num 1—4, the exclusion is not against mustering the Levites, but against the situation of their mustering — not with (or »in the midst of«) the »sons of Israel«.

This is a very curious process, in which the Levites are essentially, and apparently, excluded from the community's preparations for war. Usually, this »outsideness« of the Levites is seen in terms of their being outside of the normal pattern of mustering the people, who are all over 20 years of age, for war. Rather, the Levites are mustered at the age of

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been disbanded because of its violent behavior (Gen 49,5—7). While these issues of the lists of twelve tribes and of the secular or religious character of Levi are important, and the proposed resolutions are not wholly adequate, they will not be pursued in this context.

[51] Note that when the Levites *are* mustered, it is in accordance with the word of Yahweh. See, for example, Num 1,48—50.54; 4,49.

[52] The use of *spr* and *pqd* in the same pericope is helpful in understand *pqd*. As was noted earlier *spr* clearly means »to count«, and while we have seen that *pqd* does *not* mean »to count«, the association of counting (*spr*) and mustering or enrolling (*pqd*) is patently discernible. In addition, the use of *pqd* in this passage about David's census, and thus the implication that this was in preparation for war, may help to explain the animosity aroused by David's census. See also Num 26,2.

[53] Unlike Levi, Benjamin is not subsequently mustered (*pqd*) in Chronicles.

one month (Num 3,14), not 20 years[54], and for religious duties not military duties (Num 1,50; 3,6–7).[55] However, one could also take this statement about not mustering the Levites »in their midst« to mean that the Levites are not considered among the »sons of Israel«. That is, they are an outside group. Indeed, given the secondary and subservient status of the Levites in the »P« materials and in the Chronicler's works, this is not impossible. »P« and the Chronicler may be trying to move the Levites away from claims of power and authority by seeking to deny them their place among the tribes of Israel, and thus to justify the Levites' secondary status in the late period of Israelite religion.

Since the Levites are not to be mustered (*pqd*) with the rest of Israel but separately, it is interesting to note the circumstances in which the Levites *are* to be mustered. These circumstances are spelled out in several places (Num 1,49–54; 4,1–4.22–23.27–28.29–32.34–37.38–39. 42–43.46–47 and I Chr 23,24). In Num 1,49–54, after the prohibition of mustering (*pqd*) the Levites »in the midst of the sons of Israel« (v. 49), the Levites are then mustered on behalf of (*'l*) the tabernacle, all of its furnishings, and all that belongs to it (v. 50). Furthermore, the Levites are to guard (*šmr*) the tabernacle (v. 53).[56]

Num 4,1–4 starts a series of passages which detail the mustering of the Levites.[57] In this first passage, Moses is to »lift the head« (*nś' r'š*)[58] of

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[54] In Num 4,1–4.22–23.29–32.34–37.38–39.42–43.46–47, the Levites and the families of the Levites from 30 to 50 years of age are to work in the »tent of meeting«. However, in contrast, in Num 8,24, Levites between 25 and 50 years of age are to work in the tent of meeting and in I Chr 23,24, they are twenty years of age and older. It is interesting that this later age qualification fits with the general requirements for men preparing for war found in Num 1–4.

[55] B. Levine, Numbers 1–20, AncB 4A, 1993, 140.171–172.

[56] Levine argues that *šmr* has a variety of »connotations« and thus interprets the usage of *šmr* in this passage (Num 1,53) as »to be in charge of« (141–142). However, the etymological grounds for this meaning are weak and seem to reflect an avoidance of any connection between militaristic activities and the Levites. See Milgrom, Studies, 8–16; J. Milgrom, The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers, 1990, 341–342; and J. Spencer, The Tasks of the Levites: *šmr* and *ṣb'*, in ZAW 96 (1984), 267–271.

[57] The Levites are mustered in three groups, corresponding to the three sons of Levi: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. See Gen 46,11; Num 3,17; I Chr 5,27 [Eng. 6,1].

[58] The phrase »to lift up the head« (*nś' r'š*) is one which has the connotation of »to count«. Consult Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexicon, 635; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 671; and Koehler and Baumgartner, Hebräisches, 684. This meaning follows from situations where the phrase is used in conjunction with *pqd* (Ex 20,13) and *spr* (Num 1,2–3). See also Num 26,2; 31,26.49; I Chr 27,1. See also M. Gruber, Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East, Studia Pohl 12/1, 1986, 598–613. Gruber sees »lifting of the head« as a posture of joy, but admits that in certain contexts, it has the meaning of »make happy by taking into account« (608–609). This is the meaning which relates to the idea of counting.

the sons of Kohath, »all who come« (*kl b'*)[59] »to wage war« (*ṣb'*) »on behalf of« (*'l*) of the tabernacle. In Num 4,22–23, Moses is to »lift the head« of the sons of Gershon, and they are mustered (*pqd*), all who come (*kl hb'*) to wage war (*ṣb'*) to work for (*'bd*)[60] the tent of meeting. In Num 4,27–28, under the orders of Aaron and his sons, the sons of Gershon who are to serve (*'bd*) are mustered (*pqd*) to guard (*šmr*) the tent of meeting. In Num 4,29–32 the sons of Merari are mustered (*pqd*) all who come (*kl hb'*) to wage war (*ṣb'*) to work for (*'bd*) the tent of meeting. Similar expressions are present in Num 4,34–37 for the Kohath, in Num 4,38–39 for the Gershon, in Num 4,40–43 for Merari, and in Num 4,46–48, by way of a summary, for all the Levites. Finally, in I Chr 23,24, the Levites are mustered (*pqd*), according to the counting (*spr*), to serve (*'bd*) the house of Yahweh.

In summary, seven times the mustering is done in relation to the tent of meeting (Num 4,22–23.27–28.29–32.34–37.38–39.40–43. 46–47). Once the mustering is in relation to the tabernacle (Num 4,1–4). And once the mustering is done for the house of Yahweh, the temple (I Chr 23,24). Thus, it is clear that the mustering of the Levites is done in conjunction with the sanctuaries of Israel.

Levites: »mustering« for War and Militaristic Activities

That »mustering« is the proper understanding of *pqd* when used in relation to the Levites follows from two factors. The first factor is that the entire discussion about mustering and the Levites is placed in the larger context (Num 1–4) of preparation for war by the entire community. All eligible male members of the community are assigned responsibilities in preparing for war. While there is no indication in this passage that the Levites are »front-line troops« it is clear that during war, they had their responsibilities relative to the religious shrines. This perspective is strenghened when the second factor is examined, the purpose of the Levites' mustering. The Levites are mustered to »wage war« (*ṣb'*) for — perhaps it would be better expressed as to »defend« — the tent of meeting. They are mustered to guard (*šmr*) the tent of meeting and its components. Finally, the Levites are mustered to work (*'bd*); they are to transport and maintain the tent of meeting. So the Levites are not

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[59] Given the manuscript tradition and the later passages in Num 4 where this expression appears, the text should be read as *kl hb'* not *kl b'*.

[60] Here, in the following passages in Num 4, and in I Chr 23,24, the Levites are mustered to do physical labor or to work for the tent of meeting. For a discussion of *'bd* and the Levites see Milgrom, Studies, 60–87. See also Ex 38,21. For a discussion of a parallel to this passage and to the perspective priests who work and protect a sanctuary, see van den Branden's discussion of CIS I,88 (65–69).

to be excluded from mustering during war time; they are mustered to defend, guard, and work for the sacred sanctuaries of Israel.

To turn to a larger context, one can see that this picture of the Levites merges with other elements of the broader image of the Levites. The Levites clearly and aggressively »defend the faith«, when they kill 3,000 people who sided with Aaron against Moses and Yahweh (Ex 32). They, with Simeon, kill the males of Shechem who defiled their sister Dinah (Gen 34). The Levites are associated with the ark (Deut 3,9.25; Jos 3,3; 8,33 I Sam 6,15) and even guard (*šmr*) the ark (Num 3,17), which is a symbol of the militaristic prowess of God (Num 10,33−36; 14,44−45; I Sam 4−6, esp. I Sam 4,1−4). The Levites are to guard (*šmr*) the tent of meeting (Num 8,26; 18,3.4), the tabernacle (Num 31,30.47), the house of Yahweh (I Chr 23,4; Ezek 44,14), and the gates of the temple (I Chr 9,27; II Chr 8,14). The Levites are the militaristic defenders of the cult and its cultic centers.

This article explores two questions. The first question is the appropriate understanding of the term *pqd*. The second question is the use of *pqd* in association with the activities of the Levites in Numbers 1−4. An examination of *pqd* in Hebrew and several Semitic and cognate languages, reveals that its primary meanings are »to enroll« or »to muster« in association with militaristic or cultic activities. This same perspective is found in the Hebrew Bible (Num 1−4) when the term is used in connection with the Levites. They are »mustered« in conjunction with the sanctuary of Israel, and their role is the military defense of the sanctuary. Thus, the Levites are the militaristic defenders of the cult and its cultic centers.