WHAT DO MIQNEH AND BEHÊMÂ MEAN IN GENESIS XXXIV 23, XXXVI 6; NUMBERS XXXI 9, XXXII 26\(^1\)

by

B.A. MASTIN
Bangor, North Wales

The Revised Version renders the verses which will be discussed in this article as follows:

Shall not their cattle (miqnehem) and their substance (\(\text{w}^\text{qinyănám}\)) and all their beasts (\(\text{w}^\text{qol-brêhmtám}\)) be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. (Gen. xxxiv 23)

And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the souls of his house, and his cattle (\(\text{w}^\text{qet-miqnehú}\)), and all his beasts (\(\text{w}^\text{qet-kol-brêhmtó}\)), and all his possessions (\(\text{w}^\text{qet kol-qinyănó}\)), which he had gathered in the land of Canaan; and went into a land away from his brother Jacob. (Gen. xxxvi 6)

And the children of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their cattle (\(\text{w}^\text{qet kol-brêhmtám}\)), and all their flocks (\(\text{w}^\text{qet-kol-miqnehem}\)), and all their goods (\(\text{w}^\text{qet-kol-hêlám}\)), they took for a prey. (Num. xxxi 9)

Our little ones, our wives, our flocks (miqnehú), and all our cattle (\(\text{w}^\text{kol-brêhmtěnú}\)), shall be there in the cities of Gilead. (Num. xxxii 26)

A. Knobel holds that at Gen. xxxiv 23, xxxvi 6; Num. xxxii 26 "mit miqneh ist...das Klein- und Rindvieh..., mit brêhma das Lastvieh, als Kameele und Esel gemeint",\(^2\) and he takes an identical view of Num. xxxi 9.\(^3\) E.F.C. Rosenmüller may show that he is aware of this distinction in his translation of Gen. xxxiv 23, "pecora eorum...et omnia eorum jumenta", but if he is indeed employing "iumentum" in its strict sense "draught animal", "beast of burden", he does not explain why he thinks this word is appropriate here.\(^4\) I have been unable to discover when this inter-

---

\(^1\) For the editions of the ancient versions and of Josephus and the abbreviations that have been used see the list at the end of the article.

\(^2\) Die Genesis (Leipzig, 1852), p. 241 = \(\text{z1860},\) p. 269.

\(^3\) Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua (Leipzig, 1861), p. 170.

\(^4\) Scholia in Vetus Testamentum I (Leipzig, \(\text{t1821}\)), p. 522. See pp. 493-4 below for broader senses in which "iumentum" has been used.
pretation was first advanced. It is still current, and HALAT understands ἑκῆμα (s.v. 3) in Gen. xxxiv 23, xxxvi 6 as “Zug- u. Lastiere”, as does the most recent edition of W. Gesenius’s Handwörterbuch, which also cites Num. xxxii 26. The purpose of this article is to re-examine the theory that miqueh and ἑκῆμα describe different kinds of animal in these verses. The LXX of Gen. xlvii 18, where καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ τὰ κτήνη is parallel to the Massoretic Text’s ὑμικήν ἥβηκῆμα, will, however, not be discussed here.

It will be convenient to begin by considering the evidence supplied by the ancient versions and by rabbinic commentators. It will then be asked whether ἑκῆμα denotes “draught animals” or “beasts of burden” elsewhere in the Old Testament, and the meaning of ἑκῆμα and miqueh will be reviewed briefly. Finally, it will be suggested that ἑκῆμα and miqueh can be understood most satisfactorily at Gen. xxxiv 23, xxxvi 6; Num. xxxi 9, xxxii 26 in the light of Gen. xxxi 18; Num. xxxv 3; Josh. xiv 4.

I

The LXX translates ἑκῆμα τὰ κτήνη at Gen. xxxvi 6; Num. xxxi 9, xxxii 26 (v.l. τὰ σκύη at Num. xxxii 26) and τὰ τετράποδα (v.l. τὰ ὑπάρχοντα) at Gen. xxxiv 23, and miqueh τὰ κτήνη (v.l. τὰ ὑπάρχοντα) at Gen. xxxiv 23, τὰ ὑπάρχοντα at Gen. xxxvi 6, τὰ ἐγκτήτα (v.l. ὅσα ἐκτήσαντο and τὰ ἐγκτήματα and τὰ κτήματα) at Num. xxxi 9, and αἱ κτῆσεις (v.l. αἱ κτίσεις and ή κτήσις) at Num. xxxii 26, where it is added in the hexaplaric recension.

No relevant information is provided by Josephus, as there is no parallel in the Jewish Antiquities to Gen. xxxiv 23, xxxvi 6; Num. xxxi 9, while it is unclear to what in Num. xxxii κτῆσεως (Ant. IV 170) refers.

Because the Old Latin is dependent on a non-hexaplaric text of the LXX, it presumably contains an equivalent for ἑκῆμα but not for miqueh at Num. xxxii 26. If this is so, it uses “pecora” at Gen. xxxvi 6; Num. xxxi 9, xxxii 26 where the Massoretic Text has ἑκῆμα, and “substantia” at Gen. xxxvi 6 and “possessiones” (so Codex Lugudunensis) or “(omnia) quae possederant” (so

---