

As far as I can see, commentators all take R. Yudan's words as some sort of appendage to R. Abahu's statement. The latter commented on Abraham's tent, the former clarified, expanded or revised his comments with reference to the tent. This seems to me a fundamental misunderstanding. R. Yudan's remarks have nothing to do with R. Abahu's and are not made with reference to Abraham's tent. When he says כהדין דרומליס, he is talking about Abraham himself. The words כהדין דרומליס, whatever their exact sense, look forward, not backward (as כהדין, כהדין, כהדין frequently do).⁹ Abraham was like a דרומליס and so, when he realized that the strangers were coming toward his tent, he ran toward them to greet them.

What then is דרומליס?¹⁰ It is a word that signifies a 'runner, racer, sprinter'. Is there any known Greek word that might offer itself as a candidate. I note a possibility. The word δρομαλός is not found in any modern lexicon of ancient Greek (I refer specifically to LSJ with Supplement, Sophocles, and Lampe; DGE has not yet advanced far enough).¹¹ It does however occur in the Byzantine lexicon of Hesychius (s.v. δρομαλός λαγῶς).¹² Although it has been generally assumed that δρομαλός is a corruption of δρομαῖος (hence the absence of the word from our lexica),¹³ it is apparent that this is not a corruption in the *traditio* of Hesychius, for Hesychius clearly believed the word to be δρομαλός (His explanation depends on the connection of ἀλισκόμενος to -al-). Thus, it may be that δρομαλός did exist, nearly an equivalent of δρομαῖος, though with its own special usage and nuance, just as τροχαῖος and τροχαλός exist side by side.¹⁴ If so, R. Yudan said, 'He was like a runner. He said, 'If I see them veering from the road, I will know that they are coming to me'. When he saw them veering, immediately he ran toward them'.

If I have correctly understood the Genesis Rabbah text, then we have not only gained illumination into a rabbinic text, but we have also acquired valuable evidence for the existence of a Greek word that the lexica have chosen to ignore.

⁹ See e.g. *Kritot* 17a, *Ktuvot* 66b, *JT Sheqalim* 4.4, *JT BM* 1.4. The Aruch's suggested δρομώλης could have led him to see this, but he did not capitalize.

¹⁰ In some manuscripts spelled דרומליס. It is also so spelled in the *Yalkut Shimoni's* version at *Genesis* para. 82.

¹¹ Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon with Supplement*, Oxford 1968; E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Boston 1870; G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1968; *Diccionario Griego-Español*, Madrid 1980-.

¹² K. Latte ed., *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* I, Hauniae 1953, 479.

¹³ M. Schmidt ed., *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* I, repr. Amsterdam 1965, 537.

¹⁴ Given the very limited evidence for δρομαλός, we cannot say whether it was commonly used as a noun. But Greek adjectives were frequently used as substantives.

Genesis 27:16 reports that Rebecca covered Jacob's hands with goatskins. On this R. Yochanan commented (at Gen. Rab. 65.17), כהרין אדרעוי דאבונן יעקב, ד'פירוסופא עמודין דיפירוסופא,¹⁵ 'Jacob's two arms were like two pillars דיפירוסופא'. Theodor-Albeck rightly observe that the meaning of דיפירוסופא is unclear. Indeed, no explanation offered has been remotely plausible. Many can be found in Theodor-Albeck's commentary ad loc. and will not be repeated here. There was however a more intelligible tradition of R. Yochanan's statement. Thus, *Sechel Tov* ad loc.¹⁶ gives R. Yochanan's words in Hebrew, שני זרועי יעקב היו כשני עמודים של שיש. Similarly, the Aruch explained the mysterious word as שיש¹⁷ and the report of R. Yochanan's statement in the editio princeps of the *Yalkut Shimoni* incorporated the explanation שש עמודי into the very text.¹⁸ 'Marble pillars' is suitable for the biblical context that focuses on the smoothness of Jacob's skin (Gen. 27:11, 'Esau is hairy, but I am smooth-skinned'). If these texts accurately reflect an equivalent Hebrew version — or even a correct interpretation of the Aramaic — then the meaning of דיפירוסופא may be elucidated. It is probably a corruption of דיפירוס[א], with פ being a dittography of וס. Thus, Jacob's arms were like 'two pillars of Paros'. Paros was one of antiquity's most famous centers of marble. At Esther 1:6 the phrase שש עמודי ('marble pillars') is rendered by the Septuagint στύλοισ̄ παρίνοισ̄ ('Parian pillars').¹⁹ Rashi's comment on the strange word at Gen. Rab., that it is 'a name of a place' (שם מקום), may be the vestiges of a tradition that knew the reference here was to Paros.²⁰

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¹⁵ Text of Theodor and Albeck (n. 2), 729.

¹⁶ Buber, vol. 1, 111.

¹⁷ So reported by the *Matnot Kehuna* ad Gen. Rab. 65.17, though surviving texts of the Aruch do not contain it.

¹⁸ See Hyman's apparatus at Yalkut Genesis, sect. 115.

¹⁹ Similarly, at I Chr 29:2 שש אבני is λίθων πάριον.

²⁰ At Esther Rabbah 2.7 (ad 1:6) there is a reference to the importing to Media of marble pillars מיפרק אנטון, which is usually taken to be a corruption of 'from Proconnesos', another center of marble in the ancient world. I suppose it not impossible that in our Gen. Rab. passage דיפירוסופא might be a reference to Proconnesos, but this seems to me less likely.