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The Meaning of נִמְדָּ, Judges iii. 16.

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THE Greek translators think of a little dagger (*επιφίδιον*, Jos., *Antt.*, v. 4, 2), and render נִמְדָּ by *σπιθαμή*, 'span, half cubit' (LXX., Theod., Syr. hex.), or *παλαιστής*, handbreadth (*παλαιστιαῖον*, sc. *μάχαιραν*, Sym.); similarly Jerome, *palma manus*.¹ The Jewish interpreters generally take נִמְדָּ as a cubit, or more specifically, as a short cubit, אַמְהַ נְמוּדָּ² (cf. *Jer. Yoma*, iv. 4, fol. 41^c); so Rashi on Judges, and Rashbam on *Baba bathra*, 100^a: "נְמוּדִים are small cubits without the fingers; others maintain that they are full cubits." This interpretation is cited also in the *Aruch*, s.v. נִמְדָּ.³ So the word was understood by the Peshitto, which renders קַפְסִים אֹרְכָה. The native lexx. explain קַפְסִים as "a cubit with the fingers bent," and the Arabic translator of Judges (from the Peshitto) renders it *dirā'un ġaira qabḍatīhi*, "a cubit without the fist," i.e. one-sixth shorter than the ordinary cubit.

The primary meaning of נִמְדָּ is apparently, 'contract, draw up': the Targum renders Heb. אֶמְסַר, Jud. iii. 15, xx. 16, by נִמְדָּ; cf. also *Pesachim* 111^a, *Chullin* 43^a, *Gittin* 57^a. The noun נִמְדָּ may therefore originally have meant 'the clenched hand, fist.' So it seems to have been understood by some of the Greek translators. Aquila renders it by *γρόνθος*, 'fist,' and has evidently the same thing in mind when, in Ezek. xxvii. 11, he translates נִמְדָּיִם *πυγμαῖοι*, i.e. 'men a *πυγμή* (נִמְדָּ) tall.' Another translator, whose version of Judges is preserved to us entire in Codex B, Cod. Brit. Mus. Add. 20002, and a considerable group of cursive MSS.,⁴ renders נִמְדָּ by *δράξ*, which, in Lev. vi. 8 (15), ii. 2, v. 12, represents קַפְסִין, 'closed hand, fistful.' Subsequently נִמְדָּ came to mean 'a fist cubit,' i.e. one measured to the knuckles of the closed hand. This development of meanings is an exact parallel to that which we see in the Greek *πυγμή*, 'fist,' then, the distance from the elbow to the knuckles of the clenched fist, six finger-breadths less than a cubit.

¹ Probably *palma* is here 'a span'; see Jerome on Ezek. xl. 5.

² The variant נְמוּדָּה (Rashi, edd.; cf. *Zebachim*, 62^b), a cubit cut short, is probably due to copyists, — an easier reading of obvious etymology and meaning.

³ See also Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli*, etc., s.v.

⁴ See Lagarde, *Septuaginta Studien*, 1892, 1 ff. B has here been conformed to LXX., Theod.