

Lev. 25:29 If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the redemption period shall be a year.³⁰ If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, the house in the walled city shall pass to the purchaser **beyond reclaim** [לְצַמְיָתָהּ] throughout the ages; it shall not be released in the jubilee.³¹ But houses in villages that have no encircling walls shall be classed as open country: they may be redeemed, and they shall be released through the jubilee.³² As for the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities they hold—the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption.³³ Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city they hold—shall be released through the jubilee; for the houses in the cities of the Levites are their holding among the Israelites.³⁴ But the unenclosed land about their cities cannot be sold, for that is their holding for all time.

Lev. 25:23 But the land must not be sold **beyond reclaim** [לְצַמְיָתָהּ], for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.²⁴ Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

Baruch Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS Torah Commentary)

30. shall pass to the purchaser beyond reclaim throughout the ages Rather, “shall legally become the property of the purchaser.” Here, the sense of Hebrew *ve-kam*, literally “to stand,” is “to belong to, become the property of.” Compare Genesis 23:20, literally, “And the field and the cave within it became the property (*va-yakom*) of Abraham.” This meaning is rare, but precise, when it occurs.

RASHI: **But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim.** The Hebrew phrase translated by NJPS as “beyond reclaim” really means “definitively.” It must not be sold in a way that definitively severs the original owner’s connection with it “in perpetuity” (OJPS).

IBN EZRA: **Beyond reclaim.** As with its rhyming synonym, *keritut* (Deut. 24:1), the first ה of this word *tzemitut* is part of the root. A verb from this root is found in Ps. 94:23, “the LORD our God will *annihilate* them” irreversibly.

Dictionary of Classical Hebrew

צַמְיָתָהּ ₂ n.f. **perpetuity**—צַמְיָתָהּ—(in) **perpetuity**, i.e. for ever, or, **without right of redemption**.
→ צַמַּת *put an end to*.

צַמַּת I ₁₅ vb. **put an end to, exterminate**—Qal ₁ Pf. צַמַּתוּ—**put an end to**.

Ni. ₂ Pf. נִצְמַתוּ, נִצְמַתוּ—**disappear, vanish**.

Pi. ₂ Pf. צַמַּתוּ, צַמַּתוּ—**annihilate, exterminate, consume**.

Pilel ₁ Pf. צַמַּתוּ, צַמַּתוּ—**annihilate, exterminate, consume**.

Hi. ₁₀ Pf. הִצְמַתָהּ; impf. יִצְמַתוּ, 2ms תִּצְמַת, תִּצְמַת; + waw וַיִּצְמַתוּ; impv. הִצְמַתוּ; ptc. מִצְמַתוּ—**annihilate, exterminate, destroy**.

* **צַמַּת II** ₂ vb. **be silent**—Pi. ₁ Pf. mss צַמַּתוּ—**silence, reduce to silence** (unless צַמַּת I pi. *annihilate*).

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Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (Anchor Bible)

beyond reclaim. lišemîtu, rendered *lahalûṭîn* “in perpetuity” (*Tgs.*). Two meanings are ascertainable for the root *šmt* in Biblical Hebrew: ‘destroy’ and ‘silence’. One cannot but compare similar connotations in the related roots *dmh* ‘destroy’ (Isa 15:1; Jer 47:5) and *dmm* ‘silence’ (Exod 15:16; 1 Sam 2:9; Jer 8:14; 47:6; Amos 5:13; Pss 30:13; 131:2). Both these meanings are present in *šemîtu*: the seller’s claim is “ended / destroyed,” or the seller is constrained to silence. In either case, the seller cannot revoke the sale. Another suggestion relates this root to *šmd* ‘tie, bind’; the property, henceforth, is bound to the buyer and his progeny (Weinfeld 1990a: 59).

Of greater relevance is Akkadian *šamātu* ‘finally hand over (real estate)’, first noticed by Rabinowitz (1958) in a Ugaritic document and supported by Loretz (1962: 269–79) and Boyd (1978: 350–58) in the expression *šamit adi dāriti* ‘finally hand over to all generations’ (*PRU* 3.15:136; 16:131, 137), which is the precise semantic equivalent of *laššemîtu ... ledōrōtāyw* (v. 30; cf. *CAD* 16.94). In Mesopotamia (and Ugarit), “only real-estate at the ultimate disposal of the crown seems to be at issue in these cases ... the implication is clear that normal real-estate transactions were subject to royal annulment unless specifically declared to be a *šmt*, a practice prohibited by Leviticus” (Kaufman 1984: 280).

The terms *šamat* and *šummit* are also found as glosses to the Sumerogram SAM.TIL.LA.BI.SE, ‘at its full price’ (*CAD* 16.94–95). The chances are that the purchaser did not pay the full price of the field; otherwise, it could *not* have been subject to the *derôr* / jubilee; it would have been *lišemîtu* ‘in perpetuity’ (Muffs 1965b: 2.1965). The *derôr* did not affect property bought at *kesep mālē* ‘full price’ (Gen 23:9), *ana šim gamer* (Lewy 1958: 26, n. 48), *dāmīn gamrīn* (Milik 1954; 1957a: 264, 1. 6); compare *Murabaʿat* document 30:18–19 (Muffs 1969: 20, n. 4).

3) Ras Shamra Akkadian Sale

A ipšur ²⁾ *eqlētišu ana B ina x kaspa eqlu šami/ad* ³⁾ *qadi serdišu qadu karānišu qadu gabbu mimmušu* ⁴⁾ *ana B u ana mārī mārīšu ana dārīti*

“A sold (lit. “released”) his fields to B for x (amount) of silver. The field—together with its olive trees, together with its vineyards, together with everything in it (lit. “all its whatever-it-is”)—has become the vested/inalienable property (lit. “it is [now] yoked to”) B and his children’s children for [all] generations.” ⁵⁾

³⁾ For the legal functions of this term, see, for the time being, *CAD*, S, pp. 93–95 and O. Loretz, *Biblische Zeitschrift*, 6 (1962), pp. 269–279. There is little doubt that the biblical expression *li-šemîtu* “(sale) beyond redemption” (Septuagint: βεβαίως), Lev. 25:30, is the reflex of the Canaanite term. For the d/t sound change, cf. M. Held, *Eretz-Israel*, 3 (1954), pp. 101–103.

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