This word presents an interesting study in its unique origins, and in its unique journey into the Teutonic languages. The etymology appears historically in Akkadian and Hebrew, and its transfer exclusively to Teutonic suggests that other factors may affect how it was used in both the original languages and in the ensuing languages.

Three major related words appear in Hebrew, with four main meanings:

- דָּם = dam = blood
- דָּמָה = dama = be like, resemble
- דָּמָה = dama = cease, cause to cease, cut off, destroy
- דִּמְי = dami = cessation, pause, quiet, rest
- דָּמָם = damam = be or grow dumb, silent, still
- stupefy, be astounded, stupefied
- דָּמָה = damamah = (silence) whisper

Related words in Akkadian are dāmu = blood, da'mu = dark, da'āmu = to become dark, damtu, dutu = shape. The dam word is also found in Arabic, Ugaritic, Syriac, and so on.

An interesting cognate in Hebrew is the word for red, Adom, which is so familiar to us as the father of mankind. Adam literally was named Red. Note how dam = blood is the color red.

This red color carried on down among the ancient Hebrew people, who were noted for their handsome features and outstanding physiques.

Lam 4:7 -- Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more red than rubies, their appearance like sapphires.

1 Sam 16:12 -- So he sent and had him (David) brought in. He was red, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

1 Sam 17:42-43 -- He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, red and handsome, and he despised him.

This word admuw, or admowm, is mostly translated as "ruddy," simply because the Jewish and Christian translators did not want to use the word "red." Use of the word red would identify genetic inheritance beyond their conceptual framework. For example we can see it in the manner in which The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament explains the traditional understanding of the word:

- Ugaritic adam is the rouging done by the nobility after bathing. The Bible describes the color of skin (like coral, Lam 4:7), war shields (parallel to scarlet, Nah 2:3), fermented wine (Prov 23:31), sin (Isa 1:18), and tabernacle curtains (Ex 25:5). Also note Old Akkadian adamu "dark red," as of a garment, Akkadian adamatu "dark red soil" and adamu "red blood," and Aramaic adam, as of blood.

Edom: This name was given to Esau, who desired red pottage more than his birthright.
(Gen 25:30; 36:1). Note how this folk tradition, to avoid the literal meaning, finds another explanation of the word. Rebecca gave birth to twins; the first was colored "red," (Gen 25:25, NIV). If Edom was red so also was Jacob, as were their father, Isaac, and their grandfather, Abraham.

We can see the manner in which the translators used the words, from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.

דֹּם OT:119 adam (aw-dam'); to show blood (in the face), i.e. flush or turn rosy:
KJV - be (dyed, made) red (ruddy).

OT:120 'adam (aw-dawm'); from OT:119; ruddy i.e. a human being (an individual or the species, mankind, etc.):

OT:121 'Adam (aw-dawm'); the same as OT:120; Adam the name of the first man, also of a place in Palestine:

OT:122 'adom (aw-dome'); from OT:119; rosy:
KJV - red, ruddy.

OT:123 'Edom (ed-ome'); or (fully) 'Edowm (ed-ome'); from OT:122; red; Edom, the elder twin-brother of Jacob; hence the region (Idumaea) occupied by him.

OT:124 'odem (o'-dem); from OT:119; redness, i.e. the ruby, garnet, or some other red gem.

I have been unable to determine how the dama = resemble or the other words derived from dam = red. A relationship must exist, understood by the ancient people, that now escapes us. However, the dama = cease, dami = pause, rest, and quiet, and damam = dumb, silent and still are related by simple semantic relationship. The one word then came into the Teutonic languages for that singular use only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
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| Dumb = silent, speechless, dull, stupid. | דָּמָה = cease, perish.  
Dama = cease, perish,  
Dami = silence,  
Damma = one silenced, destroyed |

Compare Old Norse dumbr, Gothic dumbs, Old Saxon dumb, German dumm. Anglo Saxon dumb; akin to Danish dom = stupid, dumb, Swedish dumb and Old Norse forms meant only mute, speechless. In Old English dumb = silent, unable to speak; in Old High German (thumb) it meant both this and stupid.

These diverse applications suggest as the original sense such notion as "stupid," "not understanding," which might pass naturally either into "deaf" or "dumb."

1. lacking intelligence or good judgment; stupid; dull-witted.
2. lacking the power of speech (often offensive when applied to humans): a dumb animal.
3. temporarily unable to speak: dumb with astonishment.
4. refraining from any or much speech; silent.

ᠵָמַה = cease, cause to cease, cut off, destroy
1. cease Je 14:17 (eyes from weeping) La 3:49 (id.) 
2. cause to cease, cut off, destroy, Israel: Je 6:2; Ho 4:5. 
3. Je 47:5; Ez 32:2; Ho 10:7; be cut off, destroyed, ruined, of a city Is 15:1, Je 47:5; of people Ho 4:6, Zp 1:11

ᠵָמִי = cessation, pause, quiet, rest;
— 1. quiet, Is 62:6 keep not quiet (let there be no quiet to you); in prayer to God ψ 83:2 keep not quiet

_PHYS = be or grow dumb, silent, still
ψ 35:15 Jb 30:27; Am 5:13
5. made, done, etc., without speech.
6. lacking some usual property, characteristic, etc.
7. performed in pantomime; mimed.

from natural infirmity (Ex. 4:11); not knowing what to say (Prov. 31:8); unwillingness to speak (Ps. 39:9; Lev. 10:3).

4. be still Jb 31:34; = perish Je 8:14; 48:2 ψ 31:18; be silent to i.e. be resigned to ψ 37:7; 62:6.

damam is cognate to the Ugaritic dmm "be silent." It occurs twenty-nine times in the Qal, and five times in the Niphal. It is found primarily in poetry.
damam is often found in a context of catastrophe and mourning. Aaron and Ezekiel had to keep quiet in spite of the death of loved ones (Lev 10:3; Ezek 24:17). The elders of Judah sit silently with dust on their heads (Lam 2:10). Sometimes the notion of stress is absent, however, as in Job 29:21.

In a different context, however, this verb is used by Jeremiah in his aspiration that his tears shed for his people not "cease" (Jer 14:17; cf. Lam 3:49). Isaiah also uses the verb (in the Niphal perfect) in his familiar, "Woe is me for I am 'undone'" (Isa 6:5).

damà is used seventeen times in the OT and twelve of these are in the Niphal stem.

Rest, silence, occurs four times: Isa 62:6-7; Ps 83:1; Isa 38:10.

List of References


SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, J. Strong, Abingdon Press, New York, 1890. Now available on line from multiple sources, such as BIBLESOFT, 22014 7th Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98198.


TWOT: Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, Moody Press, 1980. Now available on line from multiple sources, such as BIBLESOFT, 22014 7th Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98198.


I offer no references for words that come from various other languages, and that can be traced by browsing the World Wide Web.