

Abstract:

Biblical Hebrew Verbs of Writing

This paper concerns Biblical Hebrew verbs that have to do with ancient Israel's technology of writing. The study examines a group of eleven Hebrew verbal roots, all of which refer to the process of writing. The analyzed terms can be divided into two groups: (1) verbs that carry the meaning 'engrave'; and (2) verbs that carry meanings such as 'write', 'record', 'inscribe', and 'copy'. The verbal roots of Group 1 are *ḥ-š-b* (*niphal*), *ḥ-q-q* (*hiphil*; *qal* passive), *ḥ-r-š* (*qal*), *ḥ-r-t* (*qal*), and *p-t-ḥ* (*piel*); and we may add the root *p-s-l* (*qal*) 'cut (stone tablets)'. The roots of Group 2 are *k-t-b* 'write' (*qal*, *niphal*, *piel*), *s-p-r* 'record' (*qal*), *ʿ-t-q* 'copy' (*hiphil*), *r-š-m* 'be inscribed' (*qal* passive), and *ʿ-l-h* 'be inserted' (*hophal*).

By examining comparative Semitic evidence and the biblical literary material, the study seeks to determine the semantic range of each verb as well as any overlap that may exist between the verbs. Also, the study endeavors to connect the literary and linguistic data with the archeological and epigraphic evidence that exists for the processes of writing in the ancient Near East.

While certain existing research focuses on the literary data, other studies describe the mechanics of writing; still other works gather information on the archaeological finds or epigraphic evidence for writing in the ancient Near East. In this study, I intend to pull together the fields of philology, epigraphy, and archeology in order to obtain a clearer picture of the unique meaning of each verbal root related to the act of writing. The aim of this paper is to present a fresh reexamination of the verbal roots listed above, and to offer various adjustments in the semantic meanings of some roots as well as additional evidence as regards the meanings of other roots.

Biblical Hebrew Verbs of Writing

The Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego, November 23, 2019

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I. Verbal Roots with the Meaning 'engrave, incise' > 'inscribe'

1. ḥ-ṣ-b

<p>Biblical Usage: 24x <i>qal</i> 13x; <i>niph</i> 1x; <i>pi</i> 1x; <i>hiph</i> 1x <i>ḥōṣēb</i> 8x (nominalized <i>qal</i> participle) Meaning: 'hew, bore' > 'engrave' (1x <i>niph</i>)</p>	<p>Etymology: Aram ḥ-ṣ-b 'hew'; Punic ḥ-ṣ-b 'quarry stone'; <i>mḥšb</i> 'stone quarry'; Arab ḥaṣaba 'deposit or throw pebbles' (?); Mehri ḥaṣáwb 'to make a pile of pebbles' (?); Jibbali ḥaṣbet 'pebbles' (?)</p>
<p>Job 19:23–24:</p>	<p>מִי־יִתֵּן אִפּוֹ וְיִכְתְּבוּן מִלִּי מִי־יִתֵּן בְּסֹפֶר וְיִחְקֹוּ: בְּעֵט־בְּרָזֶל וְעַפְרֹת לָעֵד בַּצּוּר יִחְצְבוּן: Oh that my words were written down, oh that they were recorded [yūḥāqû] in a document. With a pen of iron and lead (?) may they be carved/engraved [yēḥāšbûn] forever in stone.</p>

2. ḥ-q-q

<p>Biblical Usage: 19x <i>qal</i> 9x; <i>poel</i> 8x; <i>pu</i> 1x; <i>hoph</i> 1x <i>(ḥōq 127x, ḥūqqā 104x 'statute, decree')</i> Meaning: 'bore, carve' (1x) > 'engrave images' (2x) > 'inscribe' (1x <i>hoph</i>, 2x <i>qal</i>) > 'decree' (13x)</p>	<p>Etymology: Aram ḥ-q-q 'engrave, carve out; decree'; Arab ḥaqqa 'cut a furrow'; ḥaqqa 'be suitable'; Phoen mḥq 'sculptor' (?); Zinçirli tḥq 'lyh 'write on it' (?); Ge'ez ḥaqaqa 'level off, fasten, fix, make exact'; ḥaqq 'right'; Old South Arab ḥqq 'valid, binding'; Soq ḥaq 'judgement'</p>
<p>Job 19:23–24:</p>	<p>מִי־יִתֵּן אִפּוֹ וְיִכְתְּבוּן מִלִּי מִי־יִתֵּן בְּסֹפֶר וְיִחְקֹוּ: בְּעֵט־בְּרָזֶל וְעַפְרֹת לָעֵד בַּצּוּר יִחְצְבוּן: Oh that my words were written down, oh that they were recorded [yūḥāqû] in a document. With a pen of iron and lead (?) may they be carved/engraved [yēḥāšbûn] forever in stone.</p>
<p>Isa 30:8</p>	<p>עֲתָה בּוֹא כְתֹבָה עַל־לִיחַ אֲתָם וְעַל־סֵפֶר חֻקָּה... Now, come, write it [kotbāh] on a tablet with them, and on a document inscribe it [ḥuqqāh]...</p>
<p>Isa 49:16</p>	<p>הֵן עַל־כַּפַּיִם סִקְתִּיךָ... For I have inscribed [ḥaqqōtik] you on my palms...</p>

3. ḥ-r-š (ḥārûšā)

<p>Biblical Usage: 27x <i>qal</i> 23x; <i>niph</i> 2x; <i>hiph</i> 1x; <i>paul</i> (<i>ḥārûšā</i>) 1x</p> <p>Meaning: 'plow, dig' (25x) > 'engrave' (1x <i>paul</i>)</p>	<p>Etymology: <i>*ḥ-r-θ</i>: Ug <i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'plow'; Aram <i>ḥ-r-t</i> 'plow; engrave'; Arab <i>ḥaraṭa</i> 'plow'; Ge'ez <i>harasa</i> 'plow'; Akk <i>erēšum</i> 'cultivate land'; Old South Arab <i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'cultivate'</p> <p>(*<i>ḥ-r-s</i>: <i>ḥārāš</i> 'craftsman' is etymologically unrelated to *<i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'plow > engrave'. Rather, <i>ḥārāš</i> 'craftsman' is connected with Ug <i>ḥrš</i> 'craftsman' and Akk <i>eršu</i> 'wise')</p>
<p>Jer 17:1:</p>	<p>חֲטֵאת יְהוּדָה כְּתוּבָה בְּעֵט בְּרָזֶל בְּצֶפֶן שֵׁמִיר חֲרוּשָׁה עַל-לִוִּי לָבָם וּלְקַרְנוֹת מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם: The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with a point of the hardest stone, it is incised [<i>ḥārûšā</i>] on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.</p>

4. ḥ-r-t (ḥārût)

<p>Biblical Usage: 1x <i>paul</i> (<i>ḥārût</i>) 1x</p> <p>Meaning: Aram: 'plow, dig' > 'engrave'</p>	<p>Etymology: Heb < Aram < *<i>ḥ-r-θ</i>: Ug <i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'plow'; Aram <i>ḥ-r-t</i> 'plow; engrave'; Arab <i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'plow'; Ge'ez <i>harasa</i> 'plow'; Akk <i>erēšum</i> 'cultivate land'; Old South Arab <i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'cultivate'</p> <p>(*<i>ḥ-r-s</i>: <i>ḥārāš</i> 'craftsman' is etymologically unrelated to *<i>ḥ-r-θ</i> 'plow > engrave'. Rather, <i>ḥārāš</i> 'craftsman' is connected with Ug <i>ḥrš</i> 'craftsman' and Akk <i>eršu</i> 'wise')</p>
<p>Exod 32:16:</p>	<p>וְהַלְחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה וְהַמְּכַתֵּב מִכְתֵּב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל-הַלְחַת: And the tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved [<i>ḥārût</i>] on the tablets.</p>

5. p-t-ḥ (and pittu^aḥ)

<p>Biblical Usage: 9x <i>piel</i> 9x <i>pittû^aḥ</i> 'engraving' 11x</p> <p>Meaning: 'engrave, carve'</p>	<p>Etymology: <i>*p-t-ḥ</i>: Phoen <i>pth</i> 'inscription, engraving (on gold)'; Off Aram <i>pthn</i>; Akk <i>patāḥum</i> 'puncture, bore through' Bab, NeoAss; <i>puttuḥum</i> 'pierced' OldBab; Old South Arab <i>ftxm</i> 'engraved stone'; Coptic 'engrave'; Arab <i>fathat</i> 'ring' (?)</p>
<p>Exod 28:11:</p>	<p>מַעֲשֵׂה חֲרָשׁ אֶבֶן פְּתוּחִי חֲתָם תַּפְתָּח אֶת-שְׁתֵּי הָאֲבִנִּים עַל-שְׁמֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִסִּבַּת מִשְׁבְּצוֹת זָהָב תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם: A work of a craftsman of stone, like an engraving [<i>pittûḥê</i>] of a seal, you shall engrave [<i>təpattah</i>] the two stones with the names of the Israelites. You shall set them in settings of gold.</p>

6–7. *p-s-l* and *q-l-ʿ*

<p>6. Biblical Usage <i>p-s-l</i>: 6x <i>qal</i> 6x <i>(pesel</i> 31x, <i>pāsîl</i> 23x 'carved image, statue')</p> <p>Meaning: 'carve, hew'</p>	<p>Etymology: Ug <i>psl</i> 'engraver'; <i>pslt</i> 'sculpture'; <i>pslt</i> 'braid' (?); Akk <i>pasālum</i> 'turn away' (?)</p>
<p>7. Biblical Usage <i>q-l-ʿ</i>: 3x <i>qal</i> 3x <i>(miqlaʿat</i> 'carving' 3x)</p> <p>Meaning: 'carve'</p>	<p>Etymology: Geʿez <i>qalʿa</i> 'uncover, bare, open, remove, strip, unveil, be torn, tear' (?); Arab <i>qalaʿa</i> 'pluck out, extract; remove clothes' (?); Heb <i>qelaʿ</i> 'curtain' (?)</p>

II. The Verbal Root *k-t-b*

8. *k-t-b*

<p>Biblical Usage: 225x <i>qal</i> 93x; <i>paul</i> 117x; <i>niph</i> 17x; <i>pi</i> 2x</p> <p>Meaning: 'pierce' (?) > 'incise, engrave' > 'inscribe, write' > 'record'</p>	<p>Etymology:</p> <p>1. <i>k-t-b</i> 'write': Phoen; Aram; Ug; Arab; Geʿez; Mod South Arab;</p> <p>2. <i>k-t-b</i> 'pierce' (?): Arab 'sew together'; Amhar 'vaccinate, cut, scrape, scratch, prick'; Syriac & Jewish Bab Aram <i>maktābā</i> 'awl'; Akk <i>takāpum</i> 'prick, puncture' (?)</p>
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<p>1. 'inscribe, write with ink; record'</p>	<p>writing on scrolls (173x)</p> <p>a. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>sēper</i> 'document; scroll' 114x (including 10x where <i>sēper</i> means 'letter', which may refer to ostraca)</p> <p>b. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>māgilla/māgillat sēper</i> 'scroll' 9x (e.g., Jer 36:2, 6)</p> <p>c. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>gillāyôn</i> 'scroll' 1x (Isa 8:1)</p> <p>d. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>ʾiggeret</i> 'letter' 2x (Ezra 6:5–6; 2 Chron 30:1)</p> <p>e. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>ništāvān</i> 'letter' 1x (Ezra 4:7)</p> <p>f. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>ḥātūm</i> 'sealed document' 1x (Neh 10:1)</p> <p>g. <i>k-t-b</i> (<i>sēper</i> is implied) 13x (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:3)</p> <p>h. <i>k-t-b</i> 'record' (a document is implied) 32x (e.g., Ezek 24:2)</p> <p>writing on plaster (3x)</p> <p>i. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>śīd</i> 'plaster' (on stones) 3x (Deut 27:3, 8; Josh 8:32)</p> <p>writing on ostraca (?) (11x)</p> <p>j. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>sēper</i> 'letter' 10x (e.g., 2 Sam 11:14–15)</p> <p>k. <i>k-t-b</i> (Judg 8:14)</p> <p>= 177x cases of <i>k-t-b</i> in reference to writing with ink and rush/reed pens</p>
<p>2. 'incise, engrave with hard point pen or chisel'</p>	<p>writing on tablets (16x)</p> <p>a. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>lû^aḥ</i> 'stone tablet' 14x (e.g., Exod 24:12)</p> <p>b. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>lû^aḥ</i> 'wooden writing board' (?) 2x (Isa 30:8; Hab 2:2)</p> <p>writing on metal (1x)</p> <p>c. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>šîṣ</i> '(gold) plate' 1x (Exod 39:30)</p> <p>writing on wood (5x)</p> <p>d. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>maṭṭe</i> 'staff' 2x (Num 17:17–18)</p> <p>e. <i>k-t-b</i> + <i>ʿēṣ</i> 'stick' 3x (Ezek 37:16, 20)</p> <p>= 22x <i>k-t-b</i> in reference to incising, engraving with hard point pen or chisel</p>

III. Verbal Roots with the Meaning 'record' and 'to copy'

9. *r-š-m* (*rāšûm*)

Biblical Usage: BH 1x; BA 7x BH <i>paul</i> (<i>rāšûm</i>) 1x Meaning: 'record, inscribe' (1x <i>paul</i>)	Etymology: Heb < Aram; Aram 'record, inscribe; Arab (< Aram) <i>rašama</i> , <i>rasama</i>
Dan 10:21:	אָבִל אֶגִּיד לְךָ אֶת־הַרְשׁוּם בְּכַתָּב אֱמֶת. . . But I will tell you that which is recorded [<i>hā-rāšûm</i>] in the writing of truth...

10. s-p-r

Biblical Usage: 107x <i>qal</i> 27x; <i>niph</i> 8x; <i>pi</i> 67x; <i>paul</i> 5x Meaning: 'count, recount' > 'inscribe' (1x <i>qal</i>)	Etymology: Phoen <i>mspr</i> 'number'; Ug <i>s-p-r</i> 'count, recite, write, calculate'; Geʿez <i>safara</i> 'measure out'; Arab <i>sabara</i> 'probe, measure'
Ps 87:6:	יְהוָה יִסְפֹּר בְּכַתּוּב עַמִּים. . . YHWH records [<i>yispōr</i>] in writing (down) the nations...

11. ʿ-l-y

Biblical Usage: 894x <i>qal</i> 612x; <i>niph</i> 18x; <i>hiph</i> 260x; <i>hoph</i> 3x; <i>hit</i> 1x Meaning: 'go up, raise, lead' > 'record, be recorded' (1x <i>hoph</i>)	Etymology: Arab <i>ʿaliya</i> 'go up'; Old South Arab <i>ʿly</i> 'be excellent'; Soq <i>ʿeyli</i> 'be high'; Aram <i>ʿ-l-y</i> 'go up'; Akk <i>elûm</i> 'go up'; Geʿez <i>laʿala</i> 'be high'
2 Chron 20:34:	וַיִּתֵּר דְּבָרֵי יְהוֹשָׁפָט הָרִאשִׁימִים וְהָאַחֲרִימִים הַנֵּם כְּתוּבִים בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוֹא בֶן־חֲנָנִי אֲשֶׁר הִעֲלָה עַל־סֵפֶר מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: And the remainder of the former and latter deeds of Jehoshaphat are recorded [<i>katûbim</i>] in the annals of Jehu, son of Hanani, which have been recorded [<i>hōʿālā</i>] in the book [<i>sēper</i>] of the kings of Israel.

12. ʿ-t-q

Biblical Usage: 9x <i>qal</i> 4x; <i>hiph</i> 5x Meaning: '(re)move, transfer' > 'copy' (1x <i>hiph</i>)	Etymology: Ug <i>ʿ-t-q</i> 'yield, pass'; Aram <i>ʿ-t-q</i> 'become old'; Arab <i>ʿatuqa</i> , <i>ʿataqa</i> 'become old'; Safaitic <i>ʿtq</i> 'old'; Akk <i>etēqum</i> 'pass by'
Prov 25:1	גַּם־אֵלֶּה מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱתִיקוּ אַנְשֵׁי חֶזְקִיָּה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה: These also are the proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied [<i>heʿtîqû</i>].

Hebrew Verbs of Writing

1. **ḥ-ṣ-b (N)**: to incise or to engrave writing on stone.
2. **ḥ-r-š (G) and ḥ-r-t (G; Aram LW)**: to engrave writing on stone.
3. **p-t-ḥ (D)**: to engrave images or words on precious stones or metal; used in contexts relating to craftsmanship.
4. **p-s-l (G)**: to hew, to carve.
5. **q-l-š (G)**: to carve images.
6. **ḥ-q-q (G, C-)**: to record, to inscribe a document.
7. **k-t-b (G, N, D)**: to write, to inscribe, to record; can refer to incising with chisels or hard-point pens and can also refer to writing with ink and reed/rush pens.
8. **s-p-r (G)**: to count; also, to record.
9. **ʿ-l-y (C-)**: to be recorded.
10. **r-š-m (G; Aram LW)**: to record.
11. **ʿ-t-q (C)**: to copy.

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Ancient Hebrew Verbs of Writing

(Introduction)

In today's presentation, I'll discuss 12 Hebrew verbal roots, which refer to some type of writing or appear in passages that deal with writing. I'll mention 12 verbs but I'll spend a good amount of time discussing the root *k-t-b*, the quintessential verb of writing.

This study is a sequel of sorts of a larger project that I recently completed on all ancient Hebrew nouns that designated surfaces of writing and instruments of writing in ancient Israel. In both studies, I seek to connect the literary and linguistic data with the archeological and art-historical evidence for the relevant Hebrew verbs; and I seek to situate ancient Israel's writing technology within a greater ancient Near Eastern setting.

I'll begin today by mentioning the types of writing that existed in Canaan and Israel.

(I. Writing in Canaan and Israel)

Writing in the southern Levant has existed since the 2nd millennium BCE. Already in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, two different writing technologies are evident in Canaan—cuneiform and alphabetic. While both cuneiform and alphabetic writing is attested in Canaan quite early, during the last two centuries of the 2nd millennium BCE, a transition took place in which cuneiform writing was displaced by an alphabetic writing system, and it's this technology of alphabetic writing that was inherited by ancient Israel during the Iron Age II period.

(II. Forms of Writing in Canaan and Israel)

We will divide ancient Israel's writing technology into two groups:

- (1) writing that was engraved or incised with a chisel or pen of some sort;
- (2) writing that was written with ink and a reed/rush pen.

To Group 1 belong the following surfaces of writing:

- 1) Stone (steles, graffiti, precious stones, tablets)
- 2) Wood (staves, sticks, including wax-covered writing boards)
- 3) Metal (*šlš*)
- 4) Ostraca (incised)

To Group 2 belong the following surfaces of writing:

- 1) Papyrus or Skins
- 2) Ostraca
- 3) Plaster

The majority of the writing surfaces from both groups are mentioned in the Bible and the majority of these have also been discovered in the land of Israel.

Hebrew Verbal Roots Referring to the Act of Writing or Engraving

Let's turn now to the Hebrew roots that designated the act of writing or engraving in order to see which type of writing each verb denoted.

On the handout, I've listed the etymology of each term and examples of its usage in the Bible. This is still a work in progress so I am still thinking through certain sections of the etymologies.

We'll begin the verbal root *h-ṣ-b*...

(II. Hebrew Verbal Roots Referring to the Act of Writing or Engraving)

1. The Root *h-ṣ-b*

In the biblical text, the verbal root *h-ṣ-b* (24x) is very clearly related to (1) digging out holes in the ground or to (2) mining for a mineral or stone. The word also appears in the Siloam Tunnel inscription, referring to the miners that hewed out the tunnel with a heavy pick (i.e., *garzen*). And it also occurs on a stone slab inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm in reference to miners as well. In DSS, it occurs twice in reference to the digging of ditches in the ground. In short, the root *h-ṣ-b* refers to heavy duty hewing.

In Job 19:24, however, the root *h-ṣ-b* is also used in the *niphal* stem in reference to the inscribing/carving of words on stone.

Job 19:24 reads:

מִי־יִתֵּן אִפּוֹ וַיִּכְתְּבוּן מִלִּי מִי־יִתֵּן בְּסֶפֶר וְיִחְקֹוּ: בְּעֵט־בְּרָזֶל וְעִפְרָת לְעֵד בַּצּוּר יִחְצְבוּן:

Oh that my words were written down, oh that they were recorded [*yūhāqû*] in a document. With an pen of iron and lead (?) may they be carved/engraved [*yēhāṣbûn*] forever in stone.

It is very clear that *h-ṣ-b* in this passage refers to a process of writing. The passage speaks of an iron pen; we also see the roots *k-t-b* 'to write' and *h-q-q* 'to inscribe' appear here; and the word *sēper* 'document; scroll' occurs in the passage. All this suggests that *h-ṣ-b* in this passage relates to writing, but this verbal root certainly did not refer to writing with ink. Rather the root relates to incising or engraving words on a stone surface. It's difficult to know whether the root here refers to graffiti-like incising such as we see in Khirbet Beit Lei, or whether it refers to professional engraving of words on stone similar to the Siloam inscription. What's clear is that the semantics of the verb probably developed from the more archaic meaning 'to hew, to bore' to the more scribal meaning 'to incise; to engrave'.

Our second root is *h-q-q*...

2. The Root *ḥ-q-q*

As mentioned just now, the root *ḥ-q-q* (19x) occurs in the passage we just read, Job 19:23–24. The root *ḥ-q-q* carries a spectrum of meanings, stretching from a very physical meaning 'to bore, to carve', to slightly less physical meanings such as 'to engrave' and 'to inscribe', and finally to a more abstract meaning 'to decree'.

The physical meaning of boring and carving is probably the more archaic meaning. It occurs in Isaiah 22:16, where *ḥ-q-q* is used to refer to the hewing of a tomb in a rock. However, twice, the root refers to the engraving of images, once on a brick (Ezek 4:1) and another time on a wall (Ezek 23:14).

Three more times, the roots refers to the inscribing of words. In Job 19:23–24 and in Isaiah 30:8, the root refers to inscribing of words in a *sēper* 'document; scroll', and in Isaiah 49:16, the root is used symbolically to refer to the engraving (or inscribing) of Zion's name on God's palms. The more common meaning of *ḥ-q-q*, however, is 'to decree, to determine'.

In short, while this root sometimes carried a very physical meaning such as 'to carve' and sometimes carried a more abstract meaning such as 'to decree'—the verb also meant 'to inscribe, to record' when it was used in connection with writing.

The third root is *ḥ-r-š*...

3. The Root *ḥ-r-š* (*ḥārûšā*)

In Jeremiah 17:1, we see the word *ḥārûšā* where it is used in reference to the engraving of Judah's sin upon the tablet of their heart and upon horned altars.

The verse reads:

חֲטֹאת יְהוּדָה כְּתוּבָה בְּעֵט בְּרִזְלִי בְּצִפְרֵן שְׁמִיר חֲרוּשָׁה עַל-לִוּי לִבָּם וּלְקַרְנוֹת מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם:

The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with a point of the hardest stone, it is incised [*ḥārûšā*] on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.

The passage speaks of a sharp-pointed iron pen, and of a *lû^aḥ* 'tablet', and of horned altars, all of which clearly suggest *ḥārûšā* referred to the engraving of writing on a hard surface. It is noteworthy that the horned altar discovered at Be'er Sheva actually has an image of a snake engraved upon it, which is a nice parallel to this passage.

Within the root *ḥ-r-š*, there are at least two separate roots. One root relates to plowing the ground (**ḥ-r-θ*) and the other relates to 'craftsmanship' (**ḥ-r-s*). Some connect *ḥārûšā* in this verse with 'craftsmanship' (< **ḥ-r-s*; GMD 402; Koller 2012, 86), and others connect it with plowing and digging (< **ḥ-r-θ*; Cohen H: 932). I'll argue here that it's more likely that *ḥārûšā* derives from **ḥ-r-θ*, the root related to plowing. Just like *ḥ-š-b* and *ḥ-q-q* initially meant 'to dig, to bore, to carve' and later acquired the meaning 'to engrave', so it seems that *ḥārûšā*, probably derived from the root that initially meant 'to plow, to dig' and later came to mean 'to engrave'.

The fourth root is *ḥ-r-t*...

4. The Root *h-r-t* (*hārût*)

In the Bible, the lexeme *hārût* occurs just once (1x), in Exodus 32:16, which reads:

וְהַלְחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתָּב אֱלֹהִים הוּא **חֲרוּת** עַל־הַלְחַת:

And the tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved [***hārût***] on the tablets.

The verse and greater passage clearly speak of writing (*miktab* 2x) upon tablets (*lûḥ*), so the word *hārût* in this context must relate to some type of incising or engraving. This is the only occurrence of the root in the biblical corpus, but it becomes more common in the DSS (*DCH* 3:325) and Rabbinic literature (Jastrow 1926, 500). The term *hārût* appears to be an Aramaic loan, which means that *hārût*, an Aramaic loanword in Hebrew, is actually cognate with the native Hebrew word *hārûšā*. Both terms derive from **h-r-θ*, which initially meant 'to plow, to dig' and came to mean 'engrave'.

The fifth verbal root before us today is *p-t-ḥ*...

5. The Root *p-t-ḥ* and the Lexeme *pittu^aḥ*

Within biblical Hebrew root *p-t-ḥ*, there is the very frequent root *p-t-ḥ* (with dotted *ḥ*) which means 'to open', and the very infrequent root (with hooked *ḥ*), which related to carving and engraving.

The root connected to engraving *p-t-ḥ* (9x) and the noun form *pittu^aḥ* (11x) are very clearly associated with a professional craftsmanship that deals with carving images (cherubim, animals, trees; *qīṭ* and *miqlaṭ*) on metal, on stone surfaces, and on precious stones. Also, *p-t-ḥ* and *pittu^aḥ* appear in the Bible especially in connection with engraving words or names on precious stones and on metal. For instance, Exodus 28:11:

מַעֲשֵׂה חֹרֶשׁ אֶבֶן **פְּתוּחִי** חֲתָם **תַּפְתָּח** אֶת־שְׁתֵּי הָאֲבָנִים עַל־שְׁמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִסְבֹּת מִשְׁבָּצוֹת זָהָב תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם:

A work of a craftsman of stone, like an engraving [***pittûḥê***] of a seal, you shall engrave [***təpattāḥ***] the two stones with the names of the Israelites. You shall set them in settings of gold.

We may conclude, then, that *p-t-ḥ* and *pittu^aḥ* had a very specific meaning tied with the professional craftsmanship of engraving precious stones or metal plates. The root was probably used, for instance, in connection with the production of the Ketef Hinnom amulet inscriptions and the seals on precious stones that have been discovered in Israel. However, in the Bible, *p-t-ḥ* and *pittu^aḥ* are not used in reference to chiseling or engraving words on steles.

We may also note that the Akkadian cognate *patāḥum* 'to puncture, to pierce' suggests that this root, just like the previous roots, developed from a more physical meaning of 'piercing, puncturing' to a more scribal or professional meaning of 'engraving'.

Our next two roots are *p-s-l* and *q-l-ṣ*...

6–7. The Roots *p-s-l* and *q-l-ʕ* (and *miqlaʕat*)

I won't go into detail about these two roots. I'll just note that they both refer to hewing and carving and both are used in passages that speak of writing, but the verbs themselves don't actually denote any writing. In other words, *p-s-l* and *q-l-ʕ* are similar to the five roots we just discussed because they refer to hewing and carving. However, unlike the five roots discussed earlier, *p-s-l* and *q-l-ʕ* did not develop semantically as did the other roots to include the meaning 'to engrave, to incise' words.

We now turn to the root *k-t-b*, the quintessential root referring to writing in Hebrew.

8. The Root *k-t-b*

The root *k-t-b* 'to write' (225x) appears to be West Semitic, and possibly also occurs in Akkadian, which I'll discuss shortly. In West Semitic, the root carries the meaning 'to write'.

Based on the use of the root in the biblical text, we may conclude that *k-t-b* denoted the two types of writing that we mentioned in the beginning of this talk, namely,

- (1) writing that was engraved or incised with a chisel or pen of some sort;
- (2) writing that was written with ink and a reed/rush pen.

In the majority of cases, over 100 times, the root is used with the lexeme *sēper* (114x) which in most cases probably designated a scroll. Another 9x, *k-t-b* appears with *məgilla/məgillat sēper*, 1x with *gillāyôn*, 2x with *ʾiggeret* (Ezra 6:5–6; 2 Chron 30:1), 1x with *ništəvān* (Ezra 4:7), and 1x with *ḥātūm* (Neh 10:1). Presumably, in all these cases, what is envisioned by the author is a type of writing that involved ink and rush/reed pen on scrolls. Another 13x, *sēper* is not mentioned, but it seems to be implied. And the root also appears 32x without any reference to a writing surface but the meaning in these cases is clearly 'to record' presumably in a document of some sort, probably, a scroll. So, in 173x cases, plus or minus, *k-t-b* appears to be used in connection with scrolls, ink, and rush/reed pens.

In a few cases (3x), *k-t-b* appears in connection with writing on plastered stones, where writing with ink with rush/reed pens is also envisioned by the author (Deut 27:3, 8; Josh 8:30–35).

And it is possible that *k-t-b* occurs in the Bible in passages that may refer to inscribed ostraca (e.g., Judg 8:14), but this is not plainly stated in the passage.

In sum, in the Bible, the root *k-t-b* is primarily used in connection with terms that point to a writing technology that involved the use of ink and rush/reed pens.

On the other hand, the root *k-t-b* also occurs in connection with other terms that clearly connote a writing technology that involved the engraving or incising of words on hard surfaces. For instance...

The root *k-t-b* occurs with the word *lū^aḥ* 'tablet' (16x). In the majority of these cases, *lū^aḥ* refers to the stone tablets of the covenant and perhaps also in a couple cases to wooden writing boards. In these cases, an engraving process with hard point pens seems to be envisioned by the author.

The root is also used once in Exodus 39:30 in reference to the engraving of a metal plaque, a process that is compared in the passage to the engraving of a seal.

And five times, *k-t-b* appears in connection with wooden items, such as staves (*maṭṭe*; 2x) or sticks (*ʿēš*; 3x), where an incising with a hard sharp point seems to be envisioned.

We won't go into the details of the use of *k-t-b* in epigraphic finds or in the the DSS. We'll simply note that in the epigraphic finds, it generally means 'to record' and in the DSS it can mean 'to record' in a document or 'to engrave' words on metal surfaces.

In sum, the evidence from the Biblical corpus, the epigraphic corpus, and the DSS suggests that the root *k-t-b* referred to two types of writing: (1) engraving and incising hard surfaces; and (2) writing with ink with reed/rush pens on scrolls, ostraca, and plaster.

At this point in the talk, I'd like to return to question of the meaning of the root *k-t-b* in Semitic. While the root means 'to write' in all Semitic languages, in a few additional cases, the root or lexemes derived from the root carry meanings unrelated to writing. [I list these examples on the slide.] In Arabic, for instance, the root also means 'to sew together'; also, in Amharic, *k-t-b* means 'to vaccinate, cut, scrape, scratch, prick'; and in Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, the lexeme *maktābā* refers to an awl. Additionally, some scholars connect *k-t-b* with Akkadian *takāpum* 'to prick, puncture', which, if correct, would fit in well with these additional meanings.

We may summarize these comparative Semitic data listed here as follows. The meanings in Syriac/Aramaic, Arabic, and Amharic seem to point to the more archaic meaning of this root. Nödeke suggested the original meaning of *k-t-b* was 'to sting, to carve'. And we may further refine this meaning to simply 'pierce'. It is this meaning that is reflected in the additional examples, all of which connote some type of piercing. Assuming that the Akkadian verb *takāpum* 'to prick, puncture' is also connected to *k-t-b*, although in metathesized form, it would also reflect the more archaic meaning of the root.

The semantic development of *k-t-b* from 'piercing' to 'writing' is similar to the semantic development of verbs that we mentioned above, namely, *ḥ-š-b*, *ḥ-q-q*, *ḥ-r-š*, *ḥ-r-t*, and *p-t-ḥ*, which initially probably carried meanings related to hewing, carving, piercing, but eventually also came to mean 'to engrave, to inscribe'.

This semantic development (from 'piercing, carving' > to 'inscribing') also exists in Indo-European languages such as Greek, English, Church Slavonic, and Latin.

Let's now consider the historical context in which the root *k-t-b* emerged as the quintessential Hebrew and West-Semitic root that denoted writing.

As we mentioned in the beginning of the talk, writing is attested in Canaan already in the 2nd millennium BCE. Writing on ostraca and papyrus with ink was probably the most common form of writing in ancient Israel. However, it is Mesopotamian cuneiform that is first attested in the land of Canaan. The Amarna Tablets of the 14th century speak to the presence of cuneiform in ancient Canaan. Also, Ugarit, situated just north of Canaan, attests to the use of cuneiform in the 13th and early 12th centuries. And there's cuneiform finds in Canaan already in the Middle Bronze Age. In Ugaritic, the root *k-t-b* occurs twice where it presumably refers to writing that was achieved by impressing wet clay, not writing with ink and reed/rush pens on ostraca.

Assuming the original meaning of *k-t-b* was 'to pierce', it is possible that when cuneiform was introduced in Canaan, the root *k-t-b* was chosen by the scribes of the Levant to denote the act of impressing cuneiform on wet clay with a stylus because this act resembled the act of piercing a surface with an awl.

With the spread of writing in the ancient world, the meaning 'to write' took on a primary role in the semantics of the root *k-t-b*, while the original meaning 'to pierce' came to be viewed as a tangential meaning, being preserved in just a few Semitic languages and perhaps in Hebrew with the meaning of incising or engraving writing. With time, even the more common meaning of *k-t-b* 'to write; to inscribe' developed further into the more abstract meaning 'to record'.

To sum up, the roots discussed so far have a very similar semantic progression, developing from meanings that had to do with piercing or carving into meanings that have to do with writing.

There are four other Hebrew verbs that we'll discuss briefly. These four verbs mean 'to record' and in one case 'to copy'. They occur very infrequently and seem to point to an ancient Israel that was more bureaucratic in nature, one that contained historical annals, documents, and records.

9. The Root *r-š-m*

The root *r-š-m* (BH 1x; BA 7x) appears to be loaned from Aramaic *r-š-m* 'to record; to inscribe' (CAL). It occurs just once in Daniel 5:24, where it is used in a connection with the term *katāb* 'writing'. In Hebrew, as in Aramaic, the root appears to mean 'to record'. Occurring only once in the Biblical text, it becomes more common in Rabbinic Hebrew and DSS.

10. The Root *s-p-r*

The root *s-p-r* (107x) occurs in *qal* usually with the meaning 'to count'. But it also once in connection with the infinitive construct *katōb* 'writing' and appears to carry the meaning 'to record' (Ps 87:6). The semantic shift from 'counting' to 'recording' is not difficult to envision.

11. The Root ʿ-l-y

The root ʿ-l-y (894x) means 'to go up' in *qal* and it means 'to raise, lead' in the *hiphil*. Once, in *hophal*, it appears to carry the meaning 'to record; to be recorded'. This meaning occurs just once, in 2Chron 20:34, in relation to acts of a king which are recorded in a book (*sēper*) of annals. (Perhaps worth comparing with English: 'to raise an issue'; 'to bring up a matter'; 'to upload'; Russian поднял 'lift; raise an issue'; Even more relevant, English: 'to write someone up').

12. The Root ʿ-t-q

The root ʿ-t-q (9x) carries the general meaning 'to move' and in *hiphil* it refers to the removal or transfer of something. Once (Prov 25:1), it is used to refer to the transcribing, transmitting, or copying of proverbs.

(V. Conclusion)

To conclude, we have looked at 12 Hebrew terms that designated various types of writing. In essence, these verbs trace the development of writing in Canaan and ancient Israel. The roots considered in the beginning of the talk, namely, h-ṣ-b , h-r-š and h-r-t , h-q-q , p-t-h (as well as p-s-l and q-l-ʿ) reflect a writing technology that involved incising or engraving. In the middle of the talk, we focused in on the root k-t-b , the quintessential verb of writing, which as we pointed out, referred to (1) engraving or incising as well as (2) writing with ink. Finally, we considered the roots r-š-m (G; Aram LW), s-p-r (G), ʿ-l-y (C-), ʿ-t-q (C) which point to a more scribal nature of writing, namely, 'to record' and 'to copy'. In our discussion of verbs of writing, we were able to consider only a few archaeological finds from Israel that relate to writing. Such finds, however, will certainly be recorded with ink on paper in a more complete manuscript of this study. THANK YOU.

s

Hebrew Verbs of Writing

h-ṣ-b (N): to incise or engrave writing on stone.

h-r-š (G) and h-r-t (G; Aram LW): to engrave writing on stone.

p-t-h (D): to engrave images or words on precious stones or metal; used in contexts relating to craftsmanship.

p-s-l (G): to hew, to carve.

q-l-ʿ (G): to carve images.

h-q-q (G, C-): to record, to inscribe a document.

k-t-b (G, N, D): to write, to inscribe, to record; can refer to incising with chisels or hard-point pens and can also refer to writing with ink and reed/rush pens.

s-p-r (G): to count; also, to record.

ʿ-l-y (C-): to be recorded.

r-š-m (G; Aram LW): to record.

ʿ-t-q (C): to copy.