

The Royal Sceptre in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions

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In his article “Thrones and Crowns,” Aaron Koller indicates how ancient inscriptions and artwork depict West Semitic monarchs as inhabiting thrones and holding sceptres, or “shoots.” Unlike later monarchical depictions, where the crown was the central emblem of monarchy, in this particular ancient Near Eastern context, thrones and sceptres were the prime symbols. In particular, kings *sat on* thrones and *grasped* the sceptre. Such a motif can be found in Levantine texts, ranging from Assyrian-Aramean texts to the Mishnah. Furthermore, as Koller demonstrates, through artwork and text, this sceptre was often depicted as a flowering bud.¹ Continuing in that vein, the present paper seeks to understand a particular term for “sceptre,” the Semitic word *ḥōṭer* (vocalized per Hebrew; Aramaic *ḥuṭrā* or *ḥuṭar*), which is found in Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Assyrian texts, and its understanding for the context and content of monarchical regalia in the ancient world.

1 The Occurrences of *ḥōṭer* in the Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and Texts

1.1 Phoenician Inscriptions – KAI 1

KAI 1, which is known as the Aḥiram inscription, as it was donated from the king’s son to the father Aḥiram of Byblos, is one of the Phoenician inscriptions from the seaport of Byblos. Intriguingly, Byblos is known as Gebal in Phoenician, which also means “territory,” “border,” or “settlement.” The inscription is carved on one side of the lid of a decorated limestone coffin and begins on the upper rim of the sarcophagus itself. Gibson indicates that the sarcophagus was dated by its archaeological surroundings to the thirteenth-century, making it the oldest readable Phoenician text. According to its original discoverer in 1923 (Martin), it may have been carved over a previous inscription in Pseudo-Hieroglyphic writing. However, the extant Phoenician text Gibson dates to the late eleventh century. It is now

1. Aaron Koller, “Thrones and Crowns: On the Regalia of the West Semitic Monarchy,” in *The Ancient Throne: The Mediterranean, Near East, and Beyond, from 3rd Millennium BCE to the 14th Century CE. Proceedings of the Workshop held at the 10th ICAANE in Vienna, April 2016*, ed. Liah Naeh, Dana Brostowsky Gilboa, and Barbara Horejs, Oriental and European Archaeology 14 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2020), 126–127.

housed in the National Museum of Beirut.²

The text reads, according to KAI, which exhibits several differences from Gibson's reading:

[o1] ḫn z-p' ṭb'l bn ḫrm mlk gbl ḫrm 'bh k-šth b'lm [o2] w'l mlk bmlkm wškn bšknm wtm' mhnt 'ly gbl wygl ḫn zn tħtsp ḥtr mšpħth thtpk ks' mlkh wnħt tbrħ 'l gbl wh'ymħ sprħ l-pn gbl

[o1] The sarcophagus which Etbaal, son of Aḥiram, king of Byblos, made for Aḥiram, his father, when he made him their lord. [o2] And if a king among your kings, and governor among your governors, and a commander encamps against Byblos, and he discovers this sarcophagus, may he be stripped of the rod of his rulership, may the throne of his kingship be turned over, and may rest flee from Byblos, and may his inscription against Byblos(?) be wiped away! (KAI 1)

Here, the construct noun phrases *ḥtr mšpħth*, “the sceptre of judgment/rulership,” and *ks' mlkh*, “the seat of kingship,” are in apposition. The noun-phrases are interspersed with the respective verbs, which make the pairs the subject of those verbs. The verbs are in the hitpael state, with an infixated *t* which is a common morphology in Ugaritic. The verbs mean, respectively, “be torn away...be overturned.” Gibson compares the whole imprecation with a parallel from the Ugaritic: *lyhpk ks'a mlkk lytbr ḥt mtpħk*.³ In their annotations, Vriezen and Hospers define the word as “staff.”⁴ Consonant with kingship, this inscription indicates that a king would have had a *ḥtr* and a throne, a *ks'*. Given the royal context, whatever its exact nature, the *ḥtr* must be royal, likely a “sceptre.”

1.2 Samalian Inscriptions – KAI 214

In the present-day village of Zincirli Höyük (or “Zincirli mound”), in İslahiye Gaziantep, in southeastern Turkey a number of German archaeologists from 1888–1902 found a number of inscriptions on stelae, statues, and votive objects dating to the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. A newer expedition since 2006 funded by the University of Chicago has continued to find inscriptions. The Zinjirli inscriptions represent three ancient Northwest Semitic languages: Phoenician, a Syrian dialect of Old Aramaic, and a language known as Samalian. After the collapse of the Hittite Empire in 1200, a number of smaller kingdoms arose, including the local Assyrian-vassal state known as Sam'al. Sam'al was the name that outsiders gave this kingdom (i.e., in Akkadian and other Old Aramaic texts), while Yādiya *y'dy* is the name the kingdom called itself. The inscriptions represent a peculiar dialect, which contains elements from Aramaic, Akkadian, and Hittite-Luwian, especially in personal names; this dialect scholars term Samalian.⁵ The inscriptions record the deeds of the kings of Sam'al, including Kilamuwa

2. John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 3: Phoenician Inscriptions, including inscriptions in the mixed dialect of Arslan Tash (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 12–13.

3. Gibson, 16.

4. Th. C. Vriezen and Johannes Hendrik Hospers, *Palestine Inscriptions*, Textus Minores XVII (Leiden: Brill, 1951), 8.

5. Frederick Mario Fales, “Old Aramaic,” in *Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 560–561.

(d. 810), Panammuwa I (790–750), Panammuwa II (743-733), and his son Bar-Rakib (733-711), the last of the Samalian line.⁶ The texts correspond to the kings as follows:

- Kilamuwa – KAI 24 and 25
- Panammuwa I – KAI 214 (on a colossal bust of Hadad)
- written on the statue of Panammuwa II by his son Bar-Rakib – KAI 215
- authored by Bar-Rakib himself – KAI 216-221

In the inscriptions from Samal, the term *ḥōṭer* occurs four times: twice in the construct form, and twice in the absolute form,⁷ all in KAI 214. The text in which it is found is called by Gibson the Hadad inscription, as it is a colossal statue of Hadad, erected by the Samalian king Panammuwa I.⁸ Like the other stelae, it was found in 1890 in the village Zenjirli on the Syrian border; and the monument is now in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin.⁹

The text begins:

[01] אֲנָך פָּנָמָו בֶּר קְרֵל מֶלֶךְ יַעֲדִי זַי הַקְמָת נַצְבָּזׁ לְהַדָּד בְּעַלְמִי [02] קְמוֹ
עַמִּי אֶלְהָוּ הַדָּד וּרְשָׁפָּה וּרְכְבָּאָל וּשְׁמָשׁ וּנְתָן בִּידֵי הַדָּד וְאֶל [03] וּרְכְבָּאָל וּשְׁמָשׁ
וּרְשָׁפָּה חַטֵּר חַלְבָּבָה וּקְם עַמִּי רְשָׁפָּה פְּמָזָ אָחָז [04] בִּידֵי... הָא פְּלָחָ

[01] I am Panammuwa, son of Qarel, the king of Y'dy, who erected this stele for Hadad.
In my youth, [02] [these gods] stood with me and [these gods] gave into my hand [03]
the sceptre of the dynasty, PN stood with me when I grasped [04] in my hand what I
cultivated.¹⁰

Here, we have *ḥōṭer* (vocalized by Gibson as *ḥeṭōr*) in construct with the feminine noun *ḥlbbh*. The latter can either be read as from the base HLB, “milk,” with the meaning of fatness or prosperity; or the root HLP, “to succeed as king,” based on “successorship, caliphate, legitimate rule.”¹¹ The latter form is used in Sefire iii 22 (חלפה בנוֹה, “successor”) and Mesha 6 (וַיַּחַלֵּפָה בָּנוֹה). However, the root HLB with the

6. For a helpful table of the admittedly short Samalian dynasties, see Theodore J. Lewis, “Bar Rakib’s Legitimation and the Problem of a Missing Corpse: The End of the Panamuwa Inscription in Light of the Katumuwa Inscription,” *ARAM* 31 (2019): 352.

7. Jacob Hoftijzer and Kurt Jongeling, *Dictionary of North-west Semitic Inscriptions*, ed. H. Altenmüller et al., Handbuch der Orientalistik / Handbook of Oriental Studies 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 364, s.v. (Hereafter cited as DNWSI).

8. Panammu is the spelling in the Aramaic inscription. The Akkadian is (*m*)Pa-na-am-mu-u. The original Luwian Hittite form is Panammuwa.

9. John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2: Aramaic Inscriptions, including inscriptions in the dialect of Zenjirli (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 60.

10. Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2002), 214, pg. 49. (Hereafter cited as KAI)

11. Gibson, *Aramaic Inscriptions*, 70.

meaning of fatness and hence “reign” or “dynasty” seems convincing (CAL), especially since the second option would require a phonological shift from /p/ to /b/ and the reduplication of the resultant /b/.¹²

The same phrase, *ḥṭr hlbbh*, occurs in line 9:

[ך פְנָמוּ נִם יִשְׁבַת עַל מִשְׁבֵּן אֲבִי וַיְנַתֵּן הֶדֶד בִּידֵי [09] חֶטֶר חַלְ...ת]
חֶרְבָּן וְלֹשֶׁן מִן בֵּית אֲבִי וּבִינֵי נִם אֲכֵל וְשַׁתָּא יָאָדֵי

[08] I am Panammuwa, I sat upon the throne/seat of my father, and Hadad gave into my hand [09] the sceptre of the dynasty/authority; sword and slander he removed from the house of my father, and in my days, Y'dy (the kingdom) ate and drank.

The word occurs twice more in this inscription, line 20 and line 25, as an absolute noun, the object of the verb “grasp” or “seize” (*y-ḥz*) in a conditional sentence. Line 20 reads, in part, with the material in brackets reconstructed from line 17:

[20] בְּנֵי יְאָחֹז חֶטֶר וַיִּשְׁבַת עַל מִשְׁבֵּן וַיִּמְלֹךְ [21] עַל יְאָדֵי וַיִּסְעַד אֲבָרוֹ וַיִּזְבַּח
הֶדֶד זָן וְלֹא יִזְכֵּר אַשְׁם פְנָמוּ יִאמֶר תְּאַכֵּל נְבָשׁ פְנָמוּ [22] עַם הֶדֶד וְתַשְׁתַּחַ
נְבָשׁ פְנָמוּ עַם הֶדֶד הָא ...

If one of my sons seizes the sceptre and sits upon my throne and he reigns [21] over Y'dy, and he maintains power and sacrifices to this Hadad (statue) yet does not recall the name of Panammuwa and say, “May the soul of Panammuwa eat [22] with Hadad and may the soul of Panammuwa drink with this Hadad here”...

Here, we have an unique pairing of the symbol of kingship, the royal sceptre, with the throne of kingship. Kingship, however, entails several responsibilities: the king-successor must “maintain power,” understandably, and “sacrifice” to this particular Hadad statue *in order that* the soul of his predecessor may dwell favorably with Hadad. Here, the vivid language describes the soul of the deceased king “eating and drinking” with “this Hadad.” This understanding envisions some relationship between the physical sign (the statue and its inscription) and the spiritual counterpart (the soul of Panammuwa feasting with Hadad). Line 25 has the same syntax yet with the apodosis-clause, “let him not put forth his hand with a sword against my father’s house, either in anger or in violence.”

Although one might imagine that the *ḥōṭer* is a solid object, presumably wooden or metal, in each of the Samalian inscriptions that has a corresponding depiction of the king, the king always is holding a drooping or budding flower. Kilamuwa (KAI 24) shows himself holding a flower (see Figure 1), and so does Bar-Rakib, multiple times, as one can see in Figures 2, 3, and 4. (The inscriptions of both

12. The phonological shift from /p/ to /b/ is not problematic, as the presence of *nbš*, from *npš*, shows. Reduplication of /b/ (*hlbab*) seems more likely than reduplication of /p/ (*hilpap?*) In addition, where KAI has ḥLB (l. 10, חַלְבָּה), confusingly, Gibson reads ḥLP (l. 10, חַלְבָּתָה). Gibson bases his case on this, and a few other, unsure instances: “It is written twice (10, 12) without the second בָּ (an alternative form?) and once (19) without the בָּ” (Gibson, *Aramaic Inscriptions*, 70). Both KAI and Gibson agree on line 12, חַלְבָּתָה, which could be a verb-form, whereas the occurrence in line 10 is clearly the *nomen rectum* of a construct-phrase. Line 19 has a strange, uncertain form, which KAI, contra Gibson, reads as וְחַלְבָּתָה.



Figure 1: Photograph of the Kilamuwa Inscription (KAI 24). Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman and Marilyn Lundberg, West Semitic Research Project. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Vorderasiatisches Museum.

Panammuwa's — KAI 214 and 215 — do not have images.) Since the Samalian texts describe a *ḥōṭer* as an instrument of kingship (alongside the throne) and each of the depictions shows a botanical item in the king's hand, one can assume that the speakers of Samalian understood *ḥōṭer* in a botanical sense.



Figure 2: Photograph of Bar-Rakib Inscription (with the text of KAI 216) from Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul. Photo: Mark Ahsmann, Wikimedia Commons.

1.3 Deir Alla – KAI 312

The Deir Alla Plaster Texts were discovered in the Jordan Valley by a mid-twentieth-century Dutch excavation led by Jacob Hoftijzer. They found one-hundred-and-nineteen tiny fragments from a longer inscription painted in both red and black ink, on a lime-plastered wall of a large architectural complex.¹³ The text is remarkable, as it parallels the story of the pagan prophet Bilaam in the Book of Numbers. This text is identified as “The book (or missive) of Bila’am, son of Be’or, the seer-man of the gods (or, the man who saw the gods), *znh spr bl’m br b'r ḥz hz h lhn h*”.

While the meaning of the Deir Alla plaster inscription is contested, Jacob Hoftijzer, who first published on the text, indicates that the word *ḥtr* occurs in Deir Alla. According to him, it occurs on line 11 of the first combination.¹⁴ It should be noted that Hoftijzer’s numbering of lines differs from that found in KAI, due to a discrepancy in the first line, so Hoftijzer’s 11 = KAI line 9, although the text is the same for both at the line in question. Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij edited the text in question in 1976. According to their rendering, the line reads:

ywn.wṣpr (—) yn.w (—————) .mṭh.b>šr:rḥln.yybl.ḥtr:>rnbn.>klw.

13. Fales, “Old Aramaic,” 559.

14. DNWSI, 364 s.v.

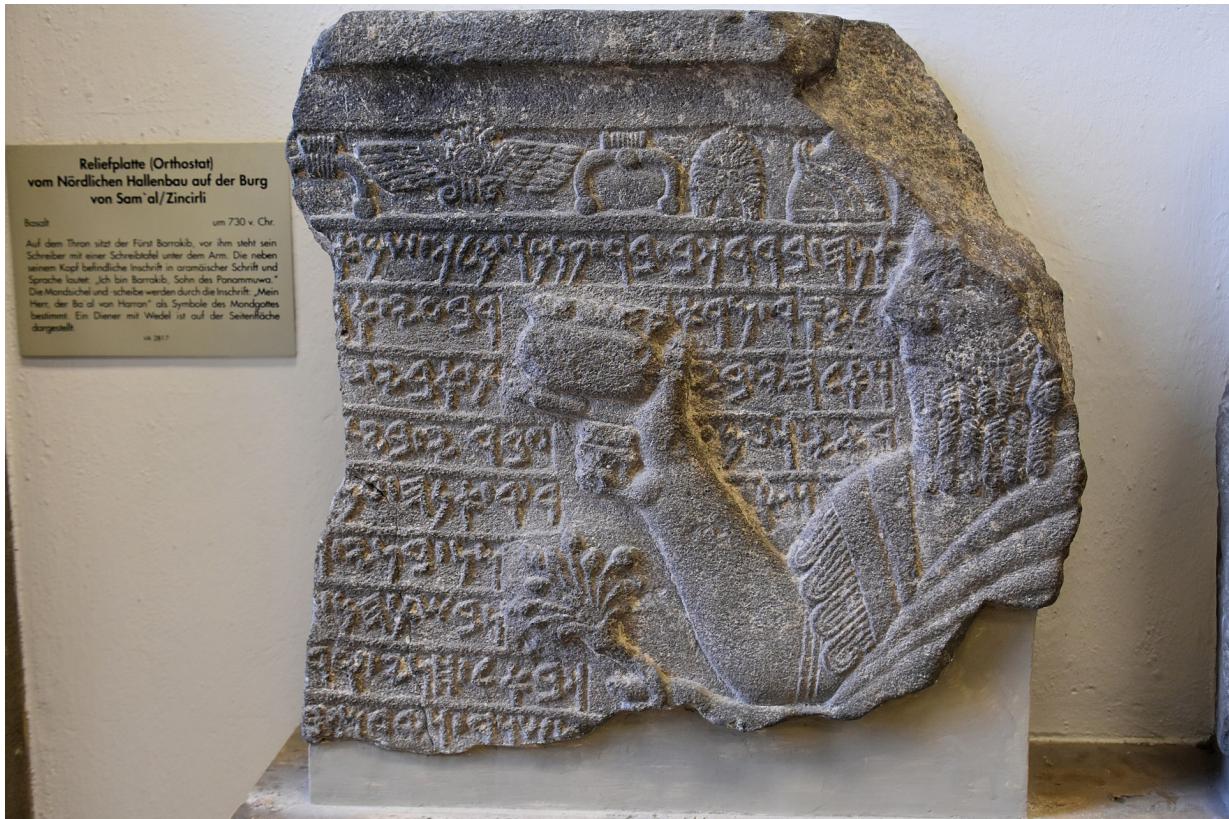


Figure 3: Relief of Bar-Rakib, from the citadel of Sam'al (Zincirli) in Turkey, ca. 730 BCE; Pergamon Museum, Berlin (with text from KAI 217). Photo: Richard Mortel, Wikimedia Commons.

[the birds for prey from] (11) the marsh and the sparrow (.....) ——— (.....)
the Rod (i.e. punishment). In the place fit for breeding ewes the Staff (i.e. punishment)
will bring hares. Eat [fear you seekers, for...]¹⁵

According to KAI, and my rendering, the line reads:

יון וצפר[...][ין ו[...] מטה באשר רחלן יibal חטראן בן אכלו [10] [ע]שׁב
the dove and the bird ... staff in the place of ewes, and he brought the rod, the rabbits ate
[herbage]

This text is notoriously difficult to translate, not only because the reading of the plaster itself is almost indecipherable, but also because of the many holes in the text and the strange words used. The text may describe a vision of vultures and other birds of prey that Bilaam, the seer of Moab, had, but much of the imagery is confusing, as indicated by the range of translations. Hallo translates the line in question

15. Text: Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij, eds., *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla*, Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 174; translation: 179.



Figure 4: Basalt relief of the Aramean king Bar Rakib with his secretary, Bit-Gabbari (with the text of KAI 218); Pergamon Museum, Berlin. Photo: © José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro, Wikimedia Commons.

as “Pigeons and birds, [and fowl in the s]ky. And a rod [shall flay the cat]tle; where there are ewes, a staff shall be brought. Hares — eat together!” It is good to see that the main objects described in the text seem consistent, but what these animals and objects are doing, is anyone’s guess. The phrase *r̥hl̥n yybl̥ h̥tr* could also be understood as “ewes and ram, a staff,” or “a rod shall lead the ewes.”

In any case, what we seem to have is an agricultural setting. Furthermore, it is remarkable that we have the two objects, *m̥th* and *h̥tr*, preserved in our texts, both of which seem to be two types of staves for herding animals.

1.4 Official Aramaic – Elephantine and Ahiqar

There are two occurrences of in official Aramaic. The first is included by Cowley as Aramaic papyri no. 69, from Elephantine (originally published in Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, vol. xii, plate 124 and CIS ii, 1, 149). It consists merely of several almost indecipherable lines, one of which has our word in the plural, absolute state, *ḥtrn*. This inscription reads: “**חַטְרָן בֵּי לֹא שִׁבְקוֹדִי עֲד בָּנָ**,” the last part of which Cowley reads, “they did not let him go” (from prison), and leaves our word untranslated.¹⁶ Unfortunately, this particular inscription is not included in TAD, so we do not know how they would have read it.

In the folktale of Ahiqar, this word also occurs in a sapiential context:

אַל תַּהְחַשֵּׂךְ בָּרֶךְ מִן חַטָּרָן הַז לֹא תַּכְּהַל תְּהַנְצְלָנָה

Do not withhold your son from (the) rod. IF NOT, you will not be able to save him. (TAD C.1.176; col. 11 = Cowley line 81)¹⁷

Cowley translates the line as “Withhold not thy son from the rod, if thou canst not keep *him from wickedness*,”¹⁸ and continues with the following line, “If I smite thee, my son, thou wilt not die, and if I leave (thee) to thine own heart *thou wilt not live*.” Clearly, in this case, the word has a strong sapiential quality as an instrument of reproof.

The inclusion in Ahiqar is initially surprising; however, when understood against the Near Eastern background of the text, its inclusion makes sense. While German excavators found the original Aramaic recension of Ahiqar in the ancient Jewish colony of Elephantine in 1907, the text actually had a non-Jewish origin, despite its preservation and inclusion in Jewish and Christian collections. According to Lindenberger, while Aramaic was the original language, there is a fairly broad consensus that the Aramaic recension represents a translation from an Akkadian (i.e., Assyrian) original from a pagan context. In Lindenberger’s words, “the setting of the story is the neo-Assyrian court, a number of the personal names are authentically Assyrian, there are several Akkadian loan words in the narrative, and four of the proverbs mention the Mesopotamian god Shamash.”¹⁹ In addition to Shamash, other gods mentioned include El, the divine epithet *r̥hm̥n*, and Shamayn, all deities native to a Canaanite and Aramean context. Its dating is fixed by the mention of Esharhaddon, who reigned 681–669 BCE. In addition, “since the Imperial Aramaic of the Persian period and later shows a great many Persian words, the absence of such Persian loans in Ahiqar suggest a dating of composition between the mid-sixth century.”²⁰ Although the paleography and archaeological context of the Elephantine text suggest the

16. A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic papyri of the fifth century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 178; no. 69, line 5.

17. Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3: Literature, Accounts, Lists, The Hebrew University Department of the History of the Jewish People Texts and Studies for Students (Jerusalem: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 46 (hereafter cited as TAD).

18. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 222, line 81.

19. J. M. Lindenberger, “Ahiqar (Seventh to Sixth Century B.C.),” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 481

20. Lindenberger, 482

late fifth century, it is likely that the combined text (narrative and sayings) was in existence for at least a century before that, in Lindenberger's view. According to him, a date between 650 and 550 is likely, although the gnomic wisdom portions point to more ancient antecedents. Thus, the inclusion of a word of Levantine origins in an Aramaic text, from the neo-Assyrian period, although in a sapiential context, is not surprising, and testifies to the native quality of the word in question.

1.5 The Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 11:1 and Proverbs 14:3

The same idea of reproof found in Ahiqar is found in Proverbs 14:3, which occurs in another sapiential context. The text reads:

בְּפִרְאֹוֵל חֹטֶר נָאָה וְשַׁפְתִּי חֲכָמִים תְּשֻׂמְרִים :

In the mouth of the foolish, an arrogant sceptre (resides), but the lips of the wise will keep them safe. (Proverbs 14:3)

The meaning of **חֹטֶר נָאָה** is uncertain. Older translations have “rod of pride.” But what exactly is a “rod of pride”? The modifier **נָאָה** is unclear, but can mean “majesty, arrogance, pride, haughtiness” (BDB). In Psalm 36:12, the psalmist prays to be delivered from a **רָגֶל נָאָה**, “haughty foot,” which is paired with **יָד־רְשָׁעִים**, “the hand of the wicked.” In view is probably not the object itself, but the person who improperly bears or uses it: the foot is not haughty, but the person who has it might be; the hand is not wicked, but its bearers may be. Similarly, with the “haughty rod” (the original hot-rod), it is probably not the rod’s fault, but the fault of the one who bears the rod improperly. Unfortunately, in our proverb here, there is no comparative object in the second clause: the lips have their match, but the **חֹטֶר נָאָה** does not. In that light, the phrase probably refers to someone who bears the “sceptre” who should not—an imposter, a usurper perhaps. But with Proverb’s interest in proper measures and upright judgment (e.g., Prov. 11:1), a wicked judge is most likely in view here. In a parallel with the idea of “lips,” Proverbs 10:31-32 reads, “The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse” (ESV). Since the “lips of the wise” lead them to safety, the context is conversation, and specifically the council of the wise. In some wisdom traditions (e.g., Native American), an object is passed between parties and used to designate the speaker of a council. The problem with this passage is there is no royal context here, and the referent of **חֹטֶר נָאָה** is unclear. The only context I can see is a wisdom context, in which words are discussed among the elders. While this is not strictly a juridical context, these sorts of convocations would discuss questions of law and judgment. As Zeev Falk writes, although about a *šēbet*, this object represents justice: “Another tool turning into a symbol of justice was the rod in the judge’s hand.”²¹ In our context, while the lips of the wise elders presumably have an upright *hōṭer*, the “evil” have a false, or haughty *hōṭer*. In modern parlance, this would be a “false gavel” or something of the like.

The only other occurrence of *hōṭer* in the Hebrew Bible is in Isaiah 11, which has a distinctly kingly and even messianic ring. This passage also has a juridical context (vv. 3-4). Depending on what a *hōṭer* is, the verb to which it relates will shift in semantic valence:

²¹ Ze'ev W Falk, “Two symbols of justice,” *Vetus testamentum* 10, no. 1 (January 1960): 73

וַיֹּצֶא חֹטֶר מִגְּזָע יְשָׁי וּנְצֵר מִשְׁרָשָׂיו יִפְּרֹה:

And a sapling shall spring forth from the stump of Yishai, and a shoot from his roots shall bud. (Isaiah 11:1)

As with Proverbs 14, we have *ḥōṭer* paired with another word of uncertain value: *mi-geza'*, which is in construct with *Yishai*. *Geza'*, according to Strong's, comes from "an unused root meaning to cut down (trees)" (BLB). Another rare word like *ḥōṭer*, *geza'* only occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible. *Geza'* occurs in Job 14:18, where it is in parallel with *shoresh*, as in Isaiah 11, and in the context of *be-āres*, "in the ground," and *be-āfar*, "in the dust." The third passage, in Isaiah 40, links the noun with *shoresh*, *āres*, and *zr'*, "seed." Whatever it means exactly, it clearly represents an agricultural or "natural" context.

Since *geza'* and *sharash* are clearly botanical and are in parallel in Isaiah 11:1—it should be noted, that *geza'* is what stands out of the earth, while *sharash* is the part of the plant in the earth—it is not unreasonable to see the other nouns in this verse as also vegetative.

Netzer has a variegated history. According to Driver, it relates to an Arabic root meaning "be fresh, bright, grow green."²² It is normally understood as "sprout, shoot, or branch," as it clearly has a vegetative valence. The term was later picked up in the Christian reception and has been read as a Messianic appellation for Yeshua.²³ In fact, even the Targum Jonathan glosses *nešer* as *mešīḥā'* "messiah," and *ḥt̄r* as *malakhā'*.²⁴ *Netzer* only occurs four times in the HB corpus: three times in Isaiah, and one in Daniel. It occurs in Isaiah 60:21, where it clearly has a botanical referent—it is literally in construct with the word "planting":

וְעַמְּדָכָלָם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יוֹרְשֵׁי אָרֶץ נְצֵר מִטְּעוֹ מַעֲשָׂה יְדֵי לְהַחְפָּאָר

And all your people shall be righteous forever; they shall inherit the Land. [They shall be called] the shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified. (Isaiah 60:21)

The *Qere* reading indicates "my planting," but it clear that this is an agricultural and botanical metaphor. In Daniel 11, Gabriel, in speech starting at 10:19, is revealing to Daniel what is come. He notes that the daughter of the King of the south shall have an offspring who shall destroy the kingdom of the north.

22. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic. Coded with the numbering system from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Based on the lexicon of William Gesenius, as translated by Edward Robinson, and edited with constant reference to the thesaurus of Gesenius as completed by E. Rödiger, and with the authorized use of the German editions of Gesenius' Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 666a (hereafter cited as BDB).

23. There is much confusion about the origin of the epithet "Nazarene." I will just note that the Aramaic and Syriac form is נָצְרָיאָן, *Natzraya* sg., נָצְרָיאָן, *Natzraye* pl. (later Hebrew *Noṣrim*), as Wolfram Kinzig indicates. Kinzig shows at least 44 variations of this word in Latin patristic reception, in Jerome alone. According to him, the *Noṣrim* were the Aramaic- and Syriac-speaking Jewish-Christians of northern Syria "who sought good relations with the Gentile church." Wolfram Kinzig, "The Nazoreans," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, January 2017), 485–486. The Syriac at Matt 2:23 reads "He dwelt in a city called נָצְרָיאָן in order fulfill what the prophet said, 'He shall be called a נָצְרָיאָן.'"

24. Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, Targum Studies Module.

In his speech, Gabriel employs the same metaphor as used in Isaiah 11: that “a shoot from her roots shall arise,” וְעֹמֶד מִנְצָר שְׁרַשְ׀יתָה (Dan. 11:7). While the referent may be a royal scion, as in Isaiah 11:1, the metaphor is still botanical. Thus, we have two clearly botanical metaphors for *netzer*.

As for the other occurrence of *nṣr*, it occurs in Isaiah 14:19, in the context of the prophet’s “taunt” (*mashal*) against Babylon. In his speech, the prophet addresses the King of Bavel as one who is “cast out, away from your grave, like a *nēṣer nit’āb*, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the shores of the pit, like a dead body trampled underfoot” (Isa. 14:19). Purely on contextual imagery, one would expect *nēṣer nit’āb* to have something to do with grave-imagery. In fact, the noun-phrase is paralleled by *peger mūbās*, “a trodden corpse.” Strange, then, that the phrase has been traditionally translated as “loathsome branch,” which coheres with the metaphor of *netzer* in its three other contexts but makes no sense here. Apropos to that dilemma, Christopher Hays came up with an ingenious solution that reads *nṣr* here as an Egyptian loanword, *ntr*, which was the common Egyptian word for “god.” Hays notes that the Egyptians often called kings and dead people gods (*ntrw*). Through the death rituals, one sought a divinized afterlife, an understanding that spread from the elite to the wider populace by the first millennium. Thus, *nēṣer nit’āb* would be understood as “a despised god,” “a dead god,” or as Hays prefers to read it, “divinized royal corpse.” Hays bases this understanding on the phonological equivalence of /t/ and /š/ in Egyptian and Hebrew, respectively, which diverged from Proto-Semitic */d/ or a similar phonetic value.²⁵ However, Hays’ understanding takes us far from the world of trees and branches. The common ground between “shoots” and “divinized royal corpses,” is that the former is a metaphor for a royal “heir,” and the latter is what happens to the royal heir when he dies.

According to Driver, *netzer* also occurs in the Hebrew book of the Wisdom of Ben-Sira, an early second-century BCE (c. 180 BCE) sapiential work authored by a pious Jewish sage living in the land of Israel. Ben-Sira was received and transmitted by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Greek recensions, but the discovery of the Cairo Geniza in the late nineteenth century turned up several Hebrew copies. One of these is Manuscript B of the Hebrew text. Another copy was found in the mid-twentieth century at Masada. Both Ms. B and Masada record the occurrence of the word at 40:15. Masada column II and Ms. B record:²⁶

נַצֵּר חַמֵּס לֹא יִכְּ[.....]
Masada MS., col. II, line 4:

נוֹצֵר מִחְמֵס לֹא יִנְקַה [....] כִּי שׁוֹרֵשׁ חַנֵּפֶת עַל שָׁן סַלְעָ[
Ms. B, *X recto*, line 6:

The shoot of the violent will not go unpunished,
for the root of the godless is upon a toothy crag.

25. Christopher B. Hays, “An Egyptian Loanword in the Book of Isaiah and the Deir ‘Alla Inscription: Heb. *nṣr*, Aram. *nqr*, and Eg. *ntr* as ‘[Divinized] Corpse’,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 42, no. 2 (2012): 17–23. Hays’ understanding also clarifies two verbal forms of *nṣr* found in Isaiah 65:4, “those who sit in graves and spend the night among *corpses*,” and Isa. 49:6, the servant will “raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the *corpses* of Israel.”

26. Bodleian MS. Heb.e.62 (Ms. B, folio X, recto = Ben Sira 40:9-40:26, transcribed by Martin Abegg, courtesy of Bodleian Libraries and Gary Rendsburg and Jacob Binstein, *The Book of Ben Sira*, BenSira.org. Masada manuscript column II, transcribed by Eric Reymond.

Here, we have a clear parallelism between *nōšer* and *shoresh*. While the metaphor is from the plant world, the referent is that of offspring growing up: the young are like shoots and roots. Therefore, from this evidence we have a clear indication that *h̄tr*, *nṣr*, and *šrš* all had the same semantic range—of things growing in the plant world.

1.6 Other Analogues — Akkadian, Sumerian

In Assyrian texts, the Semitic *h̄tr* is used both for a king's sceptre and for a staff as well as for a “branch” or “stick.” In particular, there is the Akkadian word *huṭāru*, with the variant form *huṭūru*, which can mean “a branch, a stick, a staff.” There is also *huṭartu* with an infix *t*, that means “stick, staff,” but which also has the negative connotation of “to beat someone.” There is also the official word *haṭtu*, pl. *haṭṭātu*, which is used in government contexts for “staff, sceptre.” The form *huṭāru* is represented by the Sumerian logogram [GISH.GIDRU], while *haṭtu* is depicted by [GIDRI].²⁷

In Sumerian cuneiform, *giš̄idru* and *gidri* are essentially interchangeable. They can mean “stick; staff; scepter,” but also a particular kind of stick used in agricultural situations to measure the height of a pile of grain. Notably, the constituent logogram *giš̄* means “wood,” while *dúru* means “low end or base,” referring to the end of the stick in the pile of grain. Thus, the Sumerian word-image returns us to the world of agriculture and vegetation.

The base form *giš̄*, *geš* has the meaning of tree or wood and “describes a trunk that goes out into many branches and leaves.” As an adjective, it means an animal assigned to the plow. The related *giš̄uš̄-bar*, which seems to be an intensive derivation of *giš̄*, particularly means “a ruler’s staff or sceptre.” All of the staff-related words in Sumerian have *gish* as a base:²⁸

- *giš̄*, *geš* — n., tree; wood; wooden implement; scepter; tool; organ; plow; natural phenomenon (describes a trunk that goes out into many branches and leaves)
- *giš̄idru*, *gidri* — stick; staff; scepter; stick used to measure the height of a pile of grain
- *giš̄uš̄-bar* — ruler’s staff; scepter
- *giš̄ibir*, *sibir* — n., shepherd’s staff ending in a curved end, i.e., a crook; also such a staff used by a god or king as a scepter; adj., slanted, crooked.

It likewise appears that the form with *gish* may have been the original form and that over time the shorter form was used. In the Sumerian dialogue of Inana and Enki, we have these vegetative concepts specifically tied to kingship, using the shorter lexical forms:

maḥ gišgu-za nam-lugal me-a 18. lugal-ǵuo dumu-ni-ir ba-an-na-šum2 19. ǵidru maḥ eš-giri2 šibir tug2 maḥ nam-sipad nam-lugal me-a (1.3.1.F.19)

27. Lexical information on Akkadian from “Akkadian Dictionary,” Association Assyrophile de France, https://www.assyrianlanguages.org/akkadian/index_en.php.

28. Sumerian lexical information from “Sumerian Lexicon Search,” 2016, <https://sumer.grazhdani.eu/index.php>.

5. *ĝišgu-za nam-lugal ba-<e-de6>* 6. *ĝidru maḥ ba-<e-de6>* 7. *ešgiri2 šibir ba-<e-de6>*
(1.3.1.I.6)

“Where are the noble sceptre [*ĝidru maḥ*], the staff [*ešgiri2*] and crook [*šibir*], the noble dress [*tug maḥ*], shepherdship [*nam-sipad*], kingship [*nam-lugal*]?” “My master has given them to his daughter.” (1.3.1.F.19)

“You have brought with you the noble sceptre [*ĝidru maḥ*], you have brought with you the staff [*ĝidru*] and crook [*ešgiri*], you have brought with you the noble dress [*tug maḥ*], you have brought with you shepherdship [*nam-sipad*], you have brought with you kingship [*nam-lugal*].” (1.3.1.I.6)

Here, we have a remarkable concatenation of the noble sceptre *ĝidru maḥ*, the staff *ĝidru*, the shepherd's crook *ešgiri* or *šibir*, as well as a particular garment, and association with shepherding *nam-sipad* and kingship *nam-lugal*. The Sumerian texts confirm an association between shepherding and kingship. In agricultural societies, it make sense that the chief sheep-owner may have amassed the most wealth and been honored as a ruler. In fact, in the Mesha stele, that is exactly the case with the King of Moab. After building a number of cities, Mesha announced that he brought up “sheep-breeders to shepherd the sheep of the land,” צָאן דְּאַרְץ וְאָשָׁא שֵׁם אֶת נֵקְדִּי לְרֹעַת אֲתָּה (line 31).

Thus, embedded in the Akkadian-Assyrian word *huṭāru* is the Sumerian logogram *ĝiš*, which specifically means tree, wood, or a trunk that branches out. This context amazingly illuminates the occurrence at Isaiah 11:1, especially, as something of wood or a branch of some kind.

1.7 The Occurrence of *hōter* in Late Jewish Literary Aramaic, Talmuds, and Syriac

By the period of Late Jewish Literary Aramaic and Syriac, in the Christian Era, now vocalized as *huṭrā* or *hūṭar*, it had clearly come to mean a stick or cane, in which corpora it occurs hundreds of times. Interpreting Gen. 30:38, where the patriarch Jacob is shepherding Lavan's flocks, the Targum Onkelos reads יְדֵעַיִם יְתַחַטְרִיא דְּקָלִיף בְּרַטְיָא, “he inserted the sticks (*huṭrayā*) that he had peeled into the troughs.” The Targumist rendered the Hebrew *maqqēl*, another word meaning “rod, branch, stick,” as *huṭrā* because apparently the latter was in common use and more understandable to an Aramaic-speaking audience. Similarly, the Christian Palestinian Aramaic lectionary at Zech. 11:14 translates the Hebrew *maqqēl*—referring to the Prophet's act of splitting the staff representing the union of Israel and Judah—as *huṭrā*, indicating how common the term was in the early Christian era. *hūṭar* also translates *matṭe* at Exodus 17:5, when Moshe is in the court of the Pharaoh's diviners. Finally, the Christian Palestinian Aramaic lectionary of Isaiah 11:1 reads *ypwq hwṭr mn šwršh d-Yišaya' wnṣ mn šwršh yswq*, “it shall bring forth a shoot from (the) roots of Yishai and a blossom from his roots shall come up.” This version converted YŞ' and PRH into NPQ and SLQ, respectively, the latter of which has a more general connotation. This version also clarifies the botanical nature of *hūṭar* by directly pairing it with *shoresh*, “root,” which it names twice, whereas the Hebrew used *geza'* and *shoresh*. It also clarified any ambiguity by translating *nṣr* as *naṣ*, the latter which only has a botanical meaning, “blossom.” Thus, in at least two cases, the later Aramaic readings only allowed for *hṭr* referring to a plant-based object, while allowing for the metaphorical reading related to kingship.

The Targum of Psalms translated perfectly good Hebrew rods into Aramaic sceptres. In the Targum to Psalm 45:7, the Targumist translates the Hebrew *šēbet malkutekha*, “your royal rod,” into Aramaic *huṭrā’ d-malkutekha*, “your royal sceptre,” which occurs twice in that verse. Similarly, the Targum to Psalm 2:9, תְּהִבְרִינוּ הֵיכֶל קָרְעַם בְּשָׁבֵט בְּרֹאֵל, “you shall shatter them with an iron rod,” into *בְּחַוְתְּרָא דְּפָרוֹאֵל*, “you shall break them like an iron sceptre [does],” but simply using the common Aramaic term for sceptre or staff, *huṭrā’*.

The Aramaic of the Talmud Bavli used this word for a “stick,” with which one can dig a grave:

הַהִיא דָּאַתָּא לְקַמְיָה דָּרְבָּ נְחַמֵּן אָמַר לְהָ לֹא מִיְּפִקְרָתָ אָמַרָה לֵיהֶ לֹא בְּעִירָא הַנְּקָבָה חַוְתְּרָא לִידָה וּמְרָה לְקַבְוִרָה

A certain woman came before Rav Nahman [and requested a divorce because her husband had not sired any children.] He said to her, You are not commanded [to be fruitful and multiply]. She said to him: Don’t I need a stick and a shovel for burial? (Bavli, Yevamot 65b)

In other words, the woman requested a divorce so she could marry another man who could provide her with children and therefore a proper burial when she died, “a stick and a shovel.” When re-adopted back into Hebrew from Aramaic, חַוְתְּרָא became, as the Klein dictionary notes, the Post-biblical Hebrew for “stick.” Curiously, the root ḥTR has its origins in an Arabic cognate that means “lash with the tail, move up and down, shake, and quiver.”²⁹ Perhaps, in Proto-Semitic, this was used of a branch shaking in the breeze.

According to the Sureth Dictionary, *huṭra’* in Syriac meant “a stick, a staff, a walking stick, a rod, a scepter/sceptre, a pastoral staff, a shepherd’s crook, a diviner’s rod, a divining rod, and a rod of power.”³⁰ Here, the connection between a natural object, power, and shepherding had come full circle.

2 Symbolism

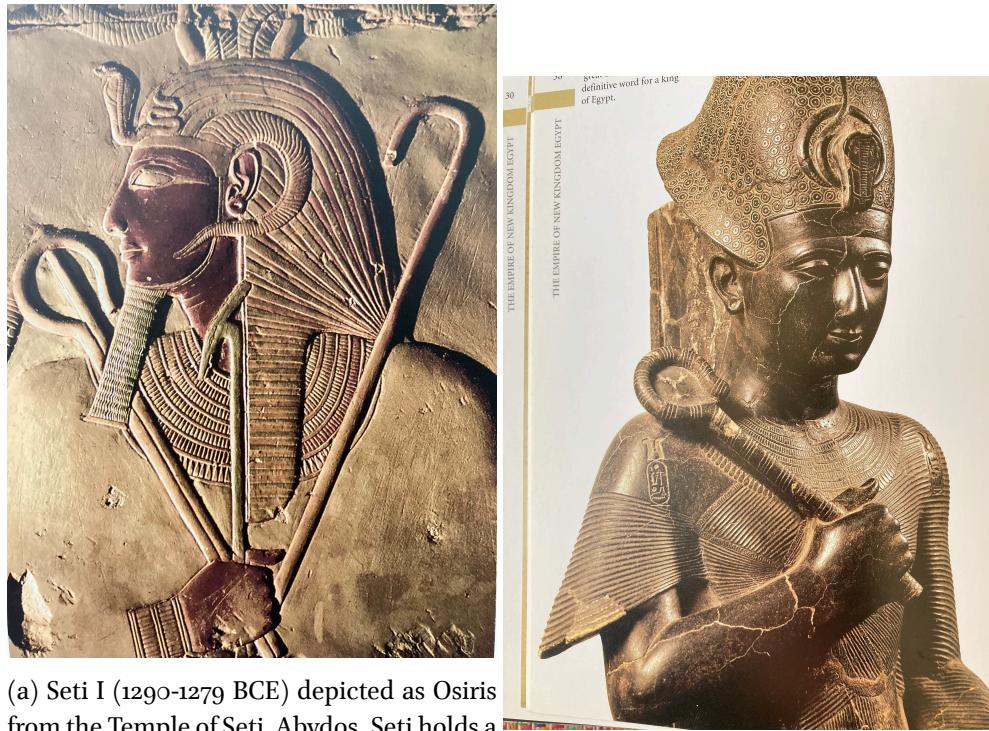
While the Sumerians may have been the first to associate kingship and shepherding, this association was carried forward by the Egyptian pharaohs. Nearly every depiction of the pharaohs, at least in the New Kingdom, which lasted from 1539 to 1069 BCE, shows them holding a flail and a shepherd’s crook across their chest or in their hands (Fig. 5). The flail and crook (*heka* and *nekhakha*) was understood as a symbol of protection and *shepherding* his people. This imagery was not limited to Egypt, however.

In Psalm 23, YHWH, who himself is a king, is also called a “shepherd,” a *ro’iy*, in the most well-known psalm. He, too, has a “crook” (*šēbet*, traditionally, “rod”) and a “staff” (*miš’enet*), both suffixed with personal possessive pronoun “your,” referring to the deity. If earthly kings are shepherds, how much more the divine king.

There are other occurrences of shepherd imagery in the Levant, which overlap with floral symbolism. Giampiero Tursi identifies a number of Syro-Palestinian cylinder seals that provide many examples of floral sceptres of varied types. Some of the flower sceptres resemble a palm tree, some resemble

29. BDB, 310c-d.

30. “Sureth Dictionary,” Association Assyrophile de France, <https://www.assyrianlanguages.org/sureth/index.php>.



(a) Seti I (1290-1279 BCE) depicted as Osiris from the Temple of Seti, Abydos. Seti holds a crook and flail, an Egyptian *w*'s sceptre, and (b) Ramases II (1279-1213 BCE) enthroned, another staff that resembles a shepherd's holding the shepherd's crook. Source: crook. Source: Christiane Desroches No-Bill Manley, "The Empire of New Kingdom blecourt, *Ramses II: An Illustrated Biography*, Egypt, 1539-1069 BC," in *The Great Empires of ed. Marie-Delphine Martelliére, trans. David the Ancient World*, ed. Thomas Harrison (Los Radzinowicz (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), 23. Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 38

Figure 5: Two New Kingdom (1539-1069) Pharaohs holding the shepherd's crook, father and son.

an Egyptian *w*'s sceptre, and others resemble a lotus flower. The latter representation probably influenced the depictions on the Samalian inscriptions. Tursi also identifies an ivory funerary talisman from Ebla with the inscription "lord of the goats," which depicts a seated figure holding a long pastoral staff. According to Tursi, "the ambivalence between branch and pastoral sceptre seems to be a largely attested iconographic convention that spread ... throughout the Levant" during the Middle Bronze Age.³¹ In other words, such symbolism was quite common in the region.

The extended metaphor of a shepherd as a protector passed down into the Christian era, with the most visible symbol being the bishop's crozier (Fig. 6). Sometimes called a pastoral staff — one must remember that *pastor* was the ancient word for shepherd. Whether grasped by an ancient pharaoh or a Byzantine bishop, the shepherd's crook was understood as a sign of protection.

³¹. Giampiero Tursi, "The lotus flower as royal attribute: A Canaanite re-interpretation of an Egyptian motif," *Vicino Oriente* XXVII (December 2023): 105. Tursi includes the images on pp. 123-126, which he hand-drew from the relevant sources.

3 Summary

The word *ḥtr* has been applied to many different contexts. In the Aramaic Aḥiqar story, it has a disciplinary function. In Proverbs, likewise, it is a tool wielded by the wicked in an unrighteous manner and represents a perversion of justice or bad discipline. In the Deir Alla inscription, it has a mysterious signification, but probably has something to do with either “leading ewes,” or conversely, the object that the rabbits ate. The first option gives credence to the idea of a *ḥtr* as a shepherd’s crook. The second option would support the contention that it is a “shoot” or other botanical-vegetal growth. None of these occurrences are very helpful.

More helpful for the denotation are the occurrences in the Byblian inscriptions and the Samalian inscriptions. In the former, the Aḥirom inscription refers to a *ḥtr* of judgement, a sceptre of rulership, which is paired with “the throne of kingship” as two indications of royal power. Likewise, the Samalian inscription of the Neo-Hittite king Panammuwa I records how the gods gave him the *ḥtr ḥlbbh*, the dynastic sceptre. Later in the inscription, he enjoins his sons who succeed him—who will “grasp the sceptre” and “sit upon my throne”—to continue observing the proper divinization rituals to Hadad so that the deceased king can have eternal life with Hadad. As in Ahirom, the sceptre and the throne are paired as symbols of royal power.

The Samalian inscriptions each have vivid depictions of the king adjacent to the actual text. However, the specific text in which *ḥtr* occurs does not have a corresponding image, because it is on the colossal bust of Hadad himself, which is missing his top half. However, of the other Samalian images we do have, they each show the king “grasping,” not a mighty iron rod, but a drooping flower. In nearly every depiction of the king, it shows the *ḥtr* in his hand as a budding flower. Even in the case of the royal princess, she is holding a flower, too (Fig. 7), which indicates that it is something that applies to royalty. We do not know exactly what the flowering *ḥtr* signified to the Samalians, but it might have something to do with royal election.

The only possible basis for such an idea (or an undercurrent that manifested itself in this situation) is the budding of Aaron’s staff in Number 17. This passage uses a word for “staff,” *matteh*, that is based on the root NTH, “to bend, incline” (and therefore could be related to a shepherd’s “crook”):



Figure 6: A bishop’s crozier. Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “crozier.”

וַיְמַתֵּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַמְּפֻתָּה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בַּאֲחָל הַעֲדָת: 23 וַיַּקְרֵב מִזְבְּחַת לְבִתְּהַרְוֹן לְבֵית לְוִי וַיֵּצֵא פָּרָח וַיַּצֵּץ צִבְיָן וַיָּגַם לְשָׁקְדִים:

[22] So Moses placed the staffs before YHWH; in the tent of meeting. [23] In the morning, Moses came to the tent of meeting, and look! the staff of Aaron of the house of Levi had budded! It had brought forth buds, and produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds.

Such a startling sight from a dead stick would have been remarkable. As Koller writes, “there is a natural logic in the idea that whoever’s staff flowers is the rightful authority, since through the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, the flowering staff symbolized authority in the Levant.”³² While usually applied in the royal context, here “it represented the elite status of Aaron in the religious realm.” Koller concludes, “the symbols of royalty and priesthood – within Israel at least – were similar and sometimes even interchangeable.” In the Panammuwa inscription, the same association between priesthood and kingship is detected: the successor-king must act as priest for his father so that the latter can enjoy the benefits of the afterlife. And the Egyptians, certainly, did not shy away from the idea of seeing their kings as divine figures. In each of these cases, it seems, the flowering bud sceptre represents the divine choice of the kingship, divine favor.

However, not everyone would agree with that interpretation. Giampiero Tursi argues that the “flower sceptre” represented the Tree of Life, a common symbol in the Mesopotamian world. Indeed, the lotus flower itself symbolized to the Egyptians regeneration and rebirth, eternal life, and the cyclical path of the sun.³³ The plant also represented the origin of life, an auspicious year, and kingship. Thus as the divine guardian of life, the king’s plant-sceptre represented the protection of life and, through association with the staff, shepherding the people.

We do not know whether the flower-sceptre was ever used in actuality — whether the monarchial *ḥōṭer* ever consisted of a flowering lotus or a budding stick or some kind of flowering staff. But we do know, that the *symbolism* of the flowering *ḥōṭer* provided an immensely influential literary and artistic motif to the ancient Egyptians, Samarians, and Mesopotamians. To them, it symbolized life and its beginnings, the protection of life, guardianship, and a sense of divine favor on the reigning monarch, that the monarch had somehow been chosen for such a role. And that idea was not limited to human monarchs: YHWH was the divine king-shepherd with his staff, and Levantine artwork depicted the gods with flowering plants. With such a provocative symbol, one can begin to see how important it was to the ancients. Whether represented in heaven or on earth, the king was the shepherd who protected life and received divine favor.

32. Koller, “Thrones and Crowns: On the Regalia of the West Semitic Monarchy,” 127.

33. Tursi, “The lotus flower as royal attribute,” 101, also see 104-105, 107, 115.

Text	Form	meaning
Aḥiram	<i>ḥṭr mšptḥ</i>	-sceptre of rulership
Panammuwa I.3,9	<i>ḥṭr ḥlbbh</i>	-sceptre of the dynasty
Panammuwa I.20,25	<i>y'hz ḥṭr</i>	“seize the sceptre,” royal power
Deir Alla I.10	<i>mṭh b'sr rḥln yybl ḥṭr 'rnbn 'kłw</i>	-unclear: the staff leading ewes, or the shoot rabbits eat?
Aḥiqar 81	<i>'l thḥšk brk mn ḥṭr</i>	“do not withhold your son from the rod/switch”
Proverbs 14:3	<i>be-pi 'ewil ḥōṭer ga'awāh</i>	“in the mouth of the foolish, an arrogant rod” [i.e., perverted justice]
Isaiah 11:1	<i>wěyāṣā' ḥōṭer mi-gēza' yišāy wě-nēṣer mi-šārāšāyw yipreh</i>	“a sapling shall spring forth from the stump of Yishai, and a shoot from his roots shall bud.”

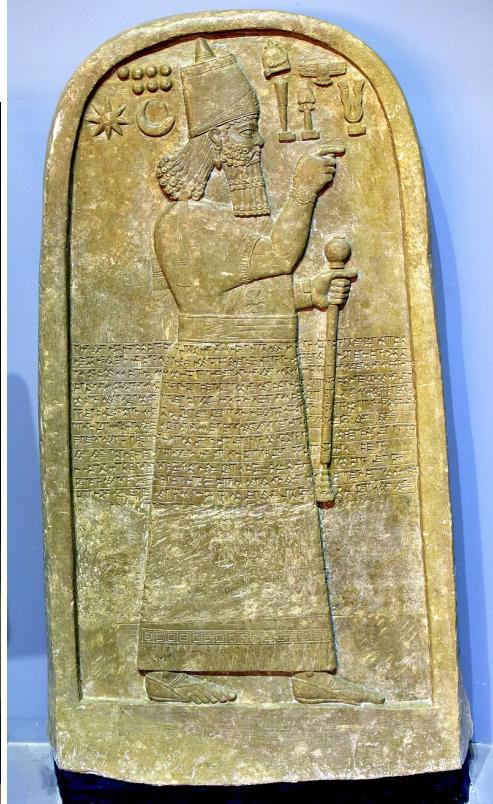
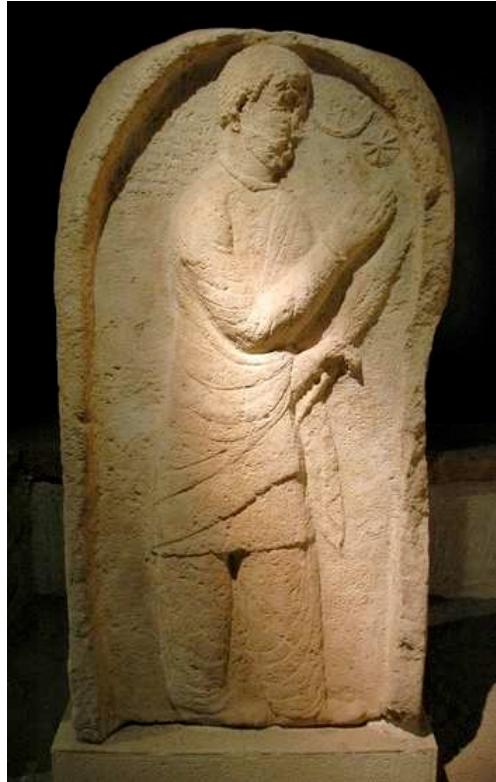
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Figure 7: Relief from a grave stele from Samal. Here, the departed princess holds the flower-sceptre, indicating that any royalty could wield it. The winged sun-disk above represents her royalty. She is being attended upon by a servant. Source: Trevor Bryce, "The Hittite Empire, 1620-1200 BC," in *The Great Empires of the Ancient World*, ed. Thomas Harrison (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 67.



(a) "Aššur, Parthian stele of a worshipper"; of syrian king (reigned 810-783 BCE) praying R'uth-Assor, local Assyrian king of Parthian- before gods and goddesses. The name of controlled city-state Aššur, c. 112/113 CE Jehoash the Samarian was mentioned, who (424th year of the Seleucid calendar). Ar- paid tribute to the king. On display at the chaeology Museum, Istanbul. Photo: Jona Iraq Museum in Baghdad, Republic of Iraq. Rendering, Livius.org (via Wikimedia Commons).
 (b) The so-called Tell al Rimah stele or "Mosul marble" of Adad-nirari III, depicts the As-

Figure 8: To the left, a late Assyrian king, R'uth-Assor, with an agriculture *htr*. To the right, a Neo-Assyrian king, Adad-Nirari III, with an iron *htr*.