

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND REALIA IN THE PREEXILIC BOOKS OF THE BIBLE*

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Abstract: *The distinction between the Standard Biblical Hebrew of the preexilic period and Late Biblical Hebrew of the postexilic one is at present widely accepted in the scholarship. Some scholars have provided evidence for the claim that various linguistic layers can be discerned in Standard Biblical Hebrew as well. As a proponent of the latter approach, I present here ten examples of linguistic developments that most probably occurred during the preexilic period, which can perhaps be linked to historical and archeological data. Thus, the discussion of this significant topic advances the discussion of the dating of the books of the Hebrew Bible from relative to absolute dating.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This article treats ten examples of biblical topics that, in my opinion, demonstrate a link between their linguistic-lexical aspects—words and expressions and their distribution—and historical or archeological data. This consideration has ramifications for a topic that has been treated from the inception of biblical studies: the dating of biblical books. In recent decades, the last decade in particular, the question of whether linguistic features can be relied on as a criterion for determining relative dating of texts has been hotly debated. The sharpest debate concerns the distinction between Standard Biblical Hebrew and Late Biblical Hebrew. Using linguistic criteria, Avi Hurvitz and others have shown that there is a sharp distinction between Standard Biblical Hebrew and postexilic Late Biblical Hebrew.¹ Ian Young and others deny this distinction, arguing that the dif-

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1. A. Hurvitz, "Biblical Hebrew: Late," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (EHLL; ed. G. Khan; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1:329–338; A. Hornkohl, "Biblical Hebrew: Periodization," in EHLL 1:315–325; C. L. Miller-Naudé and Z. Zevit, eds., *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012). More recently, see N. Samet, "The Validity of the Masoretic Text as a Basis for Diachronic Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Texts: Evidence from Masoretic Vocalisation," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 501–516; A. Hornkohl, "Linguistic Periodization in the Face of Textual and Literary Pluriformity," in *Advances in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics: Data, Methods, and Analyses* (ed. A. Moshavi and T. Notarius, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 12; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017), pp. 53–80.

ferent strata were in fact coexisting styles of language.² However, other studies have demonstrated the existence of strata within Standard Biblical Hebrew, based on linguistic criteria.³ In my opinion, this stance is logical, first and foremost because every language shows linguistic development in every period. Surely the distinction between various linguistic layers in biblical sources should be undertaken cautiously, based on several considerations, such as that late features may appear sporadically in earlier sources,⁴ or that a noun may be derived from a root that is known in the verbal system only from sister languages or much later strata of Hebrew.⁵ The innovative aspect of this study lies in its integration of the linguistic perspective with realia, which perhaps provides an external Archimedean point of reference that impacts questions of the absolute dating of biblical texts. Here I argue that it is pertinent to consult historically dated external evidence with respect to words or phrases from a particular milieu or period attested only in certain books. The outcome of this investigation may challenge the mainstream opinions of linguistic and biblical scholarship.

The ten examples are presented roughly in chronological order, from ancient to middle to late Standard Biblical Hebrew. For a summary table, see the appendix.

2. I. Young, “Biblical Texts Cannot Be Dated Linguistically,” *HS* 46 (2005): 341–351; I. Young, “Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew?” *VT* 59 (2009): 606–629; I. Young, R. Reztko, and M. Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (2 vols.; New York: Routledge, 2008). See also R. Reztko and I. Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps toward an Integrated Approach* (Ancient Near East Monographs 9; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

3. Y. M. Grintz, “מונחים קדומים ב'תורת כהנים'” (Archaic terms in “the Priestly Code”), *Leshonenu* 39 (1975): 163–181; Y. M. Grintz, “מונחים קדומים ב'תורת כהנים'” (Archaic terms in “the Priestly Code”), *Leshonenu* 40 (1975): 5–32; articles by Yossi Leshem, and especially his doctoral dissertation, Y. Leshem, “בספר שופטים ובמגילת רות” (“Royal” usages in the language of Samuel and Kings and their contribution to dating the narrative material in Judges and Ruth; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1994); Y. Elitzur, “The Divine Name ADNY in the Hebrew Bible: Surprising Findings,” *Liber Annuus* 65 (2015): 87–106; Y. Elitzur, “שמות האל ותאריכי כתיבת ספרי המקרא” (The divine names and the dates of writing and editing of the books of the Hebrew Bible), in *בעיני אלוהים ואדם* (In the sight of God and man; ed. Y. Brandes, T. Ganzel, and C. Deutsch; Jerusalem: Beit Morasha, 2015), pp. 399–408. An English translation of the latter is forthcoming.

4. See for instance, the allegedly “Mishnaic” lexemes found in various biblical sources, in A. Bendavid, *לשון מקרא ולשון חכמים* (Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1967), pp. 14–15.

5. For example, *מערב* from ^cRB known in Akkadian and Ugaritic and/or *ḠRB* known in Arabic, *מדבר* from *DBR* known in rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic, and *מכנסים* from *KNS* known in Late Biblical Hebrew, Qumran, and Rabbinic Hebrew.

1) אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי

Deuteronomy mandates that the person bringing first-fruits must present himself before the Lord in the divinely chosen place and recall divine benevolence from the beginning of Israelite national history until the settlement in the land flowing with milk and honey. The obligatory “farmer’s declaration” concludes by combining the personal and the national: וְעַתָּה הֵנָּה הֵבֵאתִי אֶת־רֵאשִׁית פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לִי יְהוָה ‘Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O Lord, have given me’ (Deut 26:10; all translations are from the NJPS). Its opening verse reads as follows: אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם בְּמִתִּי מִעֹט וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרַב ‘My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation’ (Deut 26:5). The thrust of the verse is clear: it underscores the shift from a miserable nomadic existence to a large, powerful nation.

Historically, in the second millennium B.C.E., the Arameans and the Ahlamu (a synonym for the Arameans or the name of similar tribes in Akkadian sources) were nomadic sheepherders in central and northern Mesopotamia and the arid steppes west of the Euphrates. From the eleventh century B.C.E. on, the pastoral way of life persisted only among a number of Aramean tribes that migrated to southern Mesopotamia, whereas the main body of the Aramean tribes moved westward and gradually became a strong military entity that the Assyrian kings sought to drive out. Kirleis and Herles ascribe these shifts to climatic changes that caused aridity, forcing the Arameans to search for sources of sustenance for themselves and pasture for their flocks, either by raiding Assyrian cities or by migrating to distant regions.⁶ The biblical account fits this picture very well. The pastoral character of ancient Aramean society is reflected in the biblical cycle of the patriarchs, in the description of Haran and the house of Laban the Aramean, where we encounter shepherds waiting “until all the flocks are rounded up; then the stone is rolled off the mouth of the well” (Gen 29:8), as well as in the figure of Balaam, the prophet who arrives from Aram riding on an ass to view the tents of the Israelites from the hilltops in order to curse them (Num 22:5; 23:7; Deut 23:5). Nowhere in the Pentateuch do we hear of cities, kings, or wars when Arameans are mentioned.

6. W. Kirleis and M. Herles, “Climatic Change as a Reason for Assyro-Aramaean Conflicts? Pollen Evidence for Drought at the End of the 2nd Millennium BC,” *SAAB* 16 (2007): 7–37. I thank Dr. Nili Samet for this reference.

In the days of Saul and especially in the reign of David and Solomon, that is, the eleventh–tenth centuries B.C.E. (1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8:3–12; 10:6–19; 1 Kgs 11:23–25), the Arameans are revealed as organized armed kingdoms north and northeast of Israel. By the ninth and eighth centuries they had emerged as the major political power in the Levant. In the book of Kings, from Asa’s reign to the emergence of the Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah and Hosea son of Elah, Aram was the fixed enemy of Israel and Judah (mentioned sixty-three times from 1 Kings 15 to 2 Kings 16), which made Israel “like the dust under his feet” (2 Kgs 13:7). Tens of lapidary inscriptions left by the kings of Aram, as compared to the vastly smaller number of inscriptions from Judah, Israel, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, testify to their strength.⁷ This state of affairs changed sharply with the Aramean defeat by Tiglat-Pileser III. The destruction of Damascus and the exile of its inhabitants in 732 B.C.E designates the historical point at which the Arameans ceased to exist as a nation.

In light of the historical picture drawn above, the phrase “my father was a fugitive Aramean” can be applied neither to the last 150 years of the First Temple period, when the Arameans were a story from the past, nor to the earlier centuries during which they were rulers and warriors, rather than a wandering nomadic entity. Thus, I propose that the biblical phrase אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי is of pre-eleventh-century provenance.⁸ Mainstream scholars who date Deuteronomy to a later period propose creative solutions for understanding this phrase. According to Benjamin Mazar, “nomad” or “fugitive” was a traditional historical title for Arameans, retained in use centuries beyond the point when it had ceased to be a reality.⁹ Yair Zakovitch emends the text (without any supporting version or testimony) to אֲדָם עָבַד אָבִי ‘Edom served my father’.¹⁰ Recently, the varied

7. W. T. Pitard, “Arameans,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (ed. H. J. Klauck et al.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 2:636–645; Y. Elitzur, “קִיר, מוֹלֶדֶת הָאֲרָמִים: מִבֶּט חֲדָשׁ” (Qir of the Aramaeans: A new approach), *Shnaton* 21 (2012): 148–152; K. L. Younger, “Tiglath-Pileser I and the Initial Conflicts of the Assyrians with the Arameans,” in *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria: Textual and Archaeological Perspectives* (ed. A. Berlejung, A. M. Maeir, and A. Schüle; Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), pp. 195–228.

8. For scholarly opinions that date Deuteronomy or central parts thereof as early, see M. D. Cassuto, “דְּבָרִים,” in *אֵנְצִיקְלוֹפֵדִיָּה מִקְרָאִית* (Encyclopaedia Biblica; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1964), 2:608–619; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 299–304.

9. B. Mazar, “The Aramean Empire and Israel,” in *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (ed. S. Ahituv and B. A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), p. 154 n. 9. Mazar cites a similar expression from Sennacherib’s Taylor Inscription, but this inscription relates to the southern Aramean tribes who were still nomads in the eighth century B.C.E.

10. Y. Zakovitch, “‘My Father Was a Wandering Aramean’ (Deuteronomy 26:5) or ‘Edom Served My Father’?” in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment*, in

approaches, interpretations, and text emendations for אֲרָמֵי אֲבָד אֲבִי from antiquity to the present have been compiled, together with bibliographical references, by Yigal Levin, who finally chose to interpret אֲרָמֵי אֲבָד as “idol-worshipping Aramean,”¹¹ which diverges from the plain meaning of the verse. A more moderate approach is that of Edward Lipiński, who dates the deuteronomic phrase to the late tenth century B.C.E. Based on the phrase ÉRIN.MEŠ EDIN KUR aḥ-la-me-e KUR ar-ma-a-ia in the annals of Adad-nirari II (911–891 B.C.E), Lipiński assumes the existence of an intermediate stage in which the northern Arameans had a still semi-nomadic character (he interprets the sumerogram ÉRIN.MEŠ EDIN as “people of the steppe”). To this stage he attributed the phrase אֲרָמֵי אֲבָד, arguing that אֲבָד might mean “seminomadic pastoralists.”¹² However, the preferable interpretation of ÉRIN.MEŠ EDIN is “field troops” as translated by Grayson and well argued by Kirleis and Herles.¹³ I conclude that the numerous proposals seem to be predetermined, whereas the plain meaning of the phrase convincingly links it to the pre-eleventh century B.C.E

2) בּוֹר and בְּאֵר

The archeology of the land of Israel demonstrates a dramatic shift in the map of settlement between the Bronze and the Iron Ages. If Bronze Age cities were generally located in places with available water sources or a high water table and relied on wells, or in some instances, on large urban reservoirs, the expanded use of lime plaster cisterns to gather rain-water in the Iron Age made it possible to expand the areas of settlement to mountainous and semi-desert regions that were not in proximity to natural sources of water or a high water table. William Albright denoted the lime plaster cistern a new invention of the Iron I Age.¹⁴ Subsequent scholars toned down this definition, showing that lime plaster cisterns already existed in the Bronze Age, but were not widely distributed, whereas

Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay (ed. N. S. Fox, D. A. Glatt-Gilad, and M. J. Williams; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), pp. 133–137.

11. Y. Levine, “‘My Father Was a Wandering Aramean’: Biblical Views of the Ancestral Relationship between Israel and Aram,” in *Wandering Arameans*, pp. 39–52.

12. E. Lipiński, *The Arameans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (OLA 100; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2000), pp. 55–59.

13. See W. Kirleis and M. Herles, “Climatic Change,” p. 9.

14. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 113; W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1940), p. 212.

in the Iron Age they became the standard.¹⁵ Excavations of Iron Age cities disclosed the presence of cisterns in many courtyards, even in sites that were adjacent to sources of water. In the Israelite period, settlement was no longer dependent on proximity to wells or ground water, although some wells and large underground reservoirs are still found here and there in the Israelite mounds on the coastal plain and in the Negev.¹⁶ In light of this context it is interesting to examine the findings regarding the frequency of the words בּוֹר ‘cistern’ and בְּאֵר ‘well’ in the Bible.

בְּאֵר ‘well’ is very frequent in the Bible, but its twenty-seven occurrences are restricted to the Pentateuch. In the Prophets and Writings it is found in one context with the meaning of cistern (2 Sam 17:18–21), and in five other instances as a literary word in poetic texts with multiple synonyms for plentiful water, alongside בּוֹר, מַעְמָקִים, שְׂבִלָת, מִצּוּלָה, מַעְיָנוֹת, מְקוֹר, פְּלִיגֵי מַיִם, גֶּן, גֵּל, שְׁלָחִים, מַעְיָן, נְזִלִים.

The word בּוֹר/בֵּר/בְּאֵר is more frequent and occurs some sixty times in the Bible to designate different types of excavations. In some thirty instances it means “cistern;” in individual cases “pit;” and on occasion “prison.” In literary texts it appears twenty-one times in the borrowed meanings of “grave,” “hell,” and “death.” In three instances it has a double meaning. In the Pentateuch “cistern” appears in three contexts: the cistern into which Joseph was thrown (seven times in Genesis 37), אֶדְ מַעְיָן וּבּוֹר (Lev 11:36), and וּבֵרֶת חֲצוּבִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־חֲצָבֶתָּ (Deut 6:11). This state of affairs indicates that the Pentateuch reflects the reality of the pre-Israelite epoch, in which wells were the main source of water

15. See Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. and ed. A. F. Rainey; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), pp. 107, 240; A. Faust, “The Israelite Village: Cultural Conservatism and Technological Innovation,” *Tel Aviv* 32 (2005): 207–208.

16. P. J. King and L. E. Stager, “Water Sources,” in *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 123–129. Some details that need emendation in this chapter are: (a) at present, the average annual rainfall in the area of Jerusalem (2000–2017) is 495 millimeters, not 750; (b) עֵין, at least in the book of Genesis, means “well” (Gen 16:7, 14; 24:11, 13; and compare En-rogel commonly identified with Bīr Ayūb ‘Job’s Well’), while מַעְיָן of Psalms 104:10 etc. is “spring”; (c) the water source in Jer 6:7 is not בְּאֵר ‘well’ but בּוֹר Kethib; בֵּיר Qere; (d) David wanted to drink from the cistern (בְּאֵר) near the gate of Bethlehem, not from a well that could not exist in the mountainous portions of the country; (e) the Israelite women did not carry jars of water on their heads as do the Arab women but on their shoulders; (f) cisterns are not cleaned annually as one can see until today in traditional Arab villages; (g) cisterns cut into hard limestone as in the Cenomanian deposits must always be plastered, whereas the soft chalk requires no special lining; and (h) according to the biblical account (Jer 38:10) thirty, or according to some manuscripts three, not four men were required to extricate Jeremiah from the mud. And two additional notes: (1) King and Stager were not aware of the well-known difference between the Bronze and Iron Ages concerning the distribution of the plastered cisterns; (2) the location of the cisterns in Tel Arad in the valley below was the result of the region’s arid climate; locating the reservoirs in the valley enabled them to take advantage of the winter floods. The same phenomenon is known in Nahal Zin and elsewhere.

in the country, although cisterns were also in occasional use at that time. Prophets and Writings reflect the reality of the Iron Age, when wells were no longer commonly used by the Israelites and each one drank water from his own cistern (cf. 2 Kgs 18:31; Isa 36:16).¹⁷

3) סֹטֶרִים and שְׁטָרִים

The term שְׁטָרִים is familiar from the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua (Exodus 5—five times; Numbers 11—once; Deuteronomy—seven times in various chapters; Joshua—five times, various places). It appears once in the singular in Prov 6:7 in a verse that contains several words that signify “manager.” It returns to relatively frequent use in Chronicles (six occurrences, all in verses without parallels in Samuel and Kings; one in the singular). We can then assume, following Tigay, that the term belonged to the language of the Pentateuch and Joshua, and then ceased to be used.¹⁸ Its use in Chronicles is probably artificial, influenced by the Pentateuch.

As seen from comparative linguistics, the original meaning of the word שְׁטָר is “scribe.”¹⁹ This was still known to the Septuagint, Peshitta, and the Samaritan Targum. Contrary to the prevailing view in the scholarship, there is no reason to assume that the word was specifically borrowed from Akkadian;²⁰ it is rather more likely that it is an early Semitic word.²¹

17. Y. Elitzur, “הבור והבאר: ריאליה וארכיאולוגיה והמחקר הלשוני” (באר: Reality, archaeology and linguistic research), *Leshonenu* 51 (1987): 207–230. This article collects and explains the biblical data linguistically, on the one hand, and the archaeological findings on the other, showing correspondence between these two aspects.

18. J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 345. The late artificial character of the passages in question in Chronicles is indicated by the language (לְנִצָּחַ עַל-מְלָאכָת בֵּית-יְהוָה [1 Chr 23:4], לְנִצָּחַ עַל-מְלָאכָת בֵּית-יְהוָה [1 Chr 23:5], etc.) and the curious numbers and data (such as 6,000 שְׁטָרִים [1 Chr 23:4] amongst the Levites).

19. However, as Van der Ploeg has pointed out, it is noteworthy that Scripture never mentions writing with respect to the שְׁטָרִים (J. Van der Ploeg, “Les šōṭerim d’Israël,” *OTS* 10 [1954]: 196). But this etymology belongs to the prehistory of the word, and we should not assume that their task in biblical periods included writing, against the silent biblical testimony. Compare to the similar case of מְחַקֵּק and the root ḤQQ in Hebrew and other Semitic languages, in which the same semantic development from “scribe” to “leader/ruler” took place (*HALOT* 347).

20. N. S. Fox, *In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), pp. 192–194; A. Demsky, *ידעת ספר בישראל בעת העתיקה* (Literacy in ancient Israel; Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 28; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2012), pp. 146–148.

21. The verb سَطَرَ (*saṭara*) ‘to write’ is used in Arabic to the present, and a similar root is known from early Southern Arabian languages. On the other hand, there is no *šāṭiru in Akkadian, which would be the expected parallel of Hebrew שוטר. See “שוטר,” *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 7:534–535; *HALOT* 1475–1476. The belief that Hebrew שְׁטָר depends solely on the Akkadian misled scholars. Thus, the lack of *šāṭiru in Akkadian led Alexander Rofé to assume that the term שְׁטָר was a pseudo-archaic Hebrew invention (cited from an unpublished study by Rofé in N. S. Fox, *In the Service*, p. 194 n. 77).

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that generations after the term שְׂטָרִים fell into disuse, it was replaced in Biblical Hebrew by the term סַ(ו)פֶּר. The latter appears in the Bible fifty-four times, distributed as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of סַ(ו)פֶּר

Biblical book	Number of occurrences
Judges	1 (Song of Deborah)
2 Samuel	2 (two parallel verses from a list of functionaries in the Davidic kingdom)
1 Kings	1 (a list of functionaries from Solomon's day that partially overlaps and continues the earlier list from David's day)
2 Kings	10 (functionaries serving during the reigns of Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Zedekiah)
Isaiah	3 (in the chapters concerning Hezekiah that have identical parallels in Kings)
Jeremiah	12
Ezekiel	2
Psalms	1
Esther	2
Ezra-Nehemiah	10 (and another 6 occurrences of סַפֶּר דָּתָא in the Aramaic section of Ezra)
Chronicles	10 (5 copied from Samuel and Kings)

The table shows that after a single appearance of סַפֶּר in a poetic text, it enters permanent use to denote a functionary at the royal court from David's day, which later became institutionalized in the monarchic period until the destruction of the temple. Unlike the שְׂטָרִים of the early books who are mentioned only in plural, the סַפֶּר of the monarchic period almost always occurs in the singular. The סוּפְרִים of the postexilic books are a different breed: they are no longer governmental ministers/officials but rather professionals. The concept of סוּפֶּר in this period has strong affinities to various Aramaic sources.²²

22. See HALOT, pp. 1939–1940; W. Schniedewind, “The Linguistics of Writings Systems and the Gap in the Hebrew Scribal Tradition,” in *Advances in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics*, pp. 113–123.

For the earliest periods, the biblical data indicate a tribal structure for the Israelites. Its leadership included high officials who recorded and oversaw military and civil activity, who were designated שְׁטָרִים.²³ In the chaotic period of the judges, when “every man did as he pleased,” this function disappeared. With the founding of the Davidic kingship, an administrative function emerged in Judah but not in the Northern Kingdom: this minister was termed a סוֹפֵר. Throughout this period there was no necessity for a class of professional scribes or special schools for scribes, as writing did not involve mastery of hundreds of signs, determinatives, or ideograms, unlike the nonalphabetic systems in Mesopotamia on the one hand and Egypt on the other.²⁴

4) שְׁרוּחָן

This strange toponym, which ostensibly appears to be non-Semitic, is found among the cities of the tribe of Simeon enumerated in Josh 19:6, and is listed between Beth-lebaath and Ain and Rimon. A parallel list of the tribe of Judah’s holdings in the Negev (Josh 15:32) reads: וּלְבָאוֹת וְשִׁלְחִים וְעֵין וְרִמּוֹן. It seems obvious then that Sharuhēn is another name for Shilhim.²⁵ Egyptian sources that contain toponyms in Canaan mention the name *š-r-h-n* four times (in a gravestone inscription recounting the expulsion of the Hyksos, in the annals of Thutmose III, and in the lists of conquests by Amenhotep III and Ramses II) and once as *š-r-h-m* (in the list of Shishak).²⁶ Logically, the two forms in the Egyptian sources are two

23. A. Demsky (*Literacy in Ancient Israel*, p. 147) writes: “We must wonder why the term שוטר became accepted in the Bible at a time when the term סופר was prevalent among the Canaanite and Syrian peoples. Evidently, the aim was to distinguish between the two. It is possible that the term שוטר, which referred to a tribal official who specialized in writing and administration, was preserved from an earlier period in the people’s history. Regarding the שוטר we can say that it is found in all the tribes and is not a creation of the monarchic system” (translated from Hebrew by D. Ordan).

24. See A. Mendel, “Literacy: Biblical Hebrew,” in *EHL* 2:552–558.

25. But שְׁעָרִים, which is found in a similar location in the third parallel in 1 Chr 4:31 is a completely different word according to root and structure, and cannot refer to the same place. Either it reflects a different period during which שְׁלָחִים was removed from the list and replaced by שְׁעָרִים, or it is a corruption.

26. The LXX for Josh 19:6 has καὶ οἱ ἀγροὶ αὐτῶν ‘and their fields’ (which apparently reflects וּשְׁדוֹתָן or וּשְׁדוֹתָהּ in the Hebrew substrate) instead of שְׁרוּחָן. The discovery of the name *š-r-h-n* in association with the southwest part of the land of Israel indicates that the MT has the correct version and that the LXX or its Hebrew *Vorlage* made a critical emendation because of the strangeness of this name or because of the discrepancy between the notation of “thirteen towns with their villages” and the fourteen towns listed. Note that the term שְׁדוֹתֵיהֶן or שְׁדוֹתֵיהֶן nowhere appears in the allotment chapters.

Other solutions proposed for the numerical discrepancy—to erase the שָׁבַע in Josh 19:2 (as haplography) or to assume that Sheba and Beer-sheba are two parts of one city (Radak)—are incorrect and unnecessary. There are at times numerical discrepancies in the lists, especially with regard to the Negev. Thirty-seven cities are listed in the Negev for the tribe of Judah, but the summation states:

parallel variants, like שְׁעֵלְבִין (Josh 19:42)/שְׁעֵלְבִים (Judg 1:35). Š-*r-h-m* is an exact representation of שְׁלָחִים, in line with the consistent transcription of *r* instead of Semitic *l* starting with the beginning of the New Kingdom.²⁷

As found in the list of the tribe of Simeon's holdings, שְׁרוּחָן is an almost exact parallel of š-*r-h-n*. The only difference is the element *ru* instead of *r* in the Egyptian testimonies. Anyone familiar with Egyptian transcriptions will not find this exchange surprising. We often find many “weak” consonants in Egyptian transcriptions (w, y, i, 3) that do not fit the required vowel. Especially frequent is the use of biliteral signs in which the second radical is a “weak” consonant; for example, the lion hieroglyph that signifies *rw*, instead of the closed mouth that signifies the uniliteral *r*.²⁸

How are we to explain the existence of two forms, one Hebrew-Canaanite and one Egyptian, in two parallel lists in the chapters of the tribal divisions? Evidently, when both variants were in parallel distribution, it was possible to use either form, just as at present we can write Shechem or Nablus, Kesarya or Caesarea. This would especially apply to a prominent Egyptian stronghold like Sharuhēn.

Historically, this would have been possible only during the period between the conquest of Canaan and the decline of Egyptian power, at a time when the Israelites had conquered significant portions of Canaan but the Egyptian campaigns had not yet ceased. Yehezkel Kaufmann claimed that the list of the tribal portions in Joshua could not be as late as the monarchy, because the insistence on tribal portions did not apply to that period.

“Total: twenty-nine towns, with their villages” (Josh 15:32). The most reasonable explanation is that where life depends on grazing as in the Negev, there are more unwallled towns (חֲצֵרִים—Lev 25:31) than in other regions (see Deut 2:23; Josh 19:8; Isa 42:11). The fixed formula in the lists of the tribal cities is וְחֲצֵרֵיהֶן XX עָרִים, namely the walled cites are noted because of their importance, whereas the unwallled villages are not mentioned because they are not important. But there can be exceptions. There are some villages that are nonetheless important and mentioned by name even though they were not included in the summary of the total; there were also cities that began as villages but were still called חֲצֵר (M. Noth, *Das Buch Josua* [HAT 1.7; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953], p. 93).

27. שְׁלָחִים are irrigation canals (according to Song of Songs, Mishnaic Hebrew and Akkadian) and this is consistent with the accepted identification of Sharuhēn (in the wake of Albright) as Tel el-Fāri'a, above a part of Nahal Besor where water flows, an unusual feature in the dry Negev. The vocalization שְׁלָחִים in the MT diverges from the usual practice in Hebrew of designating the plural of segholate nouns in the קָטָלִים < **qatalīm* pattern (cf. שְׁלָחִיךָ—Song 4:13) but according to the Aramaic rules of pronunciation the segholate plurals appear in the *qitlīn* pattern. Evidently in the biblical period, the pronunciation was still **šalahīm*. A similar example: Banayabarqa in Sennacherib's inscription is בְּנֵי בֶרַק (Bene-berak) in Josh 19:45, in line with how Aramaic treats the singular of segholates and in opposition to the rules of Hebrew. See Y. Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 125, 332.

28. For example, *k-rw-rw* = גִּלִּיל; ʿ3-*rw-d-y* = עֶרֶד. See S. Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), pp. 65–66, 94.

Kaufmann noted especially the list of the Benjamites (Josh 18:21–28) in which Jerusalem is an outpost, referred to as “Jebus—that is, Jerusalem,” at the end of the list in the twenty-fourth place. Such a statement could not have been made at a time when Jerusalem was the capital: “city of the great king” (Ps 48:3).²⁹ In line with Kaufmann’s stance, the existence of three variants of the name שְׁרוּחָן is easily understood, without having to force or emend either the biblical text or the Egyptian lists.³⁰

5) כנען, ארץ כנען, ארץ הכנעני

This term is very frequent from Genesis 10 (the Table of Nations) to the Song of Deborah: 141 occurrences. Its use peaks in Genesis, where the deeds of the patriarchs in what was then the land of Canaan are recounted, and in Joshua and the beginning of Judges, which recount the conquest of the land from the Canaanites and settlement instead of or alongside them. From that point on, its use declines drastically. We occasionally find it in citations from the Pentateuch, in sparse comments on the vestiges of the Canaanites, and in new meanings: merchants, Phoenicia, and Philistia. The turning point is the final, determining Israelite battle against the Canaanites: “On that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. The hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan” (Judg 4:23–24). The distribution of this term and its meanings is summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Canaan, land of Canaan, Canaanite

Genesis	57
Exodus	12
Leviticus	3
Numbers	19
Deuteronomy	5
Joshua	23

29. Y. Kaufmann, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Canaan* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), p. 44.

30. For the different opinions regarding שְׁרוּחָן, see A. Sanda, “Review of P. Heinisch: *Das Buch Genesis* (Bonn 1930),” *AfO* 7 (1931–1932): 288; W. Borée, *Die Ortsnamen Palästinas* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), pp. 119–120; N. Na’aman, “The Brook of Egypt and Assyrian Policy on the Border of Egypt,” *Tel Aviv* 6 (1979): 75; S. Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms*, pp. 171–173; R. Liwak, “Sharuhēn,” *ABD* 5:1163–1164; A. F. Rainey, “Sharhān-Sharuhen: The Problem of Identification,” *Eretz-Israel* 24 (1994): *178–*187; *HALOT*, pp. 1653–1654 (the approach of Na’aman was presented here inaccurately; according to Na’aman š-r-h-n of the Hyxos, identified with Tell el ‘Ajūl, is not mentioned in the Bible, and Shilhim was a small unidentified town in the allotment of Simeon, whose name was corrupted to שְׁרוּחָן in Joshua 19 and to שְׁעָרִים in 1 Chronicles 4).

Judges 1–5	22
Judges 6–21	1
Samuel	1
Kings	1 (the remnants at Gezer)
Isaiah	2 (one <i>שַׁפַּת כְּנַעַן</i> for Hebrew; one for Phoenicia)
Ezekiel	3 (one for Phoenicia; one for a land of traders)
Hosea	1 (trader)
Obadiah	<i>כְּנַעֲנִים עַד-צָרְפָּת</i> (a name for Phoenicia and perhaps the distant Mediterranean coast) ³¹
Zephaniah	2 (<i>חֶבֶל הַיָּם גּוֹי כְּרִתִּים ... כְּנַעַן אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים</i> = traders; <i>עַם כְּנַעַן</i>)
Zechariah	1 (<i>כְּנַעֲנִי</i> = trader)
Psalms	3 (in historical psalms—105:13; 106:38; 135:11)
Proverbs	1 (<i>כְּנַעֲנִי</i> = trader)
Job	1 (<i>כְּנַעֲנִים</i> = traders)
Ezra	1
Nehemiah	2 (historical references in the Levites' prayer—9:8, 24)
Chronicles	4 (3 copied from Genesis, one from Psalm 105)

To conclude, the terms Canaan/Canaanite(s) were in wide use until the final destruction of the Canaanite forces by Deborah and Barak. From this point on, the Canaanites ceased to exist as a nation. In addition to several citations of the Pentateuch or the book of Joshua, this term appears from time to time either as a name of the Philistine-Phoenician cities along the Mediterranean shores or as an appellation for merchants.

6) עֵדָה

עֵדָה (=congregation) is found in the Bible 149 times, of which sixteen occurrences are in poetic texts (Hosea, Jeremiah, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job). In prose contexts it is frequent in Exodus (starting with the prepara-

31. Most modern commentators correct the verse without any basis in the versions or textual witnesses in order to make *עַד-צָרְפָּת כְּנַעֲנִים* part of the promised land. As it stands, however, it appears that the verse is referring to exile outside the land of Israel. Perhaps this verse does not refer to *צָרְפָּת* known as *אֶשֶׁר לְצִדּוֹן* (1 Kgs 17:9) which is not “exile” but rather a place called by its name along the Mediterranean coast, a known phenomenon in the Phoenician diaspora. This idea was raised in an oral communication with the late Chezi Katz. See Y. Elitzur, *מקום בפרשה* (Places in the parashah; Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth and Chemed, 2014), p. 154.

tions for the Exodus from Egypt), Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua, decreases in Judges (four times—הַעֲדָה ‘the congregation’ in the story of the war with the Benjaminites that most probably describes events from the early days of the judges; Judges 20–21),³² but is missing from Deuteronomy, Samuel, Kings (with the exception of 1 Kgs 8:5; 12:20), and the postexilic books (with the exception of 2 Chron 5:6, a copy of 1 Kgs 8:5). On the basis of its absence from the post-exilic period literature, parallels in Ugaritic and Akkadian, and other considerations, Gordis, Liver, Grintz, and Hurvitz negate the common scholarly viewpoint that views עֲדָה as representative of the Persian period (a temple- and priesthood-focused religious community without a political regime).³³ The data rather indicate that this concept belonged to the period of the creation of the Israelite tribal regime that preceded the founding of the monarchy and almost went out of use after the completion of the process of the conquest and settlement. It still occurs twice in the days of the united monarchy, and then disappears entirely. We can therefore conclude that the עֲדָה was an active institution of the national-tribal framework in the earlier periods. Its absence from Deuteronomy merits further consideration. In the light of other discussions in this study in which we came to the conclusion that Deuteronomy belongs to an ancient layer of the Hebrew Bible, we may assume that perhaps the absence of עֲדָה from Deuteronomy reflects a genre or a religious trend.

עֲדָה has synonyms—קָהָל, which occurs 121 times in the Bible, and the very common עַם that bears the sense “crowd” alongside the regular meanings “people, nation” and the relatively rare ancient meanings “ancestors, relatives.” It is striking to compare עֲדָה and קָהָל. Contrary to עֲדָה, קָהָל is distributed throughout the Hebrew Bible,³⁴ including the late books (forty-two occurrences in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles). Sometimes (such as Exod 12:6; Num 14:5; Prov 5:14) both terms occur together, functioning as hendiadys. Both terms have parallels in other

32. Aside from עֲדַת דְּבֹרִים ‘a swarm of bees’ (Judg 14:8), which is not relevant to the current discussion.

33. R. Gordis, “Democratic Origins in Ancient Israel: The Biblical Edah,” in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), pp. 369–388; J. Liver, “עֲדָה,” *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 6:83–89; Y. M. Grintz, “Archaic Terms,” pp. 18–19; A. Hurvitz, “לשימוש של המונח הכוהני ‘עדה’ בספרות המקראית” (The use of the priestly term ‘edah in the biblical literature), *Tarbiz* 40 (1971): 261–267; A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (CahRB 20; Paris: Gabalda, 1982), pp. 65–67.

34. Missing from Isaiah (1–66), nine of the twelve Minor Prophets, four of the five scrolls, and Daniel.

Semitic languages. עֲדָה is derived from W^cD > Y^cD ‘to promise, to summon, to allocate’. Aside from the noun קָהָל, there exist verbal forms in *niphāl* and *hiphāl* that might be denominative forms.³⁵ The reason why עֲדָה and not קָהָל is restricted to the pre-monarchic sources might be coincidental, but we can assume that this is connected to the root Y^cD because in tribal societies people were summoned to assemblies by a trumpet call (as in Num 10:1–7; Judg 3:27, etc.).

7) לְפִי חֶרֶב

The expression להכות לפי חרב appears thirty-three times in the Bible, as follows:

Table 3: Distribution of להכות לפי חרב

Genesis	1
Exodus	1
Numbers	1
Deuteronomy	2
Joshua	12
Judges	8
Samuel	4
Kings	1
Jeremiah	1
Job	2

We can overlook the occurrences in Job because Hurvitz has already convincingly shown that the frame story, in which these references occur, is a late chapter with definitive features of Late Biblical Hebrew that deliberately uses archaic terms.³⁶

For the rest of the Bible the picture is clear: this expression, which refers to a sickle sword, Egyptian *ḥpš*,³⁷ was relatively frequent in Deuteronomy-Joshua-Judges-Samuel, peaking in Joshua, although it appears sporadically in earlier books. The only reference to a two-edged dagger as a concrete, not literary, object is found in the story of Ehud, in Judg 3:16, where it is portrayed as a known but unusual object.

35. HALOT, pp. 789–790, 837–839, 1078–1080.

36. A. Hurvitz, “The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered,” *HTR* 67 (1974): 17–34.

37. R. O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1986), p. 190.

The archeological evidence attests to the use of sickle swords in fighting during the Middle Bronze Age, but they characterized the Late Bronze and Iron I Ages in particular. Short daggers for stabbing were also found, but were less common. In summarizing the findings, Yigael Yadin noted: “The Bible expression ‘to smite with the edge of the sword,’ much used in the record of Joshua’s campaigns, suggests that the sickle sword and not the two-edged thrusting sword was the type in common use at the time.”³⁸ In the following chapter he explains that the double-edged dagger of Ehud was unusual in the period of the judges before the spread of the straight stabbing sword imported by the sea peoples.³⁹

8) בַּעֲלֵי

בַּעֲלֵי followed by the name of a city in the sense of “the aristocracy of” or “the ruling stratum of” is found twenty-one times in the Bible in the following phrases.

Table 4: בַּעֲלֵי

בַּעֲלֵי־יְרִיחוֹ	1 (Josh 24:11)
בַּעֲלֵי שָׁכֶם	13 (Judges 9—a focal concept in the Abimelech pericope)
בַּעֲלֵי מַגְדֹּל־שָׁכֶם	2 (Judg 9:46–47)
בַּעֲלֵי הָעִיר (תִּבְזָן)	1 (Judg 9:51)
בַּעֲלֵי הַגְּבֵעָה	1 (Judg 20:5)
בַּעֲלֵי קַעֲלָה	2 (1 Sam 23:11–12)
בַּעֲלֵי יָבִישׁ גִּלְעָד	1 (2 Sam 21:12)

The historical context is striking: from the settlement in the land of Israel to David’s accession to the throne. The sole occurrence in the book of Joshua is found in the summary chapter of the book and already belongs to the period of settlement. The concluding verse of 2 Samuel is the final chord of a story that belongs to David’s accession to the throne. According to the biblical description, from Abraham’s days until the conquest of

38. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands: In the Light of Archaeological Study* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), pp. 204–209, quote at p. 206. See also M. Tadmor, “חֶרֶב: מגל וחרב ישרה: רכישות חדשות במוזיאון ישראל” (Hepesh-sword and straight sword: New acquisitions at the Israel Museum), *Qadmoniot* 3 (1970): 63–64.

39. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, pp. 254–255. P. J. King and L. E. Stager, “Weapons of War,” in *Life in Biblical Israel*, pp. 224–225, following Yadin, describe briefly the sickle sword as against the two-edged dagger of Ehud, but for some reason ignore the historical aspect of its use.

Canaan in the eastern Transjordan, there were several ethnic kingdoms; on the western side, including the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, there were royal cities. This reality is reflected as well in Egyptian sources: the execration texts, annals and lists, and the Amarna Letters. From David's accession to the throne there was no longer room for rule by local aristocracies. The period most consistent with *בְּעֵלִי* is the interim period between these two different realities, namely that of the judges: the expression was born in this period and ceased to be used shortly after its end. It is mentioned most frequently in the Abimelech pericope, which places emphasis on a city and its population rather than a focal figure, as opposed to the judge-leaders highlighted in other chapters in the book.

An exceptional case is *בְּעֵלִי יְהוּדָה* (2 Sam 6:2), which differs somewhat from the classic expression in time—a later stage in David's life—and form—the second element is not a city but rather a tribe or land. As shown several years ago, this expression and its context display a sophisticated use of language that simultaneously hints at two complementary formulas—(1) David went to *בְּעֵלָה* in the allotment of Judah (Kiriath-jearim); (2) David was accompanied by the notables of the tribe of Judah. This led to the creation of this unusual, artificial language.⁴⁰

נֶשֶׂא כְלִים (9)

Yossi Leshem has shown that this phrase first appears once in Judges (9:54) with reference to Abimelech; it then occurs another eighteen times, but only with reference to the reigns of Saul and David.⁴¹ The arms-bearer is the warrior closest to the king, or the general who accompanies the king to war and the texts imply a close emotional tie between the king or the general and his arms-bearer: *וַיֶּאֱהָבֵהוּ מְאֹד וַיְהִי־לּוֹ נֶשֶׂא כְלִים* 'He took a strong liking to him and made him his arms-bearer' (1 Sam 16:21);⁴² *וַיֵּרָא* 'When his arms-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him' (1 Sam 31:5). Leshem explains that prior to the founding of the monarchy and an organized army this function did not exist, and it ceased to exist as soon as Solomon introduced horses and chariots. From that point on until

40. Y. Elitzur, *Places in the Parashah*, pp. 200–202.

41. All occurrences are in prose narrative and in the narrator's voice. Other than these occurrences, I note *הִבְרִי נֶשֶׂאֵי כְלֵי יְהוָה* (Isa 52:11), which does not belong to the discussion.

42. For an innovative interpretation of this verse see Y. Leshem, "שְׂמוּאֵל א' טז – וַיֶּאֱהָבֵהוּ מְאֹד" (1 Samuel 16:21), *Beit Mikra* 49 (2004): 225–232.

the Assyrian conquest, the warrior closest to the general or the king was known as שָׁלִישׁ.⁴³

10) מְלוּכָה ‘kingship’

מְלוּכָה occurs a total of twenty-four times in the Bible: in Samuel (seven times); Kings (eight times); Isaiah 34 (once), 62 (once); (Jeremiah 41 [once] // 2 Kings 25); Ezekiel (twice); Obadiah (once); Psalms (once); Daniel (once); Chronicles (once). The term generally denotes “kingship,” as opposed to מַמְלָכָה which designates “kingdom.” In four of its occurrences, we find the phrase זֶרַע הַמְּלוּכָה which means descendants of the royal family; these four occurrences are late: 2 Kgs 25:25 // Jer 41:1, both of which describe an event that took place after the destruction of the temple; Ezek 17:13; and Daniel 1:3. It can thus be argued that the term מְלוּכָה ‘kingship’ was born in Hebrew with the coronation of the first king, Saul, and continued to exist as long as there was a monarchy. It did not exist earlier, even though kings and kingdoms are mentioned in earlier books, from Genesis 10 on, perhaps because the issue of kingship was irrelevant for the Israelites before they had kings of their own.

2. CONCLUSION

This article presented linguistic findings that can be compared to historical or archeological developments (ten items arranged roughly in chronological order). The data presented here are very consistent with the order in which the Hebrew Bible presents itself, and must be taken into consideration by those who propose different dating.

43. Y. Leshem, “‘Royal’ Usages,” pp. 137, 142. On the שָׁלִישׁ, see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (trans. J. McHugh; London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1968), p. 221. A comprehensive survey of the data and the various approaches concerning the function of the biblical arms-bearer together with an Assyrian parallel, was presented in the inventive study “The Biblical Arm-Bearer” by V. A. Hurowitz (in “*Up to the Gates Of Ekron: Essays on Archaeology and History of the Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin*” [ed. A. Ben-Tor et al.; Jerusalem: W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and the Israel Exploration Society, 2007], pp. 344–349), where he shows that, in most cases, one of the main tasks of the arms-bearer was to dispatch a wounded commander or soldier, whether a stricken foe or an agonized friend. Two comments: (a) נָשָׂא כֵלִים is mentioned twenty times in the Bible, not seventeen; (b) Hurowitz presented the Septuagint inaccurately (το αἶψον τα σκεύη taken from the corrupted LXX^B in Judg 9:54 instead of ὁ αἶψων τὰ σκεύη) and interpreted it imprecisely “armor bearer” instead of “bearing the vessels” or “he who bore the vessels.”

Appendix

Legend

Ancient		
	Middle	
		Late
Developing – early		Developing – late

	PRE-EXILIC BOOKS OF THE BIBLE																		
	PENTATEUCH					FORMER PROPHETS				LATTER PROPHETS (until the Exile)									
	Gen	Ex	Lev	Num	Dt	Josh	Jud	Sam	Kgs	Isa	Hos	Joel	Amos	Mic	Nah	Hab	Zeph	Jer	Ezek
1	אֲרָמִי = a miserable nomad																		
2	בְּאֵר = well																		
3	שְׂטָרִים = clerks								סֹפֵר Minister of Administration (in Judah)										
4						שָׂרֵיחַן													
5	אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן / כְּנָעַן = C a n a a n																		
6			עֶדָה				עֶדָה												
7						לְפִי חֶרֶב edge of sword													
8								בְּעָלִי-											
9								נִשְׂא בָלִים											
10								מְלוּכָה = Kingship											