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Biblical Lexicology: Hebrew and Greek

Semantics – Exegesis – Translation

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Semantics and Lexicography: A Methodological Conundrum

The purpose of the present chapter is to draw attention to the importance of rigorous research in the semantics of Classical Hebrew for lexicography. I propose to do this by way of an introduction to the Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database project (SAHD), with which I have been involved over many years and of which I am the secretary. I shall therefore first explain briefly some of the reasons why this project was initiated and describe its working methods, and then reflect a little on its implications for modern lexicography.

Recognizable research on semantics can effectively be traced back as far as the work of the great medieval Jewish scholars, though it must in fact also have been considered from much earlier times, not least by those to whom we owe the ancient versions. And since the Renaissance, as a survey of the major Dictionaries could rapidly demonstrate, it is a question which has become increasingly complex as new sources of evidence and new linguistic methods have come into play.

Not surprisingly, the flood of potentially relevant published material has grown to the point where no individual can hope to master it all, so that there is a danger that valuable work will be lost sight of and, equally serious, that many scholars engaged in commentary writing or other forms of research will find themselves reinventing the wheel. More seriously, though, different methods are favoured by different scholars, and none of the aids which are currently available embraces them all. To give a well-known example, the recently completed Sheffield Dictionary[1] is of great value for those who favour an approach to semantics based on syntagmatics, but those who believe that comparative philology also has a role to play will find little help.

But beyond these well-known concerns, there is so much more to semantics than the writing of dictionaries. The need to study lexemes within their semantic fields is now well established, but less attention is generally given to such mat-

1 David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vols. 1–5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2001) and vols. 6–8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007–2011). While the Dictionary is thus now complete, Clines has announced in the Preface to volume 8 that a revision of volume 1 is planned, because it was not uniform with the later volumes, together with a ninth volume containing addenda and corrigenda, and a complete English-Hebrew index.

ters as the meaning of the same lexeme within different social registers, within different regional or dialectal settings, or in diachronic terms. If Ancient Hebrew spans some one thousand years, more or less, it should be expected that there will be considerable variation to be found within it. Furthermore it is important to be candid about the difficulties we face with regard to the semantics of Ancient Hebrew by contrast with many other languages, namely the very limited quantity of data in the case of most lexemes, the textual uncertainties resulting from the manual transmission of the text over many centuries, and the difficulties of knowing even roughly what is the correct date of much of the Biblical literature. These uncertainties should not stop us from doing what we can, but they impose inevitable limitations on the application of some forms of semantic research, such as the full application of the method of componential analysis that is much favoured in our field in Italy, for instance.

The SAHD project

It was concerns such as these which first led Professor J. Hoftijzer of Leiden University to identify the need for a semantics database. In collaboration with some other European colleagues, he secured funding for a three-year project to explore the questions in greater detail and to consider how such a database could best be organized[2]. Many of these early deliberations have been published[3], and on the basis of these consultations detailed guidelines were drawn up and agreed by the executive committee[4]. The procedures adopted may be summarized as follows, though it will be appreciated that this is only a brief outline.

First, since 1995 a number of centres and some individuals have set to work on agreed semantic fields. The level of activity varies according to each centre's ability to secure funding, and the participation of new centres is a regular item on the committee's agenda. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that progress is generally far slower than had been originally hoped or than remains desirable.

2 J. Hoftijzer, "An ESF Network on the Semantics of Classical Hebrew," *ZAH* 5 (1992), 85–86.
3 Many of the papers from the first two workshops were published in *ZAH* 6/1 (1993) and 7/1 (1994), and from the third (together with other material) in Takamitsu Muraoka, ed., *Studies in Ancient Hebrew Semantics*, Abr-Nahrain Sup 4 (Louvain: Peeters, 1995). For brief updates subsequently, see Takamitsu Muraoka, "Ancient Hebrew Semantics Database," *ZAH* 10 (1997), 98, and "Further Progress on the Ancient Hebrew Semantics Database Project," *ZAH* 17–20 (2004–2007), 247–48.
4 The chair of the committee also acts effectively as editor of the project. Professor Hoftijzer was succeeded in this role by Professor Takamitsu Muraoka, and Professor Holger Gzella succeeded Professor Muraoka on the latter's retirement.

Once the lexemes within the chosen semantic field have been formally assigned, material on them is assembled within a uniform format and in seven sections, the first six of which cover each of the approaches to semantics which are generally used, even though few if any scholars use them all at the same time. I should make clear at this point, of course, that Ancient Hebrew is deemed to cover everything, including inscriptions, down to and including the Dead Sea Scrolls.

(1) *Root and comparative material:* this covers both etymological proposals and suggestions based on comparative Semitic philology, as well as supplying the raw comparative data even if the matter is non-controversial. Neither here nor elsewhere are co-workers required to evaluate the strength of any given proposal, though of course if their research throws up relevant considerations that may be included. The main aim is to provide a database which will be of service to other scholars who require information on a given lexeme for whatever purpose. Thus from an agreed corpus of secondary literature (including standard reference works, commentaries, journal runs and monograph series from 1945 onwards) as well as other scattered suggestions that they may pick up, the primary aim is to be comprehensive in the bibliographical collection and description of data. As with other sections, so here the database is divided into A and B parts. Proposals which have been generally discounted for whatever reason are included in the B section, while those which are possible or at least are still on the table are entered under A. I stress, however, that even what seem to us at present to be wild or just plain silly suggestions are all meant to be recorded. Who knows whether future discovery will not lead to a reappraisal of the present consensus? A database should be exactly what it says; it is not a dictionary which gives the lexicographer's best judgment with which someone else may, of course, disagree.

(2) *Formal characteristics:* this section is generally brief and descriptive, but of course morphology can play a part in semantics in certain circumstances. It can be informative for etymology, for instance, while note needs sometimes to be taken of lexemes that occur only in specific or a severely limited number of forms, for reasons that may reward investigation.

(3) *Syntagmatics* is also descriptive, but its importance for semantics can scarcely be overemphasized. While by no means sufficient on its own, the use of a lexeme within each individual context is often a primary determinant of meaning. One has only to think of issues such as which prepositions a verb may govern, or of which actions a noun can serve as subject, to see the point.

(4) *The ancient versions*. This was once a primary means for determining the meaning of words, particularly rare ones, though it has tended to fall from view somewhat in recent times. It so happens that this has been a particular research strength of some of our most productive co-workers, who are able to integrate the kind of listings that one may find in Hatch and Redpath[5] with the more far-reaching discussions of the versions themselves in contemporary research. Given that there is no equivalent for Hatch and Redpath for the other versions, this will provide useful information in its own right, of course, in addition to locating current work within its ancient tradition. And here I should mention that there are cases where co-workers can quickly identify, whether in this section or in others, aspects of the topic which have never been adequately treated in the past, and MRN (= more research needed) is an acceptable abbreviation within the database. It should help future users to identify where there are gaps in our knowledge so that they can concentrate on these rather than redoing what may have been adequately done in the past.

(5) *Lexical/Semantic field*. As already mentioned, one of the strengths of our project is that co-workers work within semantic fields so as to be able to refine the meaning of words in accordance with their synonyms, antonyms and so on. This is one of the most accessibly valuable results of the database work and I shall return to some examples of its importance later. Much valuable work has been done in recent years on this basis, but it has hardly penetrated any of the standard reference works currently available. It is just one more example of the advantage of the database approach.

(6) *Exegesis*. This is a bit of a catch-all, and at the regular meetings of co-workers which we hold where they can discuss methods and problems the question often arises as to what it should cover. Our working definition is broad: an opportunity to bring in from whatever source information which scholars have found to be illuminating as one may cull it from commentaries, monographs, and articles. Nor should one overlook the importance of *realia*, which for want of anywhere better also come in here. Archaeological discoveries and iconography are examples. Needless to say, this is another section where generous use can be made of the A and B categories.

5 Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897–1906).

The final section is simply entitled "summary". Here co-workers can express their conclusions if they feel able to do so, though of course that is not a requirement. A full bibliography is also attached, as befits the nature of the project.

There can be no doubt that for practical reasons (mainly the difficulty of raising adequate finance to maintain many full-time co-workers) progress has been much slower than was originally anticipated. Despite this there are valuable results to report. Three full volumes of printed entries have appeared, and a fourth is on its way. The first is a collection of entries by S. Bindi (Florence), J. K. Aitken (Cambridge) and A. Salvesen (Oxford), this having been explicitly published as something of a "shop-window" for the project[6]. Two further volumes have also been published, these being in each case a collection of semantically related lexemes as analysed by a single scholar[7].

The project does not expect to publish the majority of its results in hard copy, however, but rather as on-line files accessed via the project's website: http://www.sahd.div.ed.ac.uk/. Entries are currently mounted at each co-worker's home institution with a link from the main project website making them easily accessible. The reason for preferring this form of publication in the long run is obvious: it is in the nature of the project that it will need regular updating, and furthermore new data may call for the revision of previously formulated opinions. Such updating calls for care in processing, of course, because the original authors have the right to retain academic credit for their work. In an on-line format, however, this can be made clear without too much difficulty.

It should be noted *en passant* that of course this is by no means the only current project relating to Ancient Hebrew semantics. Some of the more extensive series, such as the *ThWAT*[8], contain a good deal of relevant information in their entries, those engaged in Bible translation work, at the Bible Society or the Wycliffe Bible Translators, for instance, have a practical interest in the subject and publish some of their results (though usually and inevitably at a briefer

6 Takamitsu Muraoka, ed., *Semantics of Ancient Hebrew*, Abr-Nahrain Sup 6 (Louvain: Peeters, 1998).

7 James K. Aitken, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing in Ancient Hebrew*, Ancient Near Eastern Studies Sup 23 (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), and John E. Hartley, *The Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Colour Lexemes*, Ancient Near Eastern Studies Sup 33 (Louvain: Peeters, 2010). A further volume, edited by Graham I. Davies, on lexemes relating to deliverance is at an advanced stage of preparation.

8 G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970 – 1995) (ET, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 – 2006]).

and more accessible level)[9], and individual scholars frequently take a lexeme or semantic field for particular analysis[10]. But attention should be drawn here in particular to another electronic project which is not as widely known as it might be, but which in some respects helpfully complements the SAHD. I refer to the work of many of our Dutch colleagues in Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap on what is called the כלי *Database: Utensils in the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Johannes C. de Moor in cooperation with Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel, and available at http://www.otw-site.eu/KLY/kly-intro.php. About 50 lexemes are here presented, and in one or two cases there is overlap with lexemes already studied by SAHD. There is clearly considerable common ground between the two projects, though the כלי project is more limited in the range of lexemes it analyses and is more related specifically to the Biblical world. While it too clearly works to a standard template for entries, it is not identical, so that one may also speak of an element of complementarity.

Most of us involved in SAHD were unaware of the progress of this project until its site went "live" in 2011 and examples were circulated among colleagues. Whatever may be the history behind all this, there is now friendly contact between the two projects and it is anticipated that they will move forward in close co-operation.

Some results: כֶּתֶר, נֵזֶר and עֲטָרָה

Based on some of the conclusions drawn by colleagues working in Oxford, I propose now to explore how the positive results of current semantics research can pose acute problems for lexicographers.

For three years Dr. Alison Salvesen worked for the project on lexemes related to kingship. Some of her database entries are available in hard copy and others

9 See, for instance, the *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew*, edited for the United Bible Society by Reinier de Blois and available via their website http://www.ubs-translations.org, and the UBS's journal *The Bible Translator*. For some further references, see Gene L. Green, "Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22 (2012), 315–33.

10 See recently, for example, Francesco Zanella, *The Lexical Field of the Substantives of "Gift" in Ancient Hebrew*, SSN 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Daniel C. Leavins, *Verbs of Leading in the Hebrew Bible* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011); Matthew R. Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis*, Siphrut 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Stephen L. Sheed, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew: Exploring Lexical Semantics*, BibInt Series 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Stefan C. Reif, "On Some Considerations of the Word *Ma'aseh*," in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon*, ed. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton, VTSup 149 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 337–51.

electronically. Among the lexemes she researched are three that are generally translated "crown", namely כֶּתֶר, נֵזֶר, and עֲטָרָה[11]. Investigation quickly shows how unsatisfactory this English gloss can be.

In some ways the simplest to deal with is *keter*[12]. It occurs only three times, all in the book of Esther (plus once in a fragment from Qumran that reveals nothing else of help) and is always in the construct state before *malkût*, so that it is clearly used in a royal context[13]. In Est. 1:11 it is worn by Vashti, in 2:17 by Esther, and at 6:8 (where there is in any case some textual uncertainty) by either a man whom the king wishes to honour or his horse. It should thus not be identified with any item used exclusively for the reigning monarch, such as the upright *tiara*, a fabric cap depicted frequently in association with many figures with the top flopped forward, but upright only in connection with the king.

Etymology is uncertain—Salvesen has no less than six suggestions in the B category[14]! Her own preference is to link it with the verbal root *ktr* "to surround", which obviously suits some sort of headdress well. Perhaps more helpful, however, is the observation that the word must be related in some way with Greek κίταρις/κίδαρις, which seems to derive from Semitic (note Aramaic *kitraʾ*). From this we may learn more about the form of the item in that it is applied in classical sources to some kind of headband worn around (not identified with) the crown or *tiara*. It could be worn by, but was not restricted exclusively to, the Achaemenid king. Since the word is found only in Esther, as already mentioned, this seems very suitable. Thus a *keter* is best defined as a headband or fabric fillet which could be worn alone or around a crown or *tiara*. It could be distinguished in some way, perhaps by colour, dye, or decoration, in cases where it was distinctly royal, as the Esther occurrences make clear by the addition of *malkût*, and it could be worn by a king but not exclusively so.

In the light of Salvesen's work it is not clear how this might best be rendered in English. "Headband" sounds too common; "turban" would be better, though a *keter* would not have resembled it in all aspects by any means; "crown" is clearly misleading; "tiara" and "diadem" both have some historical claims to carrying

11 See Muraoka, ed., *Semantics*, 67–73, 89–100, and 106–13; also Alison G. Salvesen, "The Trappings of Royalty in Ancient Hebrew," in *King and Messiah in Ancient Israel: Papers from the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 119–141 (121–30).

12 See also Alison G. Salvesen, "כֶּתֶר (Esther 1:11; 2:17; 6:8): Something to do with a Camel?" *JSS* 44 (1999), 35–46.

13 There is a marked contrast in this with the regular use in post-Biblical Hebrew for "crownlets" that decorate the tops of some letter shapes.

14 It should be noted in particular that no satisfactory Old Persian derivation has been found.

this sense[15]; "tiara" is historically best but nowadays it is generally considered to be something more solid, so that to use it without explanation would be misleading; "diadem" is therefore perhaps the closest, though even that is far from precise; commentary rather than translation therefore seems to be required.

Moving on to *nezer* we may note that it is used in two related but distinct ways, as some type of headdress worn by the king or the high priest and in relation to the consecrated hair of the Nazirites. The extent to which these two are related either etymologically or semantically is fiercely disputed, but we do not, perhaps, need to enter into that debate here (Salvesen offers a very full summary of the discussion); I shall focus only on the first of the two senses.

It is possible that the item in question developed over time, as we shall see, so that it becomes difficult to know how far the implications about form in one passage may be applied to others. In the case of the High Priest's *nezer*, it is said in Exod 39:30 – 31 to have been made of gold, to have an engraving on it ("Holy to the Lord") and to have been fastened to the turban (מצנפת) with a blue cord (see too Exod 28:36 – 38, though the word *nezer* itself does not occur there); Exod 39:6 agrees with this location, the turban being on the head and the holy *nezer* on the turban; so too Lev 8:9. The word seems to be used in closest association, if not apposition, with ציץ, from which one may deduce either that it was flower-shaped or that it sparkled; the latter is attractive in view of the fact that the *nezer* will gleam (יציץ) (not "blossom") in Ps 132:18[16]. Opinion is thus divided as to whether it was rosette-shaped or whether, as several ancient sources suggest, it was more like a gold plate. Either way, it was clearly of modest size and was fastened to a more substantial head-garment.

This at once makes some sort of sense of the first of the very few applications to royalty, for in 2 Sam 1:10 we read that an Amalekite brought Saul's *nezer* that was on his head to David after Saul had been killed in battle. Clearly this will not have been a crown in any conventional sense, therefore, but if it could be worn in battle it must have been slight enough not to encumber a warrior.

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15 The concise *OED* gives for "diadem" (*inter alia*): "**1** a crown or headband worn as a sign of sovereignty. **2** a wreath of leaves or flowers worn round the head", and for "tiara": "**1** a jewelled ornamental band worn on the front of a woman's hair. **2** … **3** *hist*. a turban worn by ancient Persian kings".

16 This may also be the implication of the simile at Zech 9:16, which speaks of "the (gem)stones of the *nezer* מתנוססות on his land"; most commentators take the verb as "gleaming" or the like, but it is not entirely certain; cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai—Sacharja 1 – 8—Sacharja 9 – 14—Maleachi*, KAT 13/4 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976), 185, and Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9 – 14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25C (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 158 – 59.

At 2 Kgs 11:12 (2 Chron. 23:11) the *nezer* was "put on" the young Joash by Jehoiada the priest. This says nothing about its form, but it implies in the context that it was thought to symbolize Joash's royal legitimacy since as a second object of the same verb we have "the testimony" (ויתן עליו את־הנזר ואת־העדות). A similar deduction might be made from Ps 89:40 (parallel with ברית) and 132:18 (contrasting with the disgrace of the king's enemies). This sense of "insignia" may be related to the evidence Salvesen collects from the word's lexical field that it is generally used in contexts where cultic or ritual concerns are prominent. In priestly usage this would not be surprising, and something of that sense may also have been present for royal usage.

If Zech 9:16 is rightly understood to mean that by that time the *nezer* could have gemstones embedded in it, it is clear that the form had become more elaborate in its ornamentation. That is typical for items of insignia, of course, as many modern examples could attest. It does not, however, indicate that we should render "crown", as most modern translations seem to do, for that gives a quite misleading impression. Salvesen contents herself in her conclusion with a descriptive phrase: "a visible sign that the wearer had been consecrated to God; a sign on the head marking out the bearer as being in a special relationship to the Deity" (p. 98), while her final usage is "diadem". I am not aware of any sensible English equivalent; "metal fillet" is close, except that a fillet usually surrounds the head completely, unlike a *nezer*. Might one coin the term "headplaque"?

Finally, we come to the word *ʿaṭārâ*, which is the commonest of our three lexemes. At first it looks as though it might approach closer to our English gloss "crown", for it can be made of gold (2 Sam 12:30; 1 Chr 20:2; Ps 21:4; Esth 8:15) or of silver and gold (Zech 6:11) and have jewels (again 2 Sam 12:30; 1 Chr 20:2). It can be worn on the head, as all the same references indicate (and see too Ezek 16:12; Job 19:9; Lam 5:16), and its cognate verb *ʿāṭar*, "surround", suggests that it could be cylindrical, like a modern crown. It could be worn by a king, as several of the references already supplied make clear, and see too Jer 13:18; Ezek 21:31 (ET, 26).

Other passages show that more needs to be said, however. Without difficulty we should note on the one hand that the word is often used figuratively, usually in contexts which have ceremony and rejoicing as the point of connection; in this, therefore, it should be distinguished from *nezer*, which, as mentioned above, is more associated with cult and ritual (such a distinction emerges with greater clarity when semantic fields are studied as a whole).

Beyond this, however, though fully in line with such figurative uses, we should observe first that an *ʿaṭārâ* could be made of flowers (Isa 28:1, 3, 5), still worn on the head (v. 1); this equates more to English "garland" or "wreath"

(note that at Prov 4:9 it stands in parallel with לויה, another word for a garland worn on the head; cf. Prov 1:9), with the former being preferable here because of its more joyful overtones. Second, the *ʿaṭārâ* can be worn by many more than just the king, including at least (i) women in different capacities (at Jer 13:18 it relates still to royalty in the person of the queen mother, while at Ezek 16:12 and 23:42 it concerns a token of favour by a lover for the woman with whom he is associated, whether licitly or not), (ii) revellers (Isa 28), (iii) a bridegroom (Ct 3:11—though referring to "Solomon", the use is in connection with his wedding day rather than more specifically with his royalty), (iv) a high priest (at least so far as the difficult text of Zech 6:11, 14 currently goes[17]), and (v) a loyal subject, as a reward (Esth 8:15).

This quick survey indicates that *ʿaṭārâ* does duty for both English "crown" and "garland", and although it is more usually the case that (on the basis of how the item is made) "crown" is more commonly the sense in obviously royal contexts and "garland" in others, this distinction is not absolute. The feature which seems to hold the vast majority of cases together, including those that are purely figurative, either by directly positive statement or by inference from the anticipated outcome of reversal, is honour, victory, joy, and celebration[18]. It is thus distinguished from *nezer* in both form and symbol.

Having now summarized some of the principal conclusions of Salvesen's research into the semantics of these three words, it is clear that they differ quite sharply the one from the other in the form that the items take, in the identity of those who wear them, and in what they seem chiefly to signify. I have found it next to impossible to find satisfactory English equivalents, and even those that approximate in some respects fail completely in others; thus *keter:* diadem; *nezer:* "head-plaque"; *ʿaṭārâ:* "crown or garland".

I do not need to belabour the point that no lexicographer can adequately gloss these terms, so that even the best approximations will be severely misleading without extensive additional commentary, which exceeds the possibilities for most dictionaries. Merely to clarify how far we still need to travel even when working within these restrictions may be made clear by the following summary of the renderings in some of the standard dictionaries of Biblical or Classical Hebrew:

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17 For discussion, with abundant additional bibliography, see Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period*, JSOTSup 304 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 46–59.

18 In both respects (i.e. crown/garland, and association with victory and celebration) Salvesen observes that it comes close in meaning to Greek στέφανος.

	BDB	HAL	DCH
כֶּתֶר	crown	hoher Turban Kopfschmuck	crown, turban, decoration (on horse)
נֵזֶר	(consecration) crown (Naziriteship)	(Weihe, Weihung) Kranz, Diadem, Stirnreif	(consecration, separation, Naziriteship) (hair of consecration) crown, diadem
עֲטָרָה	crown, wreath	Kranz, Krone, Diadem	crown, diadem, wreath

Some results: נָבִיא, חֹזֶה and רֹאֶה

The second field of study that I shall summarize much more briefly is that relating to nouns for prophets undertaken by Dr Jonathan Stökl. His database entries on נָבִיא, חֹזֶה, and רֹאֶה are available online via the SAHD website, but one may also profitably consult the published version of his doctoral thesis[19].

I start by noting that most dictionaries render *ḥozeh* and *roʾeh* identically: BDB and DCH have "seer" and HAL and Ges[18] have "Seher". While this is understandable on the basis of the verbs of which these words are, strictly speaking, participles, nevertheless an English or German reader would not realize on this basis that there are two separate words used here, and this problem becomes acute in a verse like 1 Chr 29:29, where both words occur as a qualifier of two different individuals.

The advantage of tackling such a problem by way of semantic field is precisely that one seeks to distinguish between near synonyms. Such words may overlap in some or even many contexts, but as in any language there will not be total interchangeability. Stökl's conclusion is that, where the context makes the point clear, *ḥozeh* is used to refer specifically to official, i. e. court or temple, Judean officials. The large majority of occurrences are in the books of Chronicles, so that he is understandably cautious about committing firmly to the view that in this it also reflects pre-exilic reality; nevertheless, he seems to allow that there is some evidence from occasional references in favour of a positive response to that question[20] while also indicating that it may have been under the later influence

19 J. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison*, CHANE 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), esp. 155 – 202. There are some respects in which in relation to our particular topic this work supersedes Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), and David L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel's Prophets*, JSOTSup 17 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

20 See *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 194.

of Aramaic that the term became more popular. Related terms from the same root suggest that what the seer saw was visionary, though he also states that it "could include the 'seeing' and subsequent interpretation of ominous signs", which suggests that forms of divination should not be excluded.

The title *roʾeh* is even more rare, with only eleven secure occurrences: it is applied several times to Samuel in 1 Sam 9 and then again several times in Chronicles. This seems to rule out the possibility that the difference between *ḥozeh* and *roʾeh* can be explained simply on diachronic grounds. Although it is not much to go on, the frequent applications to Samuel (in texts of whatever date) suggest that the main difference from *ḥozeh* is that the *roʾeh* was available to the wider public, outside and beyond the court circles.

If Stökl is correct, then it is fully justifiable from one perspective to translate both terms by "seer". But it might be expected that a lexicographer would want to make clear the difference between two overlapping but distinct lexemes. Since we have no equivalents in modern languages for the different roles of court and publicly accessible seers, this can only be done by a paraphrase, which is acceptable in a work of reference but probably falls down when it comes to a formally equivalent as opposed to a dynamically equivalent translation.

The *roʾeh* is associated with the *nabîʾ* at 1 Sam 9:9, of course: "the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer". Along with others Stökl maintains that this cannot simply be read historically, as though the two terms were of the same meaning but used in different periods; rather, the verse is added to explain a common but unusual term in the story with the term which by the glossator's time had become common. A study of the use of *nabîʾ*, which occurs over 300 times in the Hebrew Bible (as well as twice in the certainly pre-exilic Lachish Letters), shows that it has a much more complex history, including significant development of meaning through time[21]. While some of his results depend upon questions of dating the relevant literature, it remains clear that significant development in the application of the title took place from either ecstatic or strongly divinatory practice early on to a word that came to signify classical writing prophets by the later period, including "the prophets" as an incipient corpus. Thus again, while we may legitimately translate "prophet", it would be misleading if so simple a gloss were to hide the wide range of practices that this term covered.

21 I shall not here discuss the feminine form, נביאה. In addition to Stökl's analysis, I may refer to my own discussion of the word in "Prophetesses in the Hebrew Bible", in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, LHB/OTS 531 (New York: Continuum, 2010), 65–80; this includes further bibliography.

The range of issues relating to words for prophets is thus not so acute as those for crowns from a lexicographical point of view, but in some ways that is even more telling for my main point[22]. While doubt remains over some lexemes, we generally have a well-established set of lexicographical English or other modern language equivalents for Classical Hebrew words. Semantics muddies these waters in two ways, however. First, it adds a surprisingly large degree of additional precision to our understanding of what the lexemes signify, and this sometimes leaves us without any secure equivalent at all, or at least not one that is not seriously misleading. Second, there is a danger in all lexicography that we tame the foreign language by assimilating it to our own culture and expectations. Semantics is able to show how lexemes give expression to *realia* or practices which are quite foreign to our culture. It is imperative for responsible interpretation that we do not domesticate the language to any degree further than is necessary for comprehension.

22 For another telling example of this sort, by a scholar who has also worked for SAHD in the past, see Peter J. Williams, "'Slaves' in Biblical Narrative and in Translation", in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies*, ed. James K. Aitken, Katharine J. Dell, and Brian A. Mastin, BZAW 420 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 441–52.