

pole, branch, bolt (?)

בַּר

1. Statistics

Torah: 31. Nebiim: 6. Ketubim: 4. Total: 41.

There is some uncertainty about the number of occurrences since some scholars emend dubious passages or reckon certain instances with homonyms of בַּר to which they attribute a different meaning (cf. *HAHAT*, 124). The statistics above are based on the occurrences where an implement seems to have been meant.

2a. Literal Use

In nearly all the cases of occurrence בַּרִים are poles of acacia wood (עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים) overlaid ($\sqrt{\text{צַפֵּה}}$ Pi.) with gold (זָהָב, Exod. 25:13, 28; 30:5; 37:4, 15, 28) or bronze (נְחֹשֶׁת, Exod. 27:6; 38:6). The wood of the *Acacia raddiana Savi* which is the only species that can have been meant is extremely hard (Feliks 1968, 96-8; Zohary 1982, 116) and therefore suitable for poles used to carry heavy objects. Such objects are the ark (אָרוֹן), carried by putting the poles through the four rings (טַבַּעֲתַי, → טַבַּעֲתַי) of gold that were fastened two by two on the four feet of its sides (Exod. 25:12f., 15; 37:3f.; cf. 35:12); the table (שֻׁלְחָן) of shewbread through the four golden rings at its four cornerlegs close to the rim (Exod. 25:26f.; 37:13f.; cf. 35:13); the burnt offering altar (מִזְבֵּחַ) on a grating (מְכַבֵּר →) or network (רֶשֶׁת →) made of bronze with rings of bronze at the corners (Exod. 27:4f.; 38:4-7; cf. 35:16; 39:39); the altar of incense (מִזְבֵּחַ הַקְטֹרֶת) on its moulding or listel (זֶר) of gold to which the four golden carrying rings were fixed underneath (Exod. 30:4f.; cf. 35:15; 37:27f.). The lampstand (מְנֹרֶה →) too was probably carried on poles (see section 7 below).

The בַּרִים of the ark remained in their rings (Exod. 27:4; cf. 39:35; 40:20). According to 1 Kgs 8:7-8 (cf. 2 Chron. 5:8-9) when the ark had been brought to its place in the temple, the wings of the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its בַּרִים which were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary.

In the wilderness the Kohathites, a clan of the Levites (Num. 4:2f.) are cast as actors for the task to handle the בַּרִים when the camp is set out (Num. 4:6, 8, 11, 14; cf. 1 Chr. 15:15 where Levites

carry the ark with poles [בָּרֹט, → בָּרֹט] in stead of בָּרִים).

In view of the uncertainty of the shape of the ark and the possibility that other ‘arks’ may have existed it is impossible to be sure about the length and weight of the poles. According to Exod. 25:10 (P) the dimensions of the ark were modest (1.25 x 0.75 x 0.75 m). Two men were able to carry it (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 15:24, 29), according to the Chronicler on their shoulders (1 Chr. 15:15; 2 Chr. 35:3).

In Hos. 11:6 and Job 17:16 בָּרִים may designate the bars of city gates. If so, this must be seen as an extended use of בָּר ‘(carrying) pole’. The bars of gatedoors were heavy poles indeed (cf. Salonen, *Türen*, , 74-90). However, in both cases other solutions have been proposed (see e.g. Macintosh 1997, 453; Clines 1989, 375).

2b. Figurative Use

בָּר is an old word that originally meant ‘in the hand’, which as a noun became ‘handle’ (see section 4 below). Therefore, when בָּר is used for a branch or twig of a vine (Ezek. 17:6; 19:14) this must be regarded as a metaphorical use of the term. According to some commentators בָּרִים in Hos. 11:6 should be understood as ‘branches’ in the metaphorical sense of ‘villages’ subservient to a major city (Macintosh 1997).

The possibility that בָּרִים in Isaiah 16:6, Jeremiah 48:30 and 50:36 does not mean ‘prattle’ or ‘prattlers, soothsayers’, but ‘power’, i.e. the ‘carrying force’ of a people, or a crocodile (Job 41:4), cannot to be excluded.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

SEMITIC: Usually בָּר is derived from \sqrt{bdd} , ‘to separate, put apart’ (e.g. *HAHAT*, 124; Cohen *et al.*, *DRS*, 43-45; *NIDOT*, vol. 1, 500-501), but for the carrying-pole a derivation from בָּר + כָּ ‘in the hand’ would seem more likely (see below on Ugaritic and Phoenician as well as some ancient renderings under section 5).

UGARITIC: The Ugaritic cognate *bd* is evidently a shortened form of *byd*, ‘in the hand’ (Del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín, *DULAT*, 214-

6).

PHOENICIAN, PUNIC: Also in Phoenician *bd* means ‘by/in/from (the hand of)’ (Krahmalkov, *PPD*, 97-8).

POSTBIBLICAL HEBREW: Dalman, *ANHT*, 48, refers to 𐤁𐤃 ‘1. Stengel, Stange; 2. Ölkelter’.

JEWISH ARAMAIC: Dalman, *ANHT*, 48: 𐤁𐤃𐤁, ‘1. Stengel; 2. Ölkelter’.

SAMARITAN ARAMAIC: Tal, *DSA*, 80: 𐤁𐤃 ‘branch’.

SYRIAC: *baddā* ‘beam of an oil- or wine-press’ (Payne Smith [Margoliouth], *CSD*, 35; see also Payne Smith, *TS*, vol. 1, 450; Brockelmann, *LS*, 59, both revealing uncertainty as to the exact meaning).

PALESTINIAN ARABIC: *badd* ‘beam of an olive-press’ (Dozy, *SDA*, t. 1, 56; Denizeau, *DPASyr*, 20-1), but according to Dalman, *AuS*, Bd. 4, 220 Palestinian Arabic *badd* would be a designation of the ‘Olivenmühle’ (*pars pro toto?*) whereas rabbinic sources seem to use 𐤁𐤃 for the receptacle of the oil (Levy, *WTM*, Bd. 1, 191; Jastrow, *DTT*, 138). For illustrations and descriptions of this type of lever press, see Dalman, *AuS*, Bd. 4, 212-6, Fig. 50-62; *BRL*², 239; Frankel, *WOP*, 86-121; Bolen, *PLBL*, disk 1, 1 Galilee and the North: Cultural Pictures: tb041103.jpg; 2 Samaria and the Center, Cultural Pictures: 69-14tb.jpg.

5. Ancient Versions

Ⲅ and other Greek versions: Mostly the Ⲅ renders ἀναφορεὺς – *LS*, 124: ‘bearer, carrying-pole, stave’ (*GELS L*, 33f.). In Exod. 27:6-7 some manuscripts have φορέυς, ‘carrying pole’ (*GELS L*, 506). στῦλος, ‘pillar’ (*GELS L*, 443), is the Ⲅ’s choice in Exod. 27:15; 35:12; 37:4, 15, possibly a harmonisation with Exod. 26:15. Once we find σκυτάλη (Exod. 30:4, 5; *GELS L*, 431, ‘pole’) which α’, σ’ and θ’ harmonise with ἀναφορεὺς. In Exod. 37:5, 14-15 (Ⲅ 38:4, 10-11) Ⲅ has διωστήρ, ‘pole running through ring, stave’ (*GELS-L*, 118). Hos. 11:6 𐤁𐤃 is rendered ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ, ‘in his hands’, possibly etymologizing. σ’ τοὺς βραχίονας αὐτοῦ, ‘his arms’, is based on the Ⲅ. Ⲅ interprets the difficult 𐤁𐤃 in Job 17:16 is as μετ’ ἐμοῦ, ‘with me’.

א^T: אַרְיָה (with many different spellings, as usual), ‘pole’ (Tal, *DSA*, 61).

ט: Mostly אַרְיָה, according to Levy, *CWT*, Bd. 1, 62: ‘Latte, viereckige Stange’, according to Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 74: ‘bar, pole’. In Hos. 11:6 ט paraphrases גִּבְרֹהֵי, ‘his heroes’. 11Q10 (11QtgJob) is missing at this point. The rabbinic ט Job 17:16 has פְּנֵי, ‘rocks’, but this might be a scribal error for טְרַנִּי. ‘tyrants’.

ס: Mostly *qwp*’, ‘carrying staves, poles, bars’ (Payne Smith [Margoliouth], *CSD*, 497). ס’s rendering of Hos. 11:6 seems to be inspired by ט: *mn ’ydyhwn*, ‘from their hands’. In Job 17:16 the translator exploits the metaphorical meaning of ‘hand’: *btwqp*’, ‘in strength, while being strong’.

ט: *vectis* ‘.

6. Judaic Sources

All Judaic references to the carrying-poles of the ark and other objects belonging to the tabernacle are derived from the Bible and for that reason do not offer useful additional information.



7. Illustrations

On the Arch of Titus the poles on which the Menorah was carried are clearly visible. They are round, not square, and were carried on the shoulders of the bearers (cf. Bolen, *PLBL*, Disk 2, 10. Rome, tb q112002.jpg and tb q112002.jpg). For the door-bar, see Salonen, *Türen*, 74-90.

8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.]

9. Conclusion

The word מַטְּבֵּל in the sense of ‘carrying-pole’ was probably derived from a contraction of מַטְּ + בֵּל ‘in the hand’, hence ‘handle’. It was a round pole of extremely hard wood overlaid with a coating of gold or bronze. Two such poles were used to carry various heavy cultic objects. Remaining in the rings of the furniture of the tabernacle and later the temple they reminded the cultic personnel continuously of the original movability of the sanctuary.

10. Bibliography

BDB, 94: ‘poles, staves; (Ezek. 17:6 ; 19:14) rods, shoots ; (Hos. 11:6) bars (of fortress), (Job 17:16) of a gate, (fig. cf. Isa. 38:10)’ – Busink, Bd. 1, 277 – Klein, *CEDHL*, 63: ‘pole, bar, rod; branch (of a tree) – Clines 1989: D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC), Dallas 1989 – Alonso Schökel, *DBHE*, 85: ‘a) Varal, asta, palo, larguero, pértiga . . . b) Vástago’ – *DCH*, vol. 2, 93-4: ‘part, proportion of spices (Exod. 30:34); pole for carrying copper altar . . . incense altar . . . ark; limbs of body (Hos. 11:6; Job 18:13); branch of tree or plant (Ez. 17:6; 19:14); bar of Sheol (Job 17:16)’ – Feliks 1968: Y. Feliks, *עולם הצומח המקראי*, Ramat Gan 1968, 96-8 – *GB*, 84: ‘Stange, Tragstange, (Hos.11:6) Riegel’ – *HAHAT*, 124: ‘Stange, Tragstange; (Job 18:3; Ez. 17:6; 19:14) Glied, Zweig, Ast’ – *HALAT*, 105: ‘Stangen, Tragstangen, (Ez. 17:6; 19:14) Schosse’ – *HAWAT*, 33-4: ‘Seitenstangen, Tragstangen; (Job 17:16; Hos. 11:6) Riegel’ – *HCHAT*, Bd. 1, 166: ‘1) Garn-, Zwirngebund, Garngewebe . . . Linnen . . . 2) Geäst, Gezweig . . . Stab (Stock) . . . Hebe-, Tragebaum, Stange’ – *HWAT*, 75: all forms of מַטְּבֵּל taken together – *KBL*, 108: ‘Stangen, Tragstangen, sticks, staves; (Ez.

19:14) Schosse, shoots' – *LÄ*, Bd. 6, 741 – *LHA*, 96: 'partica vectis (Stang, bar), (Ez. 17:6; 19:14) plantae rami' – Macintosh 1997: A.A. Macintosh, *Hosea* (ICC), Edinburgh 1997, 452-5 – Kaddari, *MHH*, 87, s.v. בֵּדִים II: 1. זמורה הגפן; 2. מוט; 3. אולי בריח שער; 4. כנראה רצועה – *NIDOT*, vol. 1, 500-1 – Ch. Rabin, 'Hebrew *baddim* "Power" , *JSS* 18 (1973), 57-8 – Loewenstamm & Blau, *TLB*, vol. 2, 19: '1. Shoot of vine ... 2. Pole used for transport ... 3. Possibly: bar of gate (Hos. 11:6; Job 17:16)' – Gesenius & Roediger, *TPC*, 178f. : 'separatio, res separata, pars' ... Plur. partes, membra corporis ... rami arboris ... vectes, impr. ad partandam arcam foederis' – Zohary 1982: M. Zohary, *Plants of the Bible*, Cambridge 1982, 116.

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