

mirror (or: stone tablet in Isa. 8:1)

גְּלִיּוֹן

1. Statistics

Torah: 0. Nebiim: 2. Ketubim: 0. Total: 0.

2a. Literal Use

The word גְּלִיּוֹן occurs in the singular in Isa. 8:1 where it is construed with the adjective גָּדוֹל ‘large’. Isaiah has to write the text ‘Belonging to Maher-šalal-ḥaš-baz’ on this large object with a קָרָט אָנוּשׁ, ‘a normal stylus’ (→ קָרָט) as opposed to the finer jeweller’s engraving tool that was used to write similar indications of ownership in tiny letters on seals. People used such a stylus to engrave markings of ownership on household utensils, weapons and jars. The use of an engraving stylus excludes the possibility that the גְּלִיּוֹן was a single sheet of papyrus (against Galling 1933; 1971; Hyatt 1943, 74). The text had to be easily legible to all passers-by (cf. Hab. 2:2). A few verses later Maher-šalal-ḥaš-baz appears to be the name of Isaiah’s son and the meaning of the name is explained as ‘Soon-spoil, Quickly-loot’ (cf. *HAHAT*, 640) because soon the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be brought before the king of Assyria (Isa. 8:3-4). In vv. 6-8 it is announced that Judah cannot hope to escape the same fate. (cf. Waschke 2007, 121). However, this explanation had to wait until the child was born and so people passing Isaiah’s גְּלִיּוֹן were kept in the dark for nine months.

In past scholarship the meaning of גְּלִיּוֹן in Isa. 8:1 has been assumed to be ‘board, tablet’ or the like (see section 10). This still remains a possibility. However, it is difficult to understand then that the word → לִיָּה ‘board, plank’ was not chosen, as it was in Hab. 2:2. Therefore an alternative solution is presented here.

The nominal formation of גְּלִיּוֹן is not unusual in Hebrew and parallels like בְּזִיּוֹן, הַגִּיּוֹן, הַמִּיּוֹן, הַזִּיּוֹן, נִקְיּוֹן, שְׁזִיּוֹן strongly suggest that the word should be derived from √גלה ‘to uncover, reveal’, not from √גלל ‘to roll’ (*pace* Norin 2006 whose proposal ‘cylinder seal’ is also objectionable on contextual grounds). The ‘uncovering’ of a stone or metal object was a term for polishing its surface in order to remove the layer of oxydation (cf. De Moor 1964). 6 Sir. 12:11 which apparently rests on a different Hebrew original

than MS A describes the polishing of a mirror to remove the rust (original Hebrew probably כַּמְנִלָּה רָאִי, → רָאִי). This tallies with several ancient versions which understood גְּלִיּוֹן in Isa. 3:23 as ‘mirror’ (see below). Mirrors were usually made of bronze, sometimes provided with a patina of silver or gold to enhance reflection (Derriks 2001). Inscribing names on mirrors was not uncommon (see e.g. Bird 1986). Standing rectangular mirrors were also known (see e.g. *BNP* s.v. ‘Mirror’). The reason why Isaiah had to write this ominous name on a reflecting surface was obviously to warn passers-by who saw their own reflection in the mirror that they themselves would soon become spoil of war.

The writing thus serves a double objective. In the first place the divine message is exposed to the general public and that is no doubt the reason why it had to be incised in an unusually *large* tablet or mirror. Normally writing tablets and mirrors were smaller (→ מִרְאָה and רָאִי). In the second place the inscription in durable stone or metal made it possible to preserve it against vandalism of angry people who understood what Isaiah meant. Moreover, the object had to prove the reliability of his announcement later on (compare Isa. 8:16.17-18). This is also the reason why Isaiah has his inscription notarised by two reliable witnesses (Isa. 8:2).

The plural גְּלִיּוֹת is attested in Isa. 3:23. Although the following words are usually explained as garments, the immediately preceding קַרְיִיטִים means ‘purses’ (→ קַרְיִיט), so there is no reason why mirrors would not be mentioned as objects used predominantly by rich ladies. Mirrors have been found in graves of women since the Ĝemdet Nařr period (Salonen, *Hausgeräte*, Bd. 1, 110), were extremely popular among women in Mesopotamia (see e.g. Nemet-Nejat 1993) and Egypt (Munro 1969). Mirrors occur in dowry lists, e.g. 204 such items in the dowry of an Egyptian princess (EA 14:II.65-66, 75-79; for EA 14 as a dowry list, Kühne 1973, 70-1). There is insufficient reason to think of exotic papyrus garments (Hönig 1957, 118).

2b. Figurative Use

Not attested.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

SEMITIC: The $\sqrt{glw/y}$ is attested in almost all Semitic languages (Cohen *et al.*, *DRS*, fasc. 3, 120-2; Leslau, *CDG*, 192-3). Below only some specific meanings that are relevant to the discussion are mentioned.

POSTBIBLICAL HEBREW: *Terminus technicus* for the blank margin of a manuscript (Levy, *WTM*, Bd. 1, 334; Jastrow, *DTT*, vol. 1, 249). See section 6 below.

SYRIAC: See below, the Versions.

CLASSICAL ARABIC: One of the meanings of the verb $\check{g}lw$ is ‘to polish’ (a sword or a mirror), cf. Lane, *AEL*, 447.

MODERN SOUTH ARABIC: \sqrt{gly} , ‘to polish’ (Johnstone, *ML*, 119).

5. Ancient Versions

⊖ and other Greek versions: Usually τὰ διαφανῆ λακωνικά, ‘the translucent Laconian dresses’, in ⊖ Isa. 3:22 are seen as the rendering of מ 3:23 יִיָּזָּ (e.g. Camilo dos Santos, *EHHH*, 36; Muraoka, *HIS*, 34). However, the ⊖’s rendering of these verses is very confused and the equation is by no means certain. In Isa. 8:1 the ⊖ paraphrases τόμον καινοῦ μεγάλου, ‘a scroll of a new great (book)’ (or if καινοῦ μεγάλου is a corruption of καινὸν μέγαλον, ‘a new large scroll’). In 1 Esd. 6:22 τόμος seems to be the rendering of מִזְנוֹן, ‘scroll’ (cf. Ezra 6:2). Probably all Greek translators derived יִיָּזָּ from $\sqrt{ללג}$, because also א’ opts for κεφαλῖς, here probably ‘roll’ (*GELS-L*, 254), σ’ for τεῦχος, also ‘roll’ (*LSJ*, 1784). θ’*s* διφθέρωμα, ‘hide’, is an attempt to explain that it was an unrolled parchment scroll.

⊘: Isa. 3:23 מְרִיבֵי (var. מְרִיבֵי, ‘mirrors’). Isa. 8:1 רַב לָל, ‘a large tablet (or plank)’ (cf. Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 279; *DJBA*, 619), possibly harmonising with Hab. 2:2.

⊘: In Isa. 3:23 ⊘ guesses *wnhtyhyn*, ‘their long mantles’. In Isa. 8:1 ⊘ simply transposes the Hebrew into Syriac: *glywn*. The Syriac dictionaries (e.g. Payne Smith (Margoliouth), *CSD*, 71; Brockel-

mann, *LS*, 116; Costaz, *DSF*, 48) fill in the presumed meaning of the Hebrew word and for that reason are not really helpful.

ו: *specula*, ‘mirrors’, in Isa. 3:23, *librum grandem*, ‘large book’ in Isa. 8:1.

6. Judaic Sources

The attestations of מִיָּדָה in the rabbinic sources seem to be derived from Isa. 8:1 but acquired the specific meaning of ‘blank margin of a manuscript’ (m. Yad. III.4; b. Shab., 116a [twice], 116b [twice]). There is insufficient reason to assume a satirical allusion to the Christian εὐαγγέλιον in these passages (G. Friedrich, *ThWNT*, Bd. 2, 723-4). In b. Abod. Zar., 18a מִיָּדָה designates the unwritten parchment of a scroll since it is contrasted to the lettering that got away unharmed. Gen. R. XIX.6 seems to understand מִיָּדָה in Isa. 3:23 as some kind of garment for women, possibly under the influence of ὄ.

7. Illustrations

See e.g. *ANEP*, Nos. 71, 76, 78, 216, 631, 632, 854; Winter 1983, Pl. 1-10; Anien & Padiou 1989.

8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.] Mirrors are attested as early as the 20th century BCE in the Egyptian Tale of Sinuhe (*CoS*, vol. 1, 82). For Mesopotamia, see Pappi 2011.

9. Conclusion

The common interpretation of מִיָּדָה as ‘tablet, writing board’ in Isa. 8:1 rests on a precarious basis. Only one of the ancient versions supports it (Ⲙ) and it is unclear why the usual designation of such an object (→ לִיָּדָה) would have been avoided here. Nevertheless this rendering should be considered a viable option.

An alternative solution is to accept the meaning ‘mirror’ which is attested in early interpretations of Isa. 3:23. As soon as it is realised that according to Isa. 8:1 Isaiah wrote on a mirror in order to warn passers-by who saw their reflection in it that they would become the target of the message of doom he had to inscribe

in it, any tension between this text and Isa. 3:23 disappears. In both instances the rendering ‘mirror’ that is attested in several ancient versions and is supported etymologically by some Semitic cognates appears to be satisfactory.

10. Bibliography

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