

sceptre

שְׂרָבִיט

1. Statistics

Torah: 0. Nebiim: 0. Ketubim: 4. Total: 4.

2a. Literal Use

It is only attested in the sense of a golden royal sceptre in the book of Esther (Est. 4:11; 5:2 [twice]; 8:4). The lemma is a late (Aramaic) development next to → שְׂבֵט ‘stick, staff, tribe’.

2b. Figurative Use

Not attested.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

König, *HAWAT*, 527, remarks: ‘mit Übergangs-*r* (2₄₇₃ [= *Hist. Komp. Lehrgeb.*, Bd. 2, 473]) wie es auch im Aram. gesprochen wird (cf. *σαῖπτρον*)’. Apparently König means Jewish and Samaritan Aramaic, see below. See also Fürst & Ryssel, *HCHAT*, Bd. 2, 497. Probably all are loans from Bab. *šabbītu* ‘staff, sceptre’, with typically Aramaic dissimilation of the geminated consonant (Wagner, *LGA*, 116, No. 317; Mankowski, *ALBH*, 147-9). The etymology proposed by Sasson 1972 must be rejected (Mankowski, *ibid.*).

COPTIC: *šarbōt* ‘sceptre’ (Crum, *CD*, 554).

AKKADIAN: *šabbītu* ‘staff’ (*CAD* Š/1, 10).

JEWISH ARAMAIC: שְׂרָבִיטא ‘staff, branch’ (Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 566).

SAMARITAN ARAMAIC: Tal, *DSA*, 930: שְׂרָבִיט ‘1. staff . . . 2. blow, plague’.

5. Ancient Versions

Ⲑ and other Greek versions: LXX translated with *χρυσῆ ῥάβδος*.

Ⲙ: The First Targum to Esther translates with *הַגָּדָא דְדָהַבָּא* ‘golden sceptre’ (Levy, *CWT*, Bd. 2, 528), the same word as is used in the Targum to Ps. 23:4.

ס: *šabṭā d^e dahbā* ‘golden sceptre’.

ט: Renders *virga aurea*.

6. Judaic Sources

The term occurs once, in the plural, in Jesus Sirach Hebrew (Sir. 37:17), in ms D, while ms B seems to read שֶׁבֶטִים, which must have been the Vorlage of σ (μέρη; cf. Beentjes 1997, 102, 155). Apparently the meaning is ‘branches’ here. The term is not attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Rabbinic sources maintain the meaning of a royal sceptre, which decides upon chastisement (m. Sanh. II,5; b. Arakh. 19a; Cant. Rabba II, 16. 2). At the same time, the term is used in the sense of a ‘shoot’ or ‘twig’ (Tosephta, Kil. I,10; Uqtsin I,5). This may be due to the fact that several times שֶׁבֶט which can mean ‘branch’, is translated as שֶׁרֶבִיטא in the Palestinian Targums to Exod. 21:20 and Lev. 27:32 (→ שֶׁבֶט, section 6).

7. Illustrations

→ מִטָּה.

8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.]

9. Conclusion

שֶׁרֶבִיט is nothing but a late loanword from Babylonian *šabbītu*, in which the double consonant is dissimilated into *r*+consonant, a process that took apparently place under the influence of Aramaic. The virtual *hapax legomenon* is exclusively attested in the book of Esther, in the meaning of ‘scepter’.

10. Bibliography

See in addition to the literature cited above: *BDB*, 987: ‘sceptre’ – Beentjes 1997: P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VT.S, 68), Leiden 1997, 102, 155 – *GB*, 863a: ‘Szepter’ – *HALAT*, 1523: ‘Stab, Szepter’ – *HAWAT*, 527: ‘Szepter’ – *HCHAT*, Bd. 2, 497: ‘Scepter’ – *HWAT*, 832: ‘das Zepter’ – *KBL*, 1010: ‘Szepter’ – *LHA*, 881: ‘sceptrum,

ramus' – *MHH*, 1143: שבט של מלכים – Sasson 1972: J.M. Sasson, 'A Note on *šarbîṭ*', *VT* 22 (1972), 111 – Gesenius, Roediger, *TPC*, 1480: 'sceptrum' –

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