

1. lamp; 2. brand, mark (?)

נִיר

1. Statistics

Torah: 0. Nebiim: 4. Ketubim: 1 (= נִר [Prov. 21:4, many MSS: נִר]). Total: 5.

2a. Literal Use

Not attested.

2b. Figurative Use

Usually נִיר is regarded as a by-form of → נִר. It is used four times (1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19 = 2 Chron. 21:7) in similar phrases to emphasise the stability, continuity and vitality of the Davidic dynasty. Apparently it is a metaphor for the Davidic descendant. The metaphor indicates that the dynastic light is kept burning, i.e. that there will be, without interruption, a Davidic king on the throne in Jerusalem. This interpretation is not entirely undisputed. With reference to the Akkadian *nīru*, ‘yoke’, in a figurative sense ‘dominion’ (Hanson 1968; Tawil, *ZIBBC*, 238-9), as well as the Egyptian *nr*, ‘power’ (Görg 1985), the meaning ‘dominion, sovereignty’ has been defended. So, using a different argument, a return is made to the targumic interpretation (see section 5) which was based on exegesis with help of the Aramaic נִרָה ‘yoke’. However, the use of Akkadian *nūru* ‘light, lamp’ as a royal epithet (CAD (N) 2, 349) argues in favour of the metaphorical use.

The text and sense of נִר in Prov. 21:4b are doubtful. נִר is equated by some with נִר (‘the lamp [= happiness, delight] of the wicked is sin’), by others with נִיר (Torah: 0. Nebiim: 2. Ketubim: 1. Total: 3; Prov. 21:4b: ‘the tillage [or, ploughing] of the wicked is sin’; cf. the use of נִיר [‘the tillable, untilled or fallow ground’] in Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12; Prov. 13:23). Another possibility that might be explored is to connect the word with Akkadian *nīru* III, a mark for the identification of animals; Arab. *nāra* ‘to make a mark upon a camel with a hot iron’, *nār* ‘brand, mark made with a hot iron’. For a similar proposal see Driver 1951, 185. This would result in the translation ‘Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the hallmark of the wicked, are sin.’ However, all three interpretations remain uncertain.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

→ נִי or section 2b.

UGARITIC: *HAHAT*, 815, cites Ugaritic *nyr* ‘luminary’, as a cognate. This it is, but not morphologically. Because in Ugaritic the *y* is normally a consonant, this proposal is acceptable only if one emends נ (*נִי). But nothing is gained by this operation.

5. Ancient Versions

⊖ and other Greek versions: ⊖ 2 Kgs. 8:19; 2 Chron. 21:7 λύχνος – *GELS-L*, 286: ‘lamp’; *LSJ*, 1068: ‘portable light, lamp’. Prov. 21:4 λαμπτήρ – *GELS-L*, 277: ‘lantern, lamp, torch’; *LSJ*, 1028: (1) ‘stand or grate for pine and other wood used for lightning rooms’ (2) ‘lantern’. In the dynamic-equivalent translation of 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4 a literal rendering of נִי is lacking (in contrast to *α'* and *σ'*: λύχνος). In Hos. 10:12 נִי II is translated as φως, ‘light’.

Ⓢ: 2 Chron. 21:7 מלכוּת; 1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19 מלכותא – Levy, *CWT*, vol. 2, 41: ‘Königthum, Herrschaft, Regierung’; Jastrow, *DTT*, 791: ‘kingdom, rulership’; Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 310: ‘kingdom, government’. Prov. 21:4 שרנא → נִי, section 5.

Ⓢ: 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19; Prov. 21:4 *šrg* ‘lamp’; 2 Chron. 21:7 *šrg* *nhyr* ‘shining lamp’, a double translation.

Ⓢ: 1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19; Prov. 21:4; 2 Chron. 21:7 *lucerna* ‘lamp’.

6. Judaic Sources

Not attested in this meaning.

7. Illustrations

No suggestions.

8. Archaeological Remarks

→ נִי.

9. Conclusion

נֵר, which is used only in figurative language, evidently denotes the burning lamp, especially its light. As such it is used a few times for the Davidic king or descendant. In Prov. 21:4 a rendering ‘brand’ in the sense of ‘hallmark’ might be considered.

10. Bibliography

BDB, 633: ‘lamp’ – Alonso Schökel, *DBHE*, 468: ‘Lámpara, candel, velón’ (Prov. 21:4 dubious) – *DCH*, vol. 5, 683: ‘lamp’, but several other options are mentioned for 1 Kgs 11:36; 1 Kgs 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; 2 Chron. 21:7; Prov. 21:4. See als 756, *^ו[נֵר] II . . . ‘mark’ – Driver 1951: G.R. Driver, ‘Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs’, *Bib* 32 (1951), 173-197 – *GB*, 522: ‘Licht, Leuchte’ – Görg 1985: M. Görg, ‘Ein “Machtzeichen” Davids 1 Könige xi 36’, *VT* 35 (1985), 363-368 – *HAHAT*, 815: ‘Lampe, Leuchte (gleichbed. m. נֵר), stets bildl. i.S. des Fortbestandes d. davidischen Dynastie . . . i.S.v. Glück, Wohlbefinden . . . die “Leuchte” d. Frevler ist Sünde Prv 21,1 [sic]’ – *HALAT*, 682: ‘Leuchte, Lampe’ – Hanson 1968: P.D. Hanson, ‘The Song of Heshbon and David’s *NĪR*’, *HThR* 61 (1968), 297-320 – *HAWAT*, 276: ‘Leuchte: fortglimmender Funke, metaph. (Stil. 99): Stammhalter’. With regard to Prov. 21:4, *HAWAT*, 288, s.v. נֵר: ‘Leuchte, metaph.: Glück’ – *HCHAT*, Bd. 2, 36: ‘Leuchte, als wesentlicher Bestandtheil des Nomadenzeltes, der Wohnung. dah. Bildl. fortdauernde Wohnung, Familie’ – *HWAT*, 420: נֵר II ‘die Leuchte’; נֵר in Prov. 21:4 is taken as נֵר I ‘der Neubruch der Sünder für ihr treiben’ – *KBL*, 615: ‘Leuchte (= dauernder Bestand) lamp (= lasting existence)’ – *LHA*, 515: ‘igniculus’. Prov. 21:4 is taken as a metaphorical use of נֵר II ‘campus coli coeptus, novale’ – Plöger 1983: O. Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (BK, 17/2-4), Neukirchen 1983, 242: ‘נֵר (“Leuchte”) [ist] als bildhafte Umschreibung für “Glück” durchaus erwägenswert’ – Gesenius & Roediger, *TPC*, 867: ‘lucerna’ (separate lemma נֵר: ‘lucerna impiorum’) – See also the literature cited under → נֵר.

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