

(palm, sole), handbowl, incense-ladle

כָּף

1. Statistics

Torah: 7. Neviim: 4. Ketuvim: 2.

In other meanings (hand, palm, sole) the noun occurs ca. 180 times.

2a. Literal Use

The primary meaning of this word is ‘palm’ or ‘sole’, to which many additional meanings can be added: socket (of hip); hollow (of slinger); ladle or saucer; handle; receptacle; and with a plausible emendation ‘castanets’ in Hab. 2:11 (Pinker 2002). The meaning under consideration here occurs when the object is a Temple utensil (→ כְּלִי) said to be filled with incense (מִלְאָה קִטְרֶת), Num. 4:7). It had to be put on the table (הַשֻּׁלְחָן), together with bowls (→ קַעֲרָה), jugs (→ מְנַקִּית), and jars (→ קַשְׁוֹת; Exod. 37:16). On the occasion of the anointing of the altar the כַּפֹּת, together with silver bowls and basins (→ קַעֲרָה, → מְזֻרְק) were dedicated (Num.7:84). They are also listed among fire pans (→ מְזֻזָּה), lampstands (מְנוֹרָה), pails (→ סֵף), scrapers (→ יַע), snuffers (→ מְזַמְרֵת), and sprinkling bowls (→ מְזֻרְק; 2 Kgs 25:14; Jer. 52:18; 2 Chron. 4:22; 24:14), and were made of bronze, silver or gold; no other material is mentioned in the Bible (see further Exod. 25:29; Num. 7:14, 86; 1 Kgs 7:50; Jer. 52:19), but archaeologically specimens made of clay and stone are known (Nielsen 1986).

2b. Figurative Use

As a name of a utensil, כָּף is a metaphor. The figurative use of כָּף is related to the meaning ‘palm’, and then denotes ‘power’ or ‘grip’.

3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

4. Cognates

According to Watson 1978 the word *kp/kappu* in the meaning of ‘shallow dish’ that is attested in several Semitic languages would have nothing to do with the homonym meaning ‘open hand’. This is unlikely, however, because the archaeological and iconographic

evidence clearly favours the identity of the two words. Mostly the noun is seen as a derivative of $\sqrt{\text{כפף}}$ ‘to bend’ (so e.g. Gesenius & Roediger, *TPC*, 705; König, *HAWAT*, 183; Zorell, *LHA*, 370; Klein, *CEDHL*, 283). This in turn might have developed by assimilation out of $\sqrt{\text{knp}}$ which gave rise to nouns denoting ‘wings’ (cf. Orel & Stolbova, *HSED*, 312).

5. Ancient Versions

Ⲅ and other Greek versions: Ⲅ $\theta\upsilon\lambda\sigma\alpha\eta$ ‘censer’ (all occurrences, except Jer. 52:18: $\kappa\rho\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\gamma\rho\alpha$, ‘flesh-hook’). For $\theta\upsilon\lambda\sigma\alpha\eta$, cf. *GELS-L*, 190; *LSJ*, 808; J.W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (SCSS, 30), Atlanta 1990, 404; for $\kappa\rho\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\gamma\rho\alpha$, cf. *GELS-L*, 267 ‘flesh-hook; fork for meat’; *LSJ*, 992: ‘flesh-hook’.

ⲙ^T: Exod. 25:29, 37:16; Num. 7:20 פִּיאֲלִי , a Greek/Latin LW, ‘cup, pot’ (Tal, *DSA*, 680).

ⲥ: Exod. 25:29; 37:16; Num. 4:7, 7:14, 84, 86 (twice); 1 Kgs 7:50; 2 Kgs 25:14; Jer. 52:18 בֹּזִיכָא – Levy, *CWT*, I, 88: ‘flache Schale, Pfanne’; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 153: ‘vessel, dish, censer’; same equivalent in Neofiti (Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 89: ‘censer, vessel’).

Ⲥ: In all instances *kaffā* ‘ladle, bowl’.

Ⲯ: Exod. 25:29, 37:16; 2 Chron. 4:22, 24:14 *phiala* ‘drinking bowl, bowl, basin’; Num. 4:7, 7:14, 84, 86; 1 Kgs 7:50; Jer 52:18 *mortariolum*, ‘bowl, basin’; 2 Kgs 25:14 *scyphus* ‘goblet, bowl’.

6. Judaic Sources

In Mishnah Tamid 4.3 the word בֹּזֶךְ occurs in the sense of a vessel ($\text{בְּקֶרְבִּים הַנְּתוּנִין בְּבֹזֶךְ וְכַרְעִים עַל גְּבִיָּהֶם מִלְּמַעְלָה}$), named after its ingredient, ‘incense’ ($\text{הָיָה נוֹטֵל אֶת הַכֶּפֶר}$) ‘he who won the incense did take the spoon’; m. Tam. 4.3; 5.4.). Cf. m. Men. 11.5. Both the close relationship between the כַּף and incense, and the fact that [another] word is used to describe the related vessel, indicate that the meaning of כַּף was understood to be ‘incense spoon’.

7. Illustrations

Photographs are found in e.g. *EM*, vol. 7, 115-7; Avitzur, 183;

Annual of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan 1977/78, object with reg. nr. DA 2518 (1976); J 13977; also published in: , 101, no. 98; Yon 2006, 156-7.

8. Archaeological Remarks

Ladles in the form of an open hand, holding a bowl, have been found all over the Levant. They are usually related to incense and ointments. [More will be added later on.]

9. Conclusion

The clearest literary indication for the use of this utensil, is its filling with incense. All other occurrences merely list the object among temple utensils. Archaeological exhibits confirm the use of a hand-shaped ladle for incense; for that reason, the meaning 'incense ladle' is reasonably certain.

10. Bibliography

Allegro 1960: J.M. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll*, London 1960, 158: 'basin' – *AncBD*, vol. 3, 410 – Avitzur, 183 – *BDB*, 497: 'pan, vessel (as hollow)' – Klein, *CEDHL*, 283: '1. palm of the hand, hand' ... 3 pan, censer ... 6 spoon' – Kelso, *CVOT*, 22, No. 47 – Alonso Schökel, *DBHE*, 343: 'Cuenco, escudilla, bandeja' – *DCH*, vol. 4, 450-52: 'ladle, spoon (or perh. saucer, dish as cultic objects)' – *EM*, vol. 7, 115-7 – *GB*, 357-8: 'Hand; Fußsohle; Griffe; Pfanne, Schale' – *HAHAT*, 564-5: 'übertr. f. handähnliche Gegenstände ... Pl. Schalen' – *HALAT*, 468: 'metallene Schale', original in the shape of a hand' – *HAWAT*, 185: 'Schale' – *HCHAT*, Bd. 1, 619: 'Pfanne, Schale, im sg. wie im pl., wegen Aehnlichkeit mit der gekrümmten Hand' – Hurowitz 1995: V.A. Hurowitz, 'Solomon's Golden Vessels (1 Kings 7:48-50) and the Cult of the First temple', in: D.P. Wright *et al.* (eds), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, Winona Lake 1995, 151-64 (157-58): 'cultic vessel' – *HWAT*, 297: 'eine bauchige Schüssel, Pfanne' – *KBL*, 449-50: '(v. d. hohlen Hand gebildeter Raum) Schale' – *LHA*, 369: 'sensu transl.: ... vas in modum volae concavum: phiala, acerra' – *MHH*, 527: (בהשאלה:) היד דבר הדומה בצורתו או בתפקידו לכף היד – Nielsen 1986: K. Nielsen,

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