

מָשַׁח

AH 76 occurrences. EBH1 58; EBH2 6; LBH1 6; QH2 3.

BH: 70 occurrences:

Gn 31.13, Ex 28.41; 29.2,7,29,36; 30.26,30; 40.9,10,13,15 x2, Lc 2.4; 6.13; 7.12,36; 8.10,11,12; 16.32, Nm 3.3; 6.15; 7.1 x2,10,84,88; 35.25, Jdg 9.8,15, 1Sm 10.1; 15.1,17; 16.3,12,13, 2Sm 2.4,7; 3.39; 5.3,17; 12.7; 19.11, 1Kg 1.34,39,45; 5.15; 19.15,16 x2, 2Kg 9.3,6,12; 11.12; 23.30, Isa 21.5; 61.1, Jr 22.14, Am 6.6, Pss 45.8; 89.21, Dn 9.24, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8; 29.22, 2Ch 22.7; 23.11.

Ep.: no occurrences.

Sir 3 occurrences:

Sir 45.15B; 46.13B; 48.8B

Qumran 3 occurrences: 11QPs^a (11Q5) XXVIII 8–9 (x2), 11QPs^a (11Q5) XXVIII 13

Disputed readings:

A.1 2Sm 1.21: see entry on מָשַׁח.

A.2 Hos 8.10 וַיִּחַלוּ מַעַט מִמְּשָׁח מֶלֶךְ שָׂרִים : it has been suggested that on the basis of LXX καὶ κοπάσουσιν μικρὸν τοῦ χρίειν βασιλέα καὶ ἄρχοντας the Hebrew should be read *מָשַׁח : “if genuine, this reading would suggest a criticism of revolutions in the Israelite monarchy” (Gelston 1974:74). However, the same writer (ibid. 74-75) does not recommend emending Hos. 7.3–7 וַיִּמְשְׁחוּ* to בָּרַעְתֶּם וְשִׁמְחוּ-מֶלֶךְ וּבִכְחָשִׁיהֶם שָׂרִים.

1. Root and comparative philology

A.1 From the Sefire inscription (A 21; KAI 222) onwards, Aram, and later in Syr, *mšah* “anoint”, *mišhā*’ “anointing oil” (there is also a possibly homonymous root meaning “to measure”, cf. Akk *mašāhu* I “measure”, Arb *mišāḥa* “measurement”); Ammon PNs *Ma-si-ḥa-an* and *Ma-si-ḥu-un*; possibly Ug *mšḥ* “anoint”, *mšḥt* “ointment”; Palm *mšḥ*’ “oil” ; Arb *masaḥa* “wipe or stroke with the hand” (BDB 602–3; Seybold *ThW* V:47–48). Seybold (ibid.) sees a possible common semantic element, “to stroke something with the hand”.

2. Syntagmatics

A.1 Subject:

Jacob (anointing a pillar) Gen 31.13.
Moses (under Yahweh's orders) Ex 28.41; 29.7, 36; 40.15.
Samuel (under Yahweh's orders) 1Sam 9.16; 15.1; 16.3, 12, 13.
house of Judah 2Sm 2.4,7.
elders of Israel 2 Sm 5.3, (17); 1Ch 11.3 (on orders of Yahweh and Samuel); people of Israel 2Sm 19.11, (1Kg 5.15).
"the assembly" 1Ch 29.22.
"the people of the land" 2Kg 23.30.
Yahweh 1Sam 10.1; 15.17, 2Sm 12.7, 2Kg 9.3,6 (grammatically—but action performed by young prophet), 12; Isa 61.1, Pss 45.8 (God); 89.21, 2Ch 22.7.
Zadok and Nathan 1Kg 1.34,45; Zadok 1Kg 1.39.
Jehoiada and sons 2Ch 23.11.
Elijah (on Yahweh's orders) 1Kg 19.15,16x2.
princes (שָׂרִים) Isa 21.5.
"those who lie on beds of ivory" Am 6.6 (they appear to anoint themselves).

A.2 Object ("smeared, anointed"):

unleavened wafers Ex 29.2; Lv 2.4; 7.12; Num 6.15 (all pass ptc);
pillar Gen 31.13 (cf. 28.18).
shield Isa 21.5, cf. 2Sm 1.21 מִגֶּן שָׂאוּל בְּלִי מְשִׁיחַ בְּשָׁמֶן and the variant reading מְשִׁיחַ.
grand house Jer 22.4.
cultic places and objects: tent of meeting Ex 30.26; tabernacle Ex 40.9, Lv 8.10, Nm 7.1 (1st); altar Ex 29.36; 40.10, Lv 8.11, Nm 7.10 (niph), 84 (niph), 88 (niph); basin and stand Ex 40.11, Lv 8.11; vessels etc. Lv 8.11, Nm 7.1 (2nd); holy of holies Dan 9.24.
priests, Aaron etc. Ex 28.41; 29.7, 29; 30.30; 40.10, 13, 15x2, Lv 6.13 (niph); 7.36; 8.12; 16.32; Nm 3.3 (pass ptc); 35.25.
king Jdg 9.8, 2Sm 3.39 (pass ptc), (Ps 45.8).
named individuals, mostly as king: David 1Sm 16.12,13, 2Sm 2.4,7; 5.3, Ps 89.21, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8 (niph.); Saul 1Sm 10.1; 15.1,17; Solomon 1Kg 1.34,39,45; 5.15, 1Ch 29.22; Hazael 1Kg

19.15; Jehu 1Kg 19.16, 2Kg 9.3,6, 2Ch 22.7; Jehoahaz 2Kg 23.30; Joash 2Kg 11.2/ /2Ch 22.7; Elisha 1Kg 19.16.

unnamed speaker Isa 61.1.

A.3 Instrument:

a) cooking oil, usually followed by prep. ב שֶׁמֶן Ex 29.2, Lv 2.4; 7.12, Nm 6.15 (all of wafers); 2Kg 9.6.

b) anointing oil, שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה Ex 29.7; (30.26); 40.9, Lv 8.10, (11), 12; שֶׁמֶן הַקֹּדֶשׁ Nm 35.25; Ps 45.8 (oil of rejoicing); Ps 89.21 (“my holy oil”). The use of a horn of oil is mentioned (פֶּךָ הַשֶּׁמֶן) 1Sm 10.1, 2Kg 9.3, or קַרְנֵי הַשֶּׁמֶן 1Sm 16.13, 1Kg 1.39).

c) cosmetic use: “the finest of oils” Am 6.6.

d) decoration: “vermilion” (שָׁשָׁר) (for a house) Jer 22.14.

A.4 Sphere of influence consequent upon anointing indicated by:

עַל: Israel (variously expressed) 1Sm 9.16; 15.1,17; 2Sm 5.3, 17; 12.7; 19.11, 1Kg 1.34; 19.16, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8; (אֶל) 2Kg 9.3,6,12; Aram 1Kg 19.15; house of Judah 2Sm 2.4,7; “Yahweh’s inheritance” 1Sm 10.1; trees Jdg 9.8,15.

A.5 Appointment defined by ל plus title:

as ruler (לַנְיָד) 1Sm 9.16; 10.1, 1Ch 29.22

as king (לַמֶּלֶךְ) Jdg 9.15, 1Sm 15.1,17, 2Sm 2.4,7; 5.3,17; 12.7, 1Kg 1.34,39,45; 5.15; 19.15,16, 2Kg 9.3,6, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8.

as prophet (לַנְבִיא) 1Kg 19.16.

A.6 Purpose of anointing expressed by

1) following infinitive: Ex 29.36, Lv 8.11, 12, Isa 61.1, 2Ch 22.7

2) purpose/result expressed by waw consecutive clause, and is consecration in many Pentateuchal passages: קָדַשׁ Pi. Ex 30.30, 40.9,10,11,13, Lv 8.10: compare Ex 29.36, Lv 8.11,12 where the same idea is expressed by means of the infinitive. Also כָּהֵן Pi Ex 40.15, Lv 16.32, Nm 7.1 1st, יָשַׁע Hi 1Sm 9.16.

3. Lexical and semantic fields:

Synonym: קָדַשׁ ; (Gen 31.13/ /Gen 28.18), 1Sm 10.1, 2Kg 9.3,6.

Consecration as consequent upon the action of anointing: Ex 29.26; 30.30; 40.9.11.13, Lv 8.10,11,12, Nm 7.2.

Priestly ordination: קָדַשׁ (pi) Ex 40.15, Lv 16.32

Connection with king-making: Jdg 9.8,15, 1Sm 15.1,17, 2Sm 2.4,7; 3.39; 5.3,17; 12.7, 1Kg 1.34; 5.15; 19.16; 19.15, 2Kg 23.30, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8; 29.22, 2Ch 23.11 (implicitly, e.g. 1Kg 1.39, 2Sm 19.11, where קָדַשׁ is virtually synonymous with, and stands for, הַמְלִיךְ).

Connection with appointment of נָבִיא : 1Sm 9.16; 10.1

Connection with appointing of prophet: 1Kg 19.16 (2nd)

4. Versions:

LXX:

A.1 The commonest equivalent by far is $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\omega$, “anoint, smear”, which occurs in every passage (including Sir), with the following exceptions:

$\delta\iota\alpha\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\omega$ “smear all over” Lv 2.4

$\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\phi\omega$ “anoint skin with oil; daub, plaster, besmear” Gen 31.13 (because the object is a pillar?); Ex 40.15x2 (because those anointed are not the high priest?); Nu 3.3 (ditto?);

$\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$ “appoint” ($\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron$ $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma$) 2Sam 3.39 (Hexaplaric recension has $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\pi\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ “stretched”, influenced by the meaning of the homonymous Aramaic and later Hebrew root קָדַשׁ “stretch, measure”; yet Aq. Sym. have $\kappa\epsilon\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$).

$\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omicron\iota\mu\acute{\alpha}\omega$ “prepare” Isa 61.1 (taking קָדַשׁ וּקָדַשׁ as a metaphor).

B.1 $\epsilon\upsilon\phi\rho\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ “cheer, gladden” LXX Dn 9.24 (presumably reading* קָדַשׁ).

Targum:

A.1 In the Pentateuch usually *rabbi*, “anoint, appoint, consecrate”, with the following exceptions:

Onk Gn 31.13, Ex 29.2, Lv 2.4; 7.1, Nm 6.15 *mšah* “smear, anoint”, also N Ex 29.2.

In the non-Pentateuchal Targumim, the main rendering is *mšah*, with *rabbē* appearing less frequently (1Sm 15.1,17, 2Sm 3.39, Isa 61.1, 1Ch 11.3; 14.8, 2Ch 22.7; 23.11).

A.2 Other translations (usually contextual renderings):

N Lv 2.4; 7.12, Nm 6.15 *pylyn* “soaked” cf. Pesh.

PJ Lv 2.4; 7.12 *ptykyn* “mixed”

Jdg 9.8 *manni* “appoint, ordain”

PJ Ex 28.41; 29.36 *dakki* “purify, cleanse”

Isa 21.5 *mrīqū w-ṣaḥṣaḥū* “they cleaned and polished (weapons)”

Jr 22.14 *mṣayyar* “painted” cf Pesh.

Peshitta:

A.1 Almost always *mšah*, “rub, smear; anoint”, no doubt because of the near identity of the roots in Syriac and Hebrew in form and meaning.

A.2 Exceptions are:

Ex 29.2, Lv 2.4, Nu 6.15 (all pass ptc) *d-fīlīn (bmešḥā)* “mingled (with oil)”

Jer 22.14 *ṣā’ar* “painting”

B.1 Renderings reflecting different readings, misunderstandings or deliberate changes:

2Sm 3.39 *dāḥel ’nā waḥzēṭ ’enā malkā* “I am afraid today and I the king have seen (that...)”

1Ch 11.3 *’aqīmw dāwīd d-nehwe’ (malkā)* “they appointed David to be (king)”:

Perhaps the translator believed that David’s earlier anointing by the prophet Samuel (1Sm 16.13) marked the divinely ordained start of his reign, and wished to avoid the idea of David being anointed by the lay elders. The same may be the case in 1Ch 29.22 where *נשמ* is not translated and the subject is the assembly.

Dn 9.24 *lamšīḥā* “for the Messiah”

Vulgate:

A.1 Almost always *ungo*, occasionally *consecro* (Ex 28.41; 29.7, Nm 7.84).

When used of cakes etc. Jerome sometimes renders *lita* “smeared” (Ex 29.2, Lv 2.4).

A.2 Several Pentateuchal occurrences have been omitted through paraphrase, e.g. in Ex 40.10–15, Lv 7.36, 8.10, Nm 7.10 (2nd).

Others are renderings according to the context:

Jdg 9.15 *constituis* “you make, set up”

Isa 21.5 *arripite* “lay hold of!”

Jr 22.14 *pingit* “he paints”

Am 6.6 *delibuti* “anointed”.

5. Exegesis:

A.1 Kutsch’s 1963 monograph is the only full length study so far of anointing as a legal act in the Hebrew Bible and ANE, and has therefore exerted a good deal of influence. On the evidence of texts describing ancient ceremonies of anointing, he concluded that there were two basic categories of significance. The first consisted of acts where anointing signified purification and release, typically involving the master/slave relationship or the buying and selling of property, where freedom from mutual claims seems to have been portrayed. The second type of anointing, he claimed, was represented by acts conferring power, might and honour, for instance, the anointing of Hittite kings, and the anointing of officials and vassal kings by the pharaohs.

Having established these two categories, Kutsch placed the anointings of priests described in BH in the first category (purification) and related the anointing of Israelite kings to the second. He also distinguished between those passages in BH where the people or Israel were the subject of the verb מָשַׁח (2Sm 2.4; 5.3, 2Kg 11.12; 23.30), and those where Yahweh or a prophet anointed an individual (1Sm 9.16; 10.1; 15.1, 17; 16.12f, 2Sm 12.7, 2Kg 9.3, 6, 12, 2Ch 22.7). He believed that the former type represented the original form of the ceremony in Israel, on the Hittite model, while the latter reflected a later development in the Judean royal ritual under Egyptian influence, with Yahweh as the source of authority and power (1963:52ff). Kutsch also maintained that not all rulers of the northern kingdom were anointed, and that Judahite kings were not regarded as anointed in the name of Yahweh, since in both cases power could only derive from an anointing by the people.

Kutsch’s thesis has been heavily criticised, and is now regarded as based on flawed methodology. He attempts to fit the OT examples into a general ancient Near Eastern pattern, though it is not necessarily the case that the act of anointing, widespread though it was, had a similar significance in different cultures and at different periods. There is also no concrete evidence in Hittite, Canaanite and Egyptian sources that native kings were actually anointed (Ringgren ET 1966:222; Emerton 1967:122–28; Weisman 1976:383–84). Kutsch stresses the consecratory element of the anointing of priests (noting the use of

roots such as קדש and טהר in these passages), and Emerton sees no reason to regard the anointing of kings as any different in this respect. The conferring of holiness or sacral status, accepted by earlier scholars such as de Boer (1938:1–17), also fits in well with Jacob’s anointing of the stone in Gn 28.18; 31.13; 35.14 (Mowinckel 1959:4–55) and Moses’ anointing of the Tent of meeting in Ex 30.29. 1Sm 24.6; 26.11 suggest that the person of the monarch was indeed regarded as sacrosanct. Emerton also regards as strained Kutsch’s insistence that “Yahweh’s anointed” was not to be taken literally, since an anointing by the people did not preclude the possibility that Yahweh was believed to act through them even if a prophet was not involved, on the analogy of the verb מָלַךְ (1967:122–28).

A.3 Rooke (1998:205–206) argues that the anointing of a high priest at his ordination was not to bestow on him divine attributes, as in royal anointing, since he was never shown as being endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh afterwards. Rather, the anointing changed his status so that he could become more involved in the sacred realm.

A.4 The person performing the anointing in the Hebrew Bible is usually a prophet or priest, but most scholars regard anointing by a prophet as a later theological motif, retrojected from the more authentic public ceremony: e.g. Knierim (1968:20–51) with regard to 1Sm 10.1, which he believes is a prophetic reinterpretation of the story to emphasize the later view that anointing came from Yahweh via the prophets and was a bestowing of charisma: compare also Weisman (1976:378–98). However, Weisman (1976:384–86) thinks the two acts have little in common, and suggests that two acts of anointing were possible in the early period, the first at the hands of a prophet, marking divine nomination of the individual, and the second by the people, once the king-designate had proved his charismatic status. Mowinckel (1959:5–6) accepts Samuel’s anointing of Saul on the ground that Samuel was perceived as a priestly seer and not as a נָבִיא. As for the anointing of prophets as in 1Kg 19.16 and Isa 61.1, this is explained as a mark of consecration as in the case of kings (Mowinckel 1959:6–7).

A.5 As for the title conferred by anointing, Richter (1963:282–91) distinguishes between Saul’s “Northern” anointing as נָגִיד and David’s Judahite anointing as מָלַךְ. Though some have assumed that all Israelite kings were anointed (“the essential characteristic of a king is

that he has been anointed”—Mowinckel 1959:5), the absence of strong evidence even within the corpus of BH for this has led some to believe that only the first king in a dynasty was anointed, unless there was a dispute about the succession.

Art and Archaeology

There are no clear examples of anointing as a rite of appointment, though Weisman (1976:388–90) suggests that the Assyrian reliefs at Nimrud, in the palace of Ashur-nasir-pal II, may depict the king's anointing by winged figures in the presence of a deity (see Stearns 1961).

Conclusion

There is no doubt about the importance of the rite of anointing in ancient Israel and its sacral aspects. Anointed figures were chosen, commissioned and empowered by Yahweh to work on behalf of his people (see מָשִׁיחַ), though there are clear differences between the resulting roles of kings and priests (Rooke 1998:193–94, 205–206). Even objects could be consecrated for sacred use by anointing. The basic sense of the word is to smear, as can be seen from the occurrences of the verb in the context of wafers, but since these too are offered to Yahweh, perhaps it always carries some sacral connotation in AH.

Bibliography (and see also מָשִׁיחַ).

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