

**inkpot (?), writing-case (?)**

תַּקְסָה

**1. Statistics**

Torah: 0. Nebiim: 3. Ketubim: 0. Total: 3.

**2a. Literal Use**

The word occurs three times, viz., Ezek. 9:2, 3, and 11. Though all three instances belong to the same vision of Ezekiel, the object is used in literal way. It is in the possession of a man in linen dress, possibly a clergyman, who belongs to a group of six persons. God ordered this group to kill the unfaithful people of Jerusalem. The godfearing people, however, had to be saved from death. Therefore they should get a mark on their foreheads. While in the verses 2 and 3 the word is used with the genitive תַּקְסָהּ, ‘of the scribe’, in the third case this addition is lacking. Unfortunately the genitive merely confirms that the object was a piece of scribal equipment, but does not throw light on its exact nature. However, the mere fact that תַּקְסָהּ had to be added would seem to exclude a technical term that was clear in itself. If it were a more general term like ‘equipment’ or ‘utensils’ (cf. Siegfried & Stade, *HWAT*, 669: ‘das Schreibzug . . . am Gürtel getragen’; *KBL*, 845: ‘Schreibzeug *writing-case*’; Alonso Schökel, *DBHE*, 640: ‘Avíos, instrumentos’; Block 1997, 300-301, 305: ‘kit’; *HAHAT*, 1178: ‘Schreibzeug’), the addition of the genitive ‘of a scribe’ would become understandable.

The man in white linen has to pass through the city and has to put a mark, probably a Taw – a cross in ancient Hebrew (cf. Van Staalduine-Sulman 1993, 290) – on the foreheads of the faithful who are disturbed because of the defilement of Jerusalem (v. 4). This renders the current hypothesis that the תַּקְסָה was an inkpot more or less plausible (see the references below). However, the man clothed in linen is walking with the תַּקְסָה on his waist (בְּתַקְסָהוֹ). This expression cannot mean anything else (Gen. 37:34; 1 Kgs 2:5; 20:31-32; 2 Kgs 1:8; Ezek. 23:15; Ps. 66:11; Job 12:18) and explains some of the renderings found in the ancient versions (see section 5 below). It seems unlikely that a person walking in a white tunic would let an inkpot or palette with wet ink pads dangle from his girdle. The matter cannot be decided on the basis

of context alone.

## 2b. Figurative Use

Not attested.

## 3. Epigraphic Hebrew

Not attested.

## 4. Cognates

SEMITIC: The etymology is unclear. Some scholars suppose it to be related to Hebr. → תבב, a vessel (Gesenius & Roediger, *TPC*, 1240; Klein, *CEDHL*, 586), but both the sibilant and the last radical are problematic in that case.

EGYPTIAN: Some authors connect the word with Egyptian *gstj*, ‘palette of a scribe’ (e.g. *GB*, 719; Kelso, *CVOT*, 39; Lambdin 1953, 154; Driver 1954, 86; *KBL*, 844; *HALAT*, 1042; Kaddari, *MHH*, 953; *HAHAT*. 1178 (with [?]); cf. Erman & Grapow, *WÄS*, 207; Hannig, *SP*, 822). However, Helck, *BÄV* and Hoch, *SWET*, do not accept this connection.

OLD AND IMPERIAL ARAMAIC: Connection with *gšwt* is highly uncertain (Hoftijzer & Jongeling, *DNSI*, vol. 1, 236).

SYRIAC: Syriac *qestā*, a pint or pot, is a loan from Greek ξέστης (Payne Smith [Margoliouth], *CSD*, 511) but might be considered, in spite of the different final consonant. Cf. Gesenius & Roediger, *LTC*, 1240; Fürst & V. Ryssel, *HCHAT*, Bd. 2, 323.

CLASSICAL ARABIC: *LTC*, 1240, and *BDB*, 903, compare Arabic *qašwah*, a basket of palm-leaves (De Biberstein Kazimirski, *DAF*, t. 2, 744), but both the sibilant and the last radical are problematic in that case.

MODERN SOUTH ARABIC: If the word has a general meaning (see above), Oman Arabic *qašš*, ‘utensil’ (Leslau, *CDG*, 448) and Mehri *qaś* or *qeš*, ‘hand-bagage’ (Johnstone, *ML*, 241) might be considered.

ETHIOPIC: König, *HAWAT*, 413, and Leslau, *CDG*, 448, consider the possibility that Ge'ez *qašut*, ‘vase, water pot, container for mead’ is related, but Leslau rejects the idea.

GREEK: A connection with Greek κίστη, ‘basket, hamper’, but

also ‘writing-case’ (*LSJ*, 954) is certainly not to be excluded now that it has become clear that contacts between the Levant and Greece started much earlier than hitherto thought. See also Latin *cista*, ‘a wooden box or basket, often woven of slips or twigs, used for keeping money, clothes, books, fruit, etc.’ (*LD*, 344). The only dictionary considering this possibility is Zorell, *LHA*, 729.

### 5. Ancient Versions

⊖ and other Greek versions: The ⊖ has ζώνη σαπφείρου, ‘sapphire belt’, apparently partly an erroneous vocalisation of the Hebrew. α’ and θ’ are said to have κάστυ γραμματέως, vocalising תכתיב correctly, but probably simply transcribing תכתיב. Another manuscript states that α’ translated תכתיב by μελανοδοχεῖον, ‘inkstand’. σ’ has πιννακίδιον γραφέως, ‘a scribe’s small writing-tablet’.

⊘: Targum Jonathan seems to agree with σ’ in rendering תכתיב פנפס, ‘a scribe’s writing-tablet’.

⊙: Follows ⊖ with *w’sr hš’ dspyl’ bhšwhy*, ‘and a sapphire belt was girded on his loins’.

⊚: *atramentarium scriptoris*, ‘a scribe’s inkstand’ (*LD*, 192).

### 6. Judaic Sources

Not attested.

### 7. Illustrations

No suggestions.

### 8. Archaeological Remarks

[Will be added later on.]

### 9. Conclusion

The Hebrew text implies that the utensil under investigation belongs to the equipment of a scribe. Moreover, the context gives the impression that the skin of the forehead of a number of persons should be marked during a hectic and turbulent incident.

Unfortunately the exact meaning of תִּכְתֵּיבִי cannot be established with certainty, as was recognised by Honeyman 1939. From antiquity on translators have guessed after its meaning. Some opted

for ‘inkpot’ or ‘inkstand’. After the discovery of the palettes of Egyptian scribes some proposed a connection with the Egyptian word for ‘palette’, but other experts rejected this. Since the object was apparently carried on the loins, it is unlikely that a man would risk to soil his white tunic with wet ink (see section 1).

The explicit addition of the genitive ‘of a scribe’ in two of the three instances might suggest a rather general term like ‘equipment’ (section 1) and there is some very weak etymological support for this (section 4 under Modern South Arabic). But why would such a rare word have been chosen in a verse in which the common Hebrew word for equipment (→ ‘לִי’) is also used?

The best option would seem to accept that תִּכְוֶה is a Greek loan word meaning ‘writing-case’ (see section 4 under Greek), a possibility mentioned by Zorell. *LHA*, 729, who renders accordingly ‘vasculum utensilia scribae continens’ (a vessel containing a scribe’s utensils). In Egypt a wooden box has been found containing all the equipment a scribe might need: papyri, cakes of black and red ink, writing reeds and a mortar (Piacentini 2001, 190; cf. Lucas & Harris, *textitAEMI*, index s.v. ink). This is a more likely object to be carried around by a scribe in a white cloak who might hook the case on his girdle while walking.

## 10. Bibliography

*BDB*, 903: ‘pot (for ink), inkhorn’ – Block 1997: D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1997, 305 – Klein, *CEDHL*, 586: ‘inkstand’ – Kelso, *CVOT*, 39: ‘ink horn’ – Alonso Schökel, *DBHE*, 640: ‘Avíos, instrumentos’ – *DCH*, vol. 7, 272: ‘writing case, or perh. inkpot’ – Driver 1954: G.R. Driver, *Semitic Writing from Pictograph to Alphabet*, London 1954, 86: ‘ink-pot, palette’ – Eisler 1930: R. Eisler, ‘*gštj* = κάστου τοῦ γραμματέως = תִּכְוֶה הַכֶּסֶף im Danielkommentar des Hyppolytos von Rom’, *OLZ* 33 (1030), viii-ix – *EM*, vol. 7, 205-9 – Ellenbogen, *FWOT*, 150: ‘Writer’s palette’ – *GB*, 719: ‘Gefäß des Schreibers, Tintenfaß’ – *HAHAT*, 1178: ‘Schreibzeug’ – *HAWAT*, 413: ‘Tintenfass’ – *HCHAT*, Bd. 2, 323: ‘Gefäß des Schreibers ... d.h. Tintenfass’ – Honeyman 1939: A.M. Honeyman, ‘The Pottery Vessels of the Old Testament’, *PEQ* 1939, 90 – *HWAT*, 669: ‘das Schreibzug ... am Gürtel getragen’ – *KBL*, 845: ‘Schreibzeug

*writing-case* – Lambdin 1953: T.O. Lambdin, ‘Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament’, *JAOS* 73 (1953), 154, ‘a scribe’s vessel, an ink vessel’ – Piacentini 2001: P. Piacentini, ‘Scribes’, in: D.B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, Oxford 2001, 187-192 – *LHA*, 729: ‘vasculum utensilia scribae continens’ – *MHH*, 953: כַּלִּי לְדָוִד – *NIDOT*, vol. 4, 1291: ‘a scribe’s palette’ – Gesenius & Roediger, *TPC*, 1240: ‘ampulla, vasculum . . . atramentarium’ – Van Staalduine-Sulman 1993: E. van Staalduine-Sulman, ‘The Aramaic Song of the Lamb’, in: J.C. de Moor & W.G.E. Watson (eds), *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (AOAT , 42), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1993, 265-92.

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