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## Monuments : [Part 1] Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

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## Month

→ Calendars

## Monuments

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
- III. Christianity
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- V. Hinduism
- VI. Literature
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### I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

The term "monument" is the translation for the Hebrew term *yād*; it is also used for words that are mostly rendered with pillar (*maššēbā/maššebet*) and signpost/marker (*štyyān*). The Hebrew word *yād* is polysemic. It usually means "hand," "arm," "side." The term can sometimes also have the meaning of "portion/parcel" or can be used as euphemism for "penis." The meaning of *yād* as a monument appears in the MT in 1 Sam 15:2; 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5; Ezek 21:19; 1 Chr 18:3 and perhaps in 2 Sam 8:3.

In LXX, the term χεῖρ (hand) is used to translate *yād* in the above cases, although this word cannot have the meaning of monument in Greek. The only exception is Isa 56:5 where *yād wāšēm* is translated as τόπον ὀνομαστόν (an esteemed place).

**1. *Yād* as Monument.** A list of toponyms in an inscription of Sheshonq contains a place named "Monument (*yād*) of the king." This attests to the use of *yād* as "monument" outside of the Bible and since the beginning of the 10th century BCE.

In the Bible, this meaning is most clearly attested in 1 Sam 15:12 "he [= Saul] set up [*n-š-b*, *hiphil*] a monument [*yād*]" and in 2 Sam 18:18 "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up [*n-š-b*, *hiphil*] for himself a pillar [*maššebet*] that is in the King's Valley, for he said, 'I have no son to keep my name [*šēm*] in remembrance'; he called the pillar by his own name [*šēm*]. It is called Absalom's Monument [*yād*] to this day."

These two passages show the semantic proximity between pillar and monument. In the first case, the monument is a victory stele which is set up (*n-š-b*, *hiphil*). This root is of the same family as the pillar. The second passage shows that the monument has a memory function associated with the name (*šēm*).

In Ezek 21:24, *yād* should be translated as "signpost." In this case, *yād* is a synonym of *štyyān*.

In other passages, the meaning of the word *yād* is subject to discussion. In Isa 56:5, the meaning of *yād wāšēm* is surely "memorial stele," the second term being used to complement the first by hendiadys (Winkle). However, some scholars have proposed to translate it "a portion/parcel and a name" (Robinson).

The difficulty of choosing between different meanings of *yād* arises also in the two parallel passages, 2 Sam 8:3 and 1 Chr 18:3. Some scholars translate *yād* by "monument" (e.g., NRSV) and others by the metaphorical meaning "authority" (e.g., NET). The use of the root *n-š-b*, *hiphil* in Chronicles implies that it is referring to a monument. However, in 2 Sam both meanings are possible as setting up a monument is a way to show the authority of a king over a region.

**2. Monument and Other Meanings of *yād*.** The different meanings of *yād* are closely linked as has been discussed in the previous section. The meaning "portion" or "authority" instead of "monument" could sometimes fit the literary context. However, some scholars have proposed that the meaning of *yād* "monument" comes from the meanings "hand" or "penis" (Delcor). Indeed, different steles have been found in Israel (Hazor, Gezer) as well as in the ancient Near East with a hand engraved in the upper part. It has also been proposed that the meaning "monument" which is closely linked to the pillar could derive from the understanding of *yād* as "penis" or from the root *y-d-d* meaning "to love" as the grove (*āšērā*) and the pillar (*maššēbā/maššebet*) are used in cultic context with sexual connotations (Ackroyd).

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### II. Judaism

The primary mention of monuments in the talmudic period refers to sepulchers that memorialized the deceased, some of them sophisticated struc-