

Hebrew Noun Word Study of “crown” עֲטָרָה

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## INTRODUCTION

In Isaiah 28:1-6, the prophet uses a word that is significant to the Christian's understanding of Israel's punishment for pride and arrogance—the judgment of God's hand upon Ephraim's northern kingdom and the southern kingdom of Judah. To declare this message, Isaiah indicated the word עֲטָרָה specifying the image of a crown (or wreath as expressed in various English translations).<sup>1</sup>

For this purpose, giving close attention to the use of עֲטָרָה will distinguish its usage within 28:1-6 to other passages related or unrelated. This study will include the examination of the historical tradition, Scriptural usage, direct contextual significance, and exegetical implication of עֲטָרָה in the Tanakh. Thus, this thesis will argue that Isaiah 28:1-6 indicates the distinction between the arrogance and fragility of humans' false headship and God's powerful and authentic headship.

### I. GENERIC USAGE OF עֲטָרָה (HISTORICAL/DIACHRONIC/SCRIPTURAL)

In expressions of etymology עֲטָרָה is a derivation of עָטַר (atar, (verb) Strong's 5849). It's historical use from a primitive root meaning to encircle, for attack and protection, becomes the literal or figurative words compass and crown. Though there are many forms and transliterations of עָטַר, its usage in Isaiah 28:1-6 is its derivative עֲטָרָה ('ăṭārâ, Strong's 5850), a noun (crown or wreath) figuratively used in 28:1, of Samaria; of צָבִי'עַ, Isaiah 28:5 ("צִפְרִית תִּפְאָרָה").<sup>2</sup>

The usage of עֲטָרָה has twenty-three occurrences within the Tanakh. Its English word translation is crown or wreath. Additional research determined other various constructs of ('ăṭārâ) such as tiara, diadem, coronet, and corona. Historically, עֲטָרָה is the figurative

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<sup>1</sup> Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: *A Reader's Edition* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2014), 745. Examination of Isaiah 28 for comparison of עֲטָרָה word study analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: New American Standard Bible. Updated ed. La Habra: Lockman Foundation, 1995. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/strongs-exhaustive-concordance/>.

expression of an ornament or the dignity to anyone designated a crown. Scriptural usage in various passages expresses this framework. For consideration, Job 19:9 utters: “He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head.” Job’s honor was his crown. Proverbs 12:4 articulates the same idea, but in this case, a wife who honors her husband is his crown: “A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.”

## II. CONTEXTUAL SETTING AND EXEGETICAL MEANING

The contextual setting of Isaiah 28:1-6 is the Isaianic theme of haughtiness, an expression of Israel’s rejection of divine counsel leading the nation to foolishness and drunkenness amongst other behaviors that lead to God’s judgment against them. God’s response to Israel’s arrogance and deceit result in punishment by an enemy against both Ephraim and Judah.

Isaiah’s inaugural verses are directed against Ephraim, resulting in the down fall of Samaria, its capital city in the northern kingdom. The description of the people of the north is that of wealthy and self-indulgent drunkards. The antithesis is Paul’s Ephesian imperative of being “imitators of God” (5:1)— “Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (5:18). “Paul urges his readers to “walk not as unwise but as wise people.” One aspect of walking wise is ‘submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.’”<sup>3</sup>

Given Paul’s urgency, Isaiah's echo puts human arrogance’s stance in opposition to the sovereign God. The Assyrian onslaught against Israel is soon to take its toll on Ephraim where her proud crown will be trodden underfoot; “and the fading flower of its glorious

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<sup>3</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *The New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 826.

beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley will be like ‘a first-ripe fig’ before summer: when someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it is in his hand” (Isa. 28:3-4). It is futile that Ephraim, in all her glory, resists her impending demise. Ephraim’s fruit of labor and trust in human depravity results from exile with the Assyrian enemy enjoying its fruit.

### III. CONCLUSION

It cannot be understated that עֲטָרָה as an expression includes the dignity of the one designated to wear it. Though Israel’s haughtiness was a woe against their trusting in false human frailties and ungodly alliances, Ephraim’s (and Judah’s) true עֲטָרָה is the sovereign God. “In that day the Lord of hosts will be a עֲטָרָה of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people” (28:5). God himself will be the Spirit of transformation to his people in his sure foundation Jesus Christ. “I am the stone” (28:16).

R. C. Sproul said, “it is undeniable that the “one like a son of man” is the one who will inherit an everlasting kingdom. In using this title, Jesus identifies Himself as this individual, the promised son of David who will rule the earth.”<sup>4</sup> “The saints are included corporately in their leader. Jesus is the Son of Man, the king, the stone, who represents the saints.”<sup>5</sup>

The עֲטָרָה in which Israel trusted became its ultimately downfall—self. “We must infer that man is never sufficiently affected with a knowledge of his own meanness, till he has compared himself with the Divine Majesty.”<sup>6</sup> Only God is the true עֲטָרָה and King of glory and “those who hope in me will not be disappointed” (Isa. 49:23).

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<sup>4</sup> R. C Sproul., (2008). He Who Comes in Clouds. *Tabletalk Magazine*, (July). doi: <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/daily-study/2008/07/he-who-comes-clouds/>

<sup>5</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 393.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, Chapter I, III* (Philadelphia, PA: Nicklin and Howe, 1816), 47.

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