

metaphoric use of the word in this text, the translation of the flower as lotus opens the reference to the metaphor of recreation and transformation (Keel 1984; 1994).

2) A term referring to a decorative element in the shape of a flower in 1 Kgs 7:19, 22, 26. Capitals of columns of bronze pillars (1 Kgs 7:19, 22) and a lip of a bowl or water basin (1 Kgs 7:26; parallel in 2 Chr 4:5, in feminine) are described as having the form of this flower. Archaeological finds of architectural elements in the shape of a lotus are fairly common in Egypt and the Near East while those in the shape of a lily are few.

3) The name in the title of certain psalms alluding perhaps to songs or other poetic texts (Ps 45:1; 60:1; 69:1, 80:1) is difficult to interpret. These psalms do not give any information on the specific flower they refer to.

The word should not be confused with the Elamite capital Susa (MT *šūšan*) named in Esth 1:2, 5; 2:3, 5, 8; 3:15; 4:8, 16; 8:14–15; 9:6, 11–15, 18; Dan 8:2; Neh 1:1.

A flower called *hābaššelet* occurs in Isa 35:1 (LXX *κρίνον*, lily) and Song 2:1 (LXX *ἄθος*, flower); in the latter verse it is defined by the name Sharon, often translated as the rose of Sharon. Due to this coastal reference several scholars suggest that the flower is a sea daffodil (*Pancreatum maritimum*). In the Targum on the Song of Songs it is interpreted as narcissus. *Hābaššelet* is also identified with at least the following: the lily, the meadow saffron, i.e., the autumn crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*), the asphodel (*Asphodelos*), the hyacinth, and the tulip. The term seems to refer to a common local bulbous plant. The generic Hebrew word for flower, *perah*, is rendered into Greek as *κρίνον* (lily) in Exod 25:31–40 and Num 8:4.

Bibliography: ■ Keel, O., *Deine Blicke sind Tauben: Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes* (SBS 114/115; Stuttgart 1984). ■ Keel, O., *The Song of Songs* (Minneapolis, Minn. 1994); trans. of id., *Das Hohelied* (ZBK; Zurich 1986). ■ Štrba, B., “[šōšanna] of the Canticle,” *Bib* 85 (2004) 475–502. ■ Suderman, W. D., “Modest or Magnificent? Lotus versus Lily in Canticles,” *CBQ* 67 (2005) 42–58.

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II. Christianity

Drawing especially on Song 2:1–2, early Christian writers such as Origen, Hippolytus, Ambrose, and Augustine associated the lily with Christ (Song 2:1: “the lily of the valley”) and with the Church (Song 2:2: “the lily among the thorns”). The lily was seen as a symbol of holiness and purity, and thus applicable to Christ as the source of holiness, to the Church as a mixed body of holy members (lilies) and sinners (thorns), to Christians as individuals capable of holiness and purity despite being surrounded by the “thorns” of unbelievers and heretics, or to virgins or ascetics.

In keeping with the Christological exegesis of Song 2:1, the figure of Christ was often depicted surrounded by lilies until the 13th century. In the Latin liturgy, scriptural verses mentioning the lily were drawn upon for various celebrations of the Virgin Mary and other saints, such as the alleluia verse “The just will flourish like the lily” (*Iustus germinabit*; cf. Hos 14:6) and the antiphons “The desert will rejoice ... like the lily” (*Laetabitur deserta*; cf. Isa 35:1) and “As a lily among thorns” (*Sicut lilium*; cf. Song 2:2), and “Your saints, O Lord, will flourish like the lily” (*Sancti tui*; cf. Sir 39:19). In the 8th century CE, the “lily among thorns” began to be associated with the Virgin Mary (Paul the Deacon, PL 95:1568). By the 11th and 12th centuries, the lily became a common attribute of the Virgin Mary on coins, seals, and artistic depictions, and Mariological expositions of the lily in the Song of Songs became commonplace, although by the 14th century, the lily began to be rivaled by the rose as in Marian iconography. In the 12th century, the lily became associated with the Capetian line of the French monarchy, appearing in the form of a triple fleur-de-lis, sometimes associated with the three persons of the Trinity or with the virtues of faith, wisdom, and chivalry.

By the 13th century, the lily had also become closely associated with various individual saints: in addition to referencing the lily in his accounts of the annunciation and assumption of Mary, the *Legenda aurea* of James of Voragine associates the lily with Cecilia (1180, giving a playful etymology related to the final syllables of the saint’s name) and Peter Martyr (439). It appears that the association of the lily with the virginal purity of Mary overflowed to others who were remarkable for their witness to chastity and purity. Over time, the lily became linked with the iconography of various other saints, including Joseph of Nazareth, the Dominicans Dominic de Guzman, Catherine of Siena, and Thomas Aquinas, the Franciscans Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, and Anthony of Padua, and early modern saints such as Aloysius of Gonzaga and Philip Neri. In each case, the lily seems to be associated with the theme of sexual purity, a feature that was prominent in the hagiography of these consecrated men and women.

Bibliography: ■ James of Voragine, *Legenda aurea* (ed. G. P. Maggioni; Millennio Medievale 6; Florence 1998). ■ Maher, M., “A Lily among Thorns: Canticles 2.2 in the Latin Exegetical Tradition,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays* (ed. C. McCarthy/J. F. Healey; JSOTSup 375; London 2004) 227–38. ■ Paul the Deacon, “Homilia Prima: In Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis” (ed. J. P. Migne; PL 95; Paris 1861) 1565–69. ■ Pastoureau, M., “La Fleur de lys: Emblème royal, symbole marial ou thème graphique?” in *La Monnaie, miroir des rois* (Paris 1978) 251–65.

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