

How Did The Kaiser Get His Title?

Background

Wilhelm II, *Prince Frederick William Victor Albert of Prussia*, (27 January 1859 – 4 June 1941) was the last German Emperor and King of Prussia, ruling both the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia from 15 June 1888 to 9 November 1918. He was deposed on that date with the treaty of World War I. He lost all his royal titles.

Wilhelm II was born in Berlin to Prince Frederick William of Prussia and his wife, Victoria, Princess of Prussia (born Princess Royal of the United Kingdom), thus making him a grandson of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom. He was Queen Victoria's first grandchild. As the son of the Crown Prince of Prussia he was related to many of Europe's royal families.

He carried the royal designation, King or Ruler, from the Middle High German **Keiser**, meaning Emperor. This name originated from the Latin name **Caesar**, pronounced **Kaisar**. The German pronouncement was nearly identical to the ancient Roman pronouncement.

(The name Kaisar also became a German surname, spelled variously as Kayser, Keyser, and Kaiser. The family originated in Western Prussia in the towns of Irresheim, Dorweiler, Norvenich, Eschweiler, Eggersheim, and Duren.)

The question is whether the designation **Kaisar** was inherited from the ancient Romans, or whether it was borrowed later to elevate the German rulers to the status of the ancient rulers of Rome.

Related to this question is that of **Czar** Nicholas II of Russia.

Nicholas II (*Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov*; (18 May 1868 – 17 July 1918) was the last Emperor of Russia, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Finland. His official title was **Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias**. He was killed on that date by Bolshevik revolutionists.

The title **Czar** is sometimes spelled **Tsar**, as I shall delineate below. How is **Czar** related to **Kaisar**?

Thus the end of the Royal Lines took place not only in Germany but also in Russia at the nearly simultaneous dates in 1918. This marked the end of an era, and advance into the modern secular age.

The Holy Roman Emperors (962–1806) called themselves **Kaiser**, combining the imperial title with that of Roman King. They saw their rule as a continuation of that of the Roman Emperors and used the title derived from Caesar to reflect their supposed heritage.

Thus the **Kaiser** title of the German rulers supposedly derived from the cognomen of **Gaius Julius Caesar**. It was taken over by Charles the Great, (Kaiser Karl der Große), (Charlemagne), in the year 800 and by Otto the Great in 962.

When Charlemagne's empire was divided the title of Emperor went to the ruler holding the kingdom of Rome. Through inheritances this kingdom became part of the eastern (German) kingdom. The Holy Roman Emperors (962–1806) called themselves **Kaiser**, combining the imperial title with that of Roman King (assumed by the designated heir before the imperial coronation). They understood their rule as a continuation of that of the Roman Emperors and used the title derived from Caesar to reflect their supposed heritage. However, documentary evidence apparently does not exist to prove a genetic continuity for the interval between the last Roman **Kaesar** and Charlemagne. Since 800 genetic inheritance was important to assumption of the title.

The Roman Noble Families

The cognomen of Gaius Julius Caesar was not a name, but a title. This title came down as part of the Royal Line from dim Roman memory of the ancient past.

Lucius Julius Libo (consul 267 BC)

-- (but before 300 BC)

 |-- Lucius Julius Caesar I

 |--Sextus Julius Caesar I (fl. 200 BC, military tribune, governor of Liguria)

 |--Sextus Julius Caesar II (consul 156 BC)

 | |-- Lucius Julius Caesar II

- | |-- Gaius Julius Caesar Strabo (Vopiscus, c.130 BC - 87 BC, quaestor, aedile, killed by partisans of Marius)
- | |-- Lucius Julius Caesar III (d. 87 BC, praetor 94 BC, consul 90 BC, killed by partisans of Marius)
- | |-- Lucius Julius Caesar IV (d. aft. 43 BC, consul 63 BC)
- | |-- Gaius Julius Caesar I
 - | |-- Gaius Julius Caesar II (also had a daughter: Julia Caesaris, wife of Gaius Marius)
 - | |-- Sextus Julius Caesar III (d. 90 BC or 89 BC, consul 91 BC, military commander, supporter of Marius)
 - | |-- Sextus Julius Caesar IV (quaestor in 48 BC, military commander in Syria, friend of Julius Caesar)
 - | |-- Gaius Julius Caesar III (Strabo, c. 135 BC – 85 BC, quaestor, praetor, supporter of Marius)
 - | |-- **Julius Caesar** (Gaius Julius Caesar IV, 100 BC – 44 BC, consul, dictator, etc.)
 - | | (by adoption)
 - | |-- Augustus (Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, 63 BC – AD 14, emperor)
 - | | (by adoption)
 - | |-- Gaius Julius Caesar (20 BC – AD 4)
 - | |-- Lucius Julius Caesar (17 BC – AD 2)
 - | |-- Tiberius (Tiberius Caesar Augustus, 42 BC – AD 37, Emperor from AD 14)
 - | |-- Drusus the Younger (Julius Caesar Drusus, 13 BC – AD 23, military commander, etc.)
 - | | (by adoption)
 - | |-- Germanicus (Germanicus Julius Caesar, 15 BC – AD 19, military commander, etc.)
 - | |-- Caligula (Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus, AD 12 – AD 41, Emperor from AD 37)

These Roman emperors were members of a noble family, the Julii. Julius was their family name, while Caesar was their title. Julius Caesar was Gaius Julius, Caesar.

According to Roman tradition they originated at Alba Longa, which was reputedly founded by Julus (also known as Ascanius), son of Aeneas (reputed ancestor of Romulus and Remus). Alba Longa headed a Latin league of uncertain extent until destroyed about 600 BC by Rome. Some nobles, including the Julian clan, were said to have migrated to Rome at that time.

We must distinguish between plebian families, or the common people of ancient Rome, and the patrician classes. **The patricians** were persons noted for their refined upbringing, manners, and tastes. They were members of an aristocracy, the noble families of the ancient Roman Republic, which before the third century BC had exclusive rights to the Senate and the magistracies.

The medieval division of land in Europe carried on this tradition with families who were members of the hereditary ruling classes. They originally owned vast tracts of land, but with time and legal division the rights to those lands deteriorated. These ruling classes carried on down to the present time among the noble families of Europe. They were part of the European Blue Bloods. They were part of a tradition hoary with age, wherein the members strongly interbred, and maintained isolation from common people. Out of this nobility were elected certain families who became the Rulers, or Kings, known in Rome as Rex. The traditions in Europe resulted in Counts, (German Graf), Dukes, (German Herzog), Earls, Barons, and Knights.

The Julii of Rome were just such members of nobility, with the patronym Caesar denoting their high social rank.

These traditions began at the time of Adam and Eve, but after the Great Default began to degenerate into ever weakening social respect and formal designation. This continued with the passing generations, until today, we are witness to a fading glory of old.

The Tsarist Traditions

According to common understanding among historians the word **tsar** is derived from the Latin title *Caesar* by way of the Old Slavonic **tsesar**. The word is cognate with German Kaiser and Gothic *Kaisar*. The contraction of **tsesar** into **tsar** occurred by the way of shorthand writing of titles in old Slavonic church manuscripts. One may see the examples of this in the older copies of the Slavic **Primary Chronicle**.

The title **tsar** was first adopted and used in Bulgaria by Simeon I following a decisive victory over the Byzantine Empire in 913. It was also used by all of Simeon's successors until the fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman rule in 1396. After Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottomans in 1878, its new monarchs adopted the title **tsar** again and used it between 1908 and 1946.

In 1547, Ivan IV of Russia changed his title from "Veliki Kniaz (Grand Duke) of the whole Rus" to "tsar of the whole Rus" as a symbol of change in the nature of the Russian state. In 1721 Peter I adopted the title Emperor (*Imperator*), by which he and his heirs were recognized, and which came to be used interchangeably with Tsar.

The title **Tsar** was also used by Serbian rulers in the middle of the 14th century.

Thus we see that **Tsar** was used by Eastern Europe, while **Caesar** was used by western Europe. (Note that Czar, Tsar, and Tzar were equivalent designations. The sibilants s = sar, sh = shar, and ts = tsar are highly mixed in languages.)

In the West Slavic languages, the use of terms differentiates among social status: a king is designated with one term (Czech *král*, Slovak *kráľ*, Polish *król*, Slovene *kralj*), an emperor is designated with another, derived from *Caesar* as in German (Czech *císař*, Slovak *cisár*, Polish *cesarz*, Slovene *cesar*), while the exotic term **tsar** (Czech, Slovene and Polish *car*, Slovak *cár*) was reserved for the Russian emperor.

This Slavic social inheritance may be seen by the contrast to the Latin word *imperator* and the Byzantine Greek term *basileus*. Both had political and **biblical connotations**. In the history of the Greek language, the *basileus* word originally meant something like *potentate*, had gradually approached the meaning of *king* in the Hellenistic Period, and designated *emperor* after the inception of the Roman Empire. As a consequence, Byzantine sources continued to call the **biblical and ancient kings** *basileus*, even when that word had come to mean "emperor" when referring to contemporary monarchs.

From this ambiguity, the development has moved in different directions in the different Slavic languages. Thus, the Bulgarian and Russian languages no longer use **tsar** as an equivalent of the term *emperor/imperator* as it exists in the West European (Latin) tradition. Currently, the term **tsar** refers to native sovereigns, and **ancient and biblical rulers**.

The problem facing us is that ancient and biblical rulers were known as **tsars**.

The famous Babylonian king **Nebuchadnezzar II**, 630-562 BC, carried this form in his titular name. The **zar = tsar** was a designation of his royal status.

Nabonassar: (also pronounced **Nabonasser**, **Nabu-nasir**, **Nebo-adon-Assur** or **Nabo-n-assar**) founded a kingdom in Babylon in 747 BC.

Nebopolassar: The state of affairs changed when **Nebopolassar** at the end of the seventh century once more claimed independent control over Babylonia.

Belshazzar (or **Balthazar**; Akkadian **Bel-sarra-usur**) was a prince of Babylon, the son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, 553 BC. In the Book of Daniel (chapters 5 and 8) of the Jewish Tanakh or Christian Old Testament, **Belshazzar** is the King of Babylon before the advent of the Medes and Persians.

These were all titular forms for the Babylonian kings, with **sar** or **tsar** appended to their titles.

Shalmaneser I, ruler of Assyria, pronounced 'zar, died in 1290 BC. This word again was a Title, not a personal name. According to traditions this title meant **the god Shulmanu is pre-eminent**. The **zar** part of his name was pronounced **tsar, and denoted his godlike status**. He restored the temple at Assur, established a royal residence at Nineveh, and removed the capital from Assur to Calah, 18 mi (29 km) south of Nineveh.

Tiglath-Pileser I (from the Hebraic form of Akkadian: *Tukultī-apil-Ešarra*, "my trust is in the son of Esharra") was a king of Assyria during the Middle Assyrian period (1114 – 1076 BC). The name **Tiglath-Pileser** was a throne-name — that is, one given to the king on his accession to the throne, rather than a name given at birth. It is given in several different forms in historical records for later kings by that name. It is variously translated as *tiglath pil'eser* (***tzer**), as the name is read in 2 Kings 15:19 (747 BC), *tilleghath pilnecer*, in 2 Chronicles 28:20; in the Septuagint as *Algathphellasar* (***sar**); and from the Assyrian as *Tukulti-abal-i-sarra*. The various translations of the title show folk interpretation, not literal understanding of the name. In this one name we find different forms of the **tsar, sar, and sarra** endings.

Is the historic memory correct? Was there a lapse in time from the Roman noble families to that of Charlemagne? Was there a lapse in time from the Tsars of early Hebrew history to that of the Tsars of the Slavic countries?

Clearly the problem before us is this: Did the tsar-sar title come from Kaiser, or vice-versa? How are they related? Why would the Roman noble family take on such a title? If the tsar-sar title was so early in history,

predating the founding of Rome, is it possible that the Caesars also borrowed that title from some obscure connection in the past?

More Ancient Forms

In Akkadian mythology, **Anshar** (also spelled **Anshur** and **Ansar**), is a sky god. He is the husband of his sister Kishar. Since the Sumerian and Akkadian words **An** and **Ki** represent heaven and earth, they should play an important part in the old folk tales. According to the confused stories both are of the second generation of gods; their parents being the serpents Lahmu and Lahamu and grandparents Tiamat and Apsu. In their turn they are the parents of Anu, another sky god. She is the female principle, he the male principle. Kishar represents the earth as a counterpart to Anshar, the sky, and can be seen as an earth mother goddess. During the reign of Sargon II Assyrians started to identify Anshar with their Assur in order to let him star in their version of their epic, Enuma Elish. In this mythology Anshar's spouse was Ninlil.

In the Assyrian Epic of the Creation, **Ansar**, the heavenly host, and **Kisar**, the earthly host, are evolved from the primeval gods and are the immediate predecessors of the gods of light. They thus represent the end of the reign of chaos. However, the Hebrew writer of the tale implicitly contradicts and rejects the polytheism of the Assyrian cosmology. While admitting the conception, which had too firm a literary footing to be easily got rid of, he declares that like the heavens and the earth the heavenly hosts also had been created by God. **Ansar** and **Kisar** were no divine and self-created beings; the hosts which they represented were the creation and the servants of God. The heavenly hosts included the **Igigi**, or angels of heaven, and the **Anunnaki**, or spirits of earth. But they also comprised those minor deities who formed the army of the supreme Baal when he was described as a Lord of Battles. The deified stars naturally counted among the hosts of heaven.

The gods deserved the title, **sar**. It was a designation that belonged to the heavenly host.

The phrases and the names went back to Sumerian times. The Sumerian equivalent was **sar** or **sarra**, which denoted the multitudinous spirits with which Sumerian belief peopled the sky and lower world. Below we shall find that these words are identical to those found in Hebrew.

In the Louvre in Paris, France is a cylinder seal belonging to the scribe **Ibni-Sharrum** made during the reign of king **Shar-kali-sharri** (c. 2217-2193 BC). In Akkadian orthography there is a set of symbols that represent syllables for the word **šàr**, acrophonically based on Akkadian for the word king = **šarrum**. Therefore the scribe carried in his name a royal designation, while his king also carried similar designations.

Examples from Sumerian documents provide illustration of how the **Sharum/Sarrum** title was used.

Letter from Shu-Suen to **Sharrum-bani** about digging a trench.

Letter from **Sharrum-bani** to Shu-Suen about keeping the Martu at bay:

Seal inscribed "Shu-Kabta the physician; son of Naram-ili; **Sharrum-bani**, scribe, his servant."

The rebuilding of fortifications is the subject of the two letters exchanged between King Shu-Sin and the special commissioner **Sharrum-bani**. The latter was appointed in charge of the defense line, but did not live up to the king's expectations, and so he was replaced by Babati, well known from Ur III sources as the uncle of the ruler. The fortifications were now named in Akkadian as Muriq-Tidnim. "The One that Keeps the Tidnum people (an Amorite tribal name) at a Distance," as we learn from the fourth year-name of Shu-Sin.

Another letter addressed to Shulgi, tells the plight of the governor **Sharrum-bani** in his reply to an order of Shulgi's to build a fortification between the mountains of Ebih to keep out the barbaric Martu (Amorites).

The **Sharrum/Sarrum** title was not restricted to the King, but was acquired by other high administrative officials.

Examples are found in the following books:

Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and Its Terminology, K. R. Veenhof, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1972.

An unpublished administrative account (LB 952) lists in three columns amounts of silver and dates, paid by persons recorded in the last column. In the additions recorded on the tablet the items of the first column (ranging from 2 1/2 to 20 shekels of silver) are called "deliveries to the palace." . . . There seems to be an additional, probably not voluntary, gift or surtax, accruing to **Adad-Sarrum** personally, alongside the large amounts paid to the palace. The same **Adad-Sarrum** occurs in a closely related text where line 28 mentions attributes which shows him to be a high administrative official.

In another document in line 4 the writer states: "we have been released by the king" (**itti sarrim ussuranu**).

Legends of the Kings of Akkade, Joan Goodnick Westenholz, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Ind. 1997.

King Sargon of Agade (**Sharrum-ken/Sharrum-kin**) was the founder of the Semitic dynasty of Akkad (Babylon) in 2360 B. C While the spelling of the name Sargon is also **sarrum-kin**, found in an Old Babylonian economic text also is **sarrum-gi**. Elsewhere Sargon is spelled **Sarkin**.

The Semitic Languages, edited by Robert Hetzron, Routledge, New York, 1997

In Old Akkadian:

ana warkat umi, ana matima (adjuncts of time)

sarrum, sa ina, matim ibbassu (subject + attributive clause)

awat misarim, sa ina nariya asturu (object + attributive clause)

lissur (predicate)

Translation:

In the future, forever,

the king who will be in the land

the words of justice, which I wrote on my stela,

let him keep.

Hetzron also illustrate phrases:

sarrum ispuru-(su) = whom the king sent.

sarrum bitam iddinusum = to whom the king gave a house.

The manner in which the ancient forms were used suggests that the titles were generic, denoting high social rank, not necessarily kingship.

The **-um** are singular nominative masculine endings in Sumerian and Akkadian to make the title fit the sentence grammatically. The word itself, standing alone, would be **sar**. It is pronounced both **shar** and **sar**, and even **zar**. John Heise has provided a logogram



See <http://www.sron.nl/~jheise/>

In Sumerian grammar we find

<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/ScribalPractices/SumerianGrammarFoxvog.pdf>

"an numun è a-a nì-nam **šár-ra**"

"An, who made the seed come forth, father who made everything numerous"

Note here that father is translated for a word that seems to be a royal designation.

In another example:

"mu **šar-kà-li-šarri** púzur-eš4-tár šagina é d en-líl dù-da bí-gub-ba"

"The year that **Šar-kali-šarri** stationed Puzur-Eštar the general at the temple of Enlil which was to be built"

We might write this as **Sar** Kali-sarri, or King Kalisarri. Even the *sarri* is a royal designation.

Sargon Sharru-konu (Assyrian) Also Sarru-kinu. The legitimate king; of the two Sargons in Babylonian history, one is regarded as the first historical king in the old Babylonian period, whose reign has been placed about 3800 BC. He ruled over northern Babylonia, making Agade (Akkad) his capital. He made conquests in Syria and erected the temple Eulbar in honor of Anunit. His story is cited by Blavatsky as the original of the familiar Biblical story of Moses: the mother of Sargon was a princess who placed her babe in an ark of rushes, sealing the ark with bitumen and setting it adrift on the river. The ark was found by a watercarrier, Akki, who brought up the child as his own. In time Sargon became the monarch of Babylonia, reigning at Agadi, which was near the city of Sippara (cf Zipporah, the name of the wife of Moses).

The second Sargon was king of Assyria from 722-705 BC.

(In the inscriptions, "Sarra-yukin" [the god] has appointed the king; also "Sarru-kinu," the legitimate king.)

Sargon II (**Šarru-kinu** "legitimate king", reigned 722 – 705 BC) was an Assyrian king. Sargon II became co-regent with Shalmaneser V in 722 BC, and became the sole ruler of the kingdom of Assyria in 722 BC after the death of Shalmaneser V. It is not clear whether he was the son of Tiglath-Pileser III or a usurper unrelated to the royal family. In his inscriptions, he styles himself as a new man, rarely referring to his predecessors; however he took the name *Sharru-kinu* ("true king").

We find similar designations in other places.

Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. May 1994: Stefan M. Maul and Riekele Borger, BRILL, Boston 1998. (Festival Writing for Rykle Borger on his 65th birthday, May 1994.)

Nabopalassar is addressed as **sarru dannu**. "mighty king". I believe that this use of **sarru dannu** carries a special connotation in this context. The juxtaposition of **dandannu - dannu** is not merely a literary device intended to express the polarity between the haughty loser and the legitimate winner. Naming Nabopalassar **sarru dannu**, one of the foremost titles of the Assyrian emperors, was surely significant and thus carried a very particular connotation. This was the second component in the standard five-part string of titles - **sarru rabu, sarru dannu, sar kissati, sar mat Assur, sar kibrat erbetti** - a string which, in its individual components or in its entirety, was used almost exclusively by the kings of Assyria. Their Neo-Babylonian successors, but for one exception, never employed it. Instead, in their quest for archaic models, they reverted to traditional Babylonian appellatives or coined new ones."

It was only Nabopalassar who, in several of his inscriptions, composed as it appears shortly after the fall of Nineveh in 612, employed the Assyrian title **sarru dannu**, followed by the older Mesopotamian title, **sar mat Sumeri u Akkadi**, used occasionally by kings of Babylonia and consistently by those emperors of Assyria who ruled over Babylonia, beginning with Tiglath-pileser III. The message embedded in these titles was that the new king of Babylon had now become an heir to the Assyrian emperors, master of all of Mesopotamia, the land of Sumer and Akkad. However, befitting as they were to express the newly-born political reality in Mesopotamia, these titles were regarded as expressly Assyrian, and hence unacceptable to Babylonian "nationalists" who had won the day. Therefore Nebuchadnezzar, who actually carried through the grand design of Nabopalassar by conquering the full extent of the Assyrian empire beyond the Euphrates, avoided almost entirely any segment of the Assyrian royal titlature in his numerous building inscriptions. So also did Neriglissar and Nalonidus. The single departure from this practice is the Sippar-Cylinder of Nabonidu, the first part of which records the restoration of (En hul-hul).

Maul and Borger fail to mention that the **dannu** and **dan** words are Semitic and that they come out of a conjugation that means "to judge." Don and Donna were the ultimate judges; they were the names for Adam and Eve. Not only does Nabopalassar, the neo-Babylonian king, carry the **sar** designation in his name, he has now acquired the older Assyrian titles.

The Amarna Letters

The **Amarna letters** are an archive of correspondence on clay tablets, mostly diplomatic, between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan and Amurru during the New Kingdom. The letters were found in Upper Egypt at Amarna, the modern name for the Egyptian capital founded by pharaoh Akhenaten (1350s – 1330s BC) during the Eighteenth dynasty of Egypt. The Amarna letters are unusual in Egyptological research, being mostly written in Akkadian cuneiform, the writing system of ancient Mesopotamia rather than ancient Egypt. The known tablets currently total 382 in number, 24 further tablets having been recovered since the Norwegian Assyriologist Jørgen Alexander Knudtzon's landmark edition of the Amarna correspondence, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* in two volumes (1907 and 1915).

We find a highly informative reference by the different national kings to themselves in a study on Amarna Diplomacy: *The Beginnings of International Relations*, Raymond Cohen, Raymond Westbrook, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2000.

Please keep in mind that the following statement expresses the attitude of the authors of this book, who did not fully understand the use of royal titles in ancient times. In a section entitled *Diplomacy and International Marriages*, page 167, they say:

A case in point is the application of the language of family relationships to the frankly mercenary and self-seeking political machinations of the Great Powers at this time." Kinship structures and obligations of brothers to brothers to fathers to sisters to sons to daughters are not identical in Egypt, Hatti, Mittani, Babylonia, and Assyria. Brothers who constantly must be reminded that they are brothers are not good brothers; the persistent reminders in international relations underscore that this family life is a fiction. "Love" and "brotherhood" among kings at a thousand miles removed mean less than love and brotherhood among close kin, but the ideological bonuses that such words bring are considerable. What is not sufficiently appreciated is the ideological sacrifice that was also required in adopting the rules of the game and its accompanying vocabulary.

The very notion of kingship is a paramount example. Kingship in second-millennium Egypt was a far different phenomenon than kingship in Hatti, which differed in turn from kingship in Mesopotamia. In the latter, the king was selected from among humans by the gods, whereas the king of Egypt himself was a god, "an epiphany," in contrast to the Hittite king, who became a god when he died. It is thus remarkable that Pharaoh allows himself to be described in the *lingua franca* as a **sarru**, "king," the same term that is used to describe the kings of Hatti, Babylonia, Assyria, and Mittani. When Pharaoh's letters refer to Pharaoh with this term, he means something much different than what his correspondents in Hattusha or Babylon mean. But the semantic playing field has been impoverished by applying a single word to a variety of phenomena; the very real cultural differences have been erased, and Pharaoh gives up his distinctiveness to join the international game. When a non-Egyptian Great King sensed a supercilious Pharaoh, it is stunning to find Pharaoh himself protesting equality, as in Ramesses II's reply to Hattusili III.

Now [I have heard] these [words] that are not good which you have written [to me]: "Why do you write these many words to [me like a slave]? That I [had written to you like] a slave among [my] slaves [is not the case]. Have you not received kingship (**sarruta**), and do I not know it?"

Pharaoh's surrender of uniqueness is even more surprising when it is recalled that Pharaoh accepted a designation (**sarru**) that was in common currency among petty kings to describe themselves. It is crucial to observe how Pharaoh's vassals usually avoid applying the term **sarru** to themselves when writing to Pharaoh, for they know their status! But inevitably, they leveled everyone in rulership positions, vassals and sovereign, with the term **sarru**:

My lord, just as I love the king (**sarri**), my lord, so too the king (**sar**) of Nuhasse, the king (**sar**) of Nii, the king (**sar**) of Zinzar, and the king (**sar**) of Tananab; all of these kings (**sarrani**) are my lord's servants. (EA 53:40-44)

Pharaoh's surrender of uniqueness is not surprising at all when one recognizes that he was not comparing himself on the grounds of purely human kingship, but on the grounds of his godlike status. The Egyptian kings, down to the times of Akhenaten, believed they were descended directly from the gods. According to Cohen and Westbrook, in Mesopotamia the king was selected from among humans to be brought to the level of the gods. Unfortunately, these two men failed to understand the manner in which **sar** was used by other Near-East people.

The Hebrew Forms

The **sar** title is used 381 times throughout the Old Testament. This large number shows the prominence of the title to the ancient Hebrew people.

As a source of information I offer an edited treatment from *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, Moody Press, 1980. This source is published electronically by BibleSoft, Seattle, WA.

I also use the information found in *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Frances Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, Oxford University Press, as updated with an electronic version from *Logos Bible Software*, Oak Harbor, Washington, 2000.

The reference numbers are to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Old Testament*, James Strong, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, revised edition, 2001.

Three major forms of the **sar** designation are found:

1. (**śarar**) rule, reign, act as a prince, govern.

This is the denominative verb from which derives the following two nominative nouns.

2. (**śarâ**) princess.

3. (**śar**) prince.

1. **sarar** is an infrequently used verb [5x] whose forms seem early to have blended in with those of **śarâ** = to rule, and **sûr** = to hold dominion over.

Judges 9:22: Abimelech is said to have reigned (**wesar**) three years over Israel. Semitic scholars would make this derive from OT:7786 [3x] rWc (**suwr**); a primitive root; properly, to vanquish; by implication, to rule (causatively, crown).

Num 16:13: Moses' opponents accused him of making himself a prince (**sarar**) over them. OT:8323_ [5x] rr^c* **sarar**; a primitive root; to have (transitively, exercise; reflexively, get) dominion.

2. **sarâ: Princesses, royal ladies, queens.** It is used five times in the OT, always of royal ladies of the court (Judg 5:29; 1 Kings 11:3; Est 1:18; Isa 49:23; Lam 1:1). This was the name given to **Sarai**, Abraham's wife, when the Lord blessed her and gave her a new name, **Sarah**. Gen 17:15-16 -- God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." (Remember Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sisters; they had the same father, Terah, but not the same mother.)

Sarai is nearly identical in linguistic meaning to **Sarah**. It may have been a debased common pronunciation that was restored to its original form when the destiny promises were given to Abraham and his wife.

3. (**śar**) is translated as **prince, chief, captain, ruler, governor, keeper, chief captain, steward, master**. Note how the word is used in broad application for high rank as found on the Sumerian and Akkadian clay tablets.

The word may denote leaders and chieftains. Thus in the plural it refers to the leaders of Israel (Num 21:18) (**sarim**), Issachar (Judg 5:15) (**sare'**), Midian (Judg 7:25) (**sare'**), the Philistines (1 Sam 29:3ff) (**sare'**), the Moabites (Jer 48:7) (**sarew**), and the Ammonites (Amos 1:15) (**sarew**). In the singular it refers to David as leader of freebooters (1 Sam 22:2) (**sar**).

Closely related is its reference to a military commander. In Judges 4:2, after naming Jabin as the king of Canaan and Hazor, Sisera is called **captain of his host (sar)**. Likewise, Abner is the **captain of the host** of Israel under King Saul (1 Sam 17:55). Interestingly, in the theophany of Josh 5:14,15, *the captain of the hosts of the Lord (sar)* appears to encourage Joshua before the siege of Jericho.

śar also appears frequently as a word representing royal rulers and officials, no doubt of sundry ranks and titles, hence, nobles and courtiers. Thus Jer 26:11 speaks of the princes of Judah (**hasarim**), and the context (vv. 10-16) depicts them as occupying the *king's house*, to possessing judicial power, ordering Jeremiah to die or to be spared. 2 Chron 21:9 mentions King Jehoram's princes, while 2 Chron 31:8 tells of the princes with Hezekiah. Jer 26:21 deals with those of Jehoiakim.

The pagan nations are also mentioned as having princes (e.g. Egypt, Gen 12:15; Midian, Judg 7:25; Assyria, Isa 10:8). Often it is not clear whether **śar** in a particular context refers to a military captain or to a prince of the royal court. Only the context tells whether a military or civil officer is meant.

It denotes a religious officer, i.e. heads of the classes or courses of priests (Ezra 8:24) and tribal heads (1 Chron 27:22), and apparently *elders* (Ezek 11:1). These two usages are found mostly in later literature.

In Isa 23:8 *merchant-princes (sarim)* is a term for rank and dignity (cf. Job 3:15).

Sar is also used for a host of other high officials of various types, i.e. chief, head. Thus Joseph has dealings with Potiphar, the prison keeper, and the chief butler and chief baker, all four of which are entitled **śar** in the Mosaic account (Gen 39:1,21; 40:2).

Finally, in the Hebrew portions of Dan, **śar** appears no less than seventeen times, and speaks of *the sar of the eunuchs* (Dan 1:7), *the Sar of the host* of heaven (i.e. God; Dan 8:11), Israel's **sarenew** (Dan 9:6), and the angelic princes of Persia and Greece who contend with Michael *the great prince* (Dan 10:13,20,21; 12:1) **wesar, sarim, hasarim** and **sarkem**. No less than the prophesied Messiah himself is called **Sar-Shalom** in Isa 9:5, *Prince of Peace*.

Application of the Hebrew Forms

Nasi is another Hebrew appellation that is used to designate rulers and administrators, OT 5387. He is an exalted one, a king or sheik. He is always mortal. This term is not applied to immortal beings. Only **sar** is applied to immortal beings, and to God.

Unfortunately, **sar** has been reduced in its application to lesser functionaries. We then must weave our way through understanding of the high social order to which the term was originally applied. On the other side of this study is the fact that it is clearly a term that has great antiquity, and that is fundamental to the Hebrew tongue. Regardless how Hebrew may have evolved from an earlier Proto-Semitic language, it has held onto this meaning. The other peoples of the Near East have used the term near its original Semitic meaning. The Egyptian kings understood and recognized the meaning of the term.

From the evidence we must recognize that it is a very ancient title, and that it held its meaning until this past century. A line of emperors and kings existed who believed they were descended from that ancestry, going back to the misty days of Adam and Eve.

That line of emperors and kings came down in human memory in Europe. The European people believed they were descended from Adam and Eve.