

EDWARD LIPIŃSKI

**Edom at the Crossroads of “Incense Routes”
in the 8th–7th Centuries B.C.**

Abstract

Edom is situated at the crossroads of the Levantine import traffic of spice and incense wares from South Arabia. A key-role was played by Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, as called by local people and in scholarly publications. It is located 1 km. to the north-west of Aqaba, between the present-day harbours of Elath (Israel) and of Aqaba (Jordan). Excavations uncovered there remains of the ancient Edomite fortress and of the resting place of caravans heading northwards to Judah, Israel, and Syria or westwards to the Mediterranean and to Egypt. Further to the north, ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb is the site of the ancient city of Tamar, at the head of the road leading to the copper mines of Feinan (Jordan). Excavations at ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb uncovered a unique Edomite sanctuary with many cult items, showing the importance of the place in the Edomite realm. The article presents the results of archaeological research at Tell al-Ḥeleifeh and ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb, it discusses the terms referring to the imported spices, and deals with the vestiges left by Arab merchants in this area and further to the north, also in Jerusalem.

Keywords: Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, Ezion-Geber, ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb, Feinan, the words *murru*, *labnātu*, Arabian inscriptions, incense altars, history of the monarchic period in Judah

The major innovations that led to the growth of the South Arabian civilization are dated in current scholarship around the 9th century B.C., with earlier phases probably beginning in the 12th century B.C. When dromedaries replaced donkeys as pack animals, merchants embarked on a new business undertaking and started to trade myrrh and frankincense on larger scale from the Ḍofar region in southern Oman, through the oases of Ḥaḍramaut, Timna in Qataban, Marib in Saba/Sheba, and thence northward through Naḡran towards

Transjordan¹, the Mediterranean, and Egypt, also to Syria and Mesopotamia. North of Saba the road led them along the eastern foothills of the Ḥiḡāz highland where oases provided stopping places and supply points². Since prolonged halts occurred often during longer journeys, the pack animals, the merchants, and their attendants could rest there for some days. From Yaṭrib (Medina) or from Dedan (al-'Ulā)³, some caravans continued north-eastwards, to Mesopotamia, while other headed north-westwards to Transjordan. Thereafter several tracks could be followed: from Aqaba westwards to Naḥl and to Egypt, or to Kuntillet 'Aḡrud and 'Ayn Qudayrāt. The route along the Arabah led to the southern tip of the Dead Sea and through the Beersheba Valley to Gaza. Another one headed to the north through Amman at the junction of several roads, viz. from the east through the Wadi Sirhan, from Damascus or from Jerusalem⁴.

There is little textual information that explicitly states how wealth was generated by this overland trade. Tariffs paid by the caravans certainly produced substantial revenues for the rulers exercising an effective control over key places, like Dedan or Amman, or over an important route like the so-called "King's Highway" through Transjordan. Part of the revenue had to be invested for providing water, food, fodder, and shelter to the caravans, but the income of the local rulers was certainly important.

Edom was crossed by the "King's Highway" and it has gained control over the trade route from Arabia through the Negeb and the Beersheba Valley to the Philistine seacoast by building fortresses at Tell al-Ḥeleifeh and 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb, and possibly at 'Ayn Qudayrāt. Its logistic role in the international trade was boasted by its cooperation with Assyria since ca. 734 B.C.

1. Tell al-Ḥeleifeh

An important stopping place on the overland caravan route from Arabia to the Mediterranean and to Egypt was the site of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh. It is located at the skirts of present-day Aqaba, 500 m. from the northern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba or Elath. From there, the northward route was leading to Gaza, the westward track through the Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. The site was first surveyed in 1933 by Fritz Frank, who identified Tell al-Ḥeleifeh with the biblical Ezion-Geber⁵. Nelson Glueck then directed three seasons

¹ A. de Maigret, *The Frankincense Road from Najrān to Ma'ān: A Hypothetical Itinerary*, in: A. Avanzini (ed.), *Profumi d'Arabia* (Saggi di storia antica 11), Firenze 1997, pp. 315–332.

² According to Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXII, 64, there were 65 way-stations along the route from Timna (Qataban) to Gaza.

³ Several jar fragments with South Arabian letters have been found at al-Ḥureiba, near the oasis of Dedan: F.V. Winnett – W.L. Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia* (Near and Middle Eastern Series 6), Toronto 1970, pp. 176–178.

⁴ M.C.A. Macdonald, *Trade Routes and Trade Goods at the Northern End of the "Incense Road" in the First Millennium B.C.*, in: A. Avanzini (ed.), *Profumi d'Arabia* (Saggi di storia antica 11), Firenze 1997, pp. 333–350.

⁵ F. Frank, *Aus der 'Arabah I. Tell el-Chlēfi*, ZDPV 57 (1934), pp. 243–245.

of excavation in 1938, 1939, and 1940⁶. Accepting Frank's identification, he discerned five major occupation periods, which he dated between the 10th and 5th centuries B.C. and connected with biblical accounts in order to provide a historical and cultural frame to the archaeological data.

Linking the results of his excavations to biblical texts, N. Glueck interpreted the earliest architectural remains of the site as a casemate enclosure from the time of Solomon, followed by a larger fortress, built in the first half of the 9th century by Jehoshaphat (cf. I Kings 22, 49) and rebuilt in the following century by Uzziah/Azariah, king of Judah (II Kings 14, 22). The stronghold would have been occupied later by the Edomites (II Kings 16, 6), who built a new settlement, associated with Edomite wheel-made pottery of the 8th–6th centuries B.C. There was finally an occupation in the Persian period.

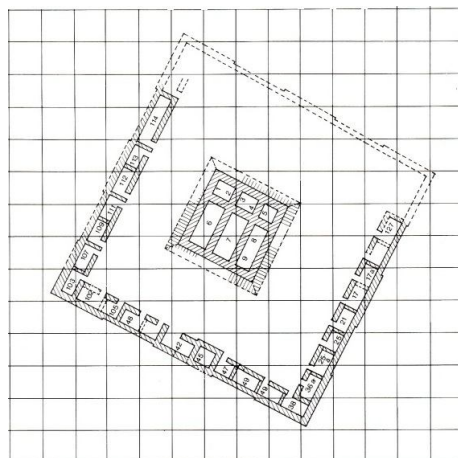
The results of Glueck's three seasons of excavations have been technically published only half a century later. This was done by G.D. Pratico in 1993⁷. The analysis and reappraisal of the finds and results of Glueck's work at the site, with special attention to its stratigraphy, architecture, and pottery, led to the conclusion that Tell al-Ḥeleifeh was occupied in two major phases: a casemate enclosure and a fortified settlement. The pottery horizons suggest an occupational history from the 8th to the 6th centuries B.C. with an epilogue lasting to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd century B.C.

The casemate enclosure was an open courtyard measuring 45 x 45 m., surrounded by rooms of roughly similar dimensions: between 3.25 m. and 4.30 m. in length with a width of 2.00 m. The exterior of the casemate wall was constructed with offsets varying in thickness between 1.05 m. and 1.10 m. and insets being between 0.80 m. and 0.85 m. thick. The interior wall of the casemate rooms was *ca.* 0.80 m. thick. This leaves a square, open courtyard measuring *ca.* 40 x 40 m. with an entryway, *ca.* 2.25 m. in width, located in the mid-section of the south-western casemate wall. The centre of the courtyard was occupied by a strong mud-brick construction, measuring 13.20 x 12.30 m. and planned like a "four-room house". This architectural feature, apparently of Philistine design, may testify to early contacts with the region of Gaza.

The casemate enclosure has been compared with the enclosed settlements of the central Negeb, but its regular layout and the presence of the exceptionally strong building in the centre of the courtyard point at a structure built by a central authority and having an administrative function. The "Negebite" handmade pottery found in the enclosure is not chronologically diagnostic, but wheel-made ware was uncovered in the four-room building. Although no photographs, drawings or descriptions of this particular ceramics are available, the fact that the assemblage of wheel-made ceramics from Tell al-Ḥeleifeh cannot be dated before the 8th century indicates that the casemate enclosure has been built in the 8th century B.C., possibly towards the end of the 9th century B.C., since some ceramic forms have earlier antecedents.

⁶ N. Glueck's publications referring to Tell al-Ḥeleife have been collected by G.D. Pratico, *Nelson Glueck's 1938-1940 Excavations at Tell el-Kheleifeh: A Reappraisal*, BASOR 259 (1985), pp. 1-32 (see 30).

⁷ G.D. Pratico, *Nelson Glueck's 1938-1940 Excavations at Tell el-Kheleifeh. Reappraisal*, Atlanta 1993; cf. ID., *Nelson Glueck. cit.; ID., Kheleifeh, Tell el-, NEAEHL, Jerusalem 1993, Vol. III, pp. 867-870.*



The earliest architectural phase of the casemate fortress (after Pinkerfeld)

The central authority that erected the complex of the Tell al-Ḥeleifeh could only be the king of Edom, as strongly suggested by the numerous parallels between its pottery and that of Edomite sites like Umm al-Biyara and Tawilan. Since Edom is mentioned between Israel and Philistia among the western countries that paid tribute to Adad-nirari III⁸ after the surrender of Damascus, most likely in 803 B.C.⁹, Edom must have then had a central authority, disposing of revenues enabling its ruler to present some valuable goods to the Assyrian king. This means that Edom had emerged as a state in the late 9th century B.C.

The location of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh at the junction of caravan routes to Arabia, Gaza, and Egypt is a strong indication that the casemate enclosure was a check-point of the royal transit toll collectors. Their office was possibly located in the four-room building, which occupied about 1/10 of the courtyard surface. The rest of the area may have served as a caravansary, although the access to the inner courtyard was not very easy: it was achieved obliquely through the gate-room. Such an entryway, 2.25 m. wide, was nevertheless sufficient also for loaded pack animals.

After the destruction of the casemate enclosure, the layout of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh was radically changed. The settlement was enlarged to *ca.* 60 x 60 m., defended by a thick and solid “offsets / insets” wall, a sloping glacis, and an outer defence wall. The gate complex was built on a classical four-chambered design, like the gate at the Moabite site of Ḥirbet al-Muḏeibi¹⁰, about 20 km. south-east of Kerak. This stronghold is dated by radiocarbon C-14 to the early 8th century B.C. At Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, the gate’s middle piers

⁸ A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II: 858–745 BC* (Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods 3), Toronto 1996, text A.0.104.8, p. 213, line 12.

⁹ A.R. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire: 910–612 BC* (SAA Studies 2), Helsinki 1994, pp. 34 and 110. Cf. E. Lipiński, *Itineraria Phoenicia* (Studia Phoenicia XVIII; OLA 127), Leuven 2004, pp. 13–15.

¹⁰ Grid ref. 2306/0502: G. Mattingly, *A New Agenda for Research on Ancient Moab*, “Biblical Archaeologist” 60 (1997), pp. 214–221; ID. *et al.*, *Al-Karak Resources Project 1997: Excavations at Khirbat al-Muḏaybi*, ADAJ 43 (1999), pp. 127–144.

allowed an opening of 3.20 m., sufficient even for heavily loaded pack animals. However, no large space seems to have been left inside the stronghold for a major courtyard. In fact, the reappraisal of Glueck's analysis suggests that there was interior architecture within the walls since the earliest phase of the settlement, datable to the 8th century B.C. The wheel-made pottery, with affinities close to the assemblages of central and southern Transjordan and the Negeb, ranges from the mid-8th to the early 6th century B.C., thus covering a period of about 150 years. Although no official building could be recognized within the walls, Edomite stamp impressions from the 7th century B.C. appear on handles of cooking pots, jars, inverted-rim craters. Over twenty recovered handles bear the legend *l-Qws'nl 'bd hmlk*¹¹, "Belonging to Qaws'anal, servant of the king", obviously a royal official, perhaps the governor of the place. An Edomite stamp seal with the legend *l-Ytm*, "Belonging to Yatam", was also found¹². This personal name, meaning "orphan", occurs often in North Arabian inscriptions, mainly Šafaitic¹³. It is echoed by the name of the long valley of the Wadi Item or Yutm, which was the natural road from Ma'an and the south-eastern highlands to Aqaba and Tell al-Ḥeleifeh.



Impression of the seal signet ring of Yatam (photo: N. Glueck)

Yatam's seal represents a ram, *'ayl* in Old Arabian. This is an allusion to the name of Elath, which has to be identified with Tell al-Ḥeleifeh. In fact, the ancient pronunciation of the toponym was *'Aylat*, which is a feminine form derived from *'ayl*, as place names were of the feminine gender. The Septuagint still preserves the ancient correct form Αἰλάθ, but the final *-t* was later dropped and the name pronounced Αἶλα, as still noticed by Stephen of Byzantium. The form Αἶλαν witnesses the well-known tendency of Middle

¹¹ N. Glueck, *The First Campaign at Tell el Kheleifeh (Ezion-Geber)*, BASOR 71 (1938), pp. 3–18 (see pp. 16–18); ID., *The Topography and History of Ezion Geber and Elath*, BASOR 72 (1938), pp. 2–13 (see 12); G.D. Pratico, *Nelson Glueck*, cit. (n. 6), p. 21, Fig. 17, and p. 24; R.A. Divito, *The Tell el-Kheleifeh Inscriptions*, in: G.D. Pratico, *Nelson Glueck*, cit. (n. 7), pp. 53–55; N. Avigad – B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*, Jerusalem 1997, No. 1051, pp. 389–390.

¹² N. Avigad, *The Jotham Seal from Elath*, BASOR 163 (1961), pp. 18–22; N. Avigad – B. Sass, *Corpus*, cit. 392, No. 1054. The seal belongs to the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, NMNH Anthro. 38829.

¹³ G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Near and Middle East Series 8), Toronto 1971, p. 657.

Aramaic to append a final *n* to undeclinable words ending in a vowel¹⁴. Further forms result either from the contraction of the diphthong, like in Ἰλάνης transmitted by Josephus Flavius¹⁵, or from a metathesis, like in Λαιωνίτης κόλπος, “Gulf of Elath”, mentioned by Agatharchides¹⁶, and in *Laeana*, recorded by Pliny the Elder¹⁷. Also the Masoretic Hebrew vocalization *’Ēlat* implies a contraction. The place name was never changed intentionally, but it was submitted to phonological processes, and it has been confounded with another toponym, viz. *’Ēlat* / *’Ēlōt*, “Terebinth(s)”, as we shall see.

One of the most important finds of the fortified settlement, belonging to Period III like Yatan’s seal and dating from the late 8th or the 7th century B.C., is a fragment of a large jar with two South Arabian monograms incised before firing¹⁸. They represent the combined letters *s*¹ + *l* and *’* + *h*. It is possible that a further monogram was incised on the missing part of the jar. The monograms probably stood for the name of the proprietor. This jar fragment provides solid evidence for trade links with South Arabia around 700 B.C.



South Arabian inscription from Tell al-Ḥeleifeh (photo: N. Glueck)

¹⁴ G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch*, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1905, p. 102; H.L. Ginsberg, *Zu den Dialekten des Talmudisch-Hebräischen*, “Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums” 77 (1933), pp. 413–429 (see pp. 428–429); E.Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic*, Ramat-Gan 1976, p. 61.

¹⁵ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish Antiquities* VIII, 6, 4, § 163.

¹⁶ C. Müller (ed.), *Geographi Graeci Minores* I, Paris 1855, pp. 178–179.

¹⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* VI, p. 156.

¹⁸ G. Ryckmans, *Un fragment de jarre avec caractères minéens à Tell el-Kheleifeh*, RB 48 (1939), pp. 247–249, Pl. VI; RÉS 4918 bis. Cf. N. Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan*, New Haven 1940, pp. 105–108; ID., *Iron II Pottery from Tell el-Kheleifeh*, “Yediot” 31 (1966–67), pp. 124–127 (see p. 125); ID., *Some Ezion-Geber: Elath Iron Age Pottery*, in: *W.F. Albright Volume* (Eretz-Israel 9), Jerusalem 1969, pp. 51*–59* (see p. 53* and Pl. VI, 4).

The superficies of the fortress of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh (*ca.* 0.35 ha) and the presence of interior architecture suggest an occupation that can be estimated at *ca.* 70 persons, women and children included. The settlement was not only a check-point of toll collectors, but probably a regional administrative centre as well, perhaps a frontier market. Its most active period corresponded very likely to the years of the *pax Assyriaca*, *ca.* 730–620 B.C., while the Babylonian domination in the region certainly brought decline and destruction in the 6th century B.C.

Very little can be said about the fragmentary architecture of the final period, except noticing a different layout of the settlement. Phoenician and Aramaic ostraca of the 5th, 4th and probably early 3th century B.C., together with a handful of Greek potsherds, constitute the most reliable dating criteria for this phase. Greek potsherds of the 5th century B.C. help dating the beginning of the period, while Ostrakon 2069¹⁹, showing Aramaic transcriptions of the Greek words καρπολόγος, “fruit-harvester”, and τοπέϊον, “rope”, shows that occupation of the site continued until Hellenistic times:

<i>qrplgs tpy'n 1</i>	“fruit-harvester, rope 1
<i>hmr tpy'n 2</i>	ass-driver, rope 2
<i>hmr 5</i>	ass-driver 5”.

Tell al-Ḥeleifeh was no harbour and the site has been abandoned for a nearby location, in present-day West Aqaba. The survey undertaken in 1990 next to the gulf, in the so-called Circular Area, as yet undeveloped, identified the remains of a large settlement, *ca.* 250 m. by 200 m., with vestiges of mud-brick walls and many Nabataean potsherds, as well as Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic pottery, suggesting continuous occupation²⁰. There is little doubt that this is ancient Aila or Aelana, and that Tell al-Ḥeleifeh is the biblical Elath. Aila continued to be a major trade centre, from which the important commercial route led to Gaza²¹, and it became a military port in Roman and Byzantine times.

2. Ezion-Geber

Ezion-Geber is another site, probably the small island of Ġazīrat al-Far'ūn (*ca.* 320 x 150 m.), about 13 km. south of the present-day Elath, or a place facing the island, which lies *ca.* 275 m. from the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. It offers the safest anchorage in the gulf and still shows ancient remains of a fortified settlement with

¹⁹ N. Glueck, *Tell el-Kheleifeh Inscriptions*, in: H. Goedicke (ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W.F. Albright*, Baltimore 1971, pp. 225–242.

²⁰ Grid ref. 149/883. Cf. D. Whitcomb, *Aqaba 1989-90*, “Syria” 70 (1993), pp. 239–244; ID., *The Fourth Gate of Ayla: A Report on the 1992 Excavations at Aqaba*, ADAJ 37 (1993), pp. 533–548; S.Th. Parker, *Preliminary Report on the 1994 Season of the Roman Aqaba Project*, BASOR 305 (1997), pp. 19–44; A. Retzlaff, *A Nabataean and Roman Domestic Area at the Red Sea Port of Aila*, BASOR 331 (2003), pp. 45–65.

²¹ Strabo, *Geography* XVI, 2, 30; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* V, 12.

a harbour²². These vestiges are mostly Mameluk and Crusader, but some date possibly from Byzantine times, when this small off-shore island was known as νῆσος Ἰωτάβη. The name was apparently coined by reference to *Ytbth*, which is described in Deut. 10, 7 as "a land of streams of water"²³. The site must correspond to the modern at-Tāba, about 3 km. to the north-west of Ġazīrat al-Far'ūn. It seems to preserve the souvenir of the ancient toponym, strengthening this identification, but suggesting at the same time that the trading community was living in the oasis on the mainland. In the light of the description of Procopius²⁴, it was generally accepted that Ἰωτάβη is the island of Tiran, at the southern end of the Gulf of Aqaba²⁵. However, an archaeological investigation of Tiran proved that this island was never settled or used in any way as a check-point of the sea traffic to Aila²⁶. The alleged distance of 1000 stadia from Ἰωτάβη to Aila, as given by Procopius, may go back to a scribal confusion of ο' (70) with ,a (1000) or result from an erroneous information of the Byzantine historiographer. Tiran was probably the Island of Phocae (νῆσος Φοκῶν), mentioned by Agatharchides of Cnidus (2nd century B.C.)²⁷ and by Artemidorus (late 2nd century B.C.)²⁸.

Neither Ġazīrat al-Far'ūn nor Tell al-Ḥeleifeh can be related historically to the biblical accounts of the naval and mercantile enterprises of Solomon and of Jehoshaphat. The concerned passages of the Deuteronomistic History are probably drawn from a composition elaborated in the early Persian period and aiming at glorifying Solomon²⁹. The idea was apparently inspired by the reports on attempted circumnavigations of Africa and it could have been stimulated by a Phoenician presence at Elath in the 5th century B.C., possibly in connection with some maritime activity in the Gulf of Aqaba. Ostraca 2070 and 8058, found by N. Glueck at Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, are written in Phoenician and two Phoenician names, *B'lyt[n]* and *'šb'[l]* appear on the Aramaic ostracon 7094³⁰.

²² B. Rothenberg, *God's Wilderness: Discoveries in the Sinai*, London 1961, pp. 185–189; A. Hashimshoni, in: B. Rothenberg, *Timna': Valley of the Biblical Copper Mines*, London 1972, pp. 202–207; A. Flinder, *The Island of Jezirat Far'ūn. Its Ancient Harbour, Anchorage and Marine Defence Installations*, "International Journal of Nautical Archaeology" 8 (1977), pp. 127–139. Ezion-Geber ('sywn-gbr < *gdyn-gbr) is probably a "Negebite" or Edomite place name, meaning "Lush place of the strong man" or the like: there is a semantic correlation between C₁C₂y and C₁C₂C₂ radicals, like *gadd*, "luxuriant, lush". First-hand data for an alternative explanation can be found in E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1863–93, p. 2269a.

²³ The very late list of the desert stations in Numb. 33, 33–34 confounds some places and possibly identifies Ezion-Geber with Elath, but this is not evident.

²⁴ Procopius, *De Bello Persico* I, 19, ed. J. Haury – G. Wirth, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* I, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1963, pp. 100–101.

²⁵ F.M. Abel, *L'île de Jotabè*, RB 47 (1938), pp. 510–538; ID., *Géographie de la Palestine* II, Paris 1938, p. 201. This opinion, still followed quite recently, is categorically rejected by Ph. Mayerson, *The Island of Jotabè in the Byzantine Sources: A Reprise*, BASOR 287 (1992), pp. 1–4.

²⁶ Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible. A Historical Geography*, London 1967, p. 183.

²⁷ He is quoted by Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca historica* III, 42, 5; C. Müller, *Geography*, cit. (n. 16), p. 176.

²⁸ He is quoted by Strabo, *Geography* XVI, 4, 18.

²⁹ E. Lipiński, *Itineraria Phoenicia*, cit. (n. 9), pp. 217–221, 247.

³⁰ A. Lemaire, *Les Phéniciens et le commerce entre la Mer Rouge et la Mer Méditerranée*, in: E. Lipiński (ed.), *Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the First Millennium B.C.* (Studia Phoenicia V; OLA 22), Leuven 1987,

II Kings 16, 6 recognizes that Elath was an Edomite town in the last third of the 8th century B.C. This date corresponds to the period when the fortress of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh was built. Instead, puzzling is the reference to the earlier Judaeian occupation of the site and the mention of the building of Elath by king Uzziah / Azariah of Judah some fifty years earlier. This record of II Kings 14, 22 seems to be linked in the mind of the Deuteronomistic Historian to the short report of the war of Amaziah against the Edomites in II Kings 14, 7: “He smote Edom in the Valley of Salt, ten thousand, and seized the Rock by war, and called its name Joqtheel until this day”. If the Valley of Salt (*Gy’-hmlh*) is not simply the Wadi Arabah, it might be Bīr Mulēh³¹, 12 km. south-east of aṣ-Ṣāfī, and the Rock (*Sl’*) would then be as-Sīl³², 18 km. to the south, not Petra, as assumed by the Septuagint.

In the original source, the Elath of II Kings 14, 22, spelled Αἰλώθ or Ἐλώθ in the Septuagint, was not Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, but a place within a single day’s journey south of Jerusalem. It is mentioned in the Mishnah³³, means “Terebinth(s)”, and is located at Ramath al-Ḥalīl, 3 km. north of Hebron³⁴. It is hard to believe that the Deuteronomistic Historian has just invented the story. He probably found a notice in the annals of the kings of Judah, concerning a building activity at this holy place, and mistakenly linked this information with the record on wars against the Edomites. His source seems instead to have connected the “building of *’Ēlat / ’Ēlōt*” with the burial of king Amaziah, who was murdered, like his father Jehoash, after a campaign against the Edomites and a disastrous war against Israel. These regicides have probably been prompted not by the foreign policy of the kings, but by the suspicion of some people at the Court that Jehoash, proclaimed king on the overthrow of Athaliahu³⁵, did not really belong to David’s lineage, but was a son of the high priest Yehoyada. It did not matter that Jehoash prevented an attack on Jerusalem by Hazael, king of Damascus, by paying him a heavy tribute: he was killed a few years later in a conspiracy. His son Amaziah managed to succeed him

pp. 49–60 (see p. 56); ID., *Kheleifeh, Tell el*, in: E. Lipiński (ed.), *Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique*, Turnhout 1992, p. 247.

³¹ Grid ref. 2033/0388; cf. W. Zwickel, *Eisenzeitliche Ortslagen im Ostjordanland* (BTAVO B/81), Wiesbaden 1990, p. 60.

³² Grid ref. 2049/0214; cf. W. Zwickel, *Eisenzeitliche Ortslagen*, cit. p. 53; S. Hart, *Sela’: The Rock of Edom?*, PEQ 118 (1986), pp. 91–95.

³³ Mishnah, *Maaser Sheni* V, 2.

³⁴ Grid ref. 160/107; cf. F.-M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* II, cit. (n. 25), pp. 375–376; M. Avi-Yonah, *Gazetteer of Roman Palestine* (Qedem 5), Jerusalem 1976, pp. 99–100. Fifteen pottery fragments, dated by W.F. Albright to the 9th–8th centuries B.C. and to the 7th–6th centuries by L.-H. Vincent, have been found in the excavation of the site: L.-H. Vincent, *L’année archéologique 1927–8 en Palestine*, RB 38 (1929), pp. 92–114, Pl. III (see pp. 108–109); R. de Vaux, rev. in RB 65 (1958), p. 595. The 8th century would correspond to the reign of Uzziah / Azariah. Unfortunately, these potsherds are not published in the report of E. Mader, *Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen im heiligen Bezirk Râmet el-Ḥalīl in Südpalästina 1926–1928*, Freiburg im Br. 1957.

³⁵ The seven years of Athaliahu’s reign might coincide with the reigns of Jehoram and of his son Ahaziah in Judah. The report on her killing all the royal seed of Judah may refer to the same event as the killing of all Jehoshaphat’s sons by Jehoram.

to the throne, but was murdered in his turn. The double name of Azariah / Uzziah in the Bible may represent an additional symptom of the continuing dynastic crisis; it may even hide the replacement of Amaziah's son by a descendant of a lateral Davidic lineage. At that time, Tell al-Ḥeleifeh did certainly not constitute a major concern at the Court of Jerusalem.

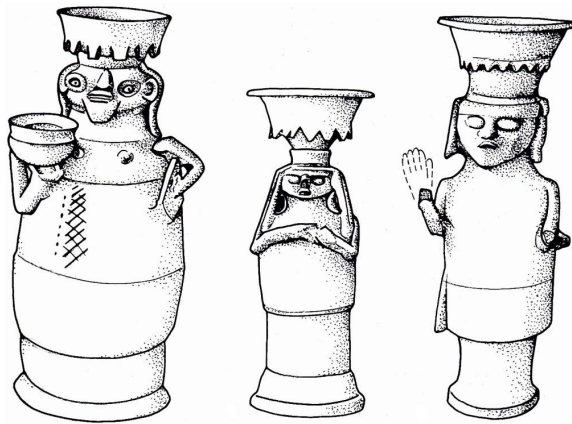
3. 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb

A strategic site of north-western Edom was 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb ('Ein Ḥaḏeva), ancient Tamar, about 35 km. south of Zoar³⁶. It lies at the junction of the roads from Moab, the Edomite mining district of Feinan, Elath, Gaza, and Egypt. The excavations of 1992–1994³⁷ have uncovered the ruins of a large stronghold (Stratum V), dated to the 8th century B.C. by the pottery found in one of the casemate rooms. The fortress, measuring *ca.* 50 x 50 m. in its first phase, was later enlarged to *ca.* 100 x 100 m. It was surrounded by a casemate wall, like the first enclosure at Tell al-Ḥeleifeh. Three towers were projected *ca.* 3 m. from the wall and the gate complex was constituted by a four-chambered structure, like at Tell al-Ḥeleifeh and Ḥirbet al-Muḏeibi. The size of the fortress in Stratum 5A, if all its area was built up, implies an occupation that can be estimated at 200–250 persons. It looks therefore as a fortified settlement. Its strategic importance results not only from its location at crossroads of caravan routes, but also from its vicinity to copper mines and to the southern border of the Kingdom of Judah. The date of the fortress even suggests connecting its construction with the aftermaths of the invasion of Edom by king Amaziah of Judah (798–769 B.C.). At any rate, the battle recorded in II Kings 14, 7 had taken place in the vicinity of 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb. The king of Edom may have decided then to fortify the site to prevent a new Judaeans invasion, but it is also possible that the earliest fort (Stratum VI) of 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb, the remains of which have been exposed under the gate of Stratum VB³⁸, existed already at the time of Amaziah and that this Edomite stronghold was attacked by the Judaeans in the Valley of Salt.

³⁶ Grid ref. 1734/0242; Y. Aharoni, *Tamar and the Roads to Elath*, IEJ 13 (1963), pp. 30–42.

³⁷ R. Cohen, *Ḥaḏeva, Meḏad*, NEAEHL, Jerusalem 1993, Vol. II, pp. 593–594; R. Cohen – Y. (Y)israel, *The Iron Age Fortress at 'En Ḥaḏeva*, "Biblical Archaeologist" 58 (1995), pp. 223–235; ID., *The Excavations at 'Ein Ḥaḏeva / Israelite and Roman Tamar*, "Qadmoniot" 29 (1996), pp. 78–92 (in Hebrew) and Pls. I–III; ID., *'En Ḥaḏeva – 1990–1994*, ESI 15 (1996), pp. 110–116; P. Beck, *Horvat Qitmit Revisited via 'En Ḥaḏeva*, "Tel Aviv" 23 (1996), pp. 102–114.

³⁸ R. Cohen – Y. Israel, *'En Ḥaḏeva*, cit. (n. 37), p. 114.



Figurines from the sanctuary of ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb (after P. Beck from photos of R. Cohen and Y. Israel)

The main economic importance of ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb stems from the natural trade roads, that crossed one another at this point, and from the copper mines at Feinan and Ḥirbet an-Naḥās. Recent surveys in Wadi Feinan have provided only scattered fragments of Iron Age pottery dated to the 7th–6th centuries B.C., while most of the evidence goes back to much earlier or later periods³⁹. Feinan was nevertheless known to biblical authors. It appears as the name of an Edomite chieftain and as toponym⁴⁰, but no particular information is provided. The pottery fragments found in the surveys reflect a certain activity in the mining area, probably in the 8th century as well, but the potsherds in question cannot be dated in a precise way as yet. Charcoal samples collected in the excavation of Ḥirbet an-Naḥās, 6 km. north of Feinan, reflect an earlier industrial activity, which seems to fall between the 11th and the 8th centuries B.C.⁴¹ These finds are important for understanding the emergence of the Edomite state, which existed already in the late 9th century B.C. A fort was then built at Ḥirbet an-Naḥās, while copper production shifted

³⁹ G.W. Barker *et al.*, *The Wadi Faynan Project. Southern Jordan*, “Levant” 29 (1997), pp. 19–40; ID., *Environment and Land Use in the Wadi Faynan, Southern Jordan: The Second Season of Geoarchaeology and Landscape Archaeology* (1997), “Levant” 30 (1998), pp. 5–25, in particular pp. 20–21. For an earlier view, see E.A. Knauf – C. Lenzen, *Edomite Copper Industry*, in: A. Hadidi (ed.), *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan III*, Amman 1987, pp. 83–88.

⁴⁰ Chieftain: Gen. 36, 41; I Chron. 1, 52. – Toponym: Numb. 33, 42–43, where one should read *Pynn* with the Septuagint, instead of *Pwnn*.

⁴¹ T.E. Levy – R.B. Adams – M. Najjar – A. Hauptmann – J.D. Anderson – B. Brandl – M.A. Robinson – T. Higham, *Reassessing the Chronology of Biblical Edom: New Excavations and ¹⁴C Dates from Khirbet en-Nahas (Jordan)*, “Antiquity” 78 (2004), pp. 865–879. The archaeological team dates the industrial activity at the site to the 12th–9th centuries B.C. on ground of C-14 data, but the analyses were based on charcoals, not on short-lived samples. They risk therefore to result in too high dates. This is why we lower them to the 11th–8th centuries B.C., thus further weakening the position of I. Finkelstein, *Khirbet en-Nahas. Edom and Biblical History*, “Tel Aviv” 32 (2005), pp. 119–125, who tries to show that the results of the Ḥirbet an-Naḥās excavations have no bearing on the early history of Edom. He also confuses Assyrian domination and diplomatic contacts, shown by presents exchanged between monarchs, but labelled “tribute” by Assyrian scribes.

to other sites in the area. One can assume that export of a certain amount of bronze artefacts continued throughout the Iron Age and that the access to this region was of some strategic and economic importance.

The remains of the later fortress of ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣḥ (Stratum IV) are scanty, but there is some characteristic pottery of the 7th century B.C. and the finds in this stratum include a stone seal carved with a horned altar flanked by two facing figures and the Edomite inscription *l-Mškt bn Wḥzn*, “Belonging to *Mškt*, son of *Wḥzn*”⁴², two North Arabian names meaning “Steadfast” and “Violent”⁴³. Moreover, a unique assemblage of sixty-three complete cult vessels and seven stone altars have been found in a *favissa* close to the wall. The pottery items are similar to the figures found in the Edomite temple at Ḥirbet Qitmit⁴⁴, and they witness the existence of an Edomite shrine in the 7th and the first half of the 6th century B.C. The building of the successive fortresses at ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣḥ certainly implies the intervention of a royal administration. One can also assume that a “servant of the king” commanded them, like Qaws‘anal at Elath.

4. Arabian spices

Following the subjection of Gaza in 734 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III received tribute of camels and “all kinds of spices” from various Arabian tribes and caravans, among them the Sabaeans⁴⁵. This indicates that caravans from South Arabia were reaching Edom and Gaza at least in the second half of the 8th century B.C., confirming the information provided by the jar fragment from Tell al-Ḥeleifeh. The presence of Sabaeans suffices to justify the assumption that frankincense and myrrh were imported from South Arabia by these caravans, bringing “all kinds of spices”. However, the South Arabian inscriptions found south of Gaza belong to a later period. A potsherd from a local storage jar with a painted South Arabian monogram, read *’bm*, and a fragment of a handmade vessel with a South Arabian *m* prove the presence of Sabaeans or Minaean merchants, but the

⁴² R. Cohen – Y. Yisrael, *The Excavations at ‘Ein Ḥaḏeva*, cit. (n. 37), p. 83, and *‘En Ḥaḏeva*, cit., p. 112, Fig. 116; J. Naveh, *A Sixth Century Edomite Seal from ‘En Ḥaḏeva*, “Atiqot” 42 (2001), pp. 197–198.

⁴³ G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance*, cit. (n. 13), p. 545 (MSKT), and the Arabic adjectives *wahḥāz* and *wāḥiz* with mimation.

⁴⁴ For the Edomite shrine discovered on the site, see: I. Beit-Arieh, *An Edomite Shrine at Horvat Qitmit*, in *Y. Yadin Volume* (Erls 20), Jerusalem 1989, pp. 135–146 (in Hebrew); ID., *The Edomite Shrine of Horvat Qitmit in the Judean Desert*, “Tel Aviv” 18 (1991), pp. 93–116; ID., *Qitmit, Horvat*, NEAEHL, Jerusalem 1993, Vol. IV, pp. 1230–1233; ID. (ed.), *Horvat Qitmit. An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev*, Tel Aviv 1995. For the figures in particular, see: J. Gunneweg – H. Mommsen, *Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis and the Origin of Some Cult Objects and Edomite Vessels from the Horvat Qitmit Shrine*, “Archaeometry” 32 (1990), pp. 7–18; P. Beck, *Transjordanian and Levantine Elements in the Iconography of Qitmit*, in *Biblical Archaeology Today 1990*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 231–236; EAD., *Horvat Qitmit Revisited via ‘En Ḥaḏeva*, “Tel Aviv” 23 (1996), pp. 102–114.

⁴⁵ H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria. Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Jerusalem 1994, p. 142, Summ. 4, line [32’]; p. 200, Summ. 13, line 14’.

storehouse in which these artefacts were found do not antedate the mid-4th century B.C.⁴⁶ Assyrian presence in the area nevertheless implies much earlier trade links with Arabia.

Some authors assume that myrrh, *murru*, and frankincense, *labanātu*, were already known in Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C.⁴⁷ However, in Akkadian texts *murru* is frequently written with the determinative *ú* of herbaceous plants⁴⁸. It could thus refer originally to an indigenous herb, for instance to some variety of anise, an umbelliferous plant found in Egypt and the Levant. It was called *ἀνφθον*, *ἄνφσον* or *ἄνφτον* in Classical Greek. This word occurs also in Matth. 23, 23, where it apparently translates Mishnaic Hebrew *šebet*, “dill”⁴⁹, not attested in Biblical Hebrew. The officinal part of anise plants is the fruit, known as aniseed, possibly the *zēr murri* of Babylonian medical texts⁵⁰. It has a strong aromatic taste and a powerful odour. By distillation it yields the oil of anise, which has carminative properties and was used in treating flatulent colic.

“Oil of *murru*” is listed among the perfumes sent by Tushratta, king of Mittanni, to the pharaoh⁵¹, and aromatic *šmn mr* is mentioned likewise on tablets from Ugarit⁵². Nothing proves that this was real myrrh⁵³. Instead, Milkilu, prince of Gezer, asks the pharaoh to send him [Š]IM.SAR.MEŠ: *mu-ur-ra* as medicine⁵⁴. This could be real myrrh (**ntyw*), imported from Punt, but it might also be another resin instead of being oil extracted from a plant. The often repeated assertion that large quantities of myrrh were needed in Egypt for mummification⁵⁵ fail taking modern chemical analyses into account. For instance, the analysis conducted in 1995 on the mummy of the priestess Iset-Iri-Hetes has shown that resin of cedar trees was used for embalming and that it was mixed with bitumen⁵⁶. This practice, attested already by Strabo⁵⁷, explains why resin recovered on mummies often has a lustrous pitch-like appearance. Resin found inside amphorae from the Late Bronze shipwreck at Ulu Burun was at first thought to be myrrh or frankincense⁵⁸. It has now

⁴⁶ G.W. Van Beek, *Tell Jemmeh*, RB 82 (1975), pp. 573–576, Pl. XLVII (see p. 575).

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Zarins, *Mesopotamia and Frankincense: The Early Evidence*, in: A. Avanzini (ed.), *Profumi d'Arabia* (Saggi di storia antica 11), Firenze 1997, pp. 251–272.

⁴⁸ CAD, M/2, pp. 221–222.

⁴⁹ Mishnah, *Peah* III, 2; *Maaseroth* IV, 5; *Uqsin* III, 4..

⁵⁰ CAD, M/2, p. 221g. Cf. W. Farber, *Myrrhe. B. Philologisch*, RLA VIII, Berlin 1993–97, pp. 536–537, with references.

⁵¹ El-Amarna Letters 22, III, 29; 25, IV, 51.

⁵² KTU 1.41, 20; 1.53, 3^a.4^a; 1.87, 22; 4.14, 2.8.15; 4.91, 16.

⁵³ This idea is supported nevertheless by K. Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel* (VTS 38), Leiden 1986, pp. 22–24.

⁵⁴ El-Amarna Letter 269, 12.

⁵⁵ For instance, M.C.A. Macdonald, *North Arabia in the First Millennium BCE*, in: J.M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, New York 1995, Vol. II, pp. 1355–1369 (see 1357); N. Karg, *Myrrhe. A. Allgemein*, RLA VIII, Berlin 1993–97, pp. 534–536 (see p. 535a).

⁵⁶ K. Babraj – H. Szymańska, *Eine Mumie unter dem Mikroskop*, “Antike Welt” 28 (1997), pp. 369–374, and *Kapłanka Izdy z Krakowa*, “Archeologia żywa” 3/8 (1998), pp. 4–10.

⁵⁷ Strabo, *Geography* XVI, 2, 45.

⁵⁸ G.F. Bass, *A Bronze Age Shipwreck at Ulu Burun (Kaş): 1984 Campaign*, AJA 90 (1986), pp. 269–296 (see pp. 277–278).

been positively identified as turpentine from the terebinth tree, *Pistacia terebinthus*⁵⁹. Its use in pharmacology and therapeutics might explain the nature of the *murru* required by Milkilu: it could be turpentine as well.

Trade relations have probably changed the situation in the 9th century B.C., when the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884 B.C.) mention a tribute of one or two talents of *murru* paid by the cities of Sirqu (Tell al-‘Ašāra), Ḥarada (Ḥirbet ad-Diniya), and Dūr-Katlimmu (Tell Šayḥ Ḥamad) in the area of the Middle Euphrates and Lower Ḥābūr⁶⁰. The precious *murru*, available apparently in this region, must have been imported from South Arabia by caravans similar to the one attacked and plundered a century later by Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur, ruler of Sūḥu⁶¹. Although he does not list *murru* among the spoils, other caravans were probably bringing “all kinds of spices” from South Arabia by the route of Teima and Dūmat al-Ġandal (al-Ġōf). Assyrian texts continued using the word *murru*, but applied it to a new product, the South-Arabian name of which is not attested so far⁶².

Various terms designate spices in the Levant, and Late Egyptian texts call *ḥry* a kind of myrrh⁶³. The word is written *ḥl* in Demotic⁶⁴ and it appears with various spellings in Coptic texts⁶⁵. There is little doubt that this is a loanword, borrowed from Neo-Assyrian *ḥīlu*, “resin”⁶⁶, probably in course of the transactions at Tell Abū Ruqeiš⁶⁷, Tell Ġemmeh⁶⁸, and Naḥal Mušri⁶⁹, the main trading posts established by Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II south-west of Gaza. This resin was probably myrrh brought by caravans from South Arabia or resin of cedar trees shipped from Phoenicia, possibly a mixture of various spices.

⁵⁹ H.H. & E.M. Hairfield, *Identification of a Late Bronze Age Resin*, “Analytical Chemistry” 62 (1990), pp. 41–45; C.W. Haldane, *Schipwrecked Plant Remains*, “Biblical Archaeologist” 53 (1990), pp. 55–60 (see p. 57).

⁶⁰ A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I: 1114–859 BC* (Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods 2), Toronto 1991, text A.O.100.5, pp. 175–177, lines 77, 91, and 107.

⁶¹ G. Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination: 1157–612 BC* (Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Babylonian Periods 2), Toronto 1995, text S.O.1002.2, p. 300, col. IV, 26’–38’.

⁶² For the South Arabian terminology of spices, see W.W. Müller, *Namen von Aromata in antiken Südarabien*, in: A. Avanzini (ed.), *Profumi d’Arabia* (Saggi di storia antica 11), Firenze 1997, pp. 193–210.

⁶³ A. Erman – H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, Leipzig 1926–31, Vol. III, p. 323:21.

⁶⁴ W. Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, Kopenhagen 1954, p. 368.

⁶⁵ W. Westendorf, *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1965–77, p. 309.

⁶⁶ W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch I–III*, Wiesbaden 1965–81, Vol. I, pp. 345–346.

⁶⁷ Grid ref. 08610/09185: W. Culican, *The Graves at Tell er-Reqeish*, “Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology” 2/2 (1973), pp. 66–105 = W. Culican, *Opera Selecta*, Göteborg 1986, pp. 85–124; R. Hestrin – M. Dayagi-Mendels, *Another Pottery Group from Abu Ruqeish*, “The Israel Museum Journal” 2 (1982), pp. 49–57; E. Oren – N. Fleming – S. Kornberg – R. Feinstein – P. Naḥshoni, *A Phoenician Emporium on the Border of Egypt*, “Qadmoniot” 19 (1986), pp. 83–91 (in Hebrew); E.D. Oren, *Ruqeish*, NEAEHL, Jerusalem 1993, Vol. IV, pp. 1293–1294; Y. Huster, *Tell er-Ruqeish*, ESI 111 (2000), pp. 87*–88*.

⁶⁸ Grid ref. 097/088. The bibliography of G.W. Van Beek’s excavations is collected by E. Vogel – B. Holtzclaw, *Bibliography of Holy Land Sites II*, HUCA 52 (1981), pp. 1–98 (see p. 41: Jemmeh, Tell). Add G.W. Van Beek, *Jemmeh, Tell*, NEAEHL, Jerusalem 1993, Vol. II, pp. 667–674.

⁶⁹ H. Tadmor, *The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study*, “Journal of Cuneiform Studies” 12 (1958), pp. 22–40 and 77–80 (see p. 34: Annals, lines 17–18; Nimrud Prism, lines 46–49).

One wonders which kind of spices was kept in the large jar from the mid-7th century B.C., found in pieces at Umm al-Biyara, near Petra. One of its fragments bears three incomplete lines of an Edomite inscription, deciphered by J.T. Milik⁷⁰. The third letter of line 2 seems to have a rather long down-stroke and to be *r* instead of *d*, which is legless or short-legged in Edomite script⁷¹. One can thus read:

<i>šmn.r[hš/qh.●●]</i>	“Pure/Fragrant oil, [a jar ²],
<i>m‘rd²šm[‘n²]</i>	from the ‘Arad of M[a‘ān ²],
<i>bd. ●●.bn² ●[●●]</i>	through N, son of N”.

In line 1, one may restore *rhš*, like in the Samaria ostraca⁷², or *rqh*, like at Ugarit⁷³ and in Qoh. 10, 1, where the Septuagint translates *šmn rqh* by ἔλαιον ἡδύσματος⁷⁴. The Edomite context recommends the second restitution. The “fragrant oil” in question was presumably oil containing myrrh, perhaps mixed with other spices to make oil for anointments. However, the inscription does not use the word *mr*. The jar was sent from a place called ‘*rd.m[●●]*, which must have laid on a caravan route. The first element of the toponym probably means “watch post” or the like⁷⁵; it appears in several place names, especially in southern Palestine. It is qualified by a name beginning with *M*, possibly Ma‘ān, the large oasis on the pilgrims’ route to Mecca, 33 km. south-east of Umm al-Biyara.

The name *lbn* of frankincense appears rarely in South Arabian inscriptions, *lābōnāh* does not occur in the Bible before the 7th century B.C., and Akkadian *labanātu* is attested only in the Late Babylonian period⁷⁶. W. von Soden’s attempt at finding it in the Neo-Assyrian *Dream Book* is based on a correction⁷⁷, which does not give any satisfactory sense. The word written *eb-bu-ni-tum* on the tablet should be regarded as an **abnānītu* derivative of *abnu*, “stone”, with the meaning “fall of (hail-)stones”. The phonetic changes ‘*a* > *e*, *bn* > *bb*, *ān* > *ōn* are concealing the root, but the meaning of the sentence is clear: “if a hail-storm showers from the heaven upon the man ...”⁷⁸.

⁷⁰ J.T. Milik, in: C.-M. Bennett, *Fouilles d’Umm el-Biyara*, RB 73 (1966), pp. 372–403, Pls. XIV–XXV (see pp. 398–399, Pl. XXIIa).

⁷¹ L.G. Herr, *The Formal Scripts of Iron Age Transjordan*, BASOR 238 (1980), pp. 21–34 (see p. 30). Edomite inscriptions now provide more examples of the letter.

⁷² Samaria ostraca 16a, 16b, 17a, (17b), 18, 19, 20, 21, 53, 54, 55, (73), 82.

⁷³ KTU 1.41, 21; 1.87, 22; 1.148, 21; 4.91, 5

⁷⁴ This translation implies the spelling *šmn rqh*, without *mater lectionis*.

⁷⁵ The word is probably related to Akkadian *ḥarādu*, “to watch” (AHw, p. 322), and to Palmyrene ‘*rd*, “watchtower”, “watch post”, or the like, not “catapult” (PAT 2757,2).

⁷⁶ CAD, L, p. 8.

⁷⁷ W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, cit. (n. 66), Vol. I, p. 522a.

⁷⁸ A.L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, Philadelphia 1956, p; 328, line 9. The hail-storm, which may seriously damage crops, was particularly feared in antiquity: A. Mastrocinque, *Magia agraria nell’impero cristiano*, “Mediterraneo Antico” 7 (2004), pp. 795–836 (see p. 805 ff.).

Levantine trade in authentic South Arabian myrrh and frankincense before the 8th century B.C. remains thus a conjecture. It is nevertheless very plausible in the case of the *murru* referred to in the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II. Instead, the argument based on the ancient use of incense in the cult lacks any solid foundation. In fact, also turpentine has an agreeable resinous odour. On exposure to air it becomes dry, hard, and brittle, and had thus to be bruised like true frankincense. The prescription of Ex. 30, 34 requiring the use of “pure frankincense”, *lābonāh zakkāh*, assumes that also cheaper substitutes could serve for preparing incense for cult activities.

5. South Arabian vestiges

The prescriptions of the incense cult in Ex. 30, 1-10.34-38 date from the Persian period⁷⁹, but the discovery of four potsherds with South Arabian letters and monograms in the excavation of the City of David proves that Sabaeen merchants were reaching Jerusalem in the 7th century B.C.⁸⁰ One can surmise that they were bringing “all kinds of spices”, in particular myrrh and frankincense. The fact that these inscriptions were incised on local vessels is of particular importance, because it shows that Sabaeen merchants were staying in Jerusalem in the 7th century B.C. or were at least storing there some of their merchandise.

These finds must be viewed in connection with the 1957 discovery of a South Arabian clay stamp at Beitīn (Bethel)⁸¹, north of Jerusalem, and with the story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem (I Kings 10, 1-10.13). According to the story, datable not earlier than the 8th century B.C., the Queen has brought a great abundance of spices (I Kings 10, 10), which certainly were the main product sold by the South Arabian merchants. The stamp found at Beitīn is paralleled by an identical clay stamp from a pre-Islamic site near Mešhed in Wadi Dū’an (Ḥaḍramaut)⁸². This shows that the Beitīn stamp is Ḥaḍramitic and that Ḥaḍramaut was the point of origin of the caravan that reached Beitīn in the 8th century B.C. Unfortunately, both stamps are incomplete and the reading of the three short lines of the Beitīn text is thus uncertain, perhaps [...H]my[n] *fdn*,

⁷⁹ See the general study by P. Heger, *The Development of Incense Cult in Israel* (BZAW 245), Berlin 1997.

⁸⁰ Y. Shiloh, *The Material Culture of Judah and Jerusalem in Iron Age II: Origins and Influences*, in: E. Lipiński (ed.), *The Land of Israel: Cross-roads of Civilizations* (OLA 19), Leuven 1985, pp. 113–146 (see pp. 141–144); ID., *South Arabian Inscriptions from the City of David, Jerusalem*, PEQ 119 (1987), pp. 9–18; M. Höfner, *Remarks on Potsherds with Incised Arabian Letters*, in: D.T. Ariel (ed.), *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985*, Vol. VI. *Inscriptions* (Qedem 41), Jerusalem 2000, pp. 26–28. One can safely dismiss the claim that two of these inscriptions are Greek, as argued by B. Sass, *Arabs and Greeks in Late First Temple Jerusalem*, PEQ 122 (1990 [1992]), pp. 59–61.

⁸¹ J.L. Kelso, *The Excavation of Bethel (1934–1960)* (AASOR 39), Cambridge Mass. 1968, Pl. 118.

⁸² Th. Bent, *Southern Arabia*, London 1900, p. 436; A. Jamme – G.W. Van Beek, *The South Arabian Clay Stamp from Bethel again*, BASOR 163 (1961), pp. 15–18.

“[...Ḥa]miya[n], the delegate”⁸³. One could recall here that Ḥaḍramaut is mentioned in Gen. 10, 26 and I Chron. 1, 20 with the correct Hebrew spelling *Ḥyrmwt*.

South Arabian caravans were probably reaching Jerusalem and Beitīn by the way of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh, ‘Ayn al-Ḥuṣb, Tell Arad, and the Judaeian highland, or from Amman by the westward route. Tell Arad did not provide any South Arabian inscription, but two North Arabian letters *yḥ* of the Teimanite variety are incised on each of the two offering dishes found in the sanctuary of Strata X–IX⁸⁴, datable to the first half of the 7th century B.C.⁸⁵ The letters *yḥ* are probably an abbreviation of *yd ḥrm*, “possession of the sanctuary”, according to an old connotation of *yd*, “hand”, preserved in Islamic law. The Teimanite variety of *ḥ* in these inscriptions is an interesting feature, since Teimanites and Sabaeans were associated in the huge caravan attacked and plundered by Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur⁸⁶.

Three North Arabian letters, read *khn* by Fr. Bron, appear on a small limestone object found at Tell as-Seba’. They are incised on the smooth side of the stone and framed by a double line⁸⁷. *Khn* is probably the North Arabian word *kahin*, “diviner”, “soothsayer”. The object was discovered in Stratum II, characterized by a pottery similar to that of Lachish Stratum III and by vessels with Edomite or Assyrian features. It can thus be dated likewise to the 7th century B.C.⁸⁸

⁸³ G.W. Van Beek – A. Jamme, *An Inscribed South Arabian Clay Stamp from Bethel*, BASOR 151 (1958), pp. 9–16.

⁸⁴ Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1975, pp. 117–119, Nos. 102–103. Cf. Z. Herzog, *The Fortress Mound at Tell Arad: An Interim Report*, “Tel Aviv” 29 (2002), pp. 3–109, in particular pp. 51–52, 58–59.

⁸⁵ According to Z. Herzog, *The Fortress Mound*, cit., pp. 14 and 98, Strata X–IX go back to the 8th century B.C. However, since the pottery assemblages of Arad Strata X–VIII resemble those of Lachish Level III, they must belong to the 7th century B.C., despite the dating of Level III at Lachish to the 8th century B.C. by D. Ussishkin (ed.), *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973–1994)*, Tel Aviv 2004. It will suffice to note here that the palaeography and the orthography of the legends in the seal impressions on jar handles clearly date this stratum from the 7th century. See already L.G. Herr, *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals*, Missoula 1978, pp. 86–94, and R. Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography* (OLA 28), Leuven 1988, p. 185, for the spelling *-yh* of the theophorous element in proper names. Stratum III was destroyed and burned in 598/7 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar II, as proposed by the first excavator of the site, J.L. Starkey, *Lachish as Illustrating Bible History*, PEQ 69 (1937), pp. 171–179 (see p. 175); ID., *Excavations at Tell ed-Duweir*, PEQ 69 (1937), pp. 228–241 (see p. 236). This opinion was followed by several distinguished archaeologists: W.F. Albright, *Some Recent Publications*, BASOR 132 (1953), pp. 46–47; ID., *Recent Progress in Palestinian Archaeology: Samaria-Sebaste III and Hazor I*, BASOR 150 (1958), pp. 21–25 (see p. 24); G.E. Wright, rev. of O. Tufnell et al., *Lachish III: The Iron Age* (Oxford 1953), “Vetus Testamentum” 5 (1955), pp. 97–105 (see pp. 100–104), and JNES 14 (1955), pp. 133–135; B.W. Buchanan, rev. in AJA 58 (1954), pp. 335–339; K.M. Kenyon, in: J.W. & G.M. Crowfoot – K.M. Kenyon, *Samaria-Sebaste III. The Objects from Samaria*, London 1957, pp. 204–208; EAD., *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 4th ed., London 1979, pp. 295–302; R. de Vaux, rev. in RB 66 (1959), p. 298. Unfortunately, C-14 analyses did not provide any useful results (D. Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations*, cit. [n. 85], p. 2510).

⁸⁶ Cf. here above, n. 61, and E. Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age. Historical and Topographical Researches* (OLA 153), Leuven 2006, pp. 395–397.

⁸⁷ L. Singer-Avitz, *Beersheba: A Gateway Community in Southern Arabian Long-Distance Trade in the Eighth Century B.C.E.*, “Tel Aviv” 26 (1999), pp. 3–75 (see pp. 50–52).

⁸⁸ K.M. Kenyon, *The Date of the Destruction of Iron Age Beer-Sheba*, PEQ 108 (1976), pp. 63–64. This date should be preferred for various reasons; cf. here above, n. 85.

The so-called "King's Highway", leading from Tell al-Ḥeleifeh to Damascus through Amman and continuing northwards to Ḥama, might have been used by South Arabian caravans as well. In fact, four graffiti incised on slabs in South Arabian script were recovered in Danish excavations at Ḥama and dated to the mid 8th century B.C.⁸⁹ However, their incision on slabs similar to those bearing Aramaic inscriptions with place names and personal names⁹⁰ suggests that a South Arabian script type was used in some eastern provinces of the kingdom of Hamath, possibly in the area near the confluence of the Euphrates and of the Ḥābūr. This is the reason why the inscribed "South Arabian" cylinder seal found in the Anat area on the Middle Euphrates and finally dated to the 8th century B.C.⁹¹ can be a local artefact instead of coming from South Arabia and witnessing long-distance trade relations. At any rate, cylinder seals represent a Mesopotamian tradition, not attested so far in South Arabia.

However, an ivory cup with an ibex-shaped protome was found at Ḥama by the Danish excavators of the site. The object was unearthed in a tomb dating back to the 9th century B.C. and is housed presently in the Archaeological Museum of Aleppo. Its comparison with some South Arabian artefacts leaves little doubt about its provenance and seems thus to witness a South Arabian frankincense trade with central Syria in the 9th or at least in the early 8th centuries B.C.⁹²

Beside the inscriptions and this exceptional cup, small limestone altars of South Arabian origin or inspiration attest trade links between Arabia and the Levant. They have a cubic shape and four short, quadratic legs. A square cavity is hollowed on top of the cube and usually contains traces of soot. These incense altars have been described already in 1922 by A. Grohmann⁹³. The number of published items increased considerably since that time⁹⁴. In particular, several altars of this type have been found in Ḥaḍramaut, at al-Ḥureiḍa in the Wadi 'Amd⁹⁵, in Qataban, at Ḥaḡar bin Ḥumeid, some 13 km south of Timna⁹⁶, but also in central Arabia, at Qaryat al-Faw⁹⁷. The complex of al-Ḥureiḍa can be dated to the 7th-5th centuries B.C. by objects reflecting foreign influence. This date roughly

⁸⁹ E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (OLA 100), Leuven 2000, pp. 276-280, with former literature.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 266-276.

⁹¹ F.V. Winnett - W.L. Reed, *Ancient Records*, cit. (n. 3), p. 90.

⁹² E. Scigliuzzo, *A South Arabian Ivory Vessel from Hama Reconsidered*, "Ugarit-Forschungen" 35 (2003 [2004]), pp. 629-647, with former literature.

⁹³ A. Grohmann, *Südarabien als Wirtschaftsgebiet I*, Wien 1922, pp. 115-119.

⁹⁴ The list established by W. Zwickel, *Räucher kult und Räuchergeräte. Exegetische und archäologische Studien zum Räucheropfer im Alten Testament* (OBO 97), Freiburg/Schweiz-Göttingen 1990, pp. 70-74 ("Die Räucherkästchen von der arabischen Halbinsel"), can be enlarged, as shown by W.W. Müller in his review of the book: *BiOr* 49 (1992), col. 265-266.

⁹⁵ G. Caton Thompson, *The Tombs and Moon Temple of Hureidha (Ḥaḍramaut)* (Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London 13), London 1944, pp. 49-50, Pls. XVI-XVII.

⁹⁶ G.W. Van Beek (ed.), *Hajar bin Ḥumeid. Investigations at a Pre-Islamic Site in South Arabia*, Baltimore 1969, pp. 272-273.

⁹⁷ A.R. al-Ansary, *Qaryat al-Fau. A Portrait of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia*, Riyadh 1982, p. 73, Figs. 7-8.

corresponds to the period when similar altars appear in Southern Palestine⁹⁸, especially at Tell as-Seba' (Tel Beersheba), on the trade route from Arabia to the Mediterranean, and at sites closer to the seacoast, like Tell Ġemneh⁹⁹ and Tell al-Far'ah South¹⁰⁰. The specimens attributed to the Persian period and found at Gezer¹⁰¹, Lachish¹⁰² or Samaria¹⁰³ can be related, if properly dated¹⁰⁴, to the Arabian units of the Achaemenian army, stationed in Palestine and worshipping 'Ashtarum¹⁰⁵. Several specimens of these incense altars, found in Saba, Ḥaḍramaut, Qataban, and Ma'in, are provided with short South Arabian inscriptions¹⁰⁶.

The South Arabian origin of these altars, found mainly in funerary and domestic contexts, has already been noticed by W.F. Albright¹⁰⁷, but poor acquaintance with the

⁹⁸ W. Zwickel, *Räucher kult*, cit. (n. 94), pp. 91–109, offers a catalogue of 65 pre-Hellenistic specimens found in Palestine, with drawings and respective publication places, as well as a map of the concerned sites (p. 75). See besides: I. Beit-Arieh, *Tel 'Ira: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev*, Tel Aviv 1999, pp. 275–276; R. Cohen – Y. Yisrael, *The Excavations at 'Ein Ḥaḍeva*, cit. (n. 37), Figs. on top of 84, where the photographs show at least one altar of this type; L. Singer-Avitz, *Beersheba*, cit. (n. 87), pp. 41–44, and *Arad: The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages*, "Tel Aviv" 29 (2002), pp. 110–214 (see pp. 161–162).

⁹⁹ W.M.F.I. Petrie, *Gerar*, London 1928, Pls. XL–XLI and XLII, 5–6.

¹⁰⁰ E. Macdonald – J.L. Starkey – L. Harding, *Beth Pelet II*, London 1932, Pls. LXXXVIII, 14 and XCIII, 662.

¹⁰¹ R.A.S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer II*, London 1912, pp. 443–445, Figs. 524–526.

¹⁰² O. Tufnell *et al.*, *Lachish III*, London 1953, Pls. 68–71.

¹⁰³ G.A. Reisner – C.S. Fisher – D.G. Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria 1908–1910*, Cambridge Mass. 1924, Pl. 80a–c.

¹⁰⁴ Such limestone cubes could easily be reused. Their dating to the Persian period is therefore questionable. In particular, the decoration of the Samaria altar shows surprising resemblance to the engravings of one of the Tell as-Seba' specimens and should probably be dated to the 7th century as well. In this case, it is a new witness of trade links with South Arabia, to be mentioned next to the Beitin stamp.

¹⁰⁵ E. Lipiński, *The Cult of Ashtarum in Achaemenian Palestine*, in: L. Cagni (ed.), *Biblica et Semitica. Studi in memoria di Francesco Vattioni*, Napoli 1999, pp. 315–323. The spelling 'štrm with mimation occurs in several inscriptions from the Sharon plain: R. Deutsch – M. Heltzer, *Forty New Ancient West Semitic Inscriptions*, Tel Aviv-Jaffa 1974, pp. 69–89. It apparently matches the Ḥaḍramitic orthography of the divine name 's'štrm (RÉS 4065; A.G. Lundin, *Die Inschriften des antiken Raybān*, "Mare Erythraeum" 1 [1997], pp. 19–25), but the inscriptions are written in West Semitic script, in Phoenician or Aramaic, and South Arabia was not under Achaemenid rule. The worshippers of 'štrm must thus be North-Arabians, perhaps from Teima or Dedan. The theonym 'štrm is written with mimation like the names of *Mlkm*, the Ammonite national god, and of *Wdm*, the moon-god Wadd worshipped in Ma'in, but originated from North Arabia.

¹⁰⁶ At least 31 inscribed examples are actually published. The oldest ones may easily date from the 5th century B.C.: A. Jamme, *Deux autels à encens de l'Université de Harvard*, BiOr 10 (1953), pp. 94–95, Pl. XIV; ANEP, Nos. 579 and 581; *Corpus des inscriptions et antiquités sud-arabes I/2*, Louvain 1977, pp. I.275–I.292; S. Antonini, *Nuovi incensieri iscritti yemeniti*, "Oriens Antiquus" 27 (1988), pp. 133–141, Pls. IV–VI; W.W. Müller, rev. in BiOr 49 (1992), col. 265–266.

¹⁰⁷ W.F. Albright, *Some Recent Publications*, BASOR 98 (1945), pp. 27–31 (see p. 28), and 132 (1953), pp. 46–47; ID., *L'archéologie de la Palestine*, Paris 1955, pp. 156–158. See further: M. Forte, *Sull'origine di alcuni tipi di altarini sud-arabici*, AION 29 (1967), pp. 97–120, in particular pp. 104–108, 115–118, and 120. M. O'Dwyer Shea, *The Small Cubic Incense-Burner of the Ancient Near East*, "Levant" 15 (1983), pp. 76–109, rightly observes that there are good reasons for thinking that the obsolete dating of the Arabian specimens to the 5th–1st centuries B.C. is too low. In the writer's opinion, the oldest, not inscribed examples, must go back at least to the 8th century B.C., since they are present in the Beersheba Valley in the 7th century B.C.

pertinent material led some authors astray. No disquisition is needed to see that these altars can by no means be related to a Phoenician workmanship of the Persian period, as stated surprisingly by E. Stern¹⁰⁸. Neither can they be linked to the small altars from the third and mid-second millennium B.C. found at sites along the great bend of the Euphrates, in northern Syria¹⁰⁹. As for the Babylonian specimens made of clay¹¹⁰, the oldest of which date to the 7th-6th centuries B.C., they derive very likely from South Arabian prototypes as well, and should be related to the presence of Old Arabian tribes in Babylonia¹¹¹ and to the inscriptions in "South Arabian" script found at several Babylonian sites¹¹².

Some cubic altars are decorated with incised figures of animals, humans, and plants, framed by a row of triangles reminiscent of the oldest Nabataean tombs at Petra and Hegra. These are characterized by a façade ornamented by a single or double row of crenelations above the entrance¹¹³. It is reasonable to assume that the same patterns have inspired the decoration of the limestone incense altars and of the oldest Nabataean tombs.

Stratum II at Tell as-Seba', to which seven cubic limestone altars belong, should be dated to the 7th century B.C.¹¹⁴, the period of the *pax Assyriaca*. These altars are thus roughly contemporaneous with the South Arabian monograms of Tell al-Ḥeleifeh and pinpoint the route of the caravans toward the Mediterranean. Their discovery at Tell as-Seba' may even indicate that South Arabian merchants were settled in the town or at least disposed there of some facilities. The inscription *khn* mentioned above and dromedary bones found in Stratum II of Tell as-Seba' confirm such a general socio-economic context, as well as small alabaster or limestone stoppers of South Arabian origin¹¹⁵. Also the altars from Tell Ğemmeh and the large amount of dromedary bones excavated at this site¹¹⁶ can very likely be dated from the 8th-7th centuries B.C. on.

¹⁰⁸ E. Stern, *Limestone Incense Altars*, in: Y. Aharoni (ed.), *Beer-sheba I*, Tel Aviv 1973, pp. 52-53, Pls. 29 and 52; ID., *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*, Warminster 1982, pp. 182-195.

¹⁰⁹ L. Singer-Avitz, *Beersheba*, cit. (n. 87), p. 44.

¹¹⁰ L. Ziegler, *Tonkastschen aus Uruk, Babylon und Assur*, ZA 47 (1942), pp. 224-240. A single specimen was found in Ashur.

¹¹¹ E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans*, cit. (n. 89), pp. 409-489.

¹¹² One can find references in I. Eph'al, "Arabs" in Babylonia in the 8th century B.C., JAOS 94 (1974), pp. 108-115 (see pp. 109-110, n. 12). The list is not complete; it does not refer to the three fragments found in 1926-27 at Ur and published in RÉS 3934-3936.

¹¹³ A. Negev, *The Nabateans and the Provincia Arabia*, ANRW II/8, Berlin 1977, pp. 520-686, Pls. I-XLVIII (see pp. 574-575, Pls. VIII-IX); *Inoubliable Petra*, Bruxelles 1980, p. 36, Fig. 17.

¹¹⁴ Since Stratum II at Tell as-Seba' should be dated from the 7th century B.C. (see K.M. Kenyon, *The Date*, cit. [n. 88]), the dates proposed by L. Singer-Avitz, *Beersheba*, cit. (n. 87), pp. 41, 52, must be lowered; cf. also EAD., 'Busayra Painted Ware' at Tel Beersheba, "Tel Aviv" 31 (2004), pp. 80-89.

¹¹⁵ L. Singer-Avitz, *Beersheba*, cit. (n. 87), pp. 51-52, and *Arad*, cit. (n. 98), p. 162.

¹¹⁶ P. Wapnish, *Camel Caravans and Camel Pastoralists at Tell Jemmeh*, JNES 13 (1981), pp. 101-121.



Incense altar from Tell as-Seba' (photo: excavations of Y. Aharoni)

Caravan trade routes were well established, but traders travelling together for greater security against robbers and for mutual assistance in the matter of provisions did not follow each year the same track. An interesting illustration is possibly provided by the votive cylinder seal found at Tell as-Seba' and dating probably from the 9th–8th centuries B.C. This date results from iconographic parallels reported by P. Beck in her study of the object, while her dating of the seal to the end of the 8th or the 7th century¹¹⁷ seems to be inspired rather by the chronology of Strata III–I at Tell as-Seba'. Since the votive seal is dedicated to Apladad, whose cult was located mainly in the Anat area on the Middle Euphrates¹¹⁸, it stands to reason that it was originally kept in a temple of this god at Anat. In unknown circumstances, it came later in the possession of the traveller who lost it at Tell as-Seba', possibly in connection with the conflagration which destroyed the city at the end of the 7th century or at the beginning of the 6th century B.C. Although the chalcedony cylinder representing Apladad being worshipped was a provincial artefact, it was a valuable item that could serve as amulet to any trader or traveller trafficking in the Middle East. The suggestion was made that a soldier of Nebuchadnezzar II's army had carried off that seal and was wearing it at Tell as-Seba'¹¹⁹. This is quite possible, since the end of Stratum II corresponds to the period in which Nebuchadnezzar's troops appeared in the region.

Unless a written itinerary provides necessary information, ancient trade routes can only be recognized on epigraphic, archaeological, and geographical grounds. When pieced together, the sparse findings from the area controlled by the Edomites in the 8th–7th

¹¹⁷ P. Beck, *A Votive Cylinder Seal*, in: Y. Aharoni (ed.), *Beer-sheba I*, Tel Aviv 1973, pp. 56–59, Pl. 26.

¹¹⁸ E. Lipiński, *Apladad*, "Orientalia" 45 (1976), pp. 53–74.

¹¹⁹ H. & M. Tadmor, *The Seal of Bel-Asharedu – A Case of "Migration"*, in: K. Van Lerberghe – A. Schoors (eds.), *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East. Festschrift E. Lipiński* (OLA 65), Leuven 1995, pp. 345–355 (see p. 354).

centuries B.C. and from some other places furnish precious indications as to the trade routes leading from Arabia to the Mediterranean through Tell al-Ḥeifeh, which seems to have been an important road-station, followed among others by 'Ayn al-Ḥuṣb and Tell as-Seba'. The analysis of these data is economic history on the march. It is based neither on theory nor on ideology. It simply tries to follow the paths traced long ago by caravans of traders.