

# Palestinian Inscriptions

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## The Gezer Calendar

This little inscription was discovered at Gezer in 1908 by R. A. S. Macalister; it is on a school exercise tablet of soft limestone. For a number of years its date was uncertain, but recent discoveries establish its relative archaism and point to the second half of the tenth century or the very beginning of the ninth as its probable time. The writer would date it in or about the third quarter of the tenth century—about 925 B.C. in round numbers. The language is good biblical Hebrew, in a very early spelling; it is written in verse and seems to have been a kind of mnemonic ditty for children.

The official publication will be found in Macalister, *Gezer*, II, pp. 24-28, and III, Pl. CXXVII. For a nearly exhaustive bibliography up to 1934 see Diringer, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (Florence, 1934), pp. 1-20, supplemented by Albright, *BASOR*, 92, pp. 16-26. For subsequent bibliography and a full discussion see Sabatino Moscati, *L'epigrafia ebraica antica 1935-1950* (Rome, 1951), pp. 8-26; see also A. M. Honeyman, *JRAS*, 1953, pp. 53-58.

His two months are (olive) harvest, (tricolon, 2:2:2)  
His two months are planting (grain),  
His two months are late planting;  
His month is hoeing up of flax, (tricolon, 3:3:3)  
His month is harvest of barley,  
His month is harvest and *feasting*;  
His two months are vine-tending, (bicolon, 2:2)  
His month is summer fruit.

## The Moabite Stone

This important inscription was discovered intact in 1868; it was subsequently broken by the Arabs and in 1873 it was taken to the Louvre. The best publication is found in Dussaud, *Les monuments palestiniens et judaïques (Musée du Louvre)*, 1912, pp. 4-22, with a magnificent photograph of the stela and a good bibliography. The work of Smend and Socin, *Die Inschrift des Königs Mesa von Moab* (1886), which was long standard, is not reliable, as was pointed out in detail by Renan and Clermont-Ganneau; see especially Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris*, I, pp. 1-10. The most recent competent translation is that of Gressmann, *AOT*, pp. 440-42. On the question of the authenticity of the text, which was strangely disputed for a long time (in spite of the fact that no forger of that time could possibly have divined the correct forms of letters in the ninth century B.C.), cf. Albright, *JQR*, xxxv, 1945, pp. 247-250.

For details of translation which depend on recent discoveries see especially Poebel, *Das appositionell bestimmte Pronomen* (Chicago, 1932), pp. 7-11; Albright, *BASOR*, 89, p. 16. n.55. There are a number of words which were formerly obscure but which have now been found in other Northwest-Semitic inscriptions.

The date of the Mesha Stone is roughly fixed by the reference to Mesha, king of Moab, in II Kings 3:4, after 849 B.C. How-

ever, since the contents of the stela point to a date toward the end of the king's reign, it seems probable that it should be placed between 840 and 820, perhaps about 830 B.C. in round numbers.

I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh-[ . . . ], king of Moab, the Dibonite—my father (had) reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father,—(who) made this high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh [ . . . ] because he saved me from all the kings and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries. As for Omri, (5) king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years (lit., days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said, "I will humble Moab." In my time he spoke (thus), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished for ever! (Now) Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and (Israel) had dwelt there in his time and half the time of his son (Ahab), forty years; but Chemosh dwelt there in my time.

And I built Baal-meon, making a reservoir in it, and I built (10) Qaryaten. Now the men of Gad had always dwelt in the land of Ataroth, and the king of Israel had built Ataroth for them; but I fought against the town and took it and slew all the people of the town as satiation (intoxication) for Chemosh and Moab. And I brought back from there Arel (or Oriel), its chieftain, dragging him before Chemosh in Keriath, and I settled there men of Sharon and men of Maharish. And Chemosh said to me, "Go, take Nebo from Israel!" (15) So I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, taking it and slaying all, seven thousand men, boys, women, girls and maid-servants, for I had devoted them to destruction for (the god) Ashtar-Chemosh. And I took from there the [ . . . ] of Yahweh, dragging them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel had built Jahaz, and he dwelt there while he was fighting against me, but Chemosh drove him out before me. And (20) I took from Moab two hundred men, all first class (warriors), and set them against Jahaz and took it in order to attach it to (the district of) Dibon.

It was I (who) built Qarhoh, the wall of *the forests* and the wall of the citadel; I also built its gates and I built its towers and I built the king's house, and I made both of its reservoirs for water inside the town. And there was no cistern inside the town at Qarhoh, so I said to all the people, "Let each of you make (25) a cistern for himself in his house!" And I cut *beams* for Qarhoh with Israelite captives. I built Aroer, and I made the highway in the Arnon (valley); I built Beth-bamoth, for it had been destroyed; I built Bezer—



for it lay in ruins—with fifty men of Dibon, for all Dibon is (my) loyal dependency.

And I reigned [*in peace*] over the hundred towns which I had added to the land. And I built (30) [ . . . ] Medeba and Beth-diblathen and Beth-baal-meon, and I set there the [ . . . ] of the land. And as for Hauronen, there dwelt in it [ . . . . And] Chemosh said to me, "Go down, fight against Hauronen. And I went down [and I fought against the town and I took it], and Chemosh dwelt there in my time. . . .

## The Ostraca of Samaria

This name is applied to a homogeneous group of 63 docketts on Israelite potsherds which were found by G. A. Reisner in 1910, while excavating a floor-level from the first phase of the second period of palace construction at Samaria. Owing to a mistake in stratigraphy, which was subsequently corrected by J. W. Crowfoot and his associates, this level was first attributed to Ahab; it is now reasonably certain that it should be assigned to the reign of Jeroboam II (about 786-746 B.C.). The four regnal years mentioned on the Ostraca extend from the ninth to the seventeenth (about 778-770 B.C.). These documents, though jejune in themselves, are of great significance for the script, spelling, personal names, topography, religion, administrative system, and clan distribution of the period.

The documents were published first by G. A. Reisner in his rare book, *Israelite Ostraca from Samaria* (no date). A revised form of this study was then incorporated in the *Harvard Excavations at Samaria*, by Reisner, Fisher and Lyon (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), pp. 227-246. For a full bibliography up to 1933 see Driinger, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (Florence, 1934), pp. 21-68, especially pp. 66-68. Subsequent treatments deal mainly with the question of chronology or with the personal names; cf. especially J. W. Crowfoot, *The Buildings at Samaria* (London, 1942), pp. 5-9, 24-27; Albright, *BASOR*, 73, p. 21, n.38.

### *Samaria Ostrakon, No. 1*

In the tenth year. To Shamaryau (Shemariah) from Beer-yam, a jar of old wine. Pega (son of) Elisha, 2; Uzza (son of) . . . , 1; Eliba, 1; Baala (son of) Elisha, 1; Jedaiah, 1.

### *Samaria Ostrakon, No. 2*

In the tenth year. To Gaddiyau from Azzo. Abibaal, 2; Ahaz, 2; Sheba, 1; Merib-baal, 1.

### *Samaria Ostrakon, No. 18*

In the tenth year. From Hazeroth to Gaddiyau. A jar of fine oil.

### *Samaria Ostrakon, No. 30*

In the fifteenth year. From Shemida to Hillez (son of) Gaddiyau. Gera (son of) Hanniab.

### *Samaria Ostrakon, No. 55*

In the tenth year. (From the) vineyard of Yehau-eli. A jar of fine oil.

## *An Order for Barley from Samaria*

In 1932 several ostraca were found at Samaria, and were published the following year by E. L. Sukenik. One of them is outstanding because of its length and relative completeness. The script belongs to the eighth century, probably to its third quarter; it is characterized by extraordinarily long shafts of such letters as *l, m, n*, like other Israelite documents of this general period. The text is difficult, and the rendering below is tentative.

For the official publication see Sukenik, *PEQ*, 1933, pp. 152-154; the text has subsequently been treated by Driinger, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (Florence, 1934), pp. 71-72, and Albright, *PEQ*, 1936, pp. 211-15.

Baruch (son of) Shallum [ . . . ]

O Baruch . . . pay attention and [give (?) to . . . (son of)] Yimnah (Imnah) barley (to the amount of) two (or three?) measures.

## The Siloam Inscription

Accidentally discovered in 1880 in the rock wall of the lower entrance to the tunnel of Hezekiah south of the temple area in Jerusalem, the inscription is now in the Museum of the Ancient Orient at Istanbul. Its six lines occupy the lower half of a prepared surface, the upper part of which was found bare of inscription. It is, accordingly, almost certain that the first half of the original document is missing. Its contents and script point to the reign of Hezekiah (about 715-687 B.C.), a dating confirmed by II Kings 20:20 and especially II Chron. 32:30.

There is a very extensive bibliography, which is collected up to 1932 by Driinger, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (Florence, 1934), pp. 95-102. For later publications see Sabatino Moscati, *L'epigrafi ebraica antica 1935-1950* (Rome, 1951) and Albright, *JBL*, 62, p. 370. The language is perfect classical Hebrew prose, but the spelling is not entirely consistent; translations can easily be judged by the quality of Hebrew which they presuppose.

[ . . . when] (the tunnel) was driven through. And this was the way in which it was cut through:—While [ . . . ] (were) still [ . . . ] axe(s), each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to be cut through, [there was heard] the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was *an overlap* in the rock on the right [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed (the rock), each man toward his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the head(s) of the quarrymen was 100 cubits.

## The Lachish Ostraca

These ostraca were discovered in the ruins of the latest Israelite occupation at Tell ed-Duweir in southern Palestine, which unquestionably represents biblical Lachish. The first 18 were found by the late J. L. Starkey in 1935; three more (making 21 in all) were added during a supplementary campaign in 1938. Most of the ostraca were letters, while others were lists of names, etc., but only a third of the documents are preserved well enough to be reasonably intelligible throughout. Nearly all of the ostraca come from the latest occupation level