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JUDAHITE RELIGION IN LIGHT OF HEBREW OSTRACA FROM THE JESELSONN COLLECTION: A PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW

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It seems to us that a study of Hebrew ostraca from the Jeselsohn collection is appropriate for a volume in memory of Ada Yardeni, the outstanding palaeographer of West Semitic epigraphy, whose penultimate volume as single author was the *Jeselsohn Collection of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea* (Jerusalem, Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2016, xxxvii + 756 p.). Ostraca are an original documentation. They usually bear short, provisional inscriptions destined to be thrown away or copied to a papyrus or parchment roll. Most of them are messages, accounts, lists of names or scribal exercises. They pertain to daily life and deal with economic and social issues. They mention food, drink, money, taxes... Religion appears only incidentally.

Our decipherment of Hebrew ostraca from the Jeselsohn collection is still preliminary. This overview is thus mainly based on three published (JH¹ 414,² 432³ and 433⁴) and two dozen unpublished ostraca that are usually in good condition. We will first look at greeting formulae, used at the beginning of messages. We will then look at onomastics, and especially theophoric elements. Finally, we will present two ostraca that are of special interest for historians of religion.

I. Greeting Formulae in Messages

As already noted about the Arad and Lachish ostraca, greeting formulae are usually more developed⁵ when the message is sent by a

subordinate⁶ or someone of an inferior rank.⁷ When a superior writes to an inferior,⁸ the ostrakon usually starts with אל + name + ועתה followed by the body of the message.

Religious references appear mainly in two types of greeting formulae:

1. A blessing by Yhwh; more specifically: יהוה ברכתך ליהוה, “I bless you (sg.) by Yhwh”⁹

or:

יהוה ברכתכם ליהוה, “I bless you (pl.) by Yhwh”¹⁰

2. A wish that Yhwh watch over the recipient: יהוה ישאל לארני לשלם, “May Yhwh watch over the welfare of my master.”¹¹

This formula is reminiscent of Arad ostracon 18: יהוה ישאל לשלמך, “May Yhwh watch over your welfare.”

The first formula, that of blessing, already appears in Arad ostraca 16, 21 and 40, and may be compared to that of Clermont-Ganneau (hereafter CG) ostracon 70.¹² The second formula, wishing that Yhwh watch over the recipient, also appears in Arad ostracon 18 and is well known from the Bible (Cf. Gen 43:27; Exod 18:7; Judg 18:15; 1 Sam 10:4; 17:22; 25:5.6; 30:21; Jer 15:5). In Elephantine, it is attested in a developed variant form: שלם מראן אלה שמיא ישאל שגיא בכל עדן, “the welfare of our lord, may the God of Heaven seek after exceedingly at all times...” in the famous papyrus Cowley 30/31 (= TAD A4.7/8) sent to Bagohi, governor of Judea.

Whether in the blessing formula or in the wish that the deity watch over the recipient, the only god mentioned in the Jeselsohn ostraca is Yhwh, as is the case with the Arad ostraca. Moreover, Yhwh is mentioned alone, and not associated with the *asherah* as at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Kom.

II. Onomastics

Many names appear in messages, and they are even more numerous in lists of names and accounts. In the sample that we studied, about half of the proper names are Yahwistic; they usually feature the theophoric ending יהו.

1. Names in messages

Several hypocoristic names (גאלי, חבי, חשוב, יאוש, מיל, עבר, ראה, שכן, שלם אבצן, אחיק, בלגי,) and other names without theophoric element (עפר, פגי ברך, מלך, גשמי, מחל, עזרקם, עלבן יהו-) include: אליהו, אריהו, בניהו, גדליהו, גמריהו, דליהו, טביהו, ידעיהו, יהושע, כליהו, מיכיהו, נדביהו, נחמיהו, נריהו, נתניהו, פלטיהו, רפאיהו, שמעיהו.

No other theonym is mentioned, except for אל: נתנאל, אלזכר.

In JH 28:8, לענתי may be understood as a verb in the infinitive construct mood followed by a pronominal suffix: "(to) answer me"—unless it is a proper name derived from 'Anat, perhaps from the toponym Bēyt 'Anat (Josh 15:59). A reference to the theonym ענת, "Anat," thus remains uncertain; and even if ענתי could be a proper name, the reference to 'Anat would be indirect.

Most theophoric Yahwistic names are already attested in the Bible, sometimes in a variant form. Thus כליהו (JH 21:2), "Yhwh has grasped/supported," or "Yhwh has completed/perfected," is new but comparable to יהוכל, which is attested in the Bible (Jer 37:3; cf. 38:1) as well as epigraphy.¹³

2. Names in lists and accounts

Names that appear in lists or accounts are apparently similar, except that Yahwistic names are even more numerous:

- Yahwistic names: אחיהו, אמריהו, אשיהו, בניהו, בעדיהו, ברכיהו, דמליהו, דעויהו, גדליהו, גמריהו, הודויהו, זכריהו, חשיהו, יאזניהו, ידעיהו, יהובן, יחזיהו, יחמליהו, ירחמיהו, מחסיהו, מביהו, מעשיהו, נדביהו, נחמיהו, נריהו, נתניהו, סעריהו, פדיהו, צדקיהו, צפניהו, רפאיהו, שבניהו, שכניהו, שלמיהו;
- Other theophoric names: אליקם, אלנתן;
- Hypocoristic names: בקש, גדי, זכר, חבי, חגן, כלכל, מכן, עבר, עזר, שבי, שכן, שלם;
- Other forms: אחמלך, אחקם, לחן, מחכישע, שפן, שר, עכבר, ער, פגי, פשח(ו)ר, צמח, רשאי, שוא, שפן, שר.

Not only are most names Yahwistic, but these Yahwistic names are usually known from the Bible, if one takes into account the variant יהו/יה. Theophoric names that are absent from the Bible may usually be compared to biblical names and/or names attested in epigraphy. Thus:

- אשיהו is reminiscent of יאשיהו and is well attested in epigraphy on seals, bullae, and in the Arad ostraca.¹⁴
- בעדיהו, "Yhwh is with me," is already attested in sigillography;¹⁵ it may be compared to בעדיהו in Elephantine.¹⁶
- דמליהו, "Be quiet, still for Yhwh," is well attested in sigillography.¹⁷
- דעויהו is not in the Bible but may be compared to דעואל (Num 1:14); it means "Know/recognize Yhwh" and could be a prayer formula (Ps 100:3; cf. Jer 31:33). This name already appears in Elephantine under the form דעויהו.¹⁸
- חשיהו, "Yhwh made haste," seems new but may be compared to biblical and epigraphical חשי (2 Sam 15:32; 1 Kgs 4:16; 1 Chr 27:33¹⁹).
- יהובן is probably a variant of יהובנה attested in epigraphy²⁰ and may be compared to biblical בניהו.

– יחמליהו, “May Yhwh have mercy,” is absent from the Bible but attested a few times in Palaeo-Hebrew epigraphy.²¹ It is also found in Aramaic documents from Egypt.²²

– סעריהו is probably already attested in sigillography.²³

– רפאיהו may be compared to Biblical רפא (1 Chr 8:2) and is well attested in sigillography.²⁴ Greeting formulae and onomastics convey the general impression that Judahite religion recognized Yhwh as its only deity—provided that, in onomastics, אל has a generic meaning of “god.” However, two ostraca from the Jeselsohn collection may nuance this conclusion.

III. Ostrakon JH 417

The sherd bearing the inscription measures 9.8×105×110 mm. It comes from a jar, light brown on the exterior (10 YR 7/3) and brown on the interior (10 YR 6/3) with a grey side. The Hebrew inscription was written on the exterior at -5° to wheel marks.

The ostrakon is unfortunately incomplete and fragmentary. The upper part is probably primitive, but at least two pieces are missing on the right-hand side: the upper angle probably contained part of the first letter, whereas the lower piece contained the first two to four letters of lines 4 and following. The lower part is incomplete, as indicated by the remains of the top of line 8; the number of missing lines is unknown. The left-hand side of the ostrakon is likewise broken, so that the end of the lines is missing, their original length being unknown.

Here is our reading of the preserved section:

Provisional Reading

1. כז/ית.פרה.בן.ס.]?
2. אשתה.אפה וע?]
3. לבעל.שמים.ו.]?
4. [--]תה.לה.לאש?]
5. [--]בת.פרה?]
6. [--]תה.ו.]?
7. [--]ת.בעל.שמים?]
8. [--]חר?]

Tentative Translation

1. *Spoil/reprobation/house* of Padah son of S..[?]
2. his wife, *he baked* and ..[?]
3. to Baal-Shamayim/the master of heavens and[?]
4. [*you gave her/his wif*]e to him as a *wi[fe/fire-offering?*
5. [...] the daughter of Padah [?]
6. [...] and [?]
7. [...].. Baal-*Sha[mayim?*
8. [...]?[?]

Notes

Line 1. The reading of the first word remains somewhat uncertain. Traces of the head of the first letter remain very fragmentary; the descender features an elbow angled ca. 100°, which is more pronounced than ב on line 5, whereas the descender of two ב in בעל (lines 3 and 7) are not angled but slightly curved at the end. If it is a ב, the sharp elbow could be due to its initial position. The second letter seems more cursive and may be a ז with a shorter lower stroke and a cursive hook at the end of the two parallel strokes. Alternatively, but less likely, this letter could be interpreted as a י with a strange shape, different from the one in line 3. The word is therefore likely to be read כזת or, less likely, בית. Both words are unparalleled at the beginning of an ostrakon; there is no characteristic formula indicating the beginning of a message, and it is apparently not a list of names either.

כזת would probably be the construct state of כזה, which may either be connected to the root כז, cf. Biblical Hebrew *bizzāh*, “looting, booty,” (Ezra 9:7; Dan 11:24), or to the root כז, “to despise,” cf. Biblical Hebrew *būzāh*, “contempt, object of contempt” (Neh 3:36, where it is associated to *herpāh*, “shame, object of shame”). The alternative reading בית, which is less likely from a palaeographic standpoint, would be easily understood: “house.”

This first word is followed by פרה, a proper name well attested in sigillography,²⁵ followed by its patronym whose first letter is visible before the break; this name will appear again l. 5.

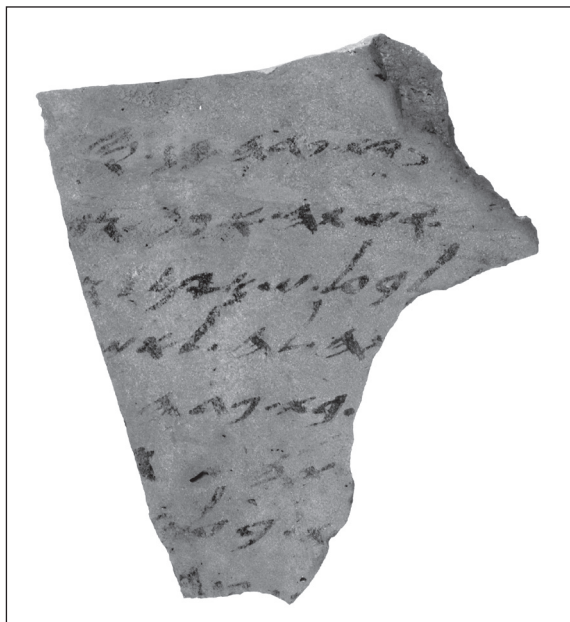


Figure 1. Ostrakon JH 417. Color photograph after wetting. (© Zev Radovan)

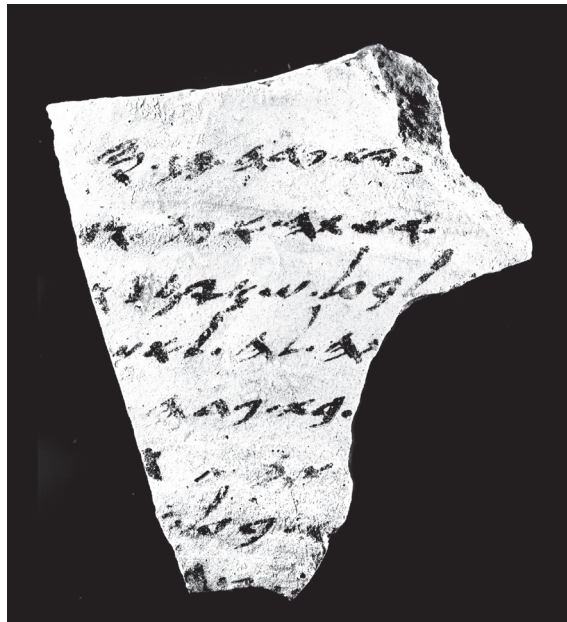


Figure 2. Ostrakon JH 417. Multispectral imaging (central wavelength: 830 nm) with further digital enhancement. (© Michael Langlois)

Line 2. The interpretation of אשתה, “his wife,” seems clear; the following word, אפה, may be a masculine qatal form. The word following אפה begins with וע and could be a verb such as עשה, “to make,” but that would be a pure conjecture.

Line 3. The reading seems assured. Note the word separator between בעל and שמים, whereas the first attestations of the deity Baalshamayim in Phoenician (Yaḥimilk ca. 950 BCE) and Aramaic (Afis, beginning of the 8th century BCE) were written without any word separator. The presence of such a separator here could allow for an independent translation of the two words: “master of heavens.”

Line 4. The text is very fragmentary and its exact meaning uncertain. At least two reconstructions are possible:

– [נת]תה.לה.לאש[ה], “you [gave] her to him as a wife,” an expression well attested in Biblical Hebrew with several variants (Gen 16:2; 29:28; 30:4.9...). Alternatively, the same graphical reconstruction could be understood: “you

[gave] it to him (*i.e.* to Baal-Shamayim?) as an offer[ing].”

– [אש]תה.לה.לאש[ה], “his wi[fe] to him (*i.e.* to Baal-Shamayim?) as an offer[ing/wife].”

Line 5. The reading בת.פרה, “daughter of Padah,” seems clear; it was perhaps preceded by her name.

Line 6. The remains are untranslatable, except for the initial ו, which is probably the conjunction “and.”

Line 7. Even though the second word has almost completely disappeared, the beginning of a possible ש suggests that this is another attestation of Baal-Shamayim as in line 3.

Line 8. The top of at least three letters is visible before the break, but their decipherment remains very uncertain.

This ostrakon apparently mentions three characters: Padah, his wife, and his daughter.

Moreover, it mentions at least once—and likely twice—the syntagm **בעל.שמים**. The inscription also refers to baking. Since this ostrakon dates to the end of the First Temple era, it is tempting to connect it to two passages from the Bible: (1) Jer 7:18, according to which women bake cakes **כונים** (*kawanîm*) for the Queen of Heaven, probably Ishtar (cf. also Jer 44:17–19.25);²⁶ (2) 2 Kgs 23:4–5, which recounts Josiah’s reform and mentions Baal and heavenly hosts. Commentators²⁷ have already suggested that the Baal that was rejected at that time was Baal-Shamayin/m,²⁸ the great Aramean god of Phoenician origin.²⁹

If these connections are justified, the fact that the ostrakon seems to begin with *BZT* could indicate that it is a reprobation of a religious practice condemned by Josiah’s reform and by Jeremiah, whether the case is real or fictitious. Unfortunately, given the state of preservation of this ostrakon, its interpretation remains highly conjectural.

IV. Ostrakon JH 208

This ostrakon measures 96×88×6–10 mm. It is written in black ink on both sides, with 9 lines on its convex side and 5 lines on its concave side. The body sherd comes from an Iron Age II jar; its exterior is light gray (2.5Y7/2) and its interior and ware are light reddish brown (2.5YR6/4), with many large white grits. Exterior and interior were pitted after the ostrakon was discarded, so that the patina covers ca. 50 % of the surface, including the writing on a few spots. On the exterior, lines are written on a slightly convex smooth surface at ca. 50° to wheel marks; on the interior, lines are written on a slightly concave, somewhat uneven surface, at ca. 80° to wheel marks.

Here is our reading:

Provisional Reading

Convex Side

1. [א]-ל-ל-ל-ל-ועת.ב
2. -----
3. -----

4. -----כ-
5. -ואפר.אשלח.מ
6. חרה.כסף.כי.
7. אשר.שלחתה.
8. למרפא.ושלח.
9. ת.לי.

Concave Side

1. ביהוהו.
2. כ/פבל.נשבעת
3. י.כי.מחרה.
4. אשלח.כי.אהב.
5. אני.

Tentative Translation

Convex Side

1. [T]o .l..... And now: .
2. ?
3. ?
4. ?
5. and a bandage. I will send to-
6. morrow silver for
7. what you sent
8. as remedy. Then you will send
9. to me.

Concave Side

1. By Yhwh and
2. by Bel, I swear
3. that tomorrow
4. I will send; for I am a fr-
5. iend.

Notes

Obverse, Line 1. The reading of the first line is very conjectural; it could be primitive and thus preserve the beginning of the message, with the name of the recipient introduced by the preposition **אל**. At the end of the line, **ועת** would mark the beginning of the message body.

Line 5. The reading of this line remains uncertain. At the beginning, reading **אפר**, probably “bandage” (see 1 Kgs 20:38.41), seems possible. The sender apparently states that he will send something to the recipient; the verb **שלח** probably occurs again in lines 7 and 8, as well as on the reverse, in line 4, where the occurrence is clear.

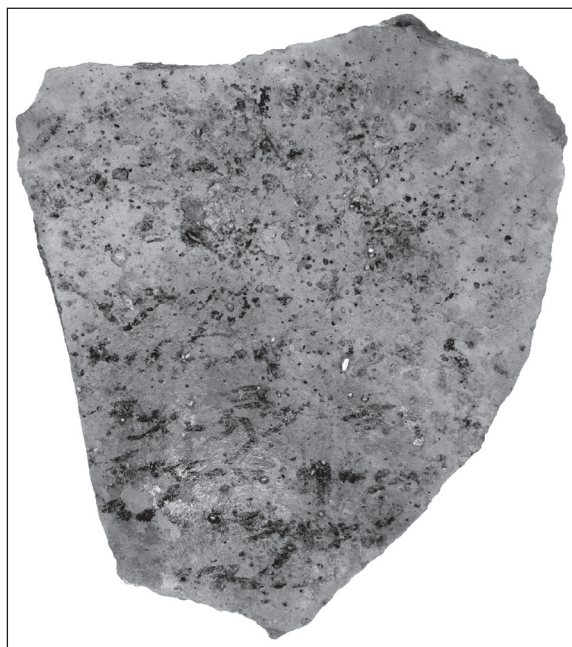


Figure 3. Ostrakon JH 208, convex side. Color photograph after wetting. (© Zev Radovan)

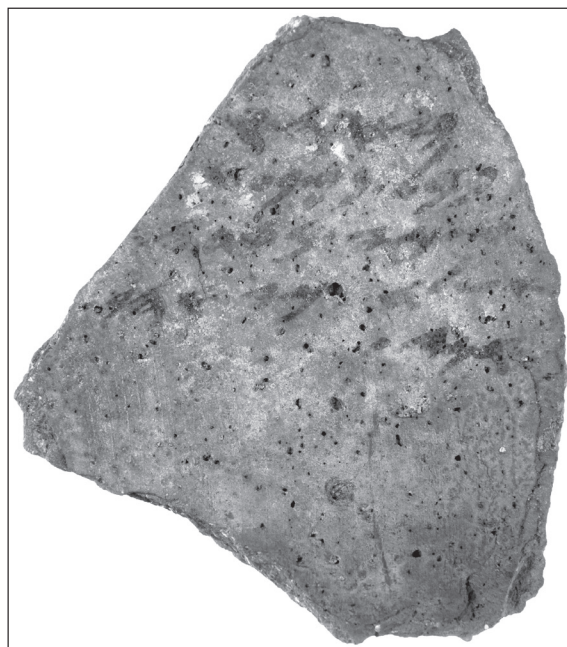


Figure 5. Ostrakon JH 208, concave side. Color photograph after wetting. (© Zev Radovan)



Figure 4. Ostrakon JH 208, convex side. Multispectral imaging (central wavelength: 830 nm) with further digital enhancement. (© Michael Langlois)

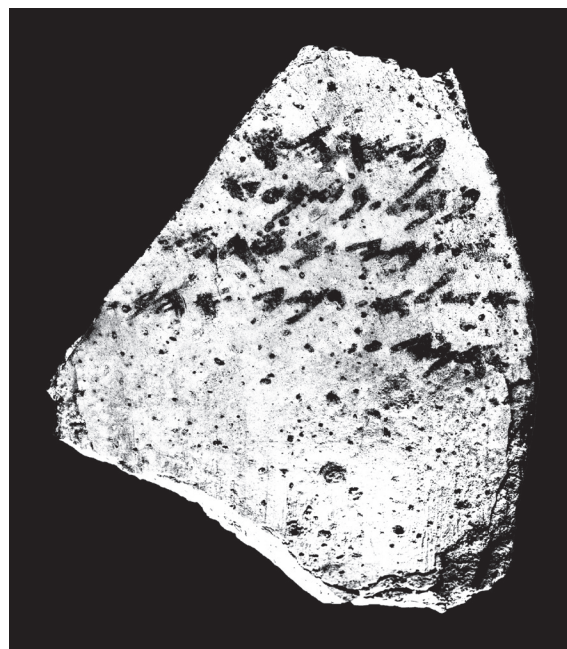


Figure 6. Ostrakon JH 208, concave side. Multispectral imaging (central wavelength: 695 nm) with further digital enhancement. (© Michael Langlois)

Lines 5–6. At the end of line 5 and beginning of line 6, reading *מחרה*, “tomorrow,” is uncertain: ה is conjectural, but the word is clearer on the reverse (line 3); see comments below.

Line 8. At the beginning of line 8, reading *למרפא* remains uncertain. *מרפא* should probably be interpreted as the well-known substantive “healing, remedy” (see e.g. Jer 8:15; 14:19; 33:6 etc.) or, less likely, as a substantivized participle “healer.” The syntagm *למרפא* may thus be translated “as remedy,” “for healing” or “for/to the healer.”

At the middle of line 8, ו is uncertain: the traces are compatible with א, ו or ה. The context seems to favor a consecutive *waw*.

Reverse, Lines 1–2. These lines preserve an oath “By Yhwh and by Bel,” which is new; see below.

Line 3. If the reading is confirmed, the suffix ה after *מחר* would be new but could be compared to Biblical Hebrew *מחרת*.

Line 4. *אהב* is apparently a participle or substantive “friend.” The final formula *כי אני אהב.אני*, “for I am a friend,” echoes messages beginning by *אהבך*, “Your friend...,” attested in Arad ostracon 16³⁰ and in several ostraca of the Jeselsohn collection.

The reverse of this ostracon could be somewhat independent from the obverse and written as an afterthought. On the other hand, both sides exhibit similar script and content, including the verb *אשלח* “I will send.” If the reverse preserves the end of the message, the fact that its top, right and left margins are preserved suggests that these three edges are primitive, which means that the corresponding margins on the obverse—bottom, right, and left,

respectively—are likewise primitive. Since the upper edge of the obverse seems to be primitive as well, the ostracon could thus be complete.

“Bel” is a well-known appellation of Marduk, the Babylonians’ main deity,³¹ frequently mentioned in the first-millennium BCE Near East. This theonym is actually mentioned in Isaiah 46:1;³² Jer 50:2; 51:44 as well as in apocrypha (Baruch, Bel and the Dragon³³).

The phrase “By Yhwh and by Bel, I swear,” which associates Yhwh to another deity in an oath, can be compared to Aramaic formulae in two Elephantine ostraca³⁴ and in a Daskyleion inscription:

- “Bel” appears first in a list of four deities including “Nabu, Shamash and Nergal” in CG 277, line 3. This short list of deities is apparently an Aramaic schoolboy exercise;³⁵ the list itself is probably a classical list of deities used to learn Aramaic—during the Achaemenid period, at least, but perhaps already in the Neo-Babylonian empire.
- An Egyptian deity appears associated to Yhwh in a greeting blessing (CG 70cc:3): “I bless you by Yaho (יהה) and by Ḥnum (ח>נ<ם).³⁶
- The author of inscription Daskyleion I adjures the passer-by “(by) Bel and Nabu” (הומיתך (בל ונבו).³⁷

The mention of “Bel” besides “Yhwh” in JH 208 could reveal strong Aramaic and/or Neo-Babylonian influence after Nebuchadnezzar’s first campaign (597 BCE) and at the eve of the second campaign ending with the fall of Jerusalem (587 BCE). This time frame—when Jehoiachin, king of Judah, was already deported to Babylon together with his officers as well as craftsmen and smiths (2 Kgs 24:11–16)—would fit the approximate paleographical dating.

Notes

- 1 Hereafter, JH stands for the Jeselsohn collection of Hebrew inscriptions.
- 2 E. Eshel, "A Late Iron Age Ostrakon Featuring the Term לערכך," *IEJ* 53, 2003, pp. 151–163; S. Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past. Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, Jerusalem, Carta, 2008, pp. 190–193.
- 3 E. Eshel and H. Eshel, "A Late Iron Age Hebrew Letter Containing the Word *nōqedīm*," in C. Cohen et alii eds., *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Post-Biblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul*, Winona Lake IN, Eisenbrauns, 2008, pp. 572–584; S. Ahituv, *Echoes*, 194–199.
- 4 S. Ahituv, *Echoes*, pp. 199–205; S. Ahituv and A. Yardeni, "Silver, Pistachio and Wheat: Two Letters of the Seventh–Sixth Centuries BCE," in D. Sivan et alii eds., *Zaphenath-Paneah. Linguistic Studies Presented to Elisha Qimron*, Beer-Sheva, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2009, p. 15–28 (in Hebrew) and 157*. [English version: "Silver, Pistachio and Wheat: Two Letters Dealing with Deliveries of Silver and Commodities on a Seventh-Sixth Centuries BCE Ostrakon," in J. Elayi and J.-M. Durand eds., *Bible et Proche-Orient. Mélanges André Lemaire I*, Transeuphratène 44, Pandé, Gabalda, 2014, p. 57–66.]
- 5 The "Noqedim" ostrakon (JH 432) is an exception.
- 6 Cf., for instance, A. Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques I. Les ostraca*, LAPO 9, Paris, Cerf, 1977, p. 98 (Lachish ostraca 2–6, 8–9). See also Arad ostraca 18, 21, 40 and Ahituv, *Echoes*, p. 205.
- 7 Cf., for instance, Arad ostrakon 16.
- 8 Cf., for instance, Arad ostraca 1–14, 17. See also the messages sent "To Shallum" (JH 23, 24).
- 9 JH 433 "second letter"; JH 26, 27.
- 10 JH 22.
- 11 JH 28, 29.
- 12 See H. Lozachmeur, *La collection Clermont-Ganneau: ostraca, épigraphes sur jarre, étiquettes de bois I*, Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres 35, Paris, 2006, p. 236–237; D. Schwiderski, "Epigraphische Elemente in den neuveröffentlichten aramäischen Ostrakonbriefen aus Elephantine (Sammlung Clermont-Ganneau)," in A.F. Botta ed., *In the Shadow of Bezalel. Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezalel Porten*, CHANE 60, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2013, p. 159–182, esp. 166.
- 13 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 368; WSS, p. 503.
- 14 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 292; idem, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions, Volume 2*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 137; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Epigraphy. The Joseph Chaim Kaufman Collection: Seals, Bullae, Handles, Second Volume*, Jaffa, Archaeological Center Publications, 2011, p. 285.
- 15 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 316; idem, *Volume 2*, 2004, p. 147.
- 16 W. Kornfeld, *Onomastica aramaica aus Ägypten*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 333 Band, Wien, 1978, p. 45.
- 17 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 331; idem, *Volume 2*, p. 151; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae: The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection*, Tel Aviv, Archaeological Center Publication, 2003, p. 390; idem, *Biblical Period Epigraphy*, p. 287.
- 18 W. Kornfeld, *Onomastica aramaica aus Ägypten*, 1978, p. 47.
- 19 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 358; idem, *Volume 2*, p. 160; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Epigraphy*, p. 289.
- 20 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 366.
- 21 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 373; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Epigraphy*, n° 612; A. Lemaire, "Quatre nouveaux ostraca paléo-hébreux," *Semítica* 54, 2012, p. 33–49, esp. 37.
- 22 W. Kornfeld, *Onomastica aramaica aus Ägypten*, p. 54.
- 23 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 450; idem, *Volume 2*, p. 202.
- 24 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 487; idem, *Volume 2*, p. 214; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae*, p. 428; idem, *Biblical Period Epigraphy*, p. 300.
- 25 G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 1991, p. 469; R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae*, p. 423; idem, *Biblical Period Epigraphy*, p. 297.
- 26 See, for instance, M. Delcor, "Le culte de la Reine du Ciel selon Jér 7,18 ; 44,17–19.25 et ses survivances. Aspects de la religion populaire féminine aux alentours de l'Exil en Juda et dans les communautés juives d'Égypte," in W.C. Delsman et alii eds., *Von Kanaan bis Kerala. Festschrift J.P.M. van der Ploeg*, AOAT 211, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982, p. 101–122 (= M. Delcor, *Environnement et Tradition de l'Ancien Testament*, AOAT 228, Neukirchen, 1990, pp. 138–159). This practice is probably also attested in Kition (CIS I,86): see, for instance O. Masson & M. Szyner,

- Recherches sur les Phéniciens à Chypre*, Hautes Études Orientales 3, Genève/Paris, Droz, 1972, p. 20–21, 48–49.
- 27 See, for instance, M. Delcor, “Les cultes étrangers en Israël au moment de la réforme de Josias d’après 2 R 23. Études de religions sémitiques comparés,” in A. Caquot and M. Delcor eds., *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, AOAT 212, Neukirchen, 1981, p. 91–123, esp. 100 (= M. Delcor, *Environnement et Tradition de l’Ancien Testament*, AOAT 228, 1990, p. 105–137); A. Lemaire, “La réforme du roi Josias et les cultes araméens à Jérusalem (VII^e s. av. n. è.),” in G. B. Lanfranchi et alii eds., *Leggo! Studies Presented to Frederick Mario Fales*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2012, p. 433–441, esp. 434.
- 28 On this god, see H. Niehr, “JHWH in der Rolle des Baalšamem,” in W. Dietrich and M.A. Klopfenstein eds., *Ein Gott Allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, OBO 139, Freiburg/Göttingen, 1994, p. 307–326; W. Röllig, “Baal-Shamem,” in *DDD*, col. 283–288; K. Engelken, “Ba’alšamem: Ein Auseinandersetzung mit der Monographie von H. Niehr,” *ZAW* 106, 1996, p. 233–248; H. Niehr, *Ba’alšamem. Studien zu Herkunft, Geschichte und Rezeptionsgeschichte eines phönikischen Gottes*, OLA 123, Studia Phoenicia XVII, Leuven, Peeters, 2003; G. Davies, “Comparative Aspects of the History of Israelite Religion,” *ZAW* 125, 2013, p. 177–197, esp. 185, 188–89.
- 29 J.F. Healey, “Aramaean Heritage,” in H. Niehr ed., *The Aramaeans in Ancient Syria*, Handbook of Oriental Studies. The Near and Middle East 106, Leiden, 2014, p. 391–402, esp. 395; see also H. Niehr, “Outlook: Aramaeans Outside of Syria,” *ibidem*, p. 273–390, esp. 336.
- 30 A. Mendel-Geberovich, A. Shaus, S. Faigenbaum-Golovin, B. Sober, M. Cordonsky, E. Piasetzky, and I. Finkelstein, “A Brand New Old Inscription: Arad Ostrakon 16 Rediscovered via Multispectral Imaging,” *BASOR* 378, 2017, 113–126, esp. 114–116.
- 31 See, for instance, W. Sommerfeld, *Die Stellung Marduks in der babylonischen Religion*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982, p. 176–183; E.R. Dalglish, “Bel,” in D.N. Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary I*, New York, 1992, p. 652–653; T. Abusch, “Marduk,” in *DDD*, col. 1014–1026; H.D. Baker, “The Statue of Bel in the Ninurta Temple at Babylon,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 52, 2011, p. 117–120.
- 32 See H. Schaudig, “‘Bel Bows, Nabû Stoops!’ The Prophecy of Isaiah xlii 1–2 as a Reflection of Babylonian ‘Processional Omens,’” *Vetus Testamentum* 58, 2008, p. 557–572.
- 33 Cf. J. De Bruyn, “Constructing Realities: Bel and the Dragon: Identifying Some Research Lacunae,” *Old Testament Essays* 27, 2014, p. 839–859; D. Amara, “Bel and the Dragon: The Relationship between Theodotion and the Old Greek,” in C. Westerman ed., *From Author to Copyist: Essays on the Composition, Redaction, and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Zipi Talshir*, Winona Lake IN, 2015, p. 125–147.
- 34 “Bel” also appears in papyrus fragment TAD C1.22 l:1; but it is too fragmentary and its context remains uncertain.
- 35 See A. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy and History in the Achaemenid Period (539–332 BCE)*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 2013, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 60–61; idem, “Aramaic Literacy and School in Elephantine,” *MAARAV* 21, 2014 [2017], p. 295–307, esp. 300–301. For the traditional interpretation of this ostrakon as a message, see recently B. Becking, “Exchange, Replacement, or Acceptance? Two Examples of Lending Deities among Ethnic Groups in Elephantine,” in M. Popović et alii eds., *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World*, Supplement to JSJ 178, Leiden, 2017, p. 30–43.
- 36 A. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, p. 52–53, 60.
- 37 See for instance J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions II. Aramaic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1975, p. 157; A. Lemaire, “Les inscriptions araméennes de Daskyleion,” in T. Bakir ed., *Achaemenid Anatolia. Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Anatolia in the Achaemenid Period, Badirna 15–18 August 1997*, Uitgraven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 92, Leiden, 2001, p. 21–25, esp. 22–23.