A Group of Hebrew Names of the Ninth Century B.C.

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In the years 1908–1910 Harvard University was engaged in exploring and excavating the site of the city of Samaria. Among the most interesting, if not the most interesting, of the objects discovered were seventy-five *ostraka*, that is to say, potsherds on which, after fracture, inscriptions were written in ink with a reed pen. Of these inscriptions Professor Lyon of Harvard University gave some account in an article entitled 'Hebrew Ostraca from Samaria,' and published in the *Harvard Theological Review* for January 1911. This article was based on a special report of Professor Reisner, who was in charge of the excavations. At the time notice was taken of Professor Lyon's article in more than one publication: and I may refer in particular to an article entitled, 'The Discoveries at Samaria,' by the late Dr. Driver in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* for April 1911, in which some extravagant rumours as to the nature of the discoveries at Samaria were corrected, and to Father Abel's contribution to the *Revue Biblique* for April 1911, pp. 290–293, which contained some useful suggestions for identifying some of the places mentioned in the inscriptions.

One of the false rumours to which I have alluded claimed that there had been found at Samaria 'an Assyrian cuneiform inscription mentioning the name of Ahab and the contemporary king of Assyria.'[1] But although Ahab's name had not been found, the names of more than thirty individuals, who were probably his contemporaries, occur in the inscriptions and were communicated by Professor Lyon in his article. Presumably many other individuals of the same generation are mentioned on the inscriptions not given by Professor Lyon.

A group of Hebrew names of the ninth century B.C. is on many grounds sufficiently interesting to have attracted at the time and since more attention than these have obviously done. And for myself such a group had a peculiar interest. In my *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (1896), with a view to bringing out the different complexion of *groups* of Hebrew names belonging to different periods or different circles, I analyzed on pp. 183 ff. eight groups of names; the first group was of pre-Davidic names, the second of contemporaries of David, the third of contemporaries of Jeremiah. The chronological gap between the second and third of these groups was regrettably great; but, as I was obliged to say at the time, 'unfortunately no sufficiently long and typical list of names' from the intervening period could be obtained. The *ostraka* from Samaria supply what was then lacking.

A very good reason why scholars have been slow to discuss this singularly interesting group of names or other features in the inscriptions is to be found in the fact that Professor Lyon's article contained only a selection from the inscriptions, and that only in translation. Unfortunately we remain in the same imperfect state of information; still no facsimiles, still even no Hebrew text of the inscriptions, still not all of the inscriptions even in translation are published. And that being so, since it is always disagreeable to express a judgment on partial evidence when other evidence is known to exist but is kept inaccessible, I should still refrain from discussing the names but for one reason. Learned bodies may observe a dignified leisure in publishing evidence which they have collected, but editors of encyclopædias grow insistent; and one of these has called upon me to redeem a promise which I made some years ago to contribute an article on Hebrew proper names to the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. I have therefore been compelled to make the best use I could of the partial and imperfect evidence with regard to these names on the Samaritan *ostraka*; and as a result of my examination certain points of some general interest have come to light, and it seems possible to make also one or two suggestions that may be of use in editing the complete material.

The date assigned for the *ostraka*, viz. the

[1] See *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1911, p. 2.

ninth century B.C., and in particular, perhaps, the reign of Ahab (yet see below), I accept provisionally from Professor Lyon. The *ostraka*, we are told, were discovered at the same level as a vase inscribed with the name of Osorkon II. of Egypt, who, if correctly assigned to the years 874–853 B.C. (Breasted), was a contemporary of Ahab (*c.* 876–854 B.C.). The script also may point somewhat decisively to the ninth century, but on this point the information given is vague. The script on the *ostraka* is said to be 'practically identical with that of the Siloam Tunnel inscriptions'; it is also said to be the same as that of the Moabite stone; the latter certainly belongs to the ninth century and mentions Ahab of Israel as contemporary with its author Mesha of Moab.

But the Siloam inscription and the inscription of Mesha, though they agree in showing the ancient Phœnician script as distinct from the later square Hebrew characters, are far from being identical scripts. On the other hand, while most authorities have assigned the Siloam inscription to the eighth century B.C., the differences from the Moabite inscription are such that others have assigned it to a date some centuries later. Whether, as Professor Lyon claims, the *ostraka* will really settle 'at a stroke the disputed question whether that inscription [*i.e.* the Siloam inscription] can be as old as the time of Hezekiah' will really turn on two other questions: (1) whether there is a sufficiency of evidence, independent of epigraphy, to prove that the *ostraka* were written in the ninth century; (2) whether the alphabet used in the *ostraka* more closely approximates to that on the Moabite stone, or that on the Siloam inscription; for since these two alphabets differ, that of the *ostraka* cannot be identical with both of them.

I accept provisionally, then, the ninth century B.C. as the date of the *ostraka*; and start, therefore, from the assumption that the names of contemporaries mentioned on them are names of individuals living in the ninth century B.C. If, when the full archæological and epigraphical evidence is available, it is less conclusive as to date than we could wish, then I think it will be found that the general complexion of this group of names favours at all events a date between David and Jeremiah, *i.e.* between the tenth and the seventh centuries, and points somewhat clearly to a date nearer the earlier than the later term.

The form of the twelve inscriptions given in translation by Professor Lyon is in general similar, though not identical, in all the inscriptions. One may serve as illustration here: No. 12 reads: 'In the tenth year. From Yaṣat. A jar of fine oil. For 'Akhino'am.'

Professor Lyon, no doubt rightly, regards Yaṣat (which follows the preposition 'from') as the name of a place, 'Akhino'am (which follows the preposition 'for') as the name of a person. He also regards as names of places Shaphtan and Saq; these also in the inscriptions given by him follow the preposition 'from,' and that, as in the inscription given above, in the clause immediately following the date. Whether the other place names cited by him — SKM (= Shechem), Khaṣeroth, 'Azâ, Qaṣah—also stood in similar clauses we are not informed; but I am inclined to suspect that they did, and that this fact has weighed with Professor Lyon in treating them also as (probably) names of places; for with the exception of Shechem and Khaṣeroth, which, if written חצרת, is identical in form with a name in Nu 33, none of the names cited in this paragraph occur as place names in the Old Testament, though, since the appearance of Professor Lyon's article, Father Abel, as I have already remarked, has pointed out resemblances to some of these names in modern place names of Central Palestine. But not all the names following 'from' even in the inscriptions which he gives are classed by Professor Lyon as place names; Sarar is not classified at all; 'Abi'ezer, Shemida', and Khelek, all of which occur in the clauses immediately following the date, are classed as personal names; so also is Elmathan, which Professor Lyon considers to be an error for Elnathan. This last name occurs not like the rest immediately after the date clause, but after the names of the recipients (introduced by 'for') which in turn follow the clause 'from Abiezer'; *i.e.* 'from Elmathan' is a second 'from' clause in the same inscription.

Now, were the names Sarar, Shemida, Abiezer, Khelek, which are preceded by the preposition 'from,' like 'Akhino'am and other names which are introduced by the preposition 'for,' names of individuals living when the *ostraka* were written? There is, of course, nothing in the mere use of the preposition 'from' to indicate that a geographical rather than a personal name follows; on the other hand, in a group of closely related inscriptions, such as these *ostraka* are, similarity of formula is

to be expected; and therefore, if origin was certainly defined by place in some cases, it is safer, in the absence of convincing reasons to the contrary, to assume that it was not defined by individuals in other cases. But have we not convincing reasons in the case of at least Abiezer and Shemida to assume that some of the names following 'from' are personal, and not geographical? Are not Abiezer and Shemida, primarily at least, personal names? We must immediately not merely admit but insist that Abiezer and Shemida were *primarily* personal names: the compounds with Ab, Abi form an important and numerous group of Hebrew personal names, and the first element of Shemida appears also in Samuel, and in all probability has its analogy in the early Babylonian personal names, derived perhaps from the western Semitic, Sumu-abi and Sumu-la-ilu, and in a group of South Arabian personal names including Sumhu-kariba, Sumhu-apika, and Sumhu-yada'a, of which the last is the exact equivalent of Shemida, which should rather be pronounced Shemyada'.[1] Sarar and Khelek are more ambiguous; Khelek means *portion*, and, like Khelkath (E.V. Helkath) with the same meaning, might well be a geographical name: still it could, if need be, be explained as a personal name. If all other names following 'from' were geographical, Khelek might safely be treated as geographical also; and even if some of the names in question are geographical and some personal, the probability that Khelek was geographical would be greater than that it was personal.

Shemida, Abiezer, and perhaps Khelek, were *primarily* personal names; but are they in these inscriptions names of *contemporary individuals*? That is a fresh question, and it is by no means certain that it should be answered in the affirmative. For the three names in question appear together in the Old Testament as the names of Manassite (Gileadite) *clans* (Jos 17^2, Nu 26^{29-32}); and it is certain that one at least of these clans, Abiezer, existed long before the ninth century B.C. (Jg 8^2 $6^{11, 24}$); and, though the other clans are mentioned only in P and Chronicles, they may well have been equally ancient. I note further that the name of another Manassite clan, Shechem, mentioned in the same Old Testament passages, occurs in these inscriptions. I suggest that the names preceded by the preposition 'from' in the clauses following the date define the origin of the produce by reference to the place whence it came, or the clan (but not the individual) who supplied it; then the rather large proportion of the names of Manassite clans to the whole of these place or clan names is reasonably explained: for produce supplied to Samaria might well come largely from the neighbouring Manassite country. On the other hand, if four or, treating Shechem as geographical, three of the six names of Manassite clans reappear here as names of *individuals* living in the ninth century, we have a curious coincidence. The unpublished inscriptions may increase or diminish the probability of my suggestion; meantime the possibility, not to say the probability, that Abiezer, Shemida, Khelek were not individuals who received their names in the ninth century, but clans who had then already borne these names for centuries, had better be kept in view.

One inscription which contains the clause 'from Abiezer' also contains, at its close in the copy used by Professor Lyon, the clause 'from Elmathan.' Professor Lyon considers this to be an error for 'from Elnathan'; Elnathan is of course a personal name. If the inscription actually contains the name Elnathan, then in one case at least the name of an individual follows the preposition 'from' though not in a clause that occupies the same position as those which we have so far considered. If אלמתן is the reading, the nature of the name is less obvious.

I conclude this part of the discussion by grouping together (1) the names cited by Professor Lyon as names of places; (2) the further names which appear to me to be possibly names of places or clans, and therefore like those under (1) anterior to the ninth century. I mark with an asterisk the names identical with names of Manassite clans. The group as a whole, or in its two parts, has a significant difference of complexion from the names which we have yet to consider.

(1)		(2)	
Shechem	*	'Abi'ezer	*
Khaseroth		Shemîda'	*
Shaptan		Kheleq	*
'Azâ		Sarar	
Yaṣat			
Raṣah			
Saq			

[1] Cp. S. R. Driver, *Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*[2], pp. 18 f.

In passing now to the names of contemporary individuals mentioned in the *ostraka*, I give at once a list composed from the names given in the list on p. 141 of Professor Lyon's article, together with others not included in his list but incidentally mentioned in his article. The names which, though treated by Professor Lyon as personal, I have just shown may rather be names of clans or places I repeat in this list, but enclose them in square brackets; I also bracket one other name for reasons given below. The list of contemporary individuals is as follows:—

ʾAbibaʿal	Khanan
[ʾAbiʿezer]	Khananʿam
ʾAbinoʿam	Yedaʿyo
ʾAkhimelek	Yôyadaʿ
ʾAkhinoʿam	Yôyashîb
ʾAphsakh	Yôʿash
ʾElâ	Maribaʿal
ʾElîsh (? = ʾElîshaʿ)	Maranyo
ʾElîshaʿ	Nathan
ʾElbâ	ʿAbdâ
[El$^{n}_{m}$athan]	ʿEgelyo
ʾAsâ	Uzzah
Baʿala	Raphâ
Baʿalzamar	Shebaʿ
[Baʿalâzakar]	[Shemîdaʿ]
Baʿalmeʿoni	Shemaryo
Gadyo	Zeker
Gera	
Kheles	
[Khelek]	

Between this list and that which precedes it, it may suffice to call attention to one difference of complexion: in the first list less than a fifth of the names are compounds, in the second more than a half.

With regard to the personal names, Professor Lyon has already pointed out that a great many of them occur in the account of the reign of David. What I wish to make clear is that the *group* as a whole resembles the group of names of David's contemporaries in 2 S 9–20 (which I have classified in *H.P.N.* pp. 272), with certain differences pointing to a slight development towards what we find in the later groups of Jeremiah's contemporaries, and of Ezra's contemporaries whether lay (Ezr 10$^{25-43}$) or priestly (Ezr 10$^{18-22}$). Had I guessed beforehand what features a list of names of Ahab's contemporaries would possess I should have said: Probably half or more than half the names will be compounds, more than half of these compounds will contain either the element Yah(weh) or El, the former being much more numerous than the latter; the remaining compounds will include names containing Ab, Aḥ, ʿAm, possibly also compounds with Melek, Baʿal, and ʾAdon. Finally, in the compounds with Yah, the divine name is likely to be as often the second element as the first, perhaps it will be more often the second element. In all these guesses I should have been right except that there is no compound with ʾAdon, and that there are more compounds with Baʿal than I should have anticipated. I have in this way presented what appear to me to be some of the chief features in the complexion of this group of names. Like all groups it contains many individual names that are on one ground or another ambiguous, and to discuss these ambiguities at length would exceed the space at my disposal. But I will refer in a little more detail to some of the clearer or more important features of the group, and conclude with the interesting question raised by the Baʿal names.

The compounds with Yah, here both at the beginning and end of words written Yo, are clear: they number eight;[1] in three the divine element stands first—Yoyadaʿ, Yoyashîb, Yoʿash; in five it stands second—Gadyô, Yedaʿyô, Maranyô, Egelyo, Shemaryo. The total number of names in the list is 37, but some or all of the five bracketed names should perhaps be omitted; *i.e.* out of a maximum of 37, a minimum of 32 names, eight are compounds with Yah, or more than a fifth and perhaps as many as a quarter of the whole number. This proportion is very slightly greater than that in the group of David's contemporaries mentioned in 2 S 9–20, where the compounds with Yah form exactly a fifth of the whole (9 out of 45); it is very strikingly less than among the contemporaries of Jeremiah, where names of this type constitute nearly two-thirds of the whole (53 out of 87: see further *H.P.N.* 185 f.).

If we consider the place occupied by the divine name in the compounds, the movement away from the Davidic list is more conspicuous. Yah stands

[1] Or nine, if Badyo, given in the translation of No. 51, be really distinct from Gadyo. As Professor Lyon says that the reading of the first letter is doubtful, I suspect that it may be Gadyo. If Badyo is correct, cp. Ba-da-ya-a-ma = בדיה in the Nippur tablets.

first in six out of the nine Davidic compounds; in only three out of eight of the names mentioned in the *ostraka*. In the later periods names in which the divine element stands not first but *last* are much the more frequent (*H.P.N.* 162).

Remembering that compounds with 'Ab, 'Ah, and 'Am were all on the decline not long after the Davidic period (*H.P.N.* pp. 22–75), we may note that the *ostraka* show two (or including Abiezer, three) compounds with 'Ab, two with 'Ah, and one with 'Am out of a total of 37 (or 32); the Davidic list four compounds with Ab, three (or including חושי, four) with 'Ah, and two (or including עמשא, three) with 'Am out of a total of 45; *i.e.* in this respect the *ostraka* group closely resembles the Davidic group.

The number of compounds with El is not clear: Professor Lyon counts two certain—Elisha and Elnathan, and three others possible—Elish, Elba, Elâ. Elâ is etymologically ambiguous: the reading of Elnathan is not certain: it is not clear whether Elish is really different from Elisha. On the other hand, Elbâ is probably enough an abbreviation (caritative) of a name compounded with El, Elbaal, Elberech, or the like. Two compounds with El at least, four probably at most, occur in the 37 (or 32) names of the *ostraka*; as against two among 45 contemporaries of David, nine among 87 of Jeremiah's contemporaries.

One further point: according to my classification of the names in 2 S 9–20, the compound names numbered 22, the simple names 23; or, transferring three ambiguous names from the simple to the compound names, the numbers are compound 25, simple 20. In the names of the *ostraka* the numbers are—compound 18, simple 14, if we exclude the bracketed names; or compound 22, simple 15, if we include them. Again, the movement is perhaps slightly, but only slightly, away from the typical Davidic group towards later groups where the compounds greatly predominate. In the Davidic group compounds with either Yah or El are exactly equal in number to all other compounds, each class containing eleven; unless we include in the compounds אמנון עמשא חושי, in which case the figures are—compounds with Yah and El, 11; other compounds, 14. In the *ostraka* the compounds with Yah and El number 10 to 12, and equal or slightly exceed in number all the other compounds, which number 8 to 12 according to the view taken of the bracketed or otherwise ambiguous names. In later lists while compounds with El and Yah are numerous, compounds other than those with El and Yah form at most a trivial proportion.

However regarded, this group of names is seen to cling closely to the nomenclature of the Davidic period; and in this fact is perhaps to be found also the real explanation of the number of Ba'al names; that is to say, the presence of Baal names in the *ostraka* was due to the continuous operation of causes that created a similar group of names in the Davidic period, not to the action of some new cause. In my discussion of the Baal names in *H.P.N.* I said (p. 124): 'The broad fact with regard to the Hebrew personal names is that they are not altogether infrequent in and before the Davidic period, but that they entirely disappear afterwards.' The question is, Did they disappear suddenly in the tenth century and revive owing to a fresh cause in the ninth century? Or is the disappearance simply to be placed a little later than I formerly suggested? should we say now: these names are not altogether infrequent in and before the ninth century, but disappear afterwards?[1] And further interesting questions are: What causes created these names in the earlier centuries? What caused their disappearance later?

We have first to consider the actual extent of this group of names: the names appear to be six in number—Abibaal, Ba'ala, Ba'alzamar, Meribaal, Baalazakar, and Baalmeoni. But the last of these, if we are keeping our eyes on causes operative in the ninth century, must certainly be excluded; for Baalmeoni is obviously a gentilic formed from the place name Baal-meon which had been in existence long before the ninth century. The name Baalmeoni was given to the child to mark his birthplace, not to associate him with a Ba'al, and, to anticipate, least of all to associate him with the Baal of Tyre. Again, it is doubtful whether Baalazakar should be included: it appears to be spelt בעלעזכר; and Professor Lyon suggests that this is an error for בעלאזכר; now as an independent caritative form בעלא is natural enough, but the compound form בעלאזכר is by no means so likely; and assuming that we ought to

[1] An occasional instance is to be found later, and that as late as the fifth century B.C., if Ba-li-la-a-mâ in the Nippur tablets is rightly equated with בעליה (A. T. Clay, *Murushu Sons*, x. 118, 5. 3).

read ס for ע, I suspect that, as in No. 19 as translated by Professor Lyon, the group of letters is to be taken as two names, Ba'alâ [and] Zakar: cp., in Professor Lyon's translation of No. 49, Ba'alâ [and] Ba'almeoni.

We may say, then, that the *ostraka* contain certainly four names that assert or suggest something about a Ba'al, or a child's relation to a Ba'al, and *perhaps* a fifth—Baal'azkar, as I think I should then read rather than Baalâzakar. Now, of eight certain personal names compounded with Ba'al in the Old Testament, seven, and of two obtained by (uncertain) emendation,[1] one, belong to the Davidic age. The number of names of all classes in the Davidic age is greater than that of those on the *ostraka*; but when allowance is made for this I think it may be asserted that no safe argument can be drawn from the *ostraka* that names containing Baal were more popular in the ninth century than in the Davidic period; the causes that produced them in the one period may, therefore, well be the same that produced them in the other.

Professor Lyon apparently takes another view: he connects the Ba'al names of the *ostraka* with 'the great development of Baal-worship in Israel during the reign of Ahab, whose queen, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, was specially devoted to this cult.' The suggestion would have more probability (1) if Ahab had given to any of his children a name compounded with Ba'al; as a matter of fact all his children contained names compounded with Yah; and (2) if the Ba'al names on the *ostraka* were relatively considerably more numerous than in the Davidic age. If, however, the suggestion were accepted, then another suggestion of Professor Lyon's would have to be abandoned, for the two are inconsistent. He suggests, and so far no doubt rightly, that the years mentioned on the *ostraka* are the years of the reigning king; he adds 'in all probability this was Ahab.' Now the years mentioned are the ninth, tenth, and eleventh; but since the recipients mentioned, viz. Ba'ala, Baalzamar (Baalazakar), cannot have been mere children, they must have received their names anything from ten to fifty or sixty years before Ahab began to reign, and consequently their names cannot have had anything to do with the great development of Ba'al-worship, which took place in his reign.

[1] *H.P.N.* 121 f.

I cannot discuss afresh here the causes of Ba'al names in the Davidic period, or the reference or meaning of Ba'al in these names. I see no reason to abandon the view I adopted in *H.P.N.*, that in such names, as one of them asserts, Yahweh was regarded as a Ba'al, just as he was regarded as an El. But why, then, do they disappear, rather abruptly as it would seem, after the ninth century B.C.? Was it that the reaction against the worship of the Tyrian Ba'al started a dislike of calling Yahweh Ba'al? The explanation is scarcely sufficient, for the popular identification of Yahweh with the local Ba'als still seems to have been current in the days of Hosea, *i.e.* towards the end of the eighth century; and the names of the Ba'als were still frequently in the people's mouths (Hos 2^{17}).

Or is the disappearance of the Ba'al names apparent only? Did several names of the period of the monarchy down to the Exile contain the element Ba'al in the original text of the Old Testament, and is the absence of the term Ba'al in our present text merely due to scribal enthusiasm, excited perhaps by Hos 2^{17}, for ridding the text of such a name? Now of such scribal corrections of the text we have, in the Books of Samuel as is well known, some evidence; on the other hand, the parallel Hebrew text of Chronicles and the Greek text even of Samuel, in some cases at least, retains Ba'al. It is possible enough that in a few instances Ba'al has been corrected out of the text without leaving trace of its existence anywhere in our existing material. But on the whole the evidence of the *ostraka* seems to me to indicate that in this respect as in others, though the text of the Old Testament has suffered from scribal activity, it has not suffered to anything like the extent that some scholars have suggested. If Ba'al names were in actual Hebrew life so much more frequent than the text of the Old Testament suggests, we should find in such contemporary documents as the *ostraka* a much larger proportion of Ba'al names than we actually do find. So also the entire absence of these names from those parts of the text of the Old Testament which relate to the post-exilic age corresponds to the entire absence of them from the Elephantine papyri: these papyri refer to some four hundred Jews living in the fifth century, and not a single one of these bears a name containing Ba'al.