

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Irish Biblical Studies* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ibs-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ibs-01.php)

## THE KINGDOM OF EDOM<sup>1</sup>

J. R. Bartlett

Most of Dr Weingreen's former colleagues and students will be well aware that when he retired the Board of Trinity College renamed the museum he founded 'The Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities'. On display in that museum is a collection of pottery and other artefacts from Edom, and it is therefore not inappropriate, in honouring the museum's former Director, for the present Curator to indulge his own interests, and to describe the results of recent research into the kingdom of Edom.

The first and in some ways the most interesting thing about Edom is that the biblical atlases are often uncertain exactly where to write the name and always hesitant to draw its boundaries. That is not surprising, because the biblical evidence is complex, and not all the Edomite biblical place names can be firmly identified. The name Edom means 'red', and is generally taken to refer to the reddish sandstone which is a feature of the mountain range running south along the east side of the Wadi Araba south of the Dead Sea and well known to visitors to Petra. The heartland of Edom lay here, a region some 75 miles from north to south, between the Wadi el-Hesa and Ras en-Naqb, and about 30 miles wide from west to east, between the Wadi Araba and the modern Desert Highway from Amman to Aqaba. This is high land, much of it over 5000 ft; when Jeremiah threatens Edom, he pictures the invading enemy - perhaps he has a Babylonian king in mind - mounting up and flying swiftly like an eagle and spreading his wings against Bozrah: a most appropriate picture for Bozrah, now the village of Buseirah. When I left it early one morning in 1974, I watched an eagle spiralling high above it; and one remembers Obadiah's words about Edom:

You who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, Who will bring me down to the ground? Though you soar aloft like an eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the LORD.

To the north of Edom, across the biblical river Zered, the modern Wadi el-Hesa, lay Moab; to the south lay Teman (the word means 'south') and Midian; to the east lay the desert home of various Arabian tribes, and to the west, across the Wadi Araba, lay the Negeb of Judah. In the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. there seems to have been some Edomite settlement

---

1 This paper was first delivered as a lecture to the Palestine Exploration Fund on 15th December 1987.

in this region south of Judah, and by the Hellenistic period much of what had been southern Judah was known as Idoumaia. This paper is mainly concerned with the mountains east of the Wadi Araba, and with two sites at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba.

It is worth asking to begin with why such a difficult region was viable as the home of a nation and its kingdom. It had long been viable, first as hunting ground and then as grazing land for sheep and goats; but what gave it importance in the age of great empires like the Assyrian and Babylonian empires of the first millenium B.C. was its position on the main North-South route between Damascus and Arabia, and on the cross route between Arabia and the Mediterranean at Gaza. Edom was of strategic importance to the Assyrian empire (8th-7th century B.C.) which expended much effort on trying to control the Arabs, and to the Babylonian empire (6th century), whose last major ruler, Nabonidus, actually established himself for a decade at Teima, in NW Arabia, having first subjected Edom. Earlier, Solomon in the 10th century had established a seaport at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba for the sake of trade with distant Ophir for its gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks, and later, in the 4th or 3rd century B.C. the Nabataeans established Petra as their entrepôt. And in addition, in the Wadi Araba just below the Edomite mountains, there was copper for those with the skill and capital resources to extract it. Edom could flourish, if there were sufficient military and capital input to control it and make it flourish. But for much of its history, in biblical and other times, this region has remained a backwater (if that is the right word for such a mountainous and desert region).

The biblical writers, mostly men of Jerusalem and Judah, had little if any first-hand knowledge of Edom. They knew Edom mainly as the most hostile of Judah's neighbours, much as for centuries most Englishmen knew Scotland or Ireland. And Edom has remained largely unknown to the European west except through the pages of the Old Testament. Edom had no holy cities to attract western pilgrims; Edom's pilgrims were Muslim en route for Mecca, among whom Christians were not welcome. Edom did not attract European traders; their routes east to Persia and India went other ways. The first important European traveller in this region was Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1810, 1854-59) who in January-April 1806 travelled from Damascus south to Kerak and round the bottom of the Dead Sea to Jerusalem. He did not enter Edom, but he did compile a useful list of villages, inhabited and ruined, in the area, and recognised Buseira as the biblical Bozrah, and Szille as the biblical Sela which Amaziah captured (2 Kings 14:7), anticipating Glubb Pasha by over a century. Seetzen is said to have died of poison at Aqaba. He was followed in 1812 by the Swiss traveller, J. L. Burckhardt (1822), famous for his rediscovery of the fabled Petra, but important to us for

his careful and detailed record of his journey through Edom in August 1812, mostly along the north-south route now signposted for tourists as 'The King's Highway', though whether this really is the route intended by the author of Num. 20:17 we cannot be sure. Burckhardt was followed by two English naval officers, Captains Irby and Mangles (1844), who in May 1818 followed a similar route south to Petra and became the first Europeans to ascend Mt. Hor, Jebel Harun, the traditional burial place of Aaron. In 1828 the Frenchman Leon de Laborde (1826, 1836) approached Petra from the south, travelling from Cairo via Sinai and Aqaba and up the Wadi Araba. This became the standard approach route for the rest of the 19th century; travellers from the north down the King's Highway being exposed to plunder and ransom demands from the Bene Sakhr and the Mejelli family of Kerak. Laborde was important because he gave Europeans the first accurate pictures of Petra, and so stimulated interest. It is fascinating to trace the 19th century travellers' accounts, among whom were artists like David Roberts, or W. H. Bartlett (on reaching Petra, he records that he dined off Irish stew in the Corinthian tomb), and churchmen like the Dean of Canterbury, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, who in his famous book *Sinai and Palestine* (1856) commented disparagingly of the Khazneh that 'there is nothing of peculiar grace or grandeur in the temple itself - it is of the most debased style'. In 1876 Charles Doughty (1888) solved the problem of accessibility as Burckhardt had, by living and travelling in Arab style. Whereas Canon Tristram (1873), travelling for the British Association in 1872, was held to ransom in Kerek Castle in Moab, Doughty actually travelled 4 years later as a pilgrim with the Haj caravan through Ma'an towards Mecca. His contribution was to explore the central hill region of Edom between Shaubak and Ma'an. But detailed scholarly exploration of Edom did not begin until the 1890s, when Alois Musil of Vienna (1907, 1908), and R. E. Brunnow and A. von Domaszewski from Germany explored the highways and byways with systematic care, recording every milestone, cistern, and building, and publishing plans and inscriptions (1904, 1905, 1909). English readers were made more aware of the area by T. E. Lawrence's account of the Arab revolt against the dying Ottoman Empire in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935); Tafileh, in the mountains of Edom just north of Edom's ancient capital, Bozrah, was the site of a minor battle.

For all this, Edom was still not well known, and it was the romantic picture of Edom (highly coloured by Dean Burgon's line about the rose red city half as old as time) that prevailed in people's minds. What put the history of Edom on the agenda for most biblical archaeologists and scholars was the work of the American biblical scholar and practising archaeologist William Foxwell Albright (1924) and his pupil Nelson Glueck. In 1934 Glueck began a series of 'Explorations in Eastern

Palestine' by exploring Moab; in 1935 Glueck spent some 7 weeks exploring the Wadi Arabah, the Wadi Yutm, and the Wadi Hisma region, and the central mountain range in search of ancient sites, which he classified as EB, MB, EI, Nab., Roman, Byzantine or Arab on the basis of his analysis of the pottery fragments collected from the surface at each place. He was the first to note the distinctive decorated pottery found in Transjordan and to assign it to the Iron Age, and on the basis of his work he published conclusions for the history of Transjordan in general and Edom in particular which are still influential 50 years later. Glueck argued (1935: 137-40) that (1) there had been an 'advanced' Early Bronze civilization in Edom from the 23rd-18th centuries B.C.; (2) this was followed by 'a complete gap in the history of settled communities in all Edom' between the 18th and 13th centuries B.C. (Glueck found no MB or LB pottery in Edom); (3) 'There was a highly developed Edomite civilization, which flourished especially between the 13th and 8th centuries B.C.'; to this period he attributed the decorated pottery and some of the ruined buildings, which he described as 'border fortresses'; (4) from the end of EI II in general and in many sites from about the 8th century B.C., there is another gap in the history of the settled communities in Edom, which lasted until the appearance of the Nabataeans.

So Glueck developed a picture of an Iron Age Edomite civilization - note the term: Glueck was a romantic at heart - starting in the 13th century B.C. He wanted this early starting date to suit the biblical record that after the exodus (commonly dated to the reign of Rameses II in the mid-13th century B.C.) the Israelites in the wilderness sent messengers to the king of Edom asking permission to cross Edom's territory. This story in Num. 20:14-21, interpreted at face value without any consideration of its literary origin, date, and background, was thus made the peg on which Glueck hung the findings of his surface survey. Subsequent research has shown that Glueck's overall reconstruction needs much correction: archaeological survey and excavation in Edom has shown that the major towns and villages flourished in the 8th-6th centuries B.C., Iron Age II, precisely when Glueck believed them to be in decline, and that there is little evidence for any 'highly developed civilization' in Iron Age I; and biblical research has equally demonstrated that Edom did not flourish as a kingdom until after it became independent of Judah in the mid-ninth century B.C., in the 840s; it reached the height of its 'civilization' or prosperity in the Assyrian period, and suffered decline in the Babylonian and Persian periods (Bartlett, 1972, 1973).

We need to look a little more closely at the archaeological and biblical evidence for Edom in the early centuries of the Iron Age, ca. 1200-900 B.C., Iron I. The late Crystal Bennett's pioneering excavations

of Tawilan, Buseirah and Umm el-Biyara turned up nothing for these centuries, and such archaeological evidence as we have comes from a number of surface surveys. Burton MacDonald (1980, 1982, 1983, 1984) minutely scrutinised the area between the Wadi el-Hasa and Tafileh and is now exploring the Wadi Araba; W. E. Rast and R. T. Schaub (1974), explored the plains round the SE corner of the Dead Sea; Stephen Hart (1985) surveyed about 500 sq km at the southern end of the Edom mountain range, just above Ras en Naqb; and W. J. Jobling (1981) scoured the Wadi Hisma region between Ras en Naqb and Aqaba. Whereas Glueck found no LB remains, and little that could be pinned down to Iron I, MacDonald at least found some evidence of LB and Iron I. But when one analyses his findings, not a lot. In three seasons' work (1979, 1981, 1982), MacDonald recorded 1074 sites (he defined a site as 'any place where *man* has left *evidence* of his activity', *ADAJ* 24 (1980), 169)). He found only 4 sites with certainly identifiable LB, and 12 more possibles; he found 8 which he could attribute to Iron IA (1200-1000 B.C.) and 23 in all (including the 8) attributable to Iron I (1200-900). To these we might add one site, Khirbet Khaneizir, with Iron I pottery from the plain SE of the Dead Sea, and 3 small sites from Jobling's survey south of W. Hisma. Few of these sites have been described by their surveyors in any detail, but in the uplands only 2 (MacDonald's site 10, Umm er-rih, and MacDonald's site 212, Kh. Abu Banna) seem to reach village size; the rest are much smaller, representing single buildings or just occasional sherd scatters. Large towns are conspicuous by their absence. The general impression given is that in Iron I northern Edom was populated thinly with a scatter of habitations and the very occasional village. Further south, between Tafileh and Ras en-Naqb, Hart in his survey work in 1984 and 1985 claims to have found no trace of LB or Iron Age settlement before Iron II, stating that nearly all the IA material matches the 7th-6th century B.C. material from Tawilan and Buseirah (Hart 1986). While it is true that Iron I pottery has been recorded in the Fenan region in the Wadi Araba, at mining sites in Wadi Dana, Khirbet el Ghuweib, Kh. el-Jariye, and Kh. en-Nahas (Bachmann and Hauptmann 1984), up on the Edomite plateau there is clearly little evidence of any well established Edomite population between 1200 and 900 B.C.

At first sight this evidence appears to contradict the picture given by the biblical record, which states that Edom had kings long before Israel had them (Gen. 36:31), and that one of them opposed Israel's march through the wilderness towards the promised land (Num. 20:14-21). This is not the place for a detailed analysis of those narratives, but it may be said that both narratives (Gen. 36; Num. 20) present what an Israelite writer, writing many centuries later towards the end or at the end of the monarchic period, believed ought to have been the case on the

basis of what was common knowledge about Edom. He believed that Edom had kings before Israel did because he knew the general and received tradition in Israel that in adopting kingship, Israel was copying the other nations (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5); and he compiled a suitable king-list from two other records available to him, each of which listed kings from various places with no dynastic connection; and these our author turned into a sort of dynasty, though no king on the list is the son of his predecessor, or comes from the same place. One of them is Jobab of Bozrah; but there is no evidence that Bozrah was any sort of place at all until the 9th century at the earliest. This king-list, in short, is poor evidence for Edom in the 12th-10th centuries B.C. (Bartlett, 1965; Knauf, 1985). The story of Israel's meeting opposition from a king of Edom in the 13th century B.C. is also fiction (i.e., fiction founded on fact); it is based on the fact that Edom had always been known as Israel's most hostile neighbour, and if Israel had passed through Transjordan, then of course Israel would have had trouble from Edom. The author presents Edom as Amos did in the 8th century and as others did later, as one who comes after his brother Israel with a sword. The author cannot name the Edomite king; he simply assumes Edom had a king. He knows that the road through Edom is called 'the King's highway', and if it got that name, as has been suggested, from the period of Assyrian imperial administration (the king being the King of Assyria), then the story reflects that 8th-7th century background. So this story too is poor evidence for Glueck's supposition of the existence of a powerful Edomite kingdom in the 13th century B.C. (Bartlett, 1977).

If we discount this material, the biblical picture in fact coincides well enough with the scant archaeological evidence. Edom's history really begins when David, c. 990 B.C., annexed Edom, garrisoned it, and put a governor there (2 Sam. 8:13-14). It was almost 150 years before Edom recovered sufficiently to rebel against Judah, which it did in the reign of Jehoram of Judah, in the mid-840s B.C. (2 Kings 8:20), about 10 years after Moab, its neighbour to the north, had regained its independence from the kingdom of Israel. This fits very well with the archaeological evidence for Edom's depressed economic condition in Iron Age I, and with the fact that it is not until Iron Age II that Edom's main sites develop and flourish.

Through the 8th and 7th centuries, Edom was a small vassal state in the southwest corner of the Assyrian empire, and our knowledge of her doings comes more from Assyrian records than from biblical writings. Somewhere about 800 B.C. Assyria noticed Edom, and Adadnirari III recorded at Calah (modern Nimrud) that he made the region from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, including Tyre, Sidon, Israel, Edom and Philistia, submit to his feet and pay tribute. At much the same time, Amaziah king of Judah attacked Edom, presumably wishing to

re-establish Judah's control over it; according to 2 Kings 14:7 he killed 10,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and captured Sela and called it Joktheel, 'which is its name to this day'. The Valley of Salt might be the Ghor at the south end of the Dead Sea, or perhaps the Wadi el-milh towards Beersheba; Sela might be Kh. Sela just south of Tafileh as Seetzen suggested, or Umm el-biyara in Petra, as many have supposed from its impressive size, or perhaps some place in the Negev near the Wadi el-milh (cf. Judg. 1:36). But in any case the Israelite historian does not suggest that Judah recovered Edom, which preserved its independence from Judah as a vassal state within the Assyrian empire. Amaziah, however, or his son Uzziah did establish a place called Elath on the north shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, which suggests that Judah was again looking to her trade route south via the Wadi Araba and beyond, and that Edom was no match for Uzziah's well trained army. Edom was probably just beginning to develop her own prosperity in this period; c. 760 B.C. Amos criticises Gaza for selling captives as slaves to Edom (if Edom, not Aram, Syria, is meant; the two place names are frequently and easily confused in Hebrew script); and Amos also refers to the palaces or strongholds (*'armōnōi*) of Bozrah. About 734 B.C., when Judah under a new king, Ahaz, was under serious military threat from Syria and Israel, the Edomites 'recovered Elath for Edom, and drove the men of Judah from Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath, where they dwell to this day'. From now on, it seems, Edom, not Judah, could derive profit from the trade passing through the Gulf of Aqaba, and from now on Edom appears to be wealthier. Her name from now on appears on Assyrian tribute lists; it is from Tiglath-pileser III's tribute list of 734 B.C. that we first read the name of an Edomite king, Kaushmalaku, who with the kings of Ammon, Moab, Ashkelon, Judah, Gaza and others paid tribute consisting of gold, silver, tin, iron, antimony, linen-garments with multi-coloured trimmings, and native garments of dark purple wool. In 713 B.C. when Ashdod rebelled against Sargon II of Assyria, Ashdod sought support from Edom and others, but Edom may not have helped; at any rate a letter found at Nimrud seems to name her after Egypt, Gaza, Judah, Moab and Ammon as having paid tribute in 712 B.C. When Hezekiah of Judah rebelled a decade later, again Edom seems to have stayed out of it, and Aiarammu, King of Edom, paid up along with the kings of Sidon, Arvad, Byblos, Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Edom, after all, did not like Judah, and it was hardly in Edom's interest to risk supporting her. A letter found at Arad (no. 40) seems to refer to diplomatic and military activity on Judah's southern border at this time; in it two soldiers from the border post of Ramath-negeb explain that they have forwarded correspondence from Edom, and end with a reference to the evil that Edom has done, though what this is is not clear. A cuneiform text probably from Esarhaddon's reign (680-669 B.C.)



lists tribute paid by 'Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Edom, in order of size of contribution; Edom pays least. More interestingly Esarhaddon records how he called up 22 kings of the west, including Qaushgabri of Edom, 'and made them transport, under terrible difficulties to Nineveh, as building material for my palace, big logs, long beams and thin boards from cedar and pine trees, products of the Sirara and Lebanon mountains ... also from their quarries in the mountains statues of protective deities' (*ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 291) and other stone objects. Esarhaddon's successor Assurbanipal (669-632? B.C.) involved Qaushgabri of Edom and others in his campaigns against Egypt and against Uate' of the Qedarite Arabs.

There is some evidence, both biblical and archaeological, which suggests that in this period Edomites were beginning to settle among the population of the Negeb of southern Judah, across the Wadi Araba to the west. In the OT, boundary descriptions of Judah, and references to Kadesh on the border of Edom, and the use of clan names from this region in the lists of Edomite clans in Gen. 36, all suggest that at some stage (probably in the later monarchic period) this area could be seen as Edomite. This is confirmed by the discovery of ostraca from Arad and Malhata bearing what appear to be Edomite names and reference to Edomite military activity, and by the presence of pottery at places like Tell Aroer, Tell Malhata, Horvat Qitmit, Tell Meshash, Tell 'Ira, and Horvat 'Uza which compares closely with that known from contemporary Buseirah up in the Edomite mountain range. It is clear that by the end of the 7th century B.C. there is an Edomite element in the population of southern Judah, at least south of a line west from Arad towards Beersheba. It is often suggested that they emigrated from Edom under pressure from Arab immigrants from the east, but it is more likely that the process was a slow one, extending through the Assyrian period as the Edomite population expanded. The Edomites had enough in common with the Kenites and Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites of the Judean desert and the Amalekites further south to make movement and intermarriage easy. By the end of the Assyrian empire, this region probably had a somewhat mixed population.

The fall of Assyria in 612 B.C. to Babylon and her allies and the takeover by Nabopolassar and his more famous son Nebuchadnezzar led to the collapse of more than one western independent kingdom. The fate of Judah is well known: Jerusalem was besieged and taken twice after her rebellions in 598-7 and 589-87 B.C., her rulers killed and her leading citizens deported. Edom was later blamed for helping Babylon destroy Jerusalem, but the charges against Edom clearly grow more virulent and detailed as their authors' retrospect grows longer; the 3rd/2nd century B.C. charge that the Edomites burned the Temple (1 Esd. 4:45) is ludicrous in the light of the 6th century B.C. record in 2 Kings 25:9 that the Babylonians burnt it (Bartlett, 1982). In fact, as Jer. 40:11 makes

clear, the mountains of Edom were a natural haven for Jewish refugees in 587 B.C. What happened to Edom at this time is not clear. Neither biblical nor Babylonian texts suggest that Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against Edom, though the 1st century A.D. Josephus does say that he attacked Ammon and Moab in 582 B.C. There is much to be said for the suggestion that it was the last major Babylonian ruler, Nabonidus, who brought the kingdom of Edom to an end, probably c. 553 B.C. when he marched through Edom en route for Teima in the Hejaz (Lindsay, 1976). Certainly the Edomite kingdom must have come to an end sometime in the Babylonian period; we hear no more of kings, and there is evidence of destruction at Buseirah about this time. In the book Malachi, variously dated between c. 525 and 475 B.C., the Edomites are represented as saying, 'We are shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins'; and there is evidence from Buseirah, Tawilan and Tell el Kheleifeh of human activity in these places in the Persian period. And it is to these sites, lastly, together with Umm el-biyara, that we must turn for our knowledge of the kingdom of Edom. Let us begin by reminding ourselves that individual sites depend for their *raison d'être* and success on their position. 'Why is that site where it is?' is an important question. For example, at the southern end of the Edomite plateau, Stephen Hart (1986) identified 3 large fortresses (or walled villages), 7 small fortresses, 2 probable fortresses, 2 unwalled villages, 2 hamlets and one isolated building, in an area about 12 km by 24 km, all dated by the pottery to the 7th-6th centuries B.C. Hart emphasised that this was a water deficient region, unsuitable for growing citrus, olives, grapes, wheat or barley. So why settle here? Hart put it down to Assyrian defence needs, and suggested the area was forcibly settled with an imported population, in good Assyrian style. Further north, between Tafileh and the Wadi el-Hesa, MacDonald attributed some 35 sites in all to Iron I-II, or II, over half of which appear to have been occupied for the first time in Iron II. Some are the remains of small fortresses (e.g., Rujm Karaka (211)), others domestic or agricultural. But clearly on this evidence alone Edom developed in this period, and this has much to do with political stability, improved security and the economic circumstances established by Assyrian control.

The large site of Buseirah, almost certainly biblical Bozrah, is a case in point. It has abundant water 1 km away, where fruit and vegetables can be grown or flocks watered; but its position on the crown of a hill between two deep converging wadis, overlooking the road running north-south along the mountain chain, suggests that it was not built as a market town or agricultural centre but as a command post and regional capital. The main buildings bear this out. The earlier building, B, seems to have been a palace building of the Assyrian open-court type (cf. R. Amiran and I. Dunayevsky, *BASOR* 149 (1958: 25-32), very similar to the

Lachish residency which Aharoni calls 'a distinctively Assyrian building', and probably the seat of the Assyrian governor there in the 7th century (1982: 258). Perhaps Building B was Bozrah's equivalent. From this period come some interesting objects: a seal, reading 'for Melek-leba', servant of the king', the property of a royal official; a beautifully carved *tridacna squamosa* shell, carved in the form of an eagle (one notes again the eagle at Bozrah), probably Syro-Phoenician in origin (Bennett, 1974). Eilat Mazar, in his recent analysis of pottery from this stratum of Buseirah (IV), notes that the two painted bowls (fig. 1, 2) 'reflect a decorative tradition imported through commerce from the Phoenician coast' (1985: 261). Building B was followed after a gap by Building A, above it but rather smaller. Crystal Bennett (1977: 3) attributed it to the Persian period, along with similar building remains in another area of the site, but Mazar associates it with the appearance of the painted and ornamented pottery paralleled in late 7th-early 6th century levels at Tel Malhata, Tel 'Ira, Tel Masos, and Aroer in the Beersheba region, Tel Sera' and Tel Haror on the Nahal Gerar, and at Kadesh Barnea. If Mazar is right, Building A belongs to the late Assyrian period, late 7th century B.C.; but a doubt remains, because most of the pottery illustrated by Mazar for Stratum II appears to derive from the debris dumped in antiquity over the casemates rather than from the floor or foundation trenches of Building A.

Tawilan was a very different sort of place, a village or agricultural centre rather than a city with an acropolis. It apparently began life as a claypit, and then went through two major phases of existence between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C. In the fill just above the original surface of the 'northern complex' of the 2nd of those phases, was found a Babylonian cuneiform tablet. This tablet is a contract of sale drawn up in the accession year of Darius (probably but not certainly Darius I, 521-486 B.C.); a man with an Edomite name, Qusu-sama' son of Qusu-yada', was buying sheep and oxen from Aramaean vendors, in Harran (Dalley, 1984). It is fascinating that an Edomite should be doing this, about 1,000 km from home, then taking the document back with him to Tawilan. If he could read it, possibly others in Tawilan could read cuneiform script; at all events, it is interesting that Horsfield and Conway, digging at Petra a few km away in 1930, excavated 'five stone pencils, seemingly for writing cuneiform'.

Umm el-Biyara was a small, one-period domestic site on the top of a dramatically steep-faced mountain rising sheer out of the valley of Petra. Its occupants seem to have practised weaving, and one wonders why they went up there to do it and how they organised their daily supplies. The small finds there included a badly damaged seal, which turned out to be a royal seal; the name can be restored as Qosgeber, a name appearing in the records of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, and so

giving us a *terminus post quem* for the site, which appears to be mid-7th century B.C. (Bennett, 1966). Its pottery includes some standard Edomite types, notably the cup. There is little painted pottery, which Mazar, as we have seen, dates later in the 7th century.

This brings me, lastly, to Tell el-Kheleifeh, 556 m north of the seashore of the northern coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. It was discovered by Fritz Frank in 1933, identified by him as Solomon's Ezion-geber, and excavated by Nelson Glueck in 3 seasons, 1938-40. Glueck's reports in *BASOR*, it must be said, contain more interpretation than description; sections and plans are totally absent, and Glueck's interpretation was hopelessly compromised by his obvious determination to see Tell el-Kheleifeh as Solomon's Ezion-geber and Uzziah's Elath, for which he could see no other candidate.

The problem begins with the note of 1 Kings 9:26 that 'King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom'. As far back as 1828 Léon de Laborde suggested that Ezion-geber was Jezirat Fara'un, an island 7 miles down the west coast of the Gulf from modern Eilat. Robinson and Smith (1841) rejected this in favour of a site El-Ghadyan, some 25 miles north up the Wadi Araba, believing that the sea had receded since Solomon's time. This became accepted orthodoxy, and though T. E. Lawrence showed it was nonsense in 1914 (Woolley and Lawrence, 1936), it remained a common view until Frank's proposal in 1933, which became the new orthodoxy.

Meanwhile the biblical Elath, or Elath, had been identified since Ruppell in 1822 as a group of mounds 1 km north-west of the fort of Aqaba. This remained accepted until Glueck in 1934 said he found no pottery there earlier than Nabataean. He had also failed to find Iron Age pottery at Jezirat Fara'un, and so could state that there was only one Iron Age site on the north coast of the Gulf. This caused a problem, for there were two placenames to be located; Glueck solved it by identifying Tell el-Kheleifeh both with Solomon's Ezion-geber (10th century), and Uzziah's Elath (8th century) (Glueck, 1939). Since then, however, Beno Rothenberg and others (1961) have re-examined Jezirat Fara'un and found 10th century B.C. pottery, and so have re-established Jezirat Fara'un, with its defences and anchorage, as a candidate for Ezion-geber.

This would leave Tell el-Kheleifeh as a candidate for Elath, and that would make sense, for Elath is not said to have been a port (as Ezion-geber is), and Tell el-Kheleifeh, 556 m from the sea, was not a port (though Sellin (1936) did his best by arguing for a channel to it from the gulf). But Glueck had argued strongly that Tell el-Kheleifeh pre-dated Uzziah and had at least 5 periods of occupation: I, under Solomon; II, under Jehoshaphat (9th century); III, as the Elath Uzziah

built (8th century); IV, as the Edomite town from c. 734 B.C. to the end of the 6th century B.C.; and Period V, into the 5th and 4th centuries. But in excavating Tell el-Kheleifeh, Glueck rejected (1940: 4) what he called 'a straight stratigraphic method' on the grounds that it would not have worked at Tell el-Kheleifeh because walls of different periods were built against one another. So we have no useful sections or stratigraphy to go on. Glueck himself was the first victim of this, and he had great difficulty relating the major inner and outer walls of the site to one another. And this is what we must examine. What we ultimately want to know is, when Tell el-Kheleifeh was founded.

In his first season, Glueck excavated a major building (which he interpreted as a copper refinery) surrounded by an outer wall with offsets and rooms inside. Glueck thought they were foundry rooms, but Albright (1956: 136) soon pointed out they were casemates. In his second season, 1939, Glueck found that this wall was part of the inner complex of the site; outside it he found the east, south, and west sides of a solid outer wall with a four-chambered gate in the south wall. He believed all this Solomonic, but in his third season he found that this outer wall (in fact, a double-walled fortification, the solid wall having what the Greeks called a *proteichisma* in front) 'in places cuts through, and in other places is built over part of the rooms of the industrial square' (i.e., the inner casemate complex) 'and the north side of the refinery'. This forced Glueck to redate the solid wall to a rebuilding by Jehoshaphat in the 9th century. (Note how Glueck's interpretation of the site is determined by his belief that it was Ezion-geber, and his interpretation of the biblical evidence for Ezion-geber and Elath.) Now the site could be seen to have two basic overlapping construction phases: (1) the main building with surrounding casemate wall; and (2) a new larger site, fortified with a solid offset/inset wall and a four-chambered gate (which Glueck saw as having several phases, probably correctly).

In an important article published in 1985, G. Pratico demonstrated that all the pottery hitherto published by Glueck from Tell el-Kheleifeh (apart from the 'Negebite' ware, which is known from all periods of the Iron Age and so does not help much) belonged to the 8th-6th centuries B.C., with parallels at Buseirah and Umm el-biyarah. He also noted that the inner casemate fortress of Tell el-Kheleifeh was 'similar in architectural plan to the central Negev fortress tradition', resembling especially the square fortresses of Nahal Reviv, Horvat Ritma, Horvat Mesora and a small fortress near 'Atar Haro'a. R. Cohen had dated these, on the basis of wheelmade pottery forms, to the tenth century B.C. (1980: 61-79). More recently, Cohen has redated these square Negev fortresses to the Persian period (1986: 40-45) i.e., to the 5th-4th centuries B.C. The problem with dating the casemate fortress at Tell el-Kheleifeh by comparison with 10th century B.C. or 5th-4th century B.C. fortresses

in the Negev is that the published pottery apparently to be associated with Tell el-Kheleifeh's casemate fortress belongs to the Assyrian-Iron II, 8th-6th centuries B.C. period - though there is also some 'Negev' ware which might come from anywhere in Iron I or II, and some imported 5th-4th centuries B.C. Greek pottery on the surface of the tell and immediately below the surface.

Glueck dated the casemate wall to the 10th century B.C., partly on the strength of the 'Negevite' pottery and partly because he wished to associate the site with Solomon's Ezion-geber; he then dated the solid wall to the mid-ninth century, Jehoshaphat's reign. Aharoni similarly appears to date the casemate wall to the 10th and the solid wall to the 9th centuries B.C., partly on the analogy of a similar sequence of building at Arad, and partly because the four-chambered, or bi-partite, gate at Tell el-Kheleifeh compares closely with similar gates at 9th century Megiddo (IIIB), Beersheba (Str.III), Mizpah (T. en-Nasbeh), and perhaps Arad. However, the four-chambered gate seems to have been in use from the 10th century B.C. to the sixth, and there is no reason why such a gate should not have been built in the 8th or 7th century B.C. The major constructions at Tell el-Kheleifeh cannot be dated precisely enough by these architectural comparisons. The published pottery seems to limit us to the 8th-6th centuries B.C., and unless there is a lot of unpublished 10th-9th century B.C. pottery from Tell el-Kheleifeh (which neither Glueck nor Pratico suggest), it seems safest to suppose that both the casemate fortress and the solid offsets/insets walled settlement fall within the 8th-6th centuries. Pratico compares the situation at Kadesh-Barnea (T. el-Qudeirat) where in the 8th-7th century B.C. a solid-walled rectangular fortress replaced an earlier casemate one.

Aharoni noted (1982: 249) that 'one has seen from air photographs it is most difficult to determine which of the two walls is chronologically earlier'; by analogy with Arad, he thinks the casemate wall earlier. Glueck in his reports is emphatic that the casemate wall is the earlier, and that the solid wall was found cutting through the casemate wall at one point and built over it at another, and that it was built partly over the north side of the main, central building (Glueck's 'smelter'). If we accept the 8th-6th century pottery horizons, then we might tentatively identify Tell el-Kheleifeh with Elath (at least it fits topographically and chronologically), and see the casemate fortress as the work of Amaziah or Uzziah, and the expanded settlement with the solid wall as the work of the Edomites after c. 735 B.C., in the later Assyrian period. The evidence of a few later buildings above this settlement (Glueck's Period V), together with the imported Greek pottery and Aramaic and Phoenician ostraca found in the surface strata of the tell indicate a 5th-4th century B.C. occupation of the site, though on a fairly small scale. What happened thereafter, we hardly know. The name Elath

survived in the Greek and Roman form Aila, which perhaps belonged to the collection of mounds 1 km northwest of Aqaba, where Glueck found evidence of pottery from Nabataean times onward. What is needed now is an excavation of these mounds, and an excavation of the northern sector of the casemates at Tell el-Kheleifeh, preserved beneath the dumps of Glueck's excavations.

Tell el-Kheleifeh remains something of a mystery, because its stratification was not properly recorded. Confusion has been added to mystery because Nelson Glueck and others were too anxious to identify it with Solomon's Ezion-geber. I think it simpler to limit the identification to Elath, founded by Amaziah or Uzziah and taken over by the Edomites. Subsequent excavation may show even this to be a biblical scholar's wishful thinking; but at least an 8th-6th century B.C. Tell el-Kheleifeh fits in with our other archaeological evidence for the kingdom of Edom.

I must end by paying two important tributes. First, I do not wish to belittle Glueck's achievements in exploration and in excavation in Jordan; they opened the door to many who came after him, and we all owe him much. He was both a practising archaeologist and a biblical scholar, in the days when to combine both disciplines was still respectable. In these latter years, when biblical scholar and dirt archaeologist, usually failing to understand one another, have hardly been on speaking terms, it is no harm to remind ourselves that the two disciplines need to stand in a working relationship. And lastly, I would like to offer this paper as a small tribute to Professor Weingreen, whose interests are archaeological as well as linguistic, and whose encouragement and friendship I have greatly valued over more than twenty years.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

N.B. For reasons of space references and bibliography in this paper have been restricted to a minimum. For fuller reference, see my forthcoming *Edom and the Edomites*, JSOT Press, 1989.

Aharoni, Y.

1982 *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel*. London: SCM Press.

Albright, W. F.

1924 The archaeological results of an expedition to Moab and the Dead Sea. *BASOR* 14: 2-12.

1956 *Archaeology and the religion of Israel*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

- Bachmann, H.-G., and Hauptmann, A.  
1984 Zur alten Kupfergewinnung in Fenan und Hirbet en-Nahas im Wadi Arabah in SüdJordanien. *ZKKB* 4: 110-23.
- Bartlett, J. R.  
1965 The Edomite king-list of Gen. 36:31-39 and 1 Chron. 1:43-50. *JTS NS* 16: 301-14.  
1972 The rise and fall of the kingdom of Edom. *PEQ* 104: 26-37.  
1973 The Moabites and Edomites. Pp. 229-58 in *Peoples of Old Testament times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
1977 The brotherhood of Edom. *JSOT* 4: 2-27.  
1982 Edom and the fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C. *PEQ* 114: 13-24.
- Bennett, C.-M.  
1966 Fouilles d'Umm el-Biyara. Rapport preliminaire. *RB* 73: 372-403.  
1971 A brief note on excavations at Tawilan, Jordan, 1968-1970. *Levant* 3: v-vii.  
1974 Excavations at Buseirah, Southern Jordan, 1972. Preliminary report. *Levant* 6: 1-24.  
1977 Excavations on Buseirah, Southern Jordan, 1974. Fourth preliminary report. *Levant* 9: 1-10.  
1984 Excavations at Tawilan in Southern Jordan, 1982. *Levant* 16: 1-23.
- Burckhardt, J. L.  
1822 *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*. London: J. Murray.
- Brunnow, R. E., and von Domaszewski, A.  
1904 *Die Provincia Arabia auf grund zweier in den Jahren 1897 und*  
1905 *1898 unternommenen Reisen und der Berichte früheren*  
1909 *Reisender*, I, II, III. Strassburg: K. J. Trübner.
- Cohen, R.  
1980 The Iron Age fortresses in the central Negev. *BASOR* 236: 61-79.  
1986 Solomon's Negev defense line contained three fewer fortresses. *BARev.* 12.4: 40-45.
- Dalley, S.  
1984 The cuneiform tablet from Tell Tawilan. *Levant* 16: 19-22.
- Doughty, C.M.  
1888 *Travels in Arabia deserta*. Cambridge: CUP.



Bartlett, Edom, IBS 10, October 1988

Professor J.R. Bartlett is Professor in the  
Biblical Studies Dept of Trinity College, Dublin  
of which he is a Fellow.