ABSTRACT

An Historical Reconstruction of Edomite Treaty Betrayal in the Sixth Century B.C.E.
Based on Biblical, Epigraphic, and Archaeological Data

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This study seeks to reconcile all relevant categories of data around a basic thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah in the sixth-century B.C.E. Preliminary discussions include the sixth century as the origin for the anti-Edom bias perceivable in many biblical texts, the biblical tradition of a kinship between Edom and Judah, historical-critical considerations of that tradition, the relationship of kinship language to ancient Near Eastern treaties, and the geopolitics and economic importance of the Edomite-Judahite border. The study argues that Edom had the logistical experience and geopolitical position by the early sixth century to capitalize on Judahite misfortune. Epigraphic and biblical evidence is presented in order to argue that by the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah in the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January 587 B.C.E.), Edom had initiated and acted upon a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom's deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah. Edom both surprised Judah with hostility coordinated with the opening phases of the Babylonian assault and betrayed perceived, longstanding, and oftentimes cooperative kinship relations with Judah. The intended objective of Edomite economic and political expansion under Babylonian

auspices may have been control of the Judahite Negev (particularly the Beersheba Valley). It is possible that clandestine Edomite betrayal facilitated the rapid fall of the Judahite Negev, which was evidently the first zone of military operations in support of the Babylonian enterprise against Judah to see its objectives completed.

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Based on Biblical, Epigraphic, and Archaeological Data

by

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A Dissertation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB   Anchor Bible

ABD   Anchor Bible Dictionary

AI   *Arad Inscriptions* (1981)

AUSS   *Andrews University Seminary Studies*

BA   *Biblical Archaeologist*

BAR   *Biblical Archaeology Review*

BASOR   *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

Bib   *Biblica*

BN   *Biblische Notizen*

BT   *The Bible Translator*

BZAW   Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ   *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

Chm   *Churchman*

ErIsr   *Eretz-Israel*

HAE   *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphic*

HAHL   *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*

HAR   *Hebrew Annual Review*

HUCA   *Hebrew Union College Annual*

HI   *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy*

IEJ   *Israel Exploration Journal*

IH	*Inscriptions Hébraïques: Tome 1, Les Ostraca*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OEANE	*The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*
OLP	*Orientalia lovaniensia periodica*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PEQ	*Palestine Excavation Quarterly*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UT	*Ugaritic Textbook*

VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WHJP	World History of the Jewish People
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

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For Caleb and Eliana

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation reconstructs a portion of sixth-century B.C.E. Edomite-Judahite political relations.[1] Specifically, this dissertation argues that Edom betrayed Judah, a treaty-based ally, by entering into an allegiance with Babylon against Judah prior to the Babylonian assault on Judah beginning in the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth regnal year. The work provides a plausible historical component behind the typically negative biblical assessment of Edom. Arguably, no other nation apart from Israel receives more biblical attacks than Edom.[2] This chapter presents the "anti-Edom" story, a related problem, and the procedure of the study. Chapter Two discusses the tradition of Edom as Israel's kin and correlated sociological issues in the study of ancient Near Eastern treaties. Subsequent chapters present archaeological, epigraphic, and biblical evidence supporting the thesis of an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E.

A Biblical Tale: From Edom as Rival to an Anti-Edom Bias

In some biblical texts, "Edom" is presented as explicitly doomed. Consider, for instance, an Isaian image of Edom's destiny (34:5).

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[1]The best single collection of works pertaining to biblical and historical Edom is that of Diana Vikander Edelman, ed., *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

[2]Douglas Stuart (*Hosea-Jonah* [WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987], 405–6) provides a convenient table of prophetic oracles against the nations, and states in regard to Edom that "more sheer space" is devoted to oracles against Tyre and Moab. Such is the case if Isaiah 34 is counted as an oracle against the nations in general (as Stuart counts), rather than one principally against Edom. Stuart acknowledges that mention of Edom has a "somewhat wider distribution."

When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens, lo, it will descend upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed to judgment.[3]

Biblical texts mark Esau/Edom as the twin and rival of Jacob/Israel,[4] yet as Isaiah exemplifies, Edom is presented in the Latter Prophets as more than a rival of Israel. Either as a nation or as an identifiable people, Edom is threatened with destruction.

Rivalry characterizes the relations among Edomites and Judahites in much of Genesis–2 Kings. In the biblical narrative's first reference of Esau and Jacob, the twins struggle within the womb of Rebekah and cause her to question whether life is worth living (Gen 25:21–26). Rebekah speaks—to whom is unknown—"If it is to be this way, why do I live?" (v. 22). Her consequential inquiry of YHWH reveals that the two peoples that shall descend from the sons within her shall be divided (v. 23), foreshadowing a rivalry traceable in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets. Jacob acquires Esau's birthright (Gen 25:29–34) and with the help of Rebekah tricks Isaac into giving him—rather than Esau—the blessing (Genesis 27). Economic abundance will be given to Jacob (27:28; cf. v. 39), and nations will bow down to him rather than to Esau (v. 29). The gravity of Esau's cry unto Isaac upon learning of this trickery and lost blessing is notable: "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!" (v. 38). Isaac predicts Esau's eventual breakout from Israel's domination (v. 37–40), yet Esau maintains a deadly grudge (vv. 41–42). Some reconciliation among brothers, however, apparently occurs by the end of Genesis (e.g., Genesis 32–33). Seemingly functioning as kin, together they bury their father (35:29).

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[3]Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the biblical text in this chapter are those of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

[4]Genesis equates Esau with Edom (see Gen 25:30; 36:1, 8, 19, 43; cf. 32:3 and Obad 8) and equates Jacob with Israel (see, e.g., Gen 32:28; 35:10; cf. 49:2; in parallelism, compare also Num 23:7, 10, 21, 23; 24:5, 17; Deut 33:10).

Despite apparent reparations between the brothers, their descendants come to loggerheads. The Israelite exodus community encounters Edomite resistance at its frontier during the wilderness wanderings (Num 20:14–21). Moses sends messengers to the Edomite political authority requesting safe passage, yet Edom responds by blocking Israelite passage (vv. 18–21).[5] According to the books of Samuel and Kings, military confrontation turns to military conflict during the monarchic period. Saul routes Edom[6] and David's campaign strikes down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt; Edom is subjugated, garrisoned, and nearly emasculated through male genocide (2 Sam 8:12[7]–14; 1 Kgs 11:15–16; cf. Psa 60:1). In developing a merchant fleet capability in the

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[5]This account is different from that of Deut 2:1–8, which suggests that Israel passed by their brother-nation (ונעבר מאת אחינו בני־עשׂו) without apparent incident. Deuteronomy paints a strikingly-different picture of Edomite-Israelite relations than that found in Genesis and Numbers. An adequate explanation is needed; John R. Bartlett ("Edom in the Non-prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* [ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 18) acknowledges this need and offers the possibility that the author of Deut 2:1–8 "writes from a late, postexilic situation when Edomites were no longer any threat." In the same volume, Diana Vikander Edelman ("Edom, A Historical Geography," 10, n. 39) suggests that Deut 23:8 might date from the Hasmoneans' forced conversion of Idumaea to Judaism. While the extent of redactional additions and modifications during the Perisan and Hellensitic periods is unknown, scholarship generally dates the compositional history of Deuteronomy to a course of time from the late eighth through mid-sixth centuries; see, e.g., S. Dean McBride, "Deuteronomy, Book of," *NIDB* 2:108–17, esp. 114–15.

[6]There is little record of the encounter apart from Saul's having "routed them" (MT *hipiʿl* from √רשׁע; LXX[B] ἐσώζετο; 1 Sam 14:47 [NRSV]). The conflict's causes and the magnitude of the Edomite defeat are unknown. As Edom is reckoned in this verse as one of "[Saul's] enemies" (איביו), it would be hard to say who initiated the first round of hostile acts that had thus far been avoided among the brother-nations despite considerable tensions between ancestors and a confrontation during the wilderness wanderings. Do these military campaigns reflect wicked action on the part of Saul (cf. יַרְשִׁיעַ in Job 34:12 and Prov 12:2)? Otherwise, graphic confusion or an ideological anti-Saul modification has occurred; see P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes & Commentary* (AB 8; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 330–31 and notes on 14:17.

[7]MT ארם; read with v.14 and the LXX, Edom (אד[ו]ם) is the reference.

Edomite port city of Ezion-geber near Elath, Solomon would need to exert control over

the local population, in part due to an adversary of royal Edomite stock (1 Kgs 11:14–

22).[8] Edom would function as a subject of Israel, providing military support when called

upon to do so (2 Kgs 3:7–27) until an opportunity arose for rebellion (2 Kgs 8:20–22; cf.

Gen 27:40). Judah attempted to regain control of its one-time subject (2 Kgs 14:7–10,

22), yet Edom made a decisive reclamation of the ʿArabah and its coastal Elath (2 Kgs

16:6). The economic potential of control of the ʿArabah running from the Dead Sea

southward to the Red Sea port of Ezion-geber and Elath was significant.[9] Indeed, control

of regional trade might have been a "pivot" on which a rivalry between Judah and Edom

hinged.[10] Whatever the cause, the Former Prophets present a history of political rivalry.

The Latter Prophets typically present negative assessments of Edom. In many of

these texts, however, the specific underlying causes of the assessments are unknown.

Jeremiah 49 threatens the lineage of Esau. Verses 10, 15, and 17–18 communicate Edom

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[8]The MT gives no information on Hadad's release from Egypt; the LXX has Hadad returning as king in "the land of Edom" and a bitter enemy of Israel; Josephus (*Ant.* 8.7.6) states that Hadad returned to an occupied Edom, but, because a safe course of action could not be made there, he joined Syria and from there made incursions into Israel. For the view that Hadad may have been an Aramean, see André Lemaire, "Hadad l'Édomite ou Hadad l'Araméen," *BN* 43 (1988): 14–18. Otherwise, see Alan R. Schulman ("The Curious Case of Hadad the Edomite" in *Egyptological Studies in Honor of Richard A. Parker* [ed. Leonard H. Lesko; Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986], esp. 135) who argues that the MT dropped an account of the release of Hadad from Egypt (when the time was ripe for coordinated assaults against Israel); the removal of the Hadad material, it is argued, was a sign of restored relations between Egypt and Israel.

[9]See Chapter Three; helpful also is Ernst Axel Knauf-Belleri, "Edom: The Social and Economic History," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 93–118.

[10]Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite For He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 23–32, esp. 23.

as the nadir of the nations, a population destined for eradication. Only widows and orphans are given hope (v. 11). Ezekiel 35:4–9 forebodes a similar fate for Edom—if the references to Mount Seir equate to Edom by synecdoche. Population centers will be deserted (v. 9; cf. Isa 34:11–15; Obad 18). Edom is accused of cherishing an ancient enmity (איבת עולם [Ezek 35:5]), an allusion perhaps either to the history of international conflict, or to Jacob's original violation of Esau (or both). In reference to supposed Edomite activity during the Babylonian crisis of the sixth century,[11] the verse describes Edom's acquisition of Judahite territory and delivery of Judahites to destruction (cf. Obad 11–14). Obadiah 18 anticipates Edom's devastation, while a reconstituted Israel engulfs and consumes the house of Esau, leaving no survivor.

For Malachi, which contains the last word on Edom in the Prophets, the devastation of Edom is a divine activity.

> I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" Is not Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD. Yet I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau; I have made his hill country a desolation and his heritage a desert for jackals. If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says: They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. (Mal 1:2–4)

According to Malachi, God hates (√ שׂנא) Esau and ensures a relentless disruption of Edomite nation-building. The Prophets end their discourse on Edom with mention of the durative anger of YHWH against the people of Esau (זעם יהוה עד־עולם [Mal 1:4]).[12] The

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[11]See below, and, for an example, Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word, 1990), 166–74.

[12]The Writings' last word on Edom is similarly sour, albeit the topic is more mundane; 2 Chronicles 28:17 describes a successful Edomite invasion and defeat of Judah during the Assyrian crisis of the eight century. Judahite captives are carried away by Edomite forces, presumably into servitude. Thus, whether one reads the biblical narrative in the canonical book order reflected by the Protestant Old Testament or in the

typically negative biblical assessment of Edom has led to what Bruce Cresson has

described as a "Damn Edom" theology in postexilic prophecy.[13]

The New Testament (NT) appears to have nothing explicitly favorable to say

about the descendants of Esau. One might consider the statement in Hebrews 11:20

about Isaac—who bestowed blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau—as favorable, yet

the overarching context of the blessing in Genesis 27 suggests otherwise. In Hebrews

12:16–17, the context is clearly unfavorable.

> See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

To which traditions the writer of Hebrews is referring in this cryptic description of Esau

as "immoral and godless" (πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος) is not clear.[14] Nevertheless, it does

reflect a continuation of the typically negative assessment of Esau/Edom in the Bible.

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canonical book order of the Tanak, the last word on Edom/Esau is hardly favorable.
Apocryphal texts are similarly unfavorable; see, e.g., 1 Esdras 4:45; 8:69; 4 Esdras 6:9;
Sirach 50:25–26.

[13]"Damn-Edom" theology is a phrase coined by William Franklin Stinespring; see
Bruce Cresson, "Israel and Edom: A Study of the Anti-Edom Bias in Old Testament
Religion" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1963); and Bruce Cresson, "The Condemnation
of Edom in Post-Exilic Judaism," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other
Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring* (ed. James M. Efird; Durham:
Duke University Press, 1972), 125–48.   The phrase "anti-Edom bias," presupposes that
compilers of some biblical texts actually maintained a predisposition toward presenting
Edom *un*favorably. More broadly, it suggests that the canon maintains such a
disposition.

[14]See, e.g., Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia;
Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 368–69; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A
Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 666–67; Luke Timothy
Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Westminster: Louisville, 2006), 324–25. In light of
the present thesis, perhaps the author of Hebrews knew of a tradition in which
Edom/Esau was, through collusion, equated with Babylon (Βαβυλών), and through
phonemic wordplay associated this nation with Esau's impropriety (βέβηλος).

The apostle Paul argued that the obedience of faith would be brought about among/in all nations/ethnicities.[15] Even so, Paul is not devoid of anti-Edom source material, quoting Malachi's declaration of God's hatred of Esau (Rom 9:13)[16] while focusing on the engrafting of gentile nations into Israel (Romans 9–11). What Paul intends to convey with this anti-Edom source material is debatable, but, like other NT words about Esau, it is not specifically and overtly hopeful for Esau.

What is biblical Edom? What processes brought about a lasting bias? Rivalry and violence between adjacent Iron Age nations might be important.[17] We may also observe that genealogical closeness in Genesis is indirectly related to ideological negativity; the closer a nation is to Israel, the more ideologically problematic it will be.[18] This hypothesis, however, only pertains to the relationship between genealogical material (and any editorial modifications of that material through time) and a nation's ideological disposition. It does not account *for the causes* of that disposition.

If severity of language is a key, then the textual fulcrum on which the lasting bias turned appears to be the Latter Prophets. Anti-Edom texts of the Latter Prophets that are

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[15]ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Rom 1:5).

[16]Paul writes in Romans 9:13, Τὸν Ἰακὼβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαυ ἐμίσησα ("Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated"); LXX Mal 1:2–3 has a slightly different word order: ἠγάπησα τὸν Ἰακὼβ τὸν δὲ Ἡσαυ ἐμίσησα.

[17]See especially Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 156; and "Edom in the Non-prophetical Corpus," 13–32.

[18]See Seth D. Kunin, "Israel and the Nations: A Structuralist Survey," *JSOT* 82 (1999): 19–43. Comparing the genealogies of Genesis with material from the Talmud, Kunin concludes that Edom (i.e., Esau, Israel's brother) and Amalek (Israel's brother's grandson [Gen 36:12]) receive the most strongly negative treatment in the Talmud. Moreover, Kunin will suggest that the Talmud connects Edom with actual evil (it becomes a symbol for Rome and Christianity) and Amalek with archetypal evil.

regularly dated as rather late reflect an intensification or expansion of the role of Edom as a nation (e.g., Isaiah 34; 63; Joel 4:19 [3:19]; Mal 1:3). This attitude appears to have crystallized within biblical compilers. Esau/Edom would become perpetually hated of God (Mal 1:2–4), an ethnicity supposedly with eschatological significance (Isaiah 34; 63; Joel 4:16–20[?]), Paul's object lesson (?) for the importance of covenant participation with the Israel of God (Rom 9:13; cf. Gal 6:16), and, eventually and extra-biblically, a symbol for Rome and Christianity as evil empires against the people of Israel.[19]

What specific historical events transformed Edom as a specific kingdom into an ignoble rubric? Is Edom deserving of such a status? Many of the anti-Edom texts are read as emotionally-charged and laced with a memory of Edomite violence against Judahites (e.g., Isaiah 34; 63; Obadiah; Mal 1:2–4; Psalm 137). One finds in the relevant literature some expressions of disapproval of Israel's/Judah's prideful arrogance and "nationalistic self-delusion" communicated by these texts.[20] It is understandable that

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[19]Indeed, this symbolic view of "Edom" has been read into many passages in the Latter Prophets. In this reading, Edom essentially becomes a representative of, or symbol or code-word for the nations in general. For Talmudic references of Edom as a symbol for Rome, see Kunin ("Israel and the Nations," esp. 21–24); for Edom as a symbol for Christianity, see also M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1992 [1903]), 16; a related bibliography is provided in Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 204.

[20]See James Limburg, "Obadiah," in *Hosea through Micah* (ed. James Luther Mays; Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 135–36 and William P. Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 10, 14. For a recent description of the practical problem in Christian theology at the intersection of Edom's hubris, Obadiah's arousal of "vengeful fantasies," divine justice, and biblical injunctions "to love your enemies," see Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 249–52. Cf. also John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (ed. James L. Mays, Carol Newsome, and David L. Petersen; Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John

some commentators with theological objectives are troubled by the anticipated vengeance

against Judah's enemies communicated in anti-Edom texts such as Psalm 137:7–9.[21]

Some commentators choose to redirect the focus from that of anticipated doom to a focus

on themes of God's ultimate control[22] and the supposedly trustworthy justice of God.[23]

Knox Press, 2001), esp. 149–50, where the desire for vengeance "need not be commendable to be comprehensible" (150).

[21]Some of the language of the Psalms has been deemed inappropriately xenophobic and violent by some faith communities. Use of these "enemy psalms" in worship can be disturbing and resisted. Psalm 137 is no exception. This attitude toward the harsh language and the psalm's exclusion from worship finds less warrant in liberation-oriented readings; in the arena of social justice, the psalm has found new appreciation. See, e.g., David Pleins, *The Psalms: Songs of Tragedy, Hope, and Justice,* The Bible and Liberation, ed. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsley (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993); in terms of covenant and enemies of the covenant, see also John Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture," *Chm* 111 (1997): esp. 115–17. On Psalm 137, see also Chapter Five.

[22]For a recent example, consider words from the epilogue by Richard J. Coggins in his commentary on Nahum and Obadiah (Richard J. Coggins and S. Paul Re'emi, *Israel Among the Nations* [International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 100):

> Not only have Assyria and Edom disappeared…much of what Nahum and Obadiah thought about God…has also disappeared from our consciousness. Yet there is another sense in which these strange books express a truth that is at the very heart of a theistic perception of the world. They proclaim that our world is an ordered world, that God is in control, that all which appears hostile to his purposes will undergo judgment. We do not have to imitate those prophets, or express our beliefs in the way that they did.

[23]E.g., Julius A. Bewer ("Obadiah," in *A Criticial and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Obadiah, and Joel* [The International Critical Commentary; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911], 14), who considers Obadiah "Jewish to its core," having "no great word," a "selfish" hope of vengeance, and yet a vision that "made it possible for many Jews to go on believing…in the justice of their God." A similar focus on Obadiah as conveying the hope of divine justice is elaborated by Hans Walter Wolff (*Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary*; trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 22–23), who rejects the problem of the specifically anti-Edom bias and writes:

No doubt, there are theological and ideological ramifications of the biblical anti-Edom bias. Improving our understanding of the historical causes of the bias may assist historical-critical theological discourse about Edom in the Bible.

The Historical Problem

According to much scholarship seeking a cause for this typically negative attitude toward Edom in the Latter Prophets, the "anti-Edom bias" is reflective not only of a history of rivalry and occasions of violent confrontation, but also, and especially, to perceived (if not real) acts of hostility carried out by Edom against the kingdom of Judah in the early sixth century B.C.E. Perceived Edomite hostility against Judah in the sixth century fueled the especially vehement attitude toward Edom expressed by many exilic and postexilic biblical compilers (the anti-Edom bias).[24] At its twilight, the kingdom of Judah was lost and its people were exiled to and subjugated by Babylon. In short, a

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What is being preached here is not hate of Edom; it is the punitive justice of God….

What Edom will have to go through is an example to all nations under whom God's people have to suffer (vv. 15a, 16f.). …Hard words about complete extermination are spoken (vv. 16b, 18)….Other sayings suggest, rather, that though the nations will lose their (hostile) independence, they will be incorporated into the order in which the delivered people of Zion live (vv. 16b, 21)….At the end the great experience for Israel and all the nations will be the lordship of God….

[24]Other possible causes of the vehemence have been suggested. The bias stems from the long history (i.e., Iron Age) of hostility between Israel and Edom (see, e.g., Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 156–57); second, the vehemence was caused by the accident of Edomite survival of the Babylonian crisis that caused Judah's fall and Edom's absorption of formerly Judahite land, which in the minds of the lamentation cult eventually warranted its condemnation; for this latter position, see, e.g., Ulrich Kellermann, "Psalm 137," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 43–58; G. S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7–22 and Obadiah," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 89–97; cf. also Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), esp. 184–85; cf. Elie Assis ("Why Edom? On the Hostility Towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources," *VT* 56 [2006]: 1–20).

"brother-nation" was perceived as contributing to Judah's fall; a long-standing rivalry

culminated in Edomite violence against Judah around the time of Jerusalem's fall.

Passages generally accepted as dating from or pertaining to this period and to the

activities of Edom are several and include Ezek 25:12–14; 35:1–15; Jer 49:7–22;

Obadiah; Lam 4:18–22; and Psalm 137.[25] Obadiah contains the most detailed description

of supposed Edomite activities, containing as it does a sustained discourse on Edom, a

lengthy parallel with Jeremiah 49 (esp. Obad 1–6), several specific accusations (esp. vv.

11–14), and several theological concepts (e.g., the day of YHWH [v. 15], the cup [of

wrath?] metaphor [v. 16], possession of the land [vv. 18–21], and the concept of *lex

talionis*, the law of return [v.15]). Indeed, Obadiah's specificity of accusations is

irregular for oracles of doom; prophetic accusations against foreign nations are typically

general or vague. Obadiah, Psalm 137, Ezekiel, and Lamentations collectively condemn

Edom for supposed sixth-century atrocities, yet of these only Obadiah includes a

sustained discourse about Edom replete with accusations of specific Edomite activity.

Given Obadiah's accusations and a gathering consensus on its date, recent

commentators tend to provide reconstructions of the sixth-century political and military

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[25]For discussion of the shift over the last few decades to a near consensus around a sixth-century date for Obadiah, see Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah* (AB 24d; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 47–56, which provides a convenient listing of commentators and their dates for Obadiah; for a dating of Obadiah to the first half of the exilic period, see pp. 54–56, and, especially, J. Renkema, "Data Relevent to the Dating of the Prophecy of Obadiah," in *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (ed. Johannes C. De Moor and Harry F. Van Rooy; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 251–62; contrast Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*; Berit Olam [Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000], 279–300). Diachronic studies of Obadiah have suggested that the text of Obadiah underwent a two- or three-stage development. These studies often suggest that portions of verses 1–14, 15b comprise an early exilic, original core of Obadiah; see, e.g., Albert Condamin, "L'unité d'Abdias," *RB* 9 (1900): 261–68; see also Chapter Five.

relations between Edom and Judah during the Babylonian crisis. It is precisely here where problematic discord exists. The reconstructions of Edom's political (and military) relations with Judah and Babylon at the time of the siege and subsequent fall of Jerusalem are multiple, diverse, and often contradictory. Edom's political relations ca. 588–586 B.C.E. have been lost to the vagaries of time. The problem is that we know neither what Edom did nor when those alleged activities were planned and initiated. A review of several reconstructions communicates the *historical* problem of multiple and contrasting historical reconstructions of Edomite activity during the fall of Judah.

Reconstructions of Sixth-Century Edomite-Judahite Political Relations

The paucity of available data directly pertaining to Edomite-Judahite relations in the sixth century has made it difficult for commentators and historians to establish and defend specific reconstructions of that relationship. Given this difficulty, some commentators have produced rather vague or non-committal reconstructions of these relations and often reference other possibilities while giving slight preference to one or more possibilities. Accordingly, we may differentiate the works into two basic groups: rather vague reconstructions of Edomite-Judahite relations at the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah (588–586 B.C.E.) and reconstructions that are relatively more specific.

Rather Vague Reconstructions of Sixth-Century Judahite-Edomite Relations

John D. W. Watts (1975). The nature of the Cambridge Bible Commentary series, which includes a commentary on Obadiah by John D. W. Watts, limits verse by verse discussion of translation problems as well as references to other biblical passages and secondary literature. Watts' reconstruction of the activities of Edom immediately

following the fall of Jerusalem is given in some detail: the month-long plunder of Jerusalem "may have provided time for Edom's participation" and was the time of Edom's "final dastardly act of ambush laid" for Zedekiah and his small band of refugees from the siege.[26]   No discussion is provided on the relations of Edom and Judah immediately prior to the Babylonian assault, yet a vague reference to a possible infraction against an alliance is made in his comment on Obad 7, which describes Edom's eventual succumbing to her own allies, perhaps in an exilic context: "The irony of Edom's fall made possible by the treachery of *allies* and kin is counterpart to her crimes against Judah, who *at one time*, considered herself Edom's *ally* and kin but who was betrayed."[27] The nonspecific, temporal reference to betrayal is telling both of the paucity of available data and of Watts' cautious reconstruction. Did Edom's betrayal of Judah occur during the pillaging? Was the betrayal due to Edom's "standing by" during the siege?[28] Watts answers: "Whatever Edom's earlier transgressions against Israel or Judah may have been, the climax was reached in her participation in the looting of Jerusalem when it fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E."[29] Unless Watts is suggesting that Edom was involved in anti-Judah hostilities during the early phases of the Babylonian assault—which is not clearly stated, and which "against *Israel* or Judah" might speak against—rather than

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[26]John D. W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 59.

[27]Watts, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 57 (emphases mine).

[28]Watts, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 59, which is apparently based on NEB "stood aloof" (Obad 11; לעמד מנגד); see also Chapter Five.

[29] Watts, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 59.

referring to the long history of violence between the "brother" nations,[30] no description of Edomite–Judahite relations *at the eve of the Babylonian invasion* is provided; Edomite hostility against Judah occurred after Jerusalem fell.

Douglas Stuart (1987). In his Word Biblical Commentary on Obadiah, Douglas Stuart acknowledges that the exact extent of Edom's involvement with Babylon against Judah is not clear, yet Edom "somehow" welcomed and helped Babylon in 586 (or 598), and waited like "vultures" for Jerusalem.[31] The "welcoming" occurred in 586. Thus, Babylon was completing or had completed its successful siege of Jerusalem. In his discussion of Obad 10–14, Stuart concludes that Edomites are not charged "with having any military role in the attack on Judah, which was strictly a Babylonian enterprise."[32] Nevertheless, Stuart will also suggest that *during* the two-year siege it is possible that "Edomite parties were looting unprotected southern sites."[33] Edom carried out a lucrative "policy of nonopposition to and indeed support for Babylon in 586 (or 598)."[34] For Stuart, if there was an official policy vis-à-vis Babylon, then it was one of "comfortably biding its time" after cowering into an "obsequious alliance" with Babylon.[35] A reader is

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[30] Watts, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 53–54.

[31] Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*; WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987, esp. 404, 417–19.

[32] Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 418. Stuart will later suggest that "in all likelihood Edomites did not enter Jerusalem (if ever) until long after the city was picked over and largely abandoned by the Babylonian armies" (419).

[33] Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 419; one wonders if "unprotected" equates to unpopulated. If populated, looting suggests either Edomite brigands or military units were at work.

[34] Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 419.

[35] Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 418.

left wondering *when* such an alliance was initiated.[36] One gathers from Stuart's

commentary that Edom was opportunistic rather than premeditative (both against Judah

and for Babylon). In short, at some point, Edom engaged in hostilities against Judah, yet

almost nothing else is certain apart from Edom's non-opposition to Babylon, perhaps

coupled with an alliance occurring in temporal proximity to the siege of Jerusalem.

James Limburg (1988). In his short commentary on Obadiah in the Interpretation

series, James Limburg dates the prophecy of Obadiah to some time shortly after the

return of the exiles (539 B.C.E.) and associates the context of Obadiah with the fall of

Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.[37] Little information regarding Edomite-Judahite political

relations is provided, yet on three occasions Limburg states that Edomites were "innocent

bystanders" from the outset of the assault until Jerusalem fell and was subjected to

looting.[38] Edom "stood by doing nothing" during the assault.[39] This innocence implies a

lack of direct support of Babylon. Obadiah bases his outrage in part on the *inactivity* of

Edomites, from whom assistance was expected because of kinship ties. In short, Edom's

betrayal was one of inaction followed by pillage-related improprieties taken against kin

after Jerusalem fell.

Billy K. Smith (1995). In his commentary on Obadiah in the New American

Commentary series, which aims at theological exegesis of given texts, Billy K. Smith

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[36]"Biding its time" suggests that there was some passage of time between the initiation of the "obsequious alliance" and the initiation of hostilities either later in the siege or following Jerusalem's fall.

[37]Limburg, "Obadiah," 130–32.

[38]Limburg, "Obadiah," 127 (2x), 135.

[39]Limburg, "Obadiah," 133 (referencing Obad 11); see Chapter Five.

makes no mention of treaties in effect during the Babylonian assault. Smith considers

Zedekiah's council of Palestinian states ca. 593 B.C.E. (see Jeremiah 27–28) to be

ineffectual due to "some hostile act" committed by Edom against Judah some time

"shortly after" the council.[40] Smith does not clarify when hostility *related to the council*

of Palestinian states took place, yet elsewhere states that Edomites pounced on their

Judean brothers "*after* Babylon had flattened them and left them helpless and

undefended…."[41] Obadiah bases his outrage primarily on broken kinship expectations;

the use of "your brother" (אחיך; v. 10) "refers to blood relationship between Judah and

Edom rather than a contractual relationship between partners in a treaty."[42] A specific

reconstruction of Edomite-Judahite relations between Zedekiah's council and the

conclusion of the Babylonian assault cannot be extrapolated from Smith's commentary.

Smith does, however, set Obad 7 (a verse with a number of treaty connotations) in an

exilic context, and prefers to understand Babylon as the treaty partner.[43]

Daniel J. Simundson (2005). In his recent commentary on Obadiah in the

Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries series (which is geared toward theological

students, pastors, and teachers), Daniel J. Simundson provides virtually no delineation of

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[40] Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, *Amos Obadiah Jonah* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 174. Smith does not clarify if "shortly after" refers to the events of ca. 588–586 B.C.E., to which he associates the Edomite hostility referred to in vv. 11–14 (p. 191).

[41]Emphasis mine; see Smith, *Obadiah*, esp. 190–92. Smith states that Judah's kin moved into the fallen city only after Nebuchadnezzar's forces were finished.

[42]Smith, *Obadiah*, 190; cf. Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi*, 11–12.

[43]Smith, *Obadiah*, 187–88, citing J. R. Bartlett (*Edom and the Edomites* [JSOTSup. 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], esp. 159).

political relations between Edom and Judah prior to the Babylonian assault of 588–586

B.C.E. apart from Edom having not been of help to Judah. The accusations of Obad 11–

14 are placed in a context of Jerusalem's fall. Simundson notes that the kinship language

of Obad 10 might refer to a political alliance as well as to blood relations,[44] but it is left

up to Simundson's readers to decide whether political agreements were involved in

Judahites' expectation of Edomite assistance. Likewise left to one's imagination is when

Edom initiated hostility against Judah during the Babylonian crisis.

Rather Specific Reconstructions of Sixth-Century Judahite-Edomite Relations

 J. M. Myers (1971). In a study on the rise of the anti-Edom polemic, Myers

argues that Edom played a role in the downfall of Judah, yet states the "indefinite"

situation of the biblical and archaeological evidence limits precision.[45] Nevertheless, he

will conclude that inscriptional evidence from Tel Arad in southern Judah suggests that

the Edomites were responsible for the fall of that fortification. Myers does not specify

when during the Babylonian crises the inscription (Arad 24) was written, yet he makes

several points about the late history of Edom based on the biblical evidence:

> Edom was one of the allies [of Judah] planning a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar in
> the fourth year of Zedekiah (Jer. 27:2). …In the *wake* of the Babylonian conquest
> of Judah, Edomites were guilty of some reprehensible activity that incensed the
> people of Judah. I Esd. 4:45 accuses them of setting the temple on fire. *They may
> have remained aloof* from the conflict when they saw the *inevitability* of its
> outcome. *But that hardly seems enough* to elicit the strong statements found [in a
> number of biblical complaints]. They may have rendered some assistance, directly
> or indirectly, to the Babylonian invaders. …[Yet it] can hardly be said, without

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[44]Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 247.

[45]J. M. Myers, "Edom and Judah in the Sixth–Fifth Centuries B.C.," in *Near
Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore:
Johns Hopkins, 1971), 377–92, esp. 392.

qualification, that they actually joined the army of Nebuchadnezzar, as some have inferred.[46]

In Myers' reconstruction, Edom was "not yet Judah's implacable opponent" during the apparently successful conference of Palestinian states under Zedekiah in the first decade of the sixth century; the animosity between Judah and Edom "can only be explained by a sudden shift on the part of the later."[47] This shift in relations apparently coincided with the point at which the outcome of the conflict was perceived as inevitable. Myers suggests two specific and "admittedly conjectural" possibilities regarding Edomite involvement in the Babylonian assault: "Edom either joined the conqueror of Judah as an ally or *remained deliberately aloof*[48] at the critical moment." Joining "the conqueror" suggests that Judah was *already* falling. In short, Palestinian states formed an alliance, but at some point in the Babylonian assault Edom gave up its loyalties to Judah.

Leslie C. Allen (1976). Leslie C. Allen suggests that Edom was opportunistic, and that kinship rather than formal alliance was the basis for obligation between Edom and Judah. Allen does not specify *when* the Edomite decision to act against Judah occurred, nor does he decide whether the action was official or not. Commenting on verse 11, Allen writes, "Whether Obadiah is referring to formal Edomite contingents in the Babylonian army, or merely to private individuals and groups sorting over soldiers'

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[46]Myers, "Edom and Judah," 386 (emphases mine).

[47]Myers, "Edom and Judah," 380.

[48]Myers, "Edom and Judah," 380 (emphasis mine); Here and in the block quote above, Myers identifies a translation problem that remains inadequately addressed. The English phrase "[stood] aloof," which is likely based on עמדך מנגד (Obad 11), does not correspond well with the general propensity of biblical compilers to accuse Edom of atrocities; see Chapter Five.

leavings, is uncertain."[49] Allen identifies here an important question related to the

problem: from Obadiah's perspective, was Edomite involvement in the fall of Judah the

result of a *formal* agreement with Babylon? Despite this acknowledged problem, Allen's

work suggests some specificity:

> The people of Edom did not maintain their *neutrality* for long. Hesitant to enter *the lists* on Judah's side, they were not averse to exploiting the situation for their own ends…. So far from presenting a unified front with Judah against the outsider, they made common cause with the enemy.[50]

The "lists" on Judah's side suggests that there was some form of cooperation (perhaps an

alliance of mutual revolt or defense) among some Palestinian states. Edom was not

brought into that fold. For Allen, Edom's decision "to stand aloof" (עמדך מנגד; v. 11)

when Judah fell was the "acme of unbrotherliness" and reflected Edom's political

"neutrality."[51] By using the word *neutrality*, Allen proposes—despite the problem he has

identified—a specific reconstruction. Edom maintained an isolationist policy perhaps

until the fall of Jerusalem, when common cause with Babylon increased and hostilities

against a fallen Judah commenced. In short, Edom was a neutral party for some portion

of the Babylonian campaign against Judah.

Hans Walter Wolff (1977/1986). Hans Walter Wolff communicates a specific act

of betrayal on the part of Edom: "Instead of showing loyalty to its *ally* [i.e. Judah] and

readiness to help her…it *collaborated* with the enemy power and joined that power's

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[49]Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 155.

[50]Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 155 (emphasis mine).

[51]Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 155.

auxiliary troops (v.11)."[52] Wolff suggests that the collaboration of Edom against a

previous ally occurred only *after* Judah's fall was evident due to Babylon's military

successes, *and* when Babylon was an "occupying" power.[53] Citing Obad 3 and the work

of John R. Bartlett (see below), Wolff advocates that, for reasons of self-preservation

rather than of enmity with Judah, Edom *withdrew from the anti-Babylonian coalition*,

which was under consideration by Palestinian states ca. 593 B.C.E. and, as the

Babylonians approached, retreated to its rocky and defensive territory. Edom carried out

hostilities against neither Babylon nor Judah during the Babylonian approach, assault,

and siege of Jerusalem.[54] Wolff suggests that this withdrawal occurred at some point

between ca. 593 and ca. 586 B.C.E., and was perhaps connected with the retirement of the

Egyptian army, which had briefly come to Jerusalem's aid (Jer 37:5–8).[55] Wolff also

suggests that the Edomite population was entirely defensive during the siege and fall of

Jerusalem, yet some elements assisted Babylon in military operations toward the end of

the siege. In discussing Obad 11–14, Wolff states that "freebooter Edomite

reconnaissance patrols" and "Edomite commandos" harassed Judahite refugees and kept

[52]Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 23 (emphases mine).

[53]Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 54 and 19, where Wolff clarifies that Obadiah "is talking about Edom's behavior during the Babylonian deportation that followed the conquest of Jerusalem." John Barton (*Joel and Obadiah*; Old Testament Library; ed. by James L. Mays, *et al.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press [2001]) provides a virtually identical reconstruction, citing Wolff on several occasions; on Mays' doubt of an Babylonian-Edomite treaty, see p. 145, yet see also 142, which pertains toEdom's "sworn loyalty" and, possibly, parity treaty with Judah.

[54]See Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 18, 43, and 48–49.

[55]Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 48.

watch over breaches in the walls, delivering captives to the Babylonians.[56] Rephrased,

Edom's goal of national survival ultimately required that it give up its anti-Babylonian

(yet purely defensive) stance, and provide tactical support to Babylonian forces as the fall

of Judah became imminent.[57] Somehow, this collaboration does not necessitate that an

official Babylonian-Edomite alliance existed.

Paul R. Raabe (1996). Similarly, Paul R. Raabe argues that the conference of

Palestinian states under Zedekiah ca. 594/3 B.C.E. (Jer 27:1–15), which aimed at forming

an anti-Babylonian coalition, never materialized or held.[58] This statement pinpoints the

lacuna in our knowledge of the relations between Judah and Edom in regard to the

existence of any mutual treaty of revolt. We do not know whether an agreement was

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[56]Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 55.

[57]Wolff (*Obadiah and Jonah*, 54) asks whether Edomites were officially foreign contingents for Babylon (2 Kgs 25:1), and concludes that what "Obadiah has to say about Edomite behavior does not make it very probable that the Edomites belonged to the Babylonian army." Yet this conclusion appears to contradict his earlier assertion that Edomites constituted part of Babylon's *auxiliary* troops. Thus, an uncertainty remains as to the precise relationship between Edomites and Babylonians: an early defensive posture in regard to Babylon (despite withdrawal from a coalition) gave way to some sort of collaboration, which somehow included Edomite military units that were "auxiliaries" (replete with commandos and freebooting anti-Judahite patrols) under Edomite command and control. One leaves Wolff's work wondering whether Edomite hostility against Judah during the fall of Jerusalem was carried out only by "particular Edomite groups" hostile to Judahites or by Edomite military contingents officially aligned with Babylon; see Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 54, contrast 23.

[58]See Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah* (AB 24d; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 53, which references Abraham Malamat, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Leo Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary L. Johnson; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 287–314. Malamat's statements on Judahite and Edomite political relations present Edom as having had some "role in the final destruction of the Judean kingdom" after having been in an alliance with Judah in the anti-Babylonian coalition that eventually "came to nothing" despite the revolts carried out by Judah, Ammon, and Tyre (Malamat, "Last Years," 297, 307 n. 40).

reached among Palestinian states that included Edom and Judah. Edomite hostility

against Judahite forces might have begun prior to the fall of Jerusalem, yet Raabe is more

specific on the Edomite–Babylonian relations *following* the fall of Jerusalem. Clues in

Obadiah suggest that "*between* the fall of Jerusalem (587/6 B.C.) and the campaign of

Nabonidus (553 B.C.), the Edomites had a formal or informal alliance with Babylon (v.

7)," which may have allowed them considerable advantages in landholdings and trade.[59]

In Raabe's reconstruction, *at some point following the final assault on Jerusalem*, Edom

appears to have cooperated with Babylon. Edomite failure to aid Judah very early in the

assault *might* have been a violation of a coalition agreement, but Edomite hostilities

against Judah appear to have begun only late in the course of the siege or subsequent to it.

Marvin A. Sweeney (2000). In his short commentary on Obadiah,[60] Sweeney has

communicated a rather specific reconstruction of the political relations among Edom and

Judah immediately prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Noting the wide distribution of treaty

connotations in Obadiah,[61] Sweeney states that Edom and Judah were treaty partners (Jer

23:7) prior to the Babylonian assault and that Edom was betrayed by its own allies (Obad

7), the Babylonians, "at some point following the destruction of Jerusalem."[62] Sweeney

neither identifies when an alliance between Edom and Babylon was initiated, nor whether

Edomite betrayal included acts of hostility prior to the fall of Jerusalem. This temporal

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[59]Raabe, *Obadiah*, 186 (emphasis mine).

[60]See "Obadiah" in Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*; Berit Olam (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 279–300.

[61]See especially Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 281–82, 293–95.

[62]Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 281; for the Babylonians as the allies of Edom, see also 285.

ambiguity is accentuated with Sweeney's consideration of vv. 8–18, which includes

specific accusations against Edom (vv. 11–14). Sweeney considers these verses as

originally pertaining to the time of Amaziah of Judah's preparation for an anti-Edom

assault in the ninth century.[63] A double temporal ambiguity of Edomite *activity* is seen in

Sweeney's statement that "Edom *did not support* Israel or Jerusalem at a time when

Israel/Jerusalem was attacked, defeated, and plundered by a foreign enemy."[64] Read on

two levels, Edom "did not support" (i.e., was *inactive*?) in both the ninth and sixth

centuries B.C.E. Sweeney does not explicate *when* Edomite hostility was initiated against

Judah during the Babylonian crisis. We may conclude, however, that Sweeney

understands these hostilities as having at least followed Jerusalem's fall. Sweeney states

the grounds for Edom's punishment, which "include Edom's *standing aside* while

foreigners do violence against Jacob, dividing the spoil of Jerusalem, and even taking

part in the plunder and cutting off fugitives."[65] According to Sweeney, Edom acted in

direct contradiction to treaty obligations established between that state and Judah.

Inactivity suggests a betrayal of expectations of protection.[66] Given the duration of the

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[63]Primarily, Sweeney's commentary provides a synchronic literary analysis of Obadiah; diachronic considerations include his suggestion that Obad 8–18 is a ninth-century prophecy to which sixth-century material (Obad 1–7 and 19–21) was added; see Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 281–83.

[64]Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 292.

[65]Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 284 (emphasis mine); it is likely that this "standing aside" is similarly based on עמדך מנגד (v. 11); see also "stood aside" in Sweeney's discussion of verse 11 (*The Twelve Prophets*, 284); according to Sweeney, Edom undertook [hostile] "action against Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian conquest of the city" (285), but "conquest of the city" may include assault, siege, and fall; given the use of "stood aside" during the violence carried out by other nations, Sweeney apparently advocates that Edom became hostile following the fall of Jerusalem.

[66]Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 292–293.

siege of Jerusalem, however, Sweeney leaves considerable latitude for the timing of Edom's initiation of hostilities against Judah and the timing of its alliance with Babylon, which might itself be an exilic undertaking. Even so, a *treaty* with Judah was betrayed, perhaps initially only with Edom's failure to come to Judah's aid.

The Edomite Scapegoat. A strikingly different reconstruction of the events has become influential: *Edom was entirely innocent of hostilities against Judah, and did not contribute to its fall.* Kinship expectations, at least from Judah's perspective, may have given Judah a false hope of Edomite support, but no hostilities contributing to the fall of Judah were carried out by Edomites at the time of the Babylonian assault. Edom's mere existence as an intact state following the disaster of 586 B.C.E. and its subsequent absorption of *former* Judahite territory might have led to an improperly founded anti-Edom bias. Accordingly, Edom has been a scapegoat suffering mimetic assaults for over twenty-five hundred years.

Along these lines, the work of John R. Bartlett has been particularly influential and has resulted in this reconstruction enjoying increasing support. In an often-cited essay he concludes: "For the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 587 B.C., Edom cannot be held in any way responsible. The prophets, and many of their less critical followers, owe Edom an apology."[67] Thus, Edom was non-hostile (at least during the

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[67]Bartlett "Edom and the Fall of Jerusalem," 23; see also *Edom and the Edomites*, esp. 151, 156–57, and "Edom in the Non-prophetical Corpus," 20. Bartlett's further contributions to the study of Edomite-Judahite relations include "The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom," *JTS* 20 (1969): 1–20; "The Brotherhood of Edom." *JSOT* 4 (1977): 2–27; "Yahweh and Qaus: A Response to Martin Rose," *JSOT* 5 (1978): 29–38; and "Biblical Sources for the Iron Age in Edom," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), 13–19; and "Edomites and Idumaeans," *PEQ* 131 (1999): 102–14.

assault, siege, and fall of Jerusalem). Judah might have hoped that Edom would act as a

brother-nation and come to its defense, yet no treaty relationship required as much. For

Bartlett, the council of Palestinian states was ineffectual in bringing about among Judah

and Edom an agreement of mutual rebellion against Babylon.

> The king of Edom was doubtless willing enough to join the council and have
> knowledge of what was planned, but it is unlikely that Edom was anxious to join
> any rebellion. The king of Edom probably took the view of Jeremiah, that rebellion
> would lead to disaster, for when Judah openly rebelled in 589 BCE, only Egypt,
> Tyre, and perhaps the Ammonites associated themselves with her.[68]

According to Bartlett, apart from joining a council and gathering intelligence on

Palestinian planning, Edom abstained from rebellion and from interfering with

Babylonian affairs in Palestine.[69] Obadiah 11–14 accuses Edomites of specific actions

against Judah, yet for Bartlett these are connected with the "usual miseries of conquest"

and these accusations "should not be understood as an historian's description of Edom's

behavior in 587 B.C.E. The poet derives his picture largely from his imagination."[70]

Conversely, Edomite individuals appeared willing to harbor Judahite refugees, and

Bartlett holds that Jer 40:11 is "[p]erhaps the most reliable piece of evidence" for

Edomite behavior during the Babylonian attack and siege of Jerusalem.[71] Consider Jer

40:11–12, which communicates that Judahites were residing in Edom:

> Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and
> in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in
> Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan as governor over
> them, then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been

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[68]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 150–51.

[69]Cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 155.

[70]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 155.

[71]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 151.

scattered and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah; and they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance.

Bartlett understands these verses as evidencing the peaceful treatment that Jews returning from Edom had received there during the attack and siege.[72] If some Edomites and Judahites perceived themselves as kin, or if proximity could translate into good relations among some neighbors, then there is no reason to doubt that some Judahites found receptive shelter among some Edomites, as "individual and national relationships are not always the same thing."[73] For Bartlett, the prophetic portrayal of Edomites as villains during the Babylonian crisis is a "prejudice" that is rooted in a Judahite "hatred for Edom" stemming from the monarchic period.[74] Bartlett's provides a concise summary of his reconstruction of the origins of the anti-Edom prejudice and its relation to supposed Edomite atrocities carried out against Judah during its fall.

> …the Davidic conquest of Edom and Edom's later successful fight for independence left a legacy of bitterness which turned Edom into the archetypal enemy of Judah. When Judah fell to the Babylonians, and Edom remained unscathed, it was inevitable that Edom should come in for harsh language; naturally such an enemy on Judah's borders coveted the land, would gloat over Judah's distress, would kill fugitives, join in the looting, and eventually be blamed, most

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[72]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 151, 154, 157.

[73]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 151; some Edomites might have been receptive to Judahites with the qualification that as a matter of "national" policy Edom may have been willing to deliver Judahite political and military authorities to the Babylonians. Bartlett, rightly I think, acknowledges in this context the difference between national policy and personal relationships. Imperial conditions in Palestine were evidently such so as to allow a return of Judahites. No information is given as to the vassal's (i.e., Edom's) take on the matter. Indeed, "When all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom *and in all the lands* (בכל־הארצות)…" (Jer 40:11a), is suggestive of an imperial indulgence or policy toward the return of Judahites *well after the attack and siege* and irrespective of Edom's political relations with Judah *ca. 588–586 B.C.E.* Jeremiah 40:11–12 might have no applicability to Edomite-Judahite relations at the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah.

[74]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 156.

unfairly, for the most painful catastrophe at all, the burning of the temple. In fact, Edom played no direct part in the events of 587 BCE. The only firm evidence suggests that some Judaean refugees found sanctuary in Edom. For the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 587 BCE Edom cannot be held responsible. [75]

Edom did survive the first phase of Babylon's assault on Palestine and Nebuchadnezzar found "no cause for punitive action."[76] Edom appears to have had a favorable relationship (perhaps of appeasement) with Babylon until the time of Nabonidus' campaign against Edom (ca. 553 B.C.E.).[77] For Bartlett, Edom was "on the Babylonian side" in 587 B.C.E.[78] In short, Edom has been falsely maligned for sixth-century hostilities against Judah. Edom was instead a refuge for Judahites.

Bartlett has effectively brought attention to the lack of clear, historically-reliable evidence directly linking Edom to hostility contributing to the fall of Judah, Jerusalem and its temple. Although no consensus has formed around Bartlett's position,[79] the possibility that Edom remains falsely maligned has led to new understandings of the anti-Edom passages of the Bible. As an example, Bert Dicou suggests that Edom's mere existence as an intact state in plain view of the crushed and lamenting inhabitants of Jerusalem might have initiated prophetic tirades assisting in the transformation of Edom

[75]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 156–57.

[76]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 157.

[77]In ca. 553 B.C.E., King Nabonidus of Babylon evidently critically weakened Edom, probably as part of a campaign aimed at imperial expansion and control of the region's trade routes and the vast wealth of Arabia; see John Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 23–39; for discussion of the motivations for and historical problems related to Nabonidus' imperial expansion and sojourn to Teima in Arabia, see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus King of Babylon 556-539 B.C.* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), esp. 165–66, 178–85.

[78]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 159; cf. "Edom and the Fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C.," 2–24.

[79]Cf. Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 23–32, esp. 24, 28.

into a "type" or "representative" of the nations.[80] Edom becomes a scapegoat.[81]

Bartlett's influence is seen in the qualification of statements about Edom's role in the fall

of Jerusalem and in the production of theological readings of Obadiah that shirk or

deconstruct its condemnation of Edom and its distasteful anti-Edom bias.[82]

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[80]Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), esp. 103–04; 184–85, who acknowledges some Edomite hostility at the fall of Jerusalem connected with the absorption of Judahite territory; cf. also Kellermann, "Psalm 137," 43–58; Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles," 89–97.

[81]Compare Bernhard Gosse, "Ézéchiel 35–36, 1–15 et Ézéchiel 6: La désolation de la montage de Séir et le renouveau des montagnes d'Israéäl," *RB* 4 (1989): 511–17. Utilizing Redaction Criticism and working from a standpoint that the Book of Ezekiel was substantially edited during the Second Temple period, Gosse suggests that Ezekiel 35–36 established a diptych transferring to Edom the curses of Ezekiel 6 (which were directed against the land of Israel) in view of Israel's renewal following the exile. Gosse argues that Ezekiel 35:1–36:15 functions, in part, to ease the prophetic weight of responsibility from Israel's shoulders onto those of the nations (e.g. the Ammonites and Philistines in Ezekiel 25) and onto Edom in particular. Edom sought possession of the land of Israel, which was due those returning from punishment and Exile. Thus, Ezekiel 35–36, with its textual allusions to earlier chapters, its unity, and its special concern with the "land" of Israel, functions apart from the "Oracles against the Nations" of chapters 25–32 and consoles a renewed people of Israel. The punishment required by Ezekiel 6 has been carried out; condemnation has been shifted to others, namely, Edom.

[82]According to Simundson (*Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 249–52, 251 and, generally, 249–52), Obadiah may be read as a warning to Judah not to become "just like Edom…, gloating over the terrible fate of a brother." Simundson can consider "humiliation, defeat, [and] punishment" to be deserved (251), yet also that "it is a tragedy that anyone, even the evildoer who deserves it, must suffer" (251–252). Biblical theologians would need to craft some curious readings of Obadiah's accusations if Bartlett's conclusions of Edom's innocence are accepted. Pronouncements that appear to speak of Edomite crimes against Judah (the supposed victim) are used, for example, to warn Judah of her biases and *to condemn her* for infidelity to a supposed soteriological universalism for all ethnicities/peoples; see, e.g., Apelu Tia Póe, "The Book of Obadiah: A Study of Its Literary Artistry and Its Theological Message" [Ph.D. diss., Vanderbuilt University, 1999]. Without satisfactory discussion or criticism, Póe accepts Bartlett's conclusion regarding Edom's innocence in the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. The goal of Póe's study is to show how the rhetoric of Obadiah was deliberately designed to expose the absurdity of the prophet's thought, word, and action in order to effect change in the hearts and minds of the intended audience. For Póe, the book of Obadiah was intended to be a divine condemnation *of Israel* for their exclusivistic view of God's salvation and

The preceding survey of opinions concerning Edomite-Judahite relations in the early sixth century should point to the problem. Depending on the reconstruction, Edom has been variously painted as a villain, an opportunist, and a scapegoat. Several specific questions have been brought to the fore. What hostilities did Edom carry out prior to the fall of Jerusalem? Was a Palestinian coalition effective in producing a multinational alliance? Did Edom betray kinship expectations? A formal treaty agreement? What is the relationship between the concepts of kinship and covenant (treaty) in the ancient Near East, and how do these apply to Judah, Edom, and Babylon? No book-length study incorporating all categories of data has been devoted to the purpose of identifying the political and military actions of Edom during the fall of Judah.[83] The archaeological data alone is insufficient to accuse Edom of contributing to the fall of Judah. Epigraphic evidence may be found for Edomite hostility, notably ostraca from Arad,[84] yet several

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justice; the book of Obadiah (contrary to all appearances) subtly reveals itself as the result of the deliberate effort of those who were committed to a broadly inclusive vision of society. Póe's undefended warrant for the study is his knowledge that "the true nature of Israel's divine mission…[is to convey] the divine plan of salvation…to all people of the earth…" (6). When soteriology is considered, the biblical indignation of Edom is increasingly being seen as inappropriate and politically—if not theologically—incorrect.

[83]A few dissertations have touched on the problem (e.g., Cresson, "Israel and Edom": A Study of the Anti-Edom Bias in Old Testament Religion" [Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1964]; Maxine Clarke Beach, "Edom among the Nations: The Roles of Edom in the Hebrew Bible" [Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1994]); and Apelu Tia Póe, "The Book of Obadiah: A Study of Its Literary Artistry and Its Theological Message" [Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1999]), yet none of these give adequate treatment of all relevant, available data in order to reconstruct Edom's political relations with Judah and Babylon. Shorter studies of note include Bruce Cresson, "The Condemnation of Edom," 125–48; John Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 23–39; and John R. Bartlett, "Edom and the Fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C.," *PEQ* 114 (1982): 2–24.

[84]A Judahite fortress in the Beersheba-Arad Valley during the last days of the kingdom of Judah; Ostracon 24 from Arad (Arad 24) is suggestive of an Edomite threat:

inscriptions mention Edom and these should also be evaluated. What do epigraphic and archaeological data suggest about early to mid-sixth century B.C.E. geopolitics in the Negev? The biblical material is critical of Edom, yet much remains unknown of the history behind this censure. The problem demands a reevaluation of available data.

Thesis, Chronological System, and Methodology of this Study

Thesis Statement

This study provides a comprehensive examination of all relevant categories of data (archaeological, epigraphic, and biblical). The study shall develop a specific thesis, namely, that *by the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah in the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January587 B.C.E.), Edom had initiated and acted upon a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom's deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah.* In the course of this dissertation I shall show that archeological, epigraphic, and biblical data support this thesis.

The Chronology Employed in This Study

This dissertation seeks specificity in the timing of Edomite betrayal of and actions against Judah. As will be shown in Chapter Four, some data will allow the inference that Edomite hostilities were initiated against Judahite sites in the Negev by the "tenth month" of a particular year. An argument will also be made in that chapter that this "tenth

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This is an order from the king—a life-and-death matter for you. I send (this message) to warn you now: The(se) men (must be) with Elisha lest (the) Edom (ites) (should) enter there.

For this translation, see "Arad 24: Military Movements," translated by Dennis Pardee (*COS* 3.43K: 85); see also Yohanan Aharoni in cooperation with Joseph Naveh, *Arad Inscriptions* (trans. Judith Ben-Or; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981).

month" corresponds to the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth regnal year, precisely when

Babylon began its siege of Jerusalem (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:1). Because of this specificity, an

operative chronological system must be established.

Determining how the Gregorian calendar corresponds with Zedekiah's ninth year

requires determinations on the reckoning of regnal years.[85] Were official regnal years in

Judah (at least during the sixth century) reckoned as having begun in Nisan (March/April;

the spring or cultic New Year)[86] or Tishri (September/October; the autumnal, agricultural

New Year)?[87] The former has received greater acceptance.[88] A case has been made that

Zedekiah would have counted regnal years according to the Nisan New Year.[89] Related

problems for Zedekiah's rule include whether an antedating or postdating system was

employed and whether Nisan had passed between the time of Jehoiachin's ouster and

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[85]For a recent summary of this convoluted problem, see the introductory section in Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[86]Compare Exod 12:2; Num 28:16; in general, see also John H.Hayes and Paul K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), esp. 97–98; Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings*.

[87]Exod 23:16; 34:22; On the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah generally and with a preference for a Tishri calendar operative in Judah, see, e.g., Edwin R. Thiele, "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns among the Hebrew Kings." *JBL* 93 (1974): 174–200; *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), esp. 184, 190–91; for the sixth century especially, see Abraham Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem: An Historical-Chronological Study," *IEJ* 18 (1968): 137–56; "The Twilight of Judah: In the Egyptian-Babylonian Maelstrom." *VTSup* 28 (1975): 123–45.

[88]Cf. Coogan, "Chronology," *ABD* 1:1006 and the bibliography cited there; according to the Mishnah (*m.Roš.Haš.* 1:1), Judah matched the Mesopotamian practice of counting regnal years from Nisan; for bibliography of related scholarship through 1968, see Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah," 146.

[89]See especially Hayim Tadmor, "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources," *WHJP* 4/1 (1979): 44–60.

Zedekiah's ascension. Do we consider, for example, the first regnal year of Zedekiah's

eleven year rule (2 Kgs 24:18) to have terminated in Adar 596 B.C.E. or Adar 595 B.C.E.?

Accepting that Jerusalem experienced an eighteen-month siege,[90] did the city fall in 587

or 586 B.C.E.? The numerous and convoluted issues and the mysterious numbers of

biblical texts have prohibited a consensus to form for each of these points.

This study follows the basic chronology for Zedekiah's rule as presented by

Hayim Tadmor.[91] The general result of this chronology is that Zedekiah's ascension took

place some time shortly after 1 Nisan 597, yet his first regnal year would have been

reckoned from Nisan 596 through Adar 595 B.C.E. According to 2 Kgs 25:1 (cf. Jer 52:4;

Ezek 24:1), the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began on the tenth day of the tenth month

(Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (which ran from Nisan 588 to Nisan 587 B.C.E.). In a

conversion to the Gregorian calendar, Tevet of Zedekiah's ninth year corresponds to

December 588/January 587 B.C.E.[92] On 9 Tammuz of Zedekiah's eleventh year (mid July

586 B.C.E.), after a siege lasting about eighteen months, the walls of Jerusalem were

breached and the city fell (2 Kgs 25:3; cf. Jer 52:6).

Accordingly, we have anchor points for the chronological system employed in

this study. References to months and regnal years in this study are based on this system

and its anchors. If we accept, for example, that a council of Palestinian states met in the

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[90]December 588/January 587 B.C.E. (10 Tevet) through July 586 (9 Tammuz); cf. 2 Kgs 25:1–8 and Josephus, *Ant*, 10.131–35; for a two-and-one-half year siege and a reckoning of regnal years from Tishri, see Malamat, "The Last Kings," esp. 150–56.

[91]"The Chronology of the First Temple Period," 44–60.

[92]In keeping with this operative chronology, conversions of 10 Tevet of Zedekiah's ninth year to the Gregorian calendar vary between 30 December 588 and 5 January 587 B.C.E. Leap years are an issue and this study offers no further solution. Gregorian standardization would assist those reliant on reckoning years according to the "common era" (B.C.E./C.E.).

fifth month (Av) of Zedekiah's fourth year (Jer 28:1; cf. Jer 27:1; see also Chapter Five),

then according to the Gregorian calendar the corresponding date would be July/August

593 B.C.E. (rather than 594 B.C.E.).[93] At some unknown time during this same year,

Zedekiah went to Babylon.[94] Additionally, if we accept that the siege of Jerusalem lasted

eighteen months, then a congruency appears between epigraphic and biblical data in their

references to a "tenth month" in a context of crisis. If these data reference the same

"tenth month," then we may date many Arad inscriptions from Stratum VI to that month

in Zedekiah's ninth year (Tevet; December 588/January 587 B.C.E.). Chapter Four will

show that this congruency allows for an inference as to the date of Edomite hostility

against Judah during the Babylonian crisis.

Methodology and Chapter Topics

Because I shall argue that Judah's trust was violated by Edom, its "brother-

nation," a special problem regarding treaty language will need to be addressed: kinship

terminology is often found in treaties and treaty contexts throughout the ancient Near

East among political entities that are not clearly *kin*. Chapter Two will discuss the

relationship between international treaties of the ancient Near East and kinship

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[93]An alternative chronology (one in which Jerusalem falls in 587 B.C.E.) places the council in 594 B.C.E. Some historians date the six-nation conclave of Judah, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon to Zedekiah's first year; the MT at 27:1 states that the council took place in the first year of Jehoiakim (not Zedekiah). Chronological assertions based on the text of Jeremiah are precarious. For an overview of the problems, see Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26–52*, (WBD 27; Waco: Word, 1995), 176–90, esp. 178–79; for the date of the council, see Jer 28:1.

[94]Did the trip to Babylon take place *prior to* or *after* the council of Palestinian states? If Zedekiah made the trip at the beginning of his fourth year, then the four to five months (Nisan through Tammuz or into Av) would provide barely enough time for Zedekiah to make the trip *and upon return* coordinate a council of Palestinian states occurring in the fifth month (Av).

terminology. Working models for understanding Edom as a "brother" of Israel/Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. will be developed.

As stated above, Obadiah, Psalm 137, Ezekiel, and Lamentations condemn Edom for atrocities, yet of these only Obadiah includes a sustained discourse about Edom replete with several specific accusations of Edomite activity, presumably at the fall of Jerusalem. In other anti-Edom texts, accusations are few,[95] yet as I shall show in the course of this study some evidence for specific actions carried out by Edom may be gleaned from these texts. It is, however, the book of Obadiah that constitutes an appropriate starting point for a discussion of the biblical data (Chapter Five). Attention to the rhetorical artistry of the book will identify betrayal motifs and semantic nuances that collectively identify Edom as a betrayer of a treaty relationship along the lines of the thesis. This analysis of *artistry* will provide some specific elements of the *historical* reconstruction offered by the study.[96]

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[95]Although Isaiah 34 contains a sustained discourse about Edom, the chapter appears to contain no explicit mention of Edomite hostility; Joel speaks of the most basic crimes, namely, violence and the shedding of innocent blood; in summarizing the anti-Edom oracle of Ezekiel 35, Bartlett (*Edom and the Edomites*, 153) writes:

Thus Ezek 35 brings a number of charges against Edom couched in familiar terms. None of them necessarily reflects any specific action of Edom's in 589–7 BCE. In Ezekiel, Edom is but one enemy among several of whom similar charges are made.

[96]For criticism of any "history" gleaned from Obadiah, see, concretely, Ehud Ben Zvi, review of Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *JBL* 119 (2000): 555–58. The critical question and current challenge is whether we can recover what actually happened in history from such texts. See, especially, John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–51. David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell (*Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 6) provide a valuable caution:

All authors and editors serve ideological agendas…. In practice, then, there must always be a distance between the narrative world and the world of 'what actually

The study seeks to satisfy a requirement of many critics by providing an archaeologically and epigraphically informed reconstruction of the geopolitics of the Edomite-Judahite border and of Edom's political relations with Judah and Babylon ca. 588–586 B.C.E. Such a reconstruction requires the expertise of archaeologists, philologists, and paleographers, among others.[97] In order to clarify the political geography and historical context of Judah and Edom in the early sixth century B.C.E., Chapter Three examines relevant archaeological data, particularly as it applies to the Edomite-Judahite border, and provides an argument for the economic incentive for control of that border. Chapter Four discusses several inscriptions containing information significant for a reconstruction of the political relations between Judah and Edom in the sixth century. Having developed elements of the thesis from the archaeological and epigraphic categories of data, additional components of the thesis will be provided through an analysis of biblical data (Chapter Five). A concluding chapter will provide a summary of the reconstruction and will comment on the anti-Edom bias and some remaining tensions in light of the thesis.

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happened'. Indeed, we could argue that there is no such thing as 'what actually happened'; there are only stories (or histories) of what happened, always relative to the perspective of the story-teller (historian)…. Thus the problem of distinguishing between 'history' and 'fiction' is generally acute.

[97]For the development of archaeology in relation to biblical studies and for a rudimentary procedural outline for writing biblical history subsequent to the near demise of biblical archaeology see John R. Bartlett, "What Has Archaeology to Do with the Bible?" in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John R. Bartlett; London: Routledge, 1997): 1–19. See also the collection of essays in James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard, eds., *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions* (Grand Rapids: Eermans, 2004). Biblical scholarship often requires the assistance of dirt-archaeology (i.e., archaeology as an independent discipline and distinct from the vestiges of biblical archaeology); For Bartlett ("What Has Archaeology to Do with the Bible," 13) such archaeologists "should not scorn the biblical scholar—though doubtless biblical scholars would do well to keep out of dirt-archaeologists' hair." Interdisciplinary arguments inevitably open up several avenues of criticism.

CHAPTER TWO

The 'Brotherhood' of Edom and Kinship Language in Ancient Near Eastern Treaties

Introduction

The ancestral narratives in Genesis present Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel as brothers, twins of the same parents.[1] Biblical compilers presented their descendents as kin with a common ancestry and an interwoven genealogy.[2] This chapter discusses Edom and Israel as "brothers" both in regard to genealogical traditions as a basis for social responsibility and in light of the use of kinship terminology in ancient Near Eastern treaties. Although the origin of the Edomite-Israelite brotherhood tradition remains unknown, an inference will be made that a perceived kinship existed prior to the Babylonian crisis of the sixth century B.C.E. During times of cooperation, this established tradition would have facilitated treaty-based relations between Edom and Judah.

The first major section of this chapter discusses "ethnicity," particularly in regard to covenant (treaty) relationships in the ancient Near East to traditions that present Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel as twins at the cusp of a divergent genealogy.[3] A

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[1]See, e.g., Gen 25:20–30; 32:2; cf. also Num 20:14; Amos 1:11; Obad 10, 12.

[2]Caution is in order when kinship allusions are found in ancient texts, particularly in genealogical lists (see below). Traditional literature may or may not align accurately with actual relationships; see Robert A. Oden, "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives," *JBL* 102 (1983): 189–205, esp. 194; cf. Alexander H. Joffe, "Review of Kenton L. Sparks, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expressions in the Hebrew Bible (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns [1998])," JNES 62 (2003): 137–38.

[3]Recent studies suggest ethnicity involves a process of group convergence and divergence over time; concomitant obligations among group members are often based on

presentation of Esau's "ethnic kinship"[4] with Jacob will suggest that the pentateuchal

narratives present Esau/Edom as a liminal ethnicity, a *tertium quid* (or "third thing") that

is neither Israel nor "the nations." The second major section discusses a perceived

kinship between Edom and Judah prior to the Babylonian crisis.[5] Shifting political

geographies and interactions among social groups will be taken into consideration in

regard to potential genealogical modifications. Religion as an important cultural trait will

also be discussed. The third major section will survey kinship language in treaties of the

ancient Near East. Examples will serve to demonstrate that treaties created artificial

brotherhoods and that the extension of kinship formed a basis for concomitant social

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the group's shared "history," primordial myths, language and genealogies. See Anne E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300–1100 B.C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), esp. 184, citing John H. Moore, "Ethnogenetic Theory," *National Geographic Research and Exploration* 10/1 (1994): 10–23 and Kirstin C. Erickson, "'They Will Come From the Other Side of the Sea': Prophecy, Ethnogenesis, and Agency in Yaqui Narrative," *Journal of American Folklore* 116 (2003): 465–82. The study of ancient "ethnicities" is fraught with challenges (as the reviews of Killebrew's work make abundantly clear).

[4]"Ethnic kinship" may be defined as the belief that members of an ethnic group are blood relatives (see below). Such beliefs awaken primordial feelings of affiliation, with a result that individuals of a group may perceive themselves as responsible only for their own group members. Ethnic kinship can prohibit social integration and has contributed to perceived inequality among ethnic groups; see Ferdinand Sutterlüty, "The Belief in Ethnic Kinship: A Deep Symbolic Dimension of Social Inequality," *Ethnography* 7 (2006): 179–207; consider also Maryon McDonald, "Celtic Ethnic Kinship and the Problem of Being English," *Current Anthropology* 27 (1986): 333–47.

[5]The evidence is sufficient to conclude that by the close of the formation of the pentateuchal traditions and the Prophets (ca. 200 B.C.E.), a kinship relationship was perceived. It is improbable that biblical compilers denied the relationship; by the late Second Temple period, denial of the relationship appears to have been impossible among both Jews and Idumeans (Edomites); for this period, see, e.g., Josephus, *J.W.* 4.4.3–4, where Josephus relates that a spokesman each for Jews (4.4.3 [265]) and for Idumeans (4.4.4 [271–74]) identified themselves as kindred; cf. also *Ant.* 13.9.1 (258) and 15.7.9 (254) where Idumeans are described as Jews subsequent to their forced conversion to Jewish customs by Hyrcanus.

obligations to ensure mutual wellbeing. In consideration of the thesis of Edomite treaty

betrayal, the chapter concludes with a presentation of viable models for understanding

Edom and Israel as kin prior to the sixth century B.C.E.

Ethnicity Theory and Seeking a "Brotherhood" of Edom and Israel

Ethnicity Theory and Covenant (Treaty) Relationships in the Ancient Near East

Scholarship is increasingly recognizing the importance of kinship ties as a basis

for social organization in ancient Near Eastern societies. It is obvious that kinship and

household language such as "father," "brother," "son" and "servant" functioned beyond

the family level. As J. David Schloen has shown, of particular importance is the

sociological extension of "the house of the father" (Heb. בית־אב),[6] a phrase identifying a

family unit. As an organizational metaphor for a common social reality, a symbolic

"house of the father" of a higher social echelon was utilized to subsume families into

clans and tribes (in the biblical material, see e.g., Num 3:24, 30, 35; 17:2; Josh 22:14; 2

Chr 35:5).[7] Schloen argues that "the house of the father" also functioned organizationally

at the kingdom level; a network of households were linked together to form a kingdom.

In such a patrimonial regime,

> the entire social order is viewed as an extension of the ruler's household—and
> ultimately of the god's household. The social order consists of a hierarchy of

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[6]See J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), esp. 46–53 for an overview of the thesis.

[7]For Schloen (*The House of the Father*, 46, 51), the application of such terminology to levels beyond the individual family were not "banal euphemisms" masking "impersonal bureaucracies" but were living or root metaphors of "a symbolic network that was rooted in the concrete social experience of family and household life."

subhouseholds linked by personal ties at each level between individual "masters" and "slaves" or "fathers" and "sons." [8]

In this model, an ancient Near Eastern kingdom was an extended family. Society was viewed as being comprised of one household, with the king as patron of the whole.

Scholarship is also (re-)recognizing a related social phenomenon. In ancient Semitic societies, kinship was the basis for an individual's responsibility to ensure community wellbeing.[9] F. M. Cross has reminded us that "kinship was conceived in terms of one blood flowing through the veins of the kinship group. If the blood of a kinsman was spilled, the blood of the kinship group, of each member, was spilled. Kindred were of one flesh, one bone."[10] Cross argues that the treaty or covenant (Heb. ברית) that unites the various clans and tribes of the people of Israel and defines their sacral bond with Yahweh is an (artificial) extension of blood kinship. Yahweh becomes the "divine kinsman" of Israel. Treaty terminology does not simply borrow kinship terminology; it incorporates the language of kinship because of its relevance for social cohesion and responsibility. Perceived kinship is vital in treaty relationships.

This view is supported by studies focusing on Semitic anthropology and social-psychology, and is also effectively a revival of the positions held by J. Pedersen and W.

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[8]Schloen, *The House of the Father*, 51.

[9]According to W. R. Smith (*Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* [ed. Stanley A. Cook; new edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903], 56–62) "Arabs were incapable of conceiving any absolute social obligation of unity that was not based on kinship." Kinship networks are key elements in social structure beyond that of Semitic societies; cf. Oden, "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew," 193–94, referencing the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Frederick Barth, and Robin Fox.

[10]See "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," in Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

R. Smith, among others.[11] Concisely, Smith communicates the severity of a relationship

established with a covenant (or "compact") between former non-kinsmen:

> The reason why [the compact] is so binding is that he who has [participated in a
> blood ceremony related to the formation of the compact] is no longer a stranger but
> a brother, and included in the mystic circle of those who share in the life-blood that
> is common to all the clan. Primarily the covenant is not a special engagement to
> this or that particular effect, but a bond of troth and life-fellowship to all the effects
> for which kinsmen are permanently bound together."[12]

From this perspective, a covenant manifests an artificial extension of kinship, of

perceived blood ties connecting covenant partners. As these ties form the basis for

concomitant social obligations to ensure the wellbeing of the group, covenants function

to extend a basis for social responsibility. In short, agreements such as treaties take as

their frame of reference and underlying basis for obligations (such as treaty stipulations)

the perception of shared blood ties binding the partners of the agreement. The current

study operates with this view of ancient Semitic anthropology.

We know that treaties (or covenants) of the ancient Near East commonly include

kinship terminology in their designations of treaty partners who have no direct kinship

relationship. Given the importance of kinship terminology and the frequency with which

the rhetoric of treaties and correspondences from as early as the Late Bronze Age resort

to a perceived kinship relationship,[13] the expectations among two political entities in a

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[11]See, e.g., William Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites* (New Brunswick:
Adam and Charles Black, 1894), 41 –47, 54, 314–316; Johs. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and
Culture* (London: Oxford, 1926), 292; for additional bibliography, see Cross, *From Epic
to Canon*, esp. 10–11.

[12]Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 315–16.

[13]For the language of treaties and their relevance for the formation of relationships
in general, see Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of
Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Analectica
Biblica 88; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982); cf. also Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 3–

treaty relationship appear to be based on the bonds established by the linking of two symbolic networks of households. *Kingdoms become kin through covenant*—hardly an innovative development given the attestations of covenants connecting personal (e.g., 1 Sam 18:3; 20:14–17), economic (e.g., Gen 21:27–31; 1 Kgs 20:34), and cultic (e.g., Num 18:1–19; 25:11–13) aspects of society. In consideration both of Schloen's and of Cross' work, it appears sociologically feasible for kingdoms built on the patrimonial household model (patrimonial regimes) to extend kinship via covenant. International "kinships" emerged replete with concomitant responsibilities, including those enumerated by the specific terms or stipulations of a treaty. These "kinships" and their concomitant responsibilities would have been comprehensible by all levels of society.

In vassal treaties, the inferior party is incorporated under the roof of the household of the "father" or "lord" and is accordingly "son" or "servant" of that patrimony. It is also understandable why two kings who engaged in a parity treaty (see below) would refer to each other as brothers. Of course, these artificially-extended kinship relationships were often reinforced by intermarriage and the production of offspring between previously unrelated groups (e.g., royal houses). Eventually, a biological kinship relationship would emerge among patrimonial regimes, yet *covenant would have already established the sociological basis for concomitant responsibilities* prior to any subsequent gene flow among the peoples of the two kingdoms. Collectively, the works of Schloen and Cross recognize the sociological importance of kinship on the local, clan,

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21. For the complexity of kinship metaphors in terms of the expectations and realities of Late Bronze Age international relationships as reflected in the Amarna correspondence in particular, see Mario Liverani, "The Great Powers' Club," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 15–27 and esp. 18–19 and 26–27; see also below.

and intra-state level for purposes of organization and social responsibility. It also seems quite defensible that perceived kinship relations were basic to ancient Near Eastern covenant/treaty ceremonies linking states together.

Along these lines, convoluted problems present themselves when arguing for a possible treaty between Edom and Judah. Kinship language in some ancient texts might allude to a *treaty* between political entities rather than to any actual kinship relationship.[14] Unless a relatively close biological relationship is otherwise evidenced, some ancient documents referencing people groups as "kin" might only reference a *perceived* sociological connection recently established through treaties. Prior to setting forth evidence for an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah, relevant questions must be addressed. How are we to understand Jacob and Esau as "brothers"? What kinship relationship (if any) existed between Edom and Judah *prior* to the sixth century B.C.E.?

A Shared Edomite-Israelite "Ethnicity"?

The so-called ancestral narratives (Genesis 12–50) identify Edom (Esau) as Israel's (Jacob's) brother. One might assume that these traditions reflect an ancient biological kinship among the ancestors of the Edomites and Israelites. Since at least the nineteenth century,[15] however, the historicity of the Genesis genealogies has been called into question. Sociological considerations both of modern tribal societies such as the Bedouin and, more generally, of ancient Near Eastern Semitic societies have suggested

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[14]See, e.g., J. M. Munn-Rankin, "Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C.," *Iraq* 18 (1956): 68–110, esp. 84; Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, esp. 98–101, 204–205.

[15]For an overview of the question of the historicity of genealogies, and for an argument against making sweeping generalizations, see Robert Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *JBL* 94 (1975): 169–89. Wilson advocates a case-by-case study of ancestors or relationships in genealogies.

that it is not uncommon for traditions about ancestral relationships to be "invented" or

change through time in order to establish community cohesion through kinship bonds.[16]

Social cohesion might be one of several goals of the ancestral narratives of Genesis.[17]

Accordingly, biblical genealogies presenting Edom and Israel as "kin" and presumably

pertaining to the Bronze Age do not in themselves substantiate an *ancient historicity* to

that sociopolitical relationship.[18] Genealogies might more closely correspond to some

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[16]See, e.g., P. Kyle McCarter, "The Patriarchal Age: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," in *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 15–16, 20–21. McCarter references modern Bedouin societies and, in ancient times, the "Amorite" dynasties of Hammurabi of Babylon and Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria, which shared a common tradition of tribal origins. A society's material culture might also change as it encounters new threats and opportunities. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith ("Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What Is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel's History," *JSOT* 122 [2003]: 401–425), for example, makes an intriguing argument for how one might distinguish Philistines from Israelites. If ancient Israel is to be satisfactorily defined by this methodology, however, each society surrounding ancient Israel must similarly be distinguished specifically from Israel—thus the Culture Area approach might not be entirely avoidable. Whether historically accurate, whether modified through time, "primordial" features of social groups such as genealogies and shared foundational myths are but one means by which groups might be distinguished. Ethnicity is neither static, nor determined merely by genealogical and ancestral traditions. Similarly, a society's material culture—which may be significantly shared by other societies—may not be an accurate gauge of the ethnicity inhabiting a given territory.

[17]Biblical genealogies function in a number of ways and literary genealogies can be modified through time. Referencing Marshall D. Johnson (*The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Attention to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* [SNTSMS 8; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969], esp. 77–82) Wilson, ("The Old Testament Genealogies," 171–72, 189) summarizes six functions of biblical genealogies, none of which require that genealogies function as historical records of actual lineages.

[18]For some ethnicity theorists and anthropologists, ethnic kinship is not a requirement for determining the ethnicity of a people group; for examples of such theorists, see the bibliography in Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998) 2–3; see also Joffe, "Review of Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*," 137–38. For Joffe, ethnic sentiments such as (literary) genealogical relationships do not equate to "their appearance in a living

other social situation or "ethnic" relationship in existence during the course of the genealogies' oral and literary transmission.

"Ethnicity," however, is a term with increasingly theoretical concerns,[19] and is problematic for no fewer than three reasons. First, it has only relatively recently entered into scholarly sociological discourse (in part as an attempted euphemism for "race"). Second, it would be imprecise and anachronistic to confine social worldviews of ancient, non-Western, Semitic peoples into a Greek-based term of recent scholarship (ἔθνος; "ethnicity"). Third, attempts to define ethnicity have led to concerns about the nature of its correlation to genetics and "culture."[20]

Despite these specific difficulties, Kenton L. Sparks has suggested that some general agreement exists among ethnicity theorists.

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society" (138). Supporting evidence from other categories of data is required for biblical ethnic relationships to be considered historically-critically plausible.

[19]For an overview of the problem of defining "ethnicity," see Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, esp. 1–3, 5, yet see also 6–22; see also Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity" in *Ethnicity and the Bible: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 3–22.

[20]The term "culture" poses difficulties. The Culture Area approach, an anthropological model for the study of societies, posits that a population's "ethnicity" (*ethnos*) may be appropriately discussed in consideration of the artifacts from and cultural traits pertaining to a certain specific geographic region or territorial unit. This model is not infrequently employed in the discourse of the emergence of Israel in Canaan; see, e.g., William G. Dever, *Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). The question is how readily artifactual remains (products of a culture) contribute to a clarification of ethnicity (cf. Devers, *Who Were the Israelites*, 192–93), particularly if not a single trait of a given culture based on the archaeological record is *exclusive* to that culture; see Bloch-Smith, "Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I," esp. 402–11; for an attempt to side-step much of the Culture Area approach while maintaining its usefulness in consideration of faunal remains (re: pig husbandry) see Mark G. Brett, "Israel's Indigenous Origins: Cultural Hybridity and the Transformation of Israelite Ethnicity." *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003): 400–412, esp. 403–4.

> [M]ost theorists would in large measure agree with the general parameters offered by F. Barth, that ethnicity is a social boundary that partitions population groups on the basis of one or more of the following distinctions: (a) genealogical characteristics; (b) cultural traits such as language, religion, customs, and shared history; (c) inherited phenotypical characteristics, *with the first of these being the primary carrier of ethnic sentiment.*[21]

Discourse on ethnicity, then, appears to be increasingly inclined toward considering ethnicity as *perceptions* (rather than biological phenomena) that partition humans into sub-groups. In discussing ancient Israelite perceptions of shared "ethnicity," it is helpful to employ the concept of shared "kinship" or what has been described as "ethnic kinship."[22] Other cultural traits and phenotypical characteristics, while important, might be of secondary importance in Semitic societies to the perception of shared (or un-shared) blood-lines. Perhaps distinction is definition; much of the discussion of "ethnicity" turns on how societies may be distinguished. Perceiving "ethnicity" equates to perceiving boundaries. Phrased this way, it is a binary question: who comprises "us" and who comprises "them"?[23] The question is whether the narratives and genealogies identifying Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom as brothers sufficiently suggest a shared ethnicity.

The Liminal Ethnicity of Esau in the Pentateuch

Often, the most problematic social relationships and transformations are those that "occur precisely at the boundary" between those who are "us" and those who are

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[21]Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 3 (emphasis original); cf. also the value of Fredrik Barth's ethnographic work as communicated and summarized in Dever, *Who Were the Israelites*, 192–93.

[22]Cf. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 3. "Ethnic kinship" is a term from anthropological/ethnographic studies and may be defined as the belief that members of a group are blood relatives; see also Sutterlüty, "Belief in Ethnic Kinship," 179–207, esp. 179–80.

[23]Cf. Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity," 10.

"them."[24] Were Edomites perceived to be among the in-group of the (other) descendants

of Isaac, namely, the people of Israel? Do the pentateuchal traditions support an answer

in the affirmative? On the surface, some texts might suggest a *functioning* ethnic kinship

(e.g., Genesis 32–33; 35:29; cf. Chapter One), whereby social responsibilities appear to

be carried out appropriately. One supposedly positive presentation is Deut 23:8–9 [Eng.

7–8], which suggests that, relative to other people groups, Israelites and Edomites are

similar enough for a person of Edomite descent eventually to gain access to Israel's cult:

> You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin…. The children of
> the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the
> LORD.[25]

If we accept the premise that a prohibition attempts to impede certain actions that are

taking place, then this prohibition communicates an existing sociological *rejection* of

Edom by some portion of Israel. Edom was "abhorred" (√ תעב), a term connoting cultic

and or ethical impropriety on the part of Edom. Sociologically, the prohibition addresses

a belief that Edomites were cultic or ethical inferiors. Edom's status relative to Israel was

in question; Esau/Edom was at the sociological border of the binary opposition between

an ethnic "us" and an ethnic "them." To which group do they belong?

It appears defensible that the ancestral narratives may be described as including

two types of genealogies, linear and segmented.[26] A linear genealogy extending from

Abraham (if not Adam) to Jacob defines Jacob/Israel externally by identifying how

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[24]Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity," 10, referencing the work of J. Z. Smith.

[25]NRSV Deut 23:7a, 8; of course, waiting for three generations to see descendants enter the Israelite cult might become equivalent to an eternity for an individual.

[26]"Ethnic kinships" determined by these genealogies serve to demarcate social boundaries; see Oden, "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew," esp. 193–96; see also McCarter, "The Patriarchal Age," 14.

Jacob/Israel is related to other people groups. Beginning with the offspring of Jacob/Israel, a segmented genealogy defines Israel *internally* by identifying its constituent clans and tribes.[27] Collectively, these genealogies focus on Jacob as the pivot. Jacob, however, has a twin. How is the ethnic kinship of such an ethnic *liminality* to be understood?

Addressing the sociological problem of Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel as twins and kin in such texts as Genesis and Deuteronomy may be assisted through an analysis of the social ramifications of Esau's marriages. Terry J. Prewitt has provided an anthropological, formal kinship analysis of the Genesis genealogies.[28] One of Prewitt's conclusions is that the relative rank or status of Ishmael and Isaac, and later of Esau and Jacob, is based upon the "appropriateness" of marriages into which each entered. For Prewitt, the marriages of Ishmael and Isaac were "proper" according to the background of their mothers, while Esau's Canaanite marriages reinforce the same ideals of the marriage system through their "inappropriateness."[29] If we take this conclusion further by including some additional literary considerations, then we might add that Esau's (or his descendants') sociological status is both inferior and diminishing relative to Jacob as a descendant of Isaac and Abraham. To begin with, consider two texts from Genesis that name Esau's wives.

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[27]The segmented genealogy of Esau/Edom, encumbered with tradition history difficulties, may be found in Genesis 36.

[28]Terry J. Prewitt, "Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies," *JNES* 40 (1981): 87–98.

[29]Prewitt, "Kinship Structures," esp. 97–98.

When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. (Gen 26:34–35)

Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah son of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. (Gen 36:2–3)[30]

We note immediately that the names do not correspond smoothly. Genesis 26:35 states that the Hittite women made life bitter (literally, "they were a bitterness of spirit"; ותהיין מרת רוח) for both Isaac and Rebekah, and although the causes of this bitterness are not made explicit, Rebekah's statements in Gen 27:46 suggest that a familial (social) turmoil resulted from the marriage.

Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

Apparently in response, Isaac directs Jacob toward a more proper marriage, effectively clarifying for the reader what the family expects of its kin and reiterating the blessings of the lineage (Gen 28:1–4).

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Go at once to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham."

An ancestor's blessing has been bestowed on Jacob and connected to a charge that Jacob is to find an appropriate marriage partner. According to 28:4, Jacob is a resident alien (מגריך) in the land and has yet to take it as *his* possession. Genesis 28:5 stresses the

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[30]Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this chapter are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

importance of lineage relationships by identifying that both Jacob *and Esau* are related

through their mother to the source of Jacob's future brides.

> Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Immediately, Esau recognizes his (or his descendants') increasing alienation from the

family circle. Esau responds immediately by seeking another marriage, but this time it is

a marriage to ethnic kin (28:6–9).

> Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women," and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father Isaac, Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, and sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

Had Esau been shirking his ancestry with improper marriages? Upon realizing the

negative societal consequences of the mistake, did he attempt to regain lost social

standing through a marriage to an Ishmaelite? Following Prewitt's anthropological

interpretation and analysis, it is evident that Esau's marriages had begun to socially

alienate his descendants from the descendants of Jacob.

On a literary level, Esau's marriages parallel this ethnic bewilderment. For

example, neither of the *Hittite* wives named in Gen 26:34, Judith and Basemath, are

named as his *Hittite* wife in the Edomite genealogy (36:2), yet "Basemath the sister of

Nebaioth" appears as the name of Esau's *Ishmaelite* bride (36:3), who, as we have just

seen, was named "Mahalath… sister of Nebaioth" (28:9). Has one of his first two

"inappropriate" wives, Basemath, *shifted ethnicities* from Hittite to Ishmaelite? His other

first wife, Judith (יְהוּדִית), *disappears* after 26:34, never to be mentioned again. The form

of the name is identical to the gentilic adjective "Jewish" (יְהוּדִית).[31] Has *Jewish-ness*

disappeared from Esau through his socially disruptive marriages? Prewitt does well to

focus on marriages in evaluating social relationships. Esau's brides are of confusing

ethnicities. One originally Hittite wife turns Ishmaelite. By the time of the Edomite

segmented genealogy (Genesis 36), we are presented with a new ethnicity for an old

name (Basemath becomes Ishmaelite), a new name for an old ethnicity (the Hittite wife is

now Adah), and an altogether new name and new ethnicity (Oholibamah, who is of

Hivite descent).[32] Through his marriages, Esau engrafts for his descendants an ethnically

muddled heritage, and his *first* wife, "Jewishness," has disappeared altogether!

Both literarily and through anthropological, formal kinship analysis, Esau's

marriages have begun to turn ethnic kin (Edomites) into resident aliens, like Jacob, but

without the blessings and possibly with a diminished or lost sociological basis for

expectations to ensure mutual wellbeing among their descendants. The descendants of

Esau and Jacob might be sociologically further removed than their "twinship" status

suggests. By the close of the Genesis narrative, Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel continue to

function as brothers, burying their father together (35:29), yet by this point in the

narrative Esau had lost much. Gone was the birthright due him through primogeniture

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[31]Cf. the form in Gen 26:34 (proper noun) with the gentilic adjective in 2 Kgs 18:26, 28; 2 Chr 32:18; Neh 13:24; Isa. 36:11, 13. Muddled genealogical traditions due to an Iron Age encroachment of Edom into formerly Esauite/Seirite territory might also appropriately describe the confusion of names and ethnicities.

[32]Oholibamah is the most frequently-mentioned matriarch in the genealogy of Esau/Edom (Genesis 36), but is otherwise unknown. Three Esauite clans descend from her and an Edomite clan bears her name (36:14, 18, 41; 1 Chr 1:51). The Oholibamah traditions appear muddled or fluid, not unlike the marriage relations of Esau generally; for a plausible clarification of the muddled traditions due to Iron Age absorption of Esauite territory (Seir) by Edom, see John R. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOTSup. 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 86–90, esp. 87.

(25:29–32), the divinely-ordained family blessing because of the trickery of Jacob and Rebekah (ch. 27), and, because of the social ramifications of Esau's "inappropriate" marriages, likely much social status. Thus, in genealogical liminality of Esau, twin of Jacob, "ethnic kinship" does not necessarily equate to sociological closeness.[33]

How Esau is presented as functioning within the sociological expectations determined by his lineage might affect how his supposed descendants and those of his brother, Jacob, might have *perceived* each other. The biblical text is replete with Edomite-Israelite kinship references, yet a caution is in order. Formal kinship analysis supplemented with literary observations has pointed to a sociological disruption in the liminal "genome" of Esau's descendents, who teeter as not quite "them," yet not quite "us." Edomites are a *tertium quid* in Genesis, a third thing that is not quite Israel and not yet the nations. Prior to texts describing Edomite-Judahite hostility, Edom's kinship with Israel has already suffered some sociological depletion, and a reader leaving Genesis may ask if the Edomite-Israelite ethnic kinship is in need of *affirmation*. As perceived kinship is basic to treaties, an Edomite betrayal of Judah involving a treaty with Babylon might function as an Edomite *rejection* of its sociological connection with Israel. Biblical data presupposes an Edomite-Judahite kinship, yet the critical question is when in history Edomites and Israelites perceived each other as kin. To this topic the study turns.

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[33]Sparks (*Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 3) prefers genealogical data in considering sociological relationships of population groups referred to in the Hebrew Bible:

> "to put it in terms of the data from the Hebrew Bible, we are researching ethnic kinship when it serves as: (1) a concept of sociocultural integration ('we are the children of Abraham'); (2) as a tool for sociocultural delimitation ('they are not the children of Abraham'); and (3) as a model for explaining the origins of other peoples ('they are the children of Lot')."

These services of "ethnic kinship" do not readily explain the sociological relationship of the *twinship* of Jacob and Esau.

An Edomite-Israelite Kinship Prior to the Sixth Century B.C.E.

As will be shown in the last major section of this chapter, treaties of the ancient Near East often employ kinship language in referencing sociopolitical relationships that were not genuine kinship relationships. A question presents itself. What are historical-critics to make of the kinship language in texts such as Obadiah? Is the language reflective of a longstanding, perceived kinship relationship or of a recent covenant extension of kinship? This section will discuss Edomite-Israelite/Judahite kinship according to several factors. These factors include genealogical traditions, overlapping geopolitics, and "religion."[34] Although the evidence is inconclusive, one may infer that an Edomite-Israelite perceived kinship may have existed well before any Edomite-Judahite political agreement specific to the Babylonian crisis could have emerged.[35]

Ancient Geopolitics and the Kinship Tradition

The twinship status of the supposed ancestors of the Edomites and Israelites as reflected in the ancestral narratives suggests that they shared an ethnic kinship as

[34]Religion as a trait of cultural self-understanding (i.e., of "ethnicity") may cross political domains and is particularly relevant in the study of possible social bonds linking Israel and Edom; cf. J. Andrew Dearman, "Edomite Religion. A Survey and an Examination of Some Recent Contributions," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 119, 123–27.

[35]Such an inference is hardly new. An Edomite-Judahite kinship of some form or another is generally accepted by scholarship. Texts such as Obadiah (vv. 10 and 12) and Amos (1:11) suggest that Judahites were surprised by a "brother's" activity in the sixth century. A principal point of divergence is *when* Edom and Israel/Judah came to be viewed as kin. For an argument that the themes of the Esau-Jacob stories of Genesis and texts such as Ezekiel 35–36 pertain to the same, sixth-century historical problem of Edomite encroachment upon formerly Judahite land, see Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 116–25, and esp. 198–204. For Dicou, the Genesis traditions and the prophets of Edom's doom provide two *different* means of addressing the same problem of Israel and the nations/Edom: conciliation/universalism and condemnation/particularism.

descendants of Isaac. The narratives also suggest that they shared a geographic interaction zone, notably in and around a region known as Seir (see, e.g., Genesis 32–33; 35:29; cf. also Num 20:14–21; Deut 2:1–8). Biblical texts apparently take for granted an early connection of Esau with Edom and Seir (see Gen 32:3; 36:8, 9), and in several instances Edom and Seir appear as synonyms or in parallel (e.g., Gen 36:21; Num 24:18; Judg 5:4; cf. Ezek 35:15; LXX Isa 21:11). Moreover, numerous biblical texts describe Israel's or Judah's activities stretching to the Red Sea and into Edom,[36] but these events are hardly verifiable. In history, interaction zones can assist in the formation of ethnic kinships; the zones allow for cultural traits such as customs, religion, and foundational myths to be shared. An identifiable interaction zone between Edomites and Israelites well before the sixth century would support the view that the peoples were linked by a perceived kinship. Historically-critically reliable evidence suggestive of such a geopolitical connection between Israel and Edom and Seir prior to the seventh century is, however, all but lacking. Compounding the problem is the uncertain location of Seir. Is it east of, west of, or within the ʿArabah (perhaps its eastern escarpment)?[37] How can people of Edom and people of Israel/Judah be understood as having had an interaction zone in Seir (or anywhere else for that matter) *centuries* before the Babylonian crisis?

A recently emerging view is that the biblical identification of Edom with Seir is an interpolation stemming from Edom's seventh-century political expansion out of its heartland east of the ʿArabah into traditionally Esauite territory (i.e., Seir) *west* of the

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[36]See, e.g., 2 Sam 8:12–14; 1 Kgs 11:14–22; 2 Kgs 3:7–27; 8:20–22; 14:7–10, 22; 16:6; Edom is typically understood as a region east of the ʿArabah—at least until its expansion westward by the end of the seventh century B.C.E. (see Chapter Three).

[37]For an overview of eastern possibilities for Seir (i.e., at the eastern edge of the ʿArabah or further east), see Ernst Axel Knauf, "Seir," *ABD* 5:1072–73.

ʿArabah.[38] In this view, the early kin of Israel (i.e. the descendants of Esau) *were not Edomites*, but Seirites. The Esau/Edom connection is a myth that emerged rather late. Such a clear geopolitical *distinction* between Seir and Edom in the eighth century or earlier remains, however, much unsubstantiated[39] and is indirectly questioned by recent archaeological discoveries at Khirbat en-Nahas in the ʿArabah. These finds suggest that Edom had a political and economic sophistication similar to that of a state and, accordingly, may have had some sociopolitical influence in and west of the ʿArabah quite earlier than previously supposed.[40] The important point is that even if Seir is to be

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[38]Particularly influential has been John R. Bartlett, "The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom," *JTS* 20 (1969): 1–20; cf. also Bartlett, "The Brotherhood of Edom," *JSOT* 4 (1977): 2–27; see also Lars Eric Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah* (Coniectanea Biblica 25; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), esp. 70–71; and Diana Vikander Edelman, "Edom: A Historical Geography," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite For He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 10. For that possibility that Seir should yet be understood as further east (noting a hilly region south of the Wadi al-Ghuweir in Jordan still known as *esh Shera* [cf. "Seir"]), see, in the same volume, Dearman ("Edomite Religion," 124–25), who summarizes the position of Ernst Axel Knauf ("Supplementa Ismaelitica." *Biblische Notizen* 45 [1988]: 62–81), positing that the Nabatean deity, Dushara (דושרא), is possibly a cognomen of the Edomite deity Qos and the epithet, *du šara* (lit. "the one of Seir").

[39]Support for locating Seir west of the ʿArabah may be found in a letter from Abdi-Ḫepa of Jerusalem to Egypt during the Amarna period. In it the ruler of Jerusalem reports that he is at war as far as the land of Seir (*šeru*). It is more likely that the king of Jerusalem had political influence *west* rather than *east* of the ʿArabah; cf. Edelman, "Edom: A Historical Geography," 9; for the text, see *EA* 288.2, 23–28 (= *ANET*, 488) in William L. Moran, ed. *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), 331.

[40]The fortified, copper industry site of Khirbat en-Nahas may be indicative of an emerging Edomite state by the tenth century B.C.E., if not earlier; see Thomas E. Levy, Russell B. Adams, Mohammad Najjar, Andreas Hauptmann, James D. Anderson, Baruch Brandl, Mark A. Robinson and Thomas Higham, "Reassessing the Chronology of Biblical Edom: New Excavations and ^{14}C dates from Khirbat en-Nahas (Jordan)," *Antiquity* 78 (2004): 865–79; significant Edomite metallurgical industry may have been undertaken at the site as early as the twelfth century (see, esp. pp. 867, 870–71); for criticism of the earlier date, see Piotr Bienkowski, "Review of Burton MacDonald, *et al*.,

understood as *west* of the ʿArabah, evidence from Khirbat en-Nahas *widens the reach of Iron I Edom* and increases the possibility that the territories of Seir and Edom were contiguous or overlapping *prior* to Edom's westward expansion in the last half of Iron II.

The economy of regional Shasu populations supports the possibility that an Edomite-Israelite kinship tradition had roots prior to Iron II. An Egyptian list of six toponyms dating to the time of Ramesses II mentions "the Shasu of Seir" (*šsw sʿrr*) and "the Shasu of YHW(H)" (*šsw yhw*) and has generated relevant discussion.[41] The text, however, is problematic and does not necessarily directly place a polity of YHW(H) and

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The Tafila-Busayra Archaeological Survey 1999–2001, West Central Jordan (ASOR, Archaeological Reports 9 (Boston: ASOR, 2004)," *BASOR* 341 (2006): 65–67. The finds challenge the argument that Edom emerged as a state only during the Assyrian period; in this regard, see Crystal-M. Bennet, "Excavations at Buseirah, Southern Jordan." *Levant* 7 (1975): 1–19; Crystal-M. Bennet, "Excavations at Buseirah (Biblical Bozrah)," in *Midian, Moab and Edom: The History and Archaeology of Late Bronze and Iron Age Jordan and North-West Arabia* (ed. John F. A. Sawyer and David J. A. Clines; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 9–17.

[41]See Raphael Giveon, *Les Bédouins Shosou des Documents Égyptiens* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 74–77 (Document 16a); cf. also an Egyptian topographical list of Amenhotep III, which lists a *shasu* land of YHW(H) (*t3 šsw yhw*) between two other toponyms (*trbr*/[*wrbwr*] and *smt*) that are likely represented in the Ramesses list (*Les Bédouins Shosou*, 26–28 [Document 6a]; 74–77 [Document 16a]); see also Raphael Giveon, "Toponymes Ouest-Asiatiques à Soleb," *VT* 14 (1964): 239–55. If we accept that the divine name YHWH is represented by this text, it may evidence an early Yahwism among Shasu groups in southern regions (cf. Judg 5:4; Hab 3:3). For the use of these and other topographical lists in arguing for the plausibility of an early religious similarity between Israel and Edom, see Martin Rose, "Yahweh in Israel - Qaus in Edom?" *JSOT* 4 (1977): 28–34; Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir*, 56–64, esp. 59–60; Dearman, "Edomite Religion," 126–27.
For *šsw sʿrr* as referencing Seir, see E. Edel, "Die Ortnamenslisten in den Tempeln von Aksha, Amarah, und Soleb im Sudan," *Biblische Notizen* 11 (1980): 78; Giveon, *Les Bédouins Shosou*, 235–236; Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir*, 59–60; cf. K. A. Kitchen, "The Egyptian Evidence on Ancient Jordan," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 7; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), 26–27. Contrast, however, e.g., Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1993), 277.

one of Edom in geographic proximity.[42] More readily useful is a text dating from the end

of the thirteenth century that recounts the "Shasu tribes of Edom" having received

permission to cross with their cattle into the more fertile lands of the Nile Delta.[43] Shasu

are generally understood as semi-nomadic,[44] and would likely experience a significant

amount of interaction and intraregional (if not interregional) travel. These Shasu of

Edom, crossing wide stretches, would be near if not actual contemporaries with the

people designated as "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele from the late thirteenth century.[45]

Given evidence from the Egyptian topographic lists, it is rather safe to infer that these

Shasu of Edom moved from Edomite territory westward through one or more regions

traversed also by the Shasu people of Seir and, perhaps, those of YHW(H). With Shasu

of Edom, Seir, and YHW(H) crossing paths, their stories and offspring would likely be

exchanged. As with marriages, foundational myths and genealogical traditions could link

the peoples together. In consideration of what we know of Late Bronze Age geopolitics

alone, the view that the origin for the ethnic kinship of Edom and Israel/Judah predates a

seventh-century Edomite encroachment westward cannot be simply dismissed.

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[42]The toponym *sʿrr* as compared with biblical שעיר (Seir) is problematic and might refer to a locale far from Edom, perhaps in Syria; see Alberto R. W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 232–34.

[43]Papyrus Anastasi VI:54–56; for this translation, see "A Report of Bedouin," translated by James P. Allen (*COS* 3.5:16–17); this text demonstrates that some political entity was understood by Egyptian contemporaries as Shasu of *Edom*; see also Edelman, "Historical Geography," 2; *ANET*, 259.

[44]Cf., perhaps, Egyptian *š* (ʾ) *s*, "to wander".

[45]The Merneptah Stela is commonly understood as referencing the people of Israel in Canaan in the last decade of the thirteenth century; see "The (Israel) Stela of Merneptah," translated by James K. Hoffmeier (*COS* 2.6:40–41; = *ANET*, 376–78.)

A Commonality of Religion: Evidence for a Perceived Kinship

What we know from biblical and other texts of Edomite religion further supports the possibility that a perceived Edomite-Judahite kinship existed well before the sixth century. A noticeable theme in the Deuteronomistic History and the Latter Prophets is the condemnation of some worship practices of Israel and surrounding nations.[46] Although the religiosity of the Ammonites and Moabites (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:1–8; Jer 48:13; Zeph 1:4–5) is specifically addressed, biblical texts are virtually silent on *Edom's* cultic practices.[47] The dominant view is that this *silence* might well reflect a close Edomite-Israelite religious connection.[48] Religious similarity commends ethnic similarity.

Some biblical evidence suggests Edomites participated in Israel's cult, apparently as members of Israel's religious "in-group." Doeg the Edomite, a functionary in Saul's court, is detained "before the LORD" (לפני יהוה; 1 Sam 21:8 [7]), evidently participating in

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[46]Biblical writers chide Israel for following "foreign" gods (e.g., Deut 7:16; 12:29–30; Judg 2:3, 19; 6:10; 1 Kgs 9:6–9) and ridicule the belief in the efficacy of those gods (e.g., Isa 8:19–22; Hab 2:18–20).

[47]See, however, Heb 12:16. Unlike the mention of the Ammonite Milkom and the Moabite Chemosh (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13), biblical texts do not explicitly identify Edom's god. While evidence evidence exists that "Edom" might be a divine name (e.g., Punic *mlkʾdm*, *ʿbdʾdm*; Heb. עבד־אדום [Obed-Edom; 2 Sam 6:10–12]), there is no evidence that that deity was worshipped *in Edom*; see Ernst Axel Knauf, "Edom אדם," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 273–74. The only explicit biblical mention of Edomite religion is the Chronicler's account of Amaziah's relocation and worship of Seirite-Edomite gods (2 Chr 25:14–20, esp. 14, 20).

[48]See, e.g., Rose, "Yahweh in Israel - Qaus in Edom?" 28–34; cf., e.g., Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 195–96. It is unlikely that this virtual silence is due to a bizarre, inherently Edomite abomination that biblical compilers dared not reveal, or to biblical writers' complete ignorance of the Edomite cult, or to some Edomite secularism (as Charles Dougherty suggested in a work from 1888), or to a limited role religion played in Edom (as F. Buel suggested in 1893); for a listing of such possibilities, see Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 195.

a Yahwistic cult at a Judahite shrine (1 Samuel 21–22).[49] We know from extrabiblical

material that the principal Edomite deity was Qos (קוס).[50] Ezra 2:53 and Neh 7:55

mention a certain Barqos (ברקוס). If the name of this Second Temple functionary

mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah betrays a Qos theophore and an Edomite heritage

(ברקוס; *barqôs* = "Son-of-Qos" perhaps "Qos-Gleamed-Forth"), then he and his family

might be of Edomite lineage or ethnicity.[51] A generational conservativeness, however, is

observable in the use of theophoric elements in personal names,[52] and the name might

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[49]On the meaning of the phrase לפני יהוה, in consideration of the Edomite shrine of Qitmit, see, especially, Baruch Levine, "*LPNY YHWH* - Phenomenology of the Open-Air-Altar in Biblical Israel," in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 196–205. Although the narrator of the 1 Samuel account gives no obvious judgment about the appropriateness of Doeg's participation in the Israelite cult, the ensuing slaughter of Yahwistic priests and Doeg's connection to Psalm 52 by way of its superscription suggest that his actions were inappropriate. If Doeg is an appropriate subject for Psalm 52, we see that the psalmist has, through agricultural metaphor, reaped that individual of Edomite "ethnicity" from the cult site. Although the psalm presents Doeg as a liar, there is some discussion as to whether Doeg lies in the course of the narrative of 1 Samuel 21–22; see however, Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "Collusion at Nob: A New Reading of 1 Samuel 21–22," *JSOT* 61 (1994): 59-73; the criticism provided by Samuel A. Meier ("The Heading of Psalm 52," *HAR* 14 [1994]: 143–58) is unconvincing, relying as it does on a narrative element becoming "lost from the narrative through scribal error" (150).

[50]For an overview, see Ernst Axel Knauf, "Qôs," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999): 674–77.

[51]ברקוס is the only likely attestation of the Edomite god in the Old Testament (see, however, below). For the translations of the name, contrast, respectively, Th. C. Vriezen, "The Edomite Deity Qaus," *OtSt* 14 (1965): 330–53 (332), which is the consensus position, and the translation by Ernst Axel Knauf ("Supplementa Ismaelitica,"45 [1988]: 62–81 [66]), who compares Lihyanite *qwsbr*, and translates "Qaus erglänzt" (i.e., "Qos-Gleamed-Forth"); see also Knauf, "Qôs," 674–77 (674).

[52]The fact that a name references a particular deity does not necessitate that that individual was a worshipper of that deity. If the name contains the Qos theophore, and because Qos would probably be recognized by Judahites as a reference to an Edomite deity, it is problematic that the parents of ברקוס would consider giving such a name to

simply reflect the antiquity of Qos veneration within that lineage. Even so, it is possible

that an ancestor of a functionary in the Judean cult both venerated Qos and was an

Edomite. This possibility is seconded with what we have already seen with Deut 23:8–9

[Eng. 7–8] and its relatively liberal cultic admission requirements for Edomites in

comparison to peoples of other nations.[53] The biblical silence on Edomite religion and

the possibilities emerging from the examples of Doeg and Barqos call for attention.[54] In

consideration of Deuteronomy, it is not unreasonable to consider that Edomite

grandparents (and, perhaps, distant progenitors of Barqos)—unable to access the

assembly of YHWH themselves—may have lived to see their grandchild functioning in

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their offspring unless they believed acknowledgement of Qos was appropriate. Personal names with theophores are not necessarily evidence of worship orientation; see Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (eds. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 157–194, esp. 159–60; for the longevity of (non-Yahwistic) theophores within Iron Age Israel in general, see Albertz Rainer, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (2 vols.; trans. John Bowden; Louisville, KT: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 1:97–99.

[53]Deuteronomy 23 reflects a time in the cultic traditions of Israel when the engrafting of Edomite and Egyptian descendents into the religious assembly (בקהל יהוה [23:2, 9]) was possible after no more than three generations (Deut 23:8–9 [Eng. 7–8]); ten generations would not see those of Ammonite or Moabite descent engrafted (23:3–6 [2–5]). As a liminal ethnicity, an Edomite family engrafting into Israel's cult needed to maintain good standing for three probationary generations. This liminality raises a question similar to that of Esau's marriages (above). *Will* the Edomite act as kin?

[54]Cf. John R. Bartlett, "Edom in the Nonprophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 18, 20–21; see also Edelman, "Edom: A Historical Geography," 10, n. 39. Deuteronomy may have nothing to say of social realities in the early sixth century (let alone the Bronze Age), and the suggestions of these authors lean toward considering a postmonarchic social setting for Deut 23:8, perhaps even subsequent to the Hasmonean forced conversion of Idumeans (so Edelman considers); see also John R. Bartlett, "Biblical Sources for the Iron Age in Edom," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 7; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), 13–19, esp. 16.

the socio-religious "in-group" of Judahites. Such an ethnic engrafting of the Edomite

lineage into the cult of Judah may be an appropriate explanation.

Although an early interaction zone in Seir remains possible, the problem remains

as to *when* it became possible for Edomites to receive "in-group" status with Israel/Judah.

Martin Rose has been influential in arguing that the starting point for the Edomite-

Israelite kinship may be traced to an old (i.e., Late Bronze Age) and shared "YHW(H)-

cult" existing in the region of Edom.[55] For Rose, the early religious connection was not

close; *it was identical*.[56] If, as Rose suggests, a principle difference between the religions

of Israel and Edom was the *eventual* preferred name for the common deity, then the

theophores are important in understanding the history of the religion shared by the two.[57]

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[55]See Rose, "Yahweh in Israel - Qaus in Edom?" 28–34. Rose formulates the existence of a shared YHW(H) cult through the use of biblical and extra-biblical sources. These sources include Egyptian topographical lists mentioning *shasu* bedouins connected to the toponym *yhw* [*t3šsw yhw*], the region of which may be proximal to if not overlapping Seir and Edom (see above); the toponym *yhw* is understood as a reference to a people associated with the deity, יהוה (Yahweh); cf., earlier, J. Freund, "Verachte Nicht Den Edomieter, Denn Ist Dein Bruder," *Bet Miqra* 11 (1965–6): 117–21.

[56]Three points of Rose's argument are challengeable: 1) there is no evidence for the wave of eighth- through seventh-century Arabian migrations through Edom that Rose describes; 2) Qos is not necessarily dependent upon an Arab deity; and 3) the divine name might be attested in the region as early as the thirteenth century B.C.E.; see the objections of John R. Bartlett, "Yahweh and Quas: A Response to Martin Rose," *JSOT* 5 (1978): 29–38; and, concisely, Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 202; cf. Dearman, "Edomite Religion," 126–27.

[57]In dialogue with Rose, Bartlett (*Edom and the Edomites,* 199), states interesting possibilities given the biblical silence Edomite religion.

> "It is not impossible that the worship of Yahweh fell out of favour in Edom and disappeared there precisely because the Edomites knew that Yahweh was the god of their rulers and oppressors from the time of the kingdom of David. And if the cult of Yahweh was practiced in early times among the Edomites, and this was known in Israel, it is also possible that Israel's writers' were silent on the matter

Rose, among others, prefers an Arabian origin for Qos,[58] which is based on the Arabic word for "bow" (*qaus*; cf. Heb. *qešet*). In consideration of what is known from orthographic studies, E. A. Knauf has reminded the community that if Qos is referenced in Egyptian texts from the thirteenth century, as is possible,[59] then the divine name is based on a Proto-Semitic term meaning "bow" and is only secondarily related to Arabic *qaus*.[60] Thus, the "Arabian" origin (if any) is *far earlier* than the attestations of the name

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because they did not like to admit too readily that the hated Edomites also worshipped Yahweh."

[58]See Rose, "Yahweh in Israel - Quas in Edom?" 28–34; cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 201; J. Andrew Dearman, "Edomite Religion," 124. Deities having names phonetically similar to Qos include the Arabian gods Quzaḥ, Qais, and a Minaean deity with the phonemes *q + s*. Each of these gods has entered into the discussion of Qos. It remains popular to consider the possibility that the god (or at least the deity's name) was of Arabian origin, yet there is no clear link between the Edomite "Qos" and any of these phonetically similar theophores. Worthy of consideration, however, is an Arabic expression for rainbow: *qaus quzaḥ* ("bow of Quzaḥ," [i.e., "rainbow"]). This expression utilizes the Arabic word for "bow" (*qaus*; cf. Heb. *qešet*); from this phrase, Wellhausen was able to connect Qos both with this Arabian God and to the *Gestalt* of a weather god; Qos was the personified bow of the Quzaḥ. Th. C. Vriezen ("The Edomite Deity Qaus," *OtSt* 14 [1965]: 330–353) disassociates Qos from Quzaḥ and understands Qos as the personified and deified bow. The theory requires that the diphthong *au* (*qaus*) eventually monophthongized by Idumean times into *ô* (*qôs*); see, e.g. Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Khirbet el-Kom Bilingual Ostracon," *BASOR* 220 (1975): 55–61 (esp. 57).

[59]See especially B. Oded, "Egyptian References to the Edomite Deity Qaus," *AUSS* 9 (1971): 47–50. These references to Qos are contemporaneous with references to Shasu tribes of "Edom" and "Seir" (see above). A direct link between Edom *and* Qos in these Egyptian topographical lists and documents, however, does not exist; see, however, K. A. Kitchen, "The Egyptian Evidence on Ancient Jordan," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 7; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), esp. 26–27.

[60]In consideration of thirteenth-century Egyptian documents that might mention Shasu groups with Qos theophores (*qś*), Ernst Axel Knauf ("Qôs," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* [ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999]: 674–77, esp. 676) presents the orthographic problem of an "Arabian" origin of Qos: Egyptian /ś/ represents Proto-Semitic /s_1/, which corresponds to /š/ in first millennium Canaanite; and in Proto-Semitic the word for bow originally utilized the biradical <*qs_1>. Knauf can then suggest that the Egyptian

used by some in proposing an Arabian origin for Qos. [61] For Knauf, the homeland of Qos

is somewhere south of Judah, in the land that was known as Seir and came to be called

Edom.

The important point, here, is that the linguistic argument suggests that the

geographic origin of Qos veneration was proximal to the location of early Yahwism,[62]

evidently south of ancient Israel.[63] Qos- *and* Yahweh-venerators may have shared an

interaction zone in the Late Bronze Age. Proximal (if not overlapping or identical) to this

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biradical *qś* pertains to the triradical suffixed Canaanite *qšt* and the triradical infixed *u* of early Arabic (*qaus*). In doing so, Knauf is able to determine that if the Egyptian documents do suggest tribes in the Negev and Edom, then Qos (with an /s/ rather than /š/) was at home in one of the *Proto*-Arabian languages of the regional Shasu Bedouins at the end of the second millennium and *before* the Canaanite shift of /s_1/ to /š/.

[61]The Arab (notably Nabataean) use of Qos/Qaus as a divine name might be a loan from ancient Edom; see Knauf, "Qos," 677. Knauf also notes that a mountain called Jabal-al Qaus near the Saudi-Jordanian border (i.e., southern Edom) is recorded.

[62]See above and Knauf's earlier work ("Supplementa Ismaelitica," 62–81) in relation to the possibility that Seir should be understood as east of the ʿArabah. In an altogether different view, Lawrence Zalcman ("Shield of Abraham, Fear of Isaac, Dread of Esau," *ZAW* 117 [2005]: 405–10) argues that Qos (קוס) is to be derived from a West Semitic root (√ קוץ, "to feel a sickening dread").

[63]Cf. the Midianite/Kenite hypothesis, summarized in Lawrence E. Stager, "Forging and Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (ed. Michael D. Coogan; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 142–49; for a fuller presentation of the hypothesis, see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), esp. 200–06; and, recently, Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 53–70, esp. 66–67; that the hypothesis remains influential, see Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. John Bowden; 2 vols.; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 1.51–55, 260 n.55, and the bibliography cited there; see also Green, *The Storm-God*, 231–36, and the bibliography cited there. The caution of De Vaux (*The Early History of Israel,* 330–38) continues to serve as a reminder that the Kenite/Midianite hypothesis is just that—a hypothesis. As the Edomite kingdom eventually and evidently inherited portions of the political geography once dominated by Midianites and their supposed sub-clans, particularly the Amalekites and Kenites—whose regions were also later partially inhabited by Judahites—it was with Edom as the remaining, established Iron Age political entity in the early land of YHWH-veneration that a *shared* history and heritage could be aligned.

zone is Seir, to which biblical texts connect the offspring of Isaac. Accordingly, the

southern interaction zone as determined by evidence from Egyptian documents and

connecting peoples of YHW(H), Seir, Edom, and Qos gives some support to the

possibility that a socio-religious commonality perceived among some Edomites and

Judahites by the sixth century had roots in the Late Bronze.[64] In the end, we are left with

tantalizing bits of evidence that collectively conform around a modest inference: an

ethnic kinship linking the ancestors of Iron Age Edomites and Judahites existed well

before the Babylonian crisis of the sixth century B.C.E. Prior to unpacking related

models, an overview of how treaties in the ancient Near East employ kinship terminology

is necessary.

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[64]Several biblical texts have been used in defense of such a temporal and geographical origin. In the "Blessing of Moses" (Deut 33:2), Yahweh comes from Sinai (the location of which remains unresolved), which is in parallel with Seir. In the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), YHWH marches from Seir, with Edom and perhaps Sinai in parallel. Isaiah 63:1–6 might portray a return trip of YHWH from Edom. One intriguing piece of textual evidence both for some commonality between Edomite and Judahite religion and for the equation of Qos and YHWH (at least in some communities by the time of the Chronicler) is the possibly double-theophoric name קושיהו (*qôšāyāhû*; perhaps meaning "Yahweh-is-Qos"; 1 Chron 15:17; cf. his familiar name, קישי [*qîšî*], in 1 Chr 6:29 [44]). Here, Etan, the son of קושיהו, is one of several Israelites appointed to be temple singers and musicians (v. 16). The Edomite theophor is defended by R. J. H. Gottheil, "On קושיהו and קישי," *JBL* 17 (1898): 199-202. Bartlett (*Edom and the Edomites*, 200–01), without discussing the etymological objection, considers the mention of Qos a possibility here. The etymological objection, however, is strong; unless this "Yahweh-is-Qos" is one of two possible exceptions in West Semitic texts (see Nah 1:1), we do not have an attestation of Qos spelled with [*š*]. In these scripts [*s*] appears to be the norm. If קוש here is not theophoric, one may read a root meaning "to grant" (e.g., Vriezen, "The Edomite Deity Qos," 333) and reject the name as evidencing a religious heritage shared among Edomites and Israelites. The other possible exception is Nah 1:1, where Nahum is called the Elqoshite, that is, from El-qosh (*ʾelqōš), which might be a town in southern Judah (reinforcing a possible Edomite context) and might mean "Qos-is-El"; see Gottheil, "On קושיהו and קישי," 200, coupled with the geographic possibility provided by Yoshitaka Kobayashi, "Elkosh," *ABD* 2:476.

The Language and Concept of Kinship in Ancient Near Eastern Treaties

International Treaties and Treaty Types in the Ancient Near East

For the purposes of this study, a treaty may be defined as "an agreement enacted between the leadership of two or more states in which one or more make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance."[65] The number of allusions to treaties in historical and literary texts from a great number of places in the ancient Near East suggests that treaties were used in forming international relations in much of the region and throughout much of its history.[66] The distribution of these texts and the variety of allusions to treaties and treaty-making suggests that states large and small would have known of such agreements and would have engaged in the practice.[67] Palestine would be no exception.

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[65]Cf. George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Heiron, "Covenant," *ABD* 1:1179.

[66]The fact that treaties proper have not been found in some political centers of the ancient Near East might more likely represent "simply the accidents of recovery of documents" rather than a flourishing of treaty-making in different centers at different times; cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (2nd ed.; Analecta Biblica 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 8–9. McCarthy's study brings to the fore the connection between relationship formation and covenant, and provides an argument for a distinct literary genre of covenant texts in the HB based on what he perceives as a rather consistent pattern of elements 1) negotiations based on existing relations; 2) clarifications of the relation; 3) symbolic affirmation; 4) Notice of covenant making; and 5) association with a shrine.

[67]Did ancient Israel rely on the treaty genre in the formation of its sacred literature, particularly the Sinai traditions and Deuteronomy? Are they adaptations of Late Bronze Age suzerainty treaties? Prophetic or Josianic adaptations of Iron Age loyalty oaths? J. Wellhausen viewed the treaty as late, legalistic, and an outgrowth of the prophetic movement. Johs. Pedersen's work pointed to the antiquity of the treaty or covenant idea for Israel. For a survey of the history of scholarship on covenant prior to 1970, see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 1–24. George Mendenhall's discussions of covenant (e.g., "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* 17 [1970]: 50–76; Mendenhall and Heiron, "Covenant," 1179–1202) have been particularly influential

Treaty types of the ancient Near East include the parity treaty, the vassal treaty, and what may be called loyalty oaths.[68] A parity treaty may be defined as a bilateral, binding agreement enacted between the leadership of two states as willing parties holding similar status and/or power in which both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. Elements in the structure of Hittite parity treaties include (1) identification of the participants with their mutual royal titles; (2) a history of past relations; (3) an affirmation of "brotherhood"; (4) terms and stipulations; (5) a list of divine witnesses; and (6) blessings and curses pertaining to the maintenance and breaking of the treaty.[69] Terms such as "brotherhood," "peace," and "friendship" (see below) characterize the relationship and reflect the equality of rank (although not necessarily power) of the treaty participants.

A vassal treaty may be defined as a binding agreement (either bilateral or unilateral) enacted between the leadership of two states as willing parties holding unequal status and power in which at least the weaker power (the vassal) promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. Although a rigid form does not characterize ancient treaties, elements in Hittite suzerain treaties included (1) the identification of the Hittite king as hero and giver of the treaty; (2) an historical prologue in which the king recounts past deeds of benefit to his vassal; (3) a list of terms or stipulations; (4) the provision for the archiving of the document and its periodic reading;

despite continued criticisms of his argument that a similarity in form to Hittite treaties provide Israel's Sinai covenant tradition with a Late Bronze Age date.

[68]Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe (*Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (ed. Robert M. Whiting; State Archives of Assyria 2; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), XV–XXIV) have discussed no fewer than seven types of treaties.

[69] For this structure, see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 48–50.

(5) a list of (divine) witnesses to the treaty; (6) blessings and curses pertaining to the maintenance and breaking of the treaty; and (7) an implied ratification ceremony.[70] The equality of rank and status of the participants perceivable in the parity treaty is noticeably absent. A vassal treaty reflects a "lord/servant" relationship, reflected in the shift from the language of "brotherhood" to that of "father/son" relationships.[71]

A loyalty oath may be defined as an obligation imposed upon a state (and that state's own vassals, if any) "to accept and protect the sovereignty of the ruling king (or his heir apparent) and to immediately report any activities undermining this sovereignty."[72] The context of so-called loyalty oaths often suggests that a stronger power has simply imposed a promise to obey upon a less powerful political entity.[73] The flexible structure of Assyrian loyalty oaths includes (1) a preamble providing titles and names of the Assyrian king; (2) the designation of the ruler or successor to whom loyalty

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[70]This summary of the vassal treaty structure is taken from Mendenhall and Heiron, "Covenant," 1.1179–2002; cf. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 1–2 and Menahem Haran, "The *Bĕrît* 'Covenant': Its Nature and Ceremonial Background," in *Tehillah Le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler and Jeffrey H. Tigay; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 203–19, esp. 217, n. 28.

[71]F. C. Fensham, "Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971), 121–35.

[72]Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, XXIV.

[73]See M. Weinfeld, "The Loyalty Oath in the Ancient Near East," *UF* 8 (1976): 392–93; study of the structure of Iron Age loyalty oaths of the ancient Near East has shown striking differences from vassal treaties of the Late Bronze Age.Historical prologues, which communicated beneficent acts of the suzerain, are mostly gone. These texts tend to focus on threat rather than gratitude; for Parpola and Watanabe (*Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, XV–XVI), who have highlighted the bilateral nature of loyalty oaths, the acquiescence of a lesser party to a superior might have been "a pretty good deal," if failure to do so meant annihilation.

is due; (3) the invocation of deities in whose presence the vassal swears; (4) stipulations, or definitions of acts of commission or omission that subject the vassal to the curses; and (5) a list of the curses or evils brought upon the disobedient vassal by each deity.[74] These agreements make clear that the vassal's survival depended upon absolute loyalty to the suzerain.

Treaty terms and related synonyms and idioms varied through time and, of course, with language. Biblical texts employ ברית ("covenant, treaty"), the etymology of which remains uncertain.[75] In the second millennium, several terms designated or referenced a treaty. Akkadian *riksu/rikiltu* (< *rakāsu* "to tie, bind") is well known and, by metonymy, closely implies the stipulations of the agreement, [76] which, by synecdoche imply the treaty as a whole. Although less attested in treaty contexts, Akkadian *mamitu* ("oath") brings to the fore the curses of an agreement.[77] The hendiadys, *rikiltu/riksu u mamitu* ("bond and oath"), makes the synecdoche of *rikiltu/riksu* clear. References to elements in the ceremonies that ratified treaties were also used in reference to the treaty

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[74]This summary of the structure of Assyrian loyalty oaths is taken from Mendenhall and Heiron, "Covenant," 1.1179–2002.

[75]For a discussion on the etymology of ברית, see Hayim Tadmor, "Treaty and Oath in the Ancient Near East: A Historian's Approach," in *Humanizing America's Iconic Book* (ed. Gene M. Tucker and Douglas A. Knight; Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982), 136–138; cf. also ברית with Akk *birūtu* ("clasp, fetter"); the same underlying meaning (i.e., "bond") might connect many of the ancient Near Eastern terms for "treaty" (e.g., Hittite *išḫiul* [< *išḫiya-*, "bind"]); see Michael L. Barré, "Treaties in the ANE," *ABD* 6:654.

[76]The term might align more closely with the suzerain, who is to take on a "commitment" to the other party; see Haran, "The *Běrît* 'Covenant'," 211.

[77]See McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 17–18; cf. *mamitu* = "sworn assurances" in Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, XVIII; oaths might align more closely with the subject or vassal; see Haran, "The *Běrît* 'Covenant'," 211.

as a whole. Names identifying the intended good effect of the agreements were also used to identify their cause (i.e., the treaty), and thus other metonyms are frequently found, notably *šulmum* ("peace") and *ṭūbtu / ṭābūtu* ("friendship"), to which we can add *atḫūtum/ aḫḫūtum* ("brotherhood"). Diversity in terminology appears to have characterized second millennium references to treaties.[78] For neo-Assyrian treaties of the first millennium, however, *adê* ("oath[s]"; cf. Heb עדות) was standard, and nearly fifty treaties are either extant (most often in a highly fragmentary state) or are referenced in other texts.[79] Letters and documents of international correspondence from the neo-Assyrian period show that the terminology of treaty-making continued throughout the period.[80] The accidents of discover might slight the parity treaty during the Iron Age, yet there is little doubt that states were aware of a variety of treaties and treaty types.

International Relations and Kinship in the Amarna Letters

As the Amarna documents reveal, Late Bronze Age international diplomacy between the Great Kings[81] of the ancient Near East made pervasive use of family

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[78]Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, esp. 17–19.

[79]Barré, "Treaties in the ANE," 653–656; see also Simo Parpola, "Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh," *JCS* 39 (1987): 161–189, esp. 184–186; for discussion on the nature of texts, see Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, XIII–L.

[80]The Synchronistic History (or "Synchronistic Chronicle") includes a summary of treaties between Babylon and Assyria from the fifteenth through eighth centuries B.C.E.; see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 106–07; for some translations of and citations to these treaty summaries as found in *Cuneiform texts from Babylonian tablets, &c., in the British Museum* (*CT*), see P. Van Der Meer, *The Chronology of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* (2nd ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 7–49.

[81]"Great King" (e.g., Akk *šarru rabŭ* ; Ug *mlk rb* ; Heb מלך רב, מלך גדול) was a title that carried with it connotations that changed through time. In the age of the Amarna

metaphors in general and terms such as "brother" in particular in referencing the

relationships among these kings.[82] Records of international diplomacy in the Iron Age

show a continuation of such usage of kinship terminology, and reflect the sociological

basis for responsibility in perceived bloodlines. The level of intermarriage among the

royal houses of the ancient Near East made "brotherhood" more than an abstract

metaphor: true blood ties became established. The Great Kings, who often referred to

themselves as "brothers," evidently utilized offers of the giving of daughters in marriage

(or the refrain from doing so) as part of their complex negotiations in the pursuit of

prestige and valuables.[83] Designating the relationship of a group of kings as a

"brotherhood," however, does not suggest that the relations were necessarily harmonious,

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archives, the title was one used by the particularly powerful kings in a brotherhood of
great and equal kings. As new powers arose, new kings could become "Great (Equal)
Kings," which would allow them a certain status, yet require of them a number of
obligations in regard to correct behavior among the Great Kings of the Amarna age:
maintaining good relations, preference for personal relations among the kings in times of
colliding international interests, satisfying material needs of others, providing and
receiving equitable gifts, assisting an Equal King in times of distress, and maintaining
open communications. The use of the title as an indicator of membership in the great
powers of the ancient Near East declines in the first millennium, as exemplified in
Assyrian usage, where Assyrian kings would employ the title in royal titularies in a
manner inconsistent (if not "diametrically opposed") to usage in the Amarna age, namely,
in a manner suggesting an *inequality* between the Assyrian king and other kings of the
world; see Pinhas Artzi and Abraham Malamat, "The Great King: A Preeminent Royal
Title in Cuneiform Sources and the Bible," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern
Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (ed. Mark E. Cohen, Daniel C. Snell, and David
Weisberg; Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1993), esp. 33–37.

[82]The complexity of brotherly relations among international powers during the
Amarna period is made manifest throughout Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook,
eds., *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (Baltimore: Johns
Hopkins University, 2000).

[83]For the offer of the giving of daughters in marriage as a bargaining tool and a
means for gaining a moral advantage over a "brother" see Raymond Westbrook,
"Babylonian Diplomacy in the Amarna Letters," *JAOS* 120 (2000): 377–82; cf. also
Liverani, "The Great Powers' Club," 18, 25–26.

as the brotherhood reflected in the Amarna correspondence exemplifies: "brothers" might hold equal status, yet not hold equal power; "brothers" might connote a league, yet those same brothers can be torn by strife and rivalry.[84]   Confounding the situation is that the expected obligations among "brothers" are culturally dependant and would have been determined in some measure on whether the brother was the Great King of Egypt, Hatti, Mittani, Babylonia, or Assyria. Recognizing differences in custom and culture, Great Kings appear to have intentionally used kinship terminology in order to reinforce if not establish the appearance of equality among the Great Kings.[85]

Occurrences of "brother" in the rhetoric of diplomacy among the kings represented in the Amarna documents could reflect any of several situations pertaining to the kings' status: as rulers of imperial power; as holders of similar rank; as participants in an inherited tradition of formal diplomatic relations between the states; and as kin with actual blood ties via intermarriage. Kinship terminology was utilized in international correspondence both as a rhetorical ploy in bargaining and as a term reflecting desired amicable relations among powerful political entities.

The Use of Kinship Language in Ancient Near Eastern Treaties

In his discussion of covenant, Paul Kalluveettil has continued in the tradition of W. R. Smith and foreshadows F. M. Cross (see above). Covenants manifest the perceived extension of blood ties, forming a basis for concomitant social obligations to

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[84]See Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, "Conclusion: The Beginnings of Internation Relations," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 225–36, esp. 232–33.

[85]Samuel A. Meier, "Diplomacy and International Marriages," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 166–168, 172–173.

ensure mutual wellbeing. Specifically, Kalluveettil promotes the view that kinship

"created a bond of social relationship and was the primary source of obligation."[86] In

terms of political relations, a covenant/treaty is an artificial brotherhood, a fictitious

extension of kinship that establishes a quasi-familial relationship.[87] Kinship was not

limited to birth; it could be created. Eventually, this artificial brotherhood may produce

direct kinship relations through royal marriages and the production of offspring. Some

texts that do not have explicit mention of treaties may be read as declarative and

symbolic acts that extend familial relations to parties that do not share the same blood.

Such declarative acts, some of which are perceivable in biblical texts, may suggest that a

treaty relationship was operative, despite the fact that the particular stipulations or terms

of a treaty are not explicitly mentioned.[88] References to such acts or rites are observable

in texts spanning three millennia.[89] Kinship terminology was at the very least regularly

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[86]Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 205. Cf. Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, esp. 11–12.

[87]Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 204–5, following Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 318; note, however the caution of Cross (*From Epic to Canon*, 8) against accepting as a truism that absolute social obligations required a perceived kinship in Semitic (Arab) societies.

[88]Cf. J. M. Munn-Rankin, "Diplomacy in Western Asia," 68–110, esp. 84.

[89]We know that "brotherhood" was a term designating a relationship of peace and friendship in both Sumerian times and in the first international period (the so-called Mari Age). Written upon a clay nail, a commemoration of the building of a temple by one Entemena has been found, which includes a reference to the "brotherhood" (NAM.ŠEŠ) that Entemena made with Erech (Uruk). The terminology for amicable international relations and the societal structures for forming those relationships during Sumerian times were similar to the terminology and structures that would produce treaties in later times. In the First International Age, we have evidence of vigorous diplomatic activity, and although we do not have treaties proper from Mari, there appear to be two major options for official relations: brotherhood (*atḫūtum /aḫūtum*) or subordination

caught up in efficacious politics. A few examples should suffice to show the connection

between kinship language (particularly the language of brotherhood) and treaty

relationships (particularly those of the parity treaty).

Example One: Hattusilis III's Letter to Kadašman-Enlil II

> When your father and I made peace and became "brothers," we did not do so for
> just a single day. Was it not for eternity that we became "brothers" and concluded
> peace? We made a pact as follows: "Since we are mortal, the survivor shall protect
> the children of the one who dies first…."[90]

This text makes clear that two persons with different parentage (one Hittite, one

Babylonian) became "brothers" with the conclusion of friendship, i.e., the formation of a

treaty relationship.[91] Tensions between Egypt and Hatti continued, and from Hattusilis'

perspective, stipulations of the treaty were broken following a dynastic succession in

Babylon after the death of his ally, Kaseshman-Turgu. We know from this text that an

expectation of the parity friendship between Hattusilis III and Kadašman-Enlil was that

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(*wardūtum*). The relationships presupposed by such terminology suggests that treaties
were in effect; see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, esp. 30–32, 35–36.

[90]"Letter from Hattušilis III of Hatti to Kadašman-Enlil II of Babylon," translated
by Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., (*COS* 3.31:52–53 [§ 4]); translations with significant variation
may be found in the related literature; compare this translation with that of Gary
Beckman, (*Hittite Diplomatic Texts* [2nd ed.; edited by Harry A. Jr. Hoffner; Atlanta:
Scholars Press, 1999], 139); contrast the translation of Kalluveettil (*Declaration and
Covenant*, 99 [= KBo 1.10:57–59]): "When your father and I have concluded friendship
and became brothers, we spoke thus: We are brothers (ŠEŠ.MEŠ *ni-i-nu*), we should be
the enemy of one who is an enemy to anyone of us, a friend to the one who is a friend of
anyone of us." Compare Kalluveettil's translation with the discussion of McCarthy
(*Treaty and Covenant*, 46). From my perspective, and with the resources available to me,
either two texts have been confused as one letter between Hattusilis III and Kadašman-
Enlil II (which does not appear to be the case, given that all sources reference KBo 1.10)
or the text and its condition allow significant translation variation.

[91]Cf. an Ugaritic text in a context referencing a parity treaty: "My brother, see,
we, you and I, are brothers, sons of the one and same man, we are brothers" (RS
17.116.21–23 (= *PRU* IV.133); for this translation, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and
Covenant*, 100–101.

successive kings were to remain as brothers in the event of dynastic succession; an enemy

(in this case, Egypt) of one was to be an enemy of the other.[92] Brotherly relations

implied concomitant expectations of ensuring mutual wellbeing and of shared strategic

military objectives, a mutual defense pact.

The regularity of dynastic succession clauses—expectations of supporting an

ally's transference of power to a designated heir—in treaties suggests that parity relations

were not to end with the death a treaty partner.[93] Hattusilis' point of dispute is that the

king of Babylon had resumed diplomatic relationship with Egypt.[94] Hattusilis writes to

his ally Kadašman-Enlil to draw his attention to the treaty and its obligations. Evidently,

the new king of Babylon had engaged in activities contrary to treaty obligations. In this

sense, an extension of kinship connects entire lineages. From Hattusilis' perspective,

Babylon was not acting as kin, and kinship language helps express his concerns.

Example Two: Letter from Burnaburiash II to the King of Egypt (mid-fourteenth

century B.C.E.)

> My brother and I made a mutual declaration of friendship, and this is what we said:
> "Just as our fathers were friends with one another, so will we be friends with one
> another." Now my merchants…were detained in Canaan…. Sum-Adda…and
> Sutatna…killed my merchants…. [C]anaan is your country…. Put to death the

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[92]Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 138–39; that Hattusilis' letter pertains to a
parity treaty and that a phrase such as "friends of one another's friends and enemies of
one another's enemies" is a classic parity treaty clause, see also E. Edel, "Die
Abfassungszeit des Briefes *Kbo* I.10 (Hattušil—Kadašman-Enlil) und seine Bedeutung
für die Chronologie Rameses' II," *JCS* 12 (1958): 130–33; McCarthy, *Treaty and
Covenant*, 46; Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 99–100.

[93]For references to such clauses, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 148
(n. 115). A letter from Burnaburiash II to Pharaoh Amenophis IV (*EA* 8:8–12) suggests
that a formal reaffirmation of international relations often followed dynastic succession.

[94]See especially § 7 of the letter (*COS* 3.31:52–53 [§7]); Beckman, *Hittite
Diplomatic Texts*, 139, 141.

men who put my servants [to] death…. [As a greeting-gift I send you 1 mina of lapis lazuli. Se[nd off] my [mess]enger immediately so I may kno[w] my brother's [dec]ision….[95]

Letters from Burnaburiash II, who negotiated as a Great King from a position of inferior strength relative to Egypt, have received some attention in the discourse about the nature of the relationship among the Great Kings of the Amarna Age.[96] Burnaburiash was of lesser power relative to Egypt and Hatti, yet the terminology of "brother" without explicit sub-ranks suggests the egalitarian nature of the kings.[97] Burnaburiash was free to remind Egypt of their history of friendly relations (ṭābūtu),and to make demands similar to the terms known from parity treaties.[98] Concomitant expectations among "brothers" included such acts of international justice, and Burnaburish sought the moral high ground

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[95]*EA* 8. The translation provided here is that of William L. Moran, ed., *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), 16–17.

[96]E.g., Westbrook, "Babylonian Diplomacy," 377–82; cf. also Carlo Zaccagnini, "The Interdependence of the Great Powers," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), esp. 142–49.

[97]Although terms designating oldest brother (*aḫu rabû*) and younger brother (*aḫu ṣiḫru*) exist, these ranks are not used in the correspondence among the Great Kings; see Cohen and Westbrook, "The Beginnings of International Relations," 233, 257 (n. 20).

[98]Compare a section from the parity treaty of Hattusilis III and Ramesses II:

…if Hattusilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, is angry with servants belonging to him…and sends to [Ramesses], the great king…. [Ramesses] shall send his foot soldiers (and) his charioteers and they shall destroy all those with whom he is angry. ("Treaty Between Hattusilis and Rameses II," translated by Albrecht Goetze [*ANET*, 202])

We might also note *EA* 41.7–13, in which the king of Hatti reminds the king of Egypt that requests (in this case for resources) made by and of the previous pharaoh were *never* refused. The king of Hatti may well be hyperbolic in his deliberative (hortatory) rhetoric, yet the text communicates the leverage "brothers" had one with another (*EA* 41.14–22). For similar rhetoric of friendly relations (ṭābūtu), see also *EA* 6, 7, 9, 10.

in brotherly relations, insisting that pharaoh should adjudicate the dispute between his

"brother" Burnaburish and an Egyptian vassal state (in this case Canaan).[99]

Example Three: Parity Treaty of Hattusilis III and Ramesses II (ca. 1258 B.C.E.)

…[Ramesses II] the great king, the king of the land of Egypt, has entered into a treaty (written) upon a silver tablet with Hattusilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land [his] brother, [from] this [da]y on to establish good peace (and) good brotherhood be[tween us] forever. He is a brother [to me] and I am a brother to him and at peace with him forever. And as for us, our brotherhood and our peace is being brought about and it will be better than the brotherhood and the peace which existed formerly for the land of Egypt and the Hatti land….[100]

In a context of encroaching sea peoples and a recent history of Hittite-Egyptian conflict

(notably the battle of Kadesh), Egypt and Hatti concluded a parity treaty, of which both

an Egyptian version and a Hittite version survive.[101] In both versions, the affirmation of

brotherhood precedes the outlining of terms and mutual obligations, including non-

aggression, military support in the event of insurrection against the kings, and the

extradition of fugitives. Regular reading of the treaty would bring to popular awareness

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[99]See Raymond Westbrook, "International Law in the Amarna Age," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 28–41, esp. 30–32, 34–36; note also the closing section of a letter from Burnaburiash to the king of Egypt (*EA* 7.73–82; for this translation, see Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 12–15):

[Furth]ermore, [tw]ice has a caravan of Ṣalmu, my messenger whom I send to you, been robb[ed]. The first one Biriyawaza rob[bed, and] his [sec]ond caravan Pamaḫu, [a *gov*]ernor of yours in a *vassalage,* robb[ed]. [*When*] is my brother [going to *adjudicate*] this case? [*As*] my messenger *sp*[*oke*] before my brother, (so) [n]ow may Ṣalmu *sp*[*eak*] before my brother. His [thi]ngs should be restored t[o him] and [he] should be compensa[ted] for his losses.

[100]"Treaty Between Hattusilis and Rameses II," translated by Albrecht Goetze (*ANET,* 202).

[101]See *ANET*, 199–203. This treaty is the only extant complete example of a Hittite parity treaty; for bibliography on fragmentary Hittite parity treaties, see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 46 (n. 23).

the responsibilities of the kinship relationship. The royal marriage some years later (ca.

1245 B.C.E.) between a daughter of Hattusilis and Ramesses—objected to by the king of

Babylon—reinforced the relations and would eventually strengthen a biological kinship

relationship between the two peoples.[102] The respective populations would increasingly

perceive a common bloodline connecting the two royal houses.

Example Four: Parity Treaty Scene between Ahab and Ben-Hadad

[31] His servants said to him, "Look, we have heard that the kings of the house of
Israel are merciful kings; let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes on our
heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." [32] So they
…went to the king of Israel, and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let
me live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." [33] Now the men were
watching for an omen; they quickly took it up from him and said, "Yes, Ben-hadad
is your brother." Then he said, "Go and bring him." So Ben-hadad came out to him;
and he had him come up into the chariot. [34] Ben-hadad said to him, "I will restore
the towns that my father took from your father; and you may establish bazaars for
yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria." The king of Israel responded,
"I will let you go on those terms." So he made a treaty with him and let him go. (1
Kings 20:33–34 NRSV)

This text describes the amicable resolution to a catastrophic defeat suffered by Aram (1

Kgs 20:29–30). The text makes clear that persons with different parentage can be

perceived as "brothers" (אחי [v. 32]; אחיך [v. 33]), allowing the formation of a treaty

(ברית), in this case, a parity treaty. Each verse displays concepts and terminology

common to ancient Near Eastern treaties, and the verses provide an account of treaty

formation that shows striking similarity to ancient Near Eastern treaty formation norms

and terminology.[103] The servants of Ben-Hadad acknowledge defeat. Employing

terminology common to treaties, the first word from Ben-Hadad's servants to Ahab is the

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[102]Meier, "Diplomacy and International Marriages," 172.

[103]On the treaty allusions and connotations in 1 Kgs 20:31–34, see Kalluveettil,
Declaration and Covenant, 198–209.

description of Ben-Hadad as "your servant" (עבדך; v.32). Ahab's response was welcome news to Aram. Ben-Hadad had sought to be subservient to Ahab (i.e., a vassal); he received a parity treaty. Concessions were to be made, including Israel's re-acquisition of territory lost and a mutuality of commercial enterprises in each partner's capital city. Territorial and commercial clauses were not uncommon in treaties from the Late Bronze and Iron Ages.[104] Although the economic and territorial concessions of Aram might suggest that the treaty is one of vassalage, the terminology employed and the economic and territorial evenhandedness is more suggestive of a partnership relationship.[105]

Kinship Terminology in Treaties of the Iron Age

It is disappointing that no treaty texts proper are known from the neo-Babylonian period. It is also disappointing—though perhaps not surprising—that no certain parity treaties proper are known from the neo-Assyrian period,[106] despite the relative wealth of Assyrian vassal treaties and loyalty oaths that have come to light. The Synchronistic History records hundreds of years of Assyro-Babylonian relations and presents summaries of several formal friendship relations between the two states. Several of these

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[104]As an example, we can note the treaty of Abba-AN of Yamkhad and Yarimlin of Alalak, in which certain cities along with their fields are exchanged for cities from the other polity; for this text, see the Appendix in McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 307. For another selection of references to treaties with territorial and commercial clauses, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 202–04 and the bibliography cited there.

[105]For a defense of the 1 Kgs 20 as describing a parity rather than vassal treaty, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 202–04 and the bibliography cited there.

[106]As many inscriptions and surviving treaties suggest, neo-Assyrian kings appear to have had a worldview that prevented consideration of other states as full equals. Campaign reports in an inscription of Tiglath-pilesar presents the king as "…strong king, unrivalled king of the universe, king of the four quarters, king of all princes, lord of lords, chief herdsman, king of kings…" (for this text and translation, see Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), 2.1.28f).

summaries may refer to formal, written friendship (parity) treaties, but the details are painfully slight. Curiously absent from these summaries is explicit "brotherhood" language, despite the terminology of "friendship" and "peace" and references to royal intermarriages,[107] One neo-Assyrian treaty, of which only the stipulation and curse sections survive, may be a parity treaty between Assyria and Babylon,[108] but the introductory portions—where we might find brotherhood language if other treaties are our guide—are lost. Unless damage has obliterated it, shared kinship terminology went unused in the treaty. There are apparently no occurrences of "brother" in neo-Assyrian treaties in a manner consistent with parity treaties from the Late Bronze Age.[109]

It is possible that Assyria developed a worldview of kingship that forbade or restricted the equality suggested by "brotherhood." Neo-Assyrian kings used the title Great King in a manner inconsistent with usage among those in the Great Powers Club during the Amarna Age.[110] Instructive is the statement by Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe in their introduction to neo-Assyrian treaties as instruments of imperialism:

> [Assyria] was above all a true superpower making use of all the classic means of political manipulation in its dealings with other nations. It concluded mutual friendship and assistance pacts, only to later invade a country by invitation; it sold arms and military assistance to shaky governments, only to add them to its sphere of influence; it acquired zones of satellites by methodically installing its puppets in

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[107]See, e.g., Synchronistic History, 2.25–27, 33–34; 3:17–18.

[108]Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe (*Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, XVIII, XXVI–XXVII) suggest that if read with the Synchronistic History, the text may be defined as a "mutual defense and peace treaty." This form would be outside the bounds of vassal treaties and among the forms of partnership or parity treaties.

[109]As observed through a study of "brother" and "brothers" and their references in the subject index of Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*.

[110]See above, and Artzi and Malamat, "The Great King," esp. 36.

exposed countries. …Assyrians might well have written the modern textbook for territorial expansion by diplomatic means.[111]

We can only wait until new evidence comes to light to see if the parity treaty was among the political tools utilized by the neo-Assyrian empire. What seems clear enough is that knowledge of kinship terminology within treaties did continue through the Iron Age. The biblical scene of Ben-Hadad and Ahab (*Example Four*, above) both attests to the language of "brother" in a parity treaty context and is similar to the use of such language in the Amarna diplomacy of the Late Bronze Age. It is safe to conclude that states large and small had knowledge of if not direct experience with various treaty types through time, and we can be confident that kingdoms in the sixth century were aware of a treaty type that we may call the parity treaty. Much unexplored by scholarship is whether the political relations of Edom and Judah were marked by some form of a parity treaty.

Models for Understanding the Brotherhood of Edom

The previous sections on ethnic kinship and ancient Near Eastern treaties have shown that kinship language in some biblical texts is allusive either to a perceived kinship or to a formal treaty relationship. Because the extension of (perceived) kinship is evidently basic to the formation of new and mutually binding political agreements, the situation is special in cases such as that of Edom and Judah: kinship language might be allusive *both* to a longstanding kinship and to a treaty relationship. In consideration of the results of this chapter, this section reviews several possible models for understanding the origin of the Edomite-Judahite kinship.

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[111]Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 25.

Model 1: An Ancient Brotherhood (Middle Bronze–Iron I).

Apart from the tenuous conclusions of Egyptian topographical lists, "evidence" for Bronze Age Edomite-Israelite brotherhood is principally from biblical texts. Conclusions based on the biblical texts are vexed by considerations of date. The new evidence from Khirbat En-Nahas for an emerging Edomite state with metallurgical industries in the ʿArabah as early as Iron I (if not earlier) does not yet clarify the matter. Moreover, given the state of affairs in the current study of the emergence of Israel as a kingdom under the Davidic and Solomonic monarchies, an Iron I model is problematic.[112] Even so, the modest inference can be made that by the sixth century B.C.E., Judahites and Edomites would have commonly perceived a *longstanding* relationship as ethnic kin. Underlying this rather ancient perceived kinship is the basis for concomitant social obligations seeking to ensure the wellbeing of the kinship group. For the purposes of this study, the basic model remains a viable option. The model may be subdivided in consideration of a possible treaty relationship (such as specific mutual defense or revolt clauses or, more generally, a parity treaty) emerging due to the Babylonian crisis.

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[112]Assuming that David existed as a king of Israel and that the biblical record generally reflects military, political, and eventually familial interactions between the two states, a perceived kinship may have emerged as early as the supposed united monarchy. Again, particularly influential has been Bartlett, "Brotherhood of Edom," 2–27; cf. earlier also Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 94–101. Bartlett's position, focusing on the interactions of "Davidic kings and Edom" might better fit with Model 2, below, particularly if a focus would shift away from *incipient* traditions and toward the establishment of those traditions. Because of the current dearth of historically-reliable data, substantially evidenced Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, and Iron I brotherhood models are currently impossible. In deference to ethnicity theory ("ethnicity" as predominantly built upon perception), any of these dates are identical for the purposes of this study. They are accordingly subsumed without differentiation into one basic model.

Model 1A: an ancient origin of a perceived brotherhood, no parity treaty. In this model, Edomites violated their ancestral "brother" (i.e., a brotherhood originating at some point during or prior to Iron I) during the Babylonian crisis. No expectations stemming from an Edomite-Judahite treaty were held at the time of the Babylonian crisis. The inappropriate activity of (or lack of support from) Edom during the fall of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. resulted in Judahite outrage over Edom's betrayal of ancient kinship expectations.

Model 1B: an ancient origin of a perceived brotherhood, parity treaty. In this model, Edomites violated their ancestral "brother" and treaty partner, a partnership that included specific expectations pertaining to the Babylonian crisis. The inappropriate activity of (or lack of support from) Edom during the demise of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. resulted in Judahite outrage over Edom's betrayal both of ancient kinship expectations, and of specific parity treaty expectations, such as provisions for a mutual revolt or defense.[113]

Model 2: An Iron II Origin of a Perceived Brotherhood.

In this model, Edomites and Israelites/Judahites would have come to perceive each other as kin due to Iron II political interactions between the established kingdoms.

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[113]This possibility might be especially significant in addressing the so-called "anti-Edom bias" of some biblical texts. If other Palestinian states where in league with Judah, and if one or more states *other than Edom* betrayed that league, what density or percentage of the Judahite population (as opposed to the political and military administrative powers) would perceive a betrayal of *kinship* expectations? Could betrayal from a member of a recent, ad-hoc and politically-driven general Palestinian league elicit from the Judahite population the same vehemence, when compared to an Edomite betrayal *both* of *ad-hoc* treaty terms *and* of an ancient kinship relationship? It seems unlikely that a betrayal devoid of a well-established and commonly-held sociological warrant among the general population would elicit the same vehemence as one that had such a warrant.

International political relations, subjugation, intermarriage, and overlapping economies and trade networks (see Chapter Three)[114] resulted in a perceived brotherhood between Judah and Edom. In this regard, the model is similar to Model 1, yet with a perceived ethnic kinship that emerged later. *The functional difference of this model from Model 1, above, is that some significant portion of the populations might not yet have accepted the sociological relationship that was becoming established through relatively recent geopolitical shifts and social interactions.* In general, however, the perceived kinship would be rather longstanding and commonplace by the sixth century and would result in concomitant expectations for promoting the wellbeing of the kinship group. For the purposes of this study, the model remains a viable option. The model may be subdivided in consideration of a possible treaty relationship emerging due to the Babylonian crisis.

Model 2A: an Iron II origin of a perceived brotherhood, no parity treaty. In this model, Edomites violated their "brother" during the Babylonian crisis. The kinship relationship, while emerging only during Iron II, came to be perceived as ancient. No expectations stemming from a treaty relationship between Edom and Judah were in effect by the time of the Babylonian crisis. The inappropriate activity of (or lack of support from) Edom during the demise of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. resulted in Judahite outrage over Edom's betrayal of perceived kinship expectations.

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[114]In brief, see Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 23–32, esp. 24–25, 30. Theoretically, once Edom established itself in what had formerly been Seirite and Esauite land, Edom became grafted onto genealogies of Esau (e.g., Genesis 36) and became further enmeshed in Israel's formative story.

Model 2B: an Iron II origin of a perceived brotherhood, parity treaty. In this model, Edomites violated their "brother" and treaty partner, a partnership that included specific expectations pertaining to the Babylonian crisis. The kinship relationship, while emerging only during Iron II, came to be perceived as ancient. The inappropriate activity of (or lack of support from) Edom during the demise of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. resulted in Judahite outrage over Edom's betrayal both of perceived kinship expectations, and of specific parity treaty expectations, such as provisions for a mutual revolt or defense.

Model 3: An Early Sixth-Century Origin of a Perceived Brotherhood.

In this model, Edomites and Judahites would *not* have perceived each other as kin prior to the sixth century despite a history of close contact throughout the seventh century (if not earlier). A treaty/covenant relationship emerged in response to the Babylonian crisis and extended the basis (perceived kinship) for concomitant social responsibilities between the two states. Through a recent covenant, Edom and Judah chose to function as family. With the Babylonian threat in its context, some pact of mutual defense and/or revolt was enacted. The extension of kinship across states provided the basis for the specifically identified concomitant responsibilities or terms (or "stipulations") of that treaty. Ancestral traditions were modified and resulted in an "ethnic kinship" tradition linking the two peoples. In that sociological worldview, the kinship would be effective as a means for mutual responsibility, yet that kinship would be newborn. In this model, the language of Esau and Jacob as brothers *would be direct evidence for the formation of an Edomite-Judahite treaty relationship in a context of the Babylonian crisis.*

This model suffers from several factors. If the event leading to the formation of a treaty is that evidenced in Jeremiah 27–28 (Zedekiah's council of Palestinian states),[115] why is Tyre, for example, not similarly attributed with a similar ethnic kinship? Of course, any mutual defense pact or parity treaty may have stemmed from negotiations other than that suggested by Jeremiah 27–28, negotiations specifically between Edom and Judah that are not evidenced in extant sources. Additionally, how can we accept a sixth-century origin for the kinship tradition as the most probable? After numerous generations of contact (cf. Chapter Three), could the Babylonian crisis be the *ad hoc* situation by which some form of Edomite-Judahite kinship *finally* came to be established? Given the frequency of covenants in the ancient Near East and the proximity of and economic interaction between Judah and Edom throughout much of the Iron Age, particularly Iron II (see Chapter Three), it is more likely that the states had engaged in formal, covenantal diplomacy prior to the sixth century. It would be rare and perhaps politically unwise for kings in proximity to avoid *for generations* any formal relations. The model remains an acknowledged possibility, yet has questionable viability.

Model 4: A Post-Babylonian Crisis Retrojection of a Perceived Brotherhood.

In this theoretical model, Judahites (Judeans) returned from exile to find Edomites (Idumeans)[116] surviving in formerly-Judahite land, notably in and around the Beersheba

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[115]Chapter Five will provide evidence for a council of Palestinian states such as that suggested by Jeremiah 27–28 (ca. 593 B.C.E.). Political counsel and positioning were very much important during the crisis; in brief, see Abraham Malamat, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Leo Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary L. Johnson; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 287–314.

[116]There is no reason to deny that a significant portion of the peoples who would come to be known as Idumeans were of Edomite ancestry. Edomites in the sixth century were one of several peoples operating in the Negev, and with the fall of Judah became the

Valley, after having lost their Transjordanian holdings by the beginning of the Persian period.   With concerns for the land of Israel, biblical compilers created the fiction of an ancient Edomite-Israelite kinship with Esau/Edom as the *rejected brother* in order to further Jewish geopolitical objectives. No kinship between Edom and Israel existed prior to the Babylonian crisis. Perhaps those returning from exile found that intermarriages and covenants between local Judahites remaining in the land and Idumeans had occurred, creating real, albeit recent, kinship relations and a sociological basis for mutual responsibility. Whether due to a hostile encroachment of Edomites during the Babylonian crisis or to a more peaceful influx of Edomites subsequent to Judah's collapse as a kingdom, Edomites were *eventually* viewed as kin. Whatever the historical case, the geopolitical aim of the returning Jewish elite would need to incorporate this brotherhood, which emerged subsequent to the fall of Judah in 586 B.C.E. into their political strategy. In order to provide a sociological warrant for the dispossession of Edomites from their recent territorial gains, biblical compilers retrojected further into antiquity a kinship relationship that would have emerged subsequent to the fall of Judah. In this model, Edom acted unbrotherly *before* Edom was a brother.

Although the formation of an ancient "kinship" tradition could make for effective geopolitical propaganda and could function as an additional fuel for the ire over Edom's real or imagined hostility during Judah's fall, the model has historical-critical weaknesses. As with Model 3, it does not take seriously what evidence there is for a

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sole polity with sufficient administrative, military, and logistical experience to capitalize on that fall (see Chapters Three and Four). It seems reasonable to conclude that "Idumea" reflects some local remnant population of the economic and political entity known as "Edom" in the sixth century. For another view, see John R. Bartlett, "Edomites and Idumaeans," *PEQ* 131 (1999): 102–114.

longstanding brotherhood. Egyptian topographical lists and what we can know of Shasu

culture suggest that the Shasu of Edom, Seir, and YHW(H) had crossed paths in the late

Bronze Age, exchanging offspring and stories. Intermarriage, foundational myths and

genealogical traditions would link the peoples together. Interaction zones and the similar

economy of these Shasu groups leave open the possibility of an ancient kinship

connection between early Yahwists and peoples of Edom and Seir. As Chapters Three

and Four will show, archaeological and epigraphic data suggest that Edomites and

Judahites also shared an interaction zone and often engaged in cooperative economic

endeavors during Iron II; state agreements between the kingdoms and intermarriages

could accentuate the kinship tradition. Given the available evidence, it is simpler to

suggest that the kinship tradition was established (if not longstanding) by the late seventh

or early-sixth century B.C.E. than to suggest that the kinship was a retrojected fiction

originating in the late sixth century (or later). Although Model 4 remains a theoretical

possibility, its viability is highly questionable.

Kinship Language: Evidence for an Edomite-Judahite Treaty?

Perceived kinship appears to have been sociologically basic to the formation of

expectations among political entities. The first two major sections of this chapter showed

that sufficient evidence exists to make the modest inference that many Edomites and

Judahites would have perceived each other as kin *prior* to the Babylonian crisis of the

sixth century B.C.E. The currently unanswerable question is how longstanding that

kinship tradition was. Even so, the perceived kinship would have *predated* the formation

of any Edomite-Judahite treaty or treaty update, such as mutual defense and revolt

clauses, emerging because of the crisis. The last major section showed that kinship

language was absolutely appropriate for treaty texts, yet, given the operative models on the origin of the brotherhood of Edom tradition (Models 1 and 2), a related point needs to be stated explicitly. Although references to the kinship of Esau and Jacob would be consistent with the language of treaties, such kinship language alone is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the existence of an Edomite-Judahite treaty relationship. Other evidence is necessary to support the thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E.

Looking Forward

With no less than four plausible models for reading Edom as "brother," (Models 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B) it is not surprising given the data currently available to see varied historical reconstructions of the origins of the kinship tradition and of Edomite activity at the time of the fall of Judah. If the present thesis of treaty betrayal is found to be defensible, then the four viable models summarized above may be reduced to two (Models 1B and 2B). Answering the question of the specific origin and date of the perceived brotherhood of Edom and Judah is outside the bounds of the current study. Definitive evidence is lacking. It is, however, reasonable (if not standard practice) to accept that the Edomite-Judahite kinship relationship predated the sixth century and that Edom would not have wholly denied that relationship. Of course, we have no data from Edom proper to support this view.

Judah and Edom were neighbors during Iron II, and it is reasonable that neighbors would have engaged in diplomacy from time to time. Political geography and economic concerns were likely part of the conversation, and diplomats from these neighboring kingdoms would have crossed their common border, evidently around the Beersheba

Valley during the early sixth-century B.C.E. An understanding of the political geography

of the Edomite-Judahite border and its economic value is necessary in developing the

thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal. To this task the study now turns.

CHAPTER THREE

The Edomite-Judahite Border: Archaeology and the Economic Incentive for Edomite
Control of the Beersheba Valley ca. 588 B.C.E.

Introduction

Biblical texts aside, the Arad ostraca comprise the greatest body of evidence

currently available for a reconstruction of specific events in the political and military

history of Edom and Judah in the first decades of the sixth century (see Chapter Four). A

discussion of the historical significance of these ostraca necessitates that the political

geography of the Edomite-Judahite border is taken into account. In part, this chapter

serves to provide a geopolitical context for such a discussion by presenting an

archeologically-informed reconstruction of the Judahite-Edomite border during the

Babylonian crisis. A related purpose of this chapter is to consolidate some information

related to an often-made suggestion that economic concerns were likely a key factor in

the history of Judahite-Edomite hostility.[1] Results will show that by the dawn of the sixth

century B.C.E. an economic incentive existed for control of the Beersheba Valley and the

Judahite Negev and that Edom was in geopolitical position to capitalize on the demise of

Judah at the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E.

The purposes of this chapter are encumbered by difficulties. The available data

do not allow a precise reconstruction of sixth-century trade passing through the Negev.

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[1]For a summary of the economy of Edom, see Ernst Axel Knauf-Belleri, "Edom:
The Social and Economic History," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your
Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 93–118. For
economic concerns as key to the history of hostility, see, for example, in the same
volume, Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 23–32, esp. 23; cf.
John Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom." *PEQ* 108 (1976): 23–39, esp. 30, 38.

(For the purposes of this study, the Negev is understood as the region northeast of the

Sinai peninsula, west of the ʿArabah, and encompassing the Beersheba-Arad Valley).[2]

Another difficulty is an acknowledged paucity of comprehensive overviews of the

geopolitics of Judah in the sixth century produced by specialists in archaeology.[3] Biblical

and historical studies improve with such studies. No doubt, anyone attempting a

presentation of the geopolitical borders in the Beersheba Valley during and subsequent to

the Babylonian destruction of Judah might subject themselves to severe criticism.[4] That

being said, attention will be given in this chapter to related archaeological data with

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[2]Cf. Steven A. Rosen, "Negev (Bronze Age)," *ABD* 4:1061.

[3]Cf. Albertz Rainer, review of Oded Lipschits, *the Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule*, *RBL* 06/2006 (2006). One study stands out, despite the fact that it is now quite dated due to the advances made in the archaeology of the Beersheba Valley during the 1990s: Lars Eric Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah* (Coniectanea Biblica 25; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987); Axelsson provides a site-by-site description of archaeological sites in the biblical Negev (Ḥorvat Qitmit, among other sites, is not mentioned; related publications apparently postdated this work). The volume provides a base bibliography for related discussion through the mid-1980s.

[4]See, e.g., Diana Edelman, review of Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule*, *RBL* 06/2006 (2006). Through her questioning of Lipschits' work on the geopolitics of the Beersheba Valley in the sixth century, Edelman identifies the difficulties that the paucity of relevant data produces. Consider, for instance, the following statements.

> It is hard to believe that the Neo-Babylonians would not have defined all the borders of the new province…. Lipschits has not adequately explained why the Neo-Babylonians would have changed the southern border of the former kingdom of Judah. …At the same time, it is not likely that the Persians would have needed to establish border forts between provinces; they were all part of the larger empire. …The placement of forts in the Judean hill country and Shephelah needs another explanation, however, since they are not located along such major roads. In addition, Lipschits needs to account for the Persian-era forts….[that] lie south of his alleged boundary but north of the Beersheba-Arad Valley. If these were within unclaimed land, or within the emergent province of Idumea, why were they needed?

Further findings may be required in order to answer these questions satisfactorily.

particular attention given both to Judahite fortifications in the Beersheba Valley and to Edomite influence in the Negev at the time of the final Babylonian assault on Judah.

Setting the Context: The Seventh Century and the Kingdom of Josiah

It is often difficult to discern from archaeology and terse biblical texts the specific military and political fallout from ancient Judah's international conflicts. The borderland between Edom and Judah ca. 588 B.C.E. is uncertain. Based on what we know, related key questions include the following. Were Edomites in *control* of the Negev south of the Beersheba Valley? Was the Negev merely within their cultural *range*? How far south could Judah exert political control? Did *cooperation* or *hostility* mark Edomite and Judahite relations prior to the Babylonian crisis or the early sixth century?

The last obvious biblical reference to Edomite-Judahite hostilities prior to the Babylonian crisis is from the Chronicler. The reference describes an Edomite victory over Judah during the Syro-Ephraimite conflict (ca. 734–732 B.C.E.),[5] nearly one and one-half centuries prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Judah diminished during the latter third of the eighth century, particularly due to Assyrian campaigns, but the extent and duration of

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[5]2 Chr 28:17; cf. 2 Kgs 16:5–6 (reading with the Qere). See, however, 1 Chr 4:41–43, which includes a patriarchic allusion and supposedly describes a Judahite invasion of Amalekite territory in the context of Hezekiah's rule. According to information from some biblical texts, Amalekites were of Edomite blood-relation and lived in the northern Negev, at least during the early Iron Age (see, e.g., Gen 36:10–12; 1 Sam 14:48–15:32; and 2 Sam 1:1). On the use of 1 Chr 4:41–43, compare Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. and ed. Anson F. Rainey; 2d ed. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 337. The historical value of this passage seems proportionate to its virtual lack of mention in the secondary literature pertaining to Edomite-Judahite relations. Bartlett (*Edom and the Edomites* [JSOT Sup. 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 44), for example, notes the verse's mention of Seir, but makes no mention of Hezekiah.

Judahite territorial losses is far from certain.[6] Edom's role in Judahite territorial losses at

the end of the eighth century is similarly uncertain. One ostracon from Arad, dated by

the excavator to the end of the eighth century, mentions an ill-defined Edomite "evil"

against Judah,[7] but the extent of Edom's capitalization upon Judah's hardship in the last

decades of the eighth century or during the seventh century remains questionable.[8]

The extent of the kingdom of Josiah concurrent with the retraction and collapse of

the Assyrian empire at the end of the seventh century B.C.E. is similarly a matter of

debate, and conclusions regarding the lasting extent of Josiah's political reach necessarily

affect how one understands the southern boundary of Judah during the Babylonian crisis.

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[6]Regarding Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and the uncertain extent of destruction, see Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 393; cf. Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1993), 727. Aharoni suggests that Arad was rebuilt quickly, which implies that if Manasseh inherited a Judah reduced to the small city-state of Jerusalem (so Ahlström, *Ancient Palestine*, 712–30) that restriction did not last long. If the Beersheba Valley was indeed lost, Judah would regain control of it. See also, e.g., Lynn Tatum, "King Manasseh and the Royal Fortress at Ḥorvat ʿUsa." *Biblical Archaeologist* 54 (1991): 136–45.

[7]See "Inscription 40" in Yohanan Aharoni and Joseph Naveh, *Arad Inscriptions* (trans. Judith Ben-Or; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), 70–74; "Arad 40: The Edomite Problem," translated by Dennis Pardee (*COS* 3.43L: 85). It is unknown to what the "evil" refers. Could it reference an Edomite assault against a Judahite position? Perhaps the reference is to Edomite capitulation to Assyria and its interests against Judahite rebellion; cf. n. 33 in the cited *COS* entry. The ostracon's date is questionable.

[8]N. Naʾaman ("Hezekiah's Fortified Cities and the *LMLK* Stamp." *BASOR* 261 [1986]: 5–24, esp. 13–14) argues for an extensive Edomite encroachment during the latter half of the eighth century. Relying heavily on 2 Chr 28:17, which describes an Edomite assault on Judahite holdings and the taking captive of Judahites and their property, Na'aman argues that in a surprise attack Edomites came into possession of portions of the Beersheba Valley during the Syro-Ephraimite conflict. The passage, however, does not suggest that Edomites *retained* any Judahite territory, but rather that Edomites were victorious in an *incursion* into Judah and "carried away" captives. For a seventh-century Edomite encroachment, see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "The Edomites in Cisjordan" in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. DianaVikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 33–40. The question is whether an Edomite encroachment had anything to do with Edomite "domination" or sustained hostility in the region.

It has often been maintained that the kingdom of Judah at this time experienced an expansion due to its ability to capitalize on a power vacuum in the wake of the Assyrian collapse.[9] According to this theory, this expansion is reflected in the description of Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 23) and the town-lists of the book of Joshua (e.g., 15:21–62; 18:21–28; 19:2–8; 19:40–46). One inscription from Arad (# 88) has been interpreted as describing a king of Judah (perhaps Jehoahaz) as coming to "reign in al[l Eretz-Israel],"[10] implying that the geographic extent of Judah remained considerable. Josiah's kingdom, however, may not have been as extensive as previously thought.[11] I will show, however,

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[9]E.g., Abraham Malamat, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah" in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Leo Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs and Gary L. Johnson; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 287–314; cf. the geographic extent of Josiah's Judah in Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, esp. 400–05 and map #33.

[10]Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 104–05. Contrast Y. Yadin ("The Historical Significance of Inscription 88 from Arad: A Suggestion," *IEJ* 26 [1976]: 9–14), who argues that the ostracon is a Judahite king's message that includes a relayed Hebrew transcription of an official Assyrian message pertaining to Asshur-uballit's ascent to the throne "in Cha[rchemish]," and a report that Egyptian forces will be passing through Judah. Aharoni describes Yadin's suggestion as "idle fancy." Aharoni's reconstruction of Josiah's empire may be too generous (see below); for this maximum extent of Judah under Josiah's reign, see Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, esp. 400–05 and map #33.

[11]See especially N. Naʾaman, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah." *TA* 18 (1991): 3–71; the prevailing view has come under significant criticism, particularly as more archaeological data is made available. Josiah's annexation of the (formerly Assyrian) province of Samaria would have been limited given likely Egyptian interests, activities, and allegiances. Similarly, westward expansion would have been halted by the sphere of influence of Gaza. The extent of an expansion to the south rests in part on how the Edomite assemblage from ʿEn Ḥazeva is interpreted and whether the site of Kadesh-Barnea was under Judahite control (see below). For related bibliography and discussion of Naʾaman's theory that Josiah's kingdom was geographically more limited than the prevailing view suggests, see Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 135–40.

that Judah at its twilight evidently remained influential in the south, particularly in regard to administrative control of trade passing into its southern frontier through the Negev.[12]

The geopolitical problem boils down to a question of Edomite and Judahite geopolitical "domain" and "range" in the Negev during the Babylonian crisis.[13] Where did the southern Judahite domain terminate? What was Edom's effective, political range? Was Edom in a geopolitical position to assist Babylon in Judah's destruction? How one interprets the data in regard to these factors determines in large measure the boundaries of Judahite and Edomite effective geopolitical power. In order to identify this critical frontier, a discussion of archaeological sites in the Beersheba Valley and in the Negev is necessary. Prior to turning to the two major purposes of this chapter (presentations of the economic incentive for control of the Beersheba Valley and of the geopolitics of the region during the Babylonian crisis), I provide the following map, which identifies major sites in Judah, the Negev, and Edom discussed in this chapter.[14]

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[12]According to Naʾaman ("The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," 48–49, 59) Josiah's "modest political and territorial achievements were wiped out by his death" and Judahite control of the extreme southern site of Kadesh-Barnea came under Egyptian control. Even if this last point is historically accurate, the Beersheba Valley, through which much trade funneled, remained Judahite (see below).

[13]Political "domain" may be defined as the territory under direct administrative and military control of a particular kingdom or people; political "range" may be defined as the limits of direct social, political, or military influence. In this sense, "range" is typically broader than domain, and a people's range may overlap regions under the administrative control or rule (domain) of another kingdom. Indirect influence could, of course, be felt outside a range. "Domain" and "range" appear to be implicit in the problem of Edomite encroachment into Judah; cf. discussion of the scholarly dispute related to the extent of an Edomite presence in the Beersheba Valley in Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 141.

[14]The map is a composite of information gleaned from a variety of sources. For ancient roads and trade routes, see Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 203; James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Harper Collins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991),
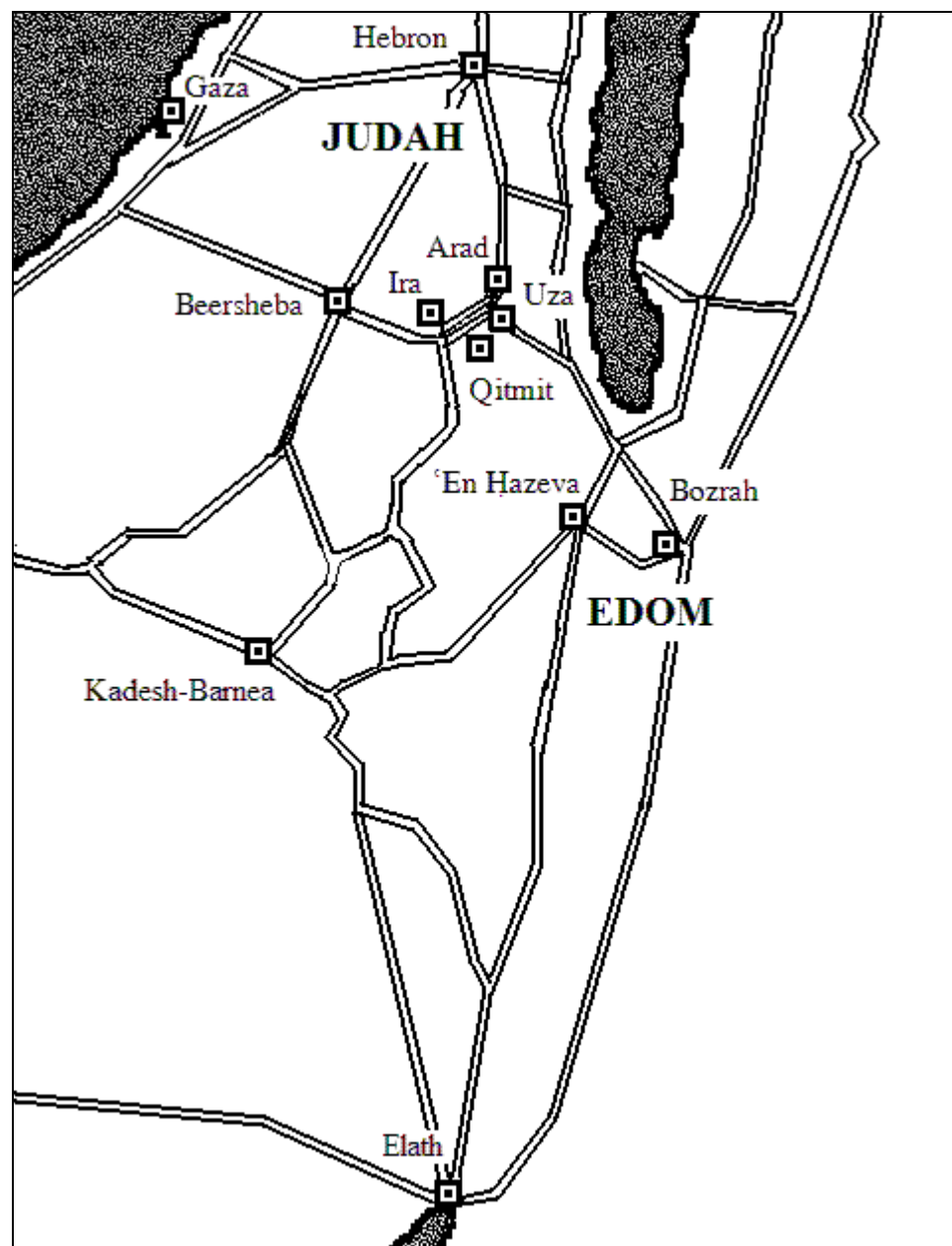
Figure 3.1 Map of Edom and Southern Judah

35, 37 and Barry J. Beitzel, "Roads and Highways (Pre-Roman)," *ABD* 5:780. For roads, fortresses, and Judahite territory see also Yohanan Aharoni, "Forerunners of the Limes: Iron Age Fortresses in the Negev," *IEJ* 17 (1967): 1–17, esp. 10 and Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 401–04. Compare also Beit-Arieh, "The Edomites in Cisjordan," 40. On the Beersheba-Arad Valley focus of the trade routes, see also Lily Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community in Southern Arabian Long-Distance Trade in the Eighth Century B.C.E." *Tel Aviv* 26 (1999): 3–75, esp. 10. Road and site locations should be considered approximate.

The Economic Incentive for Edomite Control of the Beersheba Valley

In describing one of the trade routes stemming from Arabia (the Elath-Maʿān-ʿAmmān-Damascus route), Israel Ephʿal states succinctly how geopolitical struggles of Palestinian states were related to the economic value of controlling regional trade routes.

> The three trade centers fed by this artery were Gaza, Tyre and Damascus. There is no doubt that the wars in Transjordan were in great degree fomented by the huge revenues and the politico-economic status resulting from control of this route.[15]

Providing an accurate estimate of the specific sixth-century trade goods and their quantities, however, is currently impossible for a number of reasons. Much of our information for the Arabian trade moving through the Negev toward the Mediterranean coast is from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Records pertaining specifically to such trade in the seventh–sixth centuries are sparse. Archaeology has provided some data, yet much of the trade from Arabia was perishable and nearly all of it would have been destined for locales other than the Negev; caravaneering itself leaves few material remains.[16] In light of these problems, and with the caveat that an economic "incentive" for Edomite treaty betrayal is essentially supplementary to the primary objective of the historical reconstruction of this study (Edomite treaty betrayal), this section will only survey the economic potential of the Beersheba Valley. In doing so, however, it

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[15]Israel Ephʿal, *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on the Borders of the Fertile Crescent 9th-5th Centuries B.C.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 15; for a description of the numerous trade routes from Arabia, see especially pp. 12–17.

[16]See I. Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe: The Archaeology and History of the Negev, Sinai and Neighbouring Regions in the Bronze and Iron Ages*; Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology 6 (ed. A. Bernard Knapp; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 139. Ethnographic data suggests, for example, that south Arabian packing materials (typically straw and leather)—like many of the goods packed with them—are of a perishable nature; see Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 53 with bibliographic reference.

deliberately expands the statement that economy was a key issue in Judahite-Edomite hostility.

Given the problem in reconstructing sixth-century trade in the Negev due to perishable trade goods and transportation materials, this section provides an overview of the relevant available data. With some reference to the increasing importance of the domesticated camel, the first section surveys the information found in biblical texts pertaining to the southern trade. This survey sets the context for the discussion of the importance of trade in the region, exemplified by a presentation of eighth-century Beersheba and Antigonus Monophthalmus' fourth-century campaigns against Nabataea. These two centuries and their valuable Negev trade serve as bookends to the sixth-century problem and, by way of temporal analogy, evidence an economic incentive for control of the Negev and the Beersheba Valley during the sixth century B.C.E.

Biblical Texts Suggesting a Wealth of Trade Passing through the Negev

Tradition states that in the time of Solomon, gold of Ophir, precious stones, incense, and other exotic goods, were imported to Elath at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba.[17] With Tyrian assistance,[18] some of this trade arrived via maritime endeavors.

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[17] 1 Kings 9:26–28; 10:11, 22; cf. 2 Chr 8:17–18; 9:10. Apart from the arrival point of the goods from Ophir, namely Elath, biblical texts give little indication of Ophir's location apart from a southern orientation due to its goods entering Solomon's realm through the Red Sea port. 1 Kings 22:48 reports that Jehosaphat attempted similar maritime endeavors, but his fleet did not travel due to its destruction (נשברו אניות; reading with Qere) at Ezion-Geber. The cause of the fleet's demise is unknown. Possibilities include their running aground, being wrecked by storm winds, and, given the mention of Edom in 22:47, having been sabotaged by Edomites. For this latter possibility in particular, see C.H. -S Moon ("A Political History of Edom in the Light of Recent Literary and Archaeological Research" [Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1971], 173).

[18] 1 Kings 10:11; cf. 1 Kgs 22:48.

The Chronicler expands the list of goods David accumulated for purposes of temple-building.[19] Some texts would have us believe that a spice trade was operative well before the eighth century,[20] when caravaneering increasingly made use of domesticated camels.[21] Trade was no doubt funneling through the port at the Gulf of Aqaba by this time, and the Negev would see a variety of goods moving toward distant clearinghouses and markets. Amos 1:6, which describes trade between Philistia and Edom, and which may pertain to the eighth century,[22] suggests in a manner not unlike Obad 14 that precious cargo included humans. None of these texts, however, necessarily pertain to the trade of sixth century, despite the reasonable inference that a similar variety of trade goods would have moved through the Negev at that time as well.

Ezekiel 27, a proclamation against the Phoenician city of Tyre, includes the fullest, single biblical list of trade goods ostensibly pertaining to the sixth century. Beginning with verse 16, we find a register of trade goods and trade centers, many of which have a southern orientation.

> [16] Edom did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. [17] Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minnith, millet, honey, oil, and balm. [18] Damascus traded with you for your abundant goods-- because of your great wealth of every

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[19] 1 Chr 29:1–4.

[20] E.g., Exod 30:34–35; cf. Isa 60:6.

[21] See especially J. Resto, "The Domestication of the Camel and the Establishment of the Frankincense Road from South Arabia," *Orientalia Suecana* 40 (1991): 187–219; Mario Liverani, "Early Caravan Trade between South Arabia and Mesopotamia," *Yemen* 1 (1992): 111–15.

[22] It is often considered that Amos underwent a sixth-century redaction. For a defense of an eighth-century authorship, see Shalom Paul, *Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), esp. 7–30.

kind-- wine of Helbon, and white wool. [19] Vedan and Javan from Uzal entered into trade for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for your merchandise. [20] Dedan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding. [21] Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you. [22] The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged for your wares the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious stones, and gold.[23]

If the list is an historically-reliable account of the types of goods stemming from points with an orientation south and southeast of Tyre, then we can safely assume that many of these types of goods were channeled through the Beersheba Valley. As has been suggested, the Judahite fortifications may reflect a vested interest in protecting the flow of these goods. During times of regional political stability, administrators of the fortifications would have had relatively high access to a wide variety of commodities, valuables, and exotic goods. In short, biblical texts support the position that an economic incentive existed by the sixth century B.C.E. for control of the Beersheba Valley and the Judahite Negev.

Analogous Evidence: Eighth-Century Beersheba and Nabataea in the Hellenistic Period

Tel Beersheba: An Eighth Century Trade Gateway. The site of Tel Beersheba, an administrative center rather than destination market for the goods traversing the valley,[24] never recovered as a principal administrative center subsequent to its destruction at the close of the eighth century.[25] Paralleling the references to trade in the texts described

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[23]The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

[24]For discussions, see Z. Herzog, "Beersheba," *NEAEHL* 1:167–73; "Beersheba," *OEANE* 1:287–91; Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 3–75.

[25]Beersheba seems to have been the primary administrative center of the valley prior to the seventh century. Tel ʿIra and Tel Arad would subsequently take on the administrative role once held by Beersheba; see Z. Herzog, "Tel Beersheba," *NEAEHL*

above, finds from the site are indicative of a much and many trade goods.[26] Because

Beersheba is severely diminished in the seventh century, the economic importance of the

site cannot be directly applied to a reconstruction of the economic incentive for control of

the valley at the dawn of the sixth century,[27] for which we have little extra-biblical

evidence apart from the fortifications themselves. What is applicable, however, is its

reflection of the developing regional and international trade moving through the Negev

and the Beersheba valley.

As a waystation along the trade route from Arabia to Gaza and the Mediterranean

coast, the city of Beersheba provided caravan support services in the eighth century. The

ceramic assemblage reflects Judahite control, yet the percentage of non-Judahite type

vessels is significant. Nearly sixteen percent of the ceramics reflect a non-Judahite style

(i.e., coastal, Egyptian, Edomite, etc.), and the fact that nearly all of these vessels appear

to be of local manufacture suggests that cultural contacts were such that a diverse

population was incorporated various pottery styles into the local economy.[28] Such

"international" contact reflected by the comparative analyses of Beersheba's ceramic

assemblages is exemplified by one exceptional piece, a locally-made clay hermaphroditic

centaur related to the Iron Age II Cypriote conception of centaurs and unique for Iron

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1:171; and Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir*, 11–12. Beersheba apparently did not recover after 701 B.C.E.; see Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 58.

[26]Cf. Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," esp. 57–58.

[27]For an overview of the cultural contacts represented by various finds, see Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," esp. 9–10; 30–44.

[28]Cf. Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 12–13, 32, 37–38.

Age Judah.[29] The find is suggestive of at least sporadic, indirect Cypriot contact with

Judah, and might be associated with the Kittim known from the Arad ostraca and some

biblical texts.[30] Along with the hundreds of other figurines more typical of the region,

this and other finds from Beersheba reflect an increase in the valley's trade contacts. The

prosperity of the Beersheba Valley at the close of the eighth century continued with the

increase in Arabian trade (under Assyrian auspices) moving through Palestine during the

seventh century. Beersheba would not survive as the valley's "gateway" for trade into

the seventh century, yet as the second major section will show, concurrent with a

developing trade economy during the late eighth and seventh centuries is the emergence

of a number of new administrative sites in the Edomite heartland, in the Negev, and along

the Beersheba Valley.

Tel Malḥata in the central Beersheba Valley might be the best candidate for the

new "gateway" for trade in the valley during the late seventh and early sixth century

B.C.E. In addition to the smaller scale weights found at the site is a heavy weight (1450g)

that is both indicative of an economic activity transcending "local needs" of a town in the

Negev and appropriate for large-scale traders and administrators.[31] The weight is also

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[29]R. Kletter and Z. Herzog, "An Iron Age Hermaphrodite Centaur from Tel Beer Sheba, Israel," *BASOR* 331 (2003): 27–38.

[30]Kletter and Herzog, "An Iron Age Hermaphrodite Centaur," esp. 35, which references bibliography on "Kittim" as possibly reflective of "Kition" of Cyprus; the debate concerns whether the Kittim were mercenaries or traders, and, if the former, whether they would have been in service to Egypt or to Judah. The position that they were specifically traders is less likely; see also Chapter Four.

[31]The weight is of the type that would be used in the weighing of precious metals, such as silver; consider a statement of Raz Kletter and I. Beit-Arieh ("A Heavy Scale Weight from Tel Malhata and the Maneh [Minah] of Judah," *UF* 33 [2001]: 245–61, esp. 252–53):

appropriate for weighing ore and precious metals. Raz Kletter and I. Beit-Arieh ask

whether the weight can be related not only with international trade, but also with a

"strong Edomite presence" at Malḥata due to Edom's metallurgical industry.[32] This find

helps to reinforce the suggestion that subsequent to the demise of Tel Beersheba and

during the late Iron II Malḥata might have become the "gateway community"[33] of the

valley. The archaeological evidence from Tel Malḥata might reflect this shift of

economic gateways, but relevant material remains from the early sixth century are sparse.

A more obvious prosperity may be seen in Nabataea, the kingdom that inherited the

heartland of Edom in subsequent centuries and, as ancient texts attests, benefited

magnificently from the lucrative trade moving through it.

Nabataea and Trade in the Hellenistic Period. By the Nabataean period, from

which we have far more data for regional trade than from the sixth century, a lavish

stream of goods traversed the Negev region. Spices, jewels, metals, bitumen, silk, and

exquisite rarities passed through the region formerly vied over by Judahites, Edomites,

and other regional powers.[34] We see more than a continuity of trade and the economic

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The local population of Malhata, whether pastoralists, farmers, soldiers or local commanders, would have little need for a 1450g weight in transactions within the community. The monthly wage of a hired labourer in the ancient Near-East was about one Shekel, but workers received goods rather than Silver, since barter was the common form of transaction. Most commodities, such as grain, wine or oil, were measured and traded by volume—not by weight…

[32]Kletter and Beit-Arieh, "A Heavy Scale Weight," 253.

[33]See Kletter and Beit-Arieh, "A Heavy Scale Weight," 253; cf. Piotr Bienkowski and Eveline van der Steen, "Tribes, Trade, and Towns: A New Framework for the Late Iron Age in Southern Jordan and the Negev," *BASOR* 323 (2001): 21–47, esp. 37.

[34]For an overview of Nabataean trade and its vast trade networks, see David F.Graf and Steven E. Sidebotham, "Nabataean Trade," in *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City*

value of southern Cisjordan and southern Transjordan from the eighth century to the Nabataean period; we see an expansion. Hellenistic kingdoms and, eventually, the Roman Empire held a keen interest in securing benefits from that trade. A glimpse into that future might support the suggestion that an economic incentive existed in the early sixth century for control of the Beersheba Valley.

Much trade passed through Nabataea due to its control of the caravan routes from South Arabia to the west.[35] By the late fourth century, Greeks sought increased control of the Indian spice and Arabian incense trade moving upon the dangerous Red Sea shipping lane, despite its rough coasts and piracy.[36] By this time, Nabataean Petra was already one of the great caravan cities and clearinghouses of the ancient world.[37] Writing in the first century B.C.E., Diodorus Siculus describes fourth-century Nabataeans as primarily nomadic and pastoral, yet with robust trade networks stretching from India to

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of the Nabataeans (ed. Glenn Markoe; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 65–73, especially 65–67, which includes a map of Nabataea's impressive trade networks.

[35]M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 1243–44; Graf and Sidebotham, "Nabataean Trade," 65–73.

[36]Red Sea maritime trade was in its relative infancy during the sixth century B.C.E. In 515 B.C.E., a Persian expedition commissioned by Darius was sent down the Indus River and to the Red Sea, establishing a modest maritime cinnamon route from India as far as the Suez. For a brief description, see Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 70. According to Strabo (*Geography*, 2.3.4 (98–99), during the rule of Ptolemy VIII (ca. 120 B.C.E.) a lost Indian sailor from a wrecked Indian vessel made his way to Egypt via the African side of the Red Sea. Nursed to health, he piloted an expedition over open water to India. A portion of Indian gems, spices, and cosmetics was subsequently diverted out of the hands of Arab (and Nabataean) re-exporters; cf. Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 167–69.

[37]Gerrha, in Arabia was also increasingly important. Seleucia near Babylon and Palmyra would eventually rival these; see Rostovtzeff, *Economic History*, 1247.

Africa.[38] Nabataean hands transferred frankincense, myrrh, unguents and perfumes,

cosmetics, dyeing materials, spices, precious stones, and (re-exported) pearls, silk, and

cotton.[39] The Dead Sead bitumen trade provides a good example of the economic value

of the region. By the fourth century B.C.E., if not earlier, the industry was developing in

earnest, and caravaneers conveyed bitumen shipments to Egypt through the Negev.[40] The

resource was requisite in many Egyptian embalming processes,[41] and was a valuable

Egyptian import for waterproofing, cement, tacking agents, medicines, amulets,

obliteration materials (ink erasers), imitation gems, paints and varnishes, and was used

for coloring metals.[42] The wasteland appearance of the region belies its value.

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[38]Diodorus 19.94–97. Strabo's description of a vast civilization with intensive agriculture and stone houses (that is, a non-nomadic civilization) dates to the beginning of the Christian era (see Strabo, *Geography* 7.309, 341–43, 351, 355, 367, 369). For this later civilization, see Nelson Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins: The Story of the Nabataeans* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965); see also Glenn, Markoe, ed., *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataeans* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003).

[39]Rostovtzeff, *Economic History*, 1245.

[40]See especially, Philip C. Hammond, "The Nabataean Bitumen Industry at the Dead Sea," *BA* 21/2 (1959): 40–48; Avraham Negev, "Avdat: A Caravan Halt in the Negev," *Archaeology* 14 (1961): 122–130 and Avraham Negev, "The Early Beginnings of the Nabataean Realm," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 125–133, esp. 132;

[41]For discussion of the importance of bitumen in Egyptian mummification processes, see Diodorus 19.99 and Hammond, "The Nabataean Bitumen Industry," 40–48.

[42]Hammond, "The Nabataean Bitumen Industry," 43–44. The yearly tax due to Cleopatra from the Nabataean bitumen industry alone was 200 talents (p. 48, n. 62); see also Josephus, *Ant.* 16.11; *J.W.* 1.13; ancient sources attest that a mass of bitumen as great as 10,000 square feet would occasionally be released from the bottom of the Dead Sea; see Diodorus 19.98–99 (cf. 2.48); cf. also Josephus, *J.W.* 4.8.4 (481).

By 312 B.C.E., one of Alexander's successors, Antigonus Monopthalmus, was in a geopolitical position to attempt control of this wasteland.[43] With his kingdom stretching from portions of the Greek mainland, through Asia Minor, and unto Gaza (a main clearinghouse and market for the Arabian trade; see Pliny 12.32, 63), Antigonus sent two campaigns against Nabataea (Diodorus 19.94–100). The campaigns, however, were disastrous and resulted in tremendous expenditures, catastrophic losses due to surprise attack, and few economic rewards.[44]

The question for the current study is as follows. *Why did Antigonus side-step his conflict with Ptolemy I by committing large forces to a conflict with Nabataea?*[45] It is clear that Antigonus aimed at a self-sufficient, robust economy, and his holdings and

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[43]Aegean support for Antigonus as a good-intentioned unifier of Alexander's empire was increasing; see F. W.Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981), 50–52. A letter from Antigonus to the Greek states discovered at Skepsis seems to legitimate Antigonus' intentions of Greek liberty; for discussion with a favorable conclusion, see Richard A. Billows, *Antigonos the One-Eyed and the Creation of the Hellenistic State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 132.

[44]See Diodorus 19.94. The region is conducive to surprise and ambush. Alexander Jannaeus of Judea (103–76 B.C.E.) felt it necessary to attack the Nabataeans, yet somehow, his entire army was lost; see Josephus, *J.W.* 1.90 and *Ant.* 13.375; see also the collection of stories in Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, esp. 315–17; and those in W. Stewart McCullough, *The History and Literature of the Palestinian Jews from Cyrus to Herod* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1975), 134–37.

[45]The incentives for the Nabataean campaigns may be undervalued in the study of history. According to Diodorus Siculus (19.94.1), Antigonus determined that the Nabataeans were contrary to his plans (κρίνας γὰρ τὸ ἔθνος τοῦτο τῶν ἑαυτοῦ πραγμάτων ἀλλότριον εἶναι), and set a force of four-thousand six hundred against Nabataea with the goal of acquiring their livestock. How they were contrary is not made explicit. Perhaps significant for determining Antigonus' motivations, Diodorus Siculus (19.100.1) reports that Antigonus "rebuked" (ἐπετίμησεν) his son, Demetrius, for making terms with the Nabataeans after the second campaign, but praised him for finding sources of revenue, namely the bitumen, palm, and balsam of the area of the Dead Sea.

access to resources in the eastern Mediterranean attest to this aim.[46] It is likely that the

Nabataean campaigns (as well as a later Dead Sea bitumen endeavor)[47] were components

of an Antigonid attempt at economic supremacy. Antigonus failed. His kingdom

contracted, and with his death at the Battle of Ipsus (301 B.C.E.), his once great holdings

were parceled out by the kingdoms of the anti-Antigonid alliance. Had Antigonus been

successful, the Antigonids would have controlled vast resources and the economy of the

eastern Mediterranean, and would have been economically positioned to be victorious in

the so-called "War of the Successors" (ca. 323–283 B.C.E).[48] As the Nabataean campaign

began, Antigonus Monophthalmus was nearing domination of the eastern Mediterranean.

Postponing as he did his advance against an inferior Ptolemy, we can infer that Antigonus

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[46]Two examples should suffice. First, from inscriptional data (see Billows, *Antigonos*, 289), we know that exports exceeded imports in his territory, and with control of Asia Minor, Syria, and (at various times) Cyprus, his grain exports actually rivaled that of Ptolemy's Egypt. Second, Ptolemy needed the cedar trees of Syria in large measure for fleet-building; Antigonus controlled the land and sea passages to this source, and had more access to Macedon and its pine forests than did Ptolemy (see Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners*, 138). In 315 B.C.E., the Antigonids undertook a massive naval building program, setting off the greatest naval arms race in ancient history (Diodorus 19.58.1–6). By 312 B.C.E., most of the resources needed for naval domination were in Antigonus' control.

[47]The Antigonid bitumen industry was thwarted by some six-thousand Arabs in a massive Dead Sea marine (raft) assault; see Diodorus 19.100.2.

[48]Some works suggest that the successors abandoned for selfish reasons Alexander's dream of an intermingled world; see, e.g., Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, esp. 115, and, concisely, Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 1:13–15. If there was one successor who envisioned a reunification of Alexander's empire, it was Antigonus Monophthalmus; cf. Graham Shipley, *The Greek World after Alexander: 323-30 BC* (London: Routledge, 2000) 44; Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 15. Commenting on Philip V, Polybius (*Histories*, 5.102.1) states that the house of Antigonus (notably Antigonus and his son and grandson), more than any other house, aimed at universal dominion; see also F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981), 47.

envisioned a tremendous economic incentive in control of Nabataean lands. Had he succeeded, a (re)unified Greek kingdom was within sight.

Tel Beersheba in the eighth century, Malḥata in the late Iron II, biblical texts, and the analogy of Antigonus' fourth-century campaigns against Nabataea attest to the wealth in the wilderness. Astute regional opportunists and profiteers in the early sixth century, whether individual or national, whether Judahite, Edomite, or otherwise, could comprehend committing vast resources in a high-stakes attempt to secure greater benefits from the Negev trade passing along caravan routes connecting Egypt, Gaza, and Arabia and entering the wasteland via maritime endeavors channeled into the Gulf of Aqaba. There should be little doubt that both Judah and Edom saw an economic incentive for control of the Negev ca. 588 B.C.E. An important question is whether Edomites were in geopolitical position to act on such an incentive.

The Political Geography of the Biblical Negev
at the Start of the Sixth Century B.C.E.

Early Sixth-Century Judahite Fortifications in the South

From Arad to Kadesh-Barnea: a line of Judahite fortifications? Excavators of the Judahite sites of Arad and Kadesh-Barnea have proposed that a line of Judahite fortifications stretching from Arad to Beersheba existed into the sixth century. The principal excavator of Arad suggests that these fortifications served, in part, as waystations for Judahite supply and control of portions of the Negev.[49] Arguably, this

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[49]Yohanan Aharoni, "Forerunners of the Limes: Iron Age Fortresses in the Negev," *IEJ* 17 (1967): 1–17; generally, see also Amahai Mazar, "Iron Age Fortresses in the Judean Hills," *PEQ* 114 (1982): 87–109.

line of waystations is the biblical "Way of the Spies" (lit. "Way of the Footprints") by which early Israelites supposedly reconnoitered Canaan (Num 13; 14; and, esp., 21:1).[50] Excavations at Kadesh-Barnea suggest that the site operated under Judahite control until the end of the First Temple period,[51] despite the pressures of the Babylonian empire. In short, excavators have suggested that Judah retained operational control over these sites, and, accordingly, over some stretch of the Negev.

The long reign of Manasseh and the biblical description of the reign of Josiah have been used as evidence for dating the Judahite resurgence into the Negev.[52] As we have seen, however, the lasting effects of Judahite resurgence under Josiah are questionable. Whether Kadesh-Barnea remained a Judahite site until the final Babylonian assault ca. 588 B.C.E. is important for determining Judah's southern border.[53] Had it already fallen from Judahite hands into Egyptian or Assyrian control?[54] Was the rectangular fortress *ever* Judahite?[55] Kadesh-Barnea occupies a strategic position along a road leading to the southeastern Mediterranean and bypassing the Beersheba Valley (see

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[50]So Z. Herzog, *et al.*, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," *BASOR* 254 (1984): 1–34.

[51] M. Dothan, "The Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea," *IEJ* 15 (1965): 134–43 and Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 145, 150, note 25. No evidence is provided that necessitates Kadesh-barnea's destruction during Nebuchadnezzar's 589-86 campaign against Judah.

[52]See Herzog, *et al.*, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," 25–26.

[53]So Aharoni, "Forerunners of the Limes," 1–17; cf. also Dale W. Manor, "Kadesh-Barnea," *ABD* 4:2–3; Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, esp. 144, 152.

[54]For Egyptian control, see Naʾaman, N. "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," 48–49; for Assyrian, see Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 140, citing D. Ussishkin, "The Rectangular Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea" *ErIsr* 24 (1993):16 [Hebrew]; see following note.

[55]D. Ussishkin, "The Rectangular Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 118–127; see also below.

Figure 3.1, above). Accordingly, the amount of Judahite administrative influence over the trade moving through the Negev is determined in part on whether it controlled the site. If Judah held Kadesh-Barnea, then a line of Judahite fortifications from Kadesh-Barnea to Arad would monitor the major Negev trade routes heading to the Mediterranean from southern Transjordan[56] apart from the one most southern, which runs west from Elath through the Sinai and may have seen increased use during times of political turmoil within the Palestinian states.[57] If Kadesh-Barnea was not destroyed until the Babylonian assault on Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E., then it seems reasonable that waystations running between Arad and Kadesh-Barnea would have similarly remained under Judahite operational control until the fall of Judah. Alternatively, if Kadesh-Barnea was not Judahite, it would be one stop along a route to the Mediterranean effectively bypassing Judah. If such were the case, Kadesh-Barnea would most likely be under Egyptian control during the early sixth century.

Accepting the view that Josiah's kingdom did not include Kadesh-Barnea,[58] David Ussishkin has suggested that the fortress was not a Judahite construction.[59] Due in part to the pottery assemblages having late Judahite characteristics and found beneath destruction debris, Ussishkin considers Kadesh-Barnea to be an Assyrian-initiated and ultimately Egyptian-controlled fortification garrisoned by allied Judahite soldiers.[60] The

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[56]See *Figure 3.1*; cf. Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 10.

[57]On this possibility, see Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, 152–53; Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 5.

[58]I.e., that of Naʾaman, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," 3–71.

[59]Ussishkin, "The Rectangular Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea," 118–27.

[60]Ussishkin, "The Rectangular Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea," 126.

significance for the Negev trade economy is that if Kadesh-Barnea was Egyptian-controlled yet Judahite-garrisoned, little revenue from trade taxation would likely be funneled to Judah. Obviously, the previous two decades have seen a number of positions.

In this study, no determination is made as to who retained operational control of Kadesh-Barnea ca. 588 B.C.E. No doubt Judahite control of Kadesh-Barnea would result in greater revenues for that kingdom. If we accept that Kadesh-Barnea survived until the final Babylonian assault, then two basic options remain. Either Judah controlled a line of fortifications stretching from Kadesh-Barnea to Arad or the line of Judahite fortifications did not stretch deeply into the western Negev, which would have been under relatively greater Egyptian control. In short, Kadesh-Barnea was either within the domain and operational control of Judah or under Egyptian operational control. In either case, the Beersheba Valley would remain economically important for trade.

A Problem with Judahite ʿEn Ḥazeva? During the seventh through sixth centuries B.C.E., ʿEn Ḥazeva was a small fort (or caravanserai) that replaced a rather large and fortified Judahite administrative village in the eastern Negev. Protecting trade and trade routes, the fortress occupies a strategic location at the intersection of four major roads: east to Edom; south to the Red Sea port of Elath; west to the central Negev; and north to the Beersheba–Arad Valley and Jerusalem.[61] ʿEn Ḥazeva includes outside its walls a cult site that is probably Edomite, the assemblage of which shows striking similarity with that

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[61]Cf. Rudolf Cohen, "The Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," *BA* 57 (1994): 203–15, esp. 212; Rudolf Cohen and Yigal Yisrael. "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," *BA* 58 (1995): 223–35, esp. 230. The site might be that of biblical Tamar (1 Kgs 9:18; Ezek 47:18–19; 48:28).

of Qitmit at the southern rim of the Beersheba Valley.[62] According to the site's

excavators, Stratum V of ʿEn Ḥazeva is certainly Judahite,[63] but some questions remain

as to whether Stratum IV (dated to the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth)

should be understood as Judahite. The excavators, among others, suggest the possibility

that it was Judahite and remained so into the sixth century.[64] It is argued that the orderly

dismantling of the cult site may be attributed to the reforms of Josiah carried out in 621

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[62]See Cohen and Yisrael. "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," 223–35; "Smashing the Idols: Piecing Together an Edomite Shrine in Judah," *BAR* 22:4 (1996): 40–51; see also Pirhiya Beck, "Ḥorvat Qitmit Revisited Via ʿEn Ḥazeva." *Tel Aviv* 23 (1996): 102–14.

[63]The large fortress of this stratum lead Rudolph Cohen to suggest that it was a strategic deployment center for invasion of the Transjordan, and may have served such a purpose in the retaliatory campaign against Mesha of Moab (2 Kgs 3:4–15; cf. Mesha Stele); see Cohen, "The Fortress of ʿEn Ḥaseva," 212. Uncertainty remains as to what event or conflagration resulted in the destruction of the large Stratum V site; for possibilities, see Rudolf and Yisrael. "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," 231–32; see also discussion to follow.

[64]Cohen and Yisrael, "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," 223–24; so also, e.g., Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, esp. 144; see also 107, 139, 146, 153. Ziony Zevit (*The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* [London: Continuum, 2001], 149) argues that ʿEn Ḥazeva was an Edomite cult site under *Judahite* military control. He acknowledges that a Judahite Ḥazeva would be in "enemy" territory at the twilight of Judah but likens the situation to a "chessboard in which a strategically stable position may be maintained." Supplying the fortress would be a logistical nightmare if the site was *both* Judahite and in *enemy* territory. A more complex understanding of the ethnic makeup of the region during the *Pax Assyrica* and prior to the Babylonian crisis in Palestine could tolerate a view that a cooperative relationship could have existed among a Judahite military presence, Edomites, caravaners, and regional pastoralists; on this possibility, see Bienkowski and van der Steen. "Tribes, Trade, and Towns," esp. 38, 41. This conclusion, however, might not apply to Stratum IV, particularly if this portion of the Judahite-controlled Negev was lost ca. 597 (cf. Jer 13:19; see also J. M. Myers, "Edom and Judah in the Sixth–Fifth Centuries B.C," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* [ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971], 377–392). For the possibility that Edom was allowed to keep its Negev acquisitions due to Edomite support of Assyria during Sennacherib's invasion, see Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine*, 715, 721, and the caution of 727.

B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 22–23 and 2 Chronicles 34–35).[65] Thus, according to the excavators, a *Judahite* military presence existed in the eastern Negev and in immediate proximity to an Edomite cult site.

If the inference of the excavators and others that Stratum IV is Judahite may be shown to be questionable, then one may consider the possibility that Edom was in operational control of the site. The excavators rely on sparse Stratum IV pottery remains and biblical texts pertaining to Josiah's reform in order to suggest that ʿEn Ḥazeva was Judahite with an associated Edomite cult site at its perimeter.[66] The biblical texts pertaining to Josiah's reform should be examined in regard to this designation. Specifically, the excavators relate the dismantling of the cult site to the information found in 2 Chr 34:3–7. This passage however, does not suggest that reforms were carried out south of the ancestral lands of Simeon (i.e., around the Beersheba Valley region).[67] Moreover, 2 Kings 23:8 identifies the territory affected by Josiah's despoiling of high

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[65]See esp. Cohen and Yisrael, "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaṣeva," 223–35; cf. Cohen and Yisrael, "Smashing the Idols," 40–51.

[66]The provided ceramic evidence consists of a jar and two juglets found in one of the fort's towers; see Cohen, "The Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaṣeva," 208–09; cf. Cohen and Yisrael, "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaṣeva," 223–24. Are the juglets and jar definitively *Judahite*? Each of these shows similarities with Edomite pottery from Umm el-Biyara and/or Buseirah dated to the eighth-sixth centuries. Compare these wares with the pottery drawings provided by Piotr Bienkowski, "The Date of Sedentary Occupation in Edom: Evidence from Umm el-Biyara, Tawilan, and Buseirah," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), 99–112, esp. 103 (#s 20, 25, and 28); cf. also Liora Freud and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Chapter Four: Pottery," in *Horvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev* (ed. Itzhaq Beit-Arieh; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), 209–57, esp. 217 with references to figures and bibliography.

[67]Admittedly, Simeon does not appear to have a discernable "boundary," yet the cities included within Simeon's territory (Josh 19:1–9) reflect Judah's southernmost territory; see Sharon Pace Jeannsonne, "Simeon" *ABD* 4:26.

places as encompassing from Geba (in northern Benjamin) to Beersheba. From the data

provided by 2 Kings 23 (and 2 Chronicles 34 for that matter) *there is no reason to*

conclude that biblical evidence indicates any locale south of Beersheba as a site of

Josianic reform and high place dismantling. The definitively Judahite and large Stratum

V miniaturized into the nebulous Stratum IV. This much seems certain. Yet the

excavators' argument about the controlling polity of Stratum IV becomes rather circular:

Josiah carried out reforms; Ḥazeva used to be Judahite; Ḥazeva had a high place

(showing affinities with Edom); the high place was dismantled in an orderly manner;

thus, Josianic reforms were responsible for the sixth-century dismantling of ʿEn Ḥazeva's

Edomite cult site. Given the weakness of the Josianic reform argument in explaining

Stratum IV and given its diminished size and Edomite association relative to Stratum V,

there is very little that commends a conclusion that Judah controlled the site in the early

sixth century. Rather, it is more likely that ʿEn Ḥazeva Stratum IV was *not* within the

Judahite domain.[68] Logically, the same could be said of the immediate region of the

Negev and of the ʿArabah.

ʿEn Ḥazeva Stratum IV might be Edomite. The excavators themselves consider

the possibility that the destruction of Stratum V might be attributable to a possible eighth-

century "Edomite takeover" of the region (cf., e.g., 2 Kgs 16:6; 2 Chr 28:17–18; perhaps

Amos 1:6, 11).[69] The takeover would have included both Elath (the important port center

for maritime trade reaching the region though the Gulf of Aqaba) and ʿEn Ḥazeva (the

strategic administrative center at a convergence of trade routes just west of the ʿArabah).

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[68]See also Naʾaman, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," 48–49; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 140.

[69]Cohen and Yisrael, "The Iron Age Fortress at ʿEn Ḥaseva," 231–32.

Additionally, the entire ʿArabah south of the Dead Sea would reasonably be within the Edomite domain. Thus, *Edom would be afforded a logistical foothold in the Judahite Negev and would acquire administrative oversight of international trade moving through southern Cisjordan by way of the Red Sea port of Elath and by caravaneers traversing the ʿArabah from points east or west.* In sum, an eighth-century Edomite campaign to secure the ʿArabah might help explain the diminished size of ʿEn Ḥazeva Stratum IV, its Edomite ceramic assemblage, and the increasing Edomite influence perceivable from artifactual remains in the Beersheba Valley dated to the seventh through sixth centuries.

ʿEn Ḥazeva shall be revisited during the discussion to follow on the Edomite cult site of Ḥorvat Qitmit at the rim of the Beersheba Valley. What we can infer is that during the sixth century ʿEn Ḥazeva was *within the range of Edomites.* Given the questionability of Judahite control of ʿEn Ḥazeva Stratum IV, given its associated Edomite cult site, and given the evidence for an eighth-century Edomite campaign against Judahite sites in the south, it is quite plausible that Judah lost operational control of ʿEn Ḥazeva as early as the eight century. For the purposes of this study, ʿEn Ḥazeva is outside the domain of Judah by the early sixth century and within the range, if not domain,[70] of Edom as early as the eighth century.

The Beersheba Valley in the Twilight of Judah. Judah was geopolitically significant at its twilight, particularly in regard to its economic oversight of the trade-rich southern frontier. The Judahite southern border was dotted with a line of fortifications stretching from just west of the Dead Sea through the Beersheba Valley and deeper into

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[70]For an unelaborated and tentative suggestion that Edomites controlled the Stratum IV fortress, see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, ed., *Ḥorvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), 310.

the Negev, perhaps as far as Kadesh-Barnea. Prior to incorporating particular sites in the

Beersheba Valley into the discussion, consider the following map.[71]
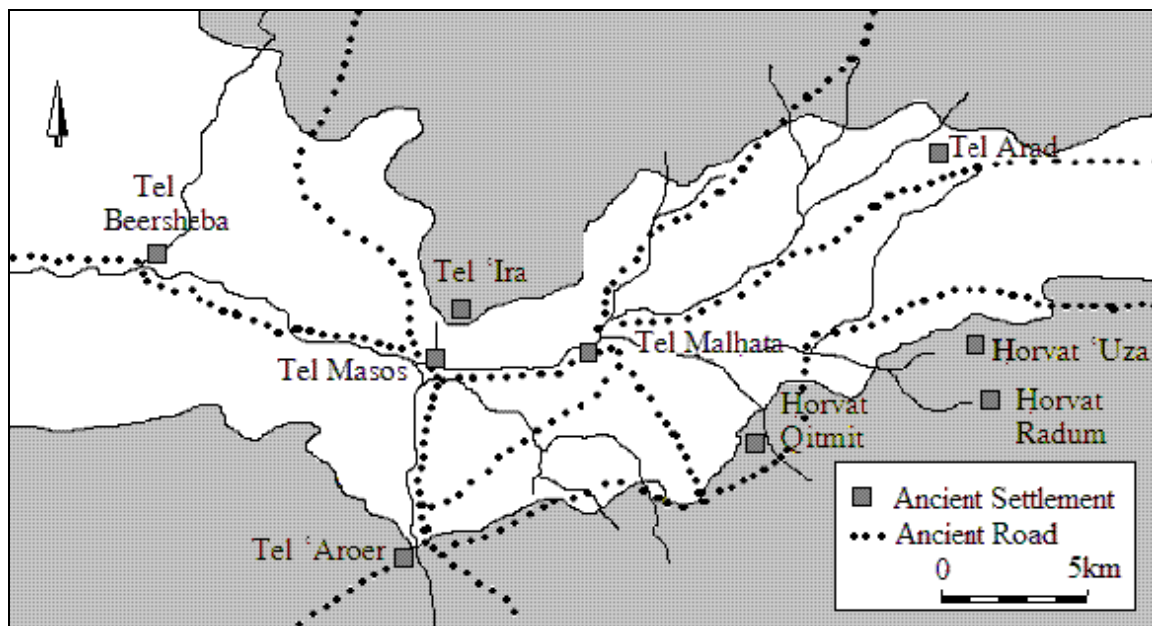
Figure 3.2 Map of the Beersheba Valley

Tel Beersheba, known from biblical texts as one pole of ancient Israel (e.g., Josh

20:1; 1 Kings 5:5), appears to have been little more than a village at the end of the

kingdom of Judah.[72] It is often considered that in 701 B.C.E Sennacherib's campaign

caused the site's downfall.[73] The valley's namesake seems to have been of minor

[71]For this map, see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, ed., *Tel ʿIra: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999), 5; see also bibliography for *Figure 3.1*, above.

[72]Yohanan Aharoni, *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel: From the Prehistoric Beginning to the End of the First Temple Period* (trans. Anson F. Rainey; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); 253–66; Z. Herzog, "Beersheba," *OEANE* 1:286.

[73]See, however, N. Naʾaman ("*LMLK* Stamp," 5–24, esp. 13), who argues that Sargon II might be responsible for the destruction of Beersheba. Yigel Yadin ("Beer-Sheba: The High Place Destroyed by King Josiah," *BASOR* 222 [1976]: 5–17) argues that

importance during the period in question. In order to describe the Judahite domain in the Beersheba Valley during the sixth century, brief mention of several Judahite sites is necessary. These sites will again be taken into account in the discussion of epigraphic data in Chapter Four.

As numerous ostraca from the Judahite fortress of Arad communicate, the site was a chief administrative center of the region. Arad in the early sixth century had significant storage capabilities and was a dominant military fortification of the region, which helps explain the "broad powers" given to its military commanders.[74] Two strata are of relevance to this study, Stratum VII (middle to late seventh century) and Stratum VI (early sixth century). The cause of the destruction layer of Stratum VII is disputed. Yohanan Aharoni, suggested that the destruction should be dated to ca. 609 B.C.E., that is, at the time of Josiah's supposedly military confrontation with Egypt and subsequent Egyptian interference in the dynastic succession of Judah by the crowning of Jehoiakim as an Egyptian protégé.[75] This suggestion is doubtful according to his co-excavators writing a few years after his death. They suggest that Stratum VII was destroyed as part of a "softening-up" operation by Nebuchadnezzar ca. 597 B.C.E.[76] The date of the destruction of Stratum VII has relevance for the historical context of the Arad ostraca. If

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the high place of Beersheba was destroyed by Josiah, indicating that a functioning city was in place toward the end of the seventh century.

[74]For a discussion on the powers of the commanders and a description of the formidable fortifications of Arad, see Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 141–43. For defensive characteristics of the fortifications, see Z. Herzog, "Arad: Iron Age Period," *OEANE* 1:174–75. See also Chapter Four.

[75]Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 149.

[76]Herzog *et al.,* "Fortress at Arad," 26.

Aharoni's date is followed, the destruction of Stratum VI may pertain to the events of 597

B.C.E. If the date of his co-excavators is followed, Arad continued to exist as an

administrative and military center until Nebuchadnezzar's campaign of 588–586 B.C.E.

In short, Arad Stratum VI and many of its ostraca might pertain to the final days of the

kingdom of Judah. Citing no evidence other than the Arad 24, Obadiah, and Psalm 137,

these excavators suggest that "it is most likely that Arad Stratum VI was destroyed by the

Edomite invasion of the Negev at the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judah…."[77]

Unfortunately, none of the evidence (including Arad 24) *directly* connects Edom with an

assault *on Arad*. Just as reasonably, Babylonian forces might have destroyed Arad,

although there appears to be no evidence for this apart from a fitting context.[78] Further

evidence is required if the party responsible for Arad's destruction is to be identified.[79]

Tel ʿIra, situated at the northern edge of the Beersheba Valley, is considered by

the principal excavator as the largest and most strongly defended Judahite fortified town

in the region.[80] The site appears to have taken over some of the administrative functions

of Tel Beersheba subsequent to its demise. Commanding the heights north of the central

Beersheba Valley, Tel ʿIra was terminally destroyed early in the sixth century B.C.E. Tel

ʿIra overlooked Tel Masos, which is situated at a confluence of trade routes. The artifacts

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[77]Herzog *et al.,* "Fortress at Arad," 29.

[78]Cf. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 144.

[79]Chapter Four shall argue that Edom was responsible for the fall of Arad; Miriam Aharoni ("Arad: The Israelite Citadels," *NEAEHL* 1:82–87), without suggesting the perpetrators, argues that these forts were taken by surprise, that Stratum VII was destroyed at the end of the seventh century, and that Stratum VI was destroyed at the end of the First Temple period.

[80]Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, *Tel ʿIra*, 2, 177.

and structures suggest that Tel Masos was a fortified caravanserai under Judahite control, and a short list of goods uncovered reveals its context of international trade: Phoenician ivory art and bichrome vessels, Philistine and so-called "Midianite" ware, fragments of Egyptian "flowerpots," and abundant copper work.[81] The excavator concludes that Tel Masos was destroyed during an Edomite conquest at the beginning of the sixth century.[82]

Similarly, the Judahite site of Tel ʿAroer is situated upon an ancient crossroad (in particular an ancient road linking the King's Highway of the Transjordan and the Mediterranean coast),[83] and has the artifacts and structure sufficient to suggest international trade contacts and significant seventh century prosperity.[84]

Defending the southeast approach to the valley was Ḥorvat ʿUza, a Judahite border fort upon the heights just south of the valley and overlooking the wadi Qinah [Kinah],[85] which stretches to the Dead Sea. The approach might be the northern stretch of the biblical "Way of the Wilderness of Edom" (2 Kgs 3:8). Approximately two kilometers south of Ḥorvat ʿUza is Ḥorvat Radum, a fort that guarded the road running

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[81]See Volkmar Fritz, "Tel Masos: A Biblical Site in the Negev," *Archaeology* 36, no. 5 (1983): 30–37 and "Masos, Tel," *OEANE* 3:437–39. Arabian trade may have influenced the size and wealth of Tel Masos; see I. Finkelstein, "Arabian Trade and Socio-Political Conditions in the Negev in the Twelfth-Eleventh Centuries B.C.E." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 47 (1988): 241-252; Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 6.

[82] See Volkmar Fritz, "Tel Masos: A Biblical Site in the Negev," *Archaeology* 36, no. 5 (1983): 30–37 and "Masos, Tel," *OEANE* 3:437–39.

[83]David Ilan, "ʿAroʿer," *OEANE* 1:211–12.

[84]See Avraham Biran, "Aroer (in Judea)," *NEAEHL* 1:89–92 and Ilan, "ʿAroʿer," 1:212.

[85]See Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "ʿUza, Ḥorvat," *NEAEHL* 4:1495-97 and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh and Bruce Cresson, "Ḥorvat Uza: A Fortified Outpost on the Eastern Negev Border," *Biblical Archaeologist* 54 (1991): 126–35.

along the wadi Qinah. This small fort, may have served as an advance lookout post for

Ḥorvat ʿUza.[86]

These fortifications show that the Beersheba Valley was under Judahite control, *at least* in an arc from ʿAroer to ʿIra to Arad to Radum. Qitmit and, perhaps, Malḥata aside (see below), the Beersheba Valley was within the domain of Judah. Again, this frontier arc of Judahite domain may have stretched (if only by Egyptian toleration) to Kadesh-Barnea until the final Babylonian assault on Judah (ca. 588–586 B.C.E.). Although ʿEn Ḥazeva was evidently lost from the Judahite domain, it may have remained within the range of the Judahite economy. Despite this lost staging area for political control further south and east, it is significant that all trade routes into the Negev would yet pass through centers under Judahite administration as represented by the arc of Judahite fortifications from Kadesh-Barnea in the southwest through the Arad-Beersheba Valleys. Negev caravaneers seeking Mediterranean ports would avoid Judahite operational control only by stealth or by skirting south and then west from Elath into Sinai. If these fortifications survived until the Babylonian assault ca. 588–586 B.C.E. (see Chapter Four), then the *southern* holdings of the last Judahite kings remained *economically* (if not territorially) impressive despite the reevaluation of Josiah's supposed expansion. When trade routes are taken into account, Judah maintained a significant geopolitical domain in 588 B.C.E.

Late Seventh- and Early Sixth-Century "Edomite" Sites in the Beersheba Valley.

The question remains as to the amount of discernable Edomite influence in the Judahite Beersheba Valley. Two sites in or upon the rim of the Beersheba Valley deserve mention due to their significant Edomite contexts. The first is the cult site of Ḥorvat

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[86]Beit-Arieh, "ʿUza," 4:1254–55.

Qitmit in the southeastern margin of the valley.[87] It includes two cult areas, numerous

and diverse cultic artifacts, and evidence of Qos veneration (the chief Edomite deity).[88]

Dated to the late seventh through early sixth century,[89] the one-period site has been used

as evidence of Edomite encroachment—if not control—of portions of the Judahite

Negev. The question is whether these Edomite material remains suggest Edomite

political *domination* of or cultural *influence* in adjacent regions.[90] The lead excavator,

Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, notes that an "unequivocal explanation" of Qitmit's geopolitical

situation is not yet possible, and offers the following "plausible interpretation."

> By seizing certain Judahite-controlled areas in the eastern Negev, Edom at last
> was able to satisfy its generations-old ambition to expand its territory westwards.
> The fact that Ḥorvat Qitmit was located within an area of contemporary Judaean
> settlements could imply that these settlements were captured by the Edomites,
> *who now effectively dominated the region.* The archaeological evidence indicates
> that these events occurred just prior to, or a few years after, the destruction of
> Jerusalem.[91]

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[87]There are some discrepancies between some "Edomite" cultic pottery types
from Qitmit with the pottery types known from the Edomite heartland. The position that
these discrepancies suggest that the population at Qitmit was a "sub-group" of Edomites
(i.e., Amalekites) has been noted (Zevit, *Religions*, 148–49, and n. 42), but has little
support, especially as non-cultic pottery types found at these sites and elsewhere in the
valley show a strong similarity to known Edomite styles in the heartland.

[88]Analysis reveals that the pottery, much of which is of Edomite design, was of
local manufacture. No evidence of destruction of the architecture by human hands has
been found, although the site is quite weathered, resting as it does upon the wind-swept
southern ridge overlooking the Beersheba Valley; see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, ed., *Ḥorvat
Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995),
2, 189–90, 280, and 285.

[89]Beit-Arieh, *Ḥorvat Qitmit*, 303.

[90]Cf. J. Andrew Dearman, "Edomite Religion. A Survey and an Examination of
Some Recent Contributions," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother:
Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars
Press, 1995), 119–136, esp. 131.

[91]Beit-Arieh, *Ḥorvat Qitmit*, 314 (emphasis mine).

Considering Qitmit to be Edomite and dating the origins of the site to the period of the

Assyrian retreat at the end of the seventh century requires that one consider Edomites to

be in operational possession of a cult site at the border of Judah in the early sixth century.

Edom would have encroached unto the Beersheba Valley *prior* to the final Babylonian

assault on Judah. To be sure, Beit-Arieh resists the conclusion that this site reflects a

hostile Edomite presence—saving that determination for a discussion of two ostraca, a

Judahite one from Arad (# 24) and an Edomite one from Ḥorvat ʿUza, dated to the

Babylonian crisis and its aftermath, respectively.[92] In this reconstruction of the

geopolitics of the valley, Edomites were in previously-Judahite territory and established

an Edomite cultic site at the frontier of Judahite domain and Edomite range.

This view of Edomites in the Judahite Negev in the late seventh century, however,

has received important criticism. Israel Finkelstein has argued that Edomites could not

have had the political power in the late seventh century to establish a cult site at Ḥorvat

Qitmit—indeed the site might not reflect an architectural status worthy of being

designated a "state enterprise." [93] According to Finkelstein, the eclectic nature of the

Qitmit findings and the various populations engaging in pastoral nomadism and/or

traversing the Negev for reasons of trade better marks Qitmit as a shrine for wayfarers

and local Arabs rather than one principally of and for Edomites.[94] In this interpretation,

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[92]Succinctly, see Beit-Arieh, *Ḥorvat Qitmit*, 311; see also Itzhaq Beit-Arieh and Bruce Cresson, "Horvat Uza: A Fortified Outpost on the Eastern Negev Border," *BA* 54 (1991): 126–135. For discussion of these important ostraca, see Chapter Four.

[93]I. Finkelstein, "Horvat Qitmit and the Southern Trade in the Late Iron II," *ZDPV* 108 (1992): 157.

[94]I. Finkelstein, "Horvat Qitmit and the Southern Trade," 156–70; cf. *Living on the Fringe: The Archaeology and History of the Negev, Sinai and Neighbouring Regions*

the site served the cultic needs of a diverse population, including Arabs, Edomites, Judahites, and Phoenicians, as seen in the "cultural mélange" of the finds at Qitmit and elsewhere in the region.[95] The Judahite fortifications of the time (which for Finkelstein included ʿEn Ḥazeva) suggest that Judah would have had political oversight of the region.[96] For Finkelstein and others, the site reveals Edomite *contact*, not *domination*.[97] In this understanding, Qitmit is far outside Edom's domain, yet within its cultural range.

Reviewing the problem as to whether Ḥorvat Qitmit is an Edomite enterprise or merely reflects Edomite influence, Pirhiya Beck has dismissed Finkelstein's argument that the eclectic nature of the assemblage at Qitmit assists in a determination that Qitmit was a wayfarers' shrine and not principally Edomite.[98] In this view, the diverse population and trade of the region suggest that one should expect the finds to reflect

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in the Bronze and Iron Ages, Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology 6 (ed. A. Bernard Knapp; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 139–44.

[95]I. Finkelstein, "Horvat Qitmit and the Southern Trade," 166.

[96]Succinctly, see Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, 144.

[97]Discussing the "Edomite" ceramic styles found in the northern Negev, Finkelstein (*Living on the Fringe*, 140–41), writes

> "The 'Edomite' ceramic tradition could be passed with Edomite people who settled in southern Judah, as well as by trade or as the result of slow cultural expansion. The fact that 'Edomite' pottery was found as far west as Tel Haror and Tel Seraʿ in the northwestern Negev shows that *its presence does not necessarily indicate direct Edomite political domination*" (emphasis mine).

We might compare Finkelstein's position with that of John R. Bartlett ("Edomites and Idumaeans," *PEQ* 131 [1999]: 102–14, esp. 105–06; cf. *Edom and the Edomites*, 143).

[98]Pirhiya Beck, "Ḥorvat Qitmit Revisited Via ʿEn Ḥazeva." *Tel Aviv* 23 (1996): 102–14. It is also noteworthy that 83% of the cooking pots found at Qitmit are of Edomite type, and that the sand ingredient in these vessels most probably came from Transjordan in Central Edom; see Liora Freud and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Chapter Four: Pottery," in *Horvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev* (ed. Itzhaq Beit-Arieh. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), 254 –55 with bibliographic reference.

eclecticism, as is perceivable in other Levantine cultic art.[99] Comparing the finds at

Qitmit with those from ʿEn Ḥazeva and Edom, Beck has reinforced the determination

that Qitmit is to be designated appropriately as Edomite, yet Beck cautions against

concluding that an Edomite site necessitates Edomite political control.[100] Given Beck's

caution as to the relationship between Qitmit and the Beersheba Valley fortifications and

the criticism of Finkelstein's reconstruction, it more likely that Qitmit was an Edomite-

administered cult site in the early sixth century.

Finds at Tel Malḥata, an ancient trade center in the heart of the Beersheba Valley,

also suggest an Edomite presence. Cultic ware utilized at Qitmit may have been

produced at Malḥata.[101] Approximately one-quarter of the pottery found from the

stratum dated to the late seventh through early sixth centuries is considered "Edomite,"

and is of the same type as that found in Umm el-Biyara and Tawilan in Transjordan;

personal names on ostraca from Malḥata also testify to contact with Edom.[102] Significant

for determining the ethnicity of the labor force at Malḥata are the cooking pots of its

destruction layer. *These were entirely of the Edomite type*.[103] These and other finds from

sixth-century Malḥata suggest that it was under significant Edomite influence—if not

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[99]Beck, "Ḥorvat Qitmit Revisited," 112.

[100]Beck, "Ḥorvat Qitmit Revisited," esp. 102, 112.

[101]Beit-Arieh, *Horvat Qitmit*, 310.

[102]An international aspect to the site is also suggested by the decorated jug in the East Greek style found at Malḥata; for the personal names and other noteworthy finds, see Kochavi, "Malḥata, Tel," *NEAEHL* 3:936.

[103]Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Tel Malḥata," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 18 (1998): 106–07. These pots of Edomite type are "in contrast to the ceramic assemblage of the earlier stratum (8th century BCE), where all the cooking pots were of Judean type" (107).

under Edomite control—by the time of its destruction.[104] The *controlling* ethnicity of Tel

Malḥata, however, is disputed.[105] Given the fact that Judahite fortifications arc around

Tel Malḥata from Ḥorvat Radum and Ḥorvat ʿUza to the east, Arad to the northeast, and

the stronghold of Tel ʿIra to the west, it is quite likely that Judah was in a geopolitical

position to control the site politically and militarily. Whether Judah did so (i.e., whether

Malḥata was functionally within the Judahite domain) is less certain, but Judah would

likely have resisted the stationing of non-Judahite military detachments at Malḥata (or

elsewhere in the Beersheba Valley), unless those detachments were authorized by Judah's

overlord (Assyrian, Egyptian, or Babylonian) or by agreement with Judah. While the

matter of domain is disputable, yet with a ceramic assemblage suggestive of an Edomite

presence, it is reasonable that Malḥata was, like Qitmit, within the Edomite range.

The Beersheba Valley: Judahite Domain and Edomite Range, a Summary.

Mostly setting aside the problem of Kadesh-Barnea and concluding that ʿEn

Ḥazeva was no longer Judahite by the dawn of the sixth century, the reconstructed

geopolitical situation is as follows. Tel Malḥata and Ḥorvat Qitmit evidently represent

territory within the range (but probably not domain) of Edomites in the Beersheba Valley

region. A simple explanation is that Qitmit and Malḥata are suggestive both of the limits

of Judahite and Edomite political control and of cooperation (or at least toleration) of

each other in economic enterprises. If these were within the Edomite *domain* by the end

of the seventh century, where is the evidence for an Edomite military presence? Where

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[104]Beit-Arieh, *Tel ʿIra*, 3.

[105]See Moshe Kochavi, "Malhata, Tel," *ABD* 4:487-88 and Moshe Kochavi, "Malḥata, Tel," *NEAEHL* 3:935–36; these works do not make a determination about the controlling ethnicity of the site in the seventh-sixth centuries.

are Edomite *fortifications* protecting its domain so far from the Edomite heartland? The

diminished ʿEn Ḥazeva? If that was indeed Edomite at the time, it is quite far removed

from the Beersheba Valley. The Edomite sites and interests in the Negev evidently relate

to trade rather than hostility. An Edomite "incursion" or "expansion" into the Judahite

Negev might have followed upon *an eighth-century*, Judahite retreat from the south

following the Assyrian crisis, a retreat that might have been exacerbated by Edomite

campaigns against Elath and, perhaps, ʿEn Ḥazeva.[106] The situation is uncertain, yet it

might be best to restrict the *domain* of Edom to the regions encompassed by Edomite

Transjordanian holdings, Elath, and ʿEn Ḥazeva. As the kingdom of Edom was a

significant player in the trade moving through the region, it is reasonable that we might

find a depot showing significant Edomite influence (Malḥata) and a nearby cult center

(Qitmit) for those Edomite traders, wayfarers, and caravan-guardians (among other

guests) so far from their heartland, families, and temples. These sites might reflect the

Edomite socio-economic (Malḥata) and religious (Qitmit) stations at the end of the

Edomite leg of the south Arabian trade circuit through the Negev and toward the

Mediterranean. International caravans entering the Beersheba Valley would subsequently

be transferred under the protection of administrators in the Judahite domain.

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[106]Cf. the suggestion of I. Beit-Arieh (*Horvat Qitmit*, 310), in a summary of the historical geography related to the finds at Qitmit:

> If further excavation at Ein Ḥatṣeva clarifies the character of the latest fortress as Edomite and the connection of the Edomite cult place to this phase, this will provide a settlement linkage between the land of Edom and the northern Negev. An Edomite fort at this location (either built by the Edomites or a resettled Judahitie fort) would control an important segment of the Aravah road and would constitute additional evidence for Edomite presence in the region at the end of the Iron Age.

In the interest of maintaining some oversight of the lucrative (and burgeoning) trade passing through the Negev from Arabia, Edom, and elsewhere, Judah developed during the seventh century a boundary along the most passable valley in the Negev that provided direct access to the Mediterranean, the Beersheba valley.[107]   Despite the loss of ʿEn Ḥazeva, this frontier arc—which marks the south-central and southeastern limits of the Judahite domain—might have retained for Judah significant profits from the Negev trade routes, particularly if Kadesh-Barnea (the southwestern limit?) remained under Judahite control. Apart from the most southern route skirting west into Sinai, all of these routes eventually passed through *Judahite* domain.

The following figure visually presents this summary of the geopolitical situation as it pertains to Judahite domain and Edomite range.
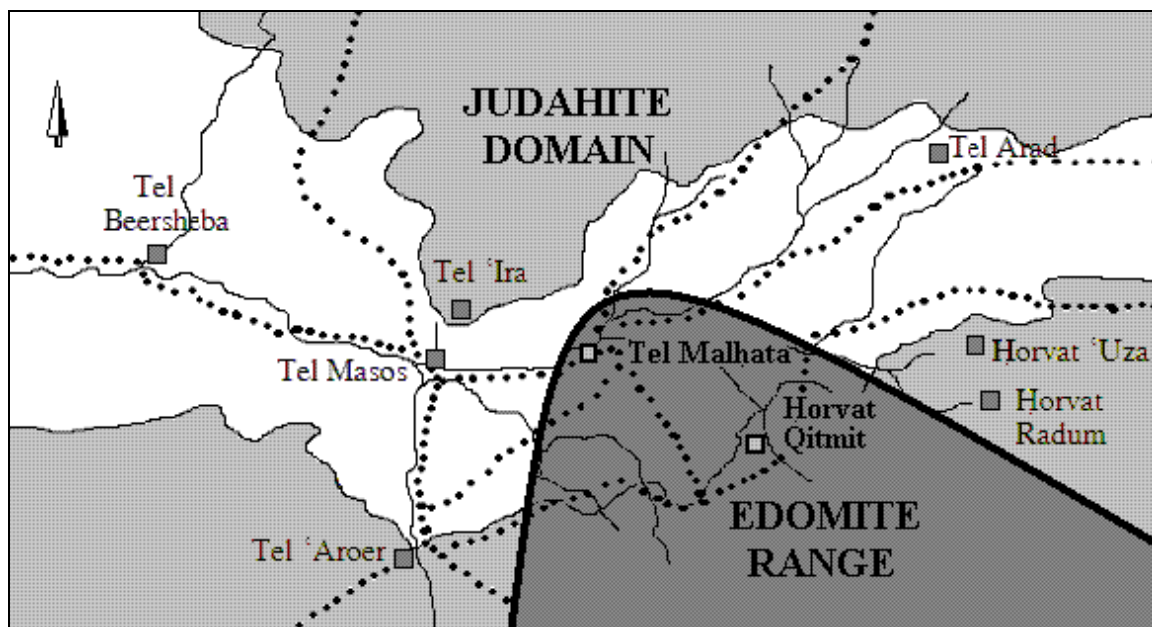
Figure 3.3 Judahite Domain and Edomite Range at the Dawn of the Sixth Century

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[107]Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 10.

How are we to understand the relationship among the surge in Judahite fortification-building during the seventh century, Edomite military activity against Judah, and the burgeoning regional and international trade passing through the Judahite Negev? Itzhaq Beit-Arieh has gone so far as to say that "the fortifications…can plausibly be attributed to Judahite-Edomite hostility at a time when Assyria…was diverting its major strength toward Egypt [i.e. the mid-seventh century B.C.E.]."[108] Certainly, these fortifications could serve to inhibit further Edomite incursions, but their *existence* at this time does not necessitate that any Edomite-Judahite "hostilities" took place.   Indeed, we do not have evidence of Edomite hostility against Judah in the seventh century.[109] The seventh century appears to have been a time of relative peace between Judah and Edom, and was no doubt a time of lucrative trade. The facts on the ground question the view of a *hostile* Edomite advance toward or encroachment upon Judah during the seventh century and prior to the Babylonian crisis. What we see is Edomite influence: a possible (though rather distant) military foothold in the Negev at ͑En Ḥatzeva, a cultic site at Qitmit, and an economic association in Malḥata.

It appears entirely possible that during the seventh century Edom and Judah (along with Arab caravaneers and, to some extent, local pastoralists and agriculturalists) were not engaging in hostilities but in an economic cooperative of trade-route facilitation and contribution. A mutually-beneficial trade economy was emerging, from which Assyria skimmed a lion's share (directly through taxation and indirectly through the

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[108]Beit-Arieh, *Tel ͑Ira*, 2–3.

[109]Cf. Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 27–29 and Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah* (AB 24d; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 53–54.

reception of tribute). Edomites, Negev pastoralists, Arab caravaneers, and others were probably mostly reliable trade partners bringing goods from the spice lines of Arabia, the Red Sea port at Elath, the Dead Sea Region, and the metal-working facilities throughout the ʿArabah. Questioning the assumption that the Edomite presence was generally hostile appears appropriate.[110] The fortifications might help deter an invasion, but their more regular function was not to fend off national assaults, but to protect, administer, and benefit from trade.[111] A critical point of disagreement, as I see it, does not exist in the nature of seventh-century Edomite-Judahite relations, but in how Edom acted during the Babylonian crisis in respect to those recognized and rather long-standing relations. What seems clear from the archeological data is that Edom had a foothold in the Negev and an established history of and ability in gleaning economic rewards (along with Judah) from trade route enterprises under an imperial aegis.

Conclusion: Edom's Geopolitical Position and Economic Incentive for Hostility

Trade caravans passing through a monitored domain could expect to yield a percentage of their value for the right of passage. Building upon significant trade connections known from earlier centuries, a remarkable and expanding trade network was developing through the Negev by the seventh century. This expansion of trade network capabilities might have been facilitated by a dramatic seventh-century increase in the number of camels used for the transporting of goods and with the introduction of superior

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[110]Finkelstein ("Horvat Qitmit and the Southern Trade," 158) states in this context, "the finds from the Judahite Negev do not provide any hard evidence for a political Edomite domination in the region." Cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 141–42; more recently, Bartlett ("Edom and Idumea," 113) has suggested that the kingdom of Edom did not have the political power to be aggressive in the Judahite Negev.

[111]Compare precisely Bartlett, "Edom and Idumea," 105.

pack saddles.[112] Indeed, camels were becoming increasingly prized both as a resource

and as the targets of marauders.[113] If Malḥata was within Edomite range and ʿEn Ḥazeva

was adjacent to or within its domain, then could not Edom have been involved in the

camel caravans, perhaps as the paid escorts of caravans moving toward the Beersheba

Valley from the ʿArabah? "Edomite" cult sites at Qitmit and ʿEn Ḥazeva could serve as

worship spaces for Edomite merchants and caravan escorts operating at the fringe of the

Edomite domain and away from their homeland cult centers in the eastern ʿArabah and

the Edomite plateau. Through Edom's cooperative ventures with caravaneers, Judahites,

and others engaged in the lucrative south Arabian trade network, *the kingdom of Edom*

had gained logistic, economic, and military experience in the Negev by the dawn of the

sixth century.

The ensuing question for the current study is, of course, how Edom *used* this

experience during the Babylonian assault ca. 588–586 B.C.E. In a fascinating footnote,

Oded Lipschits suggests that peoples other than the Babylonians may have been

responsible for some of the destruction in southern Judah.

> The Babylonians concentrated their efforts on Jerusalem and also destroyed the
> forts on Judah's western border, but it is doubtful that they had an interest in

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[112]See Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, 148 and the bibliography cited there.

[113]Two mid-eighth century examples of south Arabian trade looting reflect the increasing value of camels and related hostility. First, an early reference to caravans includes mention that some two hundred camels transporting wool, alabaster, and other valuables from Sheba were looted. Second, Tiglath-Pilesar III is reported to have taken thirty-thousand camels along with large quantities of spices from the queen of Sheba. For these examples and related bibliography, see Singer-Avitz, "Beersheba—A Gateway Community," 4–5. Compare also 1 Sam 27:9 and 1 Chr 5:21, the latter of which recounts a capture of fifty-thousand camels. 2 Chronicles 9:1 includes a reference to Sheba and its camels in a context of joy (שמחה) rather than hostility. Given the investments and dangers inherent in caravaneering, joy would be an appropriate response to the successful arrival of exotic goods.

waging military campaigns deep into the southern and eastern frontier of the kingdom of Judah. It is possible that some of the destruction was caused by auxiliary forces drawn from the armies from the region's kingdoms, but there is no historical evidence to confirm this.[114]

As the southern frontier was of considerable economic value, it seems unlikely that Babylon would be altogether disinterested in *what* kingdom came into control of the region. Lipschits has posited (albeit vaguely) a specific event that this dissertation seeks to reconstruct: acting as auxiliaries, a regional kingdom engaged in hostile activity against southern Judahite positions. Given the thesis at hand, evidence for "Babylonian" intervention in these sites is understandably lacking; the allied (subject) kingdom, by design, would probably have as their zone of operational control and activity this southern frontier of Judah. What group was in a geopolitical position to act as auxiliaries in a region requiring administrative prowess over critical trade routes? The pastoral nomads of the southern frontier? Transient caravaneers and Arab tribes? These seem less likely than Edomites, as the following discussion should make clear.

An Edomite claim on such control would likely require the patronage of Babylon.[115] Edom for centuries had benefited from its metallurgical industries,[116] and with the increasing Arabian trade and the *pax Assyriaca* of the seventh century, the

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[114]Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 144 (n. 41).

[115]We know that Assyria had attempted to control trade indirectly, leaving the trade and its administration in the hands of caravaneers and local rulers, with whom Assyria made agreements and received exacting tribute. See Eph‘al, Israel. *The Ancient Arabs*, 93–94. Stability of trade was of interest to most, if not all, parties.

[116]Again, see Thomas E. Levy, *et al*., "Reassessing the Chronology of Biblical Edom: New Excavations and 14c Dates from Khirbat En-Nahas (Jordan)." *Antiquity* 78 (2004): 865–79. For criticism of the twelfth- through eleventh-century date of the metallurgical industry at Khirbat En-Nahas, see Piotr Bienkowski, review of Burton Macdonald, Larry G. Herr, Michael P. Neeley, Traianos Gagos, Khaled Moumani, and Marcy Rockman, *The Tafila-Busayra Archaeological Survey 1999–2001, West Central Jordan*, BASOR 341 (2006): 65–67.

expansion of Edom from its Iron I status as a statelet into a full-fledged kingdom was facilitated.[117] By the end of the seventh century, Edom had national experience in industrial copper mining, modest agricultural and pastoral resources, international trade, and Assyrian-sponsorship, which is readily perceivable through Edom's regular paying of tribute.[118] Loyalty to Assyria and proximity to the King's Highway east of the ʿArabah provided Edom stability and national benefits.[119] It is not likely that the Negev was *dominated* by Edom at the dawn of the sixth century, yet it may have been regularly crossed by Edomite military squads serving as caravan escorts (from Elath and the Edomite heartland to ʿEn Ḥazeva and unto the Beersheba Valley). Given the Edomite finds in the Negev and the Beersheba Valley region, Edom appears to have had sufficient social and political complexity to allow it to exert some organized influence in the Negev upon local pastoral nomads and agriculturalists, some of whom already had a history of

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[117]On the development of Edom's economy and its prosperity due to the *pax Assyriaca*, see, e.g., B. Oded, "Observations on Methods of Assyrian Rule in Transjordania after the Palestinian Campaign of Tiglath-Pileser III," *JNES* 29 (1970): 177–86 (on Assyria, cf. also Mario Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire." in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* [ed. M. T. Larsen; Copenhagen, 1979], 297–317); Manfred Lindner, "Edom Outside the Famous Excavations: Evidence from Surveys in the Greater Petra Area," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski; Oxford: The Alden Press, 1992), 143–66, and, in the same volume, Piotr Bienkowski, "The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan: A Framework," 1–12, esp. 4 and Ernst Axel Knauf, "The Cultural Impact of Secondary State Formation: The Cases of the Edomites and the Moabites," 47–54. Arabian trade may have benefited Edom's seventh-century prosperity most; cf. Finkelstein, *Living on the Fringe*, 152–53, 165.

[118]Edom appears to have remained a loyal vassal of the Neo-Assyrian Empire; cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 137–39; for specific examples, see, e.g., *ANET* 301; to Tiglath-Pilesar III, see Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia [ARAB]* (London: Histories and Mysteries, 1989 [Reprint]) 1.801 (= *ANET* 282); to Sargon, see Luckenbill, *ARAB* 2.195 (= *ANET* 187); to Adad-Nirari, see *ARAB* 1.739 (= *ANET* 281); Luckenbill, *ARAB* 2.690 (=*ANET* 291).

[119]Cf. Ahlström, *Ancient Palestine*, 662.

cooperation (if not allegiance) to Edom.[120] Regular Edomite passage through the Negev

south of the Beersheba Valley suggests that Edomites worked together with the pastoral

nomads and agriculturalists of the Negev and others at some Beersheba Valley centers,

including Qiṭmit and Malḥata. As a kingdom, Edom had a standing military. Apart from

Judah and Edom, what other kingdom had similar experience and capabilities in the

Negev? Setting the possibility of Egypt aside, *Edom was the sole political power in the*

Negev region with direct trade network experience and sufficient administrative,

logistical, and military capabilities to assume operational control of the Beersheba

Valley following Judah's demise.[121]

In this regard, consider Ezek 36:3–5, which references the Babylonian crisis and

its aftermath, and which connects Edomite plundering with the plundering and possession

of valleys, wastelands, and towns.

> [3] therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they made you
> desolate indeed, and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the
> possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and
> slander among the people; [4] therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the
> Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, the
> watercourses and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted towns, which
> have become a source of plunder and an object of derision to the rest of the
> nations all around; [5] therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in my hot
> jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who, with

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[120]Bienkowski and van der Steen ("Tribes, Trade, and Towns," 21–47, esp. 40–
41) describe these groups as having been "held together by bonds of cooperation and
allegiance to a super-tribal monarchy" (40). Citing Judahite ceramics at Qiṭmit and ʿEn
Ḥazeva, Bienkowski and van der Steen, however, consider the Negev to be technically
under Judahite control (see esp. 38, cf. 41). The pastoral nomads, agriculturalists, and
caravaneers would likely be largely independent of any centralized Judahite control (41).
A functional Judahite *domination* of the Negev during the Babylonian crisis would
require that ʿEn Ḥazeva remained under Judahite control, which is doubtful.

[121]Until Nabonidus' campaign against Edom in 553 B.C.E; see Chapter Five.

wholehearted joy and utter contempt, took my land as their possession, because of its pasture, to plunder it.[122]

In a context of anger against the nations in general (which are on "all sides" of Israel), Edom is singled out as having taken possession of Judahite land for purposes of its countryside (NRSV "because of its pasture"; למען מגרשה)[123] and with an explicitly economic goal, namely "robbery, spoil, booty" (NRSV "plunder"; בז).[124] This term for plundering has a wide connotation, and is elsewhere associated with a wide variety of resources: human,[125] animal,[126] and otherwise. Given the economic importance of and "cultural mélange" in the Beersheba Valley, much and diverse goods could become the plunder of those who would successfully incorporate the valley into their domain.

Following conflict, trade would resume and would again need protection and organization. An alliance of tribes and other groups associated with Edom might allow Edomite leadership to play a chief role in the administration of that trade.   Under the aegis of Babylon, Edom would be in a prime position to move from being one partner in the Arabian trade passing through the Negev and the Beersheba Valley to being its chief executive. As we have seen, the economic rewards—taxation and tribute considered—

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[122]NRSV; for further discussion see Chapter 5.

[123]Reinforcing Ezekiel's concern with the "land" of Israel is this occurrence of מגרשה, which occurs only here and in the list of Levitical town and countryside distributions recounted in Joshua 21 (vv. 11, 13, 14, 15, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30 , 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39)

[124]Num 14:3, 31; 31:32; Deut 1:39; 2 Kgs 21:14; Isa 10:6; 33:23; 42:22; Jer 2:14; 15:13; 17:3; 30:16; 49:32; Ezek 7:21; 23:46; 26:5; 29:19; 34:8, 22, 28; 36:4, 5; 38:12, 13.

[125]See, e.g., Num 14:3; 14:31 Deut 1:39 Isa 42:22; Jer 2:14; cf. Ezek 34:8; 34:22 (personification); cf. also 2 Kgs 21:14.

[126]See Jer 49:32; cf. Ezek 34:8; 34:22.

would be splendid. Information from the Nabataean period clearly attests to that splendor. Information from Iron II hints at that developing splendor. The question that the archaeological data currently can address but not answer is whether Edomites under Babylonian auspices acted militarily to bring about more direct Edomite control of the Judahite Negev. What this chapter has shown is that Edom was in a favorable geopolitical position to capitalize on Judah's demise and to transform the Beersheba Valley from a region within its *range* into a prize portion of its *domain*.

A question for the next chapter is whether inscriptional evidence suggests that Edomite political and military elements in such a strategic geopolitical and economic position *acted* against the Beersheba Valley during the twilight of Judah.

CHAPTER FOUR

Epigraphic Data and the Edomite Campaign against Judah

Introduction

There is no direct evidence for Edomite treaty betrayal from inscriptional data.

One ostracon from Tel Arad, however, is especially suggestive of an Edomite threat

against Judah during the sixth century B.C.E. and is important for the historical

reconstruction offered by this study. This ostracon (hereafter Arad 24), is consistently

dated to the sixth century[1] and includes an order for the dispatch of an uncertain number

of presumably Judahite troops from at least two locations apparently in order to counter

an anticipated Edomite assault against a Judahite position, presumably in the Judahite

Negev. Another inscription (Arad 40) might also pertain to distress at the Edomite-

Judahite border and may provide insight into the military tactics playing out in the region.

Lines 9–14 of Arad 40 apparently include a context of intelligence reports (possibly from

the Edomite-Judahite border), a sender's declaration of his restriction of related

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[1]Authorities consistently date the ostracon between ca. 597 and ca. 587 B.C.E. (see below). Principal discussion of Arad 24 includes Yohanan Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad," *BASOR* (1970): 16–42; Yohanan Aharoni in cooperation with Joseph Naveh, *Arad Inscriptions* (trans. Judith Ben-Or; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981); André Lemaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques: Tome 1, Les Ostraca* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1977); Dennis Pardee, "Letters from Tel Arad," *UF* 10 (1978): 323; Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), esp. 59–61; K. A. D. Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel: A Handbook of Historical and Religious Documents* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); Johannes Renz and W. Röllig, *Handbuch Der Althebräischen Epigraphik* (3 vols.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995); James M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*. (2nd ed.; ed. Kent Harold Richards; Leiden: Brill, 2003); F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, J. J. M. Roberts, C. L. Seow, and R. E. Whitaker, *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

information from another individual, and the necessity that the king of Judah must be
made aware of the senders' inability to send something. Effacement prohibits knowing
what was to be sent. In line 15, the inscription states that Edom has committed an evil
(זָ[את הרעה.אש]ר[] אד[ם עשתה]). Despite obvious difficulties in restoring the text and
meaning of Arad 40, one can safely say that this ostracon is replete with data pertaining
to political relations between Edom and Judah. The problem with Arad 40 is its date.

Should paleographic analysis demonstrate convincingly that Arad 40 is a sixth-
century inscription, it could well become the single best piece of epigraphic evidence
supporting a thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal against Judah.[2] According to the relevant
literature, however, possible dates for Arad 40 range from the late eighth through sixth
centuries.[3] A reconstruction of sixth-century Edomite-Judahite relations would best

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[2]Arad 40 would support conclusions reached in this chapter; succinctly addressing
the historical situation, cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 73:

> "From the context, it is clear that some objects (plural) having to do with Edom
> have been given by the author of the letter to the addressee, but there are other
> possibilities as well. The objects clearly have something to do with Edom. The
> remainder of the letter reflects the setting up of a system of defense, in which
> subordinates report to superiors on the political status of their assigned region.
> The network operates under the king of Judah, as is evident in the reference to the
> king in line 13. One may, therefore, conclude that some type of network of
> defense has been monitoring the borders and reporting on relations with the
> surrounding areas. As is evident from the Lachish ostraca, it was not unusual for
> officers to "attach" other correspondences to their reports and letters (cf. *Lach* 3;
> 5; 6). Here at Arad, this correspondence must be indicative of some form of
> diplomacy, particularly since the general tenor of the letter is one of official
> administration."

[3]For the late eighth century B.C.E., see Aharoni, *AI*, 71–74; Lemaire, *IH*, 1:151,
209; Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 103–04; Renz, *HAE*, 145; for the second half
of the seventh century, see Pardee, *HAHL*, 28–29, 65; "Arad Ostraca," *COS* 3.85; cf.
Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 118; for a questioning of this date
and a conclusion that Arad 40 "refers to the same general situation reflected in Arad 24,"
see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 69–70. I heed Pardee's caution (*HAHL*,
28): "the dating of Arad 40 must for the present be judged uncertain."

incorporate epigraphic evidence solely from that period. Thus, apart from a discussion of

the fourth-century geopolitics of the Beersheba Valley discernable from some ostraca

dated to that century, *the epigraphic evidence incorporated into this chapter is decidedly*

sixth-century evidence. Indeed, as shall be shown, many of these inscriptions may be

dated to a particular month within the early sixth century.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a reconstruction of the Edomite

campaign against Judah through an examination of several inscriptions, mostly from

Arad, in light of the data presented in chapter three. Several sixth-century inscriptions

may be helpful in a reconstruction of Edomite-Judahite relations. These include Arad 2,

3, 7, 12, 17, 20, 21, 24, 26, and an "Edomite Ostracon" from Ḥorvat ʿUza. The chapter

has two major sections. In part one, some determinations related to geopolitics and

military garrisons in the region will be made through a discussion of Arad 24.

Subsequently, an argument will be presented that dates the ostracon along with the so-

called "Eliashib archive" (Arad 1–18) to the "tenth month" (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth

year (i.e., December 588/January 587 B.C.E.).[4] This date corresponds to the initiation of

the Babylonian assault on Judah (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:1). Part one concludes with the inference

that Edomite military contingents were active against Judahite positions in the Beersheba

Valley region in the opening days of the Babylonian assault.

Part two of this chapter will consider several inscriptions while taking into

consideration the common suggestion that the Eliashib archive is comprised of

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[4]For the chronological system employed in this chapter, particularly in regard to the reckoning of regnal years in sixth-century Judah according to the Nisan New Year, see Chapter One, following Hayim Tadmor, "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources," *WHJP* 4/1 (1979): 44–60; cf. Mordecai Coogan, "Chronology," *ABD* 1:1002–11, esp. 1006.

inscriptions pertaining to the last month of Arad Stratum VI. A relative chronology of some of these inscriptions will be offered. This offering is warranted by the justifiable conclusion that inscriptions from one *month* do not reflect one *moment* in time. What this deliberate chronological ordering shows is that the epigraphic data may be read in such a manner as to be reconciled with an element of the current thesis, namely, a shift occurred in Edomite-Judahite relations. Given the laconic nature of the epigraphic data, sustained and detailed discussion of these relations is often speculative. A concluding discussion on the Edomite military campaign against Judahite positions in the Beersheba Valley region will draw together some plausible elements from part two of this chapter with the relatively more sound inference of part one.

<div align="center">*Part One: Arad 24 and the Initiation of Edomite Hostility*</div>

The Arad Inscriptions

During the late Iron II, Arad served as an important Judahite military fortress and supply depot in the Beersheba Valley. Architectural and epigraphic evidence clearly demonstrates that Arad was instrumental in the support of Judahite interests in the region.[5] The economic and military contexts of numerous inscriptions coupled with the incidences of Arad's destruction and rebuilding attest to this importance.[6] Over two

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[5]Detailed discussions and principal publications on Arad include Ze'ev Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad: An Interim Report," *TA* 29 (2002): 3–109; Ze'ev, Herzog, Miriam Aharoni, Anson F. Rainey, and Shmuel Moshkovitz, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," *BASOR* 254 (1984): 1–34; Lily Singer-Avitz, "The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages of Arad," *TA* 29 (2002): 110–214; Yohanan Aharoni and Ruth Amiran, "Excavations at Tel Arad: Preliminary Report on the First Season, 1962," *IEJ* 14 (1964): 131–47; Aharoni, *AI*; Miriam Aharoni, "Arad: The Israelite Citadels," *NEAHL* 1:82–87; Ze'ev Herzog, "Arad: Iron Age Period," *OEANE* 1:174–76.

[6]Herzog, The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," 10.

hundred inscriptions have been found from Arad, constituting the single largest collection

of documents from Iron Age Palestine.[7] In addition to those written in Hebrew, most of

which date to the seventh through early sixth centuries (Strata VII and VI), there are

numerous inscriptions from later periods. Dozens of inscriptions are in Aramaic, and a

few others are in Greek and Arabic. Several inscriptions from this border fortress

reference Edom or include personal names with Qos-theophores. Arad 24 is perhaps the

best known of these inscriptions.

Arad 24, Generally Considered

Several data pertaining to the military importance of Arad, troop levels in the

Beersheba Valley, the hierarchy of fortress commanders, the influence of the king upon

military affairs, the desperation of the hour, and the counter-strategy of Judah to a

perceived Edomite threat are available from Arad 24. The Hebrew script of this ostracon

has been dated paleographically to the very end of the seventh century or the beginning

of the sixth.[8] The reverse is nearly fully recoverable, but erosion has nearly completely

effaced the obverse, from which only a few words are readable.[9]   Following the

excavator's restorations compared with the transliterations provided in a recent critical

edition of the Hebrew inscriptions, I provide the text of Arad 24, transcribed into

Aramaic characters (and incorporating final forms) and noting in superscript the letters

[7]For summary discussion of the inscriptions, see Robert B. Lawton, "Arad Ostraca," *ABD*. 1:336–37; André Lemaire, "Arad Inscriptions." *OEANE* 1:176–77; Dennis Pardee, "Arad Ostraca," *COS* 3:81–85.

[8]See the paleographic arguments in Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad," 32–42 and Aharoni, *AI*, 128-39.

[9]Aharoni, *AI*, 46. Some of the mystery regarding Judahite-Edomite relations at the time the inscription was written would likely be lessened if the obverse were also recoverable.

reconstructed on the basis of partially visible writing (e.g., אֵ).[10] For purposes of

discussion and accessibility, the translation of Dennis Pardee from *The Context of*

Scripture[11] is provided for the reverse of this frequently-referenced inscription.

Obverse	*Obverse*
To…	1. אֵל]
Eliashib…	2. אלישׁבֿ]
to…king(?)	3. לס] [מלך
…troop	4.] [חיל
…mon[ey]	5.] [כס]
…pass over…	6.] [עבר]
	7.] [רן] [ט] [
	8.] [וע]
	9.] [וכ]לֿ
… and a[ll] …	10.
	11.

Reverse	*Reverse*
[…] from Arad five and from Qinah […] and send them to Ramat-negeb under Malkiyahu son of Qerabur. He is to hand them over to Elisha son of Yirmeyahu at Ramat-negeb lest anything happen to the city. This is an order from the king—a life-and-death matter for you. I send (this message) to warn you now: The(se) men (must be) with Elisha lest (the) Edom(ites) (should) enter there.	12. מערד [50] ומקינֿ]ה
	13. ה .ושלחתם.אתם.רמת נגֿ]ב בי
	14. ד מלכיהו בן קרבאור והﬞפ
	15. קידם על.יד אלישע בן ירמי
	16. הו ברמת נגב.פן.יקרה את ה
	17. עיר.דבר.ודבר המלך אתכם
	18. בנבשכם.הנה שלחתי.להעיד
	19. בכם.הים.האנשם.את. עליש
	20. ע.פן.תבא.אדם.שמה

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[10]See Aharoni, *AI*, 46; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 48.
Differences in restorations are few; the text follows the restorations in the Dobbs-Allsopp
volume. Significant differences are limited to the restored hieratic numeral in line 12;
Aharoni's restoration ("50") is retained for purposes of discussion (see below). No new
restorations are provided for Arad 24. The photographs and drawings consulted are those
found in Aharoni, *AI*, 47.

[11]"Arad 24: Military Movements," translated by Dennis Pardee (*COS* 3:84–85).
For the translation of the obverse (not provided by *COS*), compare the translations of
Aharoni, *AI*, 46 and Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 48.

Personal names in Arad 24. In order to facilitate discussion, the persons named in the inscription and their possible offices should be briefly addressed. Three individuals are named: Eliashib (line 2),[12] Malkiyahu son of Qerabur (line 14), and Elisha son of Yirmeyahu (once in lines 15–16 and once, without the patronym, in lines 19–20). We do not know the name of the king mentioned in the inscription (lines 3[?], 17). How one dates the ostracon determines which Judahite king is referenced (see below). The ostracon is addressed to Eliashib, although the extent of the break and the effacement of the obverse allow for the possibility that additional addressees existed. Eliashib is known from numerous inscriptions,[13] and appears to have been a high ranking official at Arad Strata VII and VI. It is unclear whether he was a commander or, as has been suggested, a quartermaster/supply officer,[14] although the former seems more likely given the historical context of the archive (see below). Many of the ostraca addressed to Eliashib are orders for the disbursements of supplies, but this does not necessarily commend a reading of such inscriptions as having been addressed directly to a quartermaster. Such a command would effectively circumvent the fort's commander, who may be expected to delegate to appropriate staff the responsibility for carrying out particular orders received from superiors. For the purpose of this chapter, Eliashib is the commander of Arad.

Determining the position Malkiyahu son of Qerabur (Arad 24:14) fulfilled at Arad is more difficult. The name might be referenced in an unstratified ostracon (Arad

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[12]The vocalization of אלישב ("Eliashib" or "Elyashib"?) is uncertain. The question aside, I utilize "Eliashib" in conformity with a vocalization frequently found in the related literature.

[13]E.g., Arad 1–12, 14, 18, and 24.

[14]E.g., Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 116.

39:obv. 2–3), which comprises a list of ten names. Malkiyahu appears in line 2 of Arad 39 as the father of Shemaiah.[15] Additionally, a Malkiyahu (without a patronym) is known from Arad 40 (line 3). In Arad 24, Malkiyahu is apparently a mid-level Judahite officer. Malkiyahu might be an officer of Ramath-negeb (hereafter, Ramath-Negev) *to whom* the forces from Arad and Qinah are to be sent; this would make Malkiyahu an officer who would then transfer the troops to the command of Elisha (who is also at or destined for Ramath-Negev).[16] Alternatively, Malkiyahu might be the conscription officer responsible for assembling conscripts rather than regular garrison units (see below).[17] It is simpler, however, to understand Malkiyahu as an officer under whose command the forces assembled from Arad and Qinah (and perhaps elsewhere) were to march to Ramath-Negev.[18] If the restoration is correct, the inscription seems to communicate this point explicitly: the forces are to be led "under the arm of" (ד[ב בי]) Malkiyahu. Lines 16–20 reveal the seriousness of the hour (see below), and it is reasonable that in a situation of potential engagement with hostile forces an experienced

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[15]The next line of Arad 39 reads "Meshullam son of Qerabur," but whether this proximity of the names Malkiyahu and Qerabur suggests that the same individual or family is being referenced is unknown.

[16]So, e.g., Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 71; contrast, however, the implied role in the translation of lines 1–14 (= rev. 2–3): "you shall send them to Ramath-nege[b *by* the han]d of" Malkiyahu (p. 49). Malkiyahu leads the deployment.

[17]So Lemaire, *IH*, 1:193–94.

[18]This understanding would require that Arad 40 is not dated to Stratum VI (or that a different Malkiyahu is mentioned). In Arad 40, Malkiyahu seems to be the commander of Arad. In Arad 24, Malkiyahu may be readily understood as having been sent to Arad (and elsewhere?) in order to take troops under his charge to Ramath-Negev; cf. Aharoni, *AI* 74 n.10. Should Arad 40 be dated to the same crisis as Arad 24, a result is in line with the current thesis: The situation is severe; Edomites have attacked a Judahite site (ʿUza? Ḥazeva?) and the shift of Judahite forces from the area around Arad included the necessary redeployment (and expertise?) of its commander, Malkiyahu.

officer would be designated to lead the troop transfer. Whatever his abilities or more specific role, it is safe to conclude that Malkiyahu was at least a mid-level officer ordered to lead troops being transferred to Ramath-Negev. There they would be assigned to Elisha's operational control (והפקידם על.יד אלישע; lines 14–15).[19] The tenor of the text suggests that the repositioning of troops was serious business. The extent of strategic repositioning of Judahite military power in the valley due to this repositioning, however, requires an understanding both of the number of troops to be transferred and of the locations represented by the toponyms of the ostracon.

How many troops? It appears likely from Arad 24.12 that troops from at least two Judahite locations (Arad and Qinah [Kinah]) are to be transferred to Ramat-Negev in order to counter a perceived Edomite threat. Because the obverse is nearly entirely effaced, we cannot know whether orders for troop deployments from other Judahite locations were also included in the inscription.[20] What is clear from the obverse suggests that it, too, was concerned with political and military matters. Unless the text reflects elements of personal names otherwise effaced, a king is referenced (מלך; line 3), as is some (military) force (חיל; line 4). Also intriguing is an occurrence of √ עבר ("to cross over"; line 6). Are Judahite troops or individuals "crossing" somewhere? Are Edomites? Babylonians? Is it a reference to the passing of the month and the start of a New Moon (cf. Amos 8:5)? Such an occurrence of the root is known from elsewhere in the Eliashib archive (Arad 5:12). Is it a reference to some impropriety, perhaps even a reference to a

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[19]Cf. a similar syntax and military context and in 1 Kgs 14:27 (והפקיד על-יד שרי הרצים).

[20]If a *waw* (Aram. ו) was the final effaced consonant on the obverse, it would suggest that Arad was not the first locale from which troops were to be redeployed.

broken treaty, particularly given the syntax of עבר את־הברית ("transgressed the covenant/treaty") found in Joshua 7:15?[21] The laconic nature of the obverse leaves us with questions. What is relatively safe is that both faces of the ostracon concern military matters and any of above meanings of √ עבר fit that context.

Commenting on the reverse is also problematic, yet some reasonable conclusions may be made. Yohanan Aharoni suggests that space considerations allow for completing line 12 with the numeral "100" (if it is written out in Aramaic characters as opposed to the apparently hieratic numeral associated with Arad.[22] Thus, according to Aharoni, fifty troops from Arad and one hundred from Qinah were to be deployed. Thus, approximately one hundred and fifty troops were to be sent to Ramath-Negev. As the numbers "50" and "100" correspond to usual biblical military units (e.g., 2 Sam 15:1; 2 Kgs 1:9; 1 Sam 29:2), the conclusion is plausible, yet hardly certain.

Comparing Aharoni's transcription of the hieratic numeral ("50")[23] in Arad 24:12 with the translation provided by Pardee (who records *five*) reveals a problem in deciphering the symbol, only traces of which remain.[24] The difference is significant. Is a squad or a platoon to be redeployed from Arad? If the latter is the case, fifty soldiers

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[21]√ עבר is known from other treaty/covenant contexts (e.g., Gen 15:13; see also Chapter Two). The occurrence of √ עבר in Arad 24:6 could conceivably reference such a betrayal, yet a plausible context of betrayal and a possible biblical syntactic parallel (עבר את־הברית; Josh 7:15) is insufficient to exclude other meanings of the √ עבר in Arad 24:6; the severe effacement of the obverse of this ostracon allows little more than speculation.

[22] Aharoni, *AI*, 46–48.

[23]Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad," 16–42 (19); Aharoni, *AI*, 46; a question mark ("?") is provided for the numeral in Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 48.

[24]Lindenberger's sole critical note on Arad 24 (*Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 121, 131 n. f.) identifies the importance of this problem.

(some of whom might be support personnel) would significantly deplete the standard force capabilities of Arad,[25] particularly if we understand that these troops were part of the normal garrison of Arad, the Stratum VI architecture of which suggests that the fortification could support a population of about one hundred troops.[26] A preference for reading the hieratic numeral as "5" is increasingly noticeable in related discussions and publications.[27] One might question whether a force of five soldiers could be significant enough to counter any sizable threat,[28] yet a redeployed *squad* can make a tactical difference in combat, particularly if a defensive and fortified position is taken up. Two squads of five from Arad and Qinah could readily man a tower, bulwark or wall section and could be instrumental in fending off, at least temporarily, a larger assault force.

Several issues speak against reading line 12 as referencing only five soldiers each from Arad and Qinah. Arad Stratum VI included storehouses, water storage capabilities, and a large, central courtyard;[29] these could readily facilitate short term support for an irregularly large military force deployed to the position during times of crisis. Prior to the order for military repositioning communicated by Arad 24, additional troops

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[25]Doubt that "fifty" is to be understood is not uncommon. Renz (*HAE*, 1:391) suggests that Arad could not have housed more than 100 to 125 persons. For Renz, this number would correspond to about fifty military personnel, which would have resulted in too severe of a depletion of Arad's force capabilities ("eine Abkommandierung von 50 Personen eine zu starke Dezimierung bedeutet hätte" [p. 391]).

[26]Herzog, "Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," esp. 100.

[27]E.g., Lemaire (*IH*, 1:189 [see also the hieratic chart on p. 281]), who restores lines 12–13 to read "from Arad 5 and from Qinah 5 with weapons" (citing 1 Sam 17:13; 23:8); cf. also Renz, *HAE*, 1:391; Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 114; Dennis Pardee, "Arad 24: Military Movements," *COS* 3:84.

[28]So Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 49.

[29]See, e.g., Herzog, "Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," 46–48.

exceeding the fort's normal garrison may have arrived at Arad. Similarly, Arad's

military force might have swelled due to an emergency levy of conscripts.[30] We do not

know. What does seem certain from the inscription is the desperation of the hour. The

forceful language of the text suggests that the threat was viewed as imminent, and in

addition to a potential Edomite assault communicated by line 20 (פן תבא אדם שמה),

several phrases are noteworthy in suggesting that a number larger than "5" may be

understood. First, there is a concern that without the military support something might

happen to the city of Ramath-Negev (פן יקרה אתה עיר; lines 16–17). Ten troops might

fend off a larger force for a time, but could *ten troops* provide assurances that Ramath-

Negev would remain intact? Second, the deployment of forces is explicitly a king's edict

(ודברהמלך; line 17);[31] the redeployment is an order pertaining to Judahite strategy on the

kingdom level. Third, the situation is entirely desperate, as the king's command equates

to a life-or-death situation for the recipients[32] of the message (אתכם בנבשכם; lines 17–

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[30]If conscripts are implied by the inscription, there is little reason to believe that "50" from Arad would necessarily deplete its standard garrison; cf., e.g., Lemaire, *IH*, 1:194; Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 114.

[31]For דברהמלך as "king's edict," see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50–51, referencing 1 Sam 21:3 [Eng. 21:2]; 2 Sam 24:4; 2 Kgs 18:28; Esth 1:12.

[32]The message's recipients (note the plural pronouns) appear to have included Eliashib *and others*, whose names are no longer visible in the inscription's address, traces of which remain on the obverse; copies or variants of the letter may have been sent to Arad, Qinah, and Ramath-Negev (and perhaps other Judahite positions). The number of locations mentioned in the inscription and the likelihood that other personal names appeared in the address allow the inference that the order was communicated by more than one letter to the command staff at more than one location; for discussion of the possibility, see Pardee, *HAHL*, 60–61. This theater-wide, operational communication to Beersheba Valley command staffs is hardly provable from one inscription, particularly given the effacement of the obverse; cf. Renz, *HAE*, 1:389–90.

18).[33] Fourth, an adverb expressing immediacy is employed (הנה; line 18). Fifth, the message includes a warning counsel for the recipients (להעיד בכם; line 18–19). Sixth, the temporal adverb (הים; line 19) suggests urgency, especially if it is syntactically related to the terse nominal clause that follows (*הים האנשם את אלישע*, lines 19–20)[34] rather than to what precedes (*שלחתי להעיד בכם הים*; lines 18–19).[35] Collectively, these phrases suggest that Eliashib and others are to act immediately, *regardless of whether they might believe the order to be improper, dangerous, or constituting an unreasonable depletion of the forces stationed with them.* If Arad was to have its garrison seriously depleted, perhaps by half, then the syntax and threat language of Arad 24 preempts objection and delay.

The number of troops from a specific location, however, might be a non-issue in terms of the larger Judahite defensive response. Perhaps effacement of the obverse has obliterated orders for the mustering of troops from additional locations. The ostracon might then be one copy of a circular received by a number of Judahite commanders.[36] Additionally, based on what remains readable, the hieratic numeral "5" is not the only alternative to "50." Several other numerals have been suggested as possible, including

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[33]נבש ("throat, soul") is the etymological and semantic equivalent to the more common phonemic variant, נפש. The phrase suggests that failure to send the troops would result in a death penalty; cf. Lemaire, *IH*, 1:194. For similar extrabiblical phrases that imply such a threat, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 51–52. The same phonemic exchange of ב for פ may be observed in Arad 24:14, if Aharoni is correct (*AI*, 46, 48); contrast the restoration in Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 48.

[34]I.e., "Today, the men must be with Elisha!" See especially, Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 52, noting the word order of 1 Sam 28:19b (*ומחר אתה ובניך עמי*).

[35]I.e., "I have sent to warn you today…"; cf. most translations; see, e.g., Lemaire, *IH*, 1:188; Aharoni, *AI*, 49; Pardee, "Arad 24: Military Movements," 85.

[36]It is not irregular to consider with Aharoni that the ostracon is a circular of sorts; cf. Renz *HAE*, 1:390.

"10," "20," "30," and "70."[37]   In short, *it is unknowable both how many troops were being sent to bolster Ramath-Negev, and how many locations provided those troops.*

No fewer than ten soldiers were redeployed per the order of Arad 24. Whether these troops actually departed for or arrived at Ramath-Negev is unknown. If we consider Aharoni's suggestion that one hundred and fifty soldiers are to be transferred to Ramath-Negev, then a successful deployment of those forces reflects a significant shift on Judahite forces in the valley. Orders to other Judahite positions might also have been given, yet if these existed they do not survive. The grave tenor of and details from Arad 24 suggest that a perceived Edomite threat set in motion a strategic repositioning of forces in the Negev with the intended objective of defending Ramath-Negev.

Whence the Judahite troops? We can be sure that the "Arad" of the ostracon is none other than Tel Arad in the northeastern Beersheba Valley.[38] The location of Qinah [Kinah], however, is disputed. In a list of Judahite towns in the region (Joshua 15:21– 63), Qinah (קינה) is listed next to Arad (v. 22),[39] but the biblical reference assists in locating Qinah only generally. Two fortifications have been identified in the related literature as possibilities. The first, Ḥorvat ʿUza (Aharoni's original suggestion)[40] is approximately nine kilometers south-southeast of Tel Arad, and its identification with

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[37]See Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 49 and the bibliography on hieratic symbols cited there.

[38]See also Arad 24 and 99; A biblical Arad (ערד) located in the Negev is known (Num 33:40; Josh 12:14; Judg 1:16). There is little reason to doubt that Tel Arad is none other than biblical Arad; cf. Dale W. Manor and Gary A. Herion, "Arad," *ABD* 1:331–36.

[39]Assuming a transposition has occurred (ערד to עדר); cf. LXX Αρα.

[40]Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca," 21.

Qinah has received increasing support, due in part to the survival of an etymologically-related name for the wadi in which the fort rests (Wadi el-Qeni).[41] If the argument that Ḥorvat ʿUza is Qinah is based primarily on etymology and ʿUza's status as a fortification, then Ḥorvat Radum, an advanced lookout for ʿUza, might also be taken into consideration. Aharoni's later option, Ḥorvat Tov,[42] approximately six kilometers north-northwest of Tel Arad, merely remains in consideration with little support in the relevant literature.[43] Even so, because Qenites [Kenites] during Iron II are considered to be pastoral nomads ranging at least from Jericho to regions south and east of Arad,[44] the etymological argument for preferring the Wadi el-Qeni area for the location of Qinah is not in itself convincing. Qenites could have just as likely been known from the area around Ḥorvat Tov. In short, the location of the Qinah of Arad 24 is unknown.[45]

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[41]See especially, Lemaire, *IH*, 1:191; cf. also Rüdiger Liwak, "Kinah," *ABD* 4:39–40; Beit-Arieh, "ʿUza," *NEAHL* 4:195.

[42]Aharoni, *AI*, 146.

[43]Without apparent preference for either Ḥorvat ʿUza or Ḥorvat Tov, see, e.g., Renz, *HAE*, 1:390; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 49; cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 141.

[44]For discussion on Qenite locations and the etymological connection of Qenites [Kenites], Qinah [Kinah], and Cain, see Baruch Halpern, "Kenites," *ABD* 4:17–22.

[45]The final section of this chapter will describe an operational stratagem for Edom in light of inscriptional evidence. By that point, other factors will have suggested that Ḥorvat ʿUza and Ḥorvat Radum may have already fallen by the time of Arad 24. Although this reconstruction results in Ḥorvat Tov as a remaining option for the Qinah according to the literature consulted, no final determination of the location of Qinah should be assumed. What we can know is that at the time of the order, Judahite commanders believed that Qinah (whether Ḥorvat Tov, Ḥorvat ʿUza, Ḥorvat Radum, or some other locale) remained under Judahite operational control and was to send troops to defend against anticipated Edomite aggression.

Whereto the Judahite troops? The identification of Ramath-Negev is also disputed. The name provided by the inscription suggests but does not necessitate that the site is to be identified with a location of relatively high elevation in the Judahite Negev (רמת נגב; "height of the Negev").[46] Two proposals for the sight are prevalent in the related literature: Ḥorvat ʿUza and Tel ʿIra, each of which was a sizable fortification in the early sixth century B.C.E. ʿIra functioned as a principal administrative center and ʿUza functioned as an advance fortification on the Edomite-Judahite border.[47]

In discussing Arad 24, Aharoni suggests that Ḥorvat ʿUza is to be equated with Ramath-Negev, the location to which troops were to be deployed.[48] This would be impossible if Qinah is indeed Ḥorvat ʿUza (see above). A rationale for identifying ʿUza with Ramath-Negev for Aharoni is that if it was the first location of an anticipated attack, then it must be closer to the border with Edom and south or southeast of Arad.[49] Indeed, the inscription is regularly read as suggesting that the deployment of troops is not part of a general retreat but an attempt to reinforce a strategic border position.[50] ʿUza does

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[46]The vocalization is uncertain; cf. רָאמַת נֶגֶב (Josh 19:8) and רָאמוֹת־נֶגֶב (1 Sam 30:27); these biblical references neither assist in determining the vocalization of the toponym in the inscription, nor where Ramath/oth-Negev is to found.

[47]See Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, ed., *Tel ʿIra: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999); Itzhaq Beit-Arieh and Bruce Cresson, "Horvat Uza: A Fortified Outpost on the Eastern Negev Border," *BA* 54 (1991): 126–35. Tel ʿIra and Ḥorvat ʿUza are listed as the possibilities in, e.g., Pardee, *HAHL*, 29; Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 141; Renz, *HAE*, 1:390; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50; see also Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "ʿIra, Tel," *OEANE* 3:174–75.

[48]Aharoni, *AI*, 146–47; cf. Pardee, *HAHL*, 29; Kochavi, "Malhata," 3:934; perhaps, Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 115.

[49]Aharoni, *AI*, 146.

[50]See, e.g., Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50, who favor Tel ʿIra.

overlook a road leading to Edom and would be a valuable fort to control if Edom *sought*

to invade the valley with troops advancing from the Edomite heartland along that road.[51]

One might conclude with Aharoni that the situation suggests a *southern* deployment of

Judahite forces from Arad in order to stop an Edomite assault at the border, but casting

doubt on this conclusion is the geopolitical range of Edomites based on interpretations of

relatively recent archaeological finds (Chapter Three).[52] Because *the Edomite range*

included portions of the Beersheba Valley by the time of the Babylonian crisis, a defend-

the-border argument does little to assist in determining whether ʿUza *or* ʿIra is the

Ramath-Negev of the inscription. Ḥorvat ʿUza is closer to the Edomite heartland, but is

not significantly closer to the Edomite-Judahite "frontier" than either Tel Arad or Tel

ʿIra. The "frontier" was the artifactually muddled collection of sites visited by Judahites,

Edomites, traders, caravaneers, and pastoral nomads upon the crossroads of the

Beersheba Valley (Chapter Three). As developed by Aharoni, the conclusion that troops

would travel in a *southerly* direction to meet a potential Edomite threat at the border is

not very secure.

There are other reasons to doubt that ʿUza is the Ramath-Negev of Arad 24. One

reason is the site's location overlooking the Wadi el-Qeni. Although ʿUza occupies an

elevation higher than sites in the Beersheba Valley proper, it has been deemed too far

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[51]Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50; perhaps this road is the biblical "Way of the Wilderness of Edom" (2 Kgs 3:8, 20; verse 24 suggests that these references pertain to a location some distance from Moab but does not directly associate the road with the Negev; see, however, Num 21:1, 4).

[52]Aharoni's death preceded publications from the excavation at Qitmit and other more recent finds from the Beersheba Valley suggestive of Edomite influence or "range".

down the wadi to warrant the name "Height of the Negev."[53] Of course, ʿUza may have

come to take on the name of some nearby location or topographic feature traditionally

called Ramath-Negev.[54] What might prove helpful in concluding that ʿUza is not the

Ramath-Negev of the inscription is the lack of occupation remains earlier than the

seventh century B.C.E.[55] Because Ramath-Negev is mentioned in 1 Sam 30:27, ostensibly

reflecting a period prior to the seventh century, one reasonable criterion for determining

what site is referenced in Arad 24 is evidence for occupation in the tenth century B.C.E.

Evidence from Tel ʿIra suggests that it was inhabited during the tenth–ninth centuries,

making its identification with Ramath-Negev somewhat more supportable.[56] Finding

evidence for a similarly early occupation at ʿUza would, of course, negate this last point.

Like Ḥorvat ʿUza, the relatively high elevation of Tel ʿIra (which occupies a

position one hundred meters above the floor of the Beersheba Valley) is one factor that

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[53]So Renz, *HAE*, 1:390.

[54]Aharoni (*Arad Inscriotions*, 147) notes that ʿUza was built "was built at the top of the mountain…and it is clearly visible from Tel Arad…. This is a lookout point which suits the name Ramah/Ramot ("high place"). Photographs and topographical maps available to me have not allowed me to evaluate fairly the opposing positions of Renz (see previous note) and Aharoni.

[55]Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Horvat Uza: A Fortified Outpost," 126–35, esp. 128; cf. also Lynn Tatum, "King Manasseh and the Royal Fortress at Horvat ʿUza," *BA* 54 (1991): 136–45; on Tel ʿIra, see Beit-Arieh, ed., *Tel ʿIra: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev*.

[56]So Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Horvat Uza: A Fortified Outpost," 128. architectural evidence for settlement at Tel ʿIra in the tenth–ninth centuries are admittedly sparse; see especially Eitan Ayalon, "Area C," in Beit-Arieh, ed., *Tel ʿIra: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev*, 40–42 and in the same volume, I. Finkelstein and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Area E," 69. Pottery finds from Tomb 15 of the cemetery associated with Tel ʿIra support the conclusion that the site was occupied in the ninth century; see in the same volume, Itzaq Beit-Arieh, Liora Freund, and Aileen G. Baron, "The Cemetery," esp. 129, 151–55.

has supported its plausible identification with the Ramath-Negev of Arad 24.[57] It is

perhaps significant that Aharoni's co-excavators have argued against his identification of

Ḥorvat ʿUza as Ramath-Negev and incline toward accepting Tel ʿIra as the objective of

the troop deployment.[58] Reasons to prefer Tel ʿIra over ʿUza have been provided by

André Lemaire in his study of Arad 24.[59] These include its elevation, its size, and its

geographic location as the principal administrative center of Judahite operational control

of the Negev district of Simeon.[60] If the options for the identification of Ramath-Negev

are restricted to Ḥorvat ʿUza and Tel ʿIra, then ʿIra is the better supported option.[61] The

historical reconstruction to follow accepts that Tel ʿIra is the Ramath-Negev of Arad 24.

Summary: An Edomite threat perceived by the Judahite command. An overview

of some conclusions may be helpful prior to discussing the date of Arad 24 and its

specific relevance for the thesis of a sixth-century Edomite treaty betrayal. Reading

Ramath-Negev as Tel ʿIra suggests that a military force under Edomite control had

already moved (or was expected to move) toward the center of the Beersheba Valley. It

is also possible that Edomites had already attacked one or more Judahite positions in the

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[57]Additional supporters of Tel ʿIra as Ramath-Negev of Arad 24 include Lemaire, *IH*, 1:192; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50; and, seemingly, Renz, *HAE*, 1:390. Cf. also Beit-Arieh, "Ira, Tel" 3:175, and the bibliography cited there.

[58]Ze'ev Herzog, Miriam Aharoni, Anson F. Rainey, and Shmuel Moshkovitz. "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," *BASOR* 254 (1984): 1–34 (esp. 29–34).

[59]Lemaire, André. *IH*, 1:192.

[60]Citing Aharoni, Lemaire (*IH*, 1:192) concludes that "one cannot imagine a better center" ("…on ne peut pas imaginer de meilleur centre") for control of the district.

[61]According to Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* (*Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50), Lemaire's identification is "far more plausible" than ʿUza.

region, positions other than Arad and Qinah.[62] At the very least, Edom was perceived as

hostile by the time of the writing of Arad 24. An Edomite success against ʿIra would

place the center of the Beersheba Valley under Edomite operational control and would

open up central Judah to Edomite raids, should Edom consider such a course of military

action necessary. Arad 24 suggests that Judahite commanders feared that the Edomite

range of influence in the trade-rich Beersheba Valley could potentially develop into an

Edomite domain.[63] The inscription also suggests that Judahite commanders perceived an

Edomite will to do so. A reasonable conclusion is that the Judahite command dispatched

troops under specific officers in order to protect Judahite interests in the valley and to

hold its center through a defense of Ramath-Negev (Tel ʿIra). The question remains as to

whether the ostracon may be dated the final Babylonian assault on Judah.

The Date of Arad 24: The First Decade of the Sixth Century?

    The problem: when did Arad Stratum VI fall? How one dates the destruction of

Arad Stratum VI determines in great measure how one dates Arad 24. Three dates in

particular have been suggested for the destruction of Arad Stratum VI: ca. 597; ca. 595;

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[62]Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.* (*Hebrew Inscriptions*, 50) suggest that if ʿIra is Ramath-Negev, Edomites may have already penetrated west of the ʿArabah and were moving up toward Arad from the *southwest*" (emphasis mine); unless "southwest" is a mistake for "southeast" (the direction of the ʿArabah) this reconstruction virtually necessitates that Ḥorvat ʿUza (and, therefore, Radum?) remained under Judahite control.

[63]That the Judahite forces at Arad might "fear" events transpiring in the regional geopolitics is apparently attested in Arad 111. If the restorations are correct, we find in this broken and partially effaced inscription (which does not mention Edom) a concern "with the guard" (ובמשמר), a status of being "very much afraid" (רע מעד]י[ ), something "taken" (ילקח), a declaration that a message will be sent (נשב דבר), and a reference to a report or rumor (ולשמע); see the discussion of A. Rainey in Aharoni, *AI*, 124–25 and the cautions in Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 106–07.

and ca. 587 B.C.E. The date of Stratum VI necessarily effects the date of inscriptions

associated with that destruction level, of which Arad 24 is one. Each date will be

discussed in this section. Evidence will suggest that the ostracon may be appropriately

dated to the early phase of the Babylonian assault on Judah beginning in Tevet of

Zedekiah's ninth year (i.e., December 588/January 587 B.C.E.).

Aharoni's conclusions on Arad' stratigraphy was called into question almost

immediately. The principal points of contention are two: concerns pertaining to

paleographic similarity among inscriptions of Strata VII and VI;[64] and the relationship

between the casemate fortification, which Aharoni associated with Stratum VI, and other

architectural elements.[65] Should Stratum VII be considered distinct from Stratum VI?

Due to the style of dressed masonry of the casemate wall and the fact that it appears to

have been associated with the attached Hellenistic tower of Stratum IV, it now appears

relatively certain that the casemate fortification was never part of Stratum VI; in the early

sixth century Arad appears to have had a large open courtyard.[66] Dating the casemate

fortification to the Hellenistic period is not necessarily evidence for an improper

distinction between Strata VII and VI. Recent reevaluations of the stratigraphy and

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[64]One typological analysis of Arad inscriptions from Stratum VI (Arad 24 was not included in the study) suggests that the stratum's inscriptions are typologically older than 586 B.C.E. (the Lachish control group) yet newer than 625 B.C.E.; see Joel F. Drinkard Jr., "Epigraphy as Dating Method," in *Benchmarks in Time and Culture: An Introduction to Palestinian Archaeology Dedicated to Joseph A. Callaway* (ed. Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., Gerald Mattingly and J. Maxwell Miller; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 417–39.

[65]For an overview of the controversies related to stratigraphy, see Dale W. Manor and Gary A. Herion, "Arad," esp. 334–36.

[66]See especially, Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," esp. 41, 44, and 46–47; cf. also Herzog, "Arad: Iron Age Period," *OEANE* 1:174–76 (175); Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 165.

ceramic assemblages have suggested that the strata are similar yet warrant differentiation.[67] The similarity between the two strata is significant: Arad Stratum VII may have been destroyed and rebuilt (as Stratum VI) only to be destroyed after a short period of time, i.e., before significant changes could occur in pottery styles.[68] Accepting that the two strata may be distinguished, the reasonable dates for the destruction of Arad Stratum VII include 609 B.C.E. (Josiah's supposed conflict with Egypt) and 597 B.C.E. (the first Babylonian assault). Of interest for the present study is the destruction date for Stratum VI. Three dates have been proposed: 597 B.C.E.; 595 B.C.E.; ca. 587 B.C.E. Each will be discussed in turn, beginning with 597 B.C.E.

597 B.C.E.: a near vacuum of evidence. If one considers that the destruction of Arad Stratum VII is related to a possible assault on the Judahite fort by forces under Egyptian control following Josiah's encounter with Pharaoh Necho ca. 609 B.C.E.,[69] then one might find in Nebuchadnezzar's first assault on Judah (ca. 597 B.C.E.) following Jehoiakim's rebellion a suitable context for the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. Many

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[67]Stratum VII preserves ceramic traditions that have not been found in the destruction layers of Lachish, Jerusalem, and Tel ʿIra that have been dated to ca. 587 B.C.E.; see Lily Singer-Avitz, "The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages of Arad," *TA* 29 (2002): 110–214, esp. 180–81.

[68]Herzog (The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," 49), holds to Stratum VII and Stratum VI as distinct strata (with Eliashib [Elyashib] as commander of each fort) without providing a specific date for the destruction layers:

> The finds at Arad show that the fortress could have been destroyed twice over a short period of time, during the period of activity of the same commander. Nonetheless, Elyashib could have been stationed at Arad twice, and a gap of 20 or even 30 years between the two destructions should not be excluded. (49)

[69]So, e.g., Aharoni, *AI*, 149; Lemaire, *IH*, 1:151; Lemaire, "Arad Inscriptions," *OEANE* 1:176. The destruction of Arad Stratum VII ca 609 B.C.E. is more assumed than supported; recent publications on Arad have dated the destruction of Stratum VII to ca. 597 B.C.E. (see below).

commentators on the inscriptions from Stratum VI prefer this date.[70] The work of André

Lemaire has been particularly influential in this regard.[71] The destruction of Stratum VI,

then, is attributed (at least in part) to Edomites in cooperation with Babylon.

Setting aside any presumed date for Arad 24, the evidence for Edomite

involvement in the destruction of Arad ca. 597 B.C.E. is all but lacking.[72] 2 Kings 24:2 is

often cited by commentators on Arad 24 as evidence for Edomite hostility against Judah

in 597 B.C.E.,[73] yet the verse makes no mention of Edomites. Consider 2 Kings 24:1–2.

> In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his
> servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. [2] The LORD sent
> against him bands of the Chaldeans, *bands of the Arameans*, bands of the
> Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it,
> according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.[74]

In describing retributive attacks following Jehoiakim's rebellion, "bands of Arameans"

(גדודי ארם) are included among the raiding parties of Chaldeans, Moabites, and

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[70]See, e.g., Lemaire, *IH*, 1:186 (1977); and, more recently, Lemaire, "Arad Inscriptions," *OEANE* 1:176; see also Pardee, *HAHL*, 28–29, 61; see also Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 102; Renz, *HAE*, 1:348–49; Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 119.

[71]In preferring 597 B.C.E., Lemaire is cited in Pardee, *HAHL*, 61; Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 102; Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 119. Lemaire considers the Negev to be more likely under Edomite than Judahite control between 597 and 587. Lemaire cites the work of Alt (1925) and could not take into account the reevaluation of Edomite-Judahite geopolitics in the Negev revealed by archaeology during the late eighties and nineties; See *IH*, 1:186, 191–95, 231–35.

[72]See also Chapters One and Five. One might go so far as to say that without the emendation of 2 Kgs 24:2 discussed in this section, specific biblical references to clashes between Edom and Judah ca. 597 B.C.E. do not exist; cf. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11; Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 306.

[73]E.g., Lemaire, *IH*, 1:193; Renz, *HAE*, 1:348–49 (noting the lack of clarity as to how the verse should be coordinated with other events).

[74]Emphasis mine; the translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Ammonites. Incidentally, "Raiding bands" (גדודי) of *Arameans* are referenced several

times in the Masoretic Text (MT).[75] Moabite "raiding bands" are also known.[76] Edomite

"raiding bands" are not known.[77] The MT of 2 Kgs 24:2 makes no mention of Edom.

Circumventing this absence of evidence for *Edomite* involvement in the first

Babylonian assault, one might suggest that the occurrence of "Arameans" (ארם) in 2 Kgs

24:2 should be emended to "Edomites" (אד[ו]ם) due to graphic confusion of a *dalet* (ד)

for a supposedly original *resh* (ר). Lemaire references Jeremiah 13:19 in support of his

view of a possible Edomite capture of the Judahite Negev, which he infers in part from 2

Kgs 24:2.[78] This verse describes (or predicts) that "the cities of the Negev are closed up"

(ערי הנגב סגרו), yet the verse does not necessarily pertain to the geopolitics of the Negev

immediately following 597 B.C.E. Indeed, the second half of the verse, which states that

all of Judah has been wholly taken into exile (הגלת יהודה כלה הגלת שלומים), reinforces the

predictive nature of Jer 13:17–27 and suggests that v. 19 more readily pertains to the

geopolitical situation *following the second Babylonian assault* (ca. 588–586 B.C.E.).[79]

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[75]See 2 Kgs 11:23–25; 5:2; 6:23.

[76]See 2 Kgs 13:20–21.

[77]See, however, an Amalekite raiding band (1 Sam 30:1, 8, 14, 15, 23).

[78]Lemaire, *IH*, 1:151, 186; cf. 1:192–93.

[79]The fact that the remainder of the chapter has in its context a situation where "all of Judah" has obviously not been exiled does not necessitate that v. 19 is a hyperbolic statement about geopolitics of the Negev shortly after 597 B.C.E. The previous verse readily allows understanding v. 19 as predictive of (or a latter reflection upon) the situation in the Negev with the impending Babylonian crisis of ca. 588–586 B.C.E. The fact that places such as Arad and Ramath-Negev are *not* mentioned as among those that returnees from the exile inhabited in texts describing the Persian period (e.g., Nehemiah 3; 7; Ezra 2) hardly evidences that ca. 597 is a preferrable date for the fall of the Judahite

Moreover, apart from considerations of the geopolitics behind the text, "Edom" does not figure in this verse from Jeremiah.[80] Neither 2 Kgs 24:2 nor Jer 13:19 explicitly reinforce 597 B.C.E. as a time of *Edomite* hostility.

Jeremiah 35:11, which likely pertains to Nebuchadnezzar's first assault on Judah,[81] is also cited by Lemaire as evidence for Edomite control of the Negev,[82] yet the verse actually references (again) *Aramean* rather than Edomite activity. Shall Jeremiah 35:11 also be emended in order for it to correspond to an emendation suggested for 2 Kgs 24:2? Text-criticism suggests otherwise.[83] Historical warrants also cast doubt on the appropriateness of these emendations. In Assyrian records, Arameans (Akk. *aramu*) are found alongside Chaldeans (Akk. *kaldu*; cf. biblical כַּשְׂדִים [*kaśdîm*]); such attestations may be found in both 2 Kgs 24:2 and Jer 35:11.[84] The two references to "Arameans"

Negev rather than 587 B.C.E. Similarly, the restricted size of Yehud during the Persian period cannot be used as evidence that Judah lost the Negev in 597 rather than 587 B.C.E. Reflecting the prevelance of this view, see, e.g., Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 787–88 and the bibliography cited there. Reading the verse as a whole, Jeremiah 13:19 more readily suggests that the Negev was relatively intact and under Judahite control between 597 and the final Babylonian assault on Judah.

[80]Note, however, Jer 13:21, which predicts that the enemy from the north (v. 20) will place as head over Judah those trained to be intimates/friends/allies (כי־יפקד עליך ואת למדת אתם עליך אלפים לראש); a context of betrayal in this verse and the overwhelming regularlity with which אלוף (as a form) appears with Edom explicitly in context reinforces the possibility that Edom may be among the intimates subtly referenced in this verse. Psalm 55:14 [Eng. 13] might be instructive in this regard (see also vv. 21–22).

[81]Jeremiah 35:1 introduces the oracle with a reference to the reign of Jehoiakim.

[82]Lemaire, *IH*, 1:151.

[83]LXX, MT, and Vulgate read "Aram/Syria" The Syriac reads "Edom".

[84]For discussion and related bibliography, see Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, 306. It is also possible that the two biblical texts pertain to the same event, namely, the Babylonian retaliation against Judah ca. 597 following Jehoiakim's rebellion,

have similar contexts and neither has sufficient text-critical support to warrant

emendation. In consideration of this point and coupled with the extra-biblical connection

between Arameans and Chaldeans from Assyrian records, the emendation in 2 Kgs 24:2

of ארם (Aram) to אד[ו]ם (Edom) does not appear appropriate. Although 597 B.C.E. is

often cited as a date of Edomite hostility,[85] it is abandoned as an appropriate date for

Edomite hostilities and Arad 24 due to lack of evidence.

596/5 B.C.E. and Arad 20: Aharoni's insubstantial curio. According to Yohanan

Aharoni, an inscription on a storage jar (Arad 20) might provide a more precise date for

the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. According to Aharoni's restoration,[86] Arad 20 reads

as follows.

In the third [year]	1. בשלשת
[In the] month of Ṣaḥ	2. ירח צח

Ṣaḥ is an otherwise unknown month.[87] Aharoni suggests that this third year corresponds

to the third year of the Judahite king who ruled during the time of Stratum VI, namely,

Zedekiah. It is probable that many if not most of the ostraca found in the destruction

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although the context of Jeremiah 35:1–19 could alternatively pertain to ca. 605 B.C.E. and the Philistine revolt; see Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (AB 21B; Garden City: Doubleday, 2004), esp. 571–72, 576–77.

[85]See, e.g., Lindsay, John. "The Babylonian Kings and Edom." *PEQ* 108 (1976): 24–25; Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad." 18 (his early position, see below); although many commentators from the past three decades on the book of Obadiah tend toward the final Babylonian assault on Judah as the time of Edomite hostilities, some have attributed the initiation of Edomite hostility to the first assault; see, tentatively, e.g., Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 419; cf., e.g., Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1993), 787–88.

[86]Aharoni, *AI*, 40–41.

[87]With a philological argument (צח means "bright" or "clear"), Aharoni argues that the name refers to one of the hot, summer months (Sivan?). See Aharoni, *AI*, 40.

layer were written shortly before the destruction, and it may have been standard practice to transcribe inscriptions onto papyrus at the end of each month.[88] This reasonable possibility is often suggested, and appears to be reinforced by the concern for recording dates relative to a particular month as seen in Arad 1, 7, and 17 (see also below on dating Arad 24 to Tevet, December 588/January 587 B.C.E.). Thus, Arad ostraca found together in one locus of a destruction layer may pertain to the same secretarial month[89]—the last one—in the life of Arad Stratum VI. With this probability in mind and with the consideration that Arad 20 possibly references the third year of Zedekiah, Aharoni can suggest that Arad (and the Judahite Negev) may have been destroyed in 596/5 B.C.E. because "the writing of the date could not have preceded by more than a few months the time of the destruction."[90] For Aharoni, Arad 24 reveals the cause: an Edomite invasion.

This interpretation of Arad 20 and its consequences for the date of the destruction of Arad Stratum VI and, therefore, Arad 24 has not been influential.[91] Aharoni's co-excavators (who are among those who date the destruction of Stratum VII to 597 B.C.E.

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[88]On this conclusion and the final month of Arad as the tenth month, 597 B.C.E., see, e.g., Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, 105–06; and Lemaire ("Arad Inscriptions," *OEANE* 1:176), who dates the fall of Stratum VI to 597 B.C.E. and writes:

> Apparently, these ostraca were kept for one month and, at the beginning of the next month, were registered on a papyrus scroll. The Elyashib ostraca seem to date to the tenth month—Tebet—starting on 16 January 597 B.C.E., when Nebuchadnezzar was either on his way to attack Jerusalem or was already besieging it. The month was probably the last in the fortress's existence.

[89]It is less safe to say simply "lunar month" than secretarial month; a crisis situation may have forced a delay or termination of bookkeeping practices.

[90]Aharoni, *AI*,150.

[91]Cf. comments by A. F. Rainey in the 1981 edition of Aharoni, *AI*, 41.

and the destruction of Stratum VI during the final Babylonian assault ca. 588–586 B.C.E.)

provide a reasonable alternative to his interpretation of Arad 20:

> …the jar inscription may represent the vintage date of the wine brought out of
> storage for the builders of Stratum VI, and not the date of the fortress's
> destruction. Perhaps during his visit to Babylon, Zedekiah was given a vote of
> confidence by the Chaldean king and given permission to rebuild some of the
> Judean fortresses despoiled in 598 B.C. Wine used by the workmen in 594 could
> very easily have borne the date of king Zedekiah's third year.[92]

Arad 20, then, would have no bearing on Edomite involvement in Arad's destruction (and

therefore nothing directly to do with Arad 24). Aharoni himself testifies that "some of

these suppositions are of necessity hypotheses."[93] Therefore, Arad 20 appears to be

unrelated to Edomite hostility. Indeed, there have been a number of attempts to

understand the terse inscription of Arad 20, none of which appears to assist in reliably

dating either Arad 24 or the destruction of Arad Stratum VI.[94] Further data is required to

make credible Aharoni's dating of Arad 24 and the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. It is

accordingly rejected as a possible date for the destruction of Arad.

The Date of Arad 24: Tevet (December 588/January 587 B.C.E.)

The most plausible option? Because the dates for Arad 24 discussed above seem

dubious, the final Babylonian assault on Judah (588–586 B.C.E.) is the only remaining

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[92]Herzog, *et al.,* "Fortress at Arad," 29.

[93]Aharoni, *AI*, 150.

[94]For criticism of Aharoni's interpretation, see also Lemaire, *IH*, 1:151, 186; for
"one-third bath," rather than "third year," see E. Lipinski, "Northwest Semitic
Inscriptions," *OLP* 8 (1977): 81–117 (esp. 91); for the first line as pertaining to the third
year (likely of Zedekiah) and the second line pertaining to the person responsible for the
contents' delivery, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 43.

possible date for Arad 24 readily found in the relevant literature.[95] The "evidence" for

placing the ostracon in this context, however, has been little more than identifying the

problems with other possible dates and associating with Arad biblical texts such as

Obadiah and Psalm 137, which may reflect events at the time of Jerusalem's fall (see

Chapters One and Five). We lack definitive evidence for dating Arad 24 to ca. 588–586

B.C.E., yet some recent publications are beginning to reflect an alignment with that date.[96]

The remainder of this major section on Arad 24 will offer biblical and inscriptional

evidence that result in an inference that the Judahite fortresses of the Negev fell during

the early phases of the Babylonian assault.

Jeremiah 34 and the Date of Arad. Jeremiah 34 may be used to date more

precisely the fall of Arad during the Babylonian assault beginning in the tenth month

(Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (i.e., December 588/January 587 B.C.E). Jeremiah 34

may be understood as comprising two units:[97] vv. 1–7, which might pertain to the

beginning of the siege, and vv. 8–22, which might pertain to a latter phase of the siege,

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[95]For the final Babylonian assault on Judah (ca. 588–586 B.C.E.) as the date for both Arad 24 and the destruction of Arad Stratum VI, see, e.g., Herzog, *et al.*, "Fortress at Arad," 29. The discussion amounts to the following:

> It is most likely that Arad Stratum VI was destroyed by the Edomite invasion of the Negev at the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judah (Obadiah 10–14; Ps 137:7). A dramatic testimony to the Edomite threat comes from one of the ostraca (No. 24), associated by its script to Stratum VI, in which the commander of Arad is ordered to send reinforcements to Ramat-Negev to ward off an Edomite attack.

[96]See, e.g., Manor, and Herion. "Arad," 1:335; Singer-Avitz, "The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages of Arad," 110–214, esp. 182; cf. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 162.

[97]See, e.g., William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 232–43.

i.e., the beginning of famine, Egypt's arrival on the scene, and the temporary Babylonian withdrawal.

Jeremiah 34 might relate to the freeing and subsequent re-enslavement of Hebrew slaves by the Jerusalem elite during the protracted Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. The sense is that in a context of covenant formation (Jer 34:8) and prior to the temporary lifting of the siege of Jerusalem due to Egypt's arrival in Palestine, liberty was proclaimed to Hebrew slaves, who were then released from their servitude (34:8–10).[98] With the arrival of Egyptian forces and the lifting of the siege,[99] the elites' hopes were restored and former slaves became slaves once more (34:11).[100] Consider verses 1–2.

> The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth and all the peoples under his dominion were fighting against Jerusalem and all its cities: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Go and speak to King Zedekiah of Judah and say to him: Thus says the LORD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.[101]

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[98]This release was perhaps motivated in part by the resistance slave-owners might have had in feeding them given the scarcity of food; cf., for example, Lamentations 4:3–5, 7–10, which describes starvation affecting the population (including the elite) of Jerusalem; cf. Ezek 5:10. As a community under siege, there was likely a mixed collection of warrants and motivations among advocates for emancipation (e.g., economic, military, and theological).

[99]Egypt's arrival is not made explicit in Jeremiah 34 (see, however, verse 13 and Jer 37:5, 11). The *lifting* of the siege is made explicit in Jer 34:21–22. In terms of reconstructing the fall of the Negev, *which* "first year" date one chooses for the arrival of Egyptian forces is a moot point if the date for the hostilities in the Negev can be further specified through epigraphic data.

[100]Cf. these last two sentences with, e.g., J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 414–15. The entirety of chapter 34 might describe events prior to the lifting of the siege due to Egypt's arrival. See also Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 239; and Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah*, 179.

[101]The translation here and in verse 7 to follow is that of the NRSV.

Verse one communicates that a Babylonian army as well as forces comprised of other peoples and nations under Nebuchadnezzar's dominion (ממשלת ידו) were fighting against Jerusalem and all its cities (ועל־כל־עריה). What may be important for the date of the fall of Arad Stratum VI is the information presented in Jer 34:7, which concludes the unit seemingly pertaining to the opening phases of the Babylonian assault:

> . . . the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah; for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained.

The verse has much in parallel with verse one, including references to the king of Babylon, his army, and Judahite cities under attack. In comparison of the two verses, a progression of the "historical" situation might also be perceived. The rather vague reference in verse 1 to the (multi-national) Babylonian army "fighting…against all [Judah's/Jerusalem's] cities" (נלחמים על־כל־עריה) is subsequently specified as "fighting . . . against all the cities of Judah that were left" (נלחמים . . . על כל־ערי יהודה הנותרת). The two verses describe a Babylonian assault that has already commenced. Perhaps the artistic movement of vv. 1–7 is one of generality to specificity rather than a progression of an "historical" geopolitical situation in Judah. Even so, "all the cities of Judah *that were left*" (על כל־ערי יהודה הנותרת) suggests that the number of Judahite-controlled cities has become reduced since the beginning of the siege. Similarly, verse 7 records that the Shephelah fortifications of Lachish and Azekah were the only "*fortified* cities . . . that *remained*" (הנה נשארו . . . ערי מבצר) under Judahite operational control. Changes in the political landscape have occurred since the beginning of the Babylonian assault. Arad Stratum VI was fortified, as were several other Judahite sites in the Beersheba Valley (see Chapter Three), but none of these is mentioned.

When was the Beersheba Valley lost, and, therefore, *what is the latest possible date for Arad 24*? Precisely when the siege was lifted due to this Egyptian advance is a matter of debate.[102] In consideration of an eighteen-month siege,[103] reconstructions are nearly unanimous in concluding that the Egyptian advance occurred during the first year of the siege.[104] Moreover, these reconstructions typically place the event at or prior to the end of summer (Tishri; September/October 587 B.C.E.).[105] Thus, the collapse of the Negev and the arrival of the Egyptian relief force can be placed in relative chronological order. If Arad Stratum VI was destroyed during the Babylonian crisis of 588–586 B.C.E., then evidence available from Jeremiah 34 suggests that the Negev fortifications fell prior to the arrival of the Egyptian relief force. A reasonable conclusion can be reached that

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[102]Arguably, the Egyptian relief force arrived only a few months after the start of the Babylonian siege. But the various reconstructions are tied up in a number of contested issues, ranging from the calculating of regnal years (Nisan or Tishri), traditional covenant ceremony times, feasts of booths and weeks, and sabbatical years. For the difficulties involved and the problems with some attempts to date the Egyptian arrival, see William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989, esp. 238–39; and Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah*, 186–87.

[103]10 Tevet (December 588/January 587) through 9 Tammuz (July 586); cf. 2 Kgs 25:1–3 and Josephus, *Ant*, 10.131–35.

[104]Cf. options reviewed in Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 2:238–39; and Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah*, 186–87. As should become clear in the discussion to follow, an arrival of the relief force subsequent to the siege's *second* "tenth month" of Tevet (i.e., December 587/January 586 B.C.E.) contradicts two data. First, Arad 24 includes a communiqué from the king—who would have been besieged with Jerusalem cordoned by that time, making the sending of specific orders by ground difficult. Second, the evidence from Jeremiah 34 suggests that the Negev fell prior to the lifting of the siege. Thus, reflecting the majority view that the Egyptian arrival occurred early, the data from Jeremiah 34 and the Eliashib archive, together with Arad 24 contradict the second Tevet of the siege as a possible date for the Negev's fall.

[105]For Tishri (September/October 587), see John H. Hayes and Paul K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 97–98.

the Negev (and most of Judah, for that matter) fell within months of the start of the Babylonian campaign. Thus, most of the Judahite fortifications were lost between Tevet (December 588/January 587 B.C.E.) and, say, Tishri (September/October 587). Judah evidently lost all Negev fortifications within a few months of the initiation of the Babylonian assault.

In sum, an inference pertaining to the geopolitics of the Beersheba Valley has been made that is based on three positions pertaining to the historical reliability of certain texts. First, the rhetorical situation of Jer 34:8–22 is in an appropriate historical sequence with vv. 1–7 in regard to the historicity of freed slaves and remaining Judahite fortifications. Second, Jeremiah 34 corresponds accurately to reality in regard to the three remaining fortified cities remaining under Judahite control immediately prior to the temporary withdrawal of Babylon (i.e., there are no other fortifications remaining under Judahite operational control). Third, prior to Zedekiah's revolt and the arrival of Babylon (Jeremiah 27, 28; 2 Kgs 25:1), Judah retained control over more than three fortified cities, including those fortifications in the Beersheba Valley region that are apparently referenced in the Arad Stratum VI inscriptions. If these positions are deemed valid, we can then infer that *between the initiation of Zedekiah's revolt and the resumption of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Judah lost control of the fortified city of Arad as well as the other fortified cities in the Beersheba Valley region.* If Arad 24 reveals that Edomites invaded the valley and assaulted (or assisted in the assault of) its fortresses at that time, then, due to the information available from Jeremiah 34, *Edomites must have participated in the initial phases of the Babylonian assault on Judah.* The importance for a reconstruction of the history of Edomite-Judahite relations during the Babylonian crisis is

that Edomites were not biding their time awaiting the results of the conflict as is

sometimes supposed,[106] but were active in its opening phases, prior to the arrival of

Egyptian forces that temporarily forced Babylon to lift the siege of Jerusalem

In light of this inference, we may ask whether epigraphic data can be reconciled

with the conclusion that Edom initiated hostilities in the opening phases of the

Babylonian assault against Judah, namely between the initiation of the assault in the

"tenth month" (Tevet; December 588/January 587) and the end of summer (Tishri;

September/October 587).

"The tenth month" as the initial phase of the Edomite-Babylonian stratagem.

One inscription, Arad 7, includes an order for supplies to be given to a group of

approximately 50 Kittim (כיתים; probably Greek or Cypriot mercenaries in service to

Judah),[107] who might have been in transit in order to take up positions at a location some

distance from Arad. Because the provisions are for several days, the Kittim could have

been sent as far as Kadesh-Barnea to the south or toward some more northern position in

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[106]As Chapter One has shown, several commentaries on Obadiah have suggested that Edomites were "biding their time" or similarly standing aloof during the Babylonian assault; see also Chapter Five on עמדך מנגד [Obad 11aα]).

[107]See Arad 1, 2, 4, 5(?), 7, 8, 10(2x?), 11, 14, 17. For an overview of the Kittim, see Aharoni, *AI*, 12–13; and David W. Baker, "Kittim," *ABD* 4:93. Estimates for the number of Kittim mercenaries range from 25 to 75; see, e.g., Lemaire, *IH*, 1:229–30; see also the bibliography in Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 23; Smelik (*Writings from Ancient Israel*, 106–07) also provides a satisfactory overview of the number of Kittim relative to the rations provided them. If the supplies are for foods during transit, then one critique of this overview (which is based on Lemaire's calculations) is that the food (caloric intake) required of an equipment-bearing adult for four days of marching without weight loss would likely be beyond the one loaf (or liter of flour) per day suggested by the calculation; wine rations (see e.g., Arad 7, and, of course, way-stations and other undocumented supplies may have supplemented these foodstuffs.

anticipation of a Babylonian assault on Jerusalem and its environs.[108] If the foodstuffs

represent *several days of travel* (which is not certain), then the Kittim might be leaving

the Beersheba Valley.[109] The foodstuffs are to be given at the start of the "tenth month,"

which provides an intriguing congruency with the "tenth month" of 2 Kgs 25:1. Consider

Arad 7.[110]

To Eliashib: And Now, give to the Kittim for the tenth month, on the 1st of the month up to the sixth of the month, three *baths*. [And] write it before you on the second of the tenth month. And oil,	1. ‏אלאלישב.וע‎ 2. ‏ת.נתן.לכיתים.‎ 3. ‏לעשר֯י ב 1 לחד‎ 4. ‏ש.ע֯ד השׁשה‎ 5. ‏לחד֯שׁב ב(תים) 3 [ו‎ 6. ‏כתבתה לפֹנ֯יך.ב‎ 7. ‏שנים לחדש.בעש‎ 8. ‏רי ושׁמנ ח‎ 9.

Lines 3–7 instruct that the foodstuffs are to be distributed on the first day of the tenth

month (‏לעשר֯י‎; line 3). The distribution, however, is to be recorded as having taken place

on the second day (lines 6–7). Much discussion of this ostracon centers on this curiosity,

which might reflect religious sensibilities pertaining to work during a New Moon

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[108]Alternatively, the distribution of foodstuffs to the Kittim may have nothing to do with travel. Aharoni (*AI*, 15–16, 144–45) speculates that the Kittim may have been given supplies for the number of days required for their transit, in this case, perhaps as far south as Kadesh-Barnea. They may have been a company on patrol (cf. $\sqrt{}$ ‏סבב‎ in Arad 2)

[109]Arad 8, however, suggests that Arad is supplying (the same?) Kittim for the thirteenth through eighteenth days of the (same?) month; see also Arad 2, below.

[110]The restoration is that of Aharoni, *AI*, 22 with two exceptions. First, I have provided the word divider that ends line 2, which is clearly represented in the drawing (the photograph, however, shows only a trace of the divider); second, I have included the restored *waw* ending line 5 (which is provided in Aharoni's "Masoretic" restoration, yet not in the restoration proper); on both modifications, cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 22). The translation is that of Dobbs-Allsopp (*Hebrew Inscriptions*, 22), excluding that of a conjectural restoration provided for line 9 ([‏תמ ושלחנו‎]).

holiday.[111] For the purposes of this study, this ostracon is historically important due to its

relevance for determining the date of the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. Particularly

influential has been the discussion provided by André Lemaire:

> If we do have the archives of the tenth month, the destruction of Stratum VI of Arad probably took place…at the end of this tenth month (after the 24th day mentioned in ostracon 17, 8) or more generally at the beginning of the eleventh month. Additionally, we have seen that Stratum VI was likely destroyed by Edomite raids connected to Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion. Therefore, the "tenth month" apparently corresponds to a precise historical reference. According to the Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar gathered his troops and left to attack Jerusalem in the month of Kislev 598 B.C. (December 18th 598–January 15th 597 B.C.). Since Jehoiachin ruled only "three months" (2 Kgs 24:8), his father, Jehoiakim, died either in the month of Kislev or in the month of Tevet, probably by assassination. The announcement of Nebuchadnezzar's arrival and of king Jehoiakim's death must have encouraged the Edomites (cf. 2 Kgs 24:2) to hasten to take part in the general hunt by storming and taking the Negev fortresses.
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> On this assumption, the "Eliashib archive" may be dated to the "tenth" month (Tevet) of the eleventh year of Jehoiakim, a month beginning on January 16th 597 B.C.[112]

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[111]The Judahite military, aware of popular or official religious sensibilities, might have continued to undertake economic transactions and troop transport operations even on the first day of the month, the New Moon holiday (see Amos 8:5; cf. Num 29:6; Ezra 3:5), at least in times of crisis. The operation is officially recorded as having occurred on the month's *second* day. Along these lines, see, e.g., Pardee, *HAHL*, 41; Lemaire, *IH*, 1:169; Smelik (*Writings from Ancient Israel*, 11), writes,

> The most interesting aspect of this ostracon is the instruction to record this delivery for six days not on the day itself but on the following day. Clearly, no deliveries were supposed to be made on the first day of the month…. Compromises over the commandments is clearly a phenomenon of all periods.

[112]My translation of Lemaire, *IH*, 1:231–32, which reads:

> Si nous avons ainsi les archives du dixième mois, c'est probablement que la destruction de la strate VI d'Arad a eu lieu avant que ce mois ne soit enregistré et vérifié, c'est-à-dire probablement à la fin de ce dixième mois (après le 24 mentionné dans l'ostracon 17, 8) ou au tout début du onzième. D'autre part, nous avons vu que la strate VI avait vraisemblablement été détruite par des raids Edomites liés à la première invasion de Nabuchodonosor. Dès lors, le "dixième mois" semble concorder avec une indication historique precise. D'après la Chronique Babylonienne, Nabuchodonosor a rassemblé ses troupes et est parti

Presuming a reckoning of regnal years according to the spring calendar (Nisan), the

"tenth month" of Arad 7 may be understood as congruent with biblical and extra-biblical

texts relating to the Babylonian assault of 597 B.C.E. Evidence for Edomite hostility at

the time, however, is lacking (see above on 2 Kgs 24:2).

Could the Babylonian assault ca. 588–586 B.C.E. be an appropriate context for

Arad 7? A rather striking correlation exists between the tenth month recorded on Arad 7

and the month of Nebuchadnezzar's initiation of the siege of Jerusalem according to 2

Kgs 25:1 (cf. Jer 39:1; 52:4).[113]

> And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the
> month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against
> Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around.

This verse identifies the initiation of the siege as in "the tenth month" (בחדש העשירי) of

Zedekiah's ninth year. According to the chronology employed in this study, this tenth

month (Tevet) equates to December 588/January 587 B.C.E. Specifically, it is not until

the tenth day of that month that Nebuchadnezzar came with all his army against

Jerusalem, and encamped against it (ויחן עליה). Subsequently, the army built siegeworks

against it all around (ויבנו עליה דיק סביב). We can safely state that Judah would have been

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pour attaquer Jérusalem au mois de Kislev 598 av. J.C. (18 décembre 598–15
janvier 597 av. J.C.). Puisque Yoyakin ne régna que "trois mois" (2 R 24, 8), son
père Yoyaqîm mourut, probablement assassiné, soit au mois de Kislev, soit au
mois de Țebet. L'annonce de l'arrivée de Nabuchodonosor et celle de la mort du
roi Yoyaqîm durent inciter les Édomites (cf. 2 R 24, 2) à se hâter de participer à la
curée générale en prenant d'assaut les forteresses du Négeb.
    Dans cette hypothèse, il faudrait dater les "archives d'Elyashib" du
"dixième" mois (Țebet) de la onzième année de Yoyaqîm, mois commençant le
16 janvier 597 av. J.C.

[113]NRSV; if the correlation between this verse and Arad 7 has been presented in
the secondary literature, then that presentation has escaped my attention. Like 2 Kgs 25:1
and Jer 52:4, Jer 39:1 records that the Babylonians approached in the ninth year of
Zedekiah in the tenth month, although the precise date is not provided in that text.

aware of Babylon's approach and would have had some time to prepare for the assault—

preparations no doubt underway since the beginning of Zedekiah's rebellion. The verse

communicates that at least one siege (against Jerusalem) commenced immediately after

the Babylonian arrival on the tenth day. The building of seigeworks would have begun

and it would take only a day or two for Babylonian forces to establish patrols and

encampments around Jerusalem. Although speculative, a generally effective cordon

would be in place within one or two weeks. A fully effective cordoning would require

both patrols and, as might be evidenced, a siege wall,[114] which would take considerably

more time to establish. The ability of officials in Jerusalem to send messages by

ground[115] to other fortifications would be severely limited or impossible subsequent to an

effective cordoning of Jerusalem.[116]

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[114]For the cordoning of Jerusalem with a siege wall (דיק) perhaps made of stone and surrounding the city, see Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 73, referencing further bibliography. Until the siege wall was completed, numerous Babylonian patrols and posts along the perimeter of Jerusalem would be needed in order to inhibit communication between the Jerusalem command and other Judahite military contingents.

[115]Messenger/homing pigeons, if in use in ancient Judah, would have become critical in Jerusalem's continued functioning as the chief Judahite command center. While attested as early as 444 B.C.E. in Greece, homing pigeons are not attested in Mesopotamia and Egypt until the Byzantine or Islamic period; see Edwin Firmage, "Zoology (Fauna)," *ABD* 6:1145. Whether signal fires in Judah could communicate detailed messages is unknown.

[116]It is also reasonable that Judahite fortifications not yet surrounded by enemy forces would have engaged in logistical, supply, and combat operations based on the latest intelligence reports and as command and resource conditions dictated. We would expect to see from an intact and complete archive of the last month in the life of a Judahite fortification evidence of these operations. The extant Eliashib archive reflects these operations. I find it reasonable to conclude that the Judahite command could dispatch communications from Jerusalem by ground with a modest chance of success (especially at night) up until a siege wall was constructed. Within days of the arrival of the Babylonians on 10 Tevet, however, any such mission would be risky as Babylonians would have established positions and patrols around Jerusalem and would be becoming increasingly familiar with both the local topography and Judahite messenger tactics.

If it is appropriate both to conclude that the Eliashib archive of Stratum VI may be dated to the "tenth month" and to accept that the historical inferences made from Jeremiah 34 are sound (i.e., Arad fell in the early phases of the Babylonian assault), then a further conjecture may be made. The "tenth month" of Arad 7 may very well be the "tenth month" (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year according to 2 Kgs 25:1 (December 588/January 587).[117] The "tenth month" of the following regnal year is incongruent with the available data. The Egyptian relief force had apparently come and gone by that date and the Negev had most likely already fallen (see above on Jeremiah 34). If the siege indeed lasted eighteen months, then *the only year of the final Babylonian assault with a "tenth month" that is congruent with all categories of data is Zedekiah's ninth regnal year beginning in Nisan 588.* I conclude that the "tenth month" of Arad 7 is the "tenth month" of 2 Kgs 25:1 (cf. Jer 39:1; 52:4).

On the basis of this conclusion, further historical information from the archive comes to light. As Arad 7 references days 1, 2, and 6 of the "tenth month" (lines 3, 4, and 7), it is unlikely that this requisition to supply the Kittim (perhaps for purposes of their patrol or relocation) was issued subsequent to the first day of that month. Thus, the ostracon pre-dates the arrival of the Babylonian army on the tenth day and may also be understood as pertaining to a Judahite relocation of forces in the days immediately prior to Babylon's arrival. As the ostraca from the ninth month were disposed of or obliterated subsequent to their transcription to papyrus, this ostracon is probably one of the earliest of the Eliashib archive of the destruction layer of Stratum VI. As we have seen, Arad 24

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[117]Cf. also the "ninth" year of a jar fragment found in the ash of the destruction level of Lachish (Lachish 20); for the coordination of this ostracon with Arad 20, 2 Kgs 25:1–2, and the year of the Babylonian invasion, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 335–36.

also reflects troop transfers, yet with an explicit context of urgency. As the summary of
conclusions based on a consideration of Arad 24 stated, it is reasonable to conclude that
Edom was perceived as a threat by the time of the writing of that ostracon and that
Edomites might have already attacked one or more Judahite positions in the region. Arad
24 apparently includes a command from the king (Arad 24:17). Given the inferences and
conjectures expressly stated above, an appropriate date for Arad 24 is some day after the
first of the month, when these Kittim were supplied for their patrol or relocation that
would last several days (Arad 7), yet before the effective cordoning of Jerusalem, when
written messages from the Jerusalem command would be unlikely (2 Kgs 25:1).

The reiterative threat in the inscription and the obvious call for a redeployment of
some portion of Arad's garrison to Ramath-Negev make sense if the Kittim of the region
had been sent elsewhere and if the king came to perceive a southern threat in the
Beersheba Valley (which Eliashib may have perceived as well). In light of the crisis to
the north (Babylon) and to the south (Edom; Arad 24:20), and with the valley's military
capabilities possibly diminished with a relocation of a company of Kittim from the
valley, perhaps until the thirteenth day of the month (see Arad 8:2–3),[118] the Judahite
strategy in response to the *southern* threat appears to have been to maintain a reduced
garrison at Arad and Qinah (location uncertain) while bolstering the administrative
command center for the Negev region, Ramath-Negev (Tel ʿIra). By midmonth, only
days after the Babylonian arrival, it appears that both Jerusalem and the Negev were in
crisis. If Arad 24 is to be dated to the same month as the Eliashib archive, then one of the
last communiqués sent on foot from the Judahite command may have been this order to

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[118]This possibility presumes that the Kittim of Arad 7 are to be equated with those
of Arad 8.

bolster Ramath-Negev. Subsequent to a cordoning of Jerusalem, Ramath-Negev would function mostly independently from the Jerusalem command in its defense of Judahite interests in the Negev. To what extent this order to diminish the garrison at Arad facilitated Arad's fall is unknown, but, as we shall see, the fortress apparently fell shortly after this order was received.

If the duties of transcribing the month's ostraca to papyrus were shirked or delayed due to the crisis, then ostraca from a lunar month other than the "tenth" might have survived in the archive. Specific days appearing on ostraca without a designated month could become altogether unreliable in reconstructing the chronological order of events. The chronological picture of the geopolitics of Arad would accordingly be compromised. This legitimate possibility aside, one piece of evidence exists that might further specify the date of Arad's fall. Arad 17 suggests that the fortification survived at least into the "twenty-four[th] of the month" (לחדש 1 1 1 1 20). This date is recorded upon the reverse of the ostracon, which includes a requisition for a jar of oil from Arad to be delivered to an uncertain location. Presumably, this day is the twenty-fourth day of the "tenth month" mentioned in Arad 7. Accordingly, we may suggest that Arad fell some time after the twenty-fourth day of the same month and before the month's ostraca were transcribed to papyrus and disposed of or obliterated.

This more specific dating of the fall of Arad to a time shortly after the twenty-fourth day of Tevet and perhaps early in the eleventh month has already been suggested by A. Lemaire (albeit for a different year),[119] and is accordingly not altogether new. What is suggestive of 588/587 B.C.E. as a more appropriate *year* is the congruence

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[119]Lemaire, *IH*, 1:231; i.e., after the twenty-fourth day of the tenth month of 597 B.C.E. (see above).

between 2 Kgs 25:1 (cf. Jer 39:1; 52:4) and the Eliashib archive in regard to a "tenth month" as a crisis month. Arad 24 reveals an Edomite threat prior to the fall of Arad. Other evidence suggests that the Negev fell early and that Arad fell within a few weeks of the initiation of the Babylonian assault. Accepting the especially conjectural nature of a reconstruction of the last *days* of a Judahite fortification, and in consideration of the evidence presented thus far, we may conclude that Edomites were active against Judahite positions in the Negev in the initial days of the Babylonian assault and likely before an effective Babylonian cordon around Jerusalem was completed. The assaults implied by this statement is, in effect, a simultaneous, two pronged attack against Judah from at least two directions.

The inference of part one. Prior to turning to more tenuous evidence, some contemporary military jargon may assist in describing the conflict discernable based on the reconstruction available from this section. Within the Palestinian theater of operations during the assault on Judah, no fewer than two military zones of operation existed. Babylonian forces engaged Judah in what may be called the Central Hills Operational Zone. Concurrently, Edom engaged Judah in the Negev Operational Zone. A third zone of military operation may have been in the Shephelah (see Jer 34:7). The intact Shephelah fortifications of Lachish and Azekah reflect either a relatively effective Judahite resistance compared to the Negev zone, or were not part of early and earnest Babylonian attention (i.e., *these* fortifications in the Shephelah were not high priority objectives). If, however, Babylon entered the Central Hills through the Shephelah along the border with Philistia, then the Shephelah Operational Zone would have received early

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attention in order to secure Babylonian supply lines with the coast.[120] Accordingly, the

Judahite garrisons at Lachish and Azekah were bypassed or, more likely, held in check

while a main force advanced against Jerusalem. In the days leading up to the "tenth day"

of the "tenth month," Judah's stratagem would likely be focused on preparing for the "foe

from the north," and that foe's possible point of entry into Judah: west, north, or east of

Jerusalem.

If Judah did not perceive a threat from the south prior to the Babylonian assault,

then some Judahite Negev troops would reasonably have been relocated toward

Jerusalem in order to provide a stronger front against the advancing Babylonian forces.

If Edom was in league with Judah, then any Edomite military forces already mobilized to

the region or approaching from the south immediately prior to the assault may have been

seen as part of its common cause against Babylon, as Edom's fulfillment of mutual

defense or revolt clauses. Thus, Edom would have arrived in the Beersheba Valley

ostensibly in support of the Judahite Negev. The Judahite command might feel secure in

transferring some of its southern forces northward. Negev commanders might also give

shelter and support to allied brigades arriving from Edom. If this is at all possible, and if

Edom gave Judah false security in the Beersheba Valley, then the Negev Operational

Zone was especially primed for a surprise Edomite assault. In short, Edomite strategic

positions (either due to an extended deception or a sudden shift in allegiances; see

Chapter Five) coupled with the Babylonian approach from the north resulted in a

battlefield shaped to Edom's benefit. The Negev Operational Zone was primed for a

rapid Edomite take-over, and Judah was caught in a *surprise* and multinational pincer

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[120]Cf. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 218–19.

maneuver, whereby the Judahite front (north) and rear (south) were simultaneously attacked.

Coordinating the evidence from 2 Kings 25:1–2 and Arad 7 of the Eliashib archive, we can date the fall of Arad Stratum VI to the "tenth month" of Zedekiah's ninth year. Coupling this conclusion with data from Jeremiah 34 the following inference was made. *In the earliest phases (if not coinciding with the first days) of the Babylonian assault on Judah, Edomite military contingents appear to have been a surprise force engaged in the Negev zone of military operations.* In the last days of Arad Stratum VI, the Edomites were a threat and may have already taken one or more Judahite positions. Commanders of Arad and at least one other Judahite position were ordered to send troops to Ramath-Negev (probably Tel ʿIra). Arad fell shortly thereafter. Thus, within a few weeks of the Babylonian assault beginning in the "tenth month" (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January 587; cf. Arad 7, 17), the Negev was being overrun. Exactly how long Ramath-Negev survived as a redoubt of the Negev Operational Zone is unknown, but what seems clear from this synthesis of data is that Edom was a hostile and successful force in that zone. A question specifically related to this chapter is whether other inscriptions from Arad and the Negev dated to this period may be read in a manner supportive of the conclusion that Edom shifted from an economic (if not political) partner with Judah to an enemy in opposition at the outset of the Babylonian assault.

Part Two: Tenuous Extrapolations from the Epigraphic Evidence

Shifting Relations: From Friend to Foe in One Month?

Works touching on the topic of sixth-century Edomite hostility and incorporating the Arad inscriptions often restrict inscriptional evidence to Arad 24 and 40 (and

sometimes Arad 12 and 26). Several Arad Stratum VI inscriptions, however, pertain to

Edom and should be incorporated into a discussion focusing on Edomite-Judahite

relations at that time. The poor preservation of many of these inscriptions makes

extrapolations of the geopolitical relationship between Judahites and Edomites

particularly tenuous. That being said, this section will consider several ostraca in some

detail: Arad 2, 3, 12, 21, 26, and an Edomite ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza. This section

works under the hypothesis that many of the ostraca found in the same or adjacent room

of the Arad Stratum VI destruction layer (Arad 2, 3, 12, 21) were written shortly before

the destruction, as seems clear at least from Arad 24 and the Eliashib archive (Arad 1–

18).[121] It was a dangerous time, and the obvious must be stated: an archive from *one*

month is not an archive of *one moment.* The Arad Stratum VI inscriptions were written

during *a crisis month of days* and circumstances on the ground at the advent of the

Babylonian siege no doubt changed from day-to-day. A positive to negative shift in

Edomite-Judahite political relations may be perceived among these inscriptions. This

shift in political relations may be divided into three stages: the stage of amicable relations

prior to Edomite hostility (Arad 26 and 12); [122] the stage of Edomite hostility against

Judah (Arad 21, 3, and 2 in light of Arad 24, above); and the stage subsequent to Edom's

successful Negev campaign.[123] This third stage discusses a sixth-century Edomite

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[121]E.g., Lemaire, "Arad Inscriptions," *OEANE* 1:176; cf. above on 596/5 B.C.E.

[122]In concluding that objects of Edomite type found at Arad (and elsewhere in the region) are to be regarded as reflecting trade and cooperation rather than conflict, Herzog ("The Fortress Mount at Tel Arad," 82–83) references Arad 12 and 26, stating that they "emphasize cooperation with the Edomite kingdom, or at least with merchants and caravan drivers of Edomite origin active in Judah" (83).

[123]The objection is acknowledged that conclusions based on this arrangement— particularly regarding the Arad Stratum VI ostraca—fail due to circular reasoning (i.e.,

ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza and some Persian period inscriptions from Arad.

Collectively, these inscriptions show that Edom incorporated the area into its domain.

Stage One: Amicable Relations as the Babylonians Approach? (Arad 26 and 12)

 Arad 26: "Fellow-of-Qos" and "Yahweh-man" together. Most of the Arad

Stratum VI inscriptions were found together in a room in the southeastern portion of the

fort (locus 637) and constitute part of the "Eliashib archive" (Arad 1–18).[124] Arad 26,

however, is one of a dozen or so inscriptions found at other loci and dated for

paleographic reasons to Stratum VI.[125] We cannot safely conclude that it dates to the

month preceding the destruction of Stratum VI. What we can say is that it does not

postdate that destruction. The text has few legible words and was found in a pit in the

western portion of the fortress. Arad 26 reads as follows.[126]

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the inscriptions of the month's archive (Arad 12 prior to Arad 3) are ordered in a manner
that accords best with other categories of evidence already discussed; therefore
conclusions drawn from the inscriptions "support" the thesis already developed). The
point in organizing the discussion in this manner is that it appears from all categories of
evidence that Judah and Edom came to be in life or death crisis; inscriptions may be
chronologically ordered reflective of this shift in relations. A reverse ordering of the
sixth-century Judahite inscriptions would result in an awkward situation: during the crisis
month, Edom initially attacked Judah, only to shift to a cooperative economic and
political partner. Such heroic redemption is discordant with other categories of data.

 [124]Aharoni, *AI*, 11 (plan 6–7); note the problem with Aharoni's classification of
this locus as a "casemate room"; in this regard, see Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel
Arad," esp. 41, 44, and 46–47; for recovery loci for the inscriptions discussed in this
section, see Aharoni, *AI*, 181–82.

 [125]Aharoni, *AI*, 52.

 [126]My translation; Aharoni's restoration (*AI*, 52) appears sound; cf. Renz, *HAE*,
1:395; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 55–56; note also the restoration of
Pardee (*HAHL*, 62), who neither includes a translation of קֹס ויה in line 3, nor discusses
the consonants.

Uriyahu…	1. אריהו
…from my lord, officer (?)	2. מֹּנֹאדני.שר
…-Qos and Yah[u]-…	3. קֹוס ויה
…my lord…	4. אדני
	5. …
	6. …

Three words (אדני ["my lord"] 2x; שר ["officer"])[127] suggest that this inscription was a correspondence pertaining to at least one military officer and one or more other military personnel. In addition to Uriyahu,[128] two other persons appear to be referenced in the inscription (line 3). The names might be part of a list of other names.[129] What is preserved of the names is suggestive of cooperation among Judahites and Edomites.[130] The first name ends with the theophorous element ("-Qos"), the principal Edomite deity, and we may infer that the named person is Edomite or of Edomite lineage. The second name appears to begin with the theophorous element יה[ו] ("Yah[u-]"), and we may infer that the named person is Judahite. Effacement and breakage prohibits much more to be stated. What remains possible is that in a context of superiors and officers, an Edomite and a Judahite appear to be associated. Whether this association was recognized by the two persons or was one merely established by the purposes behind Arad 26 cannot be known. Similarly, whether that association was short-term, long-term, familial, military, political, economic, religious, or otherwise is indeterminable from the inscription. This

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[127]Alternatively, שר might be the first two consonants of a word unrelated to any office; perhaps they are to be understood as the beginning of another personal name. Cf. Aharoni, *AI*, 52.

[128]Or ʿAzaryahu (עזריהו), reading with Lemaire, *IH*, 1:197–98.

[129]Alternatively, ויה may introduce a new clause.

[130]Cf. Herzog, "The Fortress Mount at Tel Arad," 82–83.

possibly non-hostile association of a Judahite and an Edomite would make better sense in the period immediately preceding the first phase of the Babylonian assault.

Arad 12: Supply the Edomite with foodstuffs quickly! The second of two inscriptions from Arad that have been used as direct evidence of Edomite and Judahite cooperation is Arad 12,[131] the interpretation of which poses difficulties due to the ostracon's significant effacement and its fragmentary state. Found with other ostraca of the Eliashib archive, it may be dated to the month leading up to the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. The letter orders Eliashib, whose name is partially visible in line 1, to provide oil (line 1), flour (line 2), and, perhaps, bread (line 6) to an individual with a name possibly containing the theophorous element קוס ("Qos"), which, as in Arad 26, is suggestive of Edomite ethnicity. Only the text and translation of line 3 is provided.[132]

[to Qo]sʿanal quickly . . . .].צ .מהרה סענל[לקו .3

Foodstuffs are to be given quickly (מהרה) to a named individual. As should be apparent, the restoration of [לקו]סענל is questionable, despite the absence of alternative readings provided by the consulted literature. Only the *samek* (ס) remains of the supposed Edomite theophorous element in the name. The restoration to קוס ("Qos"), however,

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[131]As above, see Herzog, "The Fortress Mount at Tel Arad," 82–83; cf. also Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 142.

[132]Although the reconstructions available in the secondary literature maintain a reading that oil and flour are to be given, the effacement and breakage prohibits knowing the volume of measure of flour and whether an additional resource was included between the "1" (jar) of oil and the "2" (measures) of flour (lines 1–2). Alternatively, the gap between the "1 oil" and the "2 flour" may be explained in part by a specification that the oil be sealed. For various proposals, see Aharoni, *AI*, 26; Pardee (*HAHL*, 45); Renz, *HAE*, 1:372–73; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al*., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 28–29; in an seemingly inadvertent omission, Lemaire's reconstruction (*IH*, 1:171) drops half of line 1.

should not be entirely discredited. In addition to the apparent attestation of a Qos-

theophore in Arad 26, support for an attestation of this Edomite [Qo]sʿanal of Arad 12:3

exists in the appearance of the same name, Qosʿanal, from Tell el-Kheleifeh at the mouth

of the Gulf of Aqaba.[133] If the restoration is correct and *if* the inscription references

relations between Edomites and Judahites (which is hardly certain), then one may extract

some information relevant to the thesis.[134] The military and administrative establishment

of the Judahite Negev orders foodstuffs to be quickly given to a person of Edomite origin

or lineage. The rapid transport of oil and flour in a crisis month to this Edomite

individual (and his party of whatever ethnicity) suggests that the foodstuffs are part of

allied preparations for an impending Babylonian assault on Judah. Alternatively, the

quick provision of foodstuffs could be read as an attempt to "pay off" a potentially hostile

(and dominant) Edomite, but this consideration is cumbersome and unsustainable. Crisis

aside, perhaps Qosʿanal paid for these foodstuffs or is otherwise due them; the fact that

they are to be delivered "quickly" (מהרה) in a crisis month need not reflect any

extraordinary situation (see, however, אל תאחר in Arad 2:6, below). The inscription

might pertain simply to Beersheba Valley economics, albeit during the month in which

Babylon arrived. Obviously, this ostracon is fodder for speculation. What is possible is

that *Judahites and Edomite appear to be functioning in such a manner that everyday*

supplies may be transferred among them. If Arad 12 and 26 reflect historical events in

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[133]Aharoni, *AI*, 12; Renz, *HAE*, 1:373, citing N. Gleuck (*BASOR* 71, 1938, 15); cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 142.

[134]Pardee (*HAHL*, 46) concludes that "the sad condition of the ostracon makes it impossible for us to extract the information it may have contained on political conditions" between Edom and Judah. Even so, a political climate of *cooperation* is perceivable between Judahite political or military personnel with at least *one* Edomite.

the last month of the life of Arad Stratum VI, and if Edom was involved in Arad's destruction, then a plausible conclusion is that they reflect Edomite-Judahite cooperation.

Stage Two: Divulgence and Effects of Betrayal? (Arad 21, 3, and 2)

Arad 21: "As God lives" next to Edom. This ostracon was found in a room adjacent to the locus of the Eliashib archive. One of the two fragments is almost entirely effaced.[135] The result is that we have only about one-third of the inscription, mostly the initial portions of each line. There is unanimity in reading "Edom" (אֱֺדֹם) in line 8, but any conclusion about Edomite-Judahite relations from this ostracon is speculative. This inscription has not seen detailed discussion in any reconstruction of those relations. Because it does apparently mention Edom, and because this mention probably has in its context the theme of recompense (שלם √), an oath, and (perhaps) a diminishing supply of bread, it is included here as an appropriate bridge from stage one to stage two Edomite-Judahite relations during the crisis month.[136] It is uncertain whether it would fit best within stage one or within stage two (if such stages are defensible).

Your son Jehucal (hereby) greets Gedaliah [son of] ʾIlyaʾir and your house. I bless you by [YHW]H. And now, my lord is about to do … may YHWH reward [my] lord … … Edom(?). By the life of … … now … … and all th[at] … … and if there is still	1. בן[גדליהו.לשלם.שלח.יהוכל.בנך 2. יהו]ל.ברכתך.ביתך.ולשלם.אליאר 3. אדני.עשה.הן.ועת.הֺ]. 4. י[לאדנ]ל.יהוה.ישלם.[ ]. 5. [ ] אֱֺדֹם חי] 6. [עתֺ] [ ] ה[ ] 7. [אש]ר[וֺכל] [ ] 8. [עֺד.ואם] [ ]

…	9. [אש[ ]
…bre[ad]…	10. [ ] לח]ם

Although family terminology is found in the opening address (בנך.יהוכל; line 1), the letter probably uses this terminology metaphorically for relative rank. Arad 21 is probably a correspondence from a person of inferior rank (Jehucal) to his superior, military or otherwise.[137] Line 5 could be restored to אדם חי [יהוה] ("…Edom. As [YHWH] lives!").[138] "Edom" is adjacent to an oath phrase. Both follow a phrase wishing YHWH's repayment to Gedaliah (ישלם.יהוה.לאדנ]י; line 4). In short, YHWH is invoked for purposes of justice. This confluence of nationalities, oaths, and wished recompense apparently concludes a statement communicating that Jehucal's superior is about to engage in some unknown course of action (line 3). To be sure, the serious terminology might only reflect the importance *for Jehucal* of Gedaliah's actions. Also, how are we to understand the particle הן (line 3) in the phrase ועת.הן.עשה.אדני ("And now, my lord is *about* to do…"). Are Gedaliah's actions impending, conditional, or completed?[139] What is relatively certain is that Gedaliah's success would please Jehucal, who communicates a hope that YHWH shall appropriately repay Gedaliah for his actions, which were to take place with "Edom" and "[By the] life…!" in context.

Somehow related to the purpose of this letter is Jehucal's concern whether Gedaliah knows "if anything remains" (ואם.עד; line 8). Does this phrase reference a duty

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[137]Cf. Aharoni, *AI*, 42; Lemaire, *IH*, 1:187; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 45 (noting that a blood relation cannot be ruled out).

[138]Aharoni (*AI*, 42) references the haplographic(?) Lachish 3:9 (חיהוה); cf. חי יהוה in Lachish 6:12; 12:3; see also Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, esp. 331.

[139]Contrast Aharoni (*AI*, 42) and Lemaire (*IH*, 186) with Dobbs-Allsopp, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 45); Pardee (*HAHL*, 57–58) translates the line as conditional.

yet to be required of Jehucal by his superior? Does it introduce a subsequent course of action dependant on the results of a course of action such as that in line 3?[140] Does it pertain to remaining resources (see a parallel in Arad 2:7, below), to which Jehucal would like to have access? The latter appears quite plausible, given a parallel attestation and the common restoration of line 10 to read "bread" (לח[ם). That restoration, however, is not certain. The frequency with which "bread" appears in the Arad ostraca reinforces this preference. Apart from this ostracon, לחם appears in the Arad ostraca only in the Eliashib archive (1–18).[141] Bread is not necessarily the best fit. Nor is it the only possible restoration. One frequently attested root that fits both the consonants and the context is שלח ("to send").[142] Although rarely attested, מלחמה ("battle")[143] also remains a possibility. Whatever Gedaliah's action and whatever "remains" for Jehucal, what we can say is that "Edom" (אָֹדם; line 5) appears at the heart of the inscription. Should Arad 21 become definitively dated to the "tenth month" of the Eliashib archive (Arad 1–18), it would be an excellent example of a crisis month inscription. Possible supply operations and/or international references and "serious language" fit that context. Whether Edom is an enemy or ally, remains, however, indeterminable from the inscription.

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[140]Cf., e.g., Lev 26:18.

[141]See the concordance on the root in Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 706; elsewhere the root appears once in Lachish 9.

[142]For the numerous attestations of this root in the Arad ostraca—which far outnumber those of לחם—see Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 706; that the state of the ostracon permits these restorations, I rely on the photo in Aharoni, *AI*, 43.

[143]See twice in an inscription from Kuntillet ʿAjrud (15:5, 6); for Pardee (*HAHL*, 57–58), Edom, here, might be a military concern.

Arad 3: Emergency re-supply of Beersheba…Edomites! This inscription from the Eliashib archive is a good example of a crisis month inscription. The last legible word apparently references Edomites (ואדמם; Arad 3:12),[144] but the degree of effacement of the reverse (lines 9–14) allows very little to be said about Edom in relation to the command on the obverse (lines 1–8), which calls for the supply of the unfortified city of Beersheba. The population there is apparently suffering from a food shortage. Consider Arad 3.[145]

To Eliashib: And now,	1. אל.אלישב.ועת
Give from the wine, 3 *baths*.	2. תן.מן.היין 1 1 1 ב\ ו
Hananiah commands you to	3. צוך.חנניהו.על ב
Beersheba with the load of a	4. ארשבע עם.משא צ
pair of donkeys, and you shall pack	5. מד.חמרם.וצררת
them with dough. Then	6. אתם.בצק̇.ו
count the wheat and the	7. ספר.החטם.והל
bread and take	8. ח̇ם̇ ולקח̇ת
for yourself …	9. [אל̇כם̇]
…	10. רי̇ [ ]
to…3…	11. ל̇[ ]1̇ו[1 1 1] [ ]
and Edomites…	12. ו̇אדמ̇ם.ה[ ]
…	13. VACAT
	14. [ ]מ[ ] [ ]

The syntax of וצוך.חנניהו.על בארשבע ("[and] Hananiah commands you to Beersheba"; lines 2–4) likely communicates that Eliashib is to take *over* some administrative command Beersheba—at least while he carries out the re-supply

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[144]"Edomites" might not be represented by the consonants; one would expect אדמים (cf. Pardee, *HAHL*, 35). One wonders, however, how else the consonants could be read.

[145]The restoration and translation (with additional ellipses corresponding to line divisions) is that of Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 15. Cf. Aharoni, *AI*, 17.

operation.[146] Presumably, there is some sort of Judahite garrison there. This commission

neither necessitates that Eliashib was the commander at Arad (although it seems to be the

case that he was) nor suggests that Eliashib was merely Arad's quartermaster.[147] What

may be concluded from this text is that Eliashib is an officer of some sort, one who

should be able to take command of the unfortified yet garrisoned Judahite population

center of Beersheba. We can also conclude that this town outside the remains of Tel

Beersheba (destroyed in the late eight century) was still intact. If any Edomite assault

was underway in the valley, then the resultant problem Beersheba experienced was not

direct Edomite hostility, but a supply shortage—apparently a critical one.

Having set forth the contextual geopolitics of the inscription, it can be stated that

the order to send two donkeys burdened with *dough* (בצק) on the approximately 40

kilometer trek (by road) is suggestive of this emergency.[148] An entire day spent in transit

would allow the dough time to rise so that it could be baked immediately upon arrival.[149]

Also suggestive of a food crisis at Beersheba are the orders on the obverse of the ostracon

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[146]Contrast Lemaire, *AI*, 164; for biblical parallels (e.g., 1 Sam 25:30) and discussion supportive of the syntax, see Aharoni, *AI*, 18; Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 17. Pardee (*COS* 3:83) suggests the inventory is taken at Arad.

[147]So Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 116.

[148]Aharoni, *AI*, 18, discussing the interesting biblical parallel of Exod 12:34, which attests √ I. צרר and בצק in a context of a hasty departure from Egypt. This parallel is regularly noted; cf., e.g., Pardee, *HAHL*, 35.

[149]This explanation for "dough" makes good sense; with Aharoni, cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 17; contrast an alternative in Pardee, *HAHL*, 36 (identifying as a "guess" the possibility that the fresh dough is intended for *elitists* at Beersheba for whom staler bread is unbecoming); and Lemaire (*IH*, 165), who suggests restoring line 6 to read בצֹר ("harness") rather than בצק ("dough") and who reads the verb as from √ II. צרר "show hostility toward, press." For Lemaire, the phrase could then be indicative of a forced march. Foodstuff shortage or forced march, either reading implies a situation befitting a crisis month for Arad.

that have been understood as a call for Eliashib to take an inventory of foodstuffs at that

town (lines 7–8).[150] The numeral "3" in line 3 might also suggest a supply concern. As

the reverse evidently reads "Edomites" (אדמם; line 12), Eliashib's re-supply operation

must take Edomites into consideration. Are they the cause of the emergency as the

inference of part one suggests?[151]

Removing two donkey-loads of dough from Arad does not necessarily imply that

Arad's stores are seriously depleted. Line 2 evidences this point; the "3 *baths*" of wine

are to be taken *from* the wine supply (מן היין). Arad is apparently satisfactorily-supplied

at the time of Arad 3. Elsewhere, however, there is crisis. What was happening in the

central Beersheba Valley? Was the Beersheba defense force without effective

commanders or supply officers (quartermasters)? Were other officers competent in

logistics and supply no longer present at Arad? Were *human* resources becoming

depleted? Contrarily, was there a sudden *swell* of population (and mouths to feed) in

Beersheba—refugees from areas more directly effected by the crisis? Alternatively, did

the Judahite command over the Negev Operational Zone want, for strategic purposes, an

experienced supply officer to make a thorough assessment of remaining Judahite

provisions in the valley? The references to foodstuffs, inventories, and supply operations

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[150]Unless the inventory is to be taken at Arad. Due to the order of commands given, this inventory of Arad's supplies would occur *after* Eliashib's (presumed) return from the re-supply mission. Noting that the inventory to be taken might be from either Arad or Beersheba, Pardee (*HAHL*, 35) translates lines 7–8 in a manner accentuating the food crisis: "Calculate the (amount of) wheat (remaining there) and count the loaves of bread (available there)…."

[151]Regarding the possible reading of "Edomites" in line 12 and referring his readers to Arad 24, Aharoni (*AI*, 18) writes " . . . it appears that Eliashib's mission and this emergency situation were connected with the approach of the Edomites . . . ."

in this and other inscriptions from the Eliashib archive of the last month of Arad are tantalizing and raise many unanswerable questions.

What we can conclude is that the crisis produced serious supply concerns. At the time of the writing of Arad 3, the conditions in the central Beersheba Valley were such that Judahite commanders in the Negev zone could yet communicate with Arad (from Tel ʿIra?). Moreover, the order for re-supply operations from Arad to Beersheba suggests that the valley—at least along an arc from Arad to Tel ʿIra to Beersheba—was passable by Judahite forces. Edom, however, is evidently in the context of this re-supply operation during a crisis month. Evidence from the inscription suggests that if Edom was a threat or had already attacked, that threat or attack was likely more to the south or southeast of the Judahite-passable arc from the northeast to the central Beersheba Valley.

Arad 3 then Arad 2: Diminishing supplies. Edom is not referenced in Arad 2. If Arad remains satisfactorily-supplied at the time of the writing Arad 3, then that inscription might predate[152] the writing of Arad 2. If the supply crisis of Arad 2 was caused at least partially by Edomite hostility in the valley, then Arad 2 might reveal the increasing strain on Judahite resources because of that crisis. Like Arad 3, this inscription is part of the Eliashib archive and includes a requisition for foodstuffs. A supply of bread and wine sufficient for four days are to be delivered to the Kittim (Greek or Cypriot mercenaries in service to Judah). While this sort of distribution is not exceptional (see above on Arad 7), Arad 2:6–7 is suggestive of two concerns befitting a crisis month. First, a command requiring Eliashib's immediate action regarding the

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[152]Probably referencing the numbering system rather than chronological relationship, Aharoni (*AI*, 15) considers Arad 3 as the "sequel" to Arad 2.

foodstuffs is given: "do not be late" (אל תאחר; line 6). It is doubtful that the imperative

implies incompetence on the part of Eliashib. It is possible that, for some reason,

Eliashib had been delayed or deficient during a previous supply,[153] perhaps of the Kittim.

In consideration of the crisis month, one might also imagine that the supplies must be

immediately ready for a strategic relocation of the Kittim[154] as determined by the

Judahite command over the Negev zone of operations.[155] A second concern suggests that

Arad 2 postdates Arad 3. The inscription reveals some doubt in the Judahite command as

to whether certain supplies remain at Arad. Line 7 requisitions that "if there is yet

vinegar" (ואם.עוד.חמץ) it should be given to the Kittim in addition to the other supplies.

The phrase (ואם.עוד) befits a crisis month and is paralleled by Arad 21:8 (ואם.עד; see

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[153]Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 14.

[154]Cf. Aharoni, *AI*, 15–16, 144–45.

[155]Mention of the location to which they would travel should not be expected
from military orders to a supply depot, particularly if that deployment is during a time of
crisis. Such mention would be valuable intelligence should the inscription fall into
enemy hands. Similarly, we might speculate that the frequent failure to include the
sender of the messages in the Eliashib archive might also be a military intelligence
concern. Alternatively, this failure to include the sender in ancient Hebrew letters might
be a literary convention. If so, that convention would eventually be changed. By
Pardee's reconing (*HAHL*, 147), only four of the "pre-Christian" Hebrew letters contain
the sender's name (Arad 16, 21, 40, and Lachish 3; contrast those several dated to the Bar
Kokhba period), while seventeen Hebrew letters contain no information toward the
identification of the sender. Presuming the monthly transcription of ostraca to papyrus, it
is interesting to note that *all of these seventeen letters without information identifying the
sender are from crisis months*, either at Arad (Arad 1–8, 10–12, 17, 18) or the destruction
layer at Lachish (2, 4, 5, 6). If the lack of sender is a form-critical issue (epistolography),
it may well be that military correspondences in Judah during times of crisis would restrict
strategic information to a need-to-know basis (contrast 2 Sam 11:15 in a context of
military conflict with the (admittedly) Edomite ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza set in a post-
conflict environment, below).

above) and, perhaps, Arad 5.[156] Supplies are apparently diminishing. So too, perhaps,

are troops and able officers (cf. Arad 3 and 24). Arad 2 is congruent with logistical

operations during a crisis month.

Stage Three: Edomite Success in the Negev Operational Zone

An Edomite ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza. A critical piece of evidence for an

Edomite takeover of one Judahite fortification in the Beersheba Valley region is an

"Edomite" ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza. This ostracon was found in a chamber of ʿUza's

gatehouse *in a Judahite stratum* dated from the end of the seventh century to the

beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. Several Hebrew ostraca were also found in the

stratum. The excavators suggest that the fortification fell into Edomite hands around the

time of the Babylonian conquest of Judah.[157] Subsequently, the excavators suggest that

"the fort was captured by the Edomites shortly *before* the Babylonian conquest."[158] The

inscription reveals information relevant to Edomite military success in the region.[159]

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[156]Cautiously, this diminishing of supplies might be suggested in the order to complete the wine rations with "new/fermenting wine" (החמר.יין; Arad 2:5); for other evidence of dwindling supplies (coupled with the hopes of replenishing some supplies before the "month" is out) see Arad 5:2–3, 10–14 with discussion on "from what is left/remaining" (מן+עוד) in Pardee, *HAHL*, 37–38 and Dobbs-Allsopp, *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 20 –21, and 10 (on Arad 1:5). Alternatively, this "new/fermenting wine" might represent an established category of wine.

[157]Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "An Edomite Ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza," 96–101, esp. 100.

[158]Emphasis mine; Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Ḥorvat ʿUza; A Fortified Outpost," 134; a fuller defense of the temporal reference would be helpful.

[159]For the transliterated text, the text transcribed into Aramaic characters (reproduced here), and an English translation see Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "An Edomite Ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza," 97; an identical restoration of the text and translation

(Thus) said Lumalak (or <E>limelek): Say to *Blbl!*	1. אֻמֹר.למלך אמר.לבלבל
Are you well? I bless you	2. השלם.את.והברכתך
By Qaus. And now give the food (grain)	3. לקוס.ועת.תן.את.האכל
That Aḥiʾma/o…	4. אשר.עמדׄ.אחאמה [ ]
And may U[z]iel lift [it] upon (the altar?)…	5. והרם עׄ[ז]אל.על מזׄ[בח](?)[...]
[lest] the food become leavened(?)	6. [ ] חמר.האכל

The excavators base their determination that the inscription is "Edomite" on three

factors.[160] An invocation of Qaus (Qos; קוס), the principal Edomite deity, is found in the

blessing on a certain *Blbl*. Second, the verbal form of the blessing (והברכתך) appears to

be in the Hiphil stem, while benedictory formula in Hebrew commonly employ the Piel.

Third, some consonantal forms found in the ostracon differ from usual Hebrew forms, yet

are similar to scripts from Edom. One may conclude that the letter is from a high

Edomite official to *Blbl*, the commander at Ḥorvat ʿUza.[161] If we accept that the lack of

attestation of the personal name *Blbl* (בלבל) in Hebrew sources evidences a non-Judahite

ethnicity,[162] then it may also be concluded that the letter is to an *Edomite* commander at

Ḥorvat ʿUza.[163]

(without a transcription into Aramaic characters and without the diacritical marks over
the transcription identifying partially effaced consonants [e.g., אֻ in the Aramaic
transcription above]) is available in Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Ḥorvat ʿUza; A Fortified
Outpost," 134.

[160]Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "An Edomite Ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza," 97–99.

[161]Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Ḥorvat ʿUza; A Fortified Outpost," 134.

[162]For Arabic *bulbul* (a kind of bird) as a possible point of comparision, see Beit-
Arieh and Cresson, "An Edomite Ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza," 97.

[163]Less likely, the inscription may reflect close, friendly, and formal relations
between Edomites and Judahites. The Edomite official communicates to the commander
of a significant fortification guarding the Beersheba Valley entry point along one route
through the Negev to Edom ("the Way to Edom" of 2 Kgs 3:20?) and orders that supplies

With these reasonable conclusions in place, one can consider that the letter is an Edomite military order to the Edomite commander of an Edomite-garrisoned fortification. At some point prior to the writing of the inscription, Edom had taken (either by surprise or by storm)[164] a sizable Judahite fortification at the entry point to the Beersheba Valley region closest to the Edomite heartland. Nothing in the inscription suggests a military crisis. It is likely that the inscription dates to the period subsequent to the Babylon campaign against Judah. What we can say with minimum speculation is that Ḥorvat ʿUza was incorporated into the Edomite domain and that its logistical position would make it a reasonable target for Edomite aggression against the Judahite positions in the Beersheba Valley.[165] The ostracon reveals that Edomites had experienced success in their advance into the Beersheba Valley.

Eventually, a horde of "Qos-venerators" in the valley. As was discussed above, Arad 26 and 12 from Arad Stratum VI possibly include personal names with a Qos-theophore. These names attest to an Edomite presence. As would be expected, Judahite names (i.e., names with YHW-theophores) frequently appear in the inscriptions from

be provided. Accordingly, the order may have been warranted by terms of formal relations among Edom and Judah.

[164]The final report on ʿUza will help in focusing related questions. Given that fact that this ostracon *is in the same stratum* as several Judahite ostraca (Stratum IV), and that the fortification of this two phase Iron Age II stratum was apparently burned (see Beit-Arieh and Cresson, "Ḥorvat ʿUza; A Fortified Outpost," 129, 132, 134), one can ask whether the fort was taken by storm or captured by surprise. Might the Judahite gates have opened with the arrival of supposedly "allied" forces?

[165]Ḥorvat Radum aside, if any other Judahite fortification in the Beersheba Valley region was to be the first target, then an Edomite success there would find the fortification flanked by intact Judahite fortifications (see maps in Chapter Three). Alternatively, ʿAroer would also be a strategically (if somewhat more dangerous) target; taking that fortification would open any location in the central Beersheba Valley to subsequent Edomite assault.

Arad Stratum VI. Edomite names are relatively rare. This situation will change. Clear

evidence of this change exists from the (late) Persian period, some two centuries after

Edom had dissolved as a Transjordanian state.[166] Although dated to the middle of the

fourth century B.C.E.,[167] and hardly constituting evidence for *sixth*-century geopolitics, a

number of Aramaic inscriptions attest to an eventual Edomite presence at Arad.

Of the forty-five inscriptions (each with at least one legible word) published in Y.

Aharoni's *Arad Inscriptions* and discussed by Joseph Naveh,[168] as many as seven include

a Qos-theophore.[169] None of these inscriptions constitutes more than a few words, and

the theophorous element is typically found in a contexts of donkeys, wine (Aram.

חמר),[170] or barley supplies. The Qos-theophore is found in personal names from several

ostraca from Beersheba, attesting to an Edomite presence there and at an associated

agricultural site (Naḥal Yattir).[171] As was discussed in Chapter Three, archaeology has

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[166]For a campaign of Nabonidus as the cause of Edom's demise, see John
Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 23–39, esp. 32–36,
referencing a probable occurrence of "Edom" in the Nabonidus Chronicle; see, now, the
corrected reading of [E]dummu (Edom) rather than [A]dummu (otherwise unknown) in
Nabonidus Chronicle, line i 17 (Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian
Chronicles* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 105, with notes on pp. 282 and 294).

[167]Aharoni, *AI*, 153–76,

[168]See Aharoni, *AI*, 153–76.

[169]Six of these inscriptions are ostraca and one is found on a jar handle; see Arad
Aramaic Inscriptions 1, 10, 20 (the only inscription with the theophore in a personal
name that is fully restorable), 21, possibly 32, 33, and possibly 43; Aharoni, *AI*, 153–54,
157, 161, 164, 169, and 176.

[170]Aharoni, *AI*, 153 and 154 (n.7).

[171]See, Aharoni, *AI*, 176; Naveh, J. "The Aramaic Ostraca," in *Beer-Sheba I:
Excavations at Tel Beer-Sheba 1969–1971 Seasons* (ed. Yohanan Aharoni; Givatayim-
Ramat Gan, 1973), 79–82.

revealed much evidence for Edomite encroachment into and continued presence in southern Judah by the sixth-century.[172] Inscriptional evidence confirms that the encroachment evolved into a lasting presence. The Edomite ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUza reveals that, at least for a time, that presence was secure in its militarily power. The Aramaic ostraca reveal Edomite administrative and economic influence. Thus, the epigraphic evidence suggests that portions of the Beersheba Valley became incorporated into its geopolitical domain.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Conclusion: The Edomite Stratagem*</p>

Epigraphic Data and the Shift in Edomite-Judahite Relations

There should be little doubt that Edomites were among those who populated the Beersheba Valley following the Babylonian assault. Chapter Three argued that the kingdom of Edom had a geopolitical position with sufficient experience in the Negev trade to afford Edom an opportunity to capitalize on the trade running through the Beersheba Valley should Judah fall. This chapter has shown that inscriptional evidence is sufficient to suggest that Edom was a concern during a "tenth month" that saw Judahite deployment and supply concerns and probably saw the fall of Arad toward the month's end (after the twenty-fourth day; see Arad 17). This chapter has argued that this month might very well be identical with the "tenth month" that saw Babylon arrive on the tenth day in order to besiege Jerusalem (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 25:1–2). Such a crisis is a fitting backdrop for these epigraphic data, a backdrop that is more plausible than that of 597 or of 596/5 B.C.E. Based on a synthesis of data, it seems clear that the Negev fell during the

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[172]Cf. Beit-Arieh, ed., *Tel ʿIra: A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev*, esp. 2–3.

earliest phases of the Babylonian assault. Given the archaeological evidence for an

Edomite presence in the Negev by the sixth century, the wealth of Edomite names from

fourth century finds, and the information from sixth-century inscriptions, it is a

reasonable conclusion that Edom was successful in incorporating the Beersheba Valley

into its political domain. Some of this domain was likely taken through military

operations against Judahite positions during the initial phases of the Babylonian assault.

Venturing toward a more specific reconstruction of Edomite-Judahite relations,

this chapter has also shown that inscriptional data (admittedly coupled with biblical texts

such as Jeremiah 34) may be read as suggestive of an Edomite shift from Judah's ally to

enemy *in the course of one month*. Such an ancient reversal of allegiances is not without

precedent. A letter of Shamshi-Adad of Assyria (ca. 1813–1781 B.C.E.) recounts an acute

shift in the political allegiance of Yashub-Addu, a minor king in the eastern Zagros.[173]

> He becomes the ally of the king and swears an oath, (then) he becomes the ally of
> a(nother) king and swears an oath, while becoming the enemy of the first king with
> whom he was allied. His alliance with and then hostility to the king he is allied
> with [take place] within two months!

Although there is no direct evidence from inscriptional data that Edom *betrayed an*

alliance with Judah (see, however, Chapter Five), the evidence is congruent with such an

inference. Some "tenth month" inscriptions from Arad Stratum VI reference "Edomites"

in contexts of economic partnership and, perhaps, allied military associations, (e.g., Arad

12 and 26). A reasonable conclusion is that Edom and Judah were yet cooperating in the

early days of the tenth month (i.e., late December 588 B.C.E.; see also Arad 7). Some

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[173]"Treaties and Coalitions," translated by W. L. Moran (*ANET*, 628); in only
three years, Yashub-Addu had shifted allegiances some five times; see also Hayim
Tadmor, "Treaty and Oath in the Ancient near East: A Historian's Approach," in
Humanizing America's Iconic Book (ed. Gene M. Tucker and Douglas A. Knight; Chico,
California: Scholars Press, 1982), 130.

inscriptions evidently reference Edomites in contexts of economic and military concerns (Arad 3, 21). In one inscription, Edom is evidently perceived as a threat (Arad 24). Babylon was approaching Judah at the start of the tenth month and attacking by midmonth (i.e., early January 587 B.C.E.). A reasonable conclusion is that Edom was a perceived threat by the end of that tenth month.

The chronological ordering of inscriptions may shed light on the contrasting views on the nature of relations between Edom and Judah as expressed in some scholarship referencing these texts.[174] The point I wish to emphasize is that the Eliashib archive was not produced in a chronological stasis. The archive (properly Arad 1–18) dates neither to one moment in time, nor to a typical month of days. It is safe to conclude that the archive pertains to *a crisis month of days*. The inscriptions come from different moments in that crisis, and the texts may be ordered and read in a manner suggestive of a shift in Edomite-Judahite relations.

In light of this shift, there should be little doubt that the Edomite command would desire to keep clandestine any cooperative relationship between Edom and Babylon until the opportune moment, possibly when the Babylonians forces arrived.[175] Some epigraphic evidence suggests that Judahite-supported Kittim (mercinaries?) might have been sent out of the Beersheba Valley prior to the beginning of the assault (see above on Arad 7). An Edomite military presence in the valley prior to the shift in Edomite-

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[174]As above on Arad 12, see Herzog, "The Fortress Mount at Tel Arad," 82–83; cf. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 142.

[175]For reasons of Edomite troop safety, and in order to achieve the strategic military objectives as efficiently as possible, Edomites would best continue functioning as cooperative partners with Judahites until an opportune or coordinated moment. As is understandable in maters of political ambition and military intelligence, many Edomites would have been oblivious to an overarching scheme of the Edomite authority.

Judahite relations could have been perceived by Judahites as reflective of concomitant social obligations of mutual well being and, perhaps, the fulfillment of specific mutual defense and protection clauses (see Chapter Two). A concurrent departure of some Judahite forces and the arrival of "allied" Edomite forces would have effectively shaped the battlefield along the lines of a stratagem for Edomite victory in the Negev. All of this is suggestive of military premeditation on the part of Edom, a clandestine Edomite operation.

The Edomite Campaign: an Overview Reconstruction.

Treaty violation aside (see Chapter Five), the following reconstruction of the Edomite stratagem during the Babylonian crisis is based on a synthesis of the data presented thus far. The reconstruction utilizes contemporary military jargon in order to describe Edomite military activity on the operational level during the Babylonian assault on Judah.

During the Babylonian campaign in the Palestinian theater of operations, there appears to have been at least three military zones of operation against Judah: a Central Hills/Jerusalem Operational Zone; a Negev Operational Zone; and, given the relative survivability of Azekah and Lachish, a Western Operational Zone in the Shephelah.[176] The degree of freedom of action for a given commander of each zone is unknown, yet

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[176]Given that Lachish and Azekah remained intact as Judahite fortifications longer than the Judahite Negev fortifications (see above on Jeremiah 34), this zone might have had relatively stronger defenses. More likely, the Shephelah Operational Zone either had a lower strategic priority in the Babylonian aim of destroying the kingdom of Judah or the zone's political geography (closer to Egypt) made it a relatively dangerous early zone of military operations if Judahite forces retained offensive or defensive reserve deployment capabilities in the other zones of operation. Alternatively, the zone may have been important so as to maintain supply lines to the Mediterranean; efforts to contain the military reach of the intact garrisons at Lachish and Azekah would accordingly be needed; on this last point, cf. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 218–19.

actions in each zone would seek to contribute to the overarching strategic *Babylonian*
aim, namely, the destruction of Judah as an intact and independent kingdom in rebellion.
If Edom was primarily responsible for the attack on Judahite fortifications in the Negev,
then we may consider that, in the Palestinian theater, Babylon placed the Edomite
military in operational command of the Negev. Whether this Edomite command had
freedom to dictate the deployment of its combat forces or to determine military objectives
is unknown. One could expect, however, that the Babylonians would entrust to the
Edomite command much freedom in the Negev so long as the objectives of that
command contributed directly toward achieving the strategic aim of Babylon in the
Palestinian theater. As we have seen in Chapter Three, it was in this zone that Edom had
logistical experience. That chapter also suggested that the Beersheba Valley may have
been by design the intended objective of Edomite economic and political expansion under
Babylonian auspices.

If Arad 24 is to be dated to the month of the Eliashib archive, then we may
conclude that it reflects a perception from the Judahite command that Edom was
engaging in just such a political expansion during the earliest days of the Babylonian
assault on Judah.[177] Inscriptional evidence suggests a shift in Edomite-Judahite relations.
The Edomite leadership apparently had the will, logistical strength, and strategic position

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[177]The specific inference made in part one is that in the earliest phases (if not
coinciding with the first days) of the Babylonian assault on Judah (beginning in earnest
10 Tebet [December/January 588/587 B.C.E.]), Edomite military contingents appear to
have been a surprise force engaged in the Negev zone of military operations. Should
Arad 40 be found to pertain to the same phase, this inference would be reinforced.
Should it be found to pertain to the early sixth century, but not to this phase, elements of
the reconstruction would necessarily need revision. Should it be found to pertain to some
date in the eighth through seventh centuries, the thesis in the main would not require
revision.

to strike against Judah by the time Babylon reached Jerusalem on the tenth day of the "tenth month" (Tevet; December 588/January 587). Given the biblical and epigraphic evidence, Arad probably fell not long after the 24th of Tevet (about mid to late January 587 B.C.E.). It is probable that Edomite forces were responsible (at least in part) for the destruction of Arad Stratum VI. It is also evident that the force capabilities of Arad were diminished, perhaps by half, through a redeployment of forces to Ramath-Negev subsequent perceiving an Edomite shift in allegiance (see above on Arad 24).

With the results of Chapter Three, it may be concluded that the Edomite offensive was aimed at absorbing the whole of the Beersheba Valley into Edom's domain under Babylonian auspices. Tel ʿIra may be the best identification for the Ramath-Negev of the inscription. If so, Judah evidently attempted to merge its forces from other stations into its chief administrative and military center. Thus, Tel ʿIra served as a Judahite redoubt while fortresses such as Arad fell. Of the Negev fortifications, we can propose a specific date only for the fall of Arad. Despite the current inability to date specifically the fall of any other Judahite fortification, it is reasonable that Edomites were militarily successful elsewhere. The "Edomite ostracon" from Ḥorvat ʿUza evidently reflects such a wider military success in Edom's campaign of expansion into the Beersheba Valley region. This much seems relatively defensible, but if the reconstruction of the military elements of the stratagem is to be pressed further, then we would need to know the *first* target of the Edomites' in the Negev Operational Zone.

Accepting the more tenuous conclusions of the second section of this chapter (i.e., the relative chronology of certain inscriptions), we can state that Judahite holdings in the central and northern Beersheba Valley remained intact following the first strikes of Edom

in the region. The rapid loss of Arad within a few weeks of the Babylonian assault on

Judah requires either that Edom had captured a southern fortification at an entry point to

the region at the beginning of that assault, or that Edomite forces circumvented more

southern Judahite fortifications and penetrated to the northern side of the Arad–

Beersheba Valley. The former is more likely, particularly because some inscriptional

evidence reveals a Judahite ability to mobilize through the central portion of the valley

for purposes of re-supply and force repositioning. Supplies were diverted from Arad to

the town of Beersheba (Arad 2, 3) and forces were sent *from* Arad and elsewhere to Tel

ʿIra (probably Ramath-Negev; see Arad 24) subsequent to the Edomite threat or an

Edomite attack. (The supply of foodstuffs might reflect a sudden increase in the

population of Beersheba, perhaps due to the influx of Judahite refugees from locations

more directly affected by the crisis, but this possibility is purely speculative.) For

whatever reason, supplies were being depleted. Judahite operations to supply the town of

Beersheba during the tenth month suggest that *Edom did not control the center of the*

valley in the earliest phases of the campaign. During this time, Beersheba remained

under Judahite operational control as an unfortified site in the central Beersheba Valley.

Thus, if a supply mission could leave Arad and traverse about 40km by road to an

unfortified Beersheba, then the central valley could not have been under Edomite control.

Accordingly, the Judahite fortifications in the region that were most likely the first to be

threatened were either at the far south of the valley (ʿAroer?),[178] or to its south east

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[178]Lemaire (*IH*, 1:192–94) understands ʿUza to be intact at the time of Arad 24 (which he dates to 597 B.C.E.). His reconstruction of the assault has Edom enter at the center of the Beersheba Valley. If this entry point is correct, then Edomites would have been relatively closer to Tel ʿIra/Ramath-Negev than had they entered from the southeast; accordingly, Judahite troop relocations to Ramath-Negev are less likely reflective of a

(Ḥorvat ʿUza and/or the small advance outpost of Ḥorvat Radum). If ʿAroer was the initial target, a Judahite counterattack on the Edomite military force might stem from almost any direction; if such a location was the initial target of Edomite forces, it would result in serious strategic concerns for Edomite defenses in the south-central Beersheba Valley. That the unfortified town of Beersheba is being *supplied and inventoried* after Edomite military contingents became hostile in the region might also speak against the valley's *center* as the initial target of the Edomite campaign. Of course, a short-term supply of the town in order to inventory it for purposes of a subsequent rapid evacuation to a redoubt is also a reasonable course of action if Edom had taken ʿAroer and was threatening Tel Masos and Tel ʿIra. It seems more reasonable, however, to state that Edom's initial targets were the fortifications of Ḥorvat ʿUza and Ḥorvat Radum at the southeast of the Beersheba Valley region. Thus, *early in the Edomite campaign against the Beersheba Valley (prior to the fall of Arad), any sustained, hostile Edomite activity in the valley was probably restricted to areas to its southeast*.

How might Judah respond to this opening phase of the Edomite offensive? Apart from a general retreat, there are at least three reasonable options for the Judahite command: attempt a counterattack; defend Judahite fortifications relatively proximal to Ḥorvat ʿUza from Edomite attack (i.e., reinforce fortifications such as Arad); or defend Judahite positions to the west of Ḥorvat ʿUza from Edomite attack (i.e., supply and send forces to the central Beersheba Valley in order to protect Judahite interest through the defense of a chief administrative center for the region). The Judahite command appears

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Judahite strategic retreat to a *redoubt* than as a more ambitious attempt to defend the center (and, therefore, whole) of the valley from Edomite aggression by an amassing of military strength in opposition to the main body of Edomite forces in the region.

to have opted for the last of these options. Force depletion from the eastern Beersheba Valley occurs as Malkiyahu son of Qerabur (Arad 24.14) evidently leads westward detachments from two or more sites in order to reinforce Ramath-Negev (most likely Tel ʿIra). The Judahite defensive strategy might have been detrimental to the force capabilities of Judahite fortifications further east, and might have hastened their capture. Anticipating an assault on Tel ʿIra also reflects the value of the location as a center for control of the local economy and regional trade passing through the valley, and it has been suggested that gaining such control was likely part of the long-term Edomite stratagem. Tel ʿIra is physically closer to the Mediterranean and overlooks the valley; striking and taking a primary control center for the valley would leave Arad a peripheral (albeit sizable) vestige of Judahite operational control over the region. With the center and southeast lost, it would be unlikely that Arad alone could exert much influence over the trade routes, which would see traffic return with the cessation of hostilities. Perhaps this *strategic retreat* is what the Judahite command determined to be the most sensible defensive maneuver given the Babylonian assault from the north, the hopes of Egyptian assistance, and the opening phases of a surprise Edomite campaign in the Beersheba Valley: defend Judahite national interests in administration of trade routes heading through the Negev and to the Mediterranean by attempting to secure and hold the principal Judahite command center in the Beersheba Valley.

This course of action also makes good sense of the language of threat and warning communicated to Eliashib in Arad 24. This language anticipates the hesitance a commander at Arad (and at Qinah) might have had in hearing orders for the attenuation of forces when an active threat existed only kilometers to the south. The economic value

for Judah in maintaining direct influence over the center of the valley (e.g., over Tel Masos, Tel Malḥata, and the route to the Mediterranean) may have outweighed concerns for fortifications further east. These would remain defended, yet with reduced garrisons. Whether the attenuation of forces from Arad contributed to the decision of the Edomite command to attack that fortification in a relatively early stage of the campaign is unknown. What is likely is that *Arad fell before Tel ʿIra*. For a short while, the Judahite strategy to defend its chief administrative center for overseeing southern trade was effective. At some moment prior to the arrival of the Egyptian relief force (by late Summer 587?), however, Tel ʿIra and all other remaining Judahite fortifications in the region would be lost, and the Edomite geopolitical domain would come to include much of the Beersheba Valley region. As *Figure 4.1* depicts, the Edomite campaign in the Negev Operational Zone supporting the Babylonian strategic aim of destroying Judah as an intact kingdom in rebellion resulted in an offensive with at least three major phases.
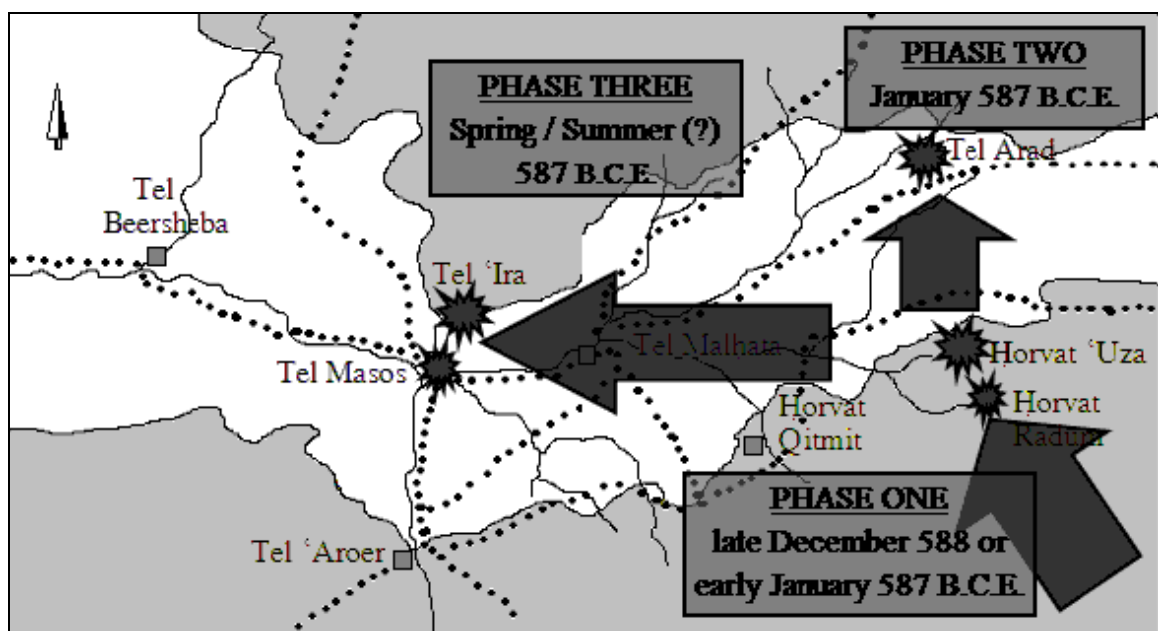
Figure 4.1 Map of the Edomite Campaign December 588–Spring/Summer 587 B.C.E.

Each of these phases included Edomite attacks against Judahite fortifications. In the first phase of the Edomite campaign, the fortifications of Ḥorvat ʿUza and Ḥorvat Radum fell. Four factors support an inference that Ḥorvat ʿUza was captured by surprise. First, Edomite and Hebrew ostraca are found in the same stratum. Second, if there was a treaty between Edom and Babylon, then the Edomite command would likely seek to keep that alliance clandestine until an opportune moment as the Babylonian assault began. Third, ʿUza (like ʿAroer) was along an entry-point to the valley for approaching Edomite military units, and (unlike ʿAroer) was along a rather direct road from ʿEn Ḥazeva, which was evidently an Edomite-controlled waystation in the sixth century (Chapter Three). Fourth, the approach of Edomite military forces might have been seen by Judahites as the arrival of *allies* during the crisis. The first phase would see Edom take the southeast of the valley region within a matter of days. It is reasonable that this phase was synchronized with the Babylonian arrival against Jerusalem.

The second major phase for which we have evidence was probably against Arad and its environs, which apparently fell within a week or two following the twenty-fourth day of the "tenth month" (i.e., within a few weeks of the start of hostilities). Shortly after the Edomite success at Ḥorvat ʿUza, Edom would enjoy a success at Arad. The result of this successful second phase was that the eastern Beersheba Valley region quickly came under Edomite control. Judahite domain in the valley became restricted to locations further west.

The third phase of the Edomite campaign was against Judahite positions further west. Excavators of the central Beersheba Valley sites of Tel ʿIra and Tel Masos (the fortified caravanserai south of ʿIra) suggest that these sites were destroyed by Edomites

(see Chapter Three). The data currently available, however, does not allow a defensible chronological ordering of Judahite losses west of Arad. What is plausible is that the southeast fell immediately, and was followed shortly thereafter by the fall of the northeast valley. At best, the western and central Beersheba Valley fortifications lasted but a few months longer. None was evidently intact with the arrival of the Egyptian relief force.

Edom appears to have been victorious in a rather sweeping campaign against Judah in the Negev Operational Zone. Perhaps Babylon assisted Edom with tactical siege assistance, facilitating success in complex assaults against Judahite fortifications. Whatever the technologies and tactics, Edom enjoyed success. Indeed, the Negev Operational Zone was the first to complete its objectives in the Babylonian aim at the destruction of Judah. By the time Jerusalem fell a year or so after the Edomite victories in the Beersheba Valley, Edom would have been in geopolitical position to witness—if not assist in—the endgame of Babylonian's siege of Jerusalem (cf. Obad 11–14).

Looking Forward

Reconstructing an Edomite campaign against Judah is possible through a study of the archaeological and epigraphic data, but these categories of data are currently silent on the matter of *diplomacy* among Babylonians and Edomites prior to the assault against Judah. Perhaps Edom merely wanted to (re-)gain the favor of Nebuchadnezzar through its own assault against a kingdom rebelling against Babylonian supremacy. Ancient treaties call for loyal subjects to engage in such activity against the suzerain's enemy (see Chapter Two). If Edom had been in rebellion, then its initial hostilities against Judah might not have been formally coordinated with Babylon; Edom's actions would reveal its *functional* allegiance. This allegiance would be re-affirmed as separated "allies" met and

completed a north-south axis splitting Judah. Alternatively, perhaps neither Judah nor

Babylon could resist an Edomite geographic expansion as a third and opportunistic party

entering the conflict, but such a Babylonian weakness *and* Edomite bravado would be an

historical oddity. Accepting the dating of the destruction of Arad Stratum VI to the final

Babylonian assault and accepting the equivalence between the "tenth month" of 2 Kgs

25:1 and the "tenth month" of Arad 7, a simpler and more reasonable explanation

emerges: coordinated military hostility against Judahite positions was likely the result of

prior diplomacy among Babylonians and Edomites. Evidence for this prior diplomacy—

specifically, Edom's initiation of a clandestine treaty with Babylon against Edom's

deceived ally, Judah—is provided by biblical data. To this category of data the study

now turns.

CHAPTER FIVE

Biblical Evidence for Edomite Treaty Betrayal

Introduction

This chapter presents biblical evidence for an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah in the sixth-century B.C.E. Three criteria determine the biblical texts serving as bases for discussion. First, the texts must pertain to supposed sixth-century Edomite activity. Similarly, the texts must be datable to that period. Third, the texts must provide a relatively sustained discourse about supposed Edomite activities during the Babylonian crisis. Obadiah's pertinence to supposed Edomite activity during the sixth century is the consensus (see Chapter One and below). The book meets the criteria. Psalm 137 meets the second criterion, while the other criteria are met through a section devoted to the psalm.[1] In order to introduce the chapter, several issues should be addressed: 1) the likelihood that Palestinian states considered forming an anti-Babylonian alliance in the early sixth century B.C.E.; 2) the methodology employed in this study; 3) the dates of Obadiah and Jeremiah and the question of dependency; and 4) poetic inversion and the identification of a reversal motif in Hebrew poetry. To these issues the study turns.

The Babylonian Threat and a Council of Palestinian States

During the first decade of the sixth century B.C.E., Palestinian states likely met in council to discuss an anti-Babylonian alliance. One such council was evidently hosted by

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[1]Ezekiel and Lamentations have a sixth-century provenance, yet have little sustained discourse about specific Edomite activities. Sections on Obadiah and Psalm 137 subsume discussion of these and other texts.

Zedekiah of Judah (Jeremiah 27–28) and attended by emissaries (מלאכים) of Edom,

Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon (Jer 27:3).[2] Perceived Babylonian weakness might have

set the stage for Zedekiah's council,[3] Egyptian resurgence in Palestine,[4] and revolt from

Babylon, yet Jeremiah 27–28 confirms neither that a league emerged, nor that

consideration of a concurrent revolt occurred. There is no reason to conclude, however,

that the council(s) presupposed by Jeremiah (contrast Jer 27:1; and 28:1) were the only

opportunity for two or more Palestinian states to join in an anti-Babylonian league.

Other evidence suggests a coordinated revolt. According to Ezek 21:23–37 [Eng.

18–32], Babylon had more than one Palestinian state resisting its supremacy, with the

king of Babylon divining between two initial targets, Judah and Ammon (vv. 26–27 [19–

20]). Ezekiel evidently considers that the two kingdoms rebelled concurrently and that

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[2]Motivations for common resistance to Babylon were several, and they were in large measure conditioned by the ebb and flow of relative power among Egypt and Babylon; for the precariousness of Judah and other small states trapped between Egypt and Babylon, see "The Twilight of Judah in the Egyptian-Babylonian Maelstorm" and "The Kingdom of Judah between Egypt and Babylon: A Small State within a Great Power Confrontation" in Abraham Malamat, *History of Biblical Israel: Major Problems and Minor Issues* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 298–319, 322–37. Philistia did not attend the council perhaps because of the level of previous destruction and the possibility that Babylonian control of the coast was strong; see Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 62–72, esp. 64, n. 98. Palestinian states may have participated in councils if only for intelligence-gathering purposes.

[3]In ca. 595 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in the east against the king of Elam, and in the next year (ca. 594 B.C.E.) a revolt within Babylon's own military ranks was suppressed only through the execution of many in Babylon's army; see Chronicle Concerning the Early Years of Nebucharnezzar II, rev. lines 16–20, 21–22 (Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 102).

[4]Victorious in Nubia in 593 B.C.E., Psammetichus II authorized an expedition (apparently non-military) along the coast of Palestine in 592 B.C.E., perhaps to display Egypt's vigor; see K.S. Freedy and D. B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources," *JAOS* 90 (1970): esp. 478–80. Active revolt against Babylon might have erupted subsequent to the succession of Pharaoh Hophres (Apries) ca. 589 B.C.E., but the specific timing of revolt remains uncertain.

Babylon adopted a Judah-first strategy, sparing Ammon but a while (vv. 33–37 [28–32]).

According to Josephus (*Ant.* 10.9.7), Nebuchadnezzar's forces attacked Ammon and

Moab five years after the destruction of Jerusalem (ca. 582–581 B.C.E.).[5] Egypt was

attacked immediately thereafter. Perhaps as early as 585 B.C.E., Babylon besieged

Phoenicia,[6] specifically Tyre, which suffered a thirteen-year siege. Sidon, too, might

have been included in a greater anti-Phoenician campaign.[7] In sum, within seven years of

the assault on Judah beginning December 588/January 587 B.C.E., we know that

Babylonian forces assaulted (or, in the case of Sidon, at least threatened) each state

represented at Zedekiah's council *with the sole exception of Edom*.[8] Accordingly, the

evidence for a conclave of Palestinian states coupled with the numerous Babylonian

assaults between ca. 589 and 581 B.C.E. allow for a reasonable inference: some or all of

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[5]Ammon's revolt from Babylon is further evidenced by Jer 40:13–41:18, which describes the support given by Baʿalis, king of Ammon, to Ishmael, son of Nathaniah, who assassinated the Babylonian appointed governor of Judah, Gedaliah, son of Ahikam.

[6]According to Tatianus (*Oratio ad Graecos*, 36), Berosus' *Babyloniaca* mentions Nebuchadnezzar's "war against the Phoenicians and Jews." See Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (vol. 1; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 1.60–61.

[7]Consider Isa 23:1–18; Ezek 29:17–20; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.9.1 [228]; *C. Ap.* 1.19–21; see also, e.g., Freedy and Redford "Dates in Ezekiel," 462–85, esp. 481–82; Abraham Malamat, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Leo Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary L. Johnson; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 296–97; D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 465–66.

[8]Edom evidently remained intact three more decades; for Nabonidus' campaign through Edom and into Arabia (ca. 553 B.C.E.) as the cause of Edom's demise, see John Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 23–39, esp. 32–36, referencing a probable occurrence of "Edom" in the Nabonidus Chronicle; see, now, the corrected reading of [*E*]dummu (i.e., Edom) rather than [*A*]dummu (otherwise unknown) in the Nabonidus Chronicle, line i 17 (Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 105, with notes on pp. 282 and 294). The line would accordingly read that Nabonidus: "encamped [*against E*]dom".

these states coordinated their rebellions. As appears typical for kingdoms of the ancient

Near East, a treaty or covenant ceremony would likely have formalized the agreement.

(A pact of mutual rebellion and/or mutual defense seems the most simple and directly

relevant treaty given the historical context.) The relevant question is whether Edomite

history includes a treaty betrayal of Judah at the time of the Babylonian assault.

Rhetoric and History—the Methodology of this Chapter

This chapter discusses elements in Obadiah's rhetorical *artistry* that may pertain

to sixth-century Edomite-Judahite relations in *history*. Much of the discussion falls under

the umbrella of rhetorical criticism,[9] a multifaceted criticism functioning at the

intersection of author, text, and audience.[10] The current analysis of Obadiah seeks to

provide a portion of the first step of rhetorical criticism, namely, an analysis of literary

artistry, which necessarily occurs before an interpreter discusses the impact that the

message had upon its audience.[11] Discussion of how the artistic whole of Obadiah

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[9]Divergence among rhetorical critics is partially related to two different understandings of rhetoric: rhetoric as an *art of composition* (cf. poetics), and rhetoric as an *art of persuasion* (how a speaker or writer shapes a communication in order to *affect* an audience). Literary criticism is a spectrum partially comprised of various types of rhetorical criticism; see Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1–20. Rhetorical criticism is among the tools of literary theorists and ideological critics, yet it remains a tool available to historical critics; see especially Duane F. Watson, review of J. David Hester Amador, *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power*, CBQ 63 (1999): 134–36; cf. also Vernon K. Robbins, "The Present and Future of Rhetorical Analysis," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 24–52.

[10]See Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), esp. 32, 41, 48–49.

[11]Cf. the attempt at a functional definition of rhetorical criticism provided by Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, 4;

persuaded an ancient audience requires a more complete reconstruction of Obadiah's

complex rhetorical situation.[12] Accordingly, this study focuses on artistic elements

supporting the thesis and restricts discussion of the artistic whole to related issues.

Dating the Prophecy of Obadiah and Its Jeremian Parallel

A straightforward date of Obadiah is not facilitated by the book.[13] Even so, recent

commentators are "more or less unanimous" that Obadiah (at least vv. 1–14, 15b) may be

dated to a time shortly after the Babylonian assault on Judah ca. 586 B.C.E.[14] P. Raabe

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cf. also David Goodwin, "Rhetorical Criticism," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (ed. Irena R. Makaryk; Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993), 174–78. Fuller rhetorical criticism requires evaluating the unified results of analysis in order to determine the persuasive effects upon near contemporaries; see, e.g., Martin Warner, ed., *The Bible As Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (London: Routledge, 1990), esp. 3–4, referencing the formulation of rhetorical criticism by G. A. Kennedy (*New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984], 4). The critic is to show how literary devices function as individual parts and work together (unified results) to form a coherent whole. Major themes and motifs in a rhetorical unit typically come to resolution at the end. In this sense, cf. James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

[12]A text's rhetorical situation includes the persons and events connoted by the text, the related social, political, and ideological interests, and the particular crises challenging those interests; Obadiah communicates much in very little space; see, e.g., Raabe, *Obadiah*, 3, quoted in John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 115

[13]One finds the name Obadiah (עבדיה) and close variants elsewhere in biblical texts, yet none of these persons satisfactorily fit the book. See 1 Chr 3:21; 7:3; 8:38; 9:16, 44; 2 Chr 17:7; Ezra 8:9; Neh 10:6; 12:25; cf. also, עבדיהו, 1 Kgs 18:3–7, 16; 1 Chr 27:19; 2 Chr 34:12. Based on 1 Kgs 18:1–16, Obadiah was frequently dated to the ninth century B.C.E. In this view, Obadiah (עבדיה) was connected to the Yahwistic royal chamberlain with essentially the same name (עבדיהו) under Ahab (1 Kgs 18:4); cf. the Babylonian Talmud (b.Sanh., 39b); Obadiah's canonical location is suggestive of this context. For an overview of various proposals for the date of Obadiah, see Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah* (Anchor Bible 24d; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 47–56.

[14]J. Renkema, "Data Relevent to the Dating of the Prophecy of Obadiah," in *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (ed. Johannes C. De

and J. Renkema have each presented arguments for an early exilic date for Obadiah.[15] The "concrete description" of supposed Edomite activities (e.g., Obad 11–14) may suggest that the prophet behind the text was a contemporary of the generation witnessing Jerusalem's fall,[16] but better evidence is that Obadiah's accusations of Edom are similar to connections made between Edom and the destruction of Jerusalem/Zion in Lam 4:21–22 and Psalm 137, the latter of which is clearly related to the Babylonian exile (v. 1). That similarity commends a similar date.

Additionally, the correlation of temporal references in Obadiah and the historical occasion with which these references match best further reinforces a sixth-century context. In the future, Obadiah promises an Israel in which exiles have returned (vv. 19–20), some of which return from territory lost during the Assyrian exile (presupposed through the promised restoration of vv. 17, 19). Thus, Obadiah likely post-dates the Assyrian period. Obadiah locates in the past, however, such events as foreigners entering Jerusalem in a context of pillaging (v. 11). Such events befit the Neo-Babylonian period.

Moor and Harry F. Van Rooy; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 255; cf. also his parallel statement in *Obadiah* (trans. Brian Doyle; Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 30. Frequently, verses 15a, 16–21 are considered redactional, post-exilic additions, and Obadiah's "literary cohesion" remains disputed; see, especially, the "Uneinheitlichkeit" of S.D. Snyman ("Cohesion in the Book of Obadiah,"101 [1989]: 59–71, esp. 61); recent discussions include Loren F. Bliese, "Chiastic and Homogenous Metrical Structures Enhanced by Word Patterns in Obadiah," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6 (1996): 210–227; Clint L. Heacock, "The Theological Implications of the Composition of Obadiah" (Master of Arts in Exegetical Theology thesis, Western Seminary, 1999), esp. 74–91; Von Theodor Lescow, "Die Komposition des Buches Obadja," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 380–98; Renkema (*Obadiah*, 45 –89, esp. 85–89); and Michael B. Dick ("The Poetics of the Book of Obadiah," *JNSL* 31/1 (2005): 1–32).

[15]See Raabe, *Obadiah*, 51–56; J. Renkema, "Data Relevant to the Dating of the Prophecy," 251–62.

[16]Renekema, "Data Relevant to the Dating of the Prophecy," 256.

Obadiah promises, however, a future where Edom shall be driven from its land to the

point of national extinction (vv. 7–9). In short, Obadiah's rhetorical situation commends

a context of previous conquest and the anticipation of both returning exiles and the fall of

Edom. Because Edom was critically weakened in ca. 553 B.C.E. by Nabonidus, the last of

the Neo-Babylonian kings, this event has been considered temporally proximal to

Obadiah's proclamation.[17] No known single event in the history of Jerusalem

corresponds better to events suggested by Obadiah than does the period shortly after the

destruction of Judah ca. 586 B.C.E.[18] Because of this correspondence and the fact that

Edom is elsewhere connected to hostility against Judah at the time (e.g. Psalm 137),

commentators are finding the middle of the sixth century as the simplest explanation for

Obadiah's date. Granting the emerging consensus, this study understands Obadiah's

rhetorical situation to include references to supposed Edomite activity during that time.

The anti-Edom oracle of Jeremiah 49:7–22 thematically and terminologically

parallels much of Obadiah?[19] The degree of correspondence both forbids chance as a

realistic explanation for the development of the oracles, and makes the question of textual

dependence a regular feature of commentaries on Obadiah. There are three major source-

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[17]As above, see Lindsay, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom," 23–39, esp. 32–36. For some commentators, this date is the *terminous ad quem* for the book; cf. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 51–56; J. Renkema "Data Relevant to the Dating of the Prophecy," 251–62.

[18]The especially strong language of Obad12 (e.g., Judah's "perishing") suggests that Judah is destroyed, which ca. 588–586 B.C.E. matches; for this and other temporal "clues" suggestive of the sixth-century, see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 47–48, 51–52.

[19]Obadiah utilizes imagery and vocabulary found in Jeremiah outside of its clear parallel with Jer 49:7–22. See also, e.g., Obad 7 and Jer 38:22; Obad 3 and Jer 21:13; cf. also Obadiah and Jer 49:7–22 with Ezek 35:1–36:15.

critical possibilities:[20] 1) Jeremiah is dependent upon Obadiah;[21] 2) Obadiah is dependent

upon Jeremiah; and 3) both Jeremiah and Obadiah are dependent upon an earlier

tradition.[22] What is the direction of dependence and relative dates of Jeremiah and

Obadiah? Increasingly, a preference for the second possibility is found in the relevant

literature.[23] Summarizing established arguments for this preference provides a rationale

for the special attention this study shall give to the many instances where paralleled

elements appear in reverse order.

The working hypothesis requires that the oracles exhibit a Jeremian priority. A

cursory, text-critical comparison of the Greek and Hebrew versions of Jeremiah—indeed

that text itself (e.g., 27:27–29, 32)—reveals that the book of Jeremiah underwent

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[20]For a listing of representative supporters of each position from the previous century, see Josef Wehrle, *Prophetie und Textanalyse: Die Komposition Obadja 1–21 interpretiert auf der Basis textlinguistischer und semiotischer Konzeptionen* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987), 12–13; for more recent decades, see Renkema, *Obadiah*, 38 n. 45. The level of literal agreement between the parallels all but forbids that both Jeremiah and Obadiah are *independent* responses to Psalm 137; for this suggestion, see G. S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7–22 and Obadiah," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 89–97.

[21]So, e.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971), 297.

[22]So, e.g., Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 131–33; Hans Walter Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986) 273–84, and esp. 39–40; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 125–26; cf. Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 415. A related hypothesis is that each came to influence the other as successive versions were produced; in this regard, cf. Peter R. Ackroyd, "Obadiah, Book of," *ABD* 5:3.

[23]See, e.g., Raabe, *Obadiah*, 22–31; Renkema, *Obadiah*, 38, 116–18, 120, 123–27, 134, 140–42; cf. also Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 281–85; see also below.

significant redactional development.[24] It is reasonable that an early form of the book of

Jeremiah with oracles against the nations included an anti-Edom oracle, yet the oracles

against the nations might have been updated or added over a long period of time.

Jeremiah 49:7–22, however, need not be considered a post-exilic addition. Through a

study of how paralleled vocabulary is used elsewhere in Jeremiah, B. Dicou has

successfully demonstrated that Jeremiah's strong terminological parallels of Obadiah

(namely Jer 49:9–10, 14–16) may be considered original to Jeremiah.[25] Despite the

difficulties in dating the oracles against the nations in Jeremiah, the anti-Edom oracle of

49:7–22 employs terminology and themes befitting the larger book of Jeremiah.

    That Jeremiah's oracle predates Obadiah is defensible. Readily observable is that

Obadiah references a rather extensive list of specific Edomite hostilities against Judah

(Obad 10–14), whereas Jeremiah 49 does not. Although one might find it odd that

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[24]Oracles against the nations appear in LXX Jeremiah 25–31, while MT oracles against the nations appear in Jeremiah 46–51 and in different order. The LXX version of Jeremiah is often considered reflective of a Hebrew version of Jeremiah earlier than that of the MT; see Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM, 1986), 50–55.

[25]Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: JSOT Press), 58–70, esp. 60–62, 69–70; cf. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 22. A few examples must suffice. Helpful is Jeremiah's use of √ שמע (Obad 1 || Jer 49:14) in a context of a preparation for war in Jer 49:23; 6:24; 37:5; 50:43 and with reference to a foe from "the north" in 10:22 and, again, in 6:24 (cf. below on Obad 6); masculine plural imperatives of √ קום occur nine times in prophetic works, six of which are in Jeremiah (all but once in a summons to war context); outside of Jeremiah and Obadiah it does not occur in that context. Similarly, the phrase למלחמה ("for battle") occurs ten times in the Prophets, five of which are in Jeremiah (twice in a context of a summons to war), while outside of Jeremiah and Obadiah it does not occur in a summons to war. The terminology in similar contexts suggests the oracle is original to Jeremiah. Thematic considerations (e.g., his observations on thematic similarities that Obad 6 [paralleling Jer 49:10] has with other portions of Jeremiah [including 49:9]) are also helpful in showing the Jeremian background not only for the anti-Edom oracle in Jeremiah, but also that background for Obadiah.

Jeremiah left out these accusations if Jeremiah utilized Obadiah, this oddity provides

little support for a Jeremian priority.[26] Better evidence for a Jeremian priority is found

through a comparison of the differing temporal and stylistic aspects between the parallels.

As for temporal aspects, one might expect to find that some events anticipated in an

earlier oracle have come to completion in the latter. Edom's "drinking of the cup" in Jer

49:12 is an *incomplete* action (שתה תשתה), whereas Obadiah 16 suggests a *completed*

action for the drinker (כי כאשר שתיתם).[27] Obadiah suggests relatively more resolution,

implying a temporal aspect subsequent to Jeremiah 49:12. Stylistic elements that may be

described as intensifications, accentuations and/or heightened contrasts also mark several

of Obadiah's divergences from Jeremiah,[28] and several shall be discussed in the study on

Obadiah, below. As an example, Jeremiah describes Edom as despised among humanity

(בזוי באדם [49:15]), whereas Obadiah accentuates Edom's despicability (בזוי אתה מאד [v.

2]). Is Jeremiah softening some of Obadiah's rhetoric, casting "completed" events back

in time, and de-specifying reasons for Edom's doom? The simpler explanation is that

Obadiah is updating Jeremian material, probably in light of Edomite activity at or shortly

after the Babylonian destruction of Judah. [29] This study functions under the hypothesis

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[26]As J. B. Geyer has made clear ("Mythology and Culture in the Oracles against the Nations," *VT* 36 [1986]: 129–45), oracles against the nations typically provide no concrete reasons for punishment. Obadiah is atypical in this regard (see vv. 11–14).

[27]Cf., with bibliography, Raabe, *Obadiah*, 22.

[28]E.g., the increase in persons having "heard" a report (שמעתי [Jer 49:14] || שמענו [Obad 1]); for a study considering Obadiah's accentuations of Jeremiah, see Renkema, *Obadiah* (e.g., 123 [on Jer 49:15 || Obad 2], 134–35, and 138 [on Jer 49:9 || Obad 5–6]).

[29]The Jeremian oracle has been dated to the late seventh- or very early sixth-century; Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, (*Jeremiah 26-52* [WBC 27; Waco: Word, 1995] , 329) tentatively suggest that the oracle may pertain to

that Obadiah modified Jeremiah. In many of these modifications, Obadiah appears to have inverted or reversed the Jeremian tradition, warranting a consideration of inversion.

Inversion of Form and of Content: A Reversal Motif

Forms of biblical parallelism, chiasmus, and wordplay in various biblical texts have been described as "inverted."[30] On an intertextual level (i.e., in comparison of biblical passages), scholarship is recognizing a stylistic devise called the *inverted quotation*, whereby textual elements among intertextual parallels appear in reverse order. In an innovative study of this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, P. C. Beentjes has advanced the discussion by identifying five basic types of "inverted quotations" perceivable among intertextual parallels.[31] Apart from the attention that the form of the

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the anti-Babylonian council ca. 593 B.C.E.; for ca. 605 B.C.E., see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 22. Beyond the close parallel (vv. 1–6), see also Obad 3 || Jer 21:13 and 49:4; Obad 7 || Jer 38:22; and Obad 8 || Jer 49:7; these parallels further suggest that Obadiah was familiar with the Jeremian tradition. Moreover they help discount the hypothesis that Jeremiah and Obadiah are independent oracles based on a third, lost source; see, especially, Dicou, *Israel's Brother and Antagonist*, 58–73, concretely, 69–70, 73; cf. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 23.

[30]See Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1984), esp. 356–59, 127, 135, 246. Study of the inversion technique requires a special tedium; cf. Wilson's closing remarks (359): "Research on this aspect of poetic technique is still in its initial stages . . . . What is being called for is a case-by-case study, despite the tedium." Clear enough is that inversion is a *secondary* technique based on earlier techniques and that modification is implicit in inversion; see also Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTSup 170; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1994), esp. 95.

[31]P. C. Beentjes, "Discovering a New Path of Intertextuality: Inverted Quotations and Their Dynamics," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard and J. P. Fokkelman; Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1996), 31–50, esp. 48; the five types are 1) inverted quotations of an *exact reflection* of another text (e.g., Gen 27:29 || Num 24:9); 2) inverted quotations of a reflection similar to that described above, yet with a *transformed content* (either positive to negative or the reverse; e.g., Hag 1:10 || Zech 8:12); 3) inverted quotations where a number of words from sentence "a" in a multi-sentence parallel changes places with a number of words from sentence "b" (e.g., Rom 10:20–21 || LXX Isaiah 65:1–2); 4)

"quotation" gives to a moment of inversion or reversal—assuming readers or hearers were familiar with both traditions—it is difficult to know how this stylistic device functions (i.e.: what this motif "means").[32] Setting aside the English semantic differential between "inversion" and "reversal", what Beentjes has demonstrated is that several types of reversals are perceivable among parallel "quotations": *reversals* of content (e.g., negative theme or message || positive theme or message; cf., e.g., reversal of fortune); *reversals* of word or phrase order; and, indeed, *reversals* of consonants. Hebrew poets evidently made use of a technique by which an expected or traditional order of textual elements (consonants, words, and/or phrases) is *reversed*. An historical-critical difficulty is in determining the circumstances that gave rise to the use of the poetic device.

Important for the discussion of Obadiah to follow, is Beentjes' fourth type of inverted quotation, the "(selective) inverted quotation." Beentjes discusses a density of inversions in Psa 83:14–16 and Isa 17:13–14. The first four roots of Psalm 83 that Beentjes discusses are *in exactly reversed order* in the Isaian parallel; a fifth root remains in identical order; and a final parallel term (בהל √ || בלהה), while in identical order in Isaiah, *manifests a transposition (or reversal) of two radicals* (הל || לה). In a context of a reversed terminological order, a reversal of radicals is apparent. This last word (בהל √

"selective" inverted quotations where a number of words appear in a parallel with a similar theme, yet in different sequence (e.g., Psa 83:14–16 || Isa 17:13–14); and 5) inverted quotations of small changes of merely a few words (e.g., Sir 48:1b || Mal 3:19). Of course, some examples of "quotations" in types three through five might more easily be attributed to established (oral) traditions, which would have less stability as literary traditions. See also P. C. Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern," *Biblica* 63 (1982): 506–23.

[32]Additional resources on this topic would help; cf. Watson (*Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 359) referencing Beentjes, "Neglected Stylistic Pattern," 506–23 and M. De Roche, "The Reversal of Creation in Hosea," *VT* 31 (1981) 400–409.

[Psa 83:16] ‖ בלהה [Isa 17:14]; "terror") reflects an *internal transposition/inversion within a context of a larger inverted quotation*.[33] Beentjes does not pursue the significance of this density of inversion apart from its function of drawing extra attention.

A comment might be helpful. Psalm 83 is a petition that God might defend God's people from an alliance of nations that are plotting destruction (vv. 1–6 [Eng. 1–5]). Nations head toward Israel and jeopardize its pastureland (vv. 3 [2], 13 [12]). Notably, the internal transposition in Isa 17:14 *introduces the results* of those activities of God predicted by Isaiah and for which the psalmist wished.[34]

At evening time, lo, *terror*!	לעת ערב והנה בלהה
Before morning, they are no more.	בטרם בקר איננו
This is the fate of those who despoil us,	זה חלק שוסינו
and the lot of those who plunder us.	וגורל לבזזינו

After a series of terms in reverse order, "terror" appears with *transposed consonants immediately preceding the enemies' reversal of fortune*. Once enemies were victorious (v. 12), yet they vanish in a moment (v. 14). In a context evidencing a certain density of inversion, wordplay with a verbal form of √ בהל in the noun בלהה does more than amuse or sustain interest; the density of inversion on the textual level introduces and reinforces a thematic reversal.[35] *Inversion, here, introduces a role reversal.*

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[33]For discussion see Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations," 33–35, 48.

[34]Emphasis mine. The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

[35]If one of these parallel texts provides an example of a (selective) inverted *quotation*, then either the psalmist knows of the prophecy and invokes YHWH for related action, or Isaiah is responding to a traditional plea. This intertextual technique of inversion (form) and inverted state of being (content) may also be noticeable in the second type of inverted quotation described by Beentjes ("Inverted Quotations," 37–38 [with notes], 40–42, 48): Hag 1:10 ‖ Zech 8:12 displays an inverted *condition* (crop failures turn to success); cf. the altered *condition* in *CD* 6:17–18 ‖ Ezek 22:26.

This study of inversion suggests that Hebrew poets had within their repertoire a motif whereby a density of inversions (form) occasionally functions to point to or reinforce an inverted condition (content). For convenience, this special inversion of *both* form and content may be called the "reversal motif". Intertextually, the reversal motif may be found in some occurrences of "inverted quotations" (e.g., Psa 83:14–16 ‖ Isa 17:13–14). Intratextually, the reversal motif is similarly seen in a particular manifestation of the inversion technique (e.g., Psa 6:11).[36] *In either case, the reversal motif is characterized by a certain density of the inversion technique (form) appearing within a context marked by an inverted state of being, condition, or fortune (content).* With working hypotheses and inferences in place, the study turns to biblical evidence for a sixth-century Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah. Recognizing Obadiah's use of inversion is an appropriate beginning.

Edomite Treaty Betrayal and the Rhetorical Artistry of Obadiah

Examples of Intratextual and Intertextual Inversion in Obadiah

That reversal may be of interpretive importance in the study of Obadiah is not new. [37] Examples of intratextual and intertextual inversion in Obadiah will begin to

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[36]Intratextually, the inversion technique may reinforce reversals of fortune found in the same context. A good example is the similar function around the root בוש ("to be ashamed") found in the *chiasmus* of Psa 6:11 [Eng. 10], which describes once-successful enemies (cf. v. 8) who "turn away" (√שוב) in confusion; chiasmus (formal inversion) and wordplay (inversion of ב and שׁ) cooperate to draw attention to the enemies' reversed state of being; see Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 26, 245–49; note also *Traditional Techniques*, esp. 210–211, which asks whether the device is being read into the text.

[37]For example, Apelu Tia Póe ("The Book of Obadiah: A Study of its Literary Artistry and its Theological Message" [Ph.D. diss., Vanderbuilt University, 1999]) uses reversal to enable a reading of Obadiah that shows the absurdity of Israel's exclusivistic

evidence the book's reversal motif. Obadiah 15b provides an obvious and often noted example of a reversal of fortune.[38]

> As you have done, it shall be done to you;   כאשר עשׂית יעשׂה לך גמלך ישׁוב
> your deeds shall return on your own head.   בראשׁך

Here is seemingly an expression of *lex talionis* ("a law of retaliation by which a guilty party suffers the same harm as that experienced by the injured party").[39] In the context of the Edomite hostilities enumerated in Obad 11–14, verse 15b predicts a reversal of fortune for Edom, which shall be victimized in the manner of its victim.[40] Edom is to experience an inverted state of being (content), a component of the reversal motif.

A consideration of Obadiah and its close parallel in Jeremiah 49 will show that intertextual inversion can be evidenced in several ways. Examples of inverted quotations evidence Obadiah's inversion of *form*.[41] Table 5.1 provides obvious terminological parallels (demarcated by cola when appropriate) between Jeremiah 49 and Obadiah organized according to the Jeremian verse order. The level of literal agreement is striking.

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view of salvation and in order to defend a broadly inclusive vision of society, to which Obadiah on the surface appears contrary. Through the reversal motif, Obadiah criticizes Israel rather than Edom.

[38]The translation here is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

[39]H. B. Huffman, "Lex Talionis," *ABD* 4:321–22; as a component of the Pentateuch, see, e.g., Gen 9:6; Exod 21:12, 23–25.

[40]Cf. the use of (גמל √) in a context of return (שׁוב √) in Joel 4:4 (Eng. 3:4); 4:7 (3:7); Psa 24:8; 94:2; Prov 12:14; Lam 3:64; 2 Chr 32:25.

[41]The inverted quotation is readily apparent if we consider the texts without parallels that are primarily *thematic* rather than *terminological* (namely Jer 49:7aγ–bβ || Obad 8; Jer 49:12 || Obad 16; and Jer 49:22b || Obad 9a; cf. also Jer 49:10aα || Obad 6.

Table 5.1

Parallels between Jeremiah 49 and Obadiah with Strong Terminological Agreement

Jeremiah 49		*Obadiah*	
לאדום	v. 7aα	לאדום	v. 1bβ
כה אמר יהוה צבאות	v. 7aβ	כה־אמר יהוה	v. 1bα
אם־בצרים באו לך לא ישארו עוללות	v. 9a	אם־בצרים באו לך הלוא ישאירו עללות:	v. 5b
אם־גנבים בלילה השחיתו דים:	v. 9b	אם־גנבים באו־לך אם־שודדי לילה איך נדמיתה הלוא יגנבו דים	v. 5a
שמועה שמעתי מאת יהוה וציר בגוים שלוח התקבצו ובאו עליה וקומו למלחמה: כי־הנה קטן נתתיך בגוים בזוי באדם: תפלצתך השיא אתך זדון לבך שכני בחגוי הסלע תפשי מרום גבעה כי־תגביה כנשר קנך משם אורידך נאם־יהוה:	vv. 14–16	שמועה שמענו מאת יהוה וציר בגוים שלח קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה: הנה קטן נתתיך בגוים בזוי אתה מאד: זדון לבך השיאך שכני בחגוי־סלע מרום שבתו אמר בלבו מי יורדני ארץ: אם־תגביה כנשר ואם־בין כוכבים שים קנך משם אורידך נאם־יהוה:	vv. 1c–4

Syntactic components of the oracles' rather formulaic introductions (Jer 49:7 and Obad 1b) happen to appear in reverse order.[42] Obadiah 1c–4 serves as a signal identification of

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[42]The priority of the object of the oracle in Jer 49:7a might be due to the oracle's inclusion in a collection of oracles against the nations that is introduced as whole with a messenger formula (46:1). Compare the order of Jer 49:7a with other oracles in the collection that are introduced with ל + gentilic/toponym with no messenger formula, namely, 46:2; 48:1; 49:1, and 23. Obadiah 1b cannot be used as evidence of Jeremian priority, because we cannot distinguish between more standard forms of introducing an oracle (cf., e.g., Amos 5:4) and supposed reversions *back* to those more standard forms.

inversion as a technique perceivable in Obadiah. A remarkably close and extended parallel with Jer 49:14–16 occurs at the beginning of Obadiah's oracle (Obad 1c–4). This *beginning* section parallels a portion *toward the end* of the Jeremian oracle. Indeed, no part of Jeremiah's oracle subsequent to verse 16 has a strong terminological parallel in Obadiah (see, however, the *thematic* parallel of Jer 49:22b and Obad 16). Obadiah 5 has nearly indistinguishable literal correspondence with Jer 49:9, yet the order of the correspondence is *inverted* (Obad 5a ‖ Jer 49:9*b*; *then* Obad 5b ‖ Jer 49:9*a*).[43] In short, each time a strong terminological parallel appears in Obadiah, a successively earlier portion of Jeremiah is paralleled. Moreover, some paralleled verses have components appearing in reverse order. Given the working hypothesis of a Jeremian priority, the situation identifies Obad 1–5 as an extended inverted quotation of Jeremiah 49. Closer attention to Obadiah will provide evidence for the thesis and will show how inverted form in a context of a reversal of fortune (e.g., Obad 15b) is significant for the thesis of this study.

Obadiah 1–6 and its Parallels in Jeremiah 49

   The title of Obadiah. Two words constitute the title (חזון עבדיה). The prophet has not been connected satisfactorily with any biblical character with the same or similar name (√ עבד; see above), and some commentators prefer to understand the work as

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[43]Discussion on inversions on the level of individual phrases, words, and consonants will be addressed in greater detail in this chapter's section on Obadiah; for now, one example suffices: we can see among the terminological elements that differ only slightly a reversed plene spelling in a series of three adjacent words: לא ישארו עוללות (Jer 49:9aβ) ‖ הלוא ישאירו עללות (Obad 5bβ).

anonymous and the name as a symbolic or representative title.[44] In this view, the prophet

is a "Servant of YH[WH]" (עבדיה). Symbolic or not, the label constituting the second

word of the book happens to mirror typical designations of lesser parties in relationships

established through ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties (see Chapter Two). The *first*

word might also evidence treaty terminology. The book is identified as Obadiah's

"vision" (חזון; usually understood from √ חזה).[45] Within the "Vision of Isaiah" (חזון

ישעיהו [Isa 1:1]), two of the four occurrences of the root are clearly in a treaty context

(28:15a, 18a):[46] "an *agreement* (√ חזה) with Sheol" (e.g., וחזותכם את־שאול) twice

parallels "a *treaty* (cf. ברית) with Death" (e.g., בריתכם את־מות). Apart from the

parallelism, no fewer than three possibilities have been suggested as to how treaty is

connoted by this root.[47] Accordingly, because √ חזה appears in treaty contexts as a near

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[44]E.g., John D. W. Watts, *Obadiah: A Critical Exegetical Commentary* (1969); Bič, "Zur Problematik," 11–25.

[45]√ חזה means "to see, perceive"; see Jepsen, *TDOT* 4:280–90, esp. 281, 284; uncertainty remains as to how Obadiah constitutes a "vision."

[46]The two other occurrences of the root in Isaiah are als noteworthy in light of the present thesis: Isa 29:11 connects "vision" (הזות) with "sealed document" (הספר החתום), and Isa 21:1–2 connects a "vision" both with the Negeb and betrayal (√ בגד).

[47]√ חזה may be congruent with treaty contexts by 1) prophetic ceremonies (*augury*?) known from treaty ratification rituals; 2) by a fixed-*vision* of a determined future; or 3) by metonymy (the stipulations are the *envisioned* agreements of the parties); see Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Analectica Biblica 88; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 31–32; see also M. Weinfeld, "Covenant Terminology in the ancient Near East and its Influences on the West." *JAOS* 93 (1973): 190–99, 196 n. 87. It is possible that these Isaian parallels with ברית are derived instead from an entirely different root, perhaps that evidenced by S. Arabian *ḥḏyt* ["agreement"; √ *ḥ-ḏ-ʾ*]); for this possibility, see Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 31–32. Alternatively, Waston (*Traditional Techniques*, 213, with bibliography) has advocated repointing the word in 28:15 to *ḥāzê* ("breast"), which would result in a phrase "we will

synonym of "treaty" (ברית) and because servant language (√ עבד) appropriately describes

vassal parties, the two-word title may provide a subtle clue that treaty relationships

constitute a theme of the book. A reader attuned to this theme might understand this

"Vision of Obadiah" as "The Agreement of the Servant of YH[WH]."

Obadiah 1 and Jeremiah 49:14. Subsequent to the messenger formula, Obadiah

references international politics. Table 5.2 presents these verses divided by cola.[48]

Table 5.2

Obadiah 1 and Its Jeremian Parallel

Jeremiah 49:14		*Obadiah 1*	
שמועה שמעתי מאת יהוה	v. 14aα	חזון עבדיה	v. 1a
וציר בגוים שלוח	v. 14aβ	כה־אמר יהוה לאדום	v. 1b
התקבצו ובאו עליה	v. 14bα	שמועה שמענו מאת יהוה וציר בגוים שלח	v. 1cα
וקומו למלחמה	v. 14bβ	קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה	v. 1cβ

Jeremiah 49:14aα references some report ("I have heard a report"; שמועה שמעתי).

Obadiah 1cα updates Jeremiah with a first person plural verb ("*We* have heard a report";

שמועה שמענו). With one difference, the parallel continues: "from YHWH that[49] an envoy

press the breast," which corresponds to the Akkadian *ṣibit tulê* ("touching the breast") an
idiom for "making a pact" and describing a treaty ratification gesture.

[48]Discussion is facilitated by an analysis of cola as demarcated in the masoretic
tradition by heavy disjunctive accents, principally the *ʾaṭnāḥ* as the verse divider with the
sillûq as the verse ender, and with other disjunctive accents (e.g., *zāqēp parvum* and *rᵉ*b̲îᵃ)
as further colon dividers. Detailed presentations of the cola of Obadiah are provided by
Renkema (*Obadiah*, 45–89) and Dick ("Poetics of the Book of Obadiah," 1–32).

[49]Reading an explicative *waw*; cf., Rudolph, *Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona*, 302.

unto the nations had been sent." Obadiah's use of "envoy" (צִיר) implies international

diplomacy,[50] and continues a verbal echo of Isaian texts (see above) with clear treaty and

diplomacy overtones.[51] Obadiah also modifies the temporally ambiguous *qal* passive

participle (שְׁלוּחַ) in Jeremiah with a Pual perfect (שֻׁלָּח), suggesting that the mission is

fully underway. The mention of a report and of an envoy suggest a royal court context

for Obad 1b–c, but whether that envoy is human or celestial (i.e., from the divine court)[52]

depends in part on how one understands the sender.[53] If the envoy is human rather than

angelic and if the sender is a head of state, then additional international intrigue is

perceivable. The report is that some political entity has taken action by completing a

diplomatic mission among the nations.[54] The text, however, provides too little

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[50]In at least four of the six biblical occurrences of צִיר, the term denotes an ambassador unto the nations (Isa 18:2; 57:9; Jer 49:14; Obad 1; cf. Prov 13:17; 25:13). A fifth occurrence (Prov 25:13) is among a collection with political concerns copied by officials of King Hezekiah, suggesting a political court.

[51]Isaiah 57:9 demonstrates connotations of "international" diplomacy, albeit to the netherworld (Sheol). As above, Isa 28:25 (cf. v. 18) references a "treaty with Death and an agreement with Sheol" (ברית את־מות ועם־שאול עשינו חזה). As these verses suggest, צִיר is at home in treaty contexts. Isaiah 28:18–19 mentions "a report" (שמועה) associated with calamity, terror, and an annulled treaty. Obadiah echoes the same cluster of terms (envoy [v. 1], report [v. 1], and treaty [v. 7]) in a calamitous international context.

[52]צִיר parallels מלאך ("messenger") in Isa 18:2 and Prov 13:17, yet neither of these occurrences explicitly designates these messengers as angelic beings.

[53]Rudolph (*Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona*, 302) suggests an angelic envoy, a view that continues to be influential; cf. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 114; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 135–36.

[54]The view that this verse relates to a diplomatic response of some group against Edom is not uncommon; cf., e.g., Allen (*Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 144–45), who favors reading the messenger and nations as pertaining to Arab tribes conspiring against Edom; Wolff (*Obadiah and Jonah*, 46–47) suggests that the call is to Jerusalem and other nations to attack Edom; Raabe (*Obadiah*, esp. 117, 157–160) suggests that, because the context includes a message from the divine assembly to the nations, the diplomatic mission results in Babylon attacking Edom with YHWH as part of the warring party.

information to determine both who the "we" of verse 1cα represents and whether

anything that follows שמועה שמענו is necessarily part of the report.[55] Either on account

of the report or because of some other situation, there is a command to "Rise up! And let

us arise against it for battle!" (קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה). Edom (v. 1b) is typically

understood as the referent of the feminine singular prepositional phrase (עליה) connected

with √ קום.[56] This root in the imperative occurs seventeen times in military contexts in

the HB, including summons to war contexts,[57] yet Obadiah's *double* use of the root is

peculiar, perhaps signaling difficult or extended preparations for a conflict that is not

necessarily imminent.[58] Verse 1 is difficult, yet it is rather clear that divulgence begins

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[55]The remainder of the verse might constitute at least a paraphrase of YHWH's
message. If one reads the *waw* of v. 1cα in an explicative sense, then the content of the
message contains at least the declaration that an envoy has been sent unto the nations
(וציר בגוים שלח). The root שלח is employed in a variety of contexts, including treaty
contexts (on √ שלח see Chapter Two and below). If the report also consists of the
remainder of the verse (קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה; v. 1cβ), then the report either orders the
audience to arise for battle or it includes a quotation of the envoy's communication to the
nations, which would require that a missing introduction be supplied to the supposed
direct speech (e.g., "…and an envoy unto the nations has been sent, *saying*…"; c.f., e.g.,
NIV; cf. also the colon [:] heavy with implication in the NRSV, NJB, and JPS [1985]).

[56]The sole feminine singular noun in Obad 1 is שמעוה ("report"; cf. LXX). The
masculine singular referent, however, is sound for no fewer than three reasons: a
feminine singular head noun such as "land of…" (ארץ־) might have dropped from אדום;
toponyms are usually understood as feminine despite a masculine form (GKC §122h);
and, intertextually, Obadiah retained the identical proposition and suffix of the Jeremiah
parallel (49:14), the feminine singular referent of which is possibly in the preceding verse
("Bozrah" [בצרה]; cf. Renkema *Obadiah*, 121). For "land of Edom," see, e.g., Gen
36:16, 17, 21, 31; Num 20:23; 21:4; 33:37; Judg 11:18; 1 Kgs 9:26; Isa 34:6; 1 Chr 1:43;
2 Chr 8:17. For discussion of the possibilities, see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 118–19.

[57]Josh 8:1; Judg 4:14; 5:12; 7:9, 15; 9:32; 18:9; 1 Sam 23:4; Isa 21:5; Jer 6:4, 5;
49:14, 28, 31; Obad 1; Mic 4:13.

[58]The use of two volitives from קום in one verse is found only here; the root is
commonly used as the first imperative (followed by a verb of motion other than √ קום) in

the prophecy proper: an envoy makes an international circuit as more persons become privy to some report coupled with a muster for battle. The situation somehow pertains to Edom (לאדום [v. 1b]; perhaps עליה [v. 1cβ]). What is Edom's role in these affairs?

Obadiah 2 and Jeremiah 49:15. This parallel, demarcated by cola in Table 5.3, evidences the inversion technique and suggests a change of fortune for Edom.

Table 5.3

Obadiah 2 and Its Jeremian Parallel

Jeremiah 49:15		*Obadiah 2*	
כי־הנה קטן נתתיך בגוים	v. 15a	הנה קטן נתתיך בגוים	v. 2a
בזוי באדם	v. 15b	בזוי אתה מאד	v. 2b

The parallels assert that Edom is to be insignificant among the nations (קטן נתתיך בגוים). Obadiah modifies Jeremiah, however, by proclaiming that Edom (here אתה) shall be "despised utterly" (בזוי . . . מאד), which modifies Jeremiah's "humankind" (אדם) with the inverted position of the ם, which appears last in Jeremiah's באדם, yet occurs first in Obadiah's מאד. This inverted position also reinforces a change in status suggested by the content of the parallel—Edom will be made *exceedingly* despicable (√ בזה + מאד is found nowhere else in the MT). Is the change an intensification of Jeremiah's "despised among humanity" (בזוי באדם), which itself communicates that Edom is the *most* despised in the

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calls to war; in this regard see, e.g., Deut 2:24; Josh 8:1; Judg 7:9; 18:9; 1 Sam 23:4; Jer 6:5; 49:28, 31). Jeremiah reverses the tendency (וקומו follows התקבצו ובאו); with no verb of motion, Obadiah deviates from tradition and might signal Jeremiah's peculiar use of the verb. Imperatival forms of קום in summons to war may reflect the call for initial posturing and/or preparations for war, rather than reflect the call to engage in conflict (see Judg 9:32). Raabe (*Obadiah*, 117) suggests that a surprise attack might be indicated.

world?[59] Both texts suggest that YHWH makes Edom *insignificant* among the nations

(קטן נתתיך בגוים). The question is whether this text suggests that YHWH *despises* (בזה √)

Edom.[60] Given the context of hubris (e.g., Obad 3) and deception attributed to Edom (see

below), מאד is a significant modification: *exceptional* (מאד) despicability has befallen

Edom and the heavenly realm may be involved (cf. Isa 34:5; Mal 1:3–4).[61] What has

Edom done to deserve this status?

Obadiah 3–4 and Jeremiah 49:16. Both texts describe Edom's hubris. As Table

5.4 shows, the parallel has much literal correspondence. At least four of Obadiah's

modifications are important for the thesis. First, in v. 3b, Edom is presented as "one who

says in his heart, 'who shall bring me down to earth?'" (אמר בלבו מי יורדני ארץ).[62] The

question presupposes an Edomite answer in the negative. A second modification

suggests a reason for Edom's certainty about its affairs being in good order: a secret

element in its national security. Although Jer 49:16aα parallels Obad 3aα with the

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[59]On the superlative, cf. GKC §132c.

[60]The passive participle בָּזוּי (בזה √) results in its uncertain subject, yet it is
unconvincing that the passiveness of the participle coupled with a supposed ellipsis in
Obad 2b caused by a parallelism within Jeremiah between "among the nations" (בגוים;
49:15a) and "among humanity" (באדם; 49:15b) exonerates YHWH as a possible subject
of the indignation (see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 121–22; Renkema, *Obadiah*, 123). When
YHWH is the subject of the verb in the HB, one finds contexts of hubris and false
teaching or reporting; see Psa 15:3–4; Psa 73:6–20; Mal 2:7–9; cf. [with negative
particle] Psa 22:25; 51:19; 69:34; 102:18; contrast, perhaps, Job 12:21; Psa 107:40; see
also Isa 37: 22–23).

[61]In consideration of texts typically dated later than Obadiah (e.g., Isa 34:5, 9–12;
Mal 1:2–4), does this verse hint at the eventually age-lasting indignation of Edom?

[62]Cf. Jer 21:13 and 49:4–5; ancient Near Eastern oracles commonly accuse
enemies of hubris; See John Barton, "History and Rhetoric in the Prophets," in *The Bible
as Rhetoric* (ed. Martin Werner; London: Routledge, 1990), 51–64.

Table 5.4

Obadiah 3–4 and Its Jeremian Parallel

Jeremiah 49:16		Obadiah 3–4	
תפלצתך השיא אתך זדון לבך	v. 16aα	זדון לבך השיאך	v. 3aα
שכני בחגוי הסלע מרום שבתו	v. 16aβ	שכני בחגוי־סלע מרום שבתו	v. 3aβ
תפשׂי מרום גבעה	v. 16aγ	…	
…		אמר בלבו	v. 3bα
…		מי יורדני ארץ	v. 3bβ
כי־תגביה כנשר קנך	v. 16bα	אם־תגביה כנשר	v. 4a
…		ואם־בין כוכבים שׂים קנך	v. 4b
משם אורידך נאם־יהוה	v. 16bβ	משם אורידך נאם־יהוה	v. 4c

phrase זדון לבך ("the pride of your heart"), Obadiah elaborates on the theme with the

addition of אמר בלבו ("*the one who says* in his heart"). Although אמר technically means

to vocalize, the phrase is an example of a common idiom (לב + אמר) meaning "thinking,

believing, intending."[63] In both parallels, Edom's hubristic statement references the

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[63]Several biblical texts make use of the idiom; see, e.g., Psa 14:1; 27:8; 53:1; Isa 49:21; Zech 12:5. We might also consider Ezek 28:2 as instructive in this regard, as it might connect internal dialogue and haughtiness (גבה √; cf. Obad 4a) in a manner similar to Obadiah:. . . יען גבה לבך ותאמר אל אני . . . (. . . because your heart is arrogant and you say, "I am God"); cf. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 128. Compare similar idioms (נשא √; לבב + יסק √ + שפה) in the treaty context of Sefire III:14–17; The Sefire text warns that secret plots violate a treaty relationship; cf. also positive statements found in Sefire II B:5 (הן תאמר בנבשך ותעשׂת בלבב[ך גבר עדן אנה]; "If you say in your being, and if you think in [your] heart, 'I am a man of the treaty' . . .); my translation; see also the translations and restoration of the text in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Revised ed.; Biblica et Orientalia 19/A; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1995), 138–9, 123. Obad 4 provides a response to Edom's supposed self-evaluation in a manner similar to other texts responding to such "speaking in the heart" (לב + אמר): YHWH will bring Edom down; cf. Obad 3–4 with, e.g., Psa 14:1–2; Isa 49:21–22; Zech 12:5–6.

defensive qualities of Edom's physical geography (Obad 3aβ ‖ Jer 49:16aβ); unlike the Jeremian parallel Edom's national security includes discourse others do not hear.

Obadiah's development of a theme of secrecy is seen in comparing the beginning of the verse (זדון לבך השיאך; "deceived you, has the pride of your heart." [v. 3aα]) with its Jeremian parallel (השיא אתך זדון לבך; "…the pride of your heart has deceived you." [Jer 49:16aα]). The inverted order of זדון לבך and √ II. נשא ("beguile, deceive") evidences the inversion technique. The second occurrence of √ II. נשא (v. 7b) is in an explicit treaty deception context. This modification of Jeremiah, this inversion of "deception" (Obad 3aα), both accentuates the interiority and secrecy of Edom's words and foreshadows the root's occurrence in a latter context of explicit treaty betrayal (השיאוך בריתך [v. 7a]). Is a secret treaty the plan that sought national security? If so, with whom is that treaty?

The answer may be found in a fourth modification. Obadiah 4b adds a curious locale from which YHWH could tear Edom down (אורידך נאם־יהוה; v. 4c): ואם־בין כוכבים שים קנך ("Even if among the stars your nest is established…").[64] The modification communicates Edom's astronomical hubris and provides assurance to Obadiah's audience of YHWH's power, yet what else might Edom's established "abode" among the stars tell us about Obadiah's views on Edom? Worship of the stars in ancient Israel was strong in times of Mesopotamian political influence,[65] and Obad 4 parallels the

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[64]See James Barr, "Is Hebrew קן 'Nest' a Metaphor?" in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau* (ed. Alan S. Kaye; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991): 150–61; whether קן literally means "abode" and is used metaphorically for a nest, or means "nest" and is used metaphorically for Edom's abode does not appear to alter the sense.

[65]On the futility of astral residence, see, e.g., Dan 8:9–11, 25; KTU 1.5 II:3; see also Fabrizio Lelli, "Stars," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (2nd ed.; ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999),

astronomical imagery in an oracle of Babylon's fall (Isaiah 13–14). The thematic and
terminological parallels with Isaiah 14:13 are particularly noteworthy.

You had said in your heart, "I shall ascend the heavens. I shall lift up my throne above the stars of El, and I shall sit on the Mount of Assembly at the far-reaches of Zaphon."	ואתה אמרת בלבבך השמים אעלה ממעל לכוכבי־אל ארים כסאי ואשב בהר־מועד בירכתי צפון

With the idiom לב + אמר, Babylon's hubristic statement about its elevation includes a
secretive quality (cf. Obad v. 3bα). Babylon seeks to lift its throne above the "stars of
El" (לכוכבי־אל) only to be cast down (√ ירד [Isa 14:15; cf. Obad 4c]). Similarly, Obadiah
has hypothesized that even if Edom is established in such a starry abode (כוכבים [v. 4b]) it
would be torn down. Important for the discussion of the addition in Obad 6b (מצפניו; √
צפן; see below), is the divine abode, Zaphon (צפון; "North"), upon the furthest reaches of
which Babylon seeks an administrative position. No other single biblical text provides as
many terminological and thematic parallels with Obad 3bα–4 as Isa 14:13.[66] In
consideration of the thesis, Obadiah's modification (בין כוכבים) makes perfect sense:
Edom's secretive rhetoric of national security (v. 3b) is associated with the stars over
which Babylon has been said to erect its throne.

Obadiah 5–6 and Jeremiah 49:9–10. Obadiah's propensity toward the inversion
technique is seen in the final cluster of close parallels with Jeremiah 49 (Table 5.5).

809–15. See also Amos 5:26; 7:43 and discussion in Shalom Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia;
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 194–98; see also Othmar L. Keel and Christoph Uehlinger,
Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel (trans. Thomas H. Trapp;
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 283–372.

[66]In contexts of international conflict, Babylon and Edom are related to hubris,
secrecy, and an attempt to establish an astral abode. Obadiah might allude to a known
description of Babylon, perhaps even to Isaiah 14; contrast Renkema, *Obadiah*, 131–32.

Table 5.5

Obadiah 5–6 and Its Jeremian Parallel

Jeremiah 49:9–10		*Obadiah 5–6*	
אם־בצרים בוא לך	v. 9aα	אם־גנבים בוא לך אם־שׁודדי לילה	v. 5aα
לא ישארו עוללות	v. 9aβ	איך נדמיתה	v. 5aβ
אם־גנבים בלילה השחיתו דים	v. 9bα	הלוא יגנבו דים	v. 5aγ
כי־אני חשפתי את־עשׂו	v. 10aα	אם־בצרים בוא לך	v. 5bα
גליתי את־מסתריו	v. 10aβ	הלוא ישאירו עללות	v. 5bβ
ונחבה לא יוכל	v. 10aγ	איך נחפשׂו עשׂו	v. 6a
שדד זרעו ואחיו ושכניו	v. 10bα	נבעו מצפניו	v. 6b
ואיננו	v. 10bβ		

Inversion of verse groups, phrases, and consonants are perceivable in the parallel. Several modifications of Jeremiah support the thesis. Obadiah introduces the *first* colon of verse 5 with an element that introduces the *last* colon of Jer 49:9 (אם־גנבים . . . ; "If thieves . . . "). "Thievery" begins the unit, accentuating the theme of secrecy suggested by verse 3bα (אמר בלבו). Second, a reference to the night (לילה; connoting mystery and danger)[67] appears in the *introductory colon* of Obad 5, yet its parallel (בלילה) appears in the *last colon* of Jer 49:9. Although Obadiah's introduction to verse 5 is nearly identical to the introductory colon of Jer 49:9 (אם־ . . . בוא לך; with Obadiah substituting גנבים for

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[67]In a related modification, an occurrence of √ שדד appears with לילה in Obad 5aα, yet that root does not appear until Jer 49:10. Edom or Seir are relatively regularly featured in connection with לילה where a sense of mystery or danger is apparent. In this regard, see also 2 Kgs 8:21 (2 Chr 21:9); Isa 21:11; 34:10. Forms of לילה also feature prominently in Lam 1:2; 2:18; and, reading with Qere, 2:19. In a context of betrayal (√ בגד), Lam 1:2 connects לילה with a term at home in treaty relationships (√ אהב).

Jeremiah's בצרים), Obadiah has retained that introductory colon exactly and literally, yet

has transposed it into the second to last colon of Obad 5 (אם־בצרים בוא לך). Additionally,

the second colon of Jeremiah (v. 9ab), has been transposed with some modification to the

position of last colon of Obad 5. These modifications include an accentuation of the

questioning implied by the syntax of Jer 49:9a by including an interrogative (ה)

connected with a negative particle (הלוא). Jeremiah includes only the negative particle

(לא). The modification highlights the interrogative. Obadiah also inverts the order of

defective[68] spelling in a series of two otherwise identical words: the two in Jer 9aβ read

ישארו עוללות, whereas the two in Obad 5bβ read ישאירו עללות, highlighting the

consonants י and ו.[69] Given the hypothesis of a Jeremian priority, Obadiah has surprised

a reading audience familiar with the opening colon of Jer 49:9 in two ways. A literal

parallel might be expected to begin immediately in verse 5 (אם־ . . . בוא ‖ אם־ . . . בוא לך

לך [Jer 49:9aα]), yet that literal parallel occurs later in the verse (5bα). In what is

otherwise a parallel of literal agreement, Obadiah has opted to *substitute* Jeremiah's

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[68]Reading ישארו in Jer 49:9 with the MT as a *hipʿil*.

[69]James Nogalski (*Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* [BZAW 218; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993], 63) suggests that these orthographic changes "have little bearing upon either the meaning of the text or the intention of the redactor." For Nogalski, the (other) reversals evidenced in a comparison of Jer 49:9 and Obad 5 may be understood as Obadiah's inversion of the Jeremian order "so that the themes of destruction and remnant appear in the same order as Amos 9:8–10)" (p. 66). Such might be the case (see also Nogalski's explanation of the added interrogative הלוא), but, given the frequency of inversion in Obadiah it is not clear that the (reversed order of) defective spellings is "most likely" due to "orthographical preference of the redactor" (p. 63) unless that "preference" had rhetorical significance.

peaceful בצרים (NRSV "grape-gatherers"; √ בצר "to cut off, enclose")[70] with a root

denoting secretive thievery (√ גנב).[71] Why this substitution in a context of so much

inversion?

Through rootplay with √ בצר, it is possible that Obadiah's substitution for

thievery produces a pun on the Edomite royal city of Bozrah (בצרה).[72] The inverted

order of defectively spelled words between the inverted occurrences of בצרים and גנבים in

the Jer 49:9 and Obad 5 parallel has highlighted *defective* spelling and the consonants ו

and י (see above). Obadiah's negative particle (הלוא) is spelled fully, unlike Jeremiah's.

Obadiah's full spelling also directs our attention to an added interrogative (ה). In a

context heavy with inversion that draws attention to spelling, the extra ה provides some

textual support for a complex rootplay in Obad 5: "grape-gatherers" or more literally

"those who shall cut off/enclose" (√ בצר) may reference Bozrah (ה + בצר = בצרה).

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[70]Note, however, Jeremiah 6:9, where Judah's enemy is described "like a grape-gatherer" (כבוצר; √ בצר) in a context of the impending Babylonian assault (ch. 6) and when danger is all around (v. 26).

[71]The nominal form may designate a habitual or professional thief; see V. Hamp, "גָּנַב gānabh," *TDOT* 3:39–45, esp. 41; the comment of Renkema (*Obadiah*, 138) accentuates the violence of theft in regard to the "reverse order" of the images:

> Jeremiah first employs the image of the grape pickers and only then the image of thieves. …By changing the order of the images, (peace-loving) grape pickers are places side by side with hostile, plundering soldiers. The effect is thus one of heightening contrast: grape pickers do not go about their work in a violent way; violent and aggressive armies, on the other hand, leave nothing but destruction in their wake.

[72]See Isa 34:6; 63:1; Jer 48:24; 49:13, 22; Amos 1:12.

The surprise[73] interjection of Obad 5aβ (אֵיךְ נִדְמֵיתָה; NRSV "how you have been destroyed!") between the reversed occurrences of בצרים and גנבים is informative.

Obadiah 5 is typically understood as suggesting that plundering and destruction are closer and more damaging than Edom might suppose. The occurrence of נדמיתה, however, provides a challenging ambiguity.[74] Should we read the phrase as "How you are similar!" (√ I. דמה), "How you are destroyed/cut off!" (√ II. דמה), or both? Is allusion being made to the root דמם (i.e., "How you are silenced!"; cf., דומה in Isa 21:11; Psa 94:17; 115:177). Any could fit the context. Reading with √ I. דמה, we see that the complex rootplay likening Edom's principle city with thievery is reinforced: Obadiah exclaims, "How you are *similar* [to a thief, to a destroyer in the night]!" The polysemous נדמיתה also suggests Edom's *destruction* and that Edom's hubristic and interior dialogue connected with Mesopotamian imagery (v. 3) will be *silenced*. Whichever position one takes, verse 5 evidences much inversion of form and a complex pun: Bozrah is likened to a devastating (√ שדד) and secretive thief (√ גבר) of the night. Themes of secrecy and international politics (established in vv. 1–4) continue, yet in verse 5 the sense of danger is heightened and the Edomite political capital is at the root.

Further evidence for the inversion technique and an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah may be gleaned from Obad 6 in comparison with Jer 49:10aα–β (see Table 5.5,

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[73]For a reader or auditor of the text familiar with the Jeremian parallel, the insertion of this phrase of destruction—before the expected remainder—would elicit surprise. Given a text heavy-laden with inversion, it is doubtful that the phrase is accidentally transposed from the end of the verse; contrast BHS and, e.g., Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* 137; Stuart's observations (*Hosea-Jonah*, 407–8, 410, 411, and 417) are beneficial, although his interrogative reading of אֵיךְ has won little support.

[74]The consonants are pointed as a *nipʿal* perfect, second person singular (נִדְמֵיתָה).

above). Jeremiah 49:10 declares that YHWH has "stripped Esau, uncovered his

enclosures" (חשפתי את־עשו גליתי את־מסתריו). The noun מִסְתָּר ("hidden/enclosed place")

has the explicit sense of a physical location.[75] In Obadiah, Esau is not "stripped" (√

חשׂף), he is "searched out, uncovered" (√ חפשׂ),[76] evidencing an intertextual inversion on

the miniscule level through the reversed order of two consonants (פשׂ < שׂף). The *nipʿal*

stem of חפשׂ occurs only here, and the verb with its plural form poses some difficulty.[77]

Translations such as "pillaged" are common,[78] but the etymology of the root suggests not

aggression but uncovering something hidden, mysterious, or requiring discernment.[79]

Outside the biblical text, this connotation (if not denotation) is evident.[80] The Ugaritic

etymological equivalent is found in the phrase *bt ḫptt* ("The House of Under"),[81] which

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[75]See also Ps 10:8; 17:12; 64:5; Isa 45:3; 53:3; Jer 13:17; 23:24; Lam 3:10; and Hab 3:14. Contrast סֵתֶר, which carries connotations both of physical concealment and of intellectual secrecy; see S. Wagner, "סָתַר, *sātar*," *TDOT* 10:362–72, esp. 369–71.

[76]On the root, see Mass, "חָפַשׂ *hāpaś*," *TDOT* 5:112–14; the root is appropriate given the physical geography of the Edomite heartland; cf. Renkema, *Obadiah*, 139.

[77]"Esau," as a collective plural, may be the subject. Some commentators consider the plural form to represent a copyist's error; see, e.g., Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 148; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 412; LXX and Vulgate have singular verbs.

[78]E.g., RSV/ NRSV: "ransacked"; NIV: "pillaged"; NJB: "looted"; JPS "thoroughly rifled"; Contrast KJV: "searched out"; contrast also(?) Vulgate: quomodo scrutati sunt Esau; cf. the use of the root in 2 Chr 18:29 (*hitpaʿel*; lit. "let myself be searched for").

[79]The context of Psa 64:7 [6] includes evil planning (מסוד מרעים; v. 3 [2]) and deep/obscure interior thoughts of heart (וקרב איש ולב עמק; v. 8 [7]); compare the discernment suggested by √ חפשׂ in Prov 20:27; cf. also Amos 9:3 (*piʿel* imperfect).

[80]The root is used to describe things brought up from below (e.g. drawing water) or the affect of something *from below* (e.g. grain; things dug); cf. Maas, *TDOT* 5:112–14.

[81]*bt ḫptt* KTU 1.4 VIII:7; cf. 1.5 V:15; this accentuating translation, "House of Under," may be supported further as the phrase occurs in parallel both with the

designates (part of) the netherworld through which Baal's subordinates are to pass toward

Mot. Accordingly, Obadiah has modified Jeremiah in order to connote not only a

physical search, but also discernment of something hidden or secretive. Translations

appear to have been influenced heavily, perhaps too heavily, *by the Jeremian parallel* (√

חשׂף; "stripped"). Thus, rather than "How Esau is pillaged!" the phrase might better

suggest, with English wordplay, "How Esau is *under*stood!" What has been discerned?

What has "come up" about the brother, Esau? The secrecy theme continues.

Evidence for a secretive Edomite alliance may be observed in Obad 6b, where the

prophet modifies Jeremiah's "his hidden places" (מסתריו from √ סתר) into "his hidden

places/treasures" (מצפניו from √ צפן).[82] The meaning of the *hapax legomenon* is

problematic, yet discussion of the term in commentaries is either avoided or reliant on its

supposed synonymy with the Jeremian parallel.[83] Although מצפניו is from a root meaning

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"thriver(?) of the earth/netherworld" (*ġsr . arṣ* [KTU 1.4 VIII:4]; cf. agricultural
"thriving" in a possible etymological relationship between *ġsr* and Arabic terms as
suggested by Cyrus Gordon [*UT* 3:465]) and "those who go down into the
earth/netherworld" (*yrdm . arṣ* [KTU 1.4 VIII:8–9]). For another view, related
bibliography, and a different translation (i.e., "house of the couch") based on a
comparison with Heb. בְּבֵית הַחָפְשִׁית [see 2 Kgs 15:5]), see N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from
Ugarit: The Words of Ilimilku and His Colleagues* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,
1998), 113; one might, however, prefer to translate the phrase as "house of separation"
following D. Pardee, noted by Wyatt (pp. 113, 472); cf. *BDB*.

[82]Cf. lexicons.

[83]Commentators provide little or no discussion of the *hapax*. Avoidance of the
term results in an uncertainty of its meaning. For directly relevant pages of a perceivable
lack of discussion in commentaries of the meaning of this term in Obad 6, see Julius A.
Bewer, "Obadiah," in *A Criticial and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah,
Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Joel* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911),
24; Brewer considers the Jeremian parallel a "calmer and more logical reading of the
original" and likens the *hapax* to the noun מַשְׂטְמוֹן (commonly understood as "hidden
treasures") in the contexts of Isa 45:3; Prov 2:4; Job 3:21; cf. also Wolff, *Obadiah and
Jonah*, 35, 50; see also Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 148–49; Stuart, *Hosea-*

to hide or treasure up, the root came to be used to signify "north" (צפון), and there are a dozen or so times in the HB where "the *north*" designates a Mesopotamian power.[84] Obadiah has modified a Jeremian term denoting a physical location with one that both denotes *something hidden* and connotes *northernness.* The reversal of expectations (if not reversal of state of being) is surprising: Obadiah communicates that Esau/Edom, a people from the *south* (cf. תימן [v. 9]),[85] may now be understood (cf. √ חפשׂ [cf. v. 6a]) as having cached a secret northernness. Given the sixth-century context, it is reasonable to understand the modification as a subtle reference to Edom's inclination toward Babylon.

The verb used to divulge this revelation complements this context of Edom's "hidden-northernness." Whereas Jeremiah has "uncovered" (√ גלה), Obadiah provides a *nipˤal* perfect from בעה. Representative translations of this term in Obad 6 include "searched out" and "ransacked," which provide some distinction from Jeremiah's גליתי, yet appears (again) to be governed as much by the parallels (both נחפשׂו in Obadiah and

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Jonah, 411, 412, 417; Raabe, *Obadiah,* esp. 146 (with noncommittal discussion); Renkema (*Obadiah,* 139) considers the hidden treasures ("storehouses") "the ultimate goal" of the subjects of Obad 6b; see also Barton, *Joel and Obadiah,* 139–42; consider also the avoidance of specificity in the commentaries of, e.g., Watts, *Obadiah,* 56–57; David W. Baker, "Obadiah: An Introduction and Commentary," in *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1988), 34; Billy K. Smith, "Obadiah," in *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 186; James Limburg, "Obadiah," in *Hosea through Micah* (ed. James Luther Mays; Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 131–33; William P. Brown, *Obadiah through Micah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 9–11; Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 246–47. If commentaries are a gauge of meaning, then מצפניו cries for an explanation; this study provides one.

[84]Cf. uses of the root in Is 14:31; 41:25; Jer 1:14, 15; 4: 6; 6:1, 10:22; 22; 13:20; 15:12; 25: 9, 26; 46:20, 24; 47:2; Ezek 26:7; 38: 6, 15; 39:2; cf. Zeph 2:13.

[85]For a direct connection between "South" (תימן) and Esau/Edom, see Gen 36:9–11; Jer 49:7, 20; Amos 1:12; Obad 1:9.

גליתי in Jeremiah) as by semantics and etymology. The occurrence of √ בעה in Isa 21:12

suggests that the root in the *hipʿil* connotes the "inquiry" (not "searching") of sentinels.[86]

In Isaiah 64:1 [2] the root (in *qal*)—if it is the same root—connotes the boiling effects of

fire upon water. In Isa 30:13, the root (in *nipʿal*) connotes the noticeable swelling out of

a stressed and fractured wall. What is bubbling up from biblical Edom?[87] In Aramaic,

the root in *peʿal* denotes asking, seeking, petitioning, and examining, which clearly

reinforces the "inquiring" sense of the term known from Isa 21:12. An Ugaritic

occurrence suggests "reveal," which corresponds to the Targum of Obad 6.[88] In the MT

of Obad 6, the verb is in the *nipʿal* stem. Considering the various nuances of the root,

secrecy is again a theme: "[Esau's] hidden-northernness has *swelled or bulged out*."

Focusing on the connotations of inquiry and petitioning, the *nipʿal* suggests that Esau's

northernness "has become divulged," (or, reciprocally, "divulged itself") rather than "has

been searched or ransacked." In sum, Obadiah 5–6 charges Edom of an erstwhile hidden

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[86]The enigmatic Dumah oracle (Isa 21:11–12), which might pertain to Edom, is set in an anti-Babylonian and Arabian context (ch. 21). The LXX reads Idumea (Edom), which corresponds to Seir (v. 12). Dumah (דומה, "silence" [?]; cf. Obad 5aβ) also appears as a synonym for the underworld (Ps 94:17; 115:17; cf. Obad 6a), which might befit the context of watchman's mysterious response to a question heard from Seir about the "night" (perhaps symbolizing destruction; cf. Obad 5aα).

[87]In three of the five occurrences of the root in biblical Hebrew, Edom (or Seir) is in an immediate or proximal context. See Isaiah 21:12 [2x] and previous note. The use of the root in Isa 30:13 is in a chapter the context of which is similar to that of Jeremiah 27–28 and Zedekiah's council considering an anti-Mesopotamian coalition. The other use, Isa 64:1[2], follows a chapter including a significant use of Edom (63:1–7).

[88]Raabe (*Obadiah*, 146–48) concludes that "seek" is the best translation (noting the parallel, חפשׂ), yet strongly considers "revealed" based on the Targum of Obadiah and an Ugaritic occurrence of the root (KTU 1.3 III 28–29): *atm . w ank ibġyh . b tk . ġry . ṣpn* ("Come, and I shall reveal it in the center of my divine mountain, Zaphon [√ צפן]"; cf. the translation of Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 78). Coincidently, √ צפן appears in the same context as √ בעה in KTU 1.3 III 28–29.

collusion: ironically, it is from the south that Edom's secret northernness has burst out.[89]
Edom is charged with a reversed state of being. South northerly is.

Obad 1–6 displays a literary cohesion identified in commentaries and other works
with rubrics such as "a prediction of Edom's impending doom" or "a call for Edom's
punishment."[90] Subsisting with that call for Edom's doom are poetic techniques of
inversion and intensification, and the more subtle themes of Edom's secrecy and divulged
Mesopotamian relations. Thus, charges against Edom (clearly made in vv. 10–14) that
are congruent with the thesis have already begun. Discussion on the extended inverted
quotation in vv. 1–6 has shown that inversion is evidenced on the verse, colon, phrase,
and consonantal level. The introduction showed that a certain density of inversion of
form can point to or reinforce the content-oriented *reversal of fortune* or *reversal of state
of being*. Obadiah 6 alone reflects both inverted *form* (√ חפשׂ ‖ √ חשׂף) and inverted
content (south northerly is). One is left wondering what historical circumstances are
behind Obadiah's rhetorical exercise of the reversal motif. Verse 7 evidences an answer.

Obadiah 7 and the Language of Alliance

Obadiah's extended "inverted quotation" has ended.[91] With verse 7, overt
references to a broken international alliance begin.

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[89]Would such a revelation be the response of the sentinel of Isa 21:11–12 (see
above) should a subsequent inquiry take place (אם־תבעיון בעיו שׁבו אתיו; v. 12)?

[90]For Obad 1–6 (or 1–7 or 1/2–9) as displaying a unifying theme of "Edom's
doom" (or nearly synonymous terminology), see, e.g., Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and
Micah*, 146; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 414; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 289.

[91]Thematic parallels do continue (see above; Obad 8 ‖ Jer 49:7b; Obad 9 ‖ Jer
49:22b; and Ob 16 ‖ Jer 49:12). Syntax and translation problems in this verse have
generated much discussion, particularly in relation to לחמד and מזור (v. 7cα); see G. I.

v. 7a	עד־הגבול שלחוך כל אנשי בריתך
v. 7b	השיאוך יכלו לך אנשי שלמך
v. 7cα	לחמך ישימו מזור תחתיך
v. 7cβ	אין תבונה בו

Three likely synonyms for "treaty" are found in Obad 7a–cα: אנשי ברית ("men of your

covenant") ‖ אנשי שלמך ("men of your peace") ‖ לחמך ("your bread"). While the first

two phrases are readily at home in treaty discourse (Chapter Two), the same may be said

of לחמך (v. 7cα). Occurrences of "bread" in treaty contexts suggest the intimacy (and

perhaps economic incentive) of the established relationship.[92] Additionally, לחמך ("your

bread") in Obad 7 might reference a meal in a treaty ratification ceremony.[93] By

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Davies, "A New Solution to a Crux in Obadiah," *VT* 27 (1977): 484–87; James D.
Nogalski ("Obadiah 7: Textual Corruption or Politically Charged Metaphor?," *ZAW* 110
[1998]: 67–71; P. Kyle McCarter, "Obadiah 7 and the Fall of Edom," *BASOR* 221
(1976): 87–92; cf. Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, *Amos Obadiah Jonah* (The New
American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 187 and Raabe,
Obadiah, 155; alternatively, see Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 150 and Barton,
Joel and Obadiah,139–40; BHS suggests the emendation מָצוֹד ("snare"); cf. LXX ἔνεδρα
["lie in wait, ambush"]; Vulgate *insidias* ["snare, ambush"]; Targum תקלא ["snare"]). In
isolation, מָזוֹר is most easily read as "wound" (cf. Jer 30:13; Hos 5:13 [2x]).

[92]For connotations of political intimacy, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and
Covenant*, esp. 34–35; cf. Nogalski, "Obadiah 7," 69–71, who will conclude that the colon
may be paraphrased as "These men have placed your covenant (or your alliance) as a trap
beneath you," or, colloquially, "Your alliance will come back to haunt you" (71). For
bread in Obad 7 as a reference to economy, see Renkema, *Obadiah*, 145–47.

[93]See, e.g., Gen 26:26–31; see also Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 15–
16, 212. An important text in this regard is Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty (see 6:153–
56, and, mentioning bread and wine in the ceremonial curses section, see 6.560–562); for
these texts, see Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty
Oaths* (ed. Robert M. Whiting; State Archives of Assyria 2, vol. 2; Helsinki: Helsinki
University Press, 1988), 35, 52; cf. *ANET 536*. A dismemberment and possible
consumption of a spring lamb during a ratification ceremony is evidenced in a treaty
between Ashurnirari V, king of Assyria (754–745 B.C.E.) and Matiʿilu, king of Arpad.
Two portions of the treaty, however, need to be read together to evidence consumption

synecdoche the term expresses the whole of the treaty. Accordingly, with לחמך and a

term referencing the intended result of mutual well-being (שׁלמך),[94] we find references to

the intended, operative benefits of Edom's formal treaty relationship. In Obad 7,

however, Edom's peaceful co-operators shall deceive (√ II. נשׁא) Edom and engage in

hostile actions (יכלו לך). Indeed, Edom was already deceived (√ II. נשׁא) in its secret

statement of geopolitical security (v. 3). Thus, Obad 7 communicates a terrible reversal

of fortune: Edom's own treaty partners act to its detriment. The verse ends with a terse

statement of Edom's inability to comprehend or anticipate this reversal (אין תבונה בו; 7d).

Attention to the consonant ך, which occurs nine times in Obad 7a–cα, is helpful.

A second person singular pronominal suffix (ך) ends each of the three synonyms for

treaty in the verse. In the HB a pronominal suffix with ברית most often designates *the*

initiating party, although not necessarily the superior party of the treaty/covenant.[95] The

verse suggests that Edom *initiated* the treaty relationship. The alliteration (and rhyme)[96]

of verse 7 due to the frequency of ך places a special emphasis on Edom's relations with

its allies. The allusions to international politics and secrecy (e.g., Obad 1–3, 6) together

with the allusion to an erstwhile hidden collusion between Edom in the south and its

divulged Mesopotamian "north" (Obad 4–6) have provided sufficient information to cast

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during a ratification ceremony; see Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, 8–9, 11. Cf. also the ratification ceremony in the treaty between KTK and [Matiᶜilu of] Arpad in Sefire IA:40 (*ANET*, 660a).

[94]For peaceful relations as the intended result and benefit of treaty relations see, e.g., Jos 9:15, which directly connects peace (√ שׁלם) with the cutting a covenant (ברית).

[95]See Raabe, *Obadiah*, 150, noting the exceptions of Ezek 16:61 and Zech 9:11.

[96]שׁלחוך כל . . . בריתך השׁיאוך יכלו לך . . . שׁלמך לחמך . . תחתיך. For end-rhyme, see Watson, *Traditional Techniques*, e.g. 122, 150–51, 172.

doubt on interpretations that the treaty partners referred to in verse 7 are Bedouins,[97] Arabic tribes,[98] or Nabataeans.[99] Given Obadiah's rhetorical artistry and the operative historical-critical inferences of the current study, Babylon is the better fit.

Attention to verbal forms in verse 7 and consideration of "the border" (הגבול; v. 7a) to which Babylon sends Edom help reveal the story of this Babylonian–Edomite treaty relationship. Apart from the context of verse 7b–c, there is no reason to conclude that this *sending* (שלח in *piʿel*) is hostile. As Chapter Two has shown, the form reflects the release of a treaty partner in peace subsequent to the ratification of the treaty.[100] The definite article (ה־) suggests that Obadiah is referencing a particular border. Obadiah's audience might have understood "*the* border" as the economically important Edomite-Judahite border. A biblical occurrence of הגבול provides textual support for this possibility; Numbers 34:3–5 describes a border virtually identical to the arc of Judahite border fortifications of the early sixth-century discussed in Chapter Three.[101] With this

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[97]So, e.g., Rudolph, *Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona.*

[98]For Wolff (*Obadiah and Jonah* 50–51) Arabs are Edom's eventual betrayers (see Ezek 25:3–10); cf. McCarter, "Obadiah 7," 87–92; in refutation, see J. R. Bartlett, "From Edomites to Nabataeans: A Study in Continuity," *PEQ* 111 (1979): 53–66; *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOTSup. 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 159.

[99]So, e.g., Julius A. Bewer, "Obadiah," 24.

[100]On שלח in *piʿel*, see especially 1 Kgs 20:34b (2 times; with Ahab as speaker: ואני בברית אשלחך ויכרת־לו ברית וישלחהו) and twice in a peaceful context with the formation of a covenant (following one occurrence of the root in a hostile context [v. 27] prior to the formation of a covenant relationship) in Gen 26:27–31. Translations of Obad 7a tend to suggest hostility (e.g., NRSV, NIV); cf. LXX ἐξαπέστειλάν; Vulgate *emiserunt*. הגבול appears as the Edomite border with Moab in 2 Kgs 3:20–21.

[101]Num 34:3–5 describes an arc stretching west from the southern end of the Dead Sea to Kadesh-Barnea; "the border" (הגבול) appears in v. 5; cf. also הגבול in Josh 15:1–4).

textual support for a border fitting the context of Edomite-Judahite relations ca. 587 B.C.E., Obad 7a might reference Babylon's release of Edom into a strategic position at the Edomite-Judahite border soon after a treaty is formalized (cf. the results of Chapter Four). Whatever the case, the treaty relationship toward ensuring mutual wellbeing (√ שלם) described in Obad 7a did not last. At first, Babylon as the superior partner sends or releases Edom (שלחוך) to a particular border (הגבול; Obad 7a). Subsequently, the wellbeing (שלמך) sought by the relationship deceives (השיאוך) and overpowers (יכלו לך) Edom (Obad 7b). With the action of the last verb, Babylon impairs (ישימו מזור) Edom with the "bread" (לחמך) of their relationship. If an economic incentive for cooperating with Babylon is implied by לחמך, then Obadiah suggests that Edom's new portion in the control of international trade passing through Edom and the Edomite-Judahite border became a primary factor in Edom's entanglement with its ally. History supports this factor.[102] Edom's fortune with Babylon has been turned on its head.

Obadiah 1–7 is a good example of how the inversion technique (re: form) can introduce reversal of fortune (re: content). The numerous instances of the inversion technique (inverted form) in Obad 1–6 and the reversal of fortune suggested by Obad 6–7 (cf. above on 15b) might leave a learned tradent, auditor or (re)reader wondering if a deeper reversal is at work at the point the inverted quotation ends and absolute Obadiah begins. Why has there been so much inversion preceding the moment Obadiah begins wholly new material? Why does Obadiah predict Edom's fall at the hands of treaty partners? The answer may be found in the density of inversion itself. According to Obad

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[102]See Lindsay, "Babylonian Kings and Edom," esp. 38–39; for the economic incentive of Nabonidus' campaign against Edom, see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), 165–69.

15b, just as Edom has done, such shall be done to Edom, whose dealings will return upon

its own head (כאשר עשית יעשה לך גמלך ישוב בראשך). Verse 7 communicates that a treaty

partner (arguably Babylon) "deceived" (√ II. נשׁא) Edom. On the surface, the reversal of

fortune in verse 7 is rather straightforward: a relationship has changed for the worse.

Inversion, however, is normative in Obadiah 1–6, and the reversal of Edom's fortune

anticipated by verse 7 may be much more precise:[103] *Edom had previously deceived its*

own alliance partner. As a Judahite composition, Obadiah commends the conclusion that

Edom deceived Judah. This precise reversal of fortune is the meaningful result of the

reversal motif in this instance. Accordingly, verse 7 announces Edom's eventual political

misery (reversal of fortune) based on an application of the so-called *lex talionis* (e.g. v.

15b) pertaining to a betrayed alliance: like Judah, Edom shall suffer treaty betrayal.

Obadiah 8–14: Deficient National Intelligence and Activities Contrary to Expectation

Obadiah 8–10. Kinship language and a cluster of functional synonyms for Edom

(e.g., Teman) are apparent verses 8–10.[104] Although treaty allusions are unclear,[105]

Obadiah's choice of terminology in much of verses 8–10 befits a treaty betrayal context.

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[103]On a deeper reversal, see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 160 and Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 141; these commentators suggest that if the verse also relates to Edom's relations with Judah, then *that* betrayal pertained to *kinship* relations rather than official treaties. Note, however, Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 151; see also throughout Póe "The Book of Obadiah." Most commentators make no mention of any deeper reversal in v. 7.

[104]Nine verses reference kinship (Obad 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21). Obadiah 10a identifies the cause of Esau's shaming, namely, the violence committed against his brother, Jacob (מחמס אחיך יעקב תכסך בושה). Coupled with the cluster of synonyms for Edom in verses 8–9—Mount Esau is referenced twice (הר עשׂו [vv. 8, 9]); Teman is referenced once (תימן [v. 9]); Edom (אדום) is associated with wisdom (חכמים מאדום [v. 8])—Obad 10 makes an explicit reference to Jacob as Edom's brother (אחיך יעקב).

v. 8a	הלוא ביום ההוא נאם יהוה
v. 8bα	והאבדתי חכמים מאדום
v. 8bβ	ותבונה מהר עשׂו
v. 9a	וחתו גבוריך תימן
v. 9b	למען יכרת־איש מהר עשׂו מקטל
v. 10a	מחמס אחיך יעקב תכסך בושה
v. 10b	ונכרת לעולם

Wisdom and understanding (חכמים . . . ותבונה [v. 8]) link these verses with the end of

verse 7 (אין תבונה בו). At the bridge between themes of wisdom and of violence, three

toponyms appear: the wise will perish from Edom (v. 8bα); understanding will perish

from Mount Esau (v. 8bβ); and broken will be the warriors of Teman (v. 9a). In the

Jeremian parallel, Teman, "Southland," is twice directly associated with counsel and

planning that cannot survive (49:7, 20a). In Obadiah, the immediately preceding context

is similar, but Obadiah places Teman ("Southland") in direct connection with its terrified

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[105]The language of an Edomite-Judahite kinship cannot in itself evidence a treaty relationship (see Chapter Two). √ כרת (v. 9) is at home in contexts of treaty formation (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:32; 24:8; 34:10, 12, 15; Deut 4:23; 5:2, 3; 7:2; 9:9; 28:69; 29:11, 13, 24; Jos 9:15; 24:25; 1 Sam 11:1; 18:3; 2 Sam 3:13; 5:3; 1 Kgs 8:21; 20:34; 2 Kgs 11:4, 17; 17:35; 23:3; 1 Chr 11:3; 2 Chr 6:11; 21:7; 23:3, 16; 34:31; Ezra 10:3; Job 40:28; Jer 31:33; 34:8; Ezek 17:13; Hos 10:4.); the root is also used to describe the consequences of treaty infraction; see G. F. Hasel, "כָּרַת *kāraṯ*," *TDOT* 7:339–52; cf. E. Kutsch, "*krt* to cut off," *TLOT* 2:635–7. The conceptual connection between *cutting* covenants and being *cut off* from a covenant group appears in Gen 17:14. For another double-duty use of the root, see Gen 15:10, 18. If we consider the cutting of animals in Jer 34:18, then the root serves triple-duty; cf. the triple-duty function of an interdialectical semantic equivalent of Heb. √ כרת (Aram. √ גזר; cf. also Heb. גזר) in Sefire IA:7; IA:40; and IB:40–43, whereby the root denotes, respectively, the cutting (i.e., concluding) of a treaty (cf. Gen 15:18), the ceremonial threat placed upon representatives who might violate it (cf. Gen 15:10–17; Jer 34:18), and the inability for treaty partners to cut off other treaty members' households (cf. Gen 17:14). For these texts and related discussion, see Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* 42–43, 46–47, 52–53, 69, 97, and 114–5; despite the kinship language of Obad 9–10 and a larger context of treaty betrayal, only a tenuous argument can be made that Edom's being "cut down to the man" references a consequence of a betrayed treaty among kin.

warriors (וחתו גבוריך תימן [v. 9a]). Given the political overtones of Obadiah 1–7 and the

emerging military overtones in vv. 9–14, what are we to make of Temanite warriors at

the cusp of wisdom and violence?

 Some biblical evidence has been read as suggestive of a more highly developed

sapiental tradition in Edom compared to its contemporaries,[106] yet the evidence for this

greater Edomite wisdom is meager and *a significant portion of this evidence is comprised*

of Obad 8–9 and Jeremiah 49.   In Obadiah, "wisdom" language appears in a context of

international diplomacy, secrecy, failed treaties, and (with vv. 11–14) an international

assault. It is interesting that Isaiah 29:13–15 attributes nearly identical "wisdom"

language to Judah in a similar context of international invasion and siege (see vv. 3, 7–8).

The Lord said, "It is because these people draw near with their mouths and lips honoring me—yet their hearts are far from me, and their reverence of me is a commandment of popular instruction—	ויאמר אדני כי נגש העם הזה בפיו ובשפתיו כבדוני ולבו רחק ותהי יראתם אתי מצות ממני אנשים מלמדה
that I shall again amaze this people with shocking awe! I will destroy the wisdom of their wise-ones, while the discernment of their discerners becomes hidden."	לכן הנני יוסף להפליא את־העם־הזה הפלא ופלא ואבדה חכמיו ובינת נבניו תסתתר
Woe to those who go to great depths to hide a plan from YHWH. Their workings are in darkness and they say, "Who shall see us?" and "Who shall know what we are up to?"	הוי המעמיקים מיהוה לסתר עצה והיה במחשך מעשיהם ויאמרו מי ראנו ומי יודענו

Both Isaiah 29:13 and Obad 3 reference an internal or secretive dialogue of the heart (בפיו

ובשפתיו כבדוני ולבו רחק ממני [Isa 29:13b] || אמר בלבו [Obad 3bα]). Rhetorical questions

of Judahites in Isa 29:15b (ויאמרו מי ראנו ומי יודענו) parallels that of Edomites in Obad

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[106]Cf. Jer 49:7; Bar 3:14, 22, 23 (πρόνησις [prudence]; √ σύνασις
[understanding]; √ γινώσκω [to know]; σόφια [wisdom]); Job 1:1; 2:11.

3bβ (מי יורדני ארץ). A triple verbal parallel appears in descriptions of lost wisdom (<u>ואבדה</u>

והאבדתי <u>חכמים</u> מאדום <u>ותבונה</u> מהר עשׂו|| [Isa 29:14b] <u>חכמיו ובינת נבניו</u> תסתתר [Obad 8b; cf.

v. 7cβ]). Because a context of deficient national *political strategies* (not to mention

secretive planning) evidently marks both Obadiah and Isaiah 29, it is not clear that

Obadiah references an exceptional Edomite sagacity.[107] Instead, we find an ironic

reversal of fortune: diplomacy and a treaty relationship seeking geopolitical security

ultimately failed as wise court counsel.

    Obadiah 11-14. These verses constitute the single most detailed biblical

description of supposed Edomite hostility against Judah ca. 586 B.C.E.

v. 11aα	ביום עמדך מנגד
v. 11aβ	ביום שבות זרים חילו
v. 11bα	ונכרים באו (שערו) [שעריו]
v. 11bβ	ועל־ירושלם ידו גורל
v. 11bγ	גם־אתה כאחד מהם
v. 12aα	ואל־תרא ביום־אחיך ביום נכרו
v. 12aβ	ואל־תשמח לבני־יהודה ביום אבדם
v. 12b	ואל־תגדל פיך ביום צרה
v. 13aα	אל־תבוא בשער־עמי ביום אידם
v. 13aβ	אל־תרא גם־אתה ברעתו ביום אידו

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    [107]A statement of Johan Renkema (*Obadiah*, 152) on Obad 8 is instructive:

> The reference here does not intend to imply that there was a striking degree of
> wisdom evident in Edom at all levels of life. The author is referring rather to those
> wise individuals who assisted at the court in the determination of policies and
> political decisions, the advisors of the king who naturally surrounded himself with
> wise and intelligent individuals….

Renkema refers his readers to texts that describe such advisors (e.g., 2 Sam 16:15–17:14;
Isa 19:11–13; Est 1:13–15) or include "wisdom" terminology clearly in a political or
court context (e.g., 1 Kgs 5:9 [4:29]; Isa 3:1–3; 19:11–13; Psa 78:72; Prov 10:16).

<div dir="rtl">

v. 13b   ואל־תשלחנה בחילו ביום אידו

v. 14a   ואל־תעמד על־הפרק להכרית את־פלטיו

v. 14b   ואל־תסגר שריתיו ביום צרה

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Verse 11aα begins the list of charges against Edom and includes a two-word phrase (ביום עמדך) unique to Obadiah and often translated into English as "your standing aloof." Such an understanding of Edom's deportment toward Judah has been a keystone in numerous reconstructions of Edom's relations with Judah ca. 586 B.C.E.[108] This understanding of ביום עמדך (*qal* infinitive construct [√עמד] with preposition) is often supported through a reference to התיצב מנגד, unique to 2 Sam 18:13.[109] In context, this phrase (התיצב מנגד) suggests that, in a hypothetical situation, David's general Joab would not intervene favorably in order to defend a subordinate's actions (i.e., would remain "aloof"; √ יצב + מנגד) should that subordinate carry out actions Joab commends and would himself come to carry out. If *aloof* denotes a distinct self-interest, then the term "aloof" might be helpful given the context of 2 Sam 18:13, but is "stood aloof" an appropriate translation of for Obadiah's עמדך מנגד, a phrase utilizing a *finite* verb of a different root?

An answer may be found in consideration of the apparent specialized use of the *qal* infinitive construct of עמד in biblical Hebrew. Setting Obadiah's use aside, with one possible exception,[110] every time the *qal* infinitive construct is used, an official legal,

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[108]See Chapter One. Influential also are the King James Version at Psa 38:11 and the Revised Standard Version at 2 Sam 18:13; Psa 38:11; Obad 11.

[109]See Helmer Ringgren, "עמד *ʿāmaḏ*," *TDOT* 11:178-87; for √ יצב as denoting general standing in a crowd (i.e., not official positioning) see 1 Sam 10:23.

[110]Ezra 10:13; but, given the context, it would be difficult to designate as "unofficial" this use of עמד; cf. Ezek 1:21, 24, 25; 10:17.

political, military, or cultic status is evident.[111] This observation does not necessitate an

Edomite treaty with Babylon.[112] What it does suggest is that *whatever* עמדך מנגד implies,

it is likely a fulfillment of an official directive of the Edomite leadership.[113] Whether or

not the complex preposition מנגד denotes hostility, it likely denotes an obvious presence.

This presence eventually turns hostile (vv. 13–14; cf. Chapter Four).

Other elements of Obadiah 11 support this understanding of עמדך מנגד. The verse

ends with "even you were like one of them" (גם־אתה כאחד מהם). Obadiah's emphatic

use of גם־אתה "*even* you" implies a reversal of expectation. The verse identifies

"strangers" (זרים) and "foreigners" (נכרים) as those involved in the assault. The terms

likely pertain to Babylonians forces and auxiliaries from tribute nations under

Nebuchadnezzar's authority.[114] The description of their activities makes it rather clear

that these peoples were hardly neutral, indifferent, or disinterested in their dealings with

Judah (i.e., they were not *aloof*). Determined, hostile actions were taken. They took

Judah's efficacy (שבות זרים חילו; 11aβ), entered its gate[s] (שערו) [שעריו]) ונכרים באו; v.

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[111]Accepting the categorizations, for legal status, see Exod 18:23; Num 35:12; Josh 20:6, 9; Ezra 9:15; for military positioning, see Judg 2:14; 1 Sam 6:20; Is 10:32; Ezek 13:5; Esth 8:11; 9:16; Dan 8:7; Dan 11:15; for cultic status, see Exod 9:11, 28; Num 16:9; Dtr 10:8; 18:5; 1 Kgs 8:11; 1 Chr 23:30; 2 Chr 5:14; 29:11; 34:31; Jer 18:20; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65; for political status, see Gen 41:46; Jer 40:10; Ezek 17:14; Dan 1:4; 11:1, 4. For the root connoting official service, see Ringren, *TDOT* 11:178–87; note also official connotations of *infinitival* occurrences of יצב.

[112]In three occurrences of the infinitive construct of עמד in non-military political settings (Jer 40:10; Ezek 17:14; Dan 1:4) it is to Babylonians that service is given.

[113]Contrast Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 45, and, especially, Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 145). The Edomite position at the crossroads (תעמד על־הפרק) was an effective strategic deployment of troops; on √ פרק in an Edomite context, see Gen 27:40; the root suggests plunder (Gen 32:2, 3, 24; Nah 3:1).

[114]Cf. the guerrilla(?) bands of 2 Kgs 24:2 (ca. 597 B.C.E.).

11bα), and divvied up Jerusalem (ועל־ירושלם ידו גורל; v. 11bβ). If the official

connotations of the *qal* infinitive construct of √עמד is considered with Obadiah's clear

statement of Edom's similitude with those foreign peoples engaged in military

operations, a more likely reading of ביום עמדך מנגד . . . גם־אתה כאחד מהם (Obad 11aα,

bγ) is not "on the day of your standing *aloof…even you* were like one of them," but

rather "on the day of your [official] stationing in opposition…*even you* were like one of

them." The lack of aloofness is all too clear in the description that follows. In the gates

(v. 13) and at the crossroads (v. 14a), Edomites are presented as braggarts (v. 12)

relishing the aggressive manifestations of betrayed brotherly[115] expectations (vv. 12–14).

It is a surprise reversal of sorts;[116] intimate kin and trade partners have officially taken

their stand with the foreigners and strangers assaulting Judah.

Three observations on Obadiah 12–14 support the thesis. First, each of the three

verses contains terminology at home in treaty contexts: אחיך (12aα; cf. 1 Kgs 20:32);

להכרית from √כרת (v. 14); and תשלחנה from √שלח (v. 13).[117] If this last form is related

to the idiomatic expression שלח יד ב־, then conspiracy might be implied.[118] Second, an

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[115]The MT of Obad 13b points the finite verb as a feminine plural.

[116]A chiastic pattern of A-B-C-B'-A' may be seen in the five cola of Obad 11; "foreigners entering his gates" occupies the center (v. 11bα). The verse begins and ends with descriptions of Edom's disposition (v. 11aα, bγ) in connection with the actions of those assaulting Jerusalem (v. 11aβ–bβ). As kin, Edom entered gates kin may enter, but in a manner inconsistent with that kinship; by v. 13aα there is an ironic reversal of Edom's status: Edom is implored not to enter the people's gate (אל־תבוא בשער־עמי).

[117]Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, esp. 127–28, 199–201, 207.

[118]According to Hayim Tawil ("Two Notes on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Inscriptions," *CBQ* 42 [1980]: 30–37), the idiom in Aramaic and Hebrew has at least two connotations: a) "to harm/smite"; b) "to plot, conspire, scheme" (less

interesting possibility comes to light with attention to Obadiah 13aβ, which reads אל־תרא

גם־אתה ברעתו ("Do not look—even you—into [Judah's] disaster!"). This is the only

instance in which Obadiah repeats a vetitive (cf. 12aα). Obadiah 13 then repeats an

emphatic גם־אתה ("*even* you"; cf. v. 11). Why has Obadiah introduced the doubly

repetitive "do not look—*even* you!" within this verse? It is rather interesting that what

immediately follows this double repetition is a term with consonantal and phonemic

similarity to בְּרִיתוֹ ("his covenant, treaty"), namely בְּרָעָתוֹ ("into his disaster"; v. 13aβ).

Could this double repetition around a verb meaning to look coupled with a certain density

of terminology at home in treaty context unveil ברעתו as Judah's "disastrous-treaty"?[119]

    Third, recently entering the discussion is a direct comparison made by Marvin

Sweeney between these verses and prohibitions known from ANE treaties.[120]

> Verses 12–14 then present a series of eight prohibitions that provide greater detail
> concerning Edom's actions against Israel. The prohibitions seem to be modeled
> loosely on the style of the prohibitions contained within the Ten Commandments
> (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)… The style likewise reflects the prohibitions that
> are found in a treaty between nations in the ancient Near East. This stylistic
> aspect… emphasizes that Edom grossly violated whatever treaty might have bound
> the two nations together.[121]

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frequently). For possible examples of the expression שלח יד ב־ implying conspiracy, see
Est 8:7 and Psa 55:21. יד is absent in Obad 13, prohibiting an immediate conclusion of
implied conspiracy; see also Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 21, n. 24.

    [119]Given Aramaic עדן, עדי, עדיא ("treaty") and Akkadian *adê* ("treaty"), consider
both אידם ("their calamity") and אידו ("his calamity") in v. 13 as possible phonemic
wordplay. Could Judah's "calamity" be its treaty with Edom (אדום)?

    [120]Raabe (*Obadiah*, 186–87) leaves open the possibility that the verse pertains to a
stipulation from Edom's *formal or informal* alliance with Babylon.

    [121]Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 293, refers his reader to two works: Michael L.
Barré, "Treaties in the ANE," *ABD* 6:653–56, esp. 655; Simo Parpola, "Neo-Assyrian
Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh," *JCS* 39 (1987): 161–89, esp. 175–76.

Sweeney suggests in particular that the vetitive pertaining to the cutting down of fugitives

(v. 14) "plays upon the stipulations of most treaties that call upon an ally to capture and

return any enemy fugitives to the king with whom it is allied."[122] Sweeney refers us to

"The Treaty between KTK and Arpad," the relevant portion of which states,

> If one of my officials or one of my brothers or one of my eunuchs or one of the
> people under my control flees from me and becomes a fugitive and goes to
> Aleppo…[y]ou must placate them and return them to me. …If you cause them to
> be disdainful of me and provide food for them and say to them: Stay where you are
> and pay no attention to him, you will have betrayed this treaty.[123]

Improper treatment of fugitives from a treaty partner constitutes betrayal of the treaty.

Obadiah objects to more than the Edomite transfer of Judahite *fugitives* (i.e., Judahites as

new or pending subjects of Babylon) to Edom's (new) treaty partner, Babylon. For

Obadiah, Edom ogled twice, boisterously cheered (v. 12aβ, b), entered the gate of

Obadiah's people (v. 13aα), sent out against Judah's efficacy/wealth/army (v. 13b),[124]

took up position in order to cut off fugitives (v. 14a) and delivered to captivity survivors

(v. 14b).[125] Edom was acting in a manner contrary to expectations.

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[122] Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 293.

[123]"The Treaty between KTK and Arpad," translated by Franz Rosenthal, *ANET*
659–61, 660 (=Sefire III:4–7); see also Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (2nd
ed.; Analecta Biblica 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 46–47; cf. also the
stipulations regarding fugitives in the "Treaty between Mursilis and Duppi-Tessub of
Amurru," (*ANET*, 203–205) and the "Treaty between Idrimi and Pilliya," (*ANET*, 532);
note also Sefire III:4–7, 19–20 (Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 136–37, 139–
41). See also the fugitive clauses in the "Treaty Between Hattusilis and Rameses II"
(translated by Albrecht Goetze [*ANET,* 203]).

[124]Treaty loyalty prohibits "raising/sending a hand against" an ally; cf. Sefire I
B:23–25 as restored and discussed in Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* pp.49–51,
108 (with bibliography); cf. also Sefire II B:6; and "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty,"
66–67 (§ 5) in Parpola, "Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives, 31.

[125]Explicit accusations of hostile activity by Edomites are few in Ezekiel (e.g.,
Ezek 25:12; 35:5, 10, 12; 36:5) One of these (35:5) fits the current context of Edom as

Conceptually similar expectations, both of word and deed, among parity treaty partners are seen in stipulations from "The Treaty of Šamši-Adad V with Marduk-zakir-šumi, King of Babylon," which was formulated in a time of significant political turmoil:

> Šamši-Adad shall not say (any) evil words about Marduk-rimanni [… to] the king, (viz): "Kill, blind, or se[ize him", nor] shall King Marduk-zakir-šumi listen to him (should he say such things). [He shall not ……] him, [nor …] *to poi*[*nt*] an eye, toe or finger [……, nor] … […… of his …] and his country. He shall not give back the captives [……]. The king shall indicate to him the fugitives [who] fled [*from Assyria to Babylonia*].[126]

Military aggression, improper words, agreements regarding captives and fugitives and, perhaps, ogling ("*to poi*[*nt*] an eye" || √ ראה 2x [Obad 12, 13]) are addressed both in the treaty of Šamši-Adad V with Marduk-zakar-šumi and in Obad 12–14. We cannot know whether these verses reference specific language of an Edomite-Judahite treaty. What we can say is that Obad 12 –14 appears to play on the form of ANE treaties.

Obadiah 15–21: The Aftermath of Betrayal

Obadiah 15–16. In discussing inversion and a reversal motif in Obadiah, verse 15 has already seen some discussion, particularly as it applies to the reversal motif. Verse 16 might further allude to an Edomite-Judahite treaty relationship due to the language that it employs, yet it is clear that the verse poses difficulties for interpreters.

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being stationed in a position to deliver escaping Judahites into (Babylonian?) captivity; cf. Amos 1:6, 9, 11; Joel 4:19 (3:19).

[126]"Treaty of Šamši-Adad V with Marduk-zakir-šumi, King of Babylon," obverse lines 8–14; for presentation of the text and translation, see Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 4.

Obadiah 15–16

v. 15a	כי־קרוב יום־יהוה על־כל־הגוים
v. 15bα	כאשר עשית יעשה לך
v. 15bβ	גמלך ישוב בראשך
v. 16aα	כי כאשר שתיתם על־הר קדשי
v. 16aβ	ישתו כל־הגוים תמיד
v. 16bα	ושתו ולעו
v. 16bβ	והיו כלוא היו

Nearly uniformly, commentators read verse 16 as pertaining to the "cup of wrath" metaphor of YHWH's judgment.[127] But there is a significant problem with the metaphor here. Who is the "you" who has been drinking (כי כאשר שתיתם [v. 16aα]) from the cup of wrath on YHWH's(?) holy mountain? Judah?[128] Edom?[129] There is no consensus.[130]

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[127]Such an understanding appears warranted given the parallel in Jer 49:12. For a detailed excursus, see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 206–43; on the cup as a metaphor for judgment, see, e.g., Psa 75:8 (contrast 116:13); Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15, 28; 49:12; Ezek 23:31–34; consider also 1 Cor 10:21; 11:27; Rev 14:10. It appears that early editions of Jeremiah connected oracles against the nations (MT Jer 46–51) with cup of wrath material (MT 25:15–29); in the LXX, the cup of wrath material follows these oracles (LXX Jer 32); see Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 50–55; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 69–71.

[128]So most recent commentaries; see, e.g., Raabe, *Obadiah*, 203–04;

[129]So most ancient authorities; cf. Watts, *Obadiah*, 61; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 420. The future aspect of Edom's punishment (e.g., Obad 8–10, 18–19, 21) makes it unlikely that Edom has already been a drinker *of the cup of wrath*.

[130]If the drinker is Edom, the locale is odd, unless it refers not to the cup of wrath, but to a celebratory drinking bout in Jerusalem following the fall of Judah (see Renkema, *Obadiah*, 191). If the drinker is Judah, why is the change of subject not specified? And how are we to understand Obadiah's modification of the Jeremian parallel (כי תנקה לא שתה תשתה [49:12b])? If the drinking subject is Judah, then verse 16 might not reflect an application of the *lex talionis* of verse 15, but an argument from lesser to greater or an intensification of the punishment dished out to the nations compared to that dished out to Judah (e.g., Raabe, *Obadiah*, 204–205). Effectively, this interpretation of the verse suggests that if Judah drank a cup of punishment, so too all the nations must drink—but unto oblivion. On Jewish and Christian interpretation of this difficult verse through the

The otherwise commonplace activity of drinking (Heb. √ שתה; Akk. *šatû*), often

specified as from a cup (Heb. כוֹס; Akk. *kāsu*), was evidently a regular feature of treaty

ratification ceremonies. Two examples should suffice.[131] Genesis 26:28–31 references

eating and drinking (√ שתה) in the context of concluding a treaty agreement (ברית). This

element in treaty ratification ceremonies may also be seen among the stipulations of the

treaties of Esarhaddon, one of which forbids the treaty partner from concluding treaties

with other political entities through "drinking from a cup" (Akk. *šá-te-e ka-si*).[132] If we

consider the wealth of treaty references throughout Obadiah, we might suggest a third

understanding of the verse: Edom drank upon Mount Zion as part of a treaty ratification

ceremony.[133] But Edom is not alone in the drinking (שתיתם [v. 16aα]). As the form is a

second person masculine plural (exceptional in Obadiah with Edom as subject), we must

ask who else drank with Edom upon Mount Zion. Judah? Given the treaty allusions and

the international context of Obad 1 and 15ff, we may suggest that the drinkers are

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Reformation, see J. Elowsky, "The Annals of Obadiah: A Record of the Wars and Peace Treaties in the History of Its Interpretation" (Masters Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1992), esp. 114–24.

[131]Sweeney (*The Twelve Prophets*, 295) refers his reader to such biblical texts as Exod 24:9–11 and Isa 25:6–10; see also LXX Gen 31:54.

[132]"Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty" 6:153–56; see Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 35; cf. *ANET* 536.

[133]So Sweeney (*The Twelve Prophets*, 295), who states that in verse 16

Obadiah apparently refers to Edom's treaty with Israel/Jerusalem, which would have been sealed with such feasting and drinking on Mount Zion…. The prophet then expands the reference to all the nations, thereby including all nations who were similarly allied with Israel/Judah…but failed to provide support when Israel was attacked…. Edom's projected judgment becomes a symbol in later times for all those nations who betrayed or persecuted Israel in similar fashion….

representatives of two or more Palestinian states who met in Jerusalem and formed an

anti-Babylonian league.[134] Given the context, the drinkers include representatives at least

of Edom and Judah. With the history of interpretation that is available to us for this

verse,[135] we know that Obad 16 provides a considerable challenge. Safely and simply,

we can state that Obadiah again includes terminology known from treaty contexts.

Obadiah 17–21. These verses describe the anticipated restoration of an exiled

Israel to and from specific territories (vv. 17, 19–21). A brief comment will show that

these verses thematically parallel territorial regulations (and related commercial clauses)

known from ANE treaties. Specific territorial regulations and commercial clauses are

seen in 1 Kings 20:34, which pertains to a treaty between Ahab and Ben-hadad. The

verse communicates that unnamed and disputed cities under the control of the Syrian

king are returned to Israel as a stipulation of the agreement.[136] Quite similar is a

territorial stipulation in a treaty between Zidanta I of Hatti and Pilliya of Kizzuwatna,

which addresses issues related to previous territorial infractions.

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[134]Verse 16 could then be understood as follows. "Just as you [Edom and other league partners] drank [in order to conclude a covenant], so all the nations will drink continuously; they will drink and gulp down and they shall be as if they never were [a different kinship group]." Nations become engrafted into Israel's fate through covenant; betrayal of which has national consequences (see ‫בית־‬ + patronymics in Obad 18).

[135]A fourth possibility is that Obadiah may be utilizing two different connotations of drinking (√ ‫שתה‬). Edom (and others) drank from a [treaty] cup on YHWH's holy mountain and on that holy mountain all nations will experience the cup of judgment that pertains to the day of YHWH (v. 15a). Understanding two connotations of √ ‫שתה‬ in this verse is not without precedent; see, e.g., John Calvin, summarized by Elowsky ("The Annals of Obadiah," 121–22).

[136]Cf. Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, esp. 202–203, 206–207; see also 1 Kings 9 with F. C. Fensham, "The Treaty between the Israelites and the Tyrians," *VTSup* 17 (1969): 71–87; cf. also Gen 31:44–52.

The cities which Pilliya took will be given back to the Sun and those of Pilliya which I took will be given back to Pilliya.[137]

These examples of territorial clauses show that treaties were often concerned with political geography, which presupposes that economies and populations were affected. The treaty of Abba-AN of Yamkhad and Yarimlin of Alalakh reflects the economic value of transferred lands in a territorial clause.

> The city of Imar along with its fields, the city of….and the city of Parre *in exchange for* the city of Uwiya; the city of Adrate in exchange for the territory which is….[138]

This treaty specifies that surrounding agricultural areas ("fields") of particular cities would be included in the transfer. In this regard, consider Obad 19–20.[139]

[19] Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.	וירשו הנגב את־הר עשׂו והשפלה את־פלשתים וירשו את־שׂדה אפרים ואת שׂדה שמרון ובנימן את־הגלעד
[20] The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah shall possess Phoenicia as far as Zarephath; and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the towns of the Negeb.	וגלת החל־הזה לבני ישׂראל אשׁשר־כנענים עד־צרפת וגלת ירושלם אשׁר בספרד ירשׁו את ערי הנגב

Similar to the language of the Abba-AN treaty, Obad 19 makes reference to a transference of "fields" (שׂדה; NRSV "land") associated with specific toponyms. The most frequently specified accusation against Edom in Ezekiel is tied to their desire for or

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[137]For this translation, other examples of territorial clauses from treaties of the ANE, and related bibliography, see Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 202–203.

[138]For this translation see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 307; cf. also the history of transference of Talʾayim and its villages in Sefire III:23–27.

[139]Text-critical and translation problems are numerous in these verses. The translation provided is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

possession of Judahite land.[140] The references to Judahite/Israelite territory as an

Edomite objective suggest that economic and territorial gain was a primary motivation

for the supposed Edomite hostility against Judah in the sixth century (cf. Chapters Three

and Four). Obadiah 17–21 documents a political geography of a restored Israel that is

rather inverted from mid-sixth century geopolitical reality, yet with YHWH as sovereign

(v. 21b) these territorial clauses give hope in a context of covenant violation. In isolation

from the rest of Obadiah, concluding that Obadiah 17–21 plays on the treaty form would

be tenuous. Additionally, the similarities with treaty texts and forms in these verses (and

v. 16) as discussed do not demonstrate that Obad 16–21 is necessarily of the same hand

as Obadiah 1–15. Even so, given the treaty allusions provided by this study, it is evident

that the rhetorical situation of Obadiah includes Edomite treaty betrayal. In leaving

Obadiah, a summary of this rhetorical situation might prove helpful.

Evidence from Obadiah for Edomite Treaty Betrayal: A Summary

        Obadiah constructs with artistic subtlety and nuance a text with numerous

allusions to Edomite treaty betrayal. Themes of diplomacy, secrecy, deception, treaty

relationships and betrayal, coupled with the reversal motif suggest that collusion between

Edom and Babylon was effected at the expense of Judah. Given the distributions of these

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[140]The land of Israel is a regular concern in Ezekiel, and accusations against Edom correspond with this general concern (Ezek 35:10, 12; 36:5b; see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 322–34). Judahites did not hear Edom's declarations (אמרך [35:10]) and "all the abusive speech" (את־כל־נאצותיך [35:12]; cf. a covenant context in two of the three occurrences of נאץ √ in Jeremiah [14:21; 33:24–25]; cf. the Ugaritic etymological equivalent in a context of political turmoil [KTU 1.17 II: 3, 18]). Edomite secrecy pertains to its desire 1) to possess the two lands (probably Israel and Judah; cf. Ezek 37:22); 2) to have Israel's mountains for its own devouring (על־הרי ישראל . . . נתנו לאכלה [35:12]); and 3) to have its pastureland for booty (מגרשה לבז [36:5]).

allusions, the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal appears to be part of Obadiah's rhetorical situation and essential to the organization of this shortest book of biblical prophecy.[141]

Both words in the title of Obadiah (חזון עבדיה; v. 1a) reflect treaty terminology. Accordingly, the two-word title may provide a subtle clue that treaty relationships constitute a theme of the book. Verse 1cα relates the dissemination of a report pertaining to an envoy's international diplomatic mission. Although the purpose and content of that mission remain elusive, Obadiah communicates that the mission is fully underway and begins the oracle with a verse manifesting both terminology found in treaty contexts and themes of international diplomacy and political intrigue in a context of battle. Somehow, Edom is bound up with this intrigue, which provides Edom an exceptional (מאד) despicability (v. 2). A theme of secrecy emerges with verse 3. The inversion technique highlights Edom's connection with deception (√ II. נשׁא), which foreshadows a deception of Edom in an explicit treaty context (v. 7). With an idiomatic expression suggestive of secrecy (אמר+ לב [v. 3bα]), Edom communicates its supposed geopolitical security. This security may be connected to Babylon through the modifications Obadiah makes of the Jeremian parallel (e.g., כוכבים [v. 4b]), particularly as Edom, a kingdom to the south (cf. תימן[v. 9]), has a "hidden northernness" (מצפניו; v. 6b). In the same context and in consideration of Obadiah's modifications within an inverted quotation of Jeremiah, Edom's capital city, Bozrah, is likened a secretive and destructive thief in the night (v. 5aα−β). Through a modification of Jeremiah, Obadiah divulges this once-secret

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[141]On the reciprocal relationship of motifs and rhetorical devices as essential to poetic organization, see Horst S. Daemmrich, "Thematics," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1279–81, esp. 1280. This unifying theme may assist redactional studies of Obadiah.

collusion (√ בעה [v. 6]). Obadiah communicates that this revelation was unexpected, disturbing, and dangerous: south northerly is. In short, Obadiah's rhetorical artistry in verses 1–6 subtly contains allusions to a Mesopotamian power, international diplomacy, secrecy, and discernment, and these rhetorical features may be subsumed under the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal, yet *it is only at the point that Obadiah's clear modifications of the Jeremian parallel ceases that a theme of treaty betrayal is explicit*. With a density of treaty terminology (שלחוך, בריתך, שלמך, לחמך), verse 7 clearly communicates that Edom shall be deceived by its own treaty partner. Given the working inferences of the study, this partner could be none other than Babylon. In consideration of the reversal motif, whereby the density of inverted *form* accentuates a reversal of *content*, the reversal of Edom's fortune anticipated by verse 7 may be much more precise: Edom previously deceived its own alliance partner, Judah. Usage of the consonant ך reinforces this precise reversal of fortune and suggests that Edom was the initiating party in its alliance with Babylon. That alliance was ultimately destructive for Edom, and the language of wisdom in verse 7b–8 communicates the reversal of Edom's expectations in regard to its political counsel and plans for national survival.

Verse 11 begins the identification of specific violations of Judah on the part of its brother. Translations of עמדך מנגד (11aα) as Edom's having "stood aloof" might be inaccurate. Rather, Edom appears to have stationed itself in intimate opposition to Judah as a matter or official national policy. Significant similarity between the vetitives and content of verses 12–14 and stipulation sections of ANE treaties suggests a play on the form of treaty stipulations. Verses 17–21 describe a restored territory of Israel. These verses show some similarity to territorial clauses in ANE treaties. All in all, Obadiah

may be read as steeped with treaty terminology and allusions to an Edomite treaty

betrayal. Nowhere does Obadiah state that a treaty between Edom and Judah was

violated. The theme, however, subtly permeates the work, perhaps as an organizing

factor,[142] and commends the following rhetorical situation. Edom initiated a clandestine

treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom's deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah.

What remains for this chapter is a look at other texts in light of this conclusion.

Allusive Evidence for Edomite Treaty Betrayal in Psalm 137 and Other Biblical Texts

This section is organized around a discussion of Psalm 137,[143] which is generally

considered a composition either of the late exile or a time shortly thereafter.[144] A general

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[142]According to Fabian Gudas ("Theme," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* [ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]: 1281–2), New Critics "have found the term [i.e., 'theme']…indispensable for pointing to the values and principal unity in a poem. However, they warn that the poem, or at least the good poem, is not a mere rhetorical device for ornamenting a prosaic [theme]…or making it more persuasive. The good poem does not assert [its theme]."

[143]Attention to other texts, particularly Lamentations and texts from Ezekiel, will be subsumed under this organization. Numerous texts that manifest some themes similar to a theme of betrayal are fraught with too many tradition history challenges and are quite possibly principally unrelated to sixth-century Edomite-Judahite relations (e.g., the Jacob-Esau narratives of Genesis 25–28 and 32–33; Num 20; Deut 2; 23:17; Isaiah; Amos 1–2; Joel 4:19 [3:19]; Mal 1:2–3 [cf. Rom 9:13]; Psa 83; Psa 108). Further study of many of these texts in light of Edomite treaty betrayal might prove fruitful.

[144]See, e.g., Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 501–02; for a survey of opinions, see J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 101–150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 150. Various sixth-century dates have been suggested. For a provenance in the early Babylon exile, see Charles Augustus Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (vol. 2; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 485; due to the immediacy of the language, compare, perhaps, Martin S. Rosenberg and Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation and Commentary* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aaronson Inc., 1999), 869–74; for a provenance in the Babylonian exile, generally, see Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 459; cf. also Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 502; for an exilic date, but a setting not exactly in Babylon, and

difficulty confronts the reader of this psalm: do verses 8–9 reference Babylon or Edom.
A discussion of the possibility that Edom may remain in focus in these verses begins the
study on treaty allusions in the psalm and other texts. A final subsection discusses a
possible date for the formation of the treaty relationship between Edom and Babylon.

Psalm 137: Allusions to Diplomacy between Edom and Babylon

 A problem focusing: a who's who of Psalm 137. For purposes of discussion, the
psalm has been divided into units according to the disjunctives ʾaṯnāḥ and sillûq.[145]

By the rivers of Babylon— there we sat down and there we wept	על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם־בכינו	v. 1a
when we remembered Zion.	בזכרנו את־ציון	v. 1b
On the willows there	על־ערבים בתוכה	v. 2
we hung up our harps.	תלינו כנרותינו	v. 2b

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with a *terminus ad quem* of 538 B.C.E., see W. Stewart McCullough and William R. Taylor, *The Book of Psalms* (Interpreter's Bible, vol. 4; Nashville: Abingdon, 1955), 704; for an immediate post-exilic setting in Jerusalem, see Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms 73–150,* (Old Testament Message 22; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier Inc., 1983), 188–89; Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Love of Zion: A Literary Interpretation of Psalm 137," in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 3; Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return: Book V, Psalms 107–150* (Studies in the Psalter IV, JSOT Supplement Series 258; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 224; cf. James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 421; for a post-exilic setting, see Alphonse Maillot and André Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes: Traduction nouvelle et commentaire, Troisième partie* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1969), 207–11; and, seemingly, both Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 321–33 and Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1952), 131; that the memory of Exile is fresh, yet the psalm suggests "an räumliche und zeitliche Distanz des Psalmisten zum Exil," see Von Ulrich Kellermann, "Psalm 137," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 43; cf. Allen, *Psalms*, 237.

 [145]The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,	כי שם שאלונו שובינו דברי־שיר ותוללינו שמחה	v. 3a
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"	שירו לנו משיר ציון	v. 3b
How could we sing the LORD's song	איך נשיר את־שיר־יהוה	v. 4a
in a foreign land?	על אדמת נכר	v. 4b
If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!	אם־אשכחך ירושלם תשכח ימיני	v. 5

Let my tongue cling to the roof of my
    mouth,
  if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
  above my highest joy.
	תדבק־לשוני לחכי אם־לא
	אזכרכי אם־לא אעלה
	את־ירושלם על ראש
	שמחתי
		v. 6

Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
  the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it
  Down!
	זכר יהוה לבני אדום את
	יום ירושלם האמרים ערו
	ערו
		v. 7a

Down to its foundations!"	עד היסוד בה	v. 7b
O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back	בת־בבל השדודה אשרי שישלם־לך	v. 8a
what you have done to us!	את־גמולך שגמלת לנו	v. 8b

Happy shall they be who take your
    little ones
  and dash them against the rock!
	אשרי שיאחז ונפץ
	את־עלליך אל־הסלע
		v. 9a

Verse 7 focuses on Edomites, who are presented as reiteratively calling for or

commanding some unknown entity to tear down (ערו, *piʿel* of √ ערה; lit. "lay bare, make

naked, strip") Jerusalem to its foundation (עד היסוד בה; lit. "unto the foundations in her").

Apart from this aggressive language,[146] verse 7 does not suggest that Edom was hostile

against Jerusalem during the Babylonian campaign. A difficulty is whether verses 8–9

focus on Edom or Babylon. If Edom remains in focus in verses 8–9, then treaty allusions

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[146]Cf. above on "The Treaty of Šamši-Adad V with Marduk-zakir-šumi."

in these verses are also readily applicable to the thesis.[147]   Verse 8aα is the fulcrum:

בת־בבל. Does this colon and what follows refer yet to Edom or does the focus return to

Babylon? Commentators mostly align with the latter position.[148] Relatively few read the

psalm as continuing to focus on Edom.[149]

One can substantiate the limitation of the focus to one upon the Edomites in a

number of ways.   First, a terminological parallel (סלע[ה]) exists between verse 9 and

Obad 3. The psalm ends abruptly[150] with a proclamation that blessed-happiness is in

store for the one who takes the little ones (of Edomites and/or Babylonians) and shatters

them "upon the rock" (אל־הסלע; v.9). The definiteness of this rock suggests that a

specific locale is to be understood. A few texts mention an Edomite "Rock" ("the Sela";

הסלע).[151] The fact that סלע is a common noun simply meaning "rock" prohibits an

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[147]Oath and curse, standard in the treaty form, comprises much of the context of verses 5–6. One specific example not formally addressed in this study is a possible treaty allusion in the correspondence between the withering of the right hand (תשכח ימיני [v. 5]) and oath-making and punishment (see, e.g., Gen 14:22–23; Exod 6:8; Psa 144:8); on this correspondence, see Bar-Efrat, "Love of Zion," 7–8, esp. note 13.

[148]See, e.g., Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 460; Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 101-150*, 151; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 403–4; Mays, *Psalms*, 422; J. Clinton McCann, "Psalms," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 1228; Bar-Efrat, "Love of Zion," 9–10; Goulder, *Psalms of Return*, 228–29; Rosenberg and Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms*, 873.

[149]See, e.g., Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 485; Terrien, *The Psalms and Their Meaning*, 131–32; perhaps also Stuhlmueller, *Psalms*, 190.

[150]The final verse of Psalm 137 in the MT is devoid of an ʾaṭnāḥ.

[151]See 2 Kgs 14:7 (cf. 2 Chr 25:12); Jer 49:16. Two geographically appropriate, defensible, and isolated formations have been suggested for this biblical, Edomite Selaʿ, one in the vicinity of Nabataean Petra, Umm el-Biyarah, and the other northwest of Buseirah (Bozrah), Khirbet es-Selaʿ. See Stephen Hart, "Selaʿ: The Rock of Edom?" *PEQ* 118 (1986): 91–95; for the defensibility of Umm el-Biyarah in historical campaigns, see, especially, Diodorus Siculus (trans. Russel M. Geer; 12 vols.; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) XIX 95:2–3, 97:2–3 and F. -M.

uncomplicated equation of either of these with the defensible "clefts of rock" where

Edomites dwell according to Obad 3 (שכני בחגוי־סלע).[152]

Intertextual evidence may support a connection of the psalm's הסלע with Edomite

territory. The context suggests that the target of the atrocities of verse 9 are the little ones

(עלליך) of an entire population (Babylonian and/or Edomite).[153] What is being envisioned

is the transportation of some thousands to the rock upon which their bodies would be

dashed. Such horrific logistics are not without biblical precedent. According to 2 Kgs

14:7, Amaziah's exploits including killing ten thousand Edomites and taking by storm a

stronghold named "Selaᶜ" (סלע). More significant for the argument is the gruesome

detail of the same campaign provided by the Chronicler.

> Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and
> struck down ten thousand men of Seir. The people of Judah captured another ten
> thousand alive, took them to the top of Sela, and threw them down from the top of
> Sela, so that all of them were dashed to pieces. (2 Chr 25:11–12 [NRSV])

These verses reveal a number of thematic, terminological, and semantic correspondences

with Psa 137:9. Both texts designate "the Rock" (הסלע) as a place of slaughter.

Thematically, both texts provide picture a logistical nightmare of thousands dying in

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Abel, "L'expédition des Grecs a Pétra en 312 avant J.-C.," *RB* 46 (1937): 373–91. For
Khirbet es-Selaᶜ, see Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 51–52; Wann M. Fanwar, "Sela,"
ABD 5:1073–4.

[152]Obadiah 3 attests "Sela" without the article (סלע). Terseness in Hebrew poetry
often allows omission of the article, and we might contrast Obadiah's סלע with
Jeremiah's הסלע (49:16). The difference in definiteness, however, further prohibits an
immediate association of the rock of Psalm 137 with an Edomite crag.

[153]Supporting the possibility that Babylonian little ones (ועלליהם) are the targets to
be split open, note Isa 13:16a, part of an oracle concerning Babylon (13:1–22): "And
their little ones will be dismembered before their eyes!" (ועלליהם ירטשו לעיניהם); similar
horrors are found elsewhere; see also Hos 14:1 [Eng. 13:16] and Nah 3:10.

some disassembly line or through a slaughter-by-stages. Two semantic correspondences

may be highlighted. In Psalm 137:9, victims are seized (אחז √). Similarly, the

Chronicler communicates that victims are taken captive (שבה √; 2 Chr 25:12). The texts'

renderings of the victims' deaths also correspond semantically. The psalm calls for the

"shattering" (נפץ √; v. 9)[154] of little ones, while the Chronicler describes victims as being

"rent open" (בקע √; 2 Chr 25:12). The parallels produce a similar vision (a myriad

population associated with Edom is apprehended and split upon the rock),[155] and provide

an intertextual warrant for reading verses 7–9 with Edom yet in focus.

The psalm also reflects an etymological and thematic relationship to Obad 15b.

We can compare אשרי שישלם־לך את־גמולך שגמלת לנו ("Happy shall they be who pay you

back what you have done to us"; Psa 137:8aβ–b) with כאשר עשית יעשה לך גמלך ישוב

בראשך ("Just as you have done it shall be done to you. Your dealings will return upon

your own head!"; Obad 15). Thematically, this parallel closely aligns with the concept of

lex talionis and anticipates a reversal of fortune.[156] The etymological parallel should be

obvious: גמולך ("your dealings" [Psa 137:8a]) parallels גמלך ("your dealings" [Obad

15b]). The root is occasionally employed in economic contexts and its occurrence in an

Edomite context is noteworthy given the thesis of treaty betrayal and the "economic

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[154]The same root is used ten times in relation to Babylon in Jer 51:20–24; see Bar-Efrat, "Love of Zion," 9–10 for this and other etymological and thematic affinities.

[155]English "split" may be an appropriate semantic bridge; cf. בקע √ in Gen 22:3 with that of נפץ √ in 1 Sam 13:11; נפץ √ connotes more "pieces" as a result of the action. Jeremiah 49:20–21 includes a similar vision, one in which young ones of [the Edomite] flock (צעירי הצון) are dragged away (סהב√) and fall (נפל √) to their deaths.

[156]For the concept of *lex talionis* in connection with Edom or Babylon, see Isa 35:4; Obad 15; Jer 51:6; cf. also Lam 3:64; and perhaps Isa 63:7.

incentive" possibly behind that betrayal (Chapter Three).[157] Both texts advocate that

Edom shall suffer national extinction due to the violence Edom initiated, perhaps in part

for the economic incentive to do so.

A primary obstacle in reading verses 8–9 as pertaining to Edom, however, is not a

lack of literary affinity between the psalm and other anti-Edom texts, but whether verse

8aα (בת־בבל; "daughter-of-Babylon") references Babylon or Edom.[158] The colon is often

taken as a literary intensification: Babylon as a capital city is personified.[159] No fewer

than three possibilities, however, have been proposed for understanding Edom rather than

Babylon as the appropriate reference. The first two rely on a redactional assumption[160] or

a supposed textual error.[161] Neither is warranted by the evidence available from ancient

manuscripts. A third possibility is intriguing. In an article arguing that the anti-Edom

oracles of Obadiah and Jeremiah 49 were post-exilic prophetic responses to Psalm 137,

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[157]See especially 2 Sam 19:36; 2 Chr 20:11; 32:23–29 (v. 25); Joel 4:4 [3:4]. The Hebrew word for "camel" (גמל) is etymologically related to גמלך ("your dealings"). Given the economic importance of camels and the reconstruction offered by this study, one might consider the occurrences of √ גמל (*n.* "dealing, recompense, benefit") in Obad 15 and Psa 137:8 allusive both to the concept of *lex talionis* and to the economic "dealings" of Edomites.

[158]There appears to be much to commend readings of either "ethnicity" into verses 8–9. In light of the concept of *lex talionis* of verse 8, how can one connect "the Rock" (הסלע) of verse 9 with Babylon? The psalm's conclusion might serve as an antithesis to "the *waters* of Babylon" (i.e., a shift from fertile rivers [v. 1] to dry, infertile "*rock*" [v. 9]); see Bar-Efrat, "Love of Zion," 10. Alternatively, a contrast emerges between lush *Babylon* at the opening of the poem and dry, rocky *Edom* at its conclusion.

[159]See A. Fitzgerald, "*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 167–83, esp. 182; cf. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 237. As Fitzgerald admits (e.g., pp. 173, 174, 179, 180), genitival constructions of בת־ plus toponym/gentilic are ambiguous.

[160]According to C. A. Briggs, (*The Book of Psalms*, 2.486) verses 8–9 demand that Edom remains in the context; colon 8aα is a misfortunate redactional gloss.

[161]Kellermann ("Psalm 137," 48) emends to בת־אדום.

Graham S. Ogden suggests that the phrase בת־בבל may legitimately be understood as "the ally or confederate of Babylon."[162] Ogden can then understand Edom as the object of the imprecations of the remaining verses; Edom as a child of Babylon (cf. "son" as a vassal's identification) is confused for its lord.

The difficulty with this understanding, however, is twofold. First, it requires the support of similar uses of בת־ + toponym in specifically and unmistakably *treaty* contexts. Second, if this figurative use of בת־ is defined as daughter-*cities* within a capital city's *contiguous* territory, as appears to be the case,[163] how could Edom fit the figure? Does contiguity *to an empire* fit the figure? What is required to accept Ogden's suggestion is that the psalm adapts an already figurative use of בת־ (typically plural) and that Edom may be considered an offshoot of the Babylonian empire despite a lack of geographic proximity of their capital cities. In short, Edom may remain in focus, and we are provided with a token warrant to examine elements in the psalm containing treaty connotations corresponding to the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal.

Payback and curses: Psalm 137:8–9 and Sefire I A. Consider again verses 7–8, divided by cola and translated so as to accentuate treaty allusions discussed below.

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[162]Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament," 89–97, 91. In support of his understanding of בת־בבל as pertaining to alliance, Ogden references his reader to the work of H. Haag, ("bath," *TDOT* 2:336), who understands the figurative uses of בת־ (with a toponym) to include one in which villages and cities of a great city can be considered daughters. This well-attested figurative use suggests that בת־ at times specifically references a weaker or smaller political entity under the aegis or control of the genitive (in our case, בבל־).

[163]Typically plural (בנות); see H. Haag, "bath," *TDOT* 2:336; Num 21:25, 32; 32:42; Josh 15:45, 47; 17:16; Jgs 1:27; 11:26; Neh 11:25–31; 1 Chr 2:23; 7:28–29; 8:12; 18:1; 2 Chr 13:19; 28:18; Isa 16:2 (note מסלע in v. 1); Jer 49:2; Psa 48:12[11]; 97:8.

Remember, YHWH, about the Edomites,	זכר יהוה לבני אדום	v. 7aα
the day of Jerusalem, the ones who said, "Strip [her]! Strip [her]	את יום ירושלם האמרים ערו ערו	v. 7aβ
down to the foundations in her!	עד היסוד בה	v. 7b
O daughter of Babylon	בת־בבל	v. 8aα
—destroyed/destroyer—Happy are those who fulfill a covenant of peace with/repay you	השדודה אשרי שישלם־לך	v. 8aβ
your own dealings	את־גמולך	v. 8bα
that you dealt to us!	שגמלת לנו	v. 8bβ

Verse 8 declares that Edom's destruction is justified. In a context of *lex talionis*, שלם √

occurs in the *piʿel* ("to complete, reward, make compensation, replace"; v. 8aβ).[164] The

root is at home in treaty contexts. Obadiah 7 provides a relevant example and suggests

that Edom's peace-covenant (שלמך) partners will betray Edom (השיאוך) rather than

"fulfill" (cf. שָׁלֵם √) of the treaty.[165] Is the psalm referencing a similar reversal of

expectation—a similar payback? I shall show that Psalm 137 reflects treaty curses and

that such a payback would be appropriate by ANE standards should betrayal occur.[166]

A treaty written in Aramaic and dating to the mid-eight century is helpful. The

curse section of Sefire I A (a vassal treaty between the suzerain Bar-Ga'yah of *KTK*[167]

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[164]*BDB*, 1022; G. Gerleman, "שלח *šlḥ* to send," *TLOT* 3:1330–48, esp. 1340–41.

[165]The phrase "Fulfill the treaty" (תשלם עדיא; Aram. שלם √) appears to be a standard clause of declaring that a treaty is fully observed; see Sefire I B:24 (presented and discussed in Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 50, 51, and 108).

[166]Like our psalm, curse and blessing sections typically appear toward the end of treaty texts. The final lines from Sephire I C provide a good example and include themes of reversal and retribution; see Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 54–55.

[167]For discussion of *KTK*, see Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* 167–74.

and his vassal, Matiᶜel of Arpad) has themes and terminology that are strikingly similar

to the psalm.[168] Consider lines 29–30, 35, and 40–41.[169]

> [29]…Nor may the sound of the lyre be heard in Arpad; but among its people (let
> there rather be) the din of *affliction* and the *noi[se of cry]ing* [30]and lamentation!
> …[35]…Just as wax is burned by fire, so may Arpad be burned and [her g]reat
> [daughter-cities]! [40]…[and just as] [41]a [har]lot is stripped naked], so may the wives
> of Matiᶜel be stripped naked, and the wives of his offspring, and the wives of [his]
> no[bles]!

In a context of lamentation, an inter-dialectical etymological and semantic equivalence is

apparent in the abandonment of music from the lyre (כנר [Sefire I A:29] || כנרותינו [Psa

137:2b]). In both texts, a lesser polity under the governance of a greater polity may be

implied by kinship language, namely the topographical mention of daughter-city/cities:

one of Babylon, and those of Matiᶜel's Arpad (ארפד ו[בנתו] [Sefire I A:35][170] || בת־בבל

[Psa 137:8a]). Moreover, these daughter cities are found in a parallel context of

destruction ("burned"; √ יקד [Sefire I A:35, 37] || "destroy(ed)"; √ שדד [Psa 137:8]).

Jerusalem is personified and feminine, and about her are the only words in the psalm

associated with the sons of Edom (בני־אדום [137:7]), who call for her to be stripped (√

ערה).[171] This sexual assault is paralleled etymologically and semantically in the Sefire

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[168]An additional parallel (עלליך [137:9] || עלים [Sefire I A:21], which precedes this
excerpt by some eight lines, is discussed with Lamentations 4, below.

[169]The translation is that of Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 44–47.

[170]For the restoration, see Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 46–47, 91, 93;
for the possibility that the great daughters of Arpad may pertain to subject cities or
regions, see also pp. 91, 93.

[171]Israel is exiled as punishment for covenant violation (e.g., 2 Kgs 22:8–23:27).
Edomite words, then, correspond to a curse befitting Israelite/Judahite betrayal of its
covenant with YHWH; in an ANE worldview, Israelites would expect to have their harps
hung, their cities and their daughter-cities vandalized, and their nobles stripped.

treaty ("and just as a harlot is stripped"; [זנ]ה] ואיך זי תערר ז] [Sefire I A:40–41][172] || "Strip

[her]! Strip [her]!"; ערו ערו [Psa 137:7aβ]).[173] Should Matiᶜel betray the treaty, stately

ladies suffer indignity (I A:41). Thus, in but a few lines of the curse section of Sefire I A,

one finds numerous thematic, etymological, and (in the case of subject cities or regions as

"daughters") kinship and syntactical parallels with Psalm 137; one finds lament and the

end of lyre play as (allied) cities are conflagrated and female principals are vandalized.

Although we do not have enough treaties from the Iron Age to make a defensible

conclusion about the frequency with which these elements appeared together in treaty

curse sections, we can say that the language of Psalm 137 is at home treaty curses.

*Lamentations 4:21–22, Psalm 137:9, and the shifting status relative to covenant
violation.* Psalm 137:8–9 is doubly ironic: the sons of Edom vocalize a curse wish that

could have been applicable to *themselves* in their own broken treaty with Judah, and, as

Judah's betrayers, they call out a curse wish appropriate for Jerusalem's own violation of

a covenant with YHWH.[174] In this bundle of treaty curses and justified punishment(s),

consider the only direct reference to Edom in Lamentations (4:21–22).[175]

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[172]For the restoration (Aram. √ ערר rather than עבד), see Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 97–98, citing also Neh 3:5; Jer 13:26–27; Ezek 16:37–38; Hos 2:5.

[173]The imperatival form in Psa 137:7a shows some graphic similarity to Aramaic עדו ("his treaty"; cf. Heb √ עוד, and nouns עד,עדות; Akk. *adē*).

[174]On √ ערה ("to strip") and YHWH against Zion, see Isa 3:17, which is set in a context of the systematic stripping of the fineries of the daughters of Zion (בנות־ציון [v. 16]) following the judgment of YHWH (vv. 13–24).

[175]The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version; cf. the use of √ ערה in a possible Edomite context (Teman) in Hab 3:13 ("stripped to the foundations"; ערות יסוד; cf. √ ערה + היסוד [Psa 137:7]); cf. also Hab 2:15–16.

²¹ Rejoice and be glad, O daughter Edom, you that live in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

שִׂישִׂי וְשִׂמְחִי בַּת־אֱדוֹם (יוֹשַׁבְתִּי)
[יוֹשֶׁבֶת] בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ גַּם־עָלַיִךְ תַּעֲבָר־כּוֹס
תִּשְׁכְּרִי וְתִתְעָרִי

²² The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter Zion, is accomplished, he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will punish, he will uncover your sins.

תַּם־עֲוֺנֵךְ בַּת־צִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתֵךְ פָּקַד
עֲוֺנֵךְ בַּת־אֱדוֹם גִּלָּה עַל־חַטֹּאתָיִךְ

As verse 21 begins to anticipate a future punishment on the daughter of Edom,¹⁷⁶ verse 22 interjects a declaration that the punishment of the daughter of Zion has reached completion (v. 22a). Given covenant infidelity as the overarching theological context of Judah's exile and a thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal, this shift of status does not appear to be a transferring of Judah's guilt onto the scapegoat, Edom, as some have seen in anti-Edom texts,¹⁷⁷ but rather a shift in status *relative to the timing of a retributive justice deserved by each for covenant violation.* With their exile ending, Judah *is completing* its punishment for covenant infidelity to YHWH (v. 22a) just as Lamentations informs Edom that it can anticipate the consequences of its own covenant infraction (v. 21b, 22b).

Lamentations evidently references the same bundled curses and retributive justices that are the context behind the invective in Psalm 137, where "blessed-happiness" (אשרי) is in store for the one who pays Edom back (שישלם־לך [v. 8aβ]) for its treaty violation of Judah (את־גמולך שגמלת לנו [v. 8b]). The mode of payback is horrific: Edomite "little

¹⁷⁶The syntax בת־ + toponym, further questions the identification of בת־בבל in Psa 137:8 as pertaining solely to Edom as a political offshoot of Babylon.

¹⁷⁷See, e.g., Bernhard Gosse, "Ézéchiel 35-36, 1–15 et Ézéchiel 6: la désolation de la montage de Séir et le renouveau des montagnes d'Israël," *RB* 96 (1989): 511–17; more generally, see discussion in Dicou, *Israel's Brother and Antagonist*, 15–16.

ones" (עלליך) are to be shattered upon the Selaʿ (Psa 137: 9). This horror further

evidences the psalm's treaty context; an etymological and thematic parallel is found in a

treaty curse identifying a specific legal consequence of treaty infraction. Consider Sefire

I A:14, 21–22, which precedes but by a few lines the excerpt cited above.

> Now if Matiʿel, the son of ʿAttarsamak, the kin[g of Arpad,] should prove
> unfaithful [to Bar-Gaʾyah…. [*then*] should seven nurses anoint [their breasts and]
> nurse a *little one*, may he not have his fill…[178]

Should the treaty be violated, nursing will not fend off starvation for the "little one" (עלים

[I A:22]; cf. Lam 2:11–12, 19–20; 4:4). A presumably quick(er) death-by-shattering is in

store for the "little ones" (עלליך) of Psa 137:9. Oaths among partners during treaty

formation made such horrors a mutually-approved course of action in the event of treaty

betrayal. A divine witness sanctioned the act (Sefire I A: 7–13; cf. Psa 137:7a[?]). The

Judahite and Edomite leadership[179] would have acknowledged that such retribution was

sanctioned and that the one who would carry out such acts would be divinely favored

(אשרי [Psa 137:8, 9]). The "scandalous" statement that blessed-happiness is in store for

the one who shatters little ones (Psa 137:8–9) simply reflects this fact.[180]

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[178]Emphases mine; the translation is that of Fitzmyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 45 with three changes. First, "[*then*]" has been added in order to clarify context. Second, "little one" has been substituted for "young boy," accentuating the etymological parallel. Third, a redundant (?) bracket that followed "nurses" has been removed.

[179]Provisions within treaties for the archiving and periodic reading ensured that populations became aware of pacts; cf. Sefire I B:8–10 (which follows the curses of I A):

> [And the gods] shall guard [this] treaty. Let…the words of thi[s] inscription…[be heard from] ʿArgu to Taʾd[I and] BZ, from Lebanon to Yabrud, from Damascu]s to ʿAru and M..W, [and fr]om the Valley to KTK.

[180]On Psalm 137 as the "scandal" psalm, see Eugene H. Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 96. Through the mutually-accepted, divinely-witnessed Edomite-Judahite treaty curses,

Psalm 137 and Lamentations 4:21–22 provide three important data for the historical reconstruction. They might reflect curses sections in the Edomite-Judahite treaty, namely, lament and an end of lyre play, the stripping of principals, city destruction, and the wasting of little ones. Second, like Obadiah, these "sixth-century" texts allude to an Edomite treaty; accordingly, they support Obadiah's pertinence to sixth-century history. Third, unlike Obadiah, the psalmist directly associates Edom *with Babylon*. Thus, Psalm 137 and Lamentations provide considerable historical support to the argument already made: Edom conspired with Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E.

Synthesizing Piecemeal Data: Ezekiel, a North-South Axis, and the Date of Betrayal

Setting the context: a Judah-first strategy and the north-south axis. With Palestine in imperial disarray ca. 588 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar had to decide which kingdom to subdue first. After considering options for dealing with the Palestinian states persisting in rebellion, and for whatever reasons, Babylon undertook a "Judah-first" strategy.[181] With Judah, Tyre, and Ammon in active revolt, why might Nebuchadnezzar first attack the rebel state *at the center*? Was it due to omens and extispacy (see below on Ezek 21:24–27 [Eng. 19–22])? A "divide and conquer" stratagem? This chapter has

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Edom accepted the threat of destruction. In an ANE worldview, the one who carried out a retributive justice sanctioned by the invectives of the treaty would be carrying out actions "blessed" by those divine witnesses. Aware or not of the divine sanctions behind the act, the one who carries out the effects may be deemed "blessed" (אשרי)—happy or not. The psalmist, as a matter of course or of theology, is either powerless or unwilling to be that one. Whether enraged or weeping over lost kin, the psalmist essentially states the consequences of Edom's choice to leave Israel in preference for Babylon: the loss of social benefits once due Edom by its ethnic kinship with Israel (cf. Chapter Two).

[181]Portions of Phoenicia may have been subdued early, yet Tyre was left in its rebellion until Jerusalem fell (cf. Ezek 29:17); see also Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.156; *Ant.* 10.228; for an overview, see H. J. Katzenstein, "Tyre," *ABD* 6:686–90, esp. 690.

shown that "sixth-century" anti-Edom texts are replete with allusions to a secretive

Babylonian-Edomite treaty divulged during the Babylonian assault on Judah beginning

Tevet of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January 587 B.C.E.). Attacking Judah first

would make good sense if a turncoat (Edom) was poised to engage Judah from the south.

The resulting north-south axis running from Riblah (2 Kgs 25:2, 6) through Judah to

Edom would effectively overwhelm Zedekiah's kingdom and would prohibit efficient

communications necessary for joint military operations of Judahite, Ammonite, and

Tyrian forces, inclining the latter two away from assisting Judah (cf. Lam 4:17).

Revisiting south northerly is: Ezekiel 36. The theme of Judahite surprise is

congruent with the results of Chapter Four (see, e.g., lines 18–20 of Arad 24): Judah was

caught in a surprise attack, whereby the Judahite front (north) and rear (south) were

attacked simultaneously. Ezekiel 35 presents Edom as engaged in geopolitical hostility

(vv. 5, 10, 12; cf. above on Obad 17–21). In this context, consider Ezek 36:1–4, which

evidences a multi-national campaign against Judah (cf. Chapter Four on Jer 34:1, 7):

> [1]And you, mortal, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. [2] Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, "Aha!" and, "The ancient heights have become our possession," [3]therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they made you desolate indeed, *and crushed you from all sides*, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and slander among the people; [4] therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted towns, which have become a source of plunder and an object of derision to the rest of the nations *all around*;

"From all sides" and "all around" (both מסביב)[182] suggest that the Babylonian assault

from the north included military actions west (Lachish and Azekah?) and east of

Jerusalem (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:4–5; Ezek 21:18–23[?]) and was accompanied by actions in the

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[182]See also Lam 1:17; 2:22; Ezek 23:22.

south. It is significant that "all of Edom" (כל־אדום כלא/אדום כלא [35:15; 36:5]) appears

in the verses *immediately prior to and after* Ezek 36:1–4. "Edom" *literarily* brackets

(surrounds) the verses about Judah being surrounded. This artistry in the context of a

multi-national assault again suggests that military coordination occurred among

Babylonian forces from the north and Edomite forces hostile in the Negev.[183]

> *Ezekiel 21 and the timing of betrayal.* Biblical and epigraphic evidence commend

a moment prior to the siege of Jerusalem for the timing of Edom's decision to betray

Judah. Literary evidence suggests that as late as 593 B.C.E. (if not later) Edom was at

least a potential ally of the Palestinian states contemplating revolt. It is not uncommon to

date the beginning of Zedekiah's rebellion to some five years latter (ca. 589 B.C.E.).[184]

Did Edom carried out diplomacy with Babylon early on in the revolt? Two years (ca.

589–Tevet 588/587 B.C.E.) is a rather long time to keep clandestine loyalties. One piece

of evidence suggests a more reasonable date. Ezekiel 21:24–27 [Eng. 19–22] presents

Nebuchadnezzar discerning whether to attack Ammon or Judah first.

> [19] Mortal, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them shall issue from the same land. And make a signpost, make it for a fork in the road leading to a city; [20] mark out the road for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites or to Judah and to Jerusalem the fortified. [21] For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the fork in the two roads, to use divination; he

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[183]For further support of the point, see Ezek 21:1–5 (Eng. 20:45–49), which immediately precedes a prophecy concerning a campaign *against Jerusalem* (21:6–12 [21:1–7]) and which prophesies an imminent campaign against *the Negeb* (Ezek 21:2 [20:46]). Twice in the immediate context one finds מנגב צפונה and מנגב צפון (Ezek 21:3, 9 [Eng 20:47; 21:4]). These data are congruent with the north-south axis and the Negev and Central Hills/Jerusalem zones of military operation as described in Chapter Four.

[184]The ascension of Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) in 589 B.C.E. and his activities in the eastern Mediterranean may have spurred rebellion. Alternatively, revolt may have occurred earlier, following Psammetichus' parade through Palestine; see Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 793–94; Lipschits, *The Rise and Fall of Jerusalem*, 70–72.

shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim, he inspects the liver. [22] Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to call out for slaughter, for raising the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build siege towers.

According to the passage, divination and extispacy rather than objective political and military strategy determines the course of action. For Ezekiel, diplomatic correspondence with representatives of an allied Palestinian state is not part of the decision-making process leading to a Judah-first policy. If this last point accurately corresponds to history, then an argument from Ezekiel's silence is that Edom decided to collaborate with Babylon only *subsequent* to an intelligence report that Babylon was indeed moving toward Judah first (i.e., some moment after Nebuchadnezzar's forces headed *specifically for Judah* yet before their arrival). This *sudden shift* in Edomite diplomacy would not require Edom to keep its formal relationship with Babylon clandestine for any great length of time. Even so, silence in the categories of evidence does not allow for a definitive date for the formation of Edom's treaty with Babylon against its deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah. In short, we do not know if Edom's activities against its erstwhile ally emerged following an *extended* deception of Judah or subsequent to a *sudden shift* in allegiance as Babylon approached central Palestine in order to suppress rebel states. What does seem clear is that by the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah in the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January587 B.C.E.), Edom had initiated and acted upon a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom's deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Overview

Biblical texts predict both that holocaustic genocide is in store for the Edomite

ethnicity and that the kingdom of Edom will be perpetually disrupted.[1] As was reviewed

in Chapter One, the Latter Prophets are the fulcrum upon which this anti-Edom bias

turns, and Edomite hostility against Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. appears to be of

significance for the bias (e.g., Obadiah, Psalm 137). There remains, however, influential

doubt that Edom contributed to Judah's fall. Is the biblical reprehension of Edom

groundless? The works of John R. Bartlett reflect an exceptional mastery of the subject

of historical Edom and are deservedly quite influential and noteworthy. On the subject of

whether Edom should be exonerated for any involvement in the fall of Judah, the

conclusion of one of Bartlett's studies may be considered representative of his position.

> For the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 587 B.C., Edom cannot be held in any
> way responsible. The prophets, and many of their less critical followers, owe
> Edom an apology.[2]

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[1]See Chapter One; in brief, see Obad 18; Mal 1:4; and Psalm 137:9 (with
discussion in Chapter Five). The biblical prediction of genocide for the Edomite
ethnicity needs some qualification. There has been no resolution about the toponymic
and syntactical problems of Obad 19–20, yet "Negevites possessing the mountains *of
Esau*" [וירשו הנגב את־הר עשׂו; v. 19], may suggest that a remnant Esauite lineage subsists
(contrast v. 18), albeit possibly under Israelite occupation; cf. Amos 9:12. As a kingdom
in covenantal opposition, Edom cannot last, yet remnant individuals of that ethnicity
might find inclusion in a restored Israel.

[2]John R. Bartlett, "Edom and the Fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C.," *PEQ* 114 (1982):
23; see also *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOTSup. 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,
1989), esp. 156–57, and "Edom in the Nonprophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor*

Bartlett considers much of Obadiah's picture of Edom to have derived "largely from his imagination,"[3] and can accordingly dismiss some of the biblical data that this study has brought to the fore.[4] Bartlett has effectively brought attention to the lack of clear evidence linking Edom to hostility against Jerusalem.

Focusing solely on biblical texts such as Obadiah and Psalm 137 allows us to hear but one side of the story, one category of data. Given the exoneration some scholarship affords Edom for its supposed activities during the fall of Jerusalem, it appeared obvious to me that history was at the heart of a problem with ideological ramifications. Edom stood accused, yet a strong enough historical-critical case for Edom's sixth-century culpability had not been made. Does the biblical condemnation of Edom pertain directly to a sixth-century collapse of Edomite-Judahite relations? Summary judgments and reconstructions—perhaps even such as that offered by the current study—deserve countersuits such as that of Bartlett. In deference to current sensibilities throughout much of scholarship, an *apologia*—an apology in the classic sense—is warranted for texts such as Obadiah and Psalm 137. The point is explicitly valid, I think, both when some readers consider biblical texts somehow authoritative for belief and practice and when some historians consider such texts viable for use in the reconstruction of the geopolitical history of Israel.

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an Edomite For He Is Your Brother (ed. DianaVikander Edelman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 20.

[3]Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 155.

[4]Compare that dismissal with a dismissal of sorts offered by this study on Jer 40:11–12, which Bartlett interprets as communicating that some Judahites found shelter in Edom during the Babylonian assault (see Chapter One).

This study has sought to advance the discussion of Edom in the Bible by setting forth such an *apologia*. The study has sought to reconcile all relevant categories of data around a thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah in the sixth-century B.C.E. Prior to developing the thesis, a number of preliminary and contextual issues needed to be addressed (Chapters One through Three). These issues included the nature of the historical problem and its relationship to a biblical anti-Edom bias, which appears to have been spurred by perceived Edomite hostility against Judah at or around the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E. Other contextual issues included the biblical tradition of a kinship between Edom and Judah, historical-critical considerations on that tradition, the relationship of kinship language to ancient Near Eastern treaties, and the geopolitics of the Edomite-Judahite border and the economic incentive for control of the region as discernable through archaeological and other evidence. Epigraphic and biblical evidence was then provided in order to argue that by the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah in the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah's ninth year (December 588/January587 B.C.E.), Edom had initiated and acted upon a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom's deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah. In short, the study showed that available data suggest Edom was indeed hostile against Judah during the Babylonian assault and that treaty relationships were involved.

The study also provided plausible details of the Edomite campaign against Judahite positions during the Babylonian assault. Archaeological, epigraphic, and biblical evidence support the conclusion that Edom was hostile in the Negev zone of military operations at the time. Chapter Three supported the position that Edom had gained logistical experience in the region by the early sixth century. By design, Judahite

holdings in the Negev (particularly the Beersheba Valley) may have been the intended

objective of Edomite economic and political expansion under Babylonian auspices.[5]

Chapter Four has shown that inscriptional evidence is sufficient to suggest that Edom was

a concern during a "tenth month" (see Arad 17), a month of Judahite troop deployments,

supply concerns and, toward month's end or shortly thereafter, the fall of Arad.

According to 2 Kgs 25:1–2 (cf. Jer 39:1; 52:4), Babylon arrived in order to besiege

Jerusalem on the tenth day of the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth year (Tevet; December

588/January 587 B.C.E.). Chapter Four argued that the month and year of the Eliashib

ostraca from Arad are identical with this biblical datum. Based on a synthesis of data, it

seems clear that Edomite hostility facilitated the rapid fall of the Judahite Negev during

the earliest phases of the Babylonian assault. Indeed, this zone of operations was

evidently the first to complete its objectives in support of the Babylonian enterprise.

At least three major phases marked this rather sweeping Edomite campaign in the

Negev Operational Zone supporting the Babylonian strategic aim of the destruction of

Judah during its larger campaign in the Palestinian theater of military operations. Each of

these phases included Edomite attacks against one or more Judahite fortifications. With

the battlefield shaped to Edom's advantage, Edom first struck—quite possibly by

surprise—Judahite sites at the southeast rim of the Beersheba Valley (Ḥorvat ʿUza).[6]

This phase might have coincided with the arrival of Babylon forces in the Central Hills

Operational Zone. Within weeks, Arad would fall. Troop deployment from Arad and its

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[5]This Negev Operational Zone was one of no fewer than three such zones (including a Central Hills/Jerusalem Operational Zone and a Western Operational Zone in the Shephelah) during Babylon's larger campaign against Judah in the Palestinian theater of operations.

[6]Again, due to drainage systems, the Beersheba Valley is more properly understood as the Beersheba-Arad Valleys.

environs to other Judahite positions may have contributed to the rapid fall of Judahite

holdings in the northeast of the Beersheba Valley. The whole of the eastern Beersheba

Valley was evidently lost within about a month of the start of the Babylonian-Edomite

north-south pincer operation against Judah. The third phase was marked by the loss of

Judahite holdings further west in the valley, sites such as the chief command and

administrative center of Tel ʿIra and the caravanserai to its south, Tel Masos, although

the data currently available do not allow a defensible chronological ordering of the losses

of Judahite positions west of Arad. These fortifications in the Beersheba Valley,

however, did not hold out for long. Apart from Lachish and Azekah in the Western

Operational Zone, and Jerusalem in the Central Hills Operational Zone, evidently no

fortification was intact when the unsuccessful Egyptian relief force arrived, probably in

spring or summer of 587 B.C.E. In sum, the Negev Operational Zone was primed for a

rapid Edomite takeover and Edom apparently did so deftly.

This study has attempted to show that something about Edom was sinister by the

time of the assault: a clandestine treaty betrayal of Judah. As a theme, treaty betrayal

permeates much of Obadiah, providing that text with much literary (thematic) cohesion.[7]

Simple recourse to a biblical text, however, does not solve an historical problem, nor

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[7]Chapter Five argued that a study of the literary artistry of the book of Obadiah
has implications for an historical reconstruction of sixth-century Edomite-Judahite
relations. The chapter posited that a consideration of what I have called the reversal
motif (the inversion of form and content) discernable in a comparison of Obadiah with its
Jeremian parallel provides important support for the thesis of Edomite treaty betrayal.
Inversion is seen in Obadiah both intra-textually within Obadiah itself and inter-textually
in consideration of the parallel in Jeremiah 49. The reversals of fortune suggested by
Obad 7 (which is introduced with verses heavy-laden with inversion) and Obad 15
(which manifests something akin to the concept of *lex talionis*) help communicate that
what shall happen to Edom (betrayal by treaty partners) is what Edom had done to Judah.

does simple recourse to one or two ostraca.[8] The demands of historical criticism may not be simple, but the driving question is. *In which of the possible reconstructions does the available evidence from all categories of data fit best*? In consideration of this point, Edomite treaty betrayal was evidently an event from a moment in time. Coupled with a clandestine, formal relationship with Babylon, Edom both surprised Judah during the opening phases of the Babylonian assault and betrayed perceived, longstanding, and oftentimes cooperative kinship relations with Judah for the purposes of Edom's economic and territorial gain. With Babylonian permission, a strategic Edomite conquest of the Beersheba Valley region would set control of that intersection of important trade routes into Edomite hands. Direct access to the Mediterranean would be facilitated, and Edom (or, rather, its elite) would be poised on the edge of a prosperity Edom had never before seen. It was a grand machination, and Judah, kin of Edom, merely stood welcoming in the way.

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[8]Compare a statement by Anson F. Rainey ("Historical Geography." in *Benchmarks in Time and Culture* [ed. Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., Gerald Mattingly and J. Maxwell Miller; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988] 353–68 [363]):

> "Coming now to the final step, we must stress that information from one discipline, such as Palestinian ceramics, should not be mixed indiscriminately with evidence from some other field. A difficult biblical passage cannot be solved by reference to potsherds. Neither can a knotty stratigraphical problem be solved by recourse to a verse of the Bible. The material from each discipline must be collected and evaluated independently before the various lines of evidence can be brought together. Even then, there is no guarantee that gaps will not remain in the final picture. The steps in achieving a synthesis may be roughly classified as source analysis, regional history and, finally, geopolitical summary."

Some Tensions and Directions

Did Edom Contribute to Jerusalem's Fall?

Those who are inclined to accept in the main this study's historical reconstruction of Edomite treaty betrayal may yet agree with John R. Bartlett and others that Edom did not contribute to *Jerusalem's* fall.[9] Thus, the basic thesis as I have presented it thus far does not directly contradict Bartlett's position on that point. Two factors, however, do suggest that such an Edomite contribution to Jerusalem's demise was historically possible. First, congruence between the categories of data suggests that the Negev Operational Zone—spearheaded by Edomite military contingents—was the *first* of at least three plausible operational zones in the Babylonian campaign against Judah to complete its objectives (Chapter Four). Edomite forces, while no doubt concerned with maintaining control over its new holdings in the Beersheba Valley and reestablishing security along trade routes, would likely have had some respite from direct conflict with organized Judahite forces prior to the collapse of *Jerusalem's* defense following its eighteen-month siege. Babylon may have called upon some portion of Edomite forces to assist in the final phases of operations in the Central Hills/Jerusalem Zone, but even the biblical evidence is almost silent in this regard. Even so, given the cooperation between Judah and Edom prior to the Babylonian crisis, Edomite commanders and individuals may have had valuable intelligence about Judahite defensive fortifications within the walls of Jerusalem. Such first-hand knowledge would have been of tremendous strategic and tactical value to Babylonian officers during the siege of Jerusalem and the havoc of its falling. In short, Edomite contingents could have been on-hand at least for support

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[9]See above bibliographic references; concretely, see, e.g., Bartlett, "Edom and the Fall of Jerusalem," 23.

operations in the Central Hills/Jerusalem Operational Zone toward the end of the siege of Jerusalem.

This last point appears to be supported by the biblical text. Obadiah suggests that Edomites entered the gates (of Jerusalem?) in order to despoil it (Obad 13; cf. v. 11). In more rural areas, Edomites took up strategic positions and struck down or delivered Judahite escapees (Obad 14), perhaps as Jerusalem's defenses disintegrated. Many commentators have agreed with this general conclusion (see Chapter One). Were it not for 1 Esdras 4:45, which states that the Edomites burned the temple during the Babylonian campaign against Judah, the question of direct Edomite involvement both in the fall of *Jerusalem* and in the destruction of its temple might be a non-issue. Although it is more readily evidenced that Judahite positions in the Negev suffered from Edom's campaigning, it is possible that Edomite forces were on hand during Jerusalem's fall.

Which, Whose, and What Treaty?

The language of deception and betrayal associated with Edom presented in this study suggests that Edomite assistance was not hoped for by naïve Judahite folk, but rather was a sociological expectation stemming from perceived kinship relations reaffirmed by covenant and despite a memory that long ago and in generations past the two kingdoms were entwined in hostility.[10] As was shown in Chapters Three and Four, Judahites and Edomites appear to have been building a new history of coexistence and cooperation in the seventh through early sixth centuries B.C.E. This history is much removed from the "ancient rivalry" of centuries past (see., e.g., Ezek 35:5), and a parity

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[10]The readiness of Edom to avenge Judean (and Israelite) crimes from centuries earlier is suggested by some commentators; see, e.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona* [Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971], 134.

treaty (perhaps of mutual revolt and or defense) would be an appropriate course of action for Edom and Judah in light of the Babylonian threat. Perhaps the agreement stemmed from a Palestinian coalition such as that reflected in Jeremiah 27–28. Unfortunately, the evidence for such a Palestinian coalition is indirect (Chapter Five), and this more general problem of scant evidence points to a larger problem of reconstructing treaty-types.

Three issues pertinent to the thesis stand out. First, opportunities for two or more Palestinian states to produce specific, formal anti-Babylonian agreements would have existed until the conclusion of the wider Babylonian campaign against Palestinian states in revolt; there should be little doubt that these kingdoms would have frequently engaged in diplomacy throughout their existences.[11] As new kings ascended thrones, relations might need to be reaffirmed (cf. dynastic succession clauses; cf. also the excerpt of Hattusilis III's Letter to Kadašman-Enlil II discussed in Chapter Two). Accordingly, the Babylonian crisis was one of many historical challenges these kingdoms would have addressed; for Judah it just happened to be a critical moment. Second and relatedly, is that few extant *types* of Iron Age treaties from the ancient Near East survive.[12] Many of the documents are Assyrian vassal treaties and loyalty oaths (agreements between a superior and an inferior). Extant references to parity treaties are few. We don't know if "mutual revolt" or "mutual defense" agreements were regular treaty forms or common treaty components during the early sixth century, despite the fact that mutual defense

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[11]Consideration of texts mentioning these kingdoms in light of a possible Palestinian League appears warranted; see, e.g., John T. Strong, "Tyre's Isolationist Policies in the Early Sixth Century BCE: Evidence from the Prophets," VT 47 (1997): 207–19.

[12]For "types" of Assyrian Iron Age treaties, see Chapter Two and the introductory section in Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2; ed. Robert M. Whiting; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988).

clauses are regularly found in parity treaty stipulations from the Late Bronze Age (see

Chapter Two). Given the circumstances of the Babylonian crisis, a related agreement

among two or more Palestinian states would *reasonably* be one of mutual revolt and

defense and (see, e.g., Lam 4:17), but data has not come to light about the number of

Palestinian states leaguing into revolt—let alone the particularities of such a Palestinian

treaty. Even so, a third issue deserves mention. Given the results of Chapters Two and

Three, any formal agreement between Edom and Judah pertaining to the Babylonian

crisis would have been merely supplementary to their longstanding and often cooperative

relations. The seventh century appears to be a time both of relatively peaceful

interactions between Edom and Judah and of a relatively lucrative economic development

for the kingdoms despite Assyrian supremacy. Given the prevalence of covenants in the

ancient Near East, Edom and Judah would likely have covenanted in some form during

the shifting international scenes of the eighth through early sixth centuries—perhaps if

only to reaffirm or modify the stipulations of their relations from time to time.[13] When

an Edomite-Judahite covenant relationship *originated* remains unknown, yet some

moment prior to the initiation of Judah's revolt from Babylon (ca. 593–589 B.C.E.) would

have been a reasonable time for a longstanding Edomite-Judahite covenant relationship to

be reaffirmed and, perhaps, supplemented.

Ethnic Kinship, Covenants, and the Anti-Edom Bias

This third issue might have ideological import. It might be the longstanding and

mutually-perceived kinship and covenant relationship binding Edom with Judah that

made Edomite violation particularly painful (cf. Lam 1:2, 19; 4:21–22). Foundational

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[13]The Amarna documents are analogous in this respect (Chapter Two).

ancestral stories kept Edom—quite unlike other Palestinian states—at the fringe of Israel. This perceived kinship connection and its concomitant expectations for ensuring mutual wellbeing were possibly severed with Edom's treaty relationship with Babylon.[14] Given the sociological function of covenants/treaties in ancient Semitic societies to extend kinship and responsibility (cf. Chapter Two on "ethnic kinship"), not only did the biblical descendants of Esau *fail to act as kin* of Israel during the Babylonian crisis, they also (or more accurately) *rejected that kinship* by taking up clandestinely a kinship with Babylon, a relationship which progressed into hostility against their erstwhile Judahite kin.

This history reflected in the Latter Prophets corresponds with a question posed by the foundational ancestral stories. In Genesis, Edomites are teetering at the edge of "ethnicity," teetering at the edge of kinship expectations (cf. Chapter Two). In a manner not unlike Esau's wife, Judith (יְהוּדִית), Edom's "Jewishness" (יְהוּדִית)—a functional kinship relationship with Judah—disappears with Edom's mixture of foreign nationality into its twinship "ethnicity" with Israel. No other nation is held in such close distinction from Israel, yet—in regard to Esau and his perceived descendants—kinship does not necessarily presuppose functional social integration. Edomites are a *tertium quid* in Genesis, a third thing that is not quite Israel and not yet the nations. A reader of Genesis leaving that narrative might wonder if the concomitant sociological benefits and expectations of the descendants of Esau relative to Israel are in jeopardy. Leaving Genesis, Esau's status as kin is in need of affirmation or rejection. According to this reading, the descendants of Esau would need *to choose* whether they would function as kin of Israel. Doubt of Esau's "Jewishness" evidently reverberated in sixth-century

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[14]How long Edom harbored its Babylonian agreement is unknown (see, however, Chapter Five on Ezekiel 21). Further studies might prove helpful.

portion of a larger Edom. Thus, for a time, Edom had populations stretching (no doubt

thinly at places) from southern Transjordan, through the ʿArabah, and into portions of the

Negev and the Beersheba Valley. The benefits Edom enjoyed from its geopolitical

domain subsequent to the successful Babylonian-Edomite campaign against Judah were,

however, short-lived. In 553 B.C.E., King Nabonidus of Babylon evidently critically

weakened Edom, probably as part of a campaign aimed at imperial expansion and control

of the region's trade routes and the vast wealth of Arabia.[16] In Transjordan, "Edom" did

not recover as a nation, and the population there would eventually merge with and

disappear into other ethnicities. The rise to prominence of Nabataean Arabs in what was

once the Edomite heartland would relegate "Edomites" as a named ethnicity to a remnant

population in southern Judah. Edom had all but disappeared. The short, golden age of a

Greater Edom (ca. 587–553 B.C.E.) stretching southward from the southern tip of the

Dead Sea through the Edomite highland to the port city at the northern limit of the Gulf

of Aqaba and westward throughout much of the Negev into the Beersheba Valley was

over. It is an ironic reversal of fortune for Edom: the survival of the Edomite ethnicity

and name was essentially confined to the territorial objective of its military campaign of

expansion during the Babylonian assault on Judah.

Fair or not for Edomites, their sphere of political influence no longer continues in a

recognizable form. Edom's perpetual political collapse is addressed in Mal 1:4–5.

> [4] If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says: They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. [5] Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel!" (NRSV)

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[16]See Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus King of Babylon 556-539 B.C.* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), esp. 165–66, 178–85.

The verses predict that Edom's former glory is unattainable. Edomites lingered on at least into the first century, when one of the last known Edomites, Herod the Great, became king of the Jews under Roman auspices (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.15.2; cf. *J.W.* 1.6.2). The dominance of the Herods, however, was fleeting. With the ancestral blessing intended for Esau stolen by Jacob (Genesis 27), primogeniture lost canonical and covenantal import, and with Edom's sociological connection with Israel critically damaged by betrayal, Edom lost a share in the promises for Israel's posterity. History eventually fulfilled the harsh calls of the Prophets' anti-Edom bias: as a distinct and recognizable ethnicity, Edom disappeared.

Biblical Edom can flummox, and it is beyond me how one can convincingly theologize biblical Edom when we can be sure of so little about biblical and historical Edom. Perhaps a hostile treaty betrayal of Judah coupled with Edom's Babylonian clandestinism—at the time of Judah's punishment for its own covenant violation (e.g., Lam 4:21–22; cf. Chapter Five)—provided for biblical compilers the momentous, underlying warrant for Edom's transference from its status as a nation of twinship-rivalry to a nation described with a particular vehemence. Other factors, however, may have contributed to the development of the bias. Edomite successes and encroachment into southern Judah would have led to a mid-sixth-century Judahite sociological exigency: was Esau—rather than Jacob—the true inheritor of the blessings of Abraham? [17] The

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[17]Of considerable value on this point is Elie Assis, "Why Edom? On the Hostility Towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources," *VT* 56 (2006): 1–20. Assis' study offers a criticism of the rush to treat Edom as a "symbol of the nations" and, in consideration of the ideological significance Judah gave Edom's actions in light of the Jacob and Esau traditions, provides insights into the development of the anti-Edom bias based on the sociological exigencies emerging among Judahites during the sixth century. Assis, however, discounts the importance of Edomite involvement in the destruction of Judah

sharp contrast between victorious Edom and devastated Judah would make this a

paramount question for many Judahites—at least during the period of a Greater Edom.

Yet, even after the collapse of that short-lived Edom, returning exiles experienced a more

lasting exigency: their relative powerlessness to reverse the influx of Edomites into a land

considered to be YHWH's.[18] What does it mean when remnant populations of Edom *and*

Judah come to coexist within a retracted land of YHWH dominated by imperial powers?

Did Edom take on eschatological importance? Understanding these sociological

concerns may help us understand biblical Edom, yet the emergence of these concerns

would also have been *subsequent* to an historical moment of Edomite treaty betrayal and

geopolitical and economic expansion to Judah's detriment. The causes of the anti-Edom

bias of the Latter Prophets does not appear to rest solely on the perceptions of Judahites

subsequent to the Babylonian crisis, nor does it stem from some geopolitical ideology of

or propaganda from some Jewish elite in the Persian period or beyond. A root cause of

biblical texts' mordant rhetoric against Edom may be found in its historic treaty betrayal

of Judah during the Babylonian assault ca. 588–586 B.C.E.

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for the development of the exceptional attitude toward Edom in biblical sources (p. 15). I
would offer that the Jacob and Esau traditions find many points of contact with Edom's
actions in the sixth century (e.g., covenant deception, betrayal of kin, and territorial
concerns). These suggest that *the manner* of Edomite involvement was important.

[18]Cf. Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall
Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Atlanta:
Scholars Press, 1995), esp. 31–32.

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