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The Galgūla Family in South Judah and the Local Sanctuaries

Recently we published an article concerning the large *Galgoula* large family (*byt 'b* – “father’s house”) which did not live in the Babylonian exile, and which can be traced from the VIII. century B.C.E. in the Arad *Ostraka* till the Greek documents from Judah at the time of the revolt of Bar Kochba.¹ It is important that on the name *bn̄y gl̄l* – was on the Arad Ostrakon² among the priestly families of the local sanctuary, closed by the reform of king Hizkiyāhu.

One of the central sources is an ostrakon, speaking about a field of *gl̄wl* – “Galgoula”.³ We now know about recently published ostraca, originating from the same find place or its vicinity, and – dated according to the dates on the ostraca – from 362–312 B.C.E.⁴ In other words they belong to late Persian times and the very beginning of the Hellenistic period.

The exact place of provenance of these hundreds of ostraca is not known, but according to all hints in the texts they are from Maqqeda in the vicinity of Khirbet el-Kom, South Judah, 14 km southwest of Hebron.⁵

In the recent edition of A. Lemaire we find again the name *gl̄wl*. Thus, on the ostrakon No. 258⁶ we read in line 1 *hl̄q 'rq* “parcellation” or “distribution” of land(plots). Despite the fact that the text is partly broken, we can understand that the land was measured by the “rope of the soil (earth, land)” *'šl'rq*, but also according to the quantity of the *séah* measures, needed for sowing on the plot(?).

In line 3 the text reads: *mšt. gl[?] gl̄sX pl̄g šbr'sX*
“[....?] Gilgal (s(éahs) X, half of the month Shabirā, X s(éahs)” (Possibly, the last numeral sign belongs to the almost destroyed line 4).

And line 6: [] *gl̄wl th̄ty s X III III I q II*
“[] Galgoul the lower s(éahs) 17.qabs 2.”⁷

¹ M. Heltzer (2001), 185–189. Cf. also Sh. Aḥituv (2003), 13–17.

² Y. Aharoni (1978), 82–86.

³ Sh. Aḥituv (1999), 33–37; also J. Eḥal-J. Naveh (1996), 92–93, Nos. 200 and 201.

⁴ A. Lemaire (2002), 199–200, nos. 1–104 on pp. 11–63.

⁵ A. Lemaire (2002), 197–198; D. A. Dorsey (1980), 185–193.

⁶ A. Lemaire (2002), 133–135.

⁷ Séah = 7–7,5 liters; qab = 1, 2 liters.

By all means we see that the Galgoul(a) were also landowners (peasants), but the size of their field is not known. The quantity of the cereals, measured in s(éahs), shows that the fields were not very large. Also, we read about the “(measuring) rope of land” (*'šl'rq*), which in the I. millennium B.C.E. measured of 120 cubits. Even if we take a short cubit of 42 cm as a minimum, the land-plot measured by the rope had the size of $\approx 2500 \text{ m}^2$. But we do not know the exact measuring system in this area in the Persian period.⁸

More important is ostrakon No. 283 in the recent publication of A. Lemaire. According to A. Lemaire, it reads:⁹

tl' zy th̄t mn byt 'z'
whybl' zy byt yhw
zbr zby rpyd' zy b̄n'
bz' s'rw kpr gl̄wl
rq̄q zy byt nbw (?)
kpr ynqm

“The hillock, which is under the House of ‘Uzza’, (The expression *zy th̄t mn* seems to show that “the House (temple, shrine) of the Goddess ‘Uzzā’ covers the tel (*tl'*)).

And the district (area, land-plot)¹⁰ which (is) of the House of Yahō.

An unproductive plot¹¹ of Zabi, the terrace(?)¹² of the terebinth tree.

The devastated land¹³ of Sa'dou¹⁴, the tomb¹⁵ of the Galgoula family.

A basin (pool)¹⁶ (?) which (belongs) to the House (temple, shrine) of Nabou(?).¹⁷

The tomb of the Yinqam (family).”

The text seems to be a cadaster or land registry. It does not, however, deal with agricultural land or peasants, but gives other information. First of all, we read here about the burial caves of the Galgoula and the Yinqam families: These families were rich and prominent possessing their family burial places.

It is also interesting to note that at this period, i.e., 360 B.C.E. and later, the population was linguistically mixed. Most personal names are Edomite, because of the theophoric element *qws* (*qaus or qōs), designating the national god of Edom. We have to add that

⁸ *'šl* “rope” akk. *ašlu*; *hbl* “rope” akk. *eblu*. According to AHW 81b and 183a–b the square *eblu* could have the size of 6 *ikū*, i.e., 2 hectares. Cf. also M. Powell (1980–1983), 488ff. where the author equals the square rope to 3 *ikū*; cf. also Zach. 2:5 *w'hinnē 'iš ūb'yādō hebel middā* “and there is a man with the measuring-rope in his hand”. Despite the fact that Zacharia is a prophet of the Persian period and he mentions the measuring-rope, we do not receive information about the size of the rope.

⁹ A. Lemaire (2002), Plate XLVII, 283.

¹⁰ *hybl'*, var. of *hbl* “rope” (also *hbwl*, *hbl* graphic variants). Cf. A. Lemaire (2002), 248.

¹¹ *Zbr* is a *hapax legomenon*. The translation is contextual. Cf. A. Lemaire (2002), 130.

¹² A. Lemaire (2002), 150, but the word is unclear.

¹³ A. Lemaire (2002), 151 takes *bz'byz'*; cf. DNWSI, p. 149, *bz'* “to destroy” and *bzz₂* “plunder”.

¹⁴ We prefer the name Sa'dou reading the third letter as *d* (*daleth*).

¹⁵ *Kpr* can also be “village”, but in Nabatean Aramaic *kpr'* designates a family tomb (possibly a burial cave) DNWSI *kpr'* of a wealthy family.

¹⁶ The translation of A. Lemaire (2002), 151 is a contextual one.

¹⁷ As we see, Lemaire doubts the reading and reads instead *k/nbd/r/w* but possibly *nbw*.

even in the area of Hebron a small altar was found with the Greek inscription κως, that tells us that even in the Hellenistic period an Edomite element existed within the population of the area.¹⁸

Additional information is furnished by ostrakon No. 238. Line 1 attests a *byt 'z'* "sanctuary of the goddess 'Uzza". This deity is well-known in South-Arabia in Sabeian, Qatabanian, Minean and other inscriptions.¹⁹ The deity is also known in Northern-Arabian, i.e., Lihyanite inscriptions.²⁰

The deity 'Uzza was also worshipped by the aramaized Arabs, i.e., in the Palmyrene²¹ and geographically closer to Judah in the Negev by the Nabateans.²² Also the Edomites worshipped 'Uzza. But more interesting is the fact, that "the House of 'Uzza" and "the House of Yahō" were proximate one to another and this was considered as a normal feature.²³ We can add here about the mentioning of tombs in the same place, i.e., that it was considered as a holy one. Until now we knew only about temples of Yahō (*Yhwh*, *Yhw*, *Yhh*) of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim during the Persian Period, built at the time of Nehemiah²⁴, and the temple of Yahō in Southern Egypt – Elephantine, which existed in the VI cent. B.C.E., and where a *byt Yhw* (var. *byhw* etc.) is known from papyri and ostraca.²⁵ Important is the fact that the *byt Yhw* mentioned in the ostrakon No. was outside the limits of the Yehud province of the Fifth Satrapy of the Persian Empire. In addition we gain quite a bit of information learned in general from the ostraca from Idumea dating to the IV. cent. B.C.E. about Jewish presence in that area. The ostrakon furnishes a good illustration to the passage in the Book of Nehemiah 4:6 which reads the "Jews, which dwell among them"²⁶ and where the Jews dwelling in the other provinces of the Fifth satrapy are meant.

Abbreviations

AHW	W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, I–III, Wiesbaden 1959–1981
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
DNWSIJ	Hoftijzer, K. Yongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, Leiden 1995.
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
RIA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie
TADAE	B. Porten – A. Yardeni, Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt, I–IV, Jerusalem 1986–1999.

¹⁸ E. Mader (1957), 137, pl. 76.

¹⁹ J. Ryckmans (1980), 193–204.

²⁰ W. Caskel (1954), 141, *han-'Uzzay*. Not entering into an exhaustive review about this deity we can add that 'Uzza was also known in early Islam: M. C. A. Macdonald – L. Nehme (2000), 967–968.

²¹ J. K. Stark (1971), 105.

²² J. Patrich (1984), 39–41; Ph. C. Hammond – D. J. Johnson – R. N. Jones (1986), 77–80.

²³ We do not enter here the question about the shrine of Nabu, because the reading of this line of the ostrakon is far from being certain.

²⁴ J. Naveh – Y. Magen (1997), 9–18; J. Frey (1994), 171–204.

²⁵ TADAE, II, B3.2:2; 3.3:2; 3.4:25; 3.5:2; 3.10:2; 3.11:2 etc., IV D 7.18:13:35:1, etc.

²⁶ *hay'hūdīm hayyošbīm 'ešlām*.

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