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# Reconsidering Yahwism in Persian Period Idumea in Light of the Current Material Findings

## An Orientation: Yahwism and Emerging Judaism in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods

This chapter discusses and re-evaluates all the available material evidence in the Idumean region and province that may be indicators of a practiced Yahwism in Persian times in this region (sections 1–6). In this context, certain biblical, namely late Persian, traditions of the Hebrew Bible also need to be taken into account: the focus at the end of the paper will be on the genealogical vestibule of Chronicles with its dominant Judean genealogy, in which "Edomite," i.e., "non-Israelite" cultural traits are "made" into Judean ones. Likewise, a look at the post-P narrative Genesis 23 will have to be taken in this context (section 7).

The question of Yahwism is seen as part of the overall phenomenon of "Yahwism in the Persian Period." According to the latest research, this phenomenon is characterized by a high degree of regional diversification and cultural-religious-social plurality. Yahwism in Idumea is accordingly classified in this system of coordination. This article represents the first study dealing with Yahwism in Idumea – in research it is either not mentioned at all (in favor of a focus on the imagined "norm group" of Judaism in Jerusalem – see below) or it is left with a short reference to the famous Idumea Ostracon from the 4th century BCE, which mentions a "Yaho temple" – apparently in Idumea.

In order to carefully grasp the phenomenon of "Yahwism in Idumea," some terminological and conceptual clarifications are necessary. I would like to highlight three central aspects in the following:

1. As I understand it, the study of the phenomenon of "Yahwism in the Persian period" is part of the research on ancient Judaism.[1] The term "early Judaism" or "emerging Judaism" typically refers to the formation of Judaism in the

**1** See on Yahwism in the Persian period and Emerging Judaism my overview of research, with the detailed outline of my own approach in Hensel, "Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible" and most recently Hensel, "Who Wrote the Bible."

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early Persian period.[2] The key aspect in this is the fact that this phase of the formation of Identity begins in the early Persian period. In contrast to the established research, however, I have already shown many times[3] that this process is not limited to the early Persian period, but extends at least until the late 2nd/early 1st century BCE and is to be regarded as a long-term process. It is only from this time on[4] that Judaism begins to develop those identity markers (especially the practice and understanding of the Torah, circumcision, food and purity laws,[5] and monotheism). As recently shown by Yonatan Adler in his study on the "Origins of Judaism,"[6] the archaeological evidence for the dissemination and observance of the Tora does not begin until the late 2nd century BCE; the same is the case with the epigraphic sources found at Qumran as has been convincingly argued by Reinhard G. Kratz in several studies now.[7]

2. In addition, there is the crucial circumstance that this emerging/early Judaism constitutes only one aspect of the far more extensive phenomenon of "Yahwism in Antiquity." I understand this to mean that Judaism emerged over time and in a long-term process from the various forms of Yahwism of the time before. Therefore, I consistently prefer the term "Yahwism" as a neutral term in religious studies to the traditional termini such as "Judaism" or "Judaisms."[8] As has become clear in the meantime and in recent years through various small-scale studies, this Yahwism is characterized by a high degree of regional diversification and cultural as well as religious-sociological

**2** See, most recently Schmid and Schröter, *The Making of the Bible*, 105–139 (the chapter on the Persian Period: "Emerging Judaism").

**3** See in the latest article Hensel, "Who Wrote the Bible," 12–13.

**4** Cohen, *The Beginning of Jewishness*.

**5** Especially for this aspect of the Diaspora, see now Schöpf, *Purity without Borders?*.

**6** Adler, *The Origins of Judaism*, 197–208, 223–236.

**7** See especially his article *in this volume*.

**8** Frevel has, with good argument, supported the designation "Judaism" (in current publications) as a larger entity or "Judaisms." ("Judentümer") (see Frevel, "Alte Stücke – Späte Brücke?"); Edelman has also used the term "Judaisms" in recent publications: Edelman, "Introduction," 1–5. In my opinion, the phenomenon should, from the approach of religious studies, be viewed as neutrally as possible: the different groupings exist alongside each other in these periods, even if they display differences in detail regarding religious practice and the sociology of religion. So, for example, monotheism is a *possible* option during the Persian period (Judah and Samaria) but not an *exclusive* option for faith in the God of Israel (so, e.g., Elephantine and Idumea). Moreover, "Judaism" is only one single development within a wider entity. The "Samaritans" for example, would never call themselves (nor would they have in antiquity) "Jews." See also a very recent article by Barnea ("Yahwistic Identity") who suggests based on archeological and onomastic evidence, that the identifier *Yhwdy* was adopted by all Yahwists (incl. Samari(t)ans) in the 6th c. BCE.

plurality. The established coordinated system of an imagined Jerusalem Orthodoxy in Persian times and other deviant groups outside the country (be it Samaria, Elephantine or Babylon, to name only the best known) can no longer be effective here. For the present contribution, this means that I use the term "Yahwistic" or "Yahwistic individuals" etc. to describe – in general terms – that group or particular individuals, who become tangible in the material findings, are cultically oriented to Yaho. I refrain, where possible, from using other ethnic or national markers or labels that are too presuppositional (such as "Jewish names," "Judahites," or "Judeans," etc.; for a detailed discussion in this regard see section 6).

3. The Persian and – in my understanding, as outlined above and in more detail elsewhere.[9] also – the early Hellenistic periods are widely recognized as the so-called formative period for the Hebrew scriptures and emerging Judaism.[10] Yet, there is very much still a decisive desideratum in research, namely there is still a lack of detailed studies that "bridge the gap," so to speak, between redaction history and the historically tangible groupings. There has been a long tradition in research of identifying biblical redactors and redactor groups as well as the groups of biblical tradents of this period with the social groups of Judea (and especially those of Jerusalem). This is also still the case for the majority of the biblical texts: the Hebrew Bible seems to be, in the end, clearly a Judean-dominated tradition. However, this is not true for all texts. It seems clear that, even if most of the traditions at the surface of the text were shaped from a Judean perspective, this diversity is still reflected in certain biblical traditions or redactional material. In this regard, another question arises: which social groups or redactor groups (Judean as well as "non-Judean") stand *behind* the Hebrew Bible's productional processes? This crucial question has – for the first time – been addressed in a holistic approach with a series of articles in the 2023 volume "Social Groups behind Biblical Traditions."[11] In any case, the observations of the most recent research in this regard allow for the conclusion that diverse redactor groups of the period in question were aware of the multifaceted nature of the Yahwistic groups. This is why the present article will also ask the question if – against the backdrop of the material evidence from Idumea – there might be traces or reflection of the representation of this group in certain biblical traditions.

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**9** See most recently Hensel, "Who Wrote the Bible," 11–23, esp. 15–19.

**10** See Schmid, "Textual, Historical, Sociological"; Römer, "Zwischen Urkunden, Fragmenten und Ergänzungen," 2–24; Kratz, "The Analysis of the Pentateuch"; Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid, *The Formation of the Pentateuch*.

**11** Hensel, Adamczewski, and Nocquet, *Social Groups behind Biblical Traditions*.

## Edom, Idumea and Edomite, Idumeans: Terminological Limitations

A final terminological remark is necessary before reviewing the evidence. The distinction in terminology between "Edom" as referring to the Iron-Age kingdom centered east of the Wadi ʿArabah and "Idumea" as referring to the region south of Judah in the Hellenistic Period is a totally modern one, existing in neither ancient Hebrew nor Greek. I will detail the several aspects involved in the course of the article when the evidence is reviewed. The effect of this distinction is further blurred by the fact that the Edomite heartland was originally located in Transjordan (on the Edomite plateau) and later gradually evolved into the Southern Negev (but not later than the 8$^{th}$ century BCE). What we see in some scholarly literature, therefore, is a rather artificial distinction between "Edom" in Transjordan and "Idumea" in Cis-Jordan. But this distinction overlooks the fact that the Jordan was never understood in antiquity as a border – both "Edoms" (Cis- and Transjordanian) are a crucial part of one cultural contact zone. That being said, the cultural traits evident in the material need to be labelled somehow. And thirdly, the terminological distinction is further blurred by the clear multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society in Idumea itself, with seemingly low cultural or ethnical boundaries. This means that the terms "Edomite" or "Idumean" in contrast to individuals with Arabic, Phoenician, Greek or possibly even Judean background is not as sharp as the terminology would suggest. In order to follow the traditional research, this article will first use the termini "Edomite" or "Idumean" as a signal for an "Edomite" background (however defined). This is meant as a counter term to other, clearly identifiable cultural traits, such as Arabic, Phoenician or Yahwistic. In the course of the article, I will problematize and correct the term "Idumean" in its limitation to the "Edomite" (section 6, in this article), then in the external perception all inhabitants of Idumea are considered Idumeans (as is the case for someone from Yehud or Samaria). The Yahwists living in that region are also "Idumeans" – the term says nothing about their religious orientation, only about their geographic or political localization to the Province of Idumea.

# 1 Religion and Yahwism in Idumea in the Persian Period: An Overview of Onomastic Evidence

## The Region and Province of Idumea in the Persian Period

In the Persian and the Hellenistic periods, the territory of Idumea included all the areas of the Beersheba-Arad Valley, the southern Shephelah, and the southernJudean Hills; in other words, territory that had been inhabited mainly by Judeans in the eighth-seventh centuries. The name "Idumea" is first mentioned as a geographical reference in Diodorus' description of the events of the year 312 BCE.[12] The exact course of the northern border of Idumea is still a matter of debate.[13] However, the borders of Yehud seem to have shrunk to a line north of Beth-Zur[14] in the hill country, and Azekah and the Elah Valley in the Shephelah, while most of the Judahite population was concentrated around Jerusalem. A recent article authored by Dafna Langgut and Oded Lipschits[15] puts forth an intriguing thesis for the reasons why the Judean settlement area continually contracted northwards over the centuries. Based on the palynological and sedimentological information, it can be shown that the Southern Levant at the transition of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE – ca. 520 to 450 – experienced an extended period of drought. These dryer climate conditions had serious ramifications in southern Judah, which was hit particularly hard by the drought and was slowly abandoned by the Judeans. It was precisely this retreat by the native population that then allowed other population groups, especially the Edomites, to come and settle into the region.

Moreover, Idumea is part of the double "post-history" of the former kingdom of Edom, which was conquered by the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus, in 552 BCE. In the following period there is evidence for a continued existence of Edomite culture not only in the former core area – the Transjordanian Edomite

**12** Diodorus, Siculus. *Bibliotheca Historica*, 19, 94–95, 98. For the Greek text see Siculus. *The Library of History 10*.

**13** See, e.g. Levin, "The Genesis of Idumea.", 80–98, esp. 81–86.

**14** See for this Josephus, who mentions in several instances that by the second century the region south of Beth-Zur was known as Idumea, and was considered to be separate from Judea, at least until it was taken over by John Hyrcanus I sometime around 107 BCE (Jos., *Antiquities* 13, 256–257; Jos., *Wars* 1.63).

**15** Langgut, and Lipschits. "Dry Climate," 151–176.

plateau[16] – but also in Idumea in the Cis-Jordanian area. The name itself, Ἰδουμαία, obviously derived from the kingdom of Edom, in Greek (LXX) "Εδωμ" or Ἰδουμαία. From what we know now, Edomites had begun expanding their mercantile activities and partially migrating into the Judean Negev as early as the eighth century BCE, as confirmed by material evidence found at Lachish,[17] Arad,[18] Beersheba,[19] Maresha,[20] Khirbet el-Kôm/Makkedah,[21] and several other sites in the area.[22] In addition, considering the evidence from the Arabah Valley and the Negev Highlands,[23] it seems likely that areas in southern Judah were already being settled in the 8th century – and probably even earlier. Some of these groups were nomadic, while others were sedentary and engaged in pastoralism, agriculture, and trade with the Edomites.[24]

In the Hellenistic period, this region was called, depending on the source, the *eparchia* (ἐπαρχία), *hyparchia* (ὕπαρχεία) or even "satrapy" (σατραπεία) of Idumea. It is not exactly clear when Idumea as an administrative entity was officially established. The earliest reference to Idumea as an administrative unit can be found in the Zenon Papyri from Cairo, dating to 259 BCE.[25] Here, Zenon mentions the port of Gaza, Marisa and Adoreon in Idumea.[26]

While some therefore argue that a province of Idumea was not established before the early Hellenistic period,[27] there are good arguments for the late Persian period, as might be concluded from the extensive amount of Aramaic official administrative ostraca from the fourth century.[28] According to Diana V. Edelman, the so-called Idumean ostraca (see below) testify to tax collection administered by Persian officials in Makkedah and thus to Idumea as part of the larger Persian financial system.

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**16** On the evidence see now Bienkowski, "Transjordan in the Persian Period." See also the articles gathered in the programmatic volume Hensel, Zvi, and Edelmann, *About Edom and Idumea*.

**17** Lemaire, "Un nouveau roi arabe."

**18** Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Arad."

**19** Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Beer-Sheba."

**20** See esp. Stern, "The Evolution of an Edomite/Idumean Identity." For the site of Maresha, see Kloner, *Maresha Excavations I* and Stern, *Excavations at Maresha Subterranean Complex 169*.

**21** Zadok, "A Prosopography of Samaria and Edom/Idumea," esp. 785–822; Zadok, "On the Documentary Framework"; Stern, "The Population of the Persian-Period Idumea," esp. 212–13.

**22** An overview of the surveys in Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism 1*, 50.

**23** For a full review of the available material see Danielson, "Edom in Judah."

**24** For an Iron Age I Edomite Kingdom, see Ben-Yosef, "The Architectural Bias."

**25** See Bartlett, "Edomites and Idumaeans," esp. 106.

**26** See Bartlett, "Edomites and Idumaeans," 106.

**27** See, e.g., Levin, "The Genesis of Idumea," 84–86. He already challenged the view that there was a province of Idumea during the Persian Period in a paper published in 2007, see Levin, "The Southern Frontier of Yehud."

**28** Edelman, "Economic and Administrative Realia."

It is more than likely that the creation of the province (or sub-satrapy) of Idumea was triggered by the Achaemenid loss of Egypt around 404–400/398 BCE.[29] As a consequence, the southern borders of the Southern Levant became an extremely sensitive frontier of the Persian Empire, all of which paved the way to a higher level of direct imperial involvement in the local administration. One good example is the establishment of the fortified administrative center at Lachish in the area around 400 BCE.[30] More than likely most of the Persian period finds in the various sites of the Negev and the Shephelah, such as Arad, Beer-sheba, Tell el-Far'ah (south), and others, should be dated to the fourth century BCE and show heightened imperial involvement in the area.[31]

## Cultural and Ethnic Identities in Idumea: A Complex Phenomenon

One aspect that brings us closer to the topic of our contribution is the question of cultural and ethnic identities in Idumea during the Persian period, which is a highly complex issue in itself.

While the term Ἰδουμαία alone expresses a certain idea of *continuity* with the Edom of old, one of the most urgent and intriguing questions in Idumean research is how this continuity actually transpired in reality; in other words, what cultural, ethnic, and religious traits identifiable in the region point towards a continuity of "Edomite" cultural heritage? Older research typically spoke simply of "Edomites" in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, which is still widely adapted in modern Hebrew Bible scholarship.[32] However, using the term "Edomite" only blurs the complexity of the various ethnic and cultural identities involved in the region and which will be tangible when we come to the onomastic evidence (see also section 6 below for a detailed discussion on the problematics on identifying ethnical, political or cultural traits). The various findings bring about their own plethora of questions: what of the Idumeans themselves, who lived for over two centuries in what had been southern Judah, without any known political, cultural or religious organization? Did they identify themselves as Idumeans in their own right, or did they instead consider themselves "refu-

**29** See Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 101.

**30** See Fantalkin and Tal, "A Tale of Two Provinces," esp. 177–179.

**31** See Fantalkin and Tal, "A Tale of Two Provinces," 177–214.

**32** See, among others, the discussion on potential "Edomite" veneration at Hebron, and thus in Idumea of the Persian period, discussed in the context of Gen 17 (P) in De Pury, "Le tombeau des Abrahamides"; also see Schmid, "Judean Identity and Ecumenicity," esp. 26.

gees" from old Edom? Did they think of themselves as "natives"? Can we even think of them in terms of ethnicity? Is there cultural continuity from the Iron-Age Edomites to the people living west of the Arabah in the Persian and Hellenistic periods? What about the Qedarites and other Arab groups who lived in the area, and what about the "Yahwists" in the region?

These questions cannot be fully answered in this article, of course, but they illustrate the problem horizon, and highlight the caution with which one has to approach the onomastic findings in the following. The core problem is that we do not have any testimonies of these "Idumeans," who could give information about their own identity construction and perception. We can only approach this identity, or better, the different identities, in Idumea indirectly via the material findings and namely via onomastics. In the traditional as well as in the current research, however, it can often be observed that linguistic or cultural traits are often raised, which, however, are too hastily explored in the sense of ethnic, cultural, and/or political labels that are possibly also presented mixed with biblical horizons. The following review of the material will give some examples of this.

## The Idumean Ostraca: The Unprovenanced Corpus of the 4th Century BCE

In order to understand the complex processes of cultural interaction in Idumea, of which Yahwism was a part, it is essential to study the rich epigraphic evidence of the Persian period. There are nearly 2,100 Ostraca from Idumea that give insight into agriculture, economics, politics, onomastics, and scribal practices from (mainly) the fourth and some from the third-century BCE. Of interest from this corpus are also the land descriptions, which record local landmarks, ownership boundaries, and land registration and thus provide rich complementary material to understanding the region of Idumea. The vast majority of the ostraca are commercial and administrative documents mostly written in Aramaic and mostly, unfortunately, unprovenanced, hence we term in the following the Unprovenanced Corpus. Most stem from the antiquities market, though certain prosopographic connections between individual ostraca and further linguistic and content similarities show that the ostraca originate from the same assemblage as has clearly been shown in several studies by Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni. All ostraca are since 2023 accessible through an excellent multivolume critical edition of all the ostraca currently known, edited by Porten and Yardeni ("Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea"/TAO 2014; 2016; 2018, 2020; 2023).[33] Many of the

33 *TAO 1–5*.

ostraca are dated according to the Babylonian calendar, typically giving the date, the month and the regnal year of the reigning king, sometimes they are only dated by day. Generally speaking, the dates of the entire corpus range from the 42nd year of Artaxerxes II (362 BCE) until the 5th year of Alexander IV (311 BCE).[34]

## The Maresha-Corpus: Suggestions for an Administrative Centre at Maresha in the Late Persian Period

While the "Idumean" corpus is now known to the research community and – mainly due to the excellent critical edition TAO – is now (2023) available in its entirety and thus no longer – as before – to be evaluated only fragmentarily by the research community – the following corpus of inscriptions is, in my estimation, virtually unknown. For the development of Idumea in the late Persian period, however, it is important. For this, however, one must abstain from some of the basic assumptions of previous research ("Hellenistic corpus"), for the case is not as clear-cut as the few small studies occasionally suggest.

While there have been findings of several (but not many) ostraca that are dated to the late Persian period from several smaller sites such as Arad, Beersheba, Tell Jemmeh, Tell el-Far'ah (south), Tell el-Kheleifeh, and the region of Yata, which are believed to belong to the same corpus as the unprovenanced corpus, the excavations at Maresha have yielded more than 1,200 Greek and Semitic (mainly Aramaic) inscriptions (including about 60 inscriptions on jars).[35] However, the publication situation of these ostraca is not very satisfactory and presented only very provisionally. It seems to be the case that about 500 of the ostraca are written in Aramaic with most of the rest in Greek,[36] however, there are contradictory statements about this number in different studies. This is partly due to the fact that the publication of the extensive excavations in Maresha has progressed only very slowly so far. Many of the inscriptions (we do not know precisely how many and from which strata) come from the tell itself, which has not yet been published satisfactorily.

Officially published from the time period in question are until now (September 2023) the following: the first group of ostraca found at Maresha had been published in 2010,[37] including 65 Persian and Hellenistic inscriptions, dated on

**34** See Porten and Yardeni. "The Chronology of the Idumean Ostraca."

**35** See Eshel, "The Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician Script" and Eshel, "Iron Age, Phoenician and Aramaic Inscriptions."

**36** Eshel, "Hellenism in the Land of Israel," esp. 123.

**37** Eshel, "The Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician Script."

paleographic grounds from the 5th to the 2nd century BCE and written in Aramaic. Additionally, 39 inscriptions have been published in 2014,[38] that have been found in Subterranean Complex 57. 37 of these inscriptions are written in Aramaic and are dated – on paleographic grounds – from the 4th to the 2nd century BCE.[39] Additionally, 360 ostraca are from Subterranean Complex No. 169 (SC 169). According to a preliminary survey, most of these ostraca and inscriptions bear names. Amongst them ca. 127 Aramaic ostraca are known, most of the inscriptions in this group are fragmentary; some of them bear only a few words.[40] The study of this collection was first done by Esther Eshel jointly with Rivka Eltizur-Leiman and it seems to be the case the corpus is now being prepared for publication by Esther Eshel and Michael Langlois. While the specific set of ostraca is paleographically dated to the third or second century BCE.

However, based on further – as yet unpublished – evidence, there seems to be good grounds to question these conclusions. From a discussion with my colleague, Dalit Regev (Israel Antiquities Authorities), it seems quite possible that some (if not the majority) of the inscriptions date from the late Persian period. This is especially the case for the unpublished Aramaic inscriptions found directly at the tell based on their stratigraphic contexts.[41] In addition, the script, writing style and language use of some of the ostraca from Maresha that are generally attributed to the Hellenistic period, has some striking similarities to the Corpus of the unprovenanced ostraca from the 4th century BCE. At least three cases are already known where an ostracon from Maresha (no. 6; no. 12; no. 64) seems to have been written by the same scribe as another Idumean ostracon from the unprovenanced corpus of the 4th century BCE.[42] My suggestion is that at least some of the Aramaic ostraca from Maresha not only stem from the late Persian period but also, that at least some of the unprovenanced ostraca stem originally from Maresha, probably dug up in illegal excavations.

Even more relations between the unprovenanced corpus and the Maresha corpus can be traced in the onomasticon of the "Maresha" Aramaic ostraca. It corresponds in large parts to the findings from the unprovenanced ostraca at Idumea, which clearly date to the late Persian period. For example, the names in the Aramaic corpus from the above-mentioned SC 57 and SC 169 are quite similar

**38** Eshel, "Iron Age, Phoenician and Aramaic Inscriptions."

**39** See e.g., Eshel, "Iron Age, Phoenician and Aramaic Inscriptions," 77.

**40** See for a recent treatment of a few of these inscriptions Eshel, Langlois, and Geller, "The Aramaic Divination Texts."

**41** While these are not yet published, I was given the opportunity to look into the unpublished materials in 2023.

**42** TAO *1*, xvii, xliv, xxxvi.

to those represented in the unprovenanced "Late Persian" corpus, that is usually attributed to Maqqedah. It includes many "Edomite" names, such as *qwsbnh, qwsgbr* or *'bdqws*, but also Arabic names such as *whb'l* and *zbd'dh* – as in the Maqqedah-corpus, this makes the vast majority of the names. There are also possible Hebrew names such as Kalkol, Tanḥum and the clearly "Yahwistic" names Azariah and Shemaiah. There is very little evidence (again, as in the unprovenanced corpus) of Babylonian names (only one possible name; "Nabu ben *zbd*"). A study is currently in planning on our part to further advance the question of Persian-period dating of these ostraca. The great advantage of these ostraca, from our point of view, is that they were found in scientifically controlled excavations. We see here a great chance to make further statements about the origin of the remaining Idumea ostraca by paleographic but also content-related comparisons with the unprovenanced text corpus. Last but not least, there is the question of where the administrative center of Idumea may have been in the Persian period. The place name "Maqqedah" – usually spelled *mnqdh*[43] – is recorded more than seventy times in the corpus of the unprovenanced ostraca,[44] which supports the identification of Khirbet el-Kôm – the place believed to be the source of the ostraca – with the biblical city of Maqqedah.[45] The entirely logical conclusion from this finding is that Maqqedah was the administrative center of the province during this period. If, however, it turns out that the Maresha Ostraca are connected with the rest of the corpus (or with parts of it), it cannot be excluded that many of these Ostraca originate from Maresha, which was the administrative and economic center of the province from Hellenistic times onwards. The question, then, is whether Maresha could have had a comparable function already in the late Persian period, which at least cannot be ruled out, and is even quite probable. Mareshah is the only major city in Idumea in

**43** The expected spelling *mqdh* appears only rarely in the findings. For a fresh explanation of the surprising addition of the *nun* (traditionally understood as a preservation of the original Hebrew root *nqd* "sheeptender," the assumption then is, that the geminated *qof* in Maqqedah is the consequence of the assimilation of this original nun. The problem however with this explanation: already in older biblical traditions and inscriptions from the First Temple period the proper name in the spelling *mqdh* appears (for the inscriptions see Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 166–168, 180–181); why should Idumeans have used – centuries later – the assumed original *nun*-form?) see Vainstub, and Fabian, "An Idumean Ostracon From Ḥorvat Naḥal Yatir," 210–211. Clusters of double consonants as *qq* tend to dissimilate, leading to a new consonant being added.
**44** See, e.g. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy,* 112–113.
**45** This identification was initially proposed by Dorsey ("The Location of Biblical Makkedah") and was then further supported by additional ostraca from the unprovenanced ostraca corpus. On the discussion of the various proposals of Maqqedah see Porten and Yardeni, "Maqqedah and the Storehouse in the Idumean Ostraca."

which extensive modern excavations have uncovered remains that represent a *continuum* from the late Persian period into the early Hellenistic period. If this holds true, then Maresha may as well be the place of the storehouse mentioned in the unprovenanced corpus (*msknt*).[46] While this storehouse is sometimes mentioned together with the placename "Maqqedah," this is not always the case. One may not exclude the possibility for another storehouse in Maresha. The probable function of these storehouse was probably collecting taxes. This would strongly suggest that already in the late Persian period Maresha was the major political and mercantile hub in the region. This is also suggested by the archaeological evidence from the site itself. While the evidence reveals little activity from during the 6th and 5th century BCE, things begin to change by the late Persian period. Aramaic ostraca, aniconic *kernos* lamps and numerous figurines such as horse and rider figurines and pillar figurines, testify to renewed settlement from the Late Persian to the Hellenistic period.[47]

## Analysis of the "Yahwistic" Anthroponyms within the Idumean Onomasticon

The names in the ostraca by which the inhabitants of Persian period Idumea called themselves and their children are an important window into their identities. The corpus of the unprovenanced ostraca provides a solid data basis due to the publication quality, on which will be focused in the following.[48] So far about 560 different anthroponyms are recorded in the Idumean corpus. By far the largest groups of anthroponyms can be attributed to either the "Edomite" cultural sphere (for which the theophoric element *qws* is the exclusive indicator – the main Edomite deity) or an Arabic context. Each of these anthroponym-groups make about ca. 33 % of the overall evidence. The next-largest group are the Judean – or, in my terminology (as stated above) "Yahwistic" names (mostly Tetragrammatic). It is important here to be aware that while names with "Yahwistic" and/or Tetragrammatic elements likely (but not necessarily) indicate the presence of individuals of Yahwistic belief, one cannot immediately assume that this also indicates individuals who were formerly Judean that remained in this primarily "ex-Judean"-territory. We simply are not sure how the Idumean people construct-

**46** See, e.g., Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy,* 204–216; and more generally on the taxation system in Idumea during the Persian period, see Edelman, "Economic and Administrative Realia."

**47** See Stern, "The Evolution of an Edomite/Idumean Identity," 99–113 for an overview.

**48** See for a recent but still preliminary treatment of the onomastic material from the unprovenanced corpus, Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 178–297.

ed the own self-identification (the Yahwists in this region could potentially understand themselves as Idumeans not as Judeans, simply for the fact that they were living now in the province of Idumea), thus "Yahwists" seems to be more appropriate. The number of clearly identifiable Phoenico or Philistine names lags far behind the Yahwistic ones. They contain popular Egyptian theonyms as theophorous elements. The number of purely Egyptian anthroponyms is very low and that of Greek and Iranian names is negligible.[49]

After this rough assessment of the onomasticon, which is based primarily on certain linguistic markers – Ran Zadok's preliminary study, published in 2021, stands out from the previous ones in methodological quality in this regard, as he steers clear of overly broad speculations about ethnic and political affiliations and tries to work out neat linguistic criteria – the theophoric names are in some ways somewhat more revealing. The fundamental assessment underlying the consideration of the theophoric onomasticon is that the bearers of these names or their eponyms mark persons as members of a particular community of shared *cultic ideologies* or *affiliations*.[50] These names indicate that members of a specific community or group had expressed a feature of their cultural perspectives or a social affiliation through the often highly intentional act of assigning names.[51]

One must be very cautious, however. While the presence of theophoric names within a larger name-corpus is often taken as indicators of one's "cultural," "national" or "ethnic" origins, these concepts too often are inappropriately applied to ancient contexts, as has been convincingly demonstrated by Bruce Routledge.[52] Ancient communities were much less homogenous than is usually assumed. The equation of certain (assumed and clearly distinguishable) identities often risks being too artificial. Especially within the Idumea Corpus it is quite evident that cultural diversity and permeability has to be taken in consideration. For example, not all *qws*-names indicate that its name-bearer is a Qos-worshipper or part of the "Edomite" community. Similarly, theophoric elements do not necessarily indicate that an individual or community worshipped *this deity* solely, as opposed to worshipping this deity as one among many deities. It will be shown in the following section (section 2) that the cases are more complex, especially as within the names theographic elements are mixed with certain linguistic markers usually attributed to other cultural identities (in the case of *qws*-names with Arabic or Aramaic name-elements); and especially from the study of clan-affiliations with

**49** For this, see the detailed overview and list of percentages and absolute numbers in Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 193–205.

**50** Nyström, "Names and Meaning."

**51** Zadok, "Names and Naming."

**52** Routledge, "The Antiquity of the Nation."

their remarkable intermixing of various cultural and religious traits, it is immediately visible, that one has to be very careful in his presumption on identities. With these methodological considerations in mind at least a few observations can – with some confidence – be drawn from the pure percentage of distribution of the theophoric elements: the theophoric names from this corpus has 227 names in total.[53] The Edomite deity *Qws* (28,63 % of all theophoric names), *ʾl* (24,66 % of all theophoric names), *Bʿl* (12,77 % of all theophoric names) is followed by the *Yhw*-theophoric element with a percentage of 9,25 % (21 names in total). The other deities are far behind with not even 2 % or less than 1 % of the evidence.

When the theophoric element is in the initial position of the anthroponym, it is always written as *Yhw,* for example *Yhwʿnh*[54] or *Yhwʿqb* (IA 12437 = ISAP 849). In the final position, however, it shows some variation: the most common spelling is *-yh*, as in, for example, *Ḥnnyh*,[55] or *Ṭwbyh*,[56] and its interchanging version *-yw,* as in *Ḥnnyw*[57] or *Ṭbyw*[58] (the name might be homonymous with the *Ṭwbyh).* The form *-yhw* is attested in *ʿbdyhw*[59] and *Yrmyhw.*[60]

If we look at the Maresha-corpus, a comparable situation regarding the percentages of theophoric elements arises. Esti Eshel records twelve *qws*-names, seven *Bʿl*-names, four with *ʾl*, and three with *Yw* or *Yh* in the evidence that she reviewed from the 1989–2000 excavation seasons at Maresha:[61] *Yw'[b]* (or *Yw'[š]*), *ʿbdyw* and *Ṭbyw* and *Šmryh*. The only notable exception in comparison to the corpus of the unprovenanced ostraca is the name *Yw'[b]* (or *Yw'[š]*) with the abbreviated version *yw* in the initial position.

Furthermore, if the suggested reading on the small incense altar from the Persian period is correct, there is the attestation of another Yahwistic name (*mḥlyh*) from a different context (that is, other than from Maresha or Maqqedah). The altar was found in Cave 534 southwest of the city gate.[62]

It is also remarkable that the distribution of anthroponyms is uneven if one looks at the various sites. As Ian Stern had already pointed out in an early publi-

**53** I am referring here to the list of theophoric names, arranged by percentage in Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 207–208.
**54** *TAO I*, 327.
**55** Lemaire, *Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée II*, 365.
**56** Yardeni, *The Jeselsohn Collection,* 681.702–703.
**57** Eph'al and Naveh, *Aramaic Ostraca,* 200.
**58** Eph'al and Naveh, *Aramaic Ostraca,* 201.
**59** *TAO III*, 593.
**60** Yardeni, *The Jeselsohn Collection, 683b.*
**61** Eshel, "The Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician Script," 35–88.
**62** Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 226, no. 534, pls. 49.3 and 68.1. See also below section 4.

cation on "Idumean identity,"[63] in Arad, for example, the percentage of names is 61.22 % Yahwistic (i.e., "Judahites" in Stern's terminology), 14.30 % Idumean (his terminology; he means names with the theophoric element *qws*), and 12.24 % Arabian names. What is remarkable here is the fact, that in Arad most of the "officers" had Yahwistic names, while most of the people to whom the supplies were given had Arabic names. Following these observations, Esti Eshel has speculated that – as she terms the group – "Jews" made up a significant part of the troops in Arad, commanded by the Qedarites in the area.[64] In Beer-sheba, the situation is different: 42.62 % had Arabian names, 24.59 % Idumean, and less than 20 % Yahwistic names.

## 2 Yahwistic Individuals in Cultural Proximity with Other Groups in Idumea

The following section will look at the larger picture and ask in which cultural context the Yahwistic names appear. As already stated above, we have to be cautious not to risk attributing too artificial identity concepts to these ancient societies. The cultural, social and ideological borders in Idumea are especially blurred, a fact that is easily overlooked when it is suggested that "Edomite," "Arab" and/or "Yahwistic" groups coexisted within Idumea. The reality is much more complex as a variety of cultural backgrounds appear to be mixed within the same name. Most of the theophorous names are a compound of a deity and a verb or noun, especially those with the element *qws* – such as Natanqos ("Qos gave") or Qosrim ("Qos is exalted") have counterparts from the – in my term – "Yahwstic" names that are mainly also attested in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Natanel ("God gave") or Yehoram ("Yaho is exalted"). Others (but few) display Arabian influence with the theophoric element *qws*, e.g., Qosghayr ("Qos is jealous") or Qosḥair ("Qos is good").[65] Porten/Yardeni also list in their critical edition some 70 predicative elements *that are shared* by the "Yahwistic" and the "Idumean"/"Edomite" theophorous names. Porten/Yardeni here even speak of a – in their terms – "Judeo-Idumean piety."[66] It is not clear, however, what further conclusion they might draw from this finding. They seem to never really follow up to this conclusion.

**63** Stern, "The Population of the Persian-Period Idumea," 212–213.
**64** Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Arad," 167.
**65** On these see *TAO I*, xx.
**66** *TAO I*, xx.

Additionally, in terms of the contexts of these individuals visible in the onomasticon, the clan lists of the (unprovenanced) Idumea Ostraca are very interesting and have been pertinently studied by Bezalel Porten, Ada Yardeni, and André Lemaire,[67] among others. It has been observed that many of the individuals mentioned in the ostraca are defined by their connection to a family, clan, or tribe. Some 230 individuals in the corpus have been identified by filiation to a clan. Porten in particular has undertaken tracing the "dossiers" (his terminology) of several clans over several generations that he constructed through the relationships visible in the various ostraca. These are the clans of Qosḥanan, of Yehokal, of Qoṣi, of Gur, of Ḥori, of Rawi, of Albaʿal and of Baʿalrim.[68] These clan-list give an excellent window into the society of Idumea in the fourth century BCE. Remarkable is the level of *cultural fluidity* that is tangible within the generation lists with a substantial amount of flexibility and *intermixing between* the different "ethnic groups." If one, for example, looks at the members of the clan of "Gur," through the generations 31 % had Arabic names, while another 31 % had Edomite/Idumean (that is: names with the theophoric element *qws*) names. Half the members of the Baʿalrim family – the name of the clan leader/founder is of Phoenician origin – had Arabic names, almost 25 % had *qws*-names (and were thus of potential Edomite or Idumean origin), one was Egyptian, and only one was Phoenician.[69]

Remarkable in this context is the clan Yehokal (see Fig. 1 below).[70] Judging from the name, which according to many scholars is a composite name with the theophoric element *yhw*,[71] the progenitor of the family was presumably of a Yahwistic context. Yet, all following generations have, without any exception *non-Yahwistic names*: Qosyinqom, Qoslanṣur, Qosner, Qosʿaz, Qosʿayr, as well as several Arabic, two Egyptian and one Aramean.[72]

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**67** Porten and Yardeni, "The House of Baalrim"; *TAO 1*: Here are all clan dossiers assembled; see also Stern, "The Population of the Persian-Period," 217–218; Lemaire, *Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée*, 145; Eph'al and Naveh, *Aramaic Ostraca*, 15.

**68** The names are variable in spelling within the ostraca corpus, see Porten and Yardeni, "The House of Baalrim."

**69** For both cases see also Stern, "The Population of the Persian-Period," 216–221.

**70** All related ostraca can be found in the "Yehokal Dossier" (A5.1–20) in *TAO 1*, 313–362.

**71** Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy,* 424, holds that the Yahwistic name Yehokal (Yaho is able, has power) is already mentioned in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 37:3; cf 38:1: יְהוּכָל). In the "clan-dossiers", the name Yehokal has five spellings – full: יהוכל that appears most frequently (A5.1–2, 4–8, 10–11, 14–16, 18–20), defective: יהכל (A5.12–13), abbreviated: one יוכל (A5.9), phonetic: יאכל (A5.17), and the unique יואכל (Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Arad" = ISAP2136). The name appears on four Hebrew seals, bullae, and jar impressions and thrice is affiliated with a Yahwistic theophorous name (cf. also *TAO 1*, 222).

**72** *TAO 1*, 222–224.

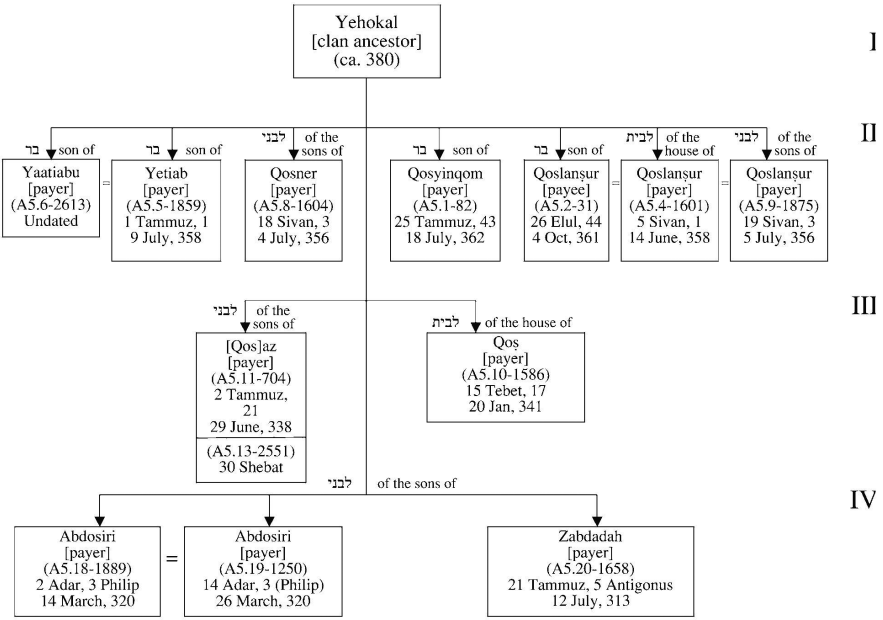


**Fig. 1:** The Four Generations of the Clan of Yehokal, after Porten and Yardeni, *TAO I*, 223.

One might deduce from this finding that a family of possibly Judean origin found its last representative with Yehokal. The subsequent generations already adapted to the cultural majority. All these clan lists show that cultural borders were rather fluid or low. However, it would be problematic to deduce from this finding that only the generation of the progenitor Yehokal was still Yahwistic, after which one tended towards Qos or another religion – syncretism or acculturation is the term often used for this phenomenon in research.[73] In view of the overall findings in Idumea, however, this term seems to me to be out of place.

Of further interest is the evidence of a *beth yaho*, a temple of Yaho, on one of the Idumean Ostraca (for the detailed discussion of this ostracon see below). If the reading is correct (and the more damaged part in the same line would not

**73** See, for instance, Stern, "The Population of the Persian-Period," 216–221. In his words (p. 218): "The onomastic statistics from our database indicate a clear Idumean dominance and it appears reasonable to assume that Ye[ho]kal was a Judahite who was in the process of acculturation into the more dominant Idumean society." Cf. also Porten and Yardeni: "The authors ask whether this is an isolated case of a Jew settled in the midst of pagan Idumeans who gave his children the names of his neighbors or must we understand the Idumean name differently from its Hebrew homonym?" (Porten and Yardeni, "In Preparation of a Corpus of Aramaic Ostraca," 212.

read "the ruins of" the *beth yaho*), this would mean that there was a temple of Yaho in Idumea, possibly situated in Maqqedah or even in Maresha (for this see my arguments below) – this all suggests that at least some Yahwists, potentially ex-Judahites in the area of Idumea remained of Yahwistic belief by the 4th century BCE – thus, even in the 4th century, the Yaho faith had not simply been replaced by a Qos-faith (or the like), and the majority of the inhabitants had become "Edomites" or "Idumeans," so to speak, from "Judahites." One could also put it differently: Yahwism did not share the "streamlined monotheistic, aniconic form" as in Jerusalem (and probably also at Mount Garizim), but was more diverse, with several cultural and religious overlaps with the neighboring cultures and religions in Idumea. Especially since one can never completely exclude the possibility that (such as in the case of Yehokal's clan) qos-containing names of successor generations were used somewhat interchangeably, wherein Yaho, the highest god of the Judeans, was simply translated to the local context wherein the name Qos was more readily understood to be the highest god. Anyway, it remains striking to find so many *qws*-anthroponyms in a Yahwistic clan, even if one is unable to offer a definite solution.

Additionally, there is at least one Judeo-Edomite/Idumean mixed filiation in the evidence of the corpus of unprovenanced ostraca, where Qos and Yaho are also placed in very close proximity: *Qwsytb* son of *Ḥnnyh*.[74]

One may add here also a rather strange name from the biblical corpus: the name Kushaiah (קושיהו); according to the biblical tradition he is father of Ethan, a Merarite Levite who accompanies the ark of God on its return to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:17). Strangely enough, this name may include both, the theophoric element *qws* as well as *yhw*, and the name would better be rendered as "Qosyah": "Qos is YHWH."[75] As is immediately evident, most scholars would reject this understanding on the grounds that Qos is supposedly never spelled with ש but with a ס. Yet, against this speaks the fact that the name *qsmlk* is written in at least one text as *qšmlk* (see Heshbon ostracon A6; late sixth century BCE).[76]

All this evidence together immediately raises the question of the cultural proximity of Qos and Yahweh during the Iron Age. And with good reasons, because after all it is conspicuous that Qos is one of the few non-Israelite deities that is not represented negatively in the biblical traditions. In addition, there are the religious-historical considerations of a common origin of Yahweh and Qos as

**74** Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 119–120.

**75** As Tebes has pointed out, this possibility was raised by Vriezen (original text: "Quš is Jahu"); yet, Vriezen found syncretistic compound names "virtually impossible;" Vriezen, "The Edomitic Deity Qaus," on Kushaiah and the citation from pages 352–353.

**76** On the spelling differences see Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook*, 90–93.

weather deities. As well as the affinity of Yahweh from his origins to Edom (see Kuntillet Ajrud). The mentioning of "YHWH of Teman," as attested in the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud (early eighth century BCE), may point to a close relationship of both deities. However, this depends on whether Teman designates a region or city in Iron Age Edom, as can be argued from the biblical evidence (Jer 49:7, 20; Ezek 25:13; Am 1:11 f.; Obad 8 f.; Hab 3:3). Yet, it has long been presumed that the deity YHWH should be associated with the presence of Shasu nomads in the southern borderlands.[77] Some of the Shasu nomads are also connected in Egyptian texts of the fourteenth/thirteenth centuries BCE with the regions of "Seir" and "Edom." This has, among other reasons, led some scholars to conclude that the Edomites were originally worshippers of YHWH and only "adopted" Qos/Qaus after the establishment of their monarchy.[78] While the cultural interaction between YHWH and Qos/Qaus in the Iron Age is still a matter of heavy debate, I would argue that the Idumean evidence from the Persian and Hellenistic periods shows an interesting fusion of "Edomite" and "Yahwistic" elements.

This also means that the individuals of the clan Yehokal may have understood themselves as Yahwists – despite the Qos-containing names of individuals. Yahwistic identity is not limited to Yahwistic or biblical names as such in this multicultural, ethnically fluid society.

## 3 The *beth yaho* in Idumea: A Yahwistic Temple in Maqqedah or Marissa – or "in Ruins" since the Late Iron IIC?

In 2002, André Lemaire published an ostracon dating to the fourth century BCE (see Fig. 2 below). The Ostracon, like most of the Idumea Ostraca, unfortunately comes from the antiques market and is therefore unprovenanced. Due to its paleographic references to the rest of the corpus, however, it undoubtedly belongs to the Idumea Ostraca of the 4th century. In 2015, Lemaire presented his most-recent reading of the ostracon,[79] applying several changes in reaction to critical remarks on his readings and reconstructions of the text by Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni.[80] The ostracon has now also been included in the final fifth volume

**77** See Leuenberger, "YHWH's Provenance from the South," for discussion of the relevant texts.
**78** See, e.g., Knauf, "Qôs," esp. 677; see Amzallag, *Esau in Jerusalem*, 39–47.
**79** See Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 118–119 (with fig. 3.25).
**80** See e.g. Porten and Yardeni. "Why the Unprovenienced Idumean Ostraca Should be Published," 87 fig. 8, with page 77; Porten and Yardeni, "The House of Baalrim," 142 fig. 21, with page 112–113; *TAO 1*, liii fig. 40, and page xxi.

of the Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea (TAO)-series (under H.1.1).[81] The ostracon reads as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1: תלא[יז] תחת מן בית עזא | 1: The hill/ruin that is under the house/temple of ʿUzza |
| 2: וחיבלא זי בית יהו | 2: and the rope/portion/ruin of the house/temple of Yaho |
| 3: זבדנבו רפידא זי בטנא | 3: ..., the terrace of the terebinth, |
| 4: ברא משכו כפר גלגול | 4: ..., the tomb of Gilgul, |
| 5: רקק זי לות כפר | 5: the sheet of water *of the monumental tomb* |
| 6: כפר ינקם | 6: the tomb of Yinqom. |

*(Aramaic Ostracon AL 283 = ISAP 1283, 4th century BCE)*[82]

**Fig. 2:** Aramaic Ostracon AL 283 = ISAP 1283, mentioning BYT YHW at the end of line 2; photograph with friendly permission of A. Lemaire from Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 118.

**81** *TAO V*, 21–22.

**82** Text and translation after Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 118–119. *Editio princeps*: Lemaire, *Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée II*, text 283, table XLVIII, 149–156 (= AL 283).

The contents of this ostracon can best be described as a cadastral record where microtoponyms referring to several locales are enumerated. Since the hill (line 1) was located below the two temples mentioned in lines 1 and 2, it is clear that these two were located at a high(er) point of the location. The mention of the temple of the well-known North Arabic goddess al-ʿUzza (line 1) accords with the importance of the Arabic "elements" in the other Idumean ostraca.

What is surprising here, however, is the fact that this widespread deity does not appear in the stock of anthroponyms of the Idumean Ostraca. In my opinion, this raises at least two urgent questions:

1. What can actually be learned about the culture, ancestry, religion of the name-bearers or name-givers by the onomastic analysis of the anthroponyms? Without the epigraphic evidence, nothing could have been said about these references in Idumea from the pure onomastic evidence.
2. Is the temple of al-Uzza possibly not connected with the "mainstream" Idumean population (majority Edomite or Arab) at all? It is possibly a sanctuary of other Arabic groups and merchants who trade through the region? A similar phenomenon is known about a recently discovered precinct, which, however, dates to Hellenistic times, but is located not far from Mareshah: Ḥorvat ʿAmuda (4 km southeast of Maresha; 3rd/2nd centuries BCE)[83] is interpreted in parts as a sanctuary, but clearly shows cultural influences from (not North, but) South Arabia, more precisely: from Yemen. The classification of this site within the Idumean find is not yet fully clarified, but here, too, the interpretation that it is a sanctuary of merchant travelers is suggested. In the onomastic finding (again) one does not see these references to south Arabia.

Remarkable in this ostracon is the mentioning of a בית יהו in line 2. The reading of this expression is unquestionable. The spelling of the divine name as יהו does not correspond to the expected Judean יהוה, but rather to the form regularly attested in the Elephantine documents (alongside occasional uses of יהה in the ostraca, following the Lozachmeur publications[84]).

The decisive factor is the reading and interpretation of the set of letters immediately before in the same line. The term חיבלא is enigmatic, but it can be interpreted as "length of a rope"/"portion of a field" (Hebrew *ḥbl I, GESENIUS s. v.)* or "ruin" (from the root *ḥbl*$_1$, DNWSI s. v.: "to damage," "to ruin"). The latter interpretation has been favored by Porten/Yardeni in their recent edition of the ostracon.[85] If this would hold true, and a ruined Yahwistic temple is mentioned

**83** Haber, Gutfeld, and Betzer. "A Monumental Hellenistic-Period Ritual Compound."
**84** Within the Elephantine papyri corpus, יהה is attested only in TAD B2.7:14 (also B3.3:2).
**85** *TAO V*, 21–22.

in the document, this immediately raises the question of when the temple was destroyed. One explanation that has been suggested is to connect the temple of Yahu with a pre-exilic temple in the region – Ran Zadok even speculates about a pre-Josian Judean temple.[86] To me this explanation seems not all too convincing. On the one hand it presupposes the immediate historicity of the cult centralization and cult purification under Josiah mentioned only in the Hebrew Bible (2 Kings 23–24) – that this so-called reform is far more complex in historical, religious-historical and literary-historical perspectives has to be considered in a much more differentiated way has already been shown by many studies.[87] On the other hand, why must a ruin of a temple, which is mentioned on an ostracon from the middle of the 4th century B.C., date to the 7th century? A scenario of a damaged temple (e.g., by fire) from the Persian period would also be conceivable.

Interpretating the phrase חיבלא as "portion" (of a land) becomes more plausible if one considers the character of the document as a cadastral and that the בית יהו is mentioned in perfect parallel with the (active temple) בית עזא in line 1.[88] Accordingly, it is an active Yaho-sanctuary in late Persian times in the province of Idumea. This is only surprising if one looks at it with the biblical template of cult centralization (especially Deut 12) in view: historically, however, several Jaho-sanctuaries dating to Persian and also Hellenistic periods outside Judah have been known for quite some time now (one may especially consider the sanctuaries of Mt. Gerizim and at Elephantine[89]).

Furthermore, it is not evident that these sanctuaries were in rivalry with the supposed center of Yahwism in Jerusalem (for the Persian period, this is merely part of the religious reinterpretation of this circumstance in certain scribal circles) – for Garizim[90] as well as for Elephantine,[91] the conflict-free contacts with Jerusalem have been described many times, especially for the Persian period. Accordingly, this can also be assumed for the temple in Idumea as a basic scenario of the religious-historical situation of Yahwism in Idumea.

But where is this sanctuary to be located? Most follow Lemaire's cautious suggestion[92] that it is Maqqedah.[93] However, it has to be said that the interpreta-

**86** See, most recently, Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 179.

**87** Cf. Pietsch, *Die Kultreform Josias*; Uehlinger, "Was There a Cult Reform."

**88** See also Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 219.

**89** For an overview and religious-historical contextualization of the various Yaho-sanctuaries in the post-exilic periods see Hensel, "Cult Centralization."

**90** See the comprehensive sketch of the relationship of Juda and Samaria in the Persian period: Hensel, "On the Relationship of Juda and Samaria," 19–42.

**91** See Edenburg, "Messaging Brothers in Distant Lands."

**92** Lemaire, *Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée II,* 223; cf. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy,* 118–119.

**93** See, e.g., Becking, "Temples across the Border."

tion towards Maqqedah is only based on the fact that the origin of the rest of the Idumea Ostraca are localized in Maqqedah – as already mentioned mainly because of the warehouses mentioned several times in the Ostraca and the locality Ma(n)qqedah. This is of course one possibility. Yet, in the light of my previous considerations on the Aramaic ostraca from Maresha, which possibly stem (this holds true at least for some of the material) from the 4th Century BCE, the temple might more likely be located in Maresha, the – as I interpret it – administrative center of the province of Idumea in the late Persian period (and beyond).

## 4 Lachish: Indications of Yahwistic Worship in the Persian Period?

Lachish is located on a major road leading from the Coastal Plain to the Hebron hills, bordering the Judean foothills (the Shephelah in the local idiom), some 30 km southeast of Ashkelon. The original British expedition led by Olga Tufnell discovered several areas of Late Persian and early Hellenistic Occupancy of the Tell. A Building Structure in the Residency,[94] was interpreted by the team as a Late Persian/Early Hellenistic temple, which they termed the "Solar Shrine" (see Fig. 3, below). Tufnell dated the establishment of the Lachish temple to the Persian period, while the pottery found inside stemmed from the second half of the second century BCE.[95]

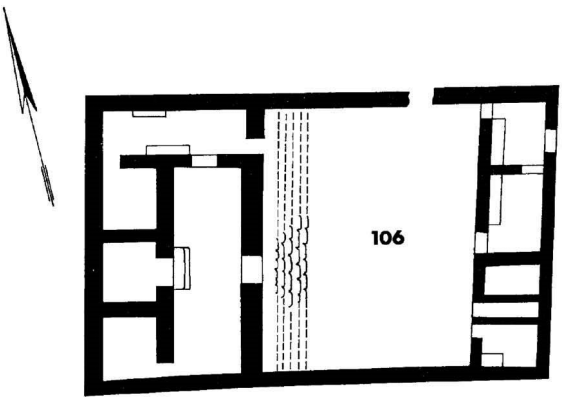


**Fig. 3:** Lachish, Solar Shrine (building 106), after Aharoni, *Lachish V*, 10 fig. 3.

**94** See Tufnell, *Lachish III*, pl. 119.
**95** Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 141–145.

When revisiting the site in the year 1966, Yohanan Aharoni related this temple to the Iron Age temple in Arad found during his excavationand related this temple to the Judean Iron Age temple in Arad found during its excavation because of supposed architectural parallels. Unlike Tufnell, however, he dates the temple around 200 BCE and does not see an earlier phase here.[96] Influenced by his findings at Arad, Aharoni attributed the Hellenistic-period cult at Lachish to descendants of the Judeans who remained in the area after its conquest by the Edomites following the fall of the Judean Kingdom in the 6th century BCE, and who continued to practice an existing Yahwistic tradition.[97]

The renewed excavation, led by David Ussishkin, have since shown that the question of Persian and Hellenistic settlement is far more complex – this is primarily due to the evaluation of the Pottery. Yet, Ussishkin also proposed an earlier, Persian-period phase of the Solar Shrine,[98] making it possible to think of a Persian period, Yahwistic Shrine in Lachish.[99] However, the recently published careful re-evaluation of the findings processed by Alexander Fantalkin and Oren Tal,[100] this building is the only one with a "secure Hellenistic date."[101] They analyzed and reinterpreted especially the stratigraphy and the pottery in the area, and additionally, none of the finds recovered *in* the Solar Shrine is of Persian date.

However, Fantalkin and Tal have pointed to the fact, that another building in this context (on the map: Grid Squares R/Q/S.15/16: 10–21) (see Fig. 4, below) holds well to an earlier dating, as suggested by Tufnell. Tufnell concluded from the findings in the room that it should be dated to the 4th and 3rd century BCE.[102] Aharoni concluded from this and further findings that this building served as the fourth- to third-century BCE forerunner of the Solar Shrine,[103] which is followed by Fantalkin/Tal.[104]

**96** Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish*, 9.

**97** Aharoni, "Trial Excavation," esp. 161–163.

**98** Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish*, 340–342.

**99** Ussishkin himself, however, interpreted the shrine in light of his reconstruction of the Solar Shrine as a cultic *Persian* governmental center (Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish,* 96–97).

**100** Fantalkin and Tal, "A Tale of Two Provinces." In more detail on the debate of the dating of the temple see also Tal, *The Archaeology of Hellenistic Palestine,* 68–71.

**101** Fantalkin and Tal, "A Tale of Two Provinces," 177–214, citation from page 184.

**102** Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 148.

**103** Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish*, 9–11, fig. 3.

**104** Fantalkin and Tal, "A Tale of Two Provinces," 184–185.

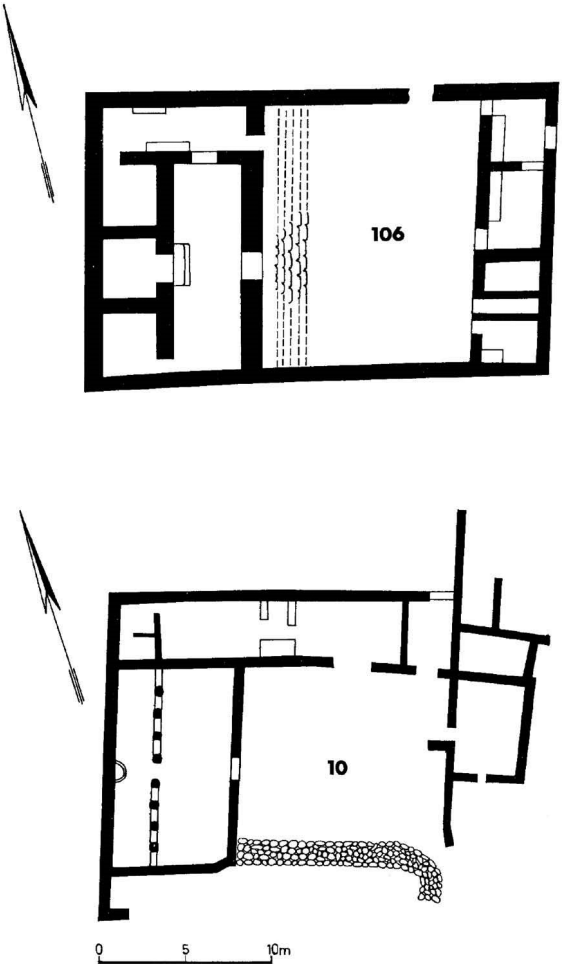


**Fig. 4:** Lachish, Solar Shrine (top) in context building below in Grid Squares R/Q/S.15/16: 10–21: the Solar shrine forerunner (Aharoni)?; figure from Aharoni, *Lachish V*, 10 fig. 3.

A dedication altar with a possible Yahwistic name incised upon it was found in Cave 534 southwest of the city gate.[105] The suggested reading is *mḥlyh* (see Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, below) – the anthroponym runs from the end of line 2 (*mḥ)* to the beginning of line 3 *(lyh).*

**105** Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 226, no. 534, pls. 49.3, 68.1; and see also 383–384; for its reading, see Dupont-Sommer, "Aramaic Inscription on an Altar"; Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish*, 5–7, fig. 1, with discussion.

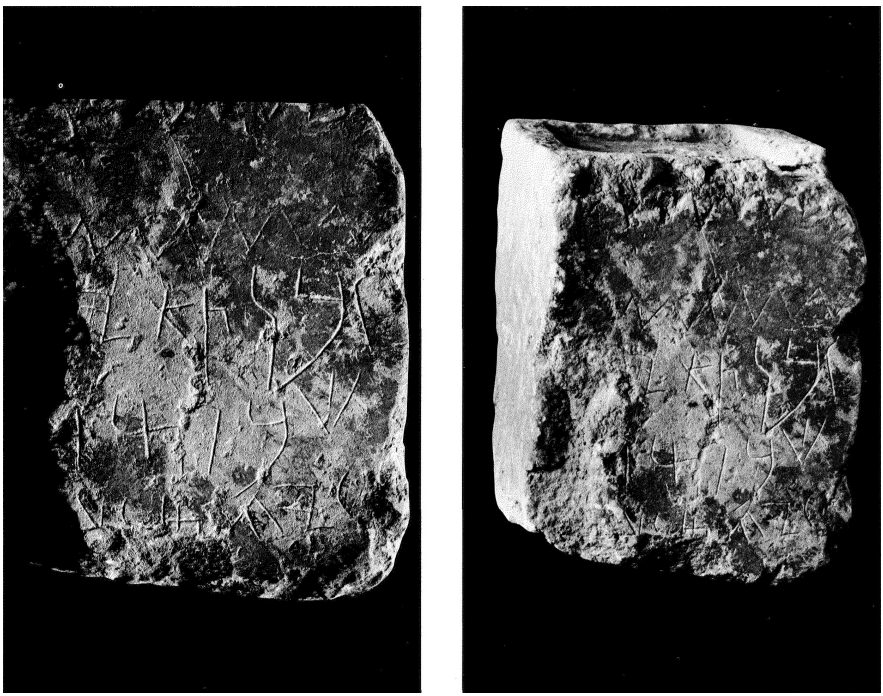

**Fig. 5:** Lachish; Yahwistic name incised upon dedication altar.

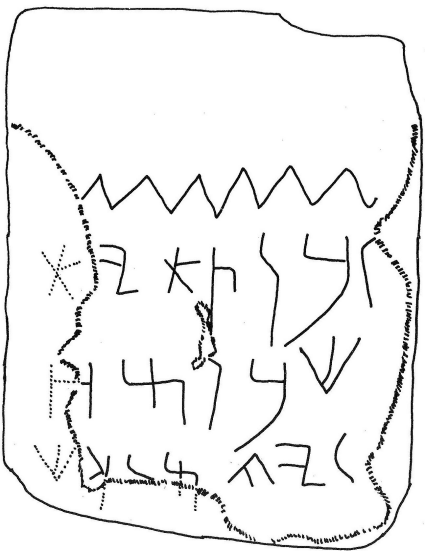

**Fig. 6:** Drawing of the inscription, figure from Aharoni, *Lachish V*, 6 fig. 1.

The whole inscription reads as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| *(1) lbnt'y* | (1) Incense altar of ʾIyy- |
| (2) *šbnmḥ* | (2) ōš, son of Maḥa- |
| (3) *lyhmlk[š]* | (3) lyah from Lachish. |

Reproduced here is the balanced reading of Rainer Degen, who has challenged the not unproblematic and since its publication much debated,[106] first reading of Dupont-Sommer (*Lachish III*). The understanding of line 3 is particularly contested: the suggestions range from, amongst others, *lyh mr' [šmy']* "to YH, Lord of the Heaven" (A. Dupont-Sommer) to *lyh mlk[š]* "Maḥliyah from Lachish" (Aharoni and Degen, amongst others) and *ly hmlk* "Maḥlay, the king" (Lemaire[107]). Lemaire's proposal clearly does not see a Yahwistic element here and interprets the *h* as an article for the following substantive with the suggested reading *mlk* ("king"). One argument for Lemaire's reading is certainly that he does not need to add a letter to the end of line 3. In his opinion, no final letter at the end of the line has broken away here. I was not able to check the inscription again in the original, however, it seems to me from the inspection of the photos nevertheless probable that at the breaking line of the inscription (very clearly to see at the final letter at the end of line 2) also in line 3 still another letter must have followed. This would not make it impossible to read "Lachish" and to understand the *h* as part of the proper name previously provided, which would thus clearly be a Yahwistic one.

The altar formed part of an assemblage found in a number of caves south-west of the city gate (506, 515, 522, 534)[108] and was probably cultic in nature. The existence of a Yahwistic name on such an altar at least allows the conclusion that at least from Hellenistic times the installation was used as a place of Yahwistic activity.

Rüdiger Schmitt and others have recently raised the idea that also the Persian-period figurines, that were found outside the borders of Yehud and especially at Lachish[109] could have been used by the Yahwists in or around Lachish.[110] It

**106** For the discussion see Degen, "Der Räucheraltar aus Lachisch," 40–45.

**107** See, most recently, Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 100, building on his earlier reading from 1974 in *Revue Biblique* 81.

**108** Cf. Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 220–221.224–226.

**109** See Tufnell, *Lachish III*, 142–144.

**110** See Schmitt, "Continuity and Change," esp. 101. and Negbi, *A Deposit of Terracottas and Statuettes*, 1, n. 5 attributes the Persian figurines and the chalk altars found in the south-west of the site to the Solar Shrine.

has to be said, however, that only one Persian horserider figurine was found actually *in* the Solar Shrine, together with a few other figurines from both earlier and later periods.[111]

## 5 A Yehud/Yaho-Coin from Idumea? – a Methodological Remark

The finding to be discussed in the following is more of a methodological problem. It illustrates in its curiosity how the research tends to keep the material findings out of an adequate description of the history of religion and culture of early Judaism.

A famous and unique image of a late Persian coin (see Fig. 7 and 8, below) originating from Yehud depicts the governor Bagoas on the obverse,[112] and interestingly shows a deity sitting on a winged wheel on the reverse,[113] which is probably to be identified with YHWH based on its coin legend, traditionally read as יהד.[114] In the meantime Haim Gitler and Oren Tal have proposed the reading יהו, i.e., "Yaho," which is admittedly preferable, because in neo-Paleo-Hebrew writing the consonants ד and ו are very similar, so that the identification is clear. Such an explicit representation of YHWH is absolutely singular and remarkable for the Southern Levantine area, for Yehud (and Judah before) specifically.

However, it is now significant that Gitler/Tal almost reflexively *exclude* the find from the material evidence for *Yehud*, since – in their view – it has no room in the assumed purified and aniconic Yehud cult of the post-exilic period. With reference to other Yaho-sanctuaries in Samaria (Garizim) and Idumea (Maqqedah; see above) they state therefore the following:

> This could suggest that the production of this coin was carried out under Edomite Jews who disregarded the second commandment, or alternatively under Gentiles who consider YHWH as yet another deity of their cultic surface.[115]

**111** Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish*, pl. 18.

**112** See Barag, "Bagoas and the Coinage of Judea."

**113** Hill, *Catalogue of the Coins of Palestine*, XIX 29 and Meshorer and Qedar *Samarian Coinage*, 15.

**114** On the possible interpretations of the coin, cf. Niehr, "Götterbilder und Bilderverbot," esp. 243 as well as Blum, "Der 'Schiqquz Schomem'." Also Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, interprets the image as a YHWH-image.

**115** Gitler and Tal, *The Coinage of Philistia*, 230.

**Fig. 7:** A famous and unique coin image of a late Persian coin originating from Yehud; photograph with friendly permission of I. de Hulster from his publication de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis,* 196).

**Fig. 8:** Drawing by Izaak de Hulster, Göttingen, for the WiBiLex article "Yahweh" based on the original by Meshorer/Qedar, *Samarian Coinage*, 15.

Already because of the inscription and the context of the find ("Yehud") it is absurd to look for the minting authorities in Idumea. Especially since no minting activities are known for the entire Persian period – this is, among other things, an argument for those researchers who do not want to attribute a provincial status to Idumea for the Persian period.[116]

**116** See, e.g., Levin, "The Genesis of Idumea," 85–87.

Of course, the coins do not give any information about a possible group of deviant Yahwists in Idumea. Instead of immediately disqualifying the finding as "deviation," methodological caution must be exercised – as the findings for Idumea show. This coin gives just information about the complexity of the religion-sociological conditions in the Persian province of Yehud and is part of the complex religious-historical developments towards a radically persevered monotheism in later times.

## 6 Judeans, Judahites, Jews, Hebrews, Samaritans or Yahwists? – Idumean Yahwists or Simply: Idumeans!

The immediate question that arises is, how to term this group of people that is seemingly, within the larger context of the province of Idumea, oriented in cultic affairs to Jaho/YHWH? There is a great deal of disagreement in the research community about how to deal with the "Yahwists" who are believed to be identified via the onomasticon. Important research along this line of the onomastic evidence is connected with the names John R. Bartlett,[117] Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni,[118] Ran Zadok,[119] Amos Kloner, Ian Stern,[120] Esti Eshel,[121] Juan M. Tebes,[122] and Yigal Levin.[123] First of all, the linguistic criteria and the terminology of these criteria are very inconsistent and sometimes already very judgmental. Sometimes it creates the impression of an onomastic criteria catalog that can be clearly grasped and clearly delimited. On the other hand, the complexity of the situation, especially in Idumea, is shown by the above explanations. In any case, the following criteria are named. The various studies employ categories of "West Semitic," "Israelite," "Jewish," "Judean," "Judahite" or even "biblical" names – and this is only a selection of the terms used. Because the studies usually do not define

**117** Bartlett, "Edomites and Idumaeans."

**118** See esp. *TAO I,* 1–5.

**119** Zadok, "A Prosopography of Samaria and Edom/Idumea," 785–822; Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 178–297.

**120** Kloner and Stern, "Idumea in the Late Persian Period"; Stern, "Ethnic Identities."

**121** Eshel, "The Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician Script"; and Eshel, "Iron Age, Phoenician and Aramaic Inscriptions."

**122** Tebes, "Memories of Humiliation."

**123** Levin, "The Genesis of Idumea"; Levin, "The Formation of Idumean Identity"; Levin, "The Southern Frontier of Yehud," 239–252.

what precise linguistic considerations are behind the terminology, they seem to be misleading or at least imprecise. For instance, what would the criterium "Jewish names" as a linguistic category mean in a time period where Judaism is just starting to emerge and the differentiating identity markers (especially the existence of the Torah and its use in everyday life, is not yet a matter of debate).[124] As I have stated on several other occasions now (as have some others before), one should probably not speak about Judaism and Jewish as a religious terminology before the late 2nd/early 1st century, when we have clear indications of Judaism in Antiquity; before is a time of plurality in Yahwism (see my introduction).

The different terminological systems applied by the various studies may have their justification within the interpretative system of each respective researcher; but often solid linguistic criteria are mixed together with assumptions on "ethnic" and "political" identities; in many cases, however, above all the theophoric element is the only unambiguous criterion. From the variety of the criteria and their naming also derives the plurality of the description of this group: the studies speak with reference to the same (depending on their criteria: a roughly similar) group about "Judahites," "Judeans," "Hebrews," "Israelites" or "Jews"[125] – depending on how one correlates the different criteria also the percentage and strength of this group in the onomasticon differs, of course, and ranges from a minimum of 2 % "Yahwists" to 10 % (Ian Stern). Terms like "Judahites" or "Judeans" seem to also always imply their ancestry with the Judean kingdom of old, but which had – nevertheless – long gone (over 200 years) by the time the names are attested. Ran Zadok then discusses and then dismisses the possibility that the group could have been Samaritans – they were Judeans.[126]

With regard to the terminology of the group, I propose to leave these problematic terms, since they are loaded with many presuppositions, and to use instead – at least for the time being – the term "Yahwists." On the basis of the findings, we simply cannot yet make any statement about how exactly these "Yahwists" practiced their Yaho-cult or how they identified themselves. The fact that they still considered themselves Judeans and felt connected to the brothers and

**124** See for this Adler, *The Origins of Judaism*, esp. 189–221 and Cohen, *The Beginning of Jewishness.*

**125** See, for example, Notarius, "The Syntax of the Clan Names," 23: "many Edomite, Arabian, Aramaic, Canaanite (Phoenician) and Jewish names indicate ethnically, linguistically and culturally different groups that were in interaction at that period in the area of Southern Canaan." "Judeans": see e.g., Zadok, "Documentary Framework"; "Jews": Porten and Yardeni, *passim* in most of their works; "Judahite": see, e.g., Stern, "The Evolution of an Edomite/Idumean Identity," 101 and *passim.*

**126** Zadok, "Documentary Framework," 234.

sisters in the province of Yehud is a possible, but by no means exclusive, interpretative option.

In addition, there is the following further consideration: That the onomastic evidence has shown how complex the situation in Idumea is, especially in terms of cultural proximity and fluidity. What one can observe, especially in recent publications, is a terminological ambiguity that is, in my opinion, no less simplistic.

Unlike older studies (Bartlett, etc.), one tries – with good reasons – to avoid the category "Edomite" – for the obvious and correct reason that Edom has not existed as a political entity since 552. In its place, in more recent articles, the category of "Idumeans" is used with congruent meaning, especially in the studies of Kloner, Stern and Levin.[127] What is described with this terminological category are ultimately only names with the theophoric element *qws*.

In my opinion, this suggests far too strong a cultural distinction from the other groups – we have already seen how "Edomite"/"Idumean" and "Arabic" cultural traits can intertwine in the names. Above all, however, the category "Idumean" is here also completely inadmissibly restricted to the Qos-Worshippers. At the latest from the Zenon Papyri (3rd century) this province was known as Idumaea; as a geographical term it is already documented in Diodorus (312 BCE). We have already suggested above that there was probably already a Province Idumaea from the late Persian period. This means, nevertheless, that from the outside at least, this region and its inhabitants were known as "Idumeans." This is true for all inhabitants (or – if you subtract the passing traders: at least for most of them) and should not be limited to the Qos-worshippers alone. We simply do not know what the Idumeans – that is, according to my understanding: all the people living in Idumea– thought of themselves. Did they identify themselves as Idumeans in their own right, or did they instead consider themselves "refugees" from old Edom? Did they think of themselves as "natives"? Can we even think of them in terms of ethnicity? Is there cultural continuity from the Iron-Age Edomites to the people living west of the Arabah in the Persian and Hellenistic periods? In order to avoid already introducing too many hypothesis-rich presuppositions with the terminology, I advocate using the term "Idumeans" in a broad sense: the inhabitants of the province. Further linguistic markers, raised via the onomasticon, can then clarify their cultural background on a case-by-case basis – for example, affinity to Qos or affinity to Yaho, etc. Thus, I would plead for calling the Yahwists in the region first of all neutrally as "Idumeans." One must discuss, then, to what extent these (or their subgroups) had family-based ties to Yehud and whether they saw themselves as ex-Judahites. Forthwith, however, I suggest that

**127** See their articles quoted in this study.

these Idumeans be referred to as Idumean Yahwists. The geographical and political entity of Idumea is first of all (neutrally speaking) their primary frame of reference. I see the term as analogous to – as I have put it – Judean Yahwism (i.e., that of the province of Yehud) and "Samarian Yahwism" (i.e., that of the Persian province of Samaria).[128] The term "Idumean Yahwism" is clearly to be understood as a provisional term, because at this stage we simply know too little about the social structures and religious structures of the Yahwists in Idumea. The term, however, can claim to look at the group as neutrally as possible from the point of view of religious studies, without immediately bringing in categories such as "deviation" (from an imagined Jerusalem Orthodoxy) or an assumed exiled Judean tradition in Idumea. The Idumean Yahwism is to be studied within the context of the province of Idumea first and added to the panorama of Yahwism in the Persian period in general.

## 7 The Case of the Edomite-Judean Genealogies in Chronicles and Judean-Edomite Cultic Ties in Genesis 23

The thesis gains further support, I argue, when one turns to the biblical evidence. This can be shown most succinctly in the book of Chronicles, as will be expanded in the following. The origins of the Book of Chronicles can safely be dated with a majority of recent scholars to the 4th or 3rd century BCE[129] – I prefer the later date for reasons that need not to be discussed here.[130]

In its re-telling of the history of Judah, Chronicles sketches an independent conception of what the authors and later redactors envisioned "Israel" to be at the time of writing. This "biblical Israel"[131] of Chronicles is defined – especially

**128** See Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*.

**129** For a brief discussion of the dating see Nihan, "Cult Centralization and the Torah," esp. 259.

**130** The dating, in my view, hinges primarily on the strongly anti-Samaritan perspective of the Chronicles. This perspective develops in the transition from the 4th to the 3rd century B.C., see the following considerations Hensel, "Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles" and Hensel, "On the Relationship of Juda and Samaria."

**131** For the term see Kratz, "Where to put 'Biblical' Yahwism in Achaemenid Times?" in this volume. In contrast to Kratz, however, it seems appropriate to me to emphasize the plurality of identity constructions that claim to be "biblical Israel." The different concepts are quite different with regard to their factual, literary and theological profiling, thus excluding each other, and in my opinion are historically due to the fact that also historically a certain conception of Yahwistic identities can be found, with which authors, redactors and tradents of the biblical texts deal, see

at the beginning of the Book of Chronicles – primarily through genealogies. These clarify the origin, descent and cultural intertwining of this "Israel" in the context of an imagined mythical pre-past and within the southern Levant and its bordering nations. This definition of the nature of "Israel" may have some historical aspects, but it is above all one thing: the theology or ideology of the contemporary (late Persian, early Hellenistic) authors. Their conception of "Israel" is deduced from the past, grounded there and then given a Jerusalem-centric perspective.

It is not without reason that Chronicles begins with the so-called *Genealogische Vorhalle* (1 Chr 1–9) and defines here quite fundamentally "Israel" via a series of genealogical lists.

In view of Edom and/or Idumea the following is remarkable:

Not surprisingly, the Chronicler's genealogical introduction of the "people of Israel" (1 Chr 2:3–8:40) as such accords more coverage to Judah than to any other tribe in this context (1 Chr 2:3–8:40). The Chronicler clearly emphasizes that although Judah is not the firstborn of Israel, he is still entitled to leadership among his brothers over Reuben (the firstborn of Leah) and Joseph (the firstborn of Rachel). See, for instance, 1 Chr 5:2, the opening part of the genealogy of Ruben: כִּי יְהוּדָה גָּבַר בְּאֶחָיו וּלְנָגִיד מִמֶּנּוּ וְהַבְּכֹרָה לְיוֹסֵף ("though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the firstborn-right belonged to Joseph"). The mentioning of the leadership alludes of course to David's kingship, which encompassed all of the Israelite tribes (cf. 1 Sam 13:14; 25:30; Mic 5:1 et al.). This pivotal position of Judah is also the reason why in the presentation of the many groups that comprise – at least in the view of Chronicler – Israel, Judah's offspring is discussed first (1 Chr 2:3–4:23). The genealogy of Judah has received significant scholarly attention, and understandably so. Much of research is thereby focused on textual, source-critical, redactional and literary considerations as there are many problems in the text in its present form, which has been described as difficult, disorderly or incoherent.[132] Above all, however, historical questions of Judah's past are in the foreground for the research and whether the chronicler might not have had earlier "sources" at his disposal. Within the limitations of this article, this research cannot and need not be rehashed here; I leave it at this indication of the problem. However, whatever sources the Chronicler may have used, the crucial question, in my opinion, is what function such a genealogy may have fulfilled in late Persian or early Hellenistic times. Here, the substantial multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of Judah's genealogy is particularly striking. Not only are there clear connections to other Israelite tribes

on this Hensel, "Who Wrote the Bible," 11–23 and Hensel, "Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible," 1–44.

**132** For the discussion see, Japhet, *I & II Chronicles,* 73–127.

(Reuben 1 Chr 2:9; 4:1; Manasseh 1 Chr 2:21.22; Simeon 1 Chr 2:43; Benjamin 1 Chr 4:4), but especially striking are the connections to non-Israelites within the genealogy.[133] Here the connection to "Edom" stands out very clearly, especially as – and in contrast to the other non-Israelites – the "Edomites" are *made* Judahite. What do I mean by this? Chronicles presents genealogical lists *linking Judean and Edomite* families or clans through the repetition of eponymous ancestors and descendants from Esau in their literary reception of the Edomite genealogy Genesis 36. It is undoubtedly the case that the Chronicler is very clearly aware of the *text* of Edomite Genealogy in Gen 36 to which he alludes in his version of genealogies. The most striking case of genealogical overlap occurs with regard to Esau's grandson Qenaz (קְנַז), the son of Eliphaz in Genesis 36:11. This name also appears as one of the אַלּוּפֵי בְנֵי־עֵשָׂו in Genesis 36:15 and 42. These "Qenazzites" appear, on the one hand, in the Edomite genealogies in 1 Chr 1:35–54 (קְנַז in vv. 36, 53) – which is of course not surprising –, but, on the other hand, they also appear in the Judahite genealogy in 1 Chr 4:13–15 (בְּנֵי קְנַז). The Qenazzites are here not labeled as "sons of Esau" or "Edomites" or the like, they are simply presented as part of the *Judahite* genealogy, which is opened in 1 Chr 4:1 and stretches till 1 Chr 4:23.

1 Chr 4:1a.13–15:

[1] בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה

(...)

[13] וּבְנֵי קְנַז עָתְנִיאֵל וּשְׂרָיָה וּבְנֵי עָתְנִיאֵל חֲתַת: [14] ׀ וּמְעוֹנֹתַי הוֹלִיד אֶת־עָפְרָה וּשְׂרָיָה הוֹלִיד אֶת־יוֹאָב
אֲבִי גֵּיא חֲרָשִׁים כִּי חָרָשִׁים הָיוּ: פ [15] ׀ וּבְנֵי כָלֵב בֶּן־יְפֻנֶּה עִירוּ אֵלָה וְנַעַם וּבְנֵי אֵלָה וּקְנַז:

[1] The sons of Judah....

(...)

[13]The sons of Qenaz: Othniel and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai. [14]Meonothai fathered Ophrah; and Seraiah fathered Joab, the father of Ge-harashim, so-called because they were craftsmen. [15]The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam; and the son of Elah: Qenaz.

The Edomites of the literary source Gen 36:11, 15, 42 are by this re-labeled as *Judahites* – rather than that Edomites *became* part of the genealogy. This is, for example, the case in other parts of the Judahite genealogy, where it is clearly said that non-Israelites became part of the Judahite family via intermarriage.

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**133** For these see, instead of many, Knoppers, "Intermarriage, Social Complexity, and Ethnic Diversity," esp., 19–23.

Additionally, there is also a significant overlap between a number of the Jerahmeelite names like Onam (אוֹנָם) and Shammai (שַׁמַּי) (1 Chr 2:28), which are clearly part of the *Judahite* genealogy (1 Chr 2:3–4:23), and the names that appear in the Edomite genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1:35–54 and the Chronicler's *Vorlage*, in Genesis 36, cf. Genesis 36:13/1 Chronicles 1:35 (שַׁמָּה) and Genesis 36:23/1 Chronicles 1:40 (אוֹנָם). As in the case presented before, the literary "template" taken from the Edomite genealogy is presented as an Edomite or more generally speaking: *Foreign* element within the Judahite genealogy (as – again – in other cases of non-Israelites elements in the Judahite tribal system) – they are plainly presented as *Judahites* from the beginning.

1 Chr 2:3a.28:

[1] בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה
[28] וַיִּהְיוּ בְּנֵי־אוֹנָם שַׁמַּי וְיָדָע וּבְנֵי שַׁמַּי נָדָב וַאֲבִישׁוּר

[1] The sons of Judah…
(…)
[28] The sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur.

This phenomenon holds true for a variety of other names in the Judahite genealogies: Shobal (שׁוֹבָל), one of the descendants of Hur (1 Chr 2:50, 52) and the immediate son of Judah (1 Chr 4:1), appeared earlier as an Edomite in Genesis 36:20, 23, 29 (= 1 Chr 1:38, 40: שׁוֹבָל). Zerach (זֶרַח), whose name is an outstanding representant of the Edomite genealogy in Genesis 36:13, 17, 33 (cf. its mention within the Edomite genealogy in 1 Chr 1:37, 44), also appears in the list of descendants of Tamar (1 Chr 2:4, 6; cf. Gen 38:30), yet here as a Simeonite (1 Chr 4:24). On a narratological level, Zerah is clearly connected to Esau or Edom, not only on the level of genealogy (Gen 36), but also via allusions, as its name means "sunrise," which alludes to the color of "red" Edom (resp. Esau or Seir). This, via several wordplays, is narratologically connected with Genesis (see esp. Gen 25:30), which plays on the phonetical and written similarity between אָדֹם, "red," and אֱדוֹם. Even in the story of Judah and Tamar, where Zerah is apparently a son of Judah, the story already alludes to the brotherly connection between Esau (Edom) and Judah (Israel) before Gen 25–36. Already the terminology hints or alludes to this connection: The term תּוֹאֲמִם ("twin") occurs only in the Judah–Tamar story Gen 38:27 and in the birth narrative of the famous twins Esau and Jacob (Gen 25:22).

In Gen 38, Perez, Zerah's brother is the firstborn son, while Zerah (alluding to Edom/Esau) is the second born son – here the text emphasizes via genealogical allusion what had been told before: The firstborn Esau/Edom loses his firstborn right in favor of his brother Jacob. I have demonstrated this in more detail in my monograph in the firstborn-blessing (or rather: On the interchange of the natural

firstborn with his younger sibling[134]) in the book of Genesis. Remarkably, though, in Chronicles we learn nothing of this "Edomite past" of the *literarische Vorlage* – he is presented as a Judahite.

In my view, while making "Edomites" Judahite within the genealogical (and thus: ideological) thinking of the Chronicler, a certain historical and contemporary (to the Chronicler) situation is reflected. It is the Persian period Idumea where we find this degree of cultural diversity and the very close proximity of "Edomite" and "Judahite" cultural traits, as shown above. As I tried to elaborate in the previous section, the Yahwists in Idumea were part of the Idumean society, while, at the same time, some of them might have or might be remembered as having family ties or ties in the past with Judahite ancestors because of the territory they once lived in. In my understanding this "Edom" that the Chronicler is referring to, when reusing "Edomite" names from the respective genealogy on Gen 36, is not the former Edomite kingdom in Transjordan – he refers to Idumea in the Southern parts of the former Judahite kingdom. This is further supported by the fact, that the Hebrew texts do not terminologically differentiate between Edom (the older kingdom) and Idumea (the later province), all is rendered אֱדוֹם. This also means, not all references to Edom in post-exilic (mostly Persian period) texts are referring to an Iron Age kingdom in Transjordan as traditional and more recent research nearly unanimously tends to assume, they might rather reflect contemporary, that is Persian period, realities in Idumea – I have dealt with this surprisingly influential "blind spot" in research in detail in another article.[135]

Moreover, the Septuagint, which is roughly from the same time period as the Book of Chronicles, provides a possible linguistic differentiation between the two (Εδωμ and Ἰδουμαία). The term Ἰδουμαία for the kingdom of Edom and the Hebrew אֱדוֹם in LXX is especially used in Gen 36:16, thus within the "Edomite" genealogy:

> Gen 36:16 LXX:
> ἡγεμὼν Κορε, ἡγεμὼν Γοθομ, ἡγεμὼν Αμαληκ· οὗτοι ἡγεμόνες Ελιφας ἐν γῇ **Ιδουμαίᾳ**· οὗτοι υἱοὶ Αδας.
>
> Which translates the Hebrew Original:
> אַלּוּף־קֹרַח אַלּוּף גַּעְתָּם אַלּוּף עֲמָלֵק אַלּוּפֵי אֱלִיפַז בְּאֶרֶץ **אֱדוֹם** אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי עָדָה

There is no clue why the translator used Ἰδουμαία in this particular instance, while he uses Εδωμ in all other occurrences of the Hebrew אֱדוֹם MT in Gen 36.

**134** Hensel, *Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtssegens in der Genesis*, 139, 206–208.
**135** See Hensel, "The Complexity of a Site," 13–37, esp. 30–37.

There is no apparent reason why Eliphaz, of all people, the firstborn son of Esau (Gen 36:15), and his descendants (Gen 36:16) should be identified territorially with Idumea, which is not the case with the other Edomite or Seirites in these genealogies. It seems to be the case that the terms Εδωμ and Ἰδουμαία are used synonymously. Further instances for the use of Ἰδουμαία are Josh 15:1; 2 Sam 8:12, 13, 14; 1 Kgs 11:1, 14, 15, 16; 2 Kgs 14:10; 1 Chr 18:11, 12, 17; 25:19. This opens up the possibility that also the Chronicler might have understood or envisioned with "*Edom*" the *Idumean* realities of his time period.

The reason behind making Edomites (Idumeans) Judahite seems to be, that in the Chronicler's conception of "biblical Israel," as he unfolds it first in his *genealogische Vorhalle* and then later narratively, the Idumeans are *integrated* into the main Israelite tribe: Judah. The Idumeans are part of this envisioned "Israel." Consequently, Idumea/Edom can only mean that the chronicler wants to understand the Yahwist individuals in Idumea (probably because there were regional references to Judah earlier) as part of his "Israel."

These observations fit seamlessly with other traditions or redactions, independent of the Book of Chronicles, that can be attributed to the Persian period. I have already suggested elsewhere and elaborated more broadly that both the role of "Edom" as it is further developed in Persian times in the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25–35; in P and Post-P redactional layers),[136] as well as the mention of "Edom" as a brother of Israel (Deut 2; 23, also very likely a Persian text),[137] are part of this literary strategy of integrating Idumeans into the respective image of Israel.

I add here, very briefly, a further case, which I assume is connected with this strategy. Genesis 23 is a text that several recent researchers evaluate as late-P, written in the Persian period. This story narrates the etiology of the grave that Abraham purchased from the Hittites in Hebron and seems to reflect the historical reality of the Persian period in which the southern lands of Judah, including Hebron, were occupied by Edomites.[138] All this is, of course, the territory of Idumea: It is possible that Abraham's cave represents a Yahwistic cultic site in the land of Idumea.[139] The late-P-related revision of Gen 23 possibly makes space for the diversity of the Yahwistic cults (in this case in Idumea) and presents a counter-position to a geographically centralized cult (i.e., only one temple) in Jerusalem.

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**136** See Hensel, "Tightening the Bonds."

**137** See Hensel, "Think Positive."

**138** Wöhrle, "'Gebt mir einen Grabbesitz bei euch.'."

**139** See discussion in, esp. Hensel, "Tightening the Bonds," 397–417; Hensel, "Edom in the Jacob." See also De Pury, "Abraham," esp. 85–86.

## Conclusions

To sum up the major observation presented above:

a) It can be concluded that while there is a very strong influence of individuals or groups with an Edomite or Arab affiliation/background, the group of individuals with a Yahwistic background is the next largest group in Idumea.
b) The picture that emerges is that of a mixed population, with Arabs, Edomites, Yahwists and others living side-by-side and probably intermixing as well. It has now become clear, that ethnic boundaries seem to have been very fluid in this region over several centuries; only a minority of persons, for example, maintained their progenitors' ethnic onomastica. The various findings testify more to a mixture of certain cultural and religious traits or a set of cultural options, for example Greek, Phoenician, Edomite, Qedarite or proto-Arabic, Nabatean, Southern Arabian, and Idumean-Yahwistic.
c) As stated before, this Yahwism adds to my general perception of multiple Yahwisms in the Persian period, which are characterized by regional diversification and pluriform sociological and religious forms. To me, the Yahwism of the Persian period is primarily characterized by a set of cultural, social, and religious options that only *realized* their formative power by the 2nd/1st century BCE. Via this long process, early Judaism emerges from this multiplicity. The different groups existed alongside each other in the previous periods, even if they display differences in detail regarding religious practice and the sociology of religion. So, for example, monotheism is a *possible* option during the Persian period (Judah and Samaria) but not an *exclusive* option for faith in the God of Israel, so, e.g., in Elephantine and possibly also in Idumea, where we see a strong cultural and religious affiliation and family ties of (Idumean Yahwists with Qos, the former state deity of Edom).
d) Certain biblical traditions – as was been shown in the case of the Book of Chronicles (which is of Late Persian or Early Hellenistic origin) and in the case of the Post-P text Gen 23 reflect Idumean realities of this time period. They take into account the cultic and cultural fluidity in this period. In the case of the Chronicler, he makes Edomites (= Idumean Yahwist in my understanding) part of his envisioned "biblical Israel."

In any case, the material and possibly biblical evidence of an Idumean Yahwism grants us a unique glimpse into a non-biblical (one might say) Judaism from the Persian period. Yahwism participates in the phenomenon of cultural fluidity in the region and as such is a much larger phenomenon. It can only be hoped that future research and studies of the archaeological material (especially the

epigraphic corpus from Maresha) will help clarifying the many still open question.

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