

# Research on Israel and Aram

Edited by  
ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG  
and AREN M. MAEIR

*Orientalische Religionen  
in der Antike*



**Mohr Siebeck**

# Orientalische Religionen in der Antike

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# Research on Israel and Aram

Autonomy, Independence and Related Issues

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RIAB Volume I

Edited by

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Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

The Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (RIAB), one of the 23 Minerva Centers funded by the Minerva Stiftung, was established in 2016 (along with an additional center at the Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot), as part of the celebrations of 50 years of the formal relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Israel.

This center, along with these other centers, and a host of other joint German-Israeli scientific ventures, provides an ongoing solid basis for creating and fostering scientific and personal relations between Germans and Israelis. It serves both as a platform for scientific excellence – but, and perhaps more importantly, a constructive and productive mode in which these two peoples can work at rebuilding a relationship of trust, friendship, cooperation, and hope.

The original call in 2014 for the two new Minerva Centers requested proposals relating to autonomous decision making and possible inter-dependencies, in any field of scientific enquiry. While at first glance such a topic would hardly seem typical for research on antiquity, we, the co-directors of the center, thought that an “out-of-the-box” proposal relating to these topics might just be of interest; and in fact, that is what happened. We proposed to study two of the most important ancient cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, the Israelite and Aramean cultures, through the relatively untouched and unused perspectives of the character of the interactions between these cultures, and the mutual influences and autonomy of these two cultures, if there were any at all. Particularly unique is the fact that they were not only among the more important cultures of Near Eastern antiquity, they still are among the few ancient cultures in the entire world whose cultural patrimony continues until this day. The center thus offers a unique opportunity for a *longue durée* perspective on the relations and/or the lack thereof, between these two cultures specifically, and cultural groups in general.

We will engage with the core issues of autonomy and interdependency. Interest in aspects relating to autonomy and inter-dependency are well-known in many fields, such as in, e.g., Philosophy, Law, and Social Theory. From these and other perspectives it is clear that in any given situation, the dynamics and tensions that exist between autonomy and inter-dependency are quite complex – and often even tricky to define. Although the core areas of study of the center lay in the Levant during earlier periods, a broader temporal and geographic horizon is also included. While most of the research focus will be on so-called “biblical periods,” we believe that extending our perspective to the entire spectrum of Israelite-Aramean relations will enhance the original aims of the center and enable us to expand the potential significance of the results of our joint research activities. Thus, the RIAB center will serve to study the past and through this partake in the ongoing rebuilding of Israeli-German relations; by being aware of the past in the present, we can hopefully also contribute to help sustain the cultural patrimony of those

who are currently suffering untold horrors in Syria. As responsible citizens of the world, we believe that this is a worthy path for us to take. We can but hope that with time, the situation “on the ground” will improve, and the Arameans and their culture in the Near East will not be under threat anymore.

In our first and opening conference in Leipzig (June 5th to 9th, 2016) entitled “Dependency and Autonomy in Intercultural Relations: Israel and Aram as a Case Study,” we wanted to show that the center opens up a broad range of fields of inquiry, ranging from archaeology to anthropology, from Bible to history, from linguistics to philology, from biblical times to the present day Middle East – to name just a few. Therefore we decided to begin the conference with public papers devoted to the current disastrous situation in Syria in order to heighten awareness in general. Then we delved into methodological research in the historical sciences with Section I entitled “Cultural Autonomy and Independence in the Historical Sciences,” followed by Section II on “Aram and Israel in the Biblical Sources.” After this exploration of the textual sources we moved into Section III, “Archaeological Perspectives on the Arameans in the Northern Levant” and Section IV, “Archaeological Perspectives on the Aramean-Israelite Inter-relations in the Southern Levant.” Section V, “Historical Perspectives on Aramean-Israelite Interactions,” focused on the possible encounters and interactions between Aram and Israel in the first millennium BCE, while our concluding section, “Historical Perspectives on Later Periods,” established a link between the ancient periods BCE and the later developments of possible Aramean-Israelite encounters.

Fortunately, a broad range of scholars followed our invitation and presented their papers during the conference. During our discussions we experienced that the autonomy and interdependency perspective provides fertile ground for a more meaningful and nuanced study of the connections and tensions between ethnicity, identities, languages, scripts within the context of the study of the ancient Near East in general, and the Aramean-Israelite interface in earlier and later periods specifically. In almost every section we observed that socio-linguistic perspectives have been used in the study of languages of the past, but insufficiently in our opinion, particularly in the study of the ancient Near East. As one of the main sources of information on the Aramean-Israelite or Syrian-Jewish interface is language, we hope to utilize current linguistic approaches to the research on language contact and multilingualism, to shed light on cultural connections and the dynamics of language contact between Hebrew and Aramaic-Syriac in earlier and later Israelite and Jewish literature (Bible, Talmud, Targum etc.), in the context of early Christianity, or in the contemporary language contacts between Aramaic and modern languages.

These ideas for different aspects and directions of research were in some ways test cases that were realized during the first international annual meeting, the papers of which are published in this volume. As co-directors of the RIAB Center, we would like to stress how grateful we are that such outstanding scholars and colleagues have agreed to read their papers in Leipzig, and to publish them in our series, “Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times” (RIAB).

We sincerely hope that this volume will be the start of a series of RIAB publications that manifest the various activities of the RIAB Minerva Center. Our smaller workshops (several times a year in Israel and in Germany) and larger annual meetings (held

alternately in Israel and Germany) provide an unparalleled opportunity to foster and enhance scholarly discussions at a senior and junior level, between seasoned academics on the one hand and promising students on the other. We are convinced that these meetings will produce fruitful discussions and excellent papers and perhaps even dissertations that are enriching current scholarship in Israel, Germany, and abroad. Information on ongoing activities of the Center, as well as planned events, can be found on the Center's website, [aramisrael.org](http://aramisrael.org).

The broad spectrum of topics and interest, which the researchers of this center are engaged in, is clearly seen in the impressive list of authors and topics in this volume.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of the RIAB Center from Israel, Germany and other parts of the world for their ongoing participation, collaboration and interest in center activities, for the participants of the various center activities since 2016, to our respective institutions for their support (Bar-Ilan University, the University of Leipzig), to our students and Center staff members who have assisted us in carrying out the Center's activities, and to Vanessa Workman who helped to produce this volume. We are very grateful to the Mohr Siebeck Publishing house and the team in Tübingen for their support and for accepting this new series into their scientific program. We are also very grateful to Prof. Joachim Quack and Prof. Anette Zgoll for accepting "RIAB" as a sub-series in the well-established series "Oriental Religions in Antiquity." Last but not least, many thanks to the Minerva Foundation who provides a broad and solid foundation for academic excellence.

Ramat-Gan/Leipzig, October 2018

*Aren M. Maeir, Angelika Berlejung*



## List of Abbreviations

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary, D.N. Freedman (ed.), 6 vols., New York 1992
AbrN	Abr-Nahrain
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
Aegaeum	Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liège et UT-PASP
AfK	Archiv für Keilschriftforschung
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AION	Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
AnSt	Anatolian Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
ARAM	Aram Periodical
ARRIM	Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project
AS	Assyriological Studies
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATD Apokryphen	Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Apokryphen
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BBVO	Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient
BCSMS	Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BibEnc	Biblical Encyclopedia
Biblica	Biblica: Journal of Pontifical Biblical Institute
BIES	Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society (= Yediot)
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BN	Biblische Notizen
BO	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BTS	Bible et terre sainte

BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Cathedra	Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv
CBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament Series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series
COS	The Context of Scripture, W. W. Hallo (ed.), 3 vols., Leiden 1997–2002
CRAI	Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres
CUOS	Columbia University Oriental Studies
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DBAT	Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament und seiner Rezeption in der Alten Kirche
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst (eds.), Leiden 1995, 2nd rev. ed., Grand Rapids 1999
DNP	Der neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike, H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), Stuttgart 1996ff.
DNPSup	Der neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike, Supplemente
ÉB	Études bibliques
ÉB NS	Études bibliques, Nouvelle Série
EBR	Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception, H.J. Klauck et al. (eds.), Berlin, 2009ff.
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EH	Europäische Hochschulschriften
Eothen	Eothen, collana di studi sulle civiltà dell'Oriente antico
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
Erlsr	Eretz-Israel
EstBib	Estudios bíblicos
EVO	Egitto e Vicino Oriente
EvT	Evangelische Theologie
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
GAT	Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
HA-ESI	Hadashot Arkheologiyot, Excavations and Surveys in Israel
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBS	History of Biblical Studies
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik, I. Abt. Bd. I: Ägyptologie
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
Hug	Hugoye, Journal of Syriac Studies
HWPh	Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie
IAA Reports	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal

IEKAT	Internationaler Exegetischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
JANES	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, University of Chicago
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBTh	Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEOL	Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JSSSup	Journal of Semitic Studies, Supplement Series
Kadmos	Kadmos, Zeitschrift für vor- und frühgriechische Epigraphik
KAI	Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften, H. Donner and W. Röllig, (eds.), 2nd ed., Wiesbaden, 1966–1969
Klio	Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
KStTh	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
LAOS	Leipziger Altorientalische Studien
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
MÄS	Mitteilungen aus der ägyptischen Sammlung
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
MDOG	Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
MSAE	Materiali e Studi Archeologici di Ebla
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
NEAEHL	The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. E. Stern (ed.), 4 vols., Jerusalem/New York, 1993ff.
NEBK	Die Neue Echter Bibel, Kommentar zum AT mit der Einheitsübersetzung
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
Numen	Numen, International Review for the History of Religions
OAC	Oriens Antiqui Collectio
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
ÖBS	Österreichische biblische Studien
OIMP	Oriental Institute Museum Publications
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>Or</i>	Orientalia
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OrANT	Oriens Antiquus
Orient	Orient, Report of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan
Oriente	Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan (Nippon Oriento Gakkai)



OrNS	Orientalia, Nova Series
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEF	Palestine Exploration Fund
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
PJ	Palästina-Jahrbuch
PNA	The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire/Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, H. Baker and K. Radner (eds.), Helsinki 1998ff.
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RA	Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
RAC	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, Theodor Klauser et al. (eds.) Stuttgart 1950ff.
RAI	Rencontre assyriologique international
RB	Revue biblique
RE	Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft
RESup	Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft Supplemente
REJ	Revue des études juives
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RGTC	Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes
RIDA	Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RIA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie, E. Ebeling et al. (eds.), Berlin 1928ff.
RSF	Rivista di studi fenici
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	State Archives of Assyria, Bulletin
SAHL	Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SAQ	Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften
SBA	Studies in Biblical Archaeology
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SC	Sources chrétiennes
ScrHier	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SDHI	Studia et documenta historiae et iuris
SEL	Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico
Sem	Semitica
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SMNIA	Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology, Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StPhoen	Studia Phoenicia
Strata	Strata, Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society
SVA	Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie
Syria	Syria, archéologie, art et histoire
TA	Tel Aviv
TAVO	Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients
TAVO B	Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B (Geisteswissenschaften)
TB	Theologische Bücherei, Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert

ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), Stuttgart 1970ff.
Transeau	Transeuphratène
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie, G. Krause and G. Müller (eds.), Berlin 1977ff.
TRev	Theologische Revue
TSSI	Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
UISK	Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
VWGTh	Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WBC	The Women's Bible Commentary, C. A. Newsom, S. H. Ringe, and J. E. Lapsley (eds.), 3rd ed., Louisville 2012
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	Die Welt des Orients
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZAWSup	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Supplement
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
ZTK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche



Section I.  
Cultural Autonomy and Independence in the  
Historical Sciences



# Liberty, Freedom, and Autonomy in the Ancient World: A General Introduction and Comparison

JAN DIETRICH\*

*Abstract:* In this paper, I shall explore the possibilities and contexts of liberty, freedom, and autonomous decision making in the ancient world. In order to do this, I will attempt to differentiate between three contexts (or dimensions) – namely, the social, the political, and the individual – and I will compare the cultures of classical antiquity, ancient Israel, and the ancient Near East.

Freedom, liberty, and autonomy are central to our modern culture and democratic systems. They build, at least in part, upon how the ancient civilizations, Greece and Rome, as well as the so-called “Hebrew Republic”<sup>1</sup> advanced these concepts. However, the way the ancient cultures thought about autonomy and freedom differs in many ways from the way we think about them today, making these concepts “many-sided.”<sup>2</sup> Let us therefore start with an act of awareness. It is relatively clear that the ancient ideas of liberty, freedom, and autonomy were no ‘eternal elementary ideas’ in the Arthur Lovejoy sense and that, even if they were present in the ancient world, they were different from our current ideas.<sup>3</sup> This is a relatively recent historical insight; it was the French-Swiss political liberal thinker Benjamin Constant who, in his 1819 speech “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns,” was one of the first to contrast the ancient and the modern way of understanding liberty.<sup>4</sup> Constant was mainly thinking of liberty in its political dimension, but, in my view, it is the broader notion of autonomous decision making in its social, political, and individual dimensions that can be contrasted with our modern times, and this can alert us to anachronisms. In this paper, I shall explore the possibilities and contexts of liberty, freedom, and autonomous decision making in the ancient world. In order to do this, I will attempt to differentiate between three contexts (or dimensions) – namely, the social, the political, and the individual – and I will compare the cultures of classical antiquity, ancient Israel, and the ancient Near East.

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\* I wish to thank Sarah Jennings (Aarhus) for improving my English.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. NELSON, Hebrew Republic.

<sup>2</sup> “The concept of freedom, however, is many-sided” (KARAVITES, Relations, 145).

<sup>3</sup> By examining this from the perspective of a history of ideas, I am following approaches and methods by Quentin Skinner and Reinhart Koselleck.

<sup>4</sup> CONSTANT, Writing, 307–328.

I regard autonomous decision making as the ability to decide independently and self-sufficiently of one's own accord. This can occur either as an individual or as a collective, but it must always take place within contexts that either support and promote, resist, or make it entirely impossible to decide autonomously.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore important to explore these contexts, as they provide the background within which autonomous decision making is most likely to occur.

It is clear that the ancient Greek and Roman culture had terms like autonomy, liberty, and freedom; however, in ancient Israel, in Mesopotamia, and in ancient Egypt, these terms seem to be lacking. Having said this, I believe that the concepts themselves – at least in a rudimentary form – were also present in these cultures, at least on the legal and socio-economic level. Therefore, as our first step, let us explore the legal and socio-economic dimensions of freedom as liberty in the ancient world.

## 1. Freedom as Legal and Socio-Economic Liberty

Freedom can, first and foremost, be found in the social and economic sphere, but only in the negative. All of the ancient civilizations – Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome – had the social institution of slavery or debt slavery, and it is within this social context that the idea of 'release' emerged. In ancient Mesopotamia, the Akkadian term *andurāru* means the manumission of slaves, the cancellation of services imposed upon free persons, or the remission of commercial debts.<sup>6</sup> The manumission of slaves is referred to several times in Hammurabi's codex (cf. CH §§ 117; 171; 280).<sup>7</sup> For example, in § 117, it is stated:

If a man is gripped in poverty, and he has sold his wife, or his son, or his daughter for silver, or has put them into bound-service, they shall work in the house of their purchaser or of their bond-master for three years but in the fourth year their liberation (*andurārsunu*) shall be agreed.<sup>8</sup>

In ancient Babylonia, the king, especially in his early reign, can issue so-called 'justice decrees' (using the formula *mīšaram šakānum*) in which he liberates people from debts, taxes, and debt slavery in order to help the economy out of socio-economic imbalances resulting from the mass indebtednesses of the many small but important landowners.<sup>9</sup> In the edict of *Ammiṣaduqa*, e.g., § 20, it is stated:

If a citizen of Numhia, of Emutbal, of Idamaras, of Uruk, of Isin, of Kisurra, [or of Malgium] – an obligation requires him to give his [child], his wife, [or himself] for silver, to work off the debt or as a security deposit, because the king has established equity for the land, (the obligation) is remitted; his release is granted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For Aristotle's view on free choice, see section three in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. CAD s.v. *andurāru*, and EBELING, Freiheit. For other terms like *mār banūti*, *elēlu*, and *zakū*, cf. ERNST, Begriffe, 25–26; WUNSCH/MAGDALENE, Freedom.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. EBELING, Freilassung, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Transcription and translation according to RICHARDSON, Laws, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. NEUMANN, Recht, 88–89.

<sup>10</sup> Translation according to HALLO, Edicts, 364. Cf. KRAUS, Verfügungen, 180–181.

Interestingly, not only individuals but also collectives can be freed from a state of bondage.<sup>11</sup> It is said, for example, that the ‘Sun’ (= king of Hatti) set the land Kizzuwatna free (KBo I 5 i 37). Likewise, the king of Hatti can release the enslaved inhabitants of a conquered city from corvée (KBo X 1 r. 14; X 2 r. iii 18f), and Sargon establishes the liberty of the men of Kish (RA XVI 161:20). However, it was not only kings but also private slave owners who could grant the manumission of slaves. In Neo-Babylonian manumission documents, for example, a chattel slave’s manumission is inscribed on a clay tablet called *tuppi mār banūti* (“tablet of free status”), thereby granting the legal free status of a *mār banūti*, ‘cleansing’ the former slave from the former master’s property rights.<sup>12</sup>

Similar aspects can be found with regard to ancient Israel.<sup>13</sup> “To be ‘free’ (Heb. root *h-p-š*) is first and foremost a legal (economic) term [...]. Deriving from Akkadian *hupšu* – ‘belonging to a lower social class’ –, a free person (Heb. *ḥopšî*) simply is a ‘no-longer’ or ‘released slave’.”<sup>14</sup> The following legal prescription from Exod 21:2 is typical: “When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free (Heb. *ḥopšî*), for nothing.”<sup>15</sup> This comprehension of freedom is usually applied to individuals, but it could, like in Mesopotamia, also be applied to collectives; for example, by using the term *d’rōr* (which is similar to Akkadian *andurāru*) with respect to the collective of captives about to be freed from exile (Isa 61:1)<sup>16</sup> or to a collective institution like the “house” (*bajit*) when the person freed was, as *pater familias*, the head of the institution, e.g. when Saul states in 1 Sam 17:25 that he would set free (*ḥopšî*) the house of the man who kills Goliath.<sup>17</sup> In this legal and socio-economic sense of release, freedom was, firstly, perceived mainly as a process, not as a fixed state of being, ability or consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, freedom was perceived only in its opposition to slavery.<sup>19</sup> This meant furthermore that, thirdly, freedom was perceived only negatively as delivery from a state of bondage, and this state of bondage brought about the initial awareness of being unfree from which the awareness of freedom as deliverance from bondage

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. CAD s.v. *andurāru* for the following examples. In some cases, the “establishment of *kid-dinūtu*” means that temple cities or estates can be dedicated to a god, with “the effect of freeing the citizens of the city or estate from taxes, military duty, corvée (forced labor), slavery (including debt slavery), and the confiscation of their property.” (BERGSMA, Release, 207).

<sup>12</sup> As Cornelia Wunsch and Rachel Magdalene recently argued, the Neo-Babylonian manumission of slaves can be differentiated according to two steps. First, the slave’s manumission grants the legal free status of a *mār banūti*. Nevertheless, this manumitted slave has received ‘only’ the legal status of a freedman equal to that of a freeborn (*mār banūti*) who still might be subject to the *patria potestas* of the household’s master – like every freeborn son or daughter living under the potestas of the household’s father. It is only with the second step, when ‘emancipation’ as further release from *patria potestas* is granted, that the freedman is no longer subject to any foreign potestas.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. BERGSMA, Release; WEINFELD, Justice.

<sup>14</sup> PORZIG, Freedom, 671. Cf. also WILLI, Freiheit, 533–538; KAISER, Testament, 190–193; SCHMITZ, Freiheit, 192–193.

<sup>15</sup> ESV Translation.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. WILLI, Freiheit, 543–546; ERNST, Begriffe, 32–33.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. ERNST, Begriffe, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. BARTSCH, Freiheit, 497.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., e.g., HEILIGENTHAL, Freiheit, 498; ERNST, Begriffe, 29.



derived. It was not typical to envision a positive state of ‘freedom to’ (as opposed to ‘freedom from’) or to highlight the fact that a person freed from bondage had acquired the legal opportunities of free actions. It is only in Deut 20:5–7 that we find a positive meaning of ‘freedom’ concerning the man who is expected to conduct military duties: If he has just built a house, planted a vineyard or married, he is ‘free’ to look after his house, his vineyard or wife.<sup>20</sup>

This kind of liberation is first and foremost a legal and socio-economic as well as a negative concept, negative in the meaning of ‘release from’ or ‘freedom from’ (negative liberty) and not ‘freedom to’ (positive liberty).<sup>21</sup> It shows that, at its beginning, the concept of liberty was important for non-aristocratic people as a reactive concept; namely, to escape a situation of almost complete dependence.

Interestingly, the situation was the same in ancient Greece and Rome. In ancient Greece, the idea of autonomy and freedom also emerged out of its opposition to bondage. Here, *eleutheros* (ἐλευθέρως) and *doulos* (δοῦλος) are the two important terms, and it seems that words with the stem *doul-* appear earlier than words with the stem with *eleuth-*, marking the experience of unfreedom as an earlier awareness that gave rise to the awareness of a positive opposition to unfreedom.<sup>22</sup> Of course, this does not imply that everybody was unfree; it simply means that freedom and unfreedom work in the same way as the contrast between (for example) health and illness: it is illness that makes people aware of health. In ancient Greece, free people – namely, the aristocratic upper class – did not designate themselves as ‘free’ but as ‘noble,’ and freedom only became known and appreciated when lost.<sup>23</sup> This was similar in the late Roman republic. Here, “all Romans shared a basic understanding of the value of liberty: they agreed that fundamentally *libertas* referred to the status of non-slavery.”<sup>24</sup> So, on the legal and socio-economic level, the loss or absence of freedom gave rise to the awareness of freedom. This seems to apply to all the ancient cultures, including Greece. It was only in ca. 600 BCE when Solon’s reform (the so-called *σεισάχθεια*) was enacted and debt bondage abolished that full citizens in Athens were granted the right to personal freedom, meaning that in the case of liabilities, a creditor could no longer lay claim to an obligor’s labor.<sup>25</sup> In the broader horizon of the ancient cultures, this went a step further than what subsequently occurred in ancient Mesopotamia and later in Israel. Firstly, in ancient Mesopotamia, individual release from bondage could be part of laws and collective release could be part of individual decrees. Secondly, in ancient Israel, a further

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. ERNST, *Begriffe*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> For the distinction between ‘freedom from’ (negative liberty) and ‘freedom to’ (positive liberty) cf., e.g., BERLIN, *Concepts*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 29–35. Cf. also POHLENZ, *Freiheit*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 38–39.

<sup>24</sup> ARENA, *Libertas*, 14. Cf. also WIRSZUBSKI, *Libertas*, 1; KLOESEL, *Libertas*, 128. This is also true for later Roman law, cf. *Digest* 1.5.3ff and ARENA, *Libertas*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> For the fragments attesting to this reform, cf. RUSCHENBUSCH, *Solon*, 132–137. For the socio-economic background in Solonian Athens, cf. FORSDYKE, *Economy*; VAN WEES, *Solon’s Athens*. In poem 36,15, Solon himself describes the liberation with the words “I set them free.” (ἐλευθέρους ἔθηκα; cf. LEWIS, *Solon*, 115).

step was taken<sup>26</sup> (though perhaps only as a programmatic idea and not in historic reality); here, release from bondage was granted as a legal right for all Hebrew debt slaves after having served six years. However, as just mentioned, Solon's reform in Greece went even further. After this reform, total abolishment of debt slavery implied granting a legal right of personal freedom in the socio-economic sphere for full citizens, yet this freedom remained a type of 'negative freedom' or 'freedom from'.

In ancient Rome, this legal and social status was also symbolized physically by the wearing of a hat called a *pilleus*. Unlike in ancient Israel, where the permanent status of slave was symbolized physically (by the piercing of the ear, Exod 21:5–6; Deut 15:16–17),<sup>27</sup> in ancient Rome, it was the status of a freed man that was emphasized physically. Here, the *pilleus* "propagated the notion of *libertas* as a status opposed to that of slavery."<sup>28</sup> In fact, this hat held such symbolic importance that Brutus showed it on his coins after the murder of Caesar (fig. 1), demonstrating how this act should be regarded as freeing Rome. On one side, these coins display the portrait of Brutus and, on the other side, they display the *pilleus* of freedman flanked by two daggers, the weapons that killed Caesar.<sup>29</sup> The hat on this and similar coins, therefore, shows a shift from the symbolization of the legal and individual to the political and collective sphere, namely from the liberty of the individual to the liberty of the commonwealth.<sup>30</sup> Of course, this shift did not occur for the first time in the late Roman republic but much earlier. Let us therefore now explore the political meaning of autonomy and freedom.



Figure 1: Coin of Brutus showing the *pilleus* of freed men.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> But cf. already CH § 117 above.

<sup>27</sup> For Mesopotamia, cf. the term *abbutum*, meaning either a hairdo, a mark on the body or an object worn by slaves, cf., e.g., YARON, *Laws*, 163.

<sup>28</sup> ARENA, *Libertas*, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Cf., e.g., ARENA, *Libertas*, 42; KLOESEL, *Libertas*, 163–164.

<sup>30</sup> ARENA, *Libertas*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> © Trustees of the British Museum.

## 2. Freedom as Political Autonomy

Freedom as political autonomy seems to be only partly present in the ancient Near East, and, in any case, it is not present in the way that it later became an important idea and ideal concept for the identity of political unity itself. Instead, on the one hand, the idea emerges as part of the king's ideology, legitimizing the king by bestowing release from debts or *corvée* for political units; as mentioned above, the king of Hatti could release the enslaved inhabitants of a conquered city from *corvée*, and Sargon establishes the liberty of the men of Kish.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the Mesopotamian city itself seems to develop aspects and structures that could be called 'autonomous' in a broader sense. Although the city (*ālum*) was no "primitive democracy" (Thorkild Jacobsen) at the outset in early times, it seems as though it obtained a more autonomous status in the long term, when the Mesopotamian kings expanded their domain and obtained an empire with power over cities with a limited autonomous status.<sup>33</sup> In these cities, the king's charges "were limited to matters of general policy, concerning security, the cult, and the agricultural conditions. They excluded the details that were important in a citizen's daily life."<sup>34</sup> Although the power of the city's assembly (*puhrum*), which consisted of elders and free citizens, was only limited in nature – in contrast to classical Athens – and could not make decisions in direct opposition to the king, the assembly nevertheless discussed and decided on a wide range of domestic matters, from legal lawsuits to the selection of leaders to offices in a way that "a great deal of power was located in the assembly, comparable to the situation in classical Greece."<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, if we wish to identify the emergence of the idea of political autonomy as a self-defining concept, we have to move on to ancient Israel and Greece. My thesis is that the idea of freedom as political autonomy was conceptualized equiprimordially, both in ancient Greece and in the Old Testament.

Let us begin with ancient Greece. Thanks to the insightful work of Kurt Raaflaub, it is clear that the Greek concept of political freedom (*eleutheria*; ἑλευθερία) first emerged in the 5th century as a consequence of the wars against the Persians, when the freedom of the Greek polis was in danger.<sup>36</sup> It was only a little later that the concept of political self-government (*autonomia*; αὐτονομία) emerged as a consequence of the first Delian League.<sup>37</sup> In this way, freedom and autonomy were 'reactive concepts' that emerged only when the cities were in danger and fighting against outside control.<sup>38</sup> So it was only during the Persian wars that the idea of freedom became "an identity marker for the Greek *poleis*."<sup>39</sup> On the cultural-religious level, this can be shown by the

<sup>32</sup> For this, see the previous section.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. VAN DE MIEROOP, *City*, 118–141.

<sup>34</sup> VAN DE MIEROOP, *City*, 123.

<sup>35</sup> VAN DE MIEROOP, *City*, 128.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 71–108; *Freiheit*, 650; cf. also POHLENZ, *Freiheit*, 14–21.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 189–207; *Freiheit*, 650.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Adel*, 55.60 as well as RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> VOLLENWEIDER, *Freedom*, 672.

emergence of the cult for Zeus Eleutherios.<sup>40</sup> When the supreme commander of the Greek army, Pausanias, won the war against the Persians in 479 BCE, he built an altar on the agora of Plataiai and sacrificed to Zeus in his new form as Eleutherios (Thuc. 2.71.2).<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the idea of political freedom emerged during the times of the Greek-Persian wars of the 5th century. Interestingly, we can draw some parallels here with ancient Israel. During Hellenistic times, the Maccabeans first fought for religious freedom as a special kind of political freedom (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.302–304), and, after this, they fought for political freedom itself, establishing Israel's freedom (ἔστησαν αὐτῷ ἐλευθερίαν 1 Macc 14:26) after lamenting the fact that Israel was “no longer free, has become a slave” (ἀντὶ ἐλευθέρως ἐγένετο εἰς δούλην 1 Macc 2:11).<sup>42</sup> It is possible to go even further back and try to compare the Exodus with the battle of Plataia, though the old socio-economic aspects can still be seen in ancient Israel's political idea of liberation from Egypt.<sup>43</sup> Egypt was called a “house of bondage” (בֵּית עֲבָדִים), and the exodus, the move-out from Egypt, was the prime mythical and ‘historical’ event for the liberation of the ‘political’ entity Israel.<sup>44</sup> While freedom remained one of the main aspects of Athenian identity from the 5th century onwards, it seems that the freedom symbolized by the exodus was also one of the main aspects for Israel's identity. Similar to ancient Greece, where the liberation in the Persian wars gave rise to a new bonding to Zeus Eleutherios (Zeus the liberator), the liberation by the exodus gave rise to a new bonding to Yhwh (Yhwh the liberator), who revealed his personal name in connection to the exodus<sup>45</sup> and who made this liberation the basis for the laws in general and the ten commandments in particular.<sup>46</sup>

Also, like in Greece, where the freedom attained in the Persian wars was used by Athens for propagandistic reasons in the first Delian League, this Israelite identity marker was also used for legitimizing political maneuvers and interpreting historical developments; for example, when Jeroboam I legitimizes the formation of the ‘state’ of Northern Israel, arguing for a war of liberation from corvée (regardless of whether or not this is historical), and when Deutero-Isaiah describes the move from Babylon as a new exodus, the idea of political liberation from Egypt becomes an identity marker for Israel.<sup>47</sup> Thus, although particular terms of freedom like Greek *eleutheria* or Rabbinic *cherut* (e.g. on coins from the Bar-Kokhba-revolt; fig. 2) are missing in the Hebrew Bible, the idea or concept of liberation from Egyptian slavery is present, and it is formulated with terms like *pādah*, *jāša* ‘hifil or *gā'al*.<sup>48</sup> It is true that, with these terms, we

<sup>40</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 125ff.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. RAAFLAUB, *Entdeckung*, 74.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. KAISER, *Schrifttum*, 54; KAISER, *Testament*, 195–196. Translation according to NRSV.

<sup>43</sup> On this, cf. FISCHER, *Exodus*.

<sup>44</sup> „„Freiheit“ ist kein Wort der Hebräischen Bibel, und doch ist sie voll von Befreiungsgeschichten, und der Exodus ist ihre größte.“ (Cf. EBACH, *Wege*, 15) Cf. also BECKER, *Befreiung*, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. CRÜSEMANN, *Freiheit*, 102.

<sup>46</sup> Cf., e.g., DOHMEN, *Exodus*, 102–103; KRÜGER, *Freiheit*, 114.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. CRÜSEMANN, *Freiheit*, 109f, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Cf., e.g., BARTSCH, *Freiheit*, 497. For the different established wordings, especially in Deuteronomy, cf. SCHULMEISTER, *Befreiung*; for *pādah* in particular cf. recently YAMAYOSHI, *Auslösung*.

do not have a particular term for the state of political freedom but only for the process of liberation. Still, this liberation was conceived as being freed from political dependency and, in pre-exilic times, it was conceived as giving rise to the notion of not being dependent on foreign political entities but on God alone. In this way, it does not seem anachronistic when, subsequently in Roman times, Josephus and Philo use the term *eleutheria* when referring to the Exodus (cf. 1 Macc 2:11; 10:25–45).<sup>49</sup>



Figure 2a–b: Coin from the Bar-Kokhba Revolt showing Rabbinic *cherut* (“freedom”).<sup>50</sup>

From the perspective of a history of ideas, it is important to see how, already in the book of Exodus itself, the political view of the exodus refers to different aspects. As Jan Assmann has recently shown, the exodus from Egypt implies three different forms of ‘withdrawal’. Firstly, on the political level, the exodus from Egypt implies a political withdrawal from sacral kingdom states by developing the idea of God’s chosen people as well as ‘nation formation’. Secondly, on the religious level, the exodus implies the religious withdrawal from polytheism to monolatry and, in the end, to monotheism; and thirdly, on the intellectual level, the exodus implies the intellectual withdrawal from myth to history.<sup>51</sup>

As well as these aspects of ‘withdrawal,’ the exodus also implies different forms of *liberation*, merging together the socio-economic, political, legal, and religious sphere. The exodus means liberation from tyranny on all these levels, making the Israelites free to serve God alone. In this way, the idea of the exodus resulted in turning back to the aforementioned socio-economic level as the basis of argumentation for the release from bondage in the land of Israel itself.<sup>52</sup> The argument now used is that release not only may take place as an individual decree dependent on kingly generosity but that it should

<sup>49</sup> Cf. HEILIGENTHAL, *Freiheit*, 499–501.

<sup>50</sup> © BIBEL+ORIENT Museum / Stiftung BIBEL+ORIENT Fribourg, Suisse; Reg no. N 2000.40.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. ASSMANN, *Exodus*, 395–397.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. also CRÜSEMANN, *Freiheit*, 111–112.

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