

Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

18

Aryeh Kasher

Jews, Idumaeans, and
Ancient Arabs



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herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

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Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Nations of the
Frontier and the Desert during the Hellenistic and Roman Era
(332 BCE – 70 CE)

by
Aryeh Kasher



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Dedicated to my venerable teacher
Professor Joshua Efron

Foreword

The purpose of this book is to focus the interest of the educated reader, the student, and the research scholar on a topic which so far has not attracted adequate monographic attention. This review of relations between the Jews in Eretz-Israel and the nations of the frontier and the desert is presented in a chronological framework. At the same time, appropriated scholarly attention has been devoted in every chapter to each one of the spheres of life in which the fabric of relations between the Jews and their neighbors was shaped: religion, society, administration, politics, defence, etc., insofar as these are relevant and necessary. Since this work is extremely monographic in nature, the reader is required to possess considerable amount of prior general knowledge in the history of the Jewish people during the Second Temple Period. This in fact is essential for a thorough understanding of the different problems raised; the same applies to the history of the Nabataeans and the Ituraeans.

We fear there is a certain danger that the modern reader might be tempted to draw analogies between historical reality as it takes form in this account and that of our own times. In anticipation of this we therefore wish to state that from the historian's point of view history does not repeat itself. Let the reader therefore not apply our conclusions or any he himself may draw while reading this book to the world scene of our time. Anyone making a historical projection of this kind errs and misleads others. It seems the great majority of those who do this are politicians with pretensions of basing their opinions on so-called experience of the past and the lessons it teaches. This is a misleading deception, for each and every historical period should and must be judged only by its own standards; similarities and conclusions are not to be transposed from one era to another, even if on the face of it there is a superficial resemblance between them.

From the scientific aspect this book is intended to present its readers the latest historical interpretations relevant to the subject, including those arising from finds and findings in archaeology, epigraphy, papyrology, numismatics, and geography. A number of useful maps, a chronological chart, a bibliography, a table of abbreviations and indices are also included. In addition, most of the Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin terms and quotations have been translated into English, often with the addition of short explanations and notes thought to be relevant and necessary. Many translations of quoted passages were taken from standard works of reference,

such as the writings of Josephus Flavius (Loeb Classical Library ed.); *The Mishnah* (trans. by Danby); *The Midrash Rabbah* (trans. by Freedman); *The Babylonian Talmud* (ed. by Epstein); *The First and Second Books of Maccabees* (trans. by Bartlett), etc.

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Aryeh Kasher

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Abbreviations

AAAS	<i>Annales archeologiques arabes de Syrie</i>
AASOR	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
ADAJ	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
AE	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ARAST	<i>Atti della reale Accademia di scienze di Torino</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
BMC	<i>Catalogues of the Greek Coins in the British Museum</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (ed. A. Boeckh <i>et al.</i>)
CIJ	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> (ed. J.B. Frey)
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CIS	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (ed. S. Krauss)
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> (ed. V. Tcherikover <i>et al.</i>)
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
EB	<i>Encyclopaedia Biblica</i>
FGrH	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (ed. F. Jacoby)
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graeca</i>
IGRR	<i>Inscriptiones Graeca ad Res Romanas pertinentes</i> (ed. R. Cagnat)
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
MUSJ	<i>Mélanges de l'université Saint-Joseph</i>
OGIS	<i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selecta</i> (ed. W. Dittenberger)
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
PCZ	<i>Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Zenon Papyri</i> (ed. C.C. Edgar), Cairo 1925–1931

<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestinian Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>RE(PW)</i>	<i>Realenzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (ed. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll)
<i>RES</i>	<i>Revue des études sémitiques</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>Yediot</i>	<i>Yediot Bahqirat Eretz-Israel Weatiqoteha</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Preface

Relations of the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel with the Idumaeans and the Arab tribes and nations have until now not had the benefit of any particular clarification through research and thus no monograph devoted mainly to this topic has ever been written. Scholars' attention has in general focussed on the history of the people of Israel or of the great Hellenistic kingdoms of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties and their successor, the Roman Empire. Only very little has been devoted to the history of the small nations in the area¹. The main reason for this no doubt lies in the lack of any written literary sources, especially of national chronicles written by authors belonging to these nations. It has already been frequently remarked that we unfortunately have no knowledge of the existence of an Idumaeen, a Nabataean, or an Ituraean Josephus leaving future generations a written record of his people. All recently attempted research for writing such a history is of course based on diligent gleaning of crumbs of information, mainly from Hellenistic and Roman historiography and a little more from epigraphic and archeological finds, sources which at best are quite limited.

If for example we should want to investigate the history of the Idumaeans, we would face the complete absence of any Idumaeen literary sources. Even on the epigraphic level there are only the scantiest of remnants and, apart from the mention of typical Idumaeen names, we have no criterion by which we can even identify an Idumaeen inscription. Neither can we recognise a typically Idumaeen style of building enabling us to distinguish an Idumaeen structure from any other – not even in any kind of cultic function. From a professional archeological point of view, it is not even possible to compare the Idumaeans with the Nabataeans and Ituraeans in the period under discussion. The Nabataeans did after all have some form of individuality in their architecture and their ritual objects, particularly since a

¹ An impression easily confirmed, if only from a fleeting glance at bibliographic lists on the Nabataeans and tiny Arab principalities such as Chalcis, Iturea, and Abila (Abilene), found in the books by Schürer, I⁴, pp.707, 726, I⁵, pp.561, 574; also; Starcky, *Dictionnaire*, cols. 1016–1017. Only in recent years has there been a certain change concerning the Nabataeans and Ituraeans, as may for example be seen from the bibliographic list compiled by Bowersock (*Roman Arabia*, p.193 ff.) on the Nabataeans, as well as the studies by Schmitt and Schottruff, see: Götz Schmitt, *ZDPV*, XLVIII (1982) pp.110–124; Schottruff, *ZDPV*, XLVIII (1982) pp.125–152.

special style of Nabataean ceramics may be clearly recognised². As for the Ituraeans, there is today a tendency in certain Israeli archeological circles to identify "Ituraean ceramics" or "Golan ceramics"³. On the other hand, insofar as "Idumaeen ceramics" have been identified in modern research, these involve periods much earlier than the one we are discussing here⁴. It appears that the absence of Idumaeen sources ever since the Persian period has to a large, even critical extent, dictated the lack of interest on the part of modern scholarship. When compared with the biblical period, the difference is enormous, since this very people then presented a fascinating subject for extensive scientific study. The very opposite holds good for their descendants in the period of the Second Temple, and there has not been even one serious attempt – in the form of an independent and unbiased scholarly monograph – to examine their history comprehensively⁵. Ronen's final Master's thesis presented at Tel-Aviv University is in the nature of an attempt to correct this⁶. Let us hope it represents a beginning. Idumaeen history included in the chapters of this monograph is therefore meant to help scholars planning to pursue this same project in the future.

Due to the revolutionary changes which took place in the Near East following the rise and fall of the great powers of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, most neighboring nations in Transjordan of biblical times (such as the Ammonites and Amorites, for example) disappeared from the stage of history in the region. Also contributing to a not inconsiderable extent were the great demographic changes which occurred and which *inter alia* were characterized by incursion of the Arab tribes from the south, the east, and the north. A quick review of the history of nations in the Eretz-Israel region will show that only the Idumaeans (or Edomites, as they are called in the Bible) succeeded in surviving as a "nation"; thus in the Hellenistic era they were recognised in every respect as an "ethnos". The special nature of this phenomenon is even more striking in view of the fact that this nation had moved to a new "homeland" where they then took root so successfully and thoroughly that for many generations it was named Idumaea after them. In contrast, their old homeland (i.e., biblical Edom), under the new demographic and political circumstances (to be more precise, from the end of the sixth century BCE), had its name changed, so

2 For an impression on Nabataean individuality in architecture, art, ritual buildings, carving graves in rock, in pottery and jewelry, see Negev, *Masters of the Desert*, p.86ff.

3 See Kasher, *Cathedra*, XXXIII (1984), pp.27–28, note 45, and further details there.

4 E.g., see Ronen, *Idumaeans etc.*, p.9.

5 Though devoting a fairly large section to the Idumaeans and Idumaea and on certain problem also diverging to the Persian period, Kochmann in his dissertation still does not represent a breakthrough in the direction of monographic study on the subject of Idumaeans.

6 See Ronen, *Idumaeans etc.*

much so that in the Hellenistic period it was already known by the name of “Arabia”.

As we know, the Hellenistic conquest brought the nations of the Orient into contact with a new and foreign culture whose influence was very powerful, due both to its political and institutional strength and also to its well-developed and solid urban infra-structure, steeped in the spirit of Greece and her heritage. In this monograph we intend to show the consequence of Hellenistic influence on Idumaeian society and the effects these projected on their relations with the neighbouring Jewish nation. In the course of our discussion we will try to trace the historical process which led most of the Idumaeians to join the Jewish people, becoming so integrated with them as in fact to accept Jewish customs and religion. That of course is one of the most interesting riddles of Jewish history, the more so since we remember the fact that at the close of the biblical period the Edomites were considered to be one of the more despised nations. They were, as we know, accused of full collaboration with Babylonia in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (586 BCE), and were denounced for enriching themselves on the ruins of the Kingdom of Judah, taking substantial portions of its land. And yet, amazingly, they of all people (or more precisely, an overwhelming majority of them) were eventually absorbed into the Jewish people, so much so that they became an inseparable part thereof. To solve this strange puzzle, we shall submit the most penetrating questions to historical discussion: were the Idumaeians converted by force and compulsion? Or rather was this an act undertaken willingly and deliberately? Was there proselytization of individuals, or perhaps massive collective conversion? Was this the end of an extended, unorganised, natural process, or was it characterized by its uniqueness and its organisation – initiated from above, i.e., by both the Idumaeian and the Jewish leadership? Were there demonstrations of internal opposition to the conversions within the proselytizing Jewish community? How, if at all, did the Idumaeian converts integrate with the different sectors of Jewish society? Did they, despite their conversion, preserve an Idumaeian “ethnic” identity in later generations? These and other questions are clarified in the following chapters and as far as we can we have drawn historical conclusions or proposed possible logical solutions.

We also pose similar questions on the conversion of the Ituraeians in Galilee. Difficulties in examining Ituraeian history are as great, if not greater, than those concerning the Idumaeians, since the former did not possess a single political entity or a single defined territorial concentration. Most of the sources concerning them are recorded in the writings of Josephus, with only a few rare echoes sounded by other Hellenistic-Roman writers. Epigraphic and numismatic information as well as archeological finds of course contribute considerably in revealing their story, but without the

writing of Josephus we would be completely in the dark. As a Jewish historian, Josephus naturally refers to Ituraean episodes and problems only insofar as they relate to Jewish history. For him, the history of the Ituraeans *per se* does not represent an historical topic; but this fact does not allow us to obtain an authentically Ituraean point of view. Since the objective we have chosen for the present monograph is relations of the Jews to the neighboring nations, we are of necessity bound to the historiographic path mapped by Josephus. Furthermore, the paucity of alternative sources prevents us from the start from obtaining a fully objective view of the situation concerning relations of Jews and Ituraeans, one which would be checked by independent comparative study, free of bias and preference. Our examination of relations between Jews and Ituraeans is therefore dictated by limitations which we cannot properly overcome, so that a considerable part of our review is based on the proposition of possibilities, mainly in specific cases, which seem logically probable, rather than proven as solid and certain factual truths.

The Nabataeans also produced no historians and writers or moralists and prophets such as arose in Israel, and there is not even a single Nabataean chronicle which tells the story of this people from its own point of view. The only written Nabataean "literature" which has been preserved for us is in the field of epigraphy, mainly from tombstones and coins. The language of the inscriptions is Aramaic and not Arabic, showing that their written culture was borrowed from "foreign" sources and was not based on national foundations⁷. Stephanus Byzantius did mention the fact of the existence of an essay called 'Arabica' (Ἀραβικά) written by an author called Uranius and apparently containing important historical and geographical information on the Nabataeans. But unfortunately we have no clear idea of the man and his precise period, whether he was of Nabataean-Arab origin or a Greco-Roman writer, nor do we even know the contents of the book or its form⁸. Among Hellenistic-Roman writers there are also none who systematically wrote the history of the Nabataeans. In truth, they are only mentioned incidentally either on the occasion of reviewing various episodes in Hellenistic or Roman history, or in relation to geographic surveys of regions with which the Nabataeans had connections⁹.

Just as for the Idumaeans and the Ituraeans, it appears that the writings of Josephus are the most important and richest source of information we

7 For a superficial impression only, see e.g.: Negev, *Masters of the Desert*, p.139-142.

8 See: Jacoby, *FGrH*, II.C, 675, F.24-25; West, *HSCP*, LXXVIII (1974), pp.282-284.

See also Starcky, *Dictionnaire*, cols. 903, 906.

9 We shall here only mention the main references of the following writers: Diodorus Siculus, Posidonius of Apamea, Hieronymus of Cardia, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Cassius Dio, and the so-called *Periplus maris Erythraei*.

have on the Nabataeans. It is true he wrote not Nabataean but rather Jewish history, yet the many existing points of contact between the two peoples contributed quite considerably, though only indirectly, to a reconstruction of Nabataean history, even if only in the most general terms. However, since Josephus refers to various Nabataean episodes exclusively on the basis of their implications on Jewish history, it is quite obvious that his approach and point of view (on Nabataean history) are far from objective and it would therefore be difficult for us to put his writing to the test of critical and impartial comparative study. Indeed, we are necessarily bound to follow the path laid down by Josephus, and frequently we will be quite unable to escape the bonds of this restraint in order to test historic truth from a point of view different from his.

On the other hand, the wealth of information contained in his writing on the Nabataeans, out of all proportion to what he relates concerning the Idumaeans and the Ituraeans, allows us at least in several cases to trace his sources and in this way to improve our understanding of the nature of his writing and its historiographic tendencies. For example, in his Herodian chapter – the richest in extent and quality in its revelation of Nabataean history – Josephus relies on the history written by Nicolaus of Damascus who, as official court historian and the king's most senior adviser, stood very close to Herod. This fact in itself can show the critical reader a little of the tendentious nature of Josephus' writing in this important chapter, thereby casting on it a heavy shadow of unreliability, or at least the suspicion of propagandist rewriting of history, of attempting to exalt and praise Herod, to hide his failures and shortcomings, and to defend him as far as is possible.

In the Hellenistic-Roman period, relations between Jews and Nabataeans underwent the most extreme changes. In the course of our survey we attempt to examine them and, as far as is possible and logically probable, explain how within a short time it came about that, from close friendship and cooperation in the days of the early Hasmonaeans, in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus only one generation later, those relations had changed to enmity and bloodshed. We have of course attempted to throw some light on the reasons for the continuation and broadening of mutual enmity between the two nations, which reached its peak in blood-drenched wars and acts of horrifying cruelty of the kind that occurred in the days of the Great Revolt against the Romans.

Introduction

The Idumaeen Incursion into the Region of Southern Judaea

In this short introduction on the Idumaeans we do not intend to solve the question of their precise ethnic origin, a very complex problem involving a special study into the biblical period. For the purpose of our discussion we will merely mention the fact accepted by most scholars that theirs was one of the Semitic-speaking nations (or tribes) who in the 14th century BCE had apparently invaded the region of Transjordan and driven out or absorbed the previous inhabitants. It appears that the Idumaeen settlement within a specific geographic region of Transjordan, well-defined by natural boundaries – the Zered Brook in the north, Eilat Bay in the south, the Araba Wādi to the west, and the Syrian-Arabian desert to the north east – helped them preserve their ethnic (or tribal) individuality over a very long period of time. In fact, the other nations (or tribes) who had invaded together with them (i.e., Moabites, Ammonites, and Amorites of Gilead) had also settled into fairly well-defined geographic boundaries, and therefore they too from the start developed political entities which were well-defined and distinguishable from each other. Archeological finds prove further that over the generations the natural boundaries of the biblical Land of Edom were also marked by strong systems of fortifications intended to block the possible incursion of nomad tribes from the desert¹. This also helped the Edomites (as they were called at the time) preserve their specific ethnic character. In fact, for many years they succeeded in preventing massive intrusions of desert nomads into their country; in this they were not inconsiderably helped by their high degree of political progress (compared with others in their region), with the aid of which they managed to establish an orderly and properly organised realm that reached the peak of its glory and prosperity in the Assyrian and Babylonian periods.

However, despite all this, the Edomites of the biblical period were unable to resist the continuous and unending pressure of the nomads invading from the desert – tribes of Arabs, Nabataeans, and Kedarites, who pene-

¹ See basic information on this: Glueck, 'Edom', *EB*, I (1955), pp.91–98.

trated into their subsistence area at a growing rate, particularly in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. The simultaneous decline of the Kingdom of Judah, and the Edomites' commercial interests in the control of traffic arteries leading from Transjordan to the sea-coast of Eretz-Israel, weakened even further their powers to resist the invaders from the desert. It appears that under these circumstances their expansion to the west, into the southern regions of the land of Judaea, was a form of compensation and release for the weakening of their hold on their own country. The beginnings of the Edomite invasion of southern Judaea had in fact already started in the 8th century BCE, a fact confirmed by archeological findings such as pottery, ostraca, seal imprints, etc. In the 7th and 6th centuries BCE this process became stronger², following on and concurrent with the growing Nabataean invasion of the Land of Edom. In fact we will not be far wrong in stating that the Edomite penetration into southern Judaea was a gradual process which had already begun in the Assyrian period, gathered strength during the Babylonian period, and came to an end in the Persian (Achemenid) period at the end of the 6th century BCE³.

It seems that this very same process, which as indicated continued for a few hundred years, was concurrent with the "Arabization" of the biblical Land of Edom, which was also not a one-time event and did not cause any dramatic and revolutionary change in the region. It appears that the archeological finds connected with the Nabataeans also confirm the continuous nature of this process. Thus for example the continuity of Edomite presence within the bounds of the biblical (i.e., Transjordanian) Land of Edom is very evident throughout the whole of the Nabataean period, particularly in epigraphy, a fact clearly borne out by the considerable use of Edomite (later Idumaeen) theophoric names containing the component 'Kos' (or Koze, Cos, Qos, etc.)⁴. It also stands out in the continuance of customary Edomite (or Idumaeen) ritual under Nabataean rule⁵. Continuity of the use of the Aramaic language, from the time it took root in the Land of Edom in the 8th century BCE and inclusive of the Nabataean era, also indicates continuity of Aramaic-Idumaeen culture, which eventually the Nabataeans themselves also came to adopt and accept⁶. Generally speaking:

2 Bartlett, *JTS*, 20 (1969), pp. 15–17; Kochavi, *IEJ*, XVII (1967), p.227ff. Compare further: Biran, *Qadmoniot*, XI (1978), pp.20–23; Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, p.180; and recently: Bartlett, *PEQ*, CXIV (1982), p.15ff.

3. Eph'al, Dissertation, p.130, 141ff.

4 Bartlett, *PEQ*, CXI (1979), pp.52–66 (esp. p.54); Starcky, *Levant*, VII (1975), p.16.; idem, *RB*, LXXV (1968), pp.206–235.

5 E.g. see: Vriezen, *Öltestamentische Studien*, XIV (1965), pp.333–334; Milik, *Syria*, XXXV (1958), pp.236–241; idem, *Syria*, XXXVII (1960), pp.95–96; Teixidor, *Syria*, XLIX (1979), pp.419–420; and see recently: Patrich, *Cathedra*, XXVI (1982), p.57 with further details.

6 See Naveh, *BASOR*, CCIII (1971), pp.27–32; Bartlett, *PEQ*, CXI (1979), p.56.

survival in Transjordan of the earlier tribes (Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites) alongside the Arab tribes (headed by the Nabataeans) took the form of ethnic and cultural co-existence, at least at the beginning.

Naturally and understandably, with passing generations there began a process of which we do not know sufficient details of both ethnic and cultural merging and integration. At the end of this process a new entity was created in the region, syncretistic but with a prominent and dominantly Arab-Nabataean character, which to a large extent reflected the demographic superiority of the desert nomads⁷. It therefore appears that over a quite extended period similar processes were taking place simultaneously in biblical Edom and in southern Judaea (later to become "Idumaea"). In parallel with increasing intrusion of the Arab-Nabataean tribes into the region of Transjordan, there was growing Edomite migration westwards into southern Judaea and the northern Negev. We therefore cannot speak of a one-time occurrence of a sudden migration of nations, but rather of a continuous and gradual process that gained considerable impetus in the years 587–582 BCE, at the time of the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the great expulsion of its inhabitants to Babylonia. It is commonly accepted that the national catastrophes of the Kingdom of Judah merely increased the rate of Edomite (later Idumaeen)-Nabataean incursions in the south and did not serve as a marker indicative of a new demographic phenomenon. It simply appears that the invaders succeeded at that time in gaining control of the regions which they had entered long before and gave them a new political character, Edomite (or Idumaeen)-Arabic⁸, thereby filling the vacuum created in the wake of the national disasters which had befallen the Kingdom of Judah. It is inconceivable that the Edomite incursion into and domination of the regions in the south took place without a base of consent and cooperation from the Babylonian regime of those days. For that reason it seems that from then onwards Edom became the symbol of evil in Jewish consciousness⁹, at least to the end of the Ptolemaic period (as we shall see later).

7 See Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins*, p.5; Glueck, *Transjordan*, pp.136–137; Eph'al, Dissertation, p.145.

8 Clear indications of this in prophecies of *Ezekiel*, 35:15 and confirmation *III Ezra*, 4:50. Epigraphic support is found in Beersheba and Arad ceramics from the 4th century BCE, containing scores of Arab and Idumaeen names – see: Naveh, *Beersheba*, I, pp.79–82; idem, *Tel Aviv*, VI (1979), pp.182–189; idem, *Arad Inscriptions* (ed. Aharoni), pp.167–204). The papyri of Wadi Daliyeh in the Samaria Desert (north of Jericho) also testify to the demographic phenomenon of ethnic assimilation in Eretz-Israel following the waves of migration from the east in the Persian period. Among the names mentioned there, from their theophoric components it is possible to identify Idumaeen, Moabite, Aramaic, Babylonian and Jewish or Samaritan names – see: Cross, *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, esp. p.52.

9 See Hoffman, in: Uffenheimer (ed.), *Bible and Jewish History*, pp.76–89, and particularly pp. 85–89.

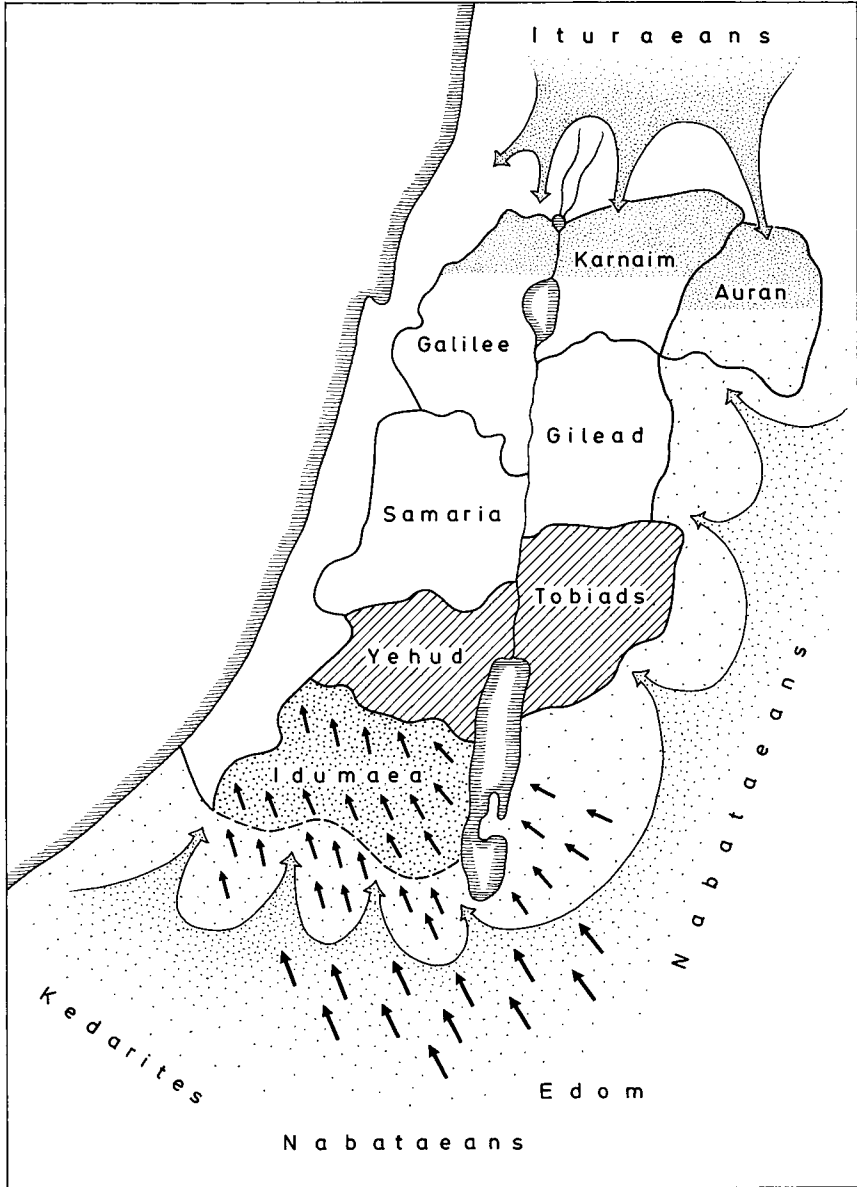
An entirely different interpretation holds that tribal groups, having clear genealogic ties with Edom, had in fact been settled from earliest times on the southern slopes of the Hebron mountains and in the northern Negev (later to become the "Idumaea" of Hellenistic times). In other words, the indicated region of settlement had from earliest times included tribal groups with the names in their genealogical records proving a clear connection to those of biblical Edom. Pursuing the logic of this opinion, the great Edomite migration of the 7th and 6th centuries BCE was therefore of the nature of a homecoming and an attempt to revive a previously extant ethnic and political situation. Dormant traditions of a genealogical relationship linked with the eponym "Edom" were thus likely to have served here as formal grounds for demanding recognition of a separate ethno-political Edomite identity from the Babylonian authorities. According to this conception, the massive migration of Edomites westwards following the growing Nabataean incursion on the one hand, and the decline of the Kingdom of Judah on the other, only encouraged and spurred on separatist ambitions for the establishment of an independent ethno-political Edomite entity. At all events this was not a new creation.

Since we have neither the intention nor the capacity within this framework to deal with the deeper problems of the biblical period, we will therefore not put the above opinion to the test of historical examination. For the moment, and for the purpose of our discussion, we will merely note that the bias and one-sidedness of this opinion are evident, since it is clearly guided by the idea that the conversion of the Idumaeans in the Hasmonaean period never took place, for the Idumaeans had long since been fully-fledged Jews. Pursuing its reasoning one must therefore relate to information on conversion of the Idumaeans in the days of John Hyrcanus I as merely referring to the act of political annexation of Idumaea to Judaea, an act according to the wishes of the local inhabitants, who thereby recovered their original political holding of long ago¹⁰.

Literary sources from the Persian period clearly indicate that according to official political terminology, the lands south of Beth-Zur were Arab; in the days of Nehemiah for example they were under the rule of Geshem (or Gashmu) the Arab. Archeological finds however prove that in actual fact the population there was quite mixed, an impression which may be obtained from the mention of people with Arabic, Idumaeen, and Aramaic names. One cannot deduce from this that ethnic mixing was total and equal in every single region. It appears for example that the Idumaeen element

¹⁰ See extensively: Kochman, dissertation, pp.158–178. On conversion of Idumaeans to Judaism in the days of John Hyrcanus I, more is brought below, but the problematics of the whole subject are presented in a totally different light.

Map 1: The Idumaeen and Arab Penetration during the Persian Period (6–4 Centuries BCE)



was prominent and even dominant in southern Judaea, that is, the areas lying between Beth-Zur and Beersheba. On the other hand, in the area south of Beersheba the Arab character was more prominent. The fact that in Hellenistic times an Idumaeen political entity was born – a fact that found expression in the establishment of an administrative unit named Idumaea in the areas between Beth-Zur and Beersheba – indicates not only a political turning point, of secession from a pact with the Arabs (as existing in the Persian period), but also a policy of creating new administrative units having an as clearly-defined as possible local ethnic character. Choice of the name of Idumaea can therefore serve as a fairly authoritative indicator of the composition of the local population, namely, that the Idumaeen element was the most prominent and dominant therein. In our opinion, the process of political renunciation by the foreign administration in Eretz-Israel of its pact with the Arabs gained its great impetus beginning in the days of Antigonus Monophthalmus, who wanted to impose his rule over Petra. This same renunciation however found concrete administrative expression in the creation of Idumaea, only with the establishment of Ptolemaic rule in Eretz-Israel.

Nabataen Penetration into the Eretz-Israel Region

The Nabataens' origin was and still is a subject for serious dispute among scholars. One of the ideas initially prevalent inclined to determine their origin as Aramaic, mainly in view of the Aramaic language used in Nabataean inscriptions and on official coinage¹¹. In this case however, linguistic evidence is in fact inconclusive since, though Aramaic was the principal written language of the Nabataeans, this fact if not to be interpreted and seen as a proof on the question of their origin, but rather evaluated as an expression of the cultural standards they adopted. It should be noted that the Nabataeans did not have a written language of their own, also that in the Near East, Aramaic had for many hundreds of years been the international language by means of which it was possible to maintain contacts and communicate between the different peoples and nations. In relation to the Nabataeans, whose main occupation was international trade, this fact has special and important significance. Their adoption of the Aramaic language was therefore due not only to the strong influence of Mesopotamian culture, but also and perhaps principally for pragmatic reasons, appro-

¹¹ See details: Dussaud, *La Penetration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam*, p.21; Patrich, *Cathedra*, XXXVIII (1985), p.6.

priate to traders who travel the roads and need an efficient, widely acceptable form of linguistic communication. In the 19th century, modern scholars had already preferred the possibility of solving the riddle of the Nabataeans' origins on the basis of investigating the selection of names in common use among them. It was T. Nöldeke – basing himself on detailed linguistic study of Nabataean names – who first determined that 'Arabism' formed their dominant element and that therefore the Nabataeans' origin was to be seen as Arab¹². This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the identification of those called "Nabatu" (in inscriptions) with the "Sons of Nebajoth" mentioned in the Bible and in the Assyrian chronicles of Assurbanipal – the answer to which is apparently negative – and we shall therefore merely mention the opinion accepted in research today, that their origin was Arabic¹³.

The main historic information on the Nabataeans was as we know drawn from the writings of the historian Diodorus Siculus. It is corroborated by Hieronymus of Cardia who participated in the campaign against Petra in the year 312 BCE and whom Antigonus Monophthalmus appointed to supervise the Dead Sea area and the gathering of asphalt¹⁴. According to Diodorus, in addition to the Nabataeans there were also other Arab tribes and nations (II, 48, 1) settled in the eastern region of what he called Arabia, showing that the Nabataeans formed only one element in the family of Arabic tribes there¹⁵. Diodorus makes a distinction between them and all the others, not only because of their great wealth but also in view of their

12 On the meaning of the name 'Arab' and early epigraphic occurrence see: Eph'al, *Biblical Encyclopaedia*, VI p.355ff.; Nöldeke, *ZDMG*, XVII (1863), pp.703–708; XXV (1871), p.122ff.; see also idem, apud: Euting, *Nabatäische Inschriften aus Arabien*, pp.73–80; Kammerer, *Petra*, pp.27–28; Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen*, pp.x,9,12; Starcky, *Dictionnaire*, cols. 900, 903, 924; compare also: Negev, *ANRW*, II, 8, p.527; Negev, *Masters of the Desert*, p.33.

13 See M. Eilat, "Nebajoth", *Biblical Encyclopaedia*, V, pp.744–746 (with bibliographic details); Starcky, *Dictionnaire*, col.903; Winnett & Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia*, p.99; Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, p.221ff; see also: Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, p.14ff with up-to-date bibliographic details. Latest studies by Patrich on the prohibition of human images in Nabataean art greatly reinforce the opinion concerning their Arabic origin, see: *Cathedra*, XXVI (1982), pp. 47–107; XXXVIII (1985), pp.3–54.

14 See: Diodorus Siculus, II, 48, 1–9; 49; XIX, 94, 1–10; 97, 1–7; 100, 1–2. Analysis and full details on this journey see: Abel, *RB*, XLVI (1937) pp.373–391. On Hieronymos of Cardia see recently Hornblower, *Hieronymus of Cardia*, esp. pp.44–50; additional details see note 28 below.

15 Diodorus (XIX, 94, 1) expressed himself thus: 'the land of the Arabs called Nabataeans (=την χώραν τῶν Ἀράβων τῶν καλούμενων Ναβατίων), indicating that in his eyes there were also other Arabs not Nabataeans. Later in his survey (XIX, 94, 4) he clearly distinguished between Nabataeans and what he called other 'Arab tribes' (Ἀραβικῶν ἔθνῶν), and he even distinguished them from the others by indicating their wealth. Later (XIX, 94, 10) he again distinguishes between them and 'other Arab tribes' (ἄλλα γένη τῶν Ἀράβων), several of whom farmers and had customs similar to those of the 'Syrians', apart from the fact that they did not live in permanent houses.

small numbers, which according to him did not far exceed ten thousand¹⁶. It is hard to evaluate this figure, whether it refers to the total of individuals in this tribe or only to the number of fighting men. In our opinion the second assumption seems more probable, in view of the fact that the subject of Diodorus' survey was the military campaign to Petra.

From various sources, literary and epigraphic, we know the identity of the other tribes at which Diodorus Siculus hinted, even if the information is limited just to their names. Thus for example, in *I Macc.*, 5:4 there is mention of the Sons of Baean (p. 27–28 below), and in *I Macc.*, 9:66 we have the Odomera tribe and the Sons of Phasiron, who operated in the Teko'a desert south of Judaea. In *I Macc.*, 9:36 as well as in Safaic and Greek inscriptions there is mention of the Sons of Jambri living and operating in the vicinity of Medeba (p. 34 below). Members of another tribe, called "Salmu" in inscriptions, were allies of the Nabataeans and were mentioned in the inscriptions on graves at *Mada'in Sali'ah* (in the Arabian Peninsula) and in Petra. But it is not clear whether their subsistence area extended just over the north of the Arabian Peninsula, or if eventually it reached as far as the Auranitis mountains¹⁷. In the northeast of the Sinai Peninsula lived the "Utai" tribe mentioned by Pliny, one of their centres of settlement being in *Qasrawet*¹⁸. If we judge by the mention of Nabataean names containing semi-theophoric components not given particularly to kings, and which some scholars are inclined to believe are names of tribes, there are, besides all these, also epigraphic traces of additional Arab tribes¹⁹.

The Hellenistic Era led to a great flourishing of international trade with the countries in the East and, in its wake, also to the rapid development of the Arabs as a whole and the Nabataeans in particular. This period wrought far-reaching changes in the social life and political structure of the latter. The Nabataeans as well as other Arab tribes tended gradually to abandon the traditional nomadic life, going over to a semi-permanent residential life-style that included the adoption of administrative and political order from the Hellenistic world around them. Eventually these would find significant expression in the establishment of an organised dynastic monarchy, more than a little based on political models and administrative frameworks borrowed from the neighboring kingdoms. This was to a large extent made possible when the Nabataeans realized the advantages of leaving their restricted tribal world, in order to create a broad confederation incorporating a number of Arab tribes. In Greek this phenomenon might be described as

16 Diodorus XIX, 94, 4.

17 See Milik, *Syria*, XXXV (1958), p.231ff.

18 Tsafirir, *IEJ*, XXXII (1982), pp.212–214.

19 See: Milik, *Liber Annuus*, X (1959–60), p.150. For further details see: Patrich, *Cathedra*, XXXVIII (1985), pp.7–8 and notes 23–27.

συννοικισμός, that is a federative union of several tribes for the purpose of serving common interests in the spheres of security, policy, economy, and culture. The Nabataeans were the first to understand this and were therefore the motive power for political initiative in this direction. It was this fact that raised their importance to such a high degree and established their leadership among the Arab tribes.

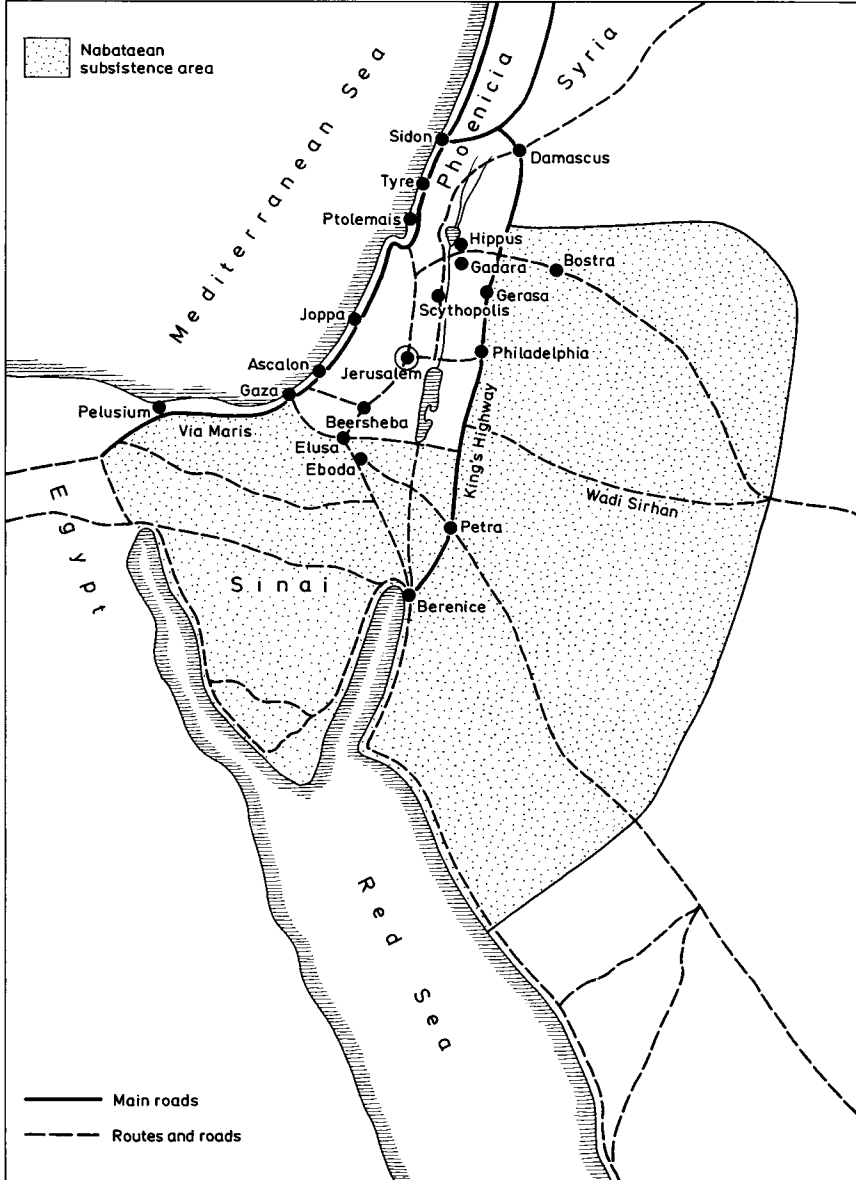
Not only that: the Nabataeans also succeeded in bringing other ethnic elements from among the previous permanent residents who lived in their vicinity on the edge of the desert into their tribal federation. This applies to the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites known from the Bible. Although Nabataeans assumed control over these peoples' lands²⁰, we simultaneously hear of continuity of the national-ethnic existence of the subject peoples, a fact that for example found expression in the continuity of settlement and the survival of traditional national ritual, even in later generations²¹. Based on archeological findings, modern scholarship has proved that Nabataean penetration into the land of biblical Edom during the Persian period did not involve overall destruction or general and organised exile of its previous inhabitants. Accepted opinion of the expulsion of the Edomites from their lands by the Nabataeans has been shown to be not quite accurate. The findings indicate the gradual process of Edomite demographic attenuation which gathered momentum in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, apparently due to Persian inspiration and permission or at least Persian non-intervention and non-prevention. In this period the signs of this process could be clearly recognised in the renewal of settlements and their expansion under a new Nabataean political framework²². Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that despite the Edomite decline, Edomite settlements did not wholly disappear from the scene. It was simply the growing Nabataean influence which gave the region a new character.

20 On Nabataean rule in Ammon and Moab, see: Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'Archeologie Orientale*, II (1898), pp.185–219; Glueck, *BASOR*, LXVIII (1937), p.15.

21 Thus for example the cult to the Moabite god Kemosh, which continued from the Persian up to the Roman period, is evidence of continuity of Moabite settlement of a definite ethnic and ritual character – see: Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins*, pp.47–62; Milik, *Liber Annuus*, IX (1958–59), pp.331–341. The same applies to the Edomite cult to the god Kos (or Koze, Qos, Cos etc.), which survived in quite a number of places in the sphere of Nabataean rule, if to judge by the widespread use of the theophoric component 'Kos' and if to judge by actual ritual finds – see: Milik, *Syria*, XXXV (1958), pp.235–241 (No. 3); Starcky, *Levant*, VII (1975), p.16; idem, *RB*, LXXV (1968), pp.208–209; see also: Patrich, *Cathedra*, XXVI (1982), pp.57,80,82,88 and cf. p.79, note 113. Kindler, *Coinage of Bostra*, p.84. On the god Kos see extensively: Vriezen, *Oudtestamentische Studien*, XIV (1965), pp.330–353.

22 On accepted opinion concerning the displacement of the Edomites westwards into the region of Idumaea see: Glueck, *AASOR*, XV (1935), p.138ff.; idem, *op.cit.*, XVIII–XIX (1937–1939), p.23ff.; Starcky, *BA*, XVIII (1955), p.86; Meyers, in: Goedicke (ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W.F. Albright*, p.386ff.; Dussaud, *Penetration* etc., p.23; on the new opinion taking shape lately, see: Bartlett, *PEQ*, CXI (1979), pp.53–66.

Map 2: The Nabataean Zone of Action



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