

Recent Archaeological Developments Relevant to Ancient Moab

Emory University, in association with the American Center for Oriental Research and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, currently is engaged in an archaeological survey of the plateau between Wadi Mūjib and Wadi Ḥesa. Thus far we have covered the northern half of the plateau proper—between Wadi Mūjib and the Kerak-Qaṭrana road, approximately 350 square kilometers. My comments in this paper will have to do specifically with this northern half of the plateau, which I will be referring to as central Moab¹. The paper has three parts: 1) a brief review of previous archaeological explorations in central Moab; 2) an equally brief account of our project; and 3) some tentative observations regarding the implications of our findings for understanding Moabite history and toponymy.

Previous archaeological explorations in Central Moab

During the nineteenth century, when other parts of Palestine were being mapped and explored systematically for archaeological remains, the plateau between Wadi Mūjib and Wadi Ḥesa tended to be by-passed. It was somewhat isolated—cut off by the two wadis, the Dead Sea and the desert. Also it was dominated by local sheiks who apprehended travellers entering their territory, forced them to pay ransom, and sent them hurrying away. Among the travellers who did penetrate central Moab during the nineteenth century, the following deserve special mention.

To my knowledge, Ulrich Seetzen² was the first European to pass through this territory after Saladin expelled the Crusaders. Seetzen crossed the Mūjib in March of 1805, and as he climbed out of the wadi onto the plateau he was waylaid and robbed. Ludwig Burckhardt³ passed through in 1812

following, as did Seetzen, the route of the old Roman road from north to south. Burckhardt reached Kerak without difficulty, making careful notes regarding the lay of the land and ancient ruins which he observed along the way; but then he was held in Kerak for approximately a month before being allowed to continue. Charles Irby and James Mangles⁴ were able to avoid any such difficulties when they passed through central Moab in 1818, following the Roman road from south to north. Commanders of the British navy, they were well armed and travelled with a small troop of bodyguards. Also, as an extra precaution against harassment from the local sheikhs, they claimed to be mercenary soldiers of Mohammed Ali. Louis de Sauley⁵ was less fortunate in 1851. Approaching Moab from around the southern end of the Dead Sea, he ascended the plateau along the northern slopes of Wadi Ibn Hammād and cut across to Qaṣr. From Qaṣr he turned south; but then his party was intercepted at approximately Rabba, taken to Kerak, and held there until appropriate ransom was paid. De Sauley made very detailed and useful notes on the archaeological ruins which he encountered during the first part of his journey through Moab, i.e. before he reached Qaṣr. It was during this first leg of his journey, for example, that he discovered the so-called Shīḥān Stela. Understandably, his notes become less detailed after Qaṣr.

F. A. Klein's discovery of the Mesha Inscription at Dhibān in 1868 created quite a stir, and inspired two follow-up expeditions into central Moab. Both were sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund; both were undertaken in hopes of finding more inscriptions; and, of course, neither was successful in this regard. The first of these follow-up expeditions occurred during the summer of 1870, when E. H. Palmer and C. F. T. Drake cut across the northwestern corner of the plateau on their return from a more extensive expedition into Sinai⁶. Then, in 1872, Klein and H. B. Tristram⁷

¹ This plateau has been occupied throughout the long sweep of human history, and we are concerned in our survey with the archaeological sites from all periods. It is appropriate to refer to the area directly east of the Dead Sea as 'Moab' however, since it is called by that name when it first appears in our earliest available written records (from the Iron Age). Northern Moab would be the area north of Wadi Mūjib to approximately Hesban; southern Moab would be from approximately the Kerak-Qaṭrana road to Wadi Ḥesa.

² U. J. Seetzen, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten*, ed., Fr. Kruse et al. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854–55).

³ J. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, ed., William Martin Leake for the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa (London: John Murray, 1822).

⁴ C. L. Irby and J. Mangles, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and the Holy Land, Including a Journey Round the Dead Sea, and through the Country East of the Jordan* (London: John Murray, 1844).

⁵ F. De Sauley, *Narrative of a Journey round the Dead Sea and in the Bible Lands*, Trans., Edward de Warren (London: Bentley, 1853–54).

⁶ E. H. Palmer, 'The Desert of the Tih and the Country of Moab', *PEFQS* (1871) 3–73.

⁷ H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Moab: Travels and Discoveries on the East Side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan* (New York: Harper, 1873).

undertook an expedition which focussed specifically on central Moab. This Klein-Tristram expedition seemed doomed to failure from the beginning. Having approached Kerak from the Lissan, they were retained there until an unusually high ransom was paid. In the meantime Klein had received news of the sudden illness of his son and decided to withdraw from the expedition. Tristram set out northward and eventually crossed Wadi Mūjib at approximately the point where the modern road crosses today; but he was plagued by heavy rainstorms and seems to have got his travel notes hopelessly garbled. The place names which he recorded do not correlate with the route which he seems to have followed, and the map which he provided only increases the confusion.

Other travellers passed through the Moabite plateau during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, including Charles Doughty⁸ and Grey Hill⁹. As the century drew to a close, however, the topography of this territory, to say nothing of the archaeological remains, still was largely unknown and in some respects misunderstood¹⁰. This is perhaps best illustrated by the *PEFQS* map published in 1890¹¹. Then, in 1894, the Turks conquered Kerak and placed there a military governor with garrison. Suddenly the situation changed. As it turned out, this governor was himself curious about the antiquities of his district and welcomed travellers who came to investigate them. There followed a flurry of exploration in the area which lasted approximately a decade, from 1894 to 1904.

F. J. Bliss¹² began this new phase with an excursion around the desert side of the plateau in March of 1895, at which time he was able to clarify the considerable confusion which still existed regarding the relative positions of the upper branches of Wadi Mūjib. His conclusions in this regard were confirmed by Rudolf Brünnow who, in the course of three expeditions (1895, 1897, 1898), made a systematic study of the Roman road system and associated fortifications. Assisted by Alfred von Domaszewski, who participated in the second and third expeditions, Brünnow published the results of his investigations in a major three volume work¹³ which included plans of the more prominent Nabataean and Roman ruins (e.g. Meḥaṭṭet el-Hājī, Qaṣr, Rabba, Lejjūn and Fityān), some of the earliest photographs of these sites, and sketch maps.

Alois Musil had access to Brünnow's notes, made several excursions of his own in 1896–1902, and devoted the first volume of his *Arabia Petraea*¹⁴ to the area east of the Dead Sea. He also prepared a 1 : 300,000 scale map which, although it still included some distortions, indicated the approximate locations of some seventy or eighty ancient ruins in central Moab. Many other travellers passed through this area during the decade which followed 1894 and reported their observations—Vincent¹⁵, Wilson¹⁶, Hornstein¹⁷, Gautier¹⁸, Libby and Hoskins¹⁹. George Adam Smith, for example, journeyed from Kerak to Madeba along the route of the old Roman road in April of 1904. Before he published his report in *PEFQS* later that same year²⁰, he had occasion to study the first volume of Brünnow's *Provincia Arabia* and a preliminary report on Musil's work. In a sense, then, Smith's report represents a concluding statement to this brief but exceedingly fruitful phase of exploration.

The antiquities of Moab were to receive little focussed attention for the next 30 years. W. F. Albright's brief expedition in 1924²¹ deserves mention, especially in view of the fact that he employed the new technique of surface sherding. Albright concentrated on the Ghor and Kerak at that time, however, making only a two-day excursion into the plateau north of Kerak. Then, in 1930, Reginald Head of the Department of Antiquities discovered the famous Bālū' stela. This created renewed interest in the plateau itself, especially in the impressive ruins at Bālū'. Horsfield and Vincent published a sketch plan of Bālū' in 1932²². The next year Crowfoot and Albright made soundings at Bālū' and Adir respectively²³. The results indicated that both sites had long histories of occupation and suggested that more extensive excavations would produce interesting results. There was no follow-up at either site, however, largely because of their relative inaccessibility. Crowfoot returned to Sebaṣṣīyeh where he had excavations already underway; and Albright began his excavation at Beitin the following year.

Nelson Glueck covered the area east of the Dead Sea in connection with his survey of the Transjordan; and as it turned out he worked central Moab the same year that

⁸ C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge: University Press, 1888).

⁹ Grey Hill, *With the Beduins* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891) and 'A Journey East of Jordan and the Dead Sea, 1895', *PEFQS* (1896) 24–46.

¹⁰ For example, Jebel Shīḥān is a prominent hill which dominates the northern part of the plateau, and Ariḥā is an ancient site (resettled since 1950) approximately 5 kilometers further to the northeast. But the contexts in which Burckhardt mentions these two places in his journal seems to imply that he passed Jebel Shīḥān on his right some distance before reaching Ariḥā. In other words, Ariḥā would be southeast of Jebel Shīḥān rather than northeast, and that is where it appears consistently on the early maps.

¹¹ *Palestine. From the Surveys Conducted for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund and Other Sources*. Compiled by G. Armstrong, Revised by C. W. Wilson and C. R. Conder, 1890.

¹² F. J. Bliss, 'Narrative of an Expedition to Moab and Gilead in March 1895', *PEFQS* (1895) 203–234.

¹³ R. E. Brünnow and A. von Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia. auf Grund zweier in den Jahren 1897 und 1898 unternommenen Reisen und der Berichte früherer Reisender* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1904–1909).

¹⁴ A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea*. Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1907–1908).

¹⁵ H. Vincent, 'Notes de voyage', *RB* 7 (1898) 424–451.

¹⁶ C. W. Wilson, 'Address Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Fund', *PEFQS* (1899) 304–316.

¹⁷ A. Hornstein, 'A Visit to Kerak and Petra', *PEFQS* (1898) 94–103.

¹⁸ L. Gautier, *Au delà du Jourdain. Souvenirs d'une Excursion faite en Mars 1894* (Geneva: Rey et Malavallon, 1895).

¹⁹ W. Libbey and F. E. Hoskins, *The Jordan Valley and Petra* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905).

²⁰ G. A. Smith, 'The Roman Road between Kerak and Madeba', *PEFQS* (1904–5) 39–48.

²¹ W. F. Albright, 'The Archaeological Results of an Expedition to Moab and the Dead Sea', *BASOR* 14 (1924) 1–12.

²² G. Horsfield and G. H. Vincent, 'Chronique: une Stèle Égypto-Moabite au Balou'a', *RB* 41 (1932) 417–444.

²³ W. F. Albright, 'Soundings at Ader, a Bronze Age City in Moab', *BASOR* 53 (1934) 13–18; J. W. Crowfoot, 'An Expedition to Balu'ah', *PEFQS* (1934) 76–84.

Crowfoot and Albright made their soundings at Bālū²⁴ and Adir, 1933²⁴. In all, he devoted approximately one week to this area and recorded 34 sites on the plateau proper. He spent most of a full day at each of three sites—Bālū²⁴, Lejjūn and el-Medeiyineh near Lejjūn. Otherwise he averaged six or seven sites a day, some of which he seems to have recorded without actually visiting.

Almost a half century has passed now since Glueck's survey. For all practical purposes, however, his report still represented the last word on the archaeology of central Moab where we began our survey in 1978. Four other developments had occurred in the meantime: 1) The Department of Antiquities has done some clearing in the temple area at Rabba; 2) Olavárri made a sounding at Khirbet el-Medeiyineh in 1976; 3) Accurate maps, prepared from aerial photography, are now available for this part of Jordan; 4) There have been some important excavations in the surrounding areas—Dhibān, 'Aro'er and Ḥesban north of the Mūjib; Buseirah south of the Ḥesa; and Bab edh-Dhra down in the Ghor.

The present survey

The present survey has been undertaken with three main goals in mind. Our first is to develop an accumulative and comprehensive gazetteer of archaeological sites on the plateau between Wadi Mūjib and Wadi Ḥesa with their precise locations established and correlated with the most recent maps. Given the broad range of territory which Glueck attempted to cover, his survey was necessarily superficial. Moreover, at least with regard to central Moab, his report is not accumulative in that it takes into account archaeological data which had been reported by others before him. True, Glueck makes occasional references to earlier travellers' reports in the footnotes. It is altogether apparent from his own observations, however, that he was essentially unfamiliar with their findings²⁵. This is unfortunate; Musil alone had already reported virtually all of the sites which Glueck recorded in central Moab, and at least twice that many more.

Since these earlier travellers, including Glueck, did not have accurate maps, they could only estimate the locations of the ancient sites which they encountered. Once we have sifted through their travel accounts and catalogued the references to ancient ruins, therefore, it remains to re-locate these ruins in the field and establish their map co-ordinates. At the same time we are making our own systematic coverage of the plateau in order to catch any sites which those before us may have missed. With this procedure we have dealt with more than 250 sites now in the same area where Glueck recorded 34.

Our second goal is to prepare a brief description of each site, with photographs and sketch plans where appropriate. Some of the sites urgently need more attention than we are

giving them—particularly in those cases where modern villages are emerging on or near ancient ruins. We have decided to keep moving, however, until we get a better survey of the plateau as a whole. For recording purposes we are classifying the sites according to six broad categories, ranging from 'Full Settlements' (places where villages or cities have stood in times past) to a miscellaneous category for cave dwellings, dams, old roadways, etc.

Finally, we are making a rather intensive collection of the surface pottery at each site and processing it in the following manner. Nondescript body sherds are counted and discarded on the site. Those which seem to have some potential for dating purposes are brought to camp, washed, read and assigned whenever possible to their respective periods. Those which cannot be assigned to a particular period with confidence are assigned to either of two further categories: UD (unidentified) or UDE (unidentified, but apparently pre-Roman). With the exception of some additional discards—poorer examples where there is an abundance of sherds of a particular type—the sherds are then registered.

Naturally our readings of the pottery must be considered tentative, if for no other reason that the only stratigraphic controls come from sites outside this rather isolated plateau. In view of this tentativeness, and in order to make the raw data from our survey immediately available to other specialists, the following items have been placed at the Kerak Museum;

- 1) A copy of the survey log book which lists all of the sites treated thus far with their names, Palestinian Grid co-ordinates and the field numbers which we assigned them.
- 2) A 1:25,000 scale map which locates each site and indicates its classification according to the six categories mentioned above.
- 3) The pottery itself, bagged and clearly tagged according to field number.

We hope to resume the survey during the summer of 1982, moving south of the Kerak-Qaṭrana road this time in the direction of Wadi Ḥesa.

Some implications for understanding Moabite history and toponymy

Although we have surveyed only the northern part of the plateau, it is apparent already that our findings will demand reconsideration of several widely held views regarding the history and toponymy of ancient Moab. Three examples, all representing occasions where our findings and Glueck's differ, now follow.

- 1) One of Glueck's well known conclusions was that the whole area east of the Dead Sea and south to Aqaba was essentially devoid of sedentary occupation throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. In his opinion this occupational gap was concluded by a resurgence of village life during the

²⁴ N. Glueck, *Explorations in Eastern Palestine I*, AASOR XIV (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1934) 1-113.

²⁵ Compare, for example, Glueck's description of Sejerah (his site #134, p. 62) with Musil's description of Beit Lejja in volume 1, page 87.

thirteenth century and he associated this resurgence with the rise of the kingdoms of Edom and Moab. Since the biblical account of the Israelite exodus from Egypt has the Israelites encountering Edomite and Moabite kingdoms along the way, it was argued further that the Exodus must have occurred at least as late as the thirteenth century²⁶. This line of argument gained wide acceptance to the extent that the thirteenth century date for the rise of the Edomite and Moabite kingdoms and the Israelite Exodus has become a standard element in history books, atlases and encyclopaedias.

There are problems with this line of argument quite apart from whether Glueck interpreted the ceramic evidence correctly, and I have attempted to point out some of these problems in other contexts²⁷. The ceramic evidence is the most crucial aspect of the argument, however, and it is precisely this aspect which has met with increasing resistance during recent years. On the one hand, occasional Late Bronze Age remains have turned up in southern Jordan since Glueck's survey e.g. the LB tomb at Hesban reported by Lankester Harding in 1953²⁸. On the other hand, subsequent excavations in Edom and Moab (Umm el-Biyarah, Tawilan, Buseirah, Dhibān, 'Aro'er, Hesban) seem to suggest that the post-LB resurgence of sedentary occupation occurred much later than the thirteenth century, perhaps as late as the ninth or eighth century. G. E. Mendenhall summed up the situation as follows in 1976.

Meanwhile, things have been happening in archaeological and historical research. Paul Lapp told me in 1965 that Nelson Glueck had dated those 'Edomite border fortresses' at least two centuries too early, and they therefore had nothing to do with events during the lifetime of Moses. In fact, the three most competent specialists in Transjordan have assured me that at present we have not a single Early Iron Age sherd between Wadi Mojib (=River Arnon) and Qurayya in the land of Midian, now in Saudi Arabia²⁹.

Naturally this is one of the problem areas which we had in mind when we began our survey. Would a more thorough coverage of the Moabite plateau combined with more systematic sherding procedures confirm Glueck's gap hypothesis? If so, did the post-LB resurgence of sedentary occupation begin during the thirteenth century or later?

As it turns out, we too have found the Middle Bronze Age

to be surprisingly elusive. Specifically, we have found occasional sherds at approximately twenty sites which could pass for MB, but few if any absolute certainties and never in significant concentration. For the Late Bronze Age, on the other hand, we can point to some seven or eight sites with fairly good representation, and twice that many more with less compelling evidence. Iron Age pottery has turned up at some forty sites, with both Early and Late Iron Ages well represented. In short, while our findings agree with Glueck's findings in that we also notice a sudden decline in the abundance of surface pottery representing the Middle Bronze Age, ours do not confirm his conclusion that there was a virtually complete occupational gap which extended throughout the Late Bronze Age and ended specifically during the thirteenth century. There is the prior question, of course, as to whether the relative abundance of surface pottery from a given period is a safe indicator of its degree of sedentary occupation. To the extent that it is, our findings seem to indicate at least a scattering of settlements even during the Middle Bronze Age which gradually increased in number during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. Certainly there is nothing here that will provide us with a precise date for the emergence of the Moabite kingdom or for the Israelite Exodus from Egypt.

2) Irby and Mangles, passing through central Moab in 1818, suggested Rabba as the site of ancient Rabbath-Moab, later called Areopolis³⁰. The name Rabbath-Moab does not actually appear in the Old Testament, our main source of information about Moabite place names. The Old Testament does know of an 'Ar Moab, however, which seems to have been a name of an area bordered by the Arnon River (Wadi Mūjib) and perhaps the name also of a city situated within that area. Musil observed the similarity of sound between 'Ar and Areopolis, speculating that the former may have suggested the latter and that the memory of both may be preserved in Marma el-'Eir, the Arabic name of a low-lying knoll just south of Rabba³¹. In short, Musil suggested that 'Ar Moab, Rabbath-Moab, Areopolis and present-day Rabba are all essentially the same place.

This equation of place names was generally accepted until Glueck's survey, from which he reports the following:

At er-Rabbah, generally associated with Rabbah-Moab, an extensive search was undertaken for Early Iron Age pottery. Not a sherd was found which could be identified as belonging to the Early Iron Age or earlier³².

Actually Glueck did not report any Iron Age pottery at all from Rabba, which does not create a serious problem for the Rabbath-Moab/Rabba part of the equation since Rabbath-Moab appears first in Josephus. This did seem to disqualify

²⁶ N. Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan* (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1940), p. 146.

²⁷ J. M. Miller, 'The Israelite Occupation of Canaan', *Israelite and Judaeen History*, ed., J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (London: SCM Press, 1977) pp. 213–284; 'Archaeology and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan: Some Methodological Observations', *PEQ* (1977) 87–93.

²⁸ G. L. Harding *et al.*, *Four Tomb Groups from Jordan*, *APEF* vi (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1953) 27–41.

²⁹ G. E. Mendenhall, 'Migration Theories vs. Culture Change as an Explanation for Early Israel', *Society of Biblical Literature 1976 Seminar Papers* (Missoula Mo.: Scholars Press, 1976) 135–143, esp. p. 140.

³⁰ Irby and Mangles, p. 141.

³¹ Musil, I, pp. 369–70; p. 381, n. 4, 5.

³² *AASOR* xiv, p. 67.

Rabba as the site of 'Ar Moab, however, so the latter has been sought elsewhere. Some have associated 'Ar with el-Mišna³³, a site approximately two kilometers northeast of Rabba where Glueck did report some Iron Age pottery; others have opted for Kirbet el-Medeiyneh³⁴, which overlooks an upper branch of Wadi Mūjib.

We did find Early Iron pottery at Rabba, and occasional Late Bronze Age sherds as well. This does not confirm the 'Ar Moab/Rabbath Moab/Areopolis/Rabba equation, of course, but it does remove one serious objection to it. Also we can clarify now some of the confusion which has arisen from the fact that at least five different sites within the territorial realm of ancient Moab are called by the same name, Khirbet el-Medeiyneh. Musil reported three of these: Medeiyyeh on Wadi eth-Themed, Medeiyyeh on Wadi Saliya and Medeiyyeh on Wadi Lejjūn. Glueck reported these same three again (assigning them field numbers 68, 93 and 141 respectively) and reported a fourth Medeiyyeh on Wadi Ḥesa (field number 222). Unfortunately Glueck confused the Medeiyyeh on Wadi Themed with the Medeiyyeh on Wadi Lejjūn in a crucial footnote in the first volume of his report³⁵, which throws the reader off from that point on. Van Zyl then, in his history of the Moabites, treated the Medeiyyeh on Wadi Lejjūn and the Medeiyyeh on Wadi Saliya as if they were one and the same and proposed this composite site as the real 'Ar Moab³⁶. Finally, in 1976, Olavárri made a sounding at a Khirbet el-Medeiyneh which overlooks Wadi Lejjūn³⁷ and which I for one assumed to be the same site which Musil and Glueck had reported in that vicinity. As it turns out, this is another Medeiyyeh altogether, the fifth Medeiyyeh in the realm of ancient Moab. In other words, there are two Medeiyyehs overlooking Wadi Lejjūn no more than four or five kilometers apart. They are strikingly similar, and the ceramic remains from both seem to date primarily from the Early Iron Age.

3) The biblical account of the Israelite exodus from Egypt refers at two points to a road or roads called *derek hammelek*. The first instance is Numbers 20:17, where the Israelites make the following request to the king of Edom:

Now let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyards, neither will we drink water from a well; we will go along *derek hammelek*, we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, until we have passed through your territory.

³³ A. H. Van Zyl, *The Moabites, Pretoria Oriental Series III* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

³⁵ AASOR xiv, p. 63, n. 60a.

³⁶ Van Zyl, pp. 72–73.

³⁷ J. A. Sauer, 'Iron I Pillared House in Moab', BA 42 (1979) 9. Report by Olavárri forthcoming in ADAJ.

The second reference is in the following chapter, Numbers 21:22, where the same request is made in almost the same words to king Sihon of Heshbon.

Now it is not at all clear whether this term *derek hammelek* should be translated as a proper name or as an appellative. In the former case it would be translated 'the King's Highway' and refer to a particular road (such as 'the Blue Ridge Parkway' or 'the Great North Road'). In the latter case it would be translated something like 'the royal road' (we might say 'the freeway' or 'Hauptstrasse') and one could suppose that there might be various royal roads in different parts of the country. Earlier commentators generally understood *derek hammelek* in the appellative sense³⁸, and in fact the two passages mentioned above seem to presuppose two unrelated roads. Specifically, the context of Numbers 20:17 seems to require that the *derek hammelek* to which it refers led eastward from Kedesh-Barnea (somewhere in northeastern Sinai), while Numbers 21:22 clearly has to do with a *derek hammelek* which passed in the vicinity of Heshbon.

To my knowledge, the idea that *derek hammelek* in these two passages was the proper name for a single major highway which led north-south through Moab and Edom originated with Glueck. The only really new evidence which he offered in support of this interpretation was that he found numerous Iron Age sites along the route of the Roman road:

What is this 'King's Highway' which cut through central Transjordan as early as the time of Moses? Where did this 'royal road' lead to? As must already be apparent to the reader, it is nothing more and nothing less than the very same highway, or the line of that highway which in due course of time became Trajan's Road, and which today has become Emir Abdullah's road. It is called in the modern Arabic vernacular, *et-Tariq es-Sultani*, the Sultan's Road. The King's Highway led from Aqabah to Syria. Along its length, and marking its character as clearly as if there had been Roman milestones with Latin inscriptions or modern Transjordanian sign-posts with Arabic letters, have been found numerous sites, which can be dated by pottery finds between the 13th and 6th centuries BC³⁹.

Thus far in our survey we have not noticed any such pattern of Iron Age sites. But even if such a pattern does emerge; if it can be confirmed that the old Roman road through Moab and Edom was preceded by a major Iron Age road; the question will remain open as to whether this was one of various major routes which were known as 'royal roads' or whether it is the one and only 'King's Highway.'

³⁸ E.g., G. B. Gray, *Numbers, The International Critical Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) p. 267.

³⁹ Glueck, *The Other Side of Jordan*, p. 15.