

## SEALS AND TOMBSTONES

(The three seals illustrated here are all from the tomb of Adoni-nur in Amman: the complete tomb-group is being published in an Occasional Paper of the P.E.F. The large tombstone came from the Ghôr-eş-Şâfi at the south end of the Dead Sea. The other three are from ez-Zib near Acre.—*Ed.*)

### I. INSCRIBED SEALS

THE first seal (Pl. XXI, 1, numbered J1191), is of carnelian (?), with a large white blotch, oval in shape, pierced through its narrow width, and mounted in a ring of silver; this, measuring 25 × 20 mm. inside, seems too big to have been worn on the finger or thumb and may have hung from a chain. The inscribed surface, measuring 20 × 17 mm. and divided into two halves along its length by a double line, is inscribed:

לאדנר ע  
בר עמנדב

that is, '(belonging) to 'Adoni-nur servant of 'Ammi-nadab.'

The engraving is a good example of the lapidary's art, the letters being finely and carefully cut; the photograph (enlarged three times) shows clearly the fine scratches on the surface caused in the final polishing and also reveals the engraver's technique, apparently gouging with a very fine point which has occasionally slipped and still further scratched the surface; these scratches are visible in almost every letter. The forms of the letters differ slightly from those on the seal of 'Adoni-pelet,<sup>1</sup> notably the ע and the ל; these on the latter are square, while on the former they are round, although the ל is slightly squared. The ב and the נ are different; but the ך has the same long vertical stroke, making it almost like the ך of early inscriptions.

This seal can only be compared with the other mentioned above, which reads:

לאדנפלט  
עבר עמנדב

that is, '(belonging) to 'Adoni-pelet servant of 'Ammi-nadab'; the place of finding is unknown, but it is generally thought to be of Ammonite origin (Diringer, *Iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi*, 253-255), since Ashurbanipal speaks of an Ammonite king called *Am-mi-na-ad-bi* (Streck, *Assurbanipal*, II, 140-141, c, i, 34). The names, namely 'ăđôni-nûr and 'ammî-nādāb (as they may be approximately vocalized), mean respectively 'my lord (is) the light' and 'my (divine) uncle (is) noble,' just as 'ăđôni-pelet means 'my lord (is) escape'; and the similarity both in the names and in the position of the owners of the seal suggests a common origin.

The second seal (Pl. XXI, 2; numbered J1195) is perhaps an onyx made opaque by burning; the surface is covered with thin crackle lines and a few large fractures, all clearly due to heat. The black-and-white banding makes it extremely difficult to see

<sup>1</sup> AASOR, II-III, p. 103ff.

the cutting on both sides; and, if the stone in its original condition was anything like what it is now, the maker must have had considerable trouble in engraving it. In shape it is oval and double-faced; it measures 24 × 14 mm. and is 7 mm. in thickness, pierced through in its greatest length. On one side is a four-winged human figure, standing facing right and wearing a long-fringed Assyrian garment; the arms are extended on either side, but the head is lost in consequence of the flaking off of a piece of the surface through heat. On the other side is a human-headed winged bull, standing facing right with its front legs, which are bent at the knee-joints, held out before it. There seems to be a wig on the head, and the face is bearded. Below the figure is a single line, beneath which is inscribed:

לשבאל

That is, '(belonging) to Shub-'el.'

The owner's name as it is here written is new but may probably be identified with שבואל or rather שבאל (LXX; cf. I Chron. xxv. 4, 20); for this may be compared with the Ass. *Šûb-na-il* and the S.-Arab *taw-b'l* meaning 'turn (pray), O God' (Noth, *Personennamen*, 32).

The third seal (Pl. XXI, 3; numbered J1200), is unfortunately badly rubbed and therefore not entirely easy to describe. It is made of a brown stone, very much worn, scaraboid, almost circular in shape. The inscribed face has been divided into three registers by two double lines: first, a legend of perhaps five letters; second, the royal four-winged scarabaeus centrally placed and flanked on either side by some kind of standard which faintly resembles a thistle; third, another legend composed perhaps of four letters. The upper legend may perhaps be read למנחם and the lower register seems to read נימן; the text may then be interpreted as:

למנחם [בן] or למנחם [בן]  
ן ימן                      נימן

that is, either '(belonging) to Menahem son of Yamin' or '(belonging) to Menahem (son of) Benjamin'; for all these names are attested in the Old Testament. Either reading, however, is offered only with every possible reservation.

All three seals seem to belong to the Israelite period, c. 8th century B.C.<sup>1</sup>

## II. INSCRIBED STONES

The first three stones, now in the Palestine Archaeological Museum at Jerusalem, come from the cemetery of erRâs at ezZib near Acre.

The first stone (Pl. XXI, 6; numbered 42.251 in the catalogue of the Museum) is a stela of limestone and is inscribed:

לעמדהו  
ד

meaning 'to (the memory of) 'Ammi-hud'; this name, spelled עמיהוד 'ammîhûd and meaning 'my (divine) uncle (is) glory (?)', is found also in the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Ammi-nadab being king of Ammon under Ashur-bani-pal may be dated about 650 B.C.—*Ed.*



The second stela (Pl. XXI, 7; numbered 42.252) is of sandstone and is inscribed:

לְעֶבֶד־שֵׁמֶשׁ  
שׁ בֶּן אֲשִׁי

meaning 'to (the memory of) 'Ebed-shemesh son of 'Ashshi' or the like. The first name does not occur in the Old Testament and, although it means 'Servant of (the sun-god) Shamash,' is not necessarily that of a non-Israelite; for this god's name occurs also in *Šimš ōn*, namely Samson, the name of one of the judges of Israel before the establishment of the Kingdom. The second name is found in post-Biblical Hebrew literature.<sup>1</sup>

The third stela (Pl. XXI, 8; numbered 42.253), also of sandstone, is inscribed:

לְזֶכֶר מֶ  
לְךָ

meaning 'to the memory of Melech' or perhaps rather 'to Zecher (the son of) Melech'; for the first translation must be rejected as based on an idiom otherwise apparently unknown,<sup>2</sup> while the second only involves an ellipse commonly found on Israelite seals. Both names are found in the Old Testament, though only in exilic or post-exilic parts of it, so that their presence on a pre-exilic tombstone is interesting; but they are found early enough in some form or other on inscriptions in the cognate languages.

All three monuments are tombstones of the Israelite period and may be dated c. 7th–6th centuries B.C. on epigraphical grounds.

The last monument (Pl. XXI, 5) is also a tombstone of a very different kind, now in the Jordan Archaeological Museum (numbered J376). It is a large block of stone carrying the following inscription, engraved in a late style of lettering arranged in eight lines. The text is to the following effect:

תְּרַח נִפְשָׁהּ  
דְּאֶסְתֵּר בְּרַתָּהּ  
דְּעֵדְיֹו דְּמִיתָתָּהּ  
בִּירַח שְׁבַט  
דְּשֵׁתָּהּ ג' וְשִׁבְעֵנִיז  
שְׁנַת תְּלַת מֵאַנְהָה  
מִן שְׁנֵינִי לְחֵרְבֹן  
בֵּית מִקְדָּשָׁהּ  
שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם  
סְלָה

which may be translated: 'This is the tomb of 'Esther the wife of 'Edyo, who died in the month of Shebat of her seventy-third year, the year three hundred of the era of the destruction of the place of the sanctuary. Peace, peace for ever!'

In l. 3 עֵדְיֹו is otherwise known as a Nabataean and Arabic name.<sup>3</sup> In ll. 6–8 the date is given as the 300th year of the destruction of the (Second) Temple; this is dated

<sup>1</sup> Jastrow, *Dictionary*, I, 127.

<sup>2</sup> No examples in Klein, Frey or Chwolson (s. Lieben in *Encycl. Jud.*, VII, 625–628).

<sup>3</sup> Cook, *Glossary*, 89.

A.D. 68/9 by Jewish chronology, so that A.D. 368/9 is the date of the tomb. In l. 5 the text is unfortunately uncertain. The obvious reading is **דשתה ג דשמטרה**, 'of the year 3 of (the) release.' This is a common formula, giving a second date by the number of the sabbatical year; this is a cycle of seven years and, if it is reckoned from A.D. 68/9, which is known to have been a sabbatical year, the 42nd 'year of release' is found to be A.D. 362/3, to which the addition of three years gives A.D. 365/6 as the date of the tomb. The two dates therefore do not agree. Another possible reading is **דשתה ג ושבענין**, 'of her year 3 and seventy,' i.e. of her seventy-third year; and this may perhaps be accepted, even though the letter before **שבענין** is unlike that of any other **ן** in the inscription, since the addition of a woman's age to a funerary inscription in memory of her is not unknown.<sup>1</sup> The form of the statement, however, is peculiar. Another unusual idiom is **מן שנין**, 'of (the) years,'<sup>2</sup> as a method of indicating the era; for such a phrase seems to be unique. These difficulties prompt the question whether the stone is genuine.

G. R. DRIVER

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Frey, CIJ. I, 452-453, 634, 9-10; and Chwolson, CIH. 163, 83, 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Similarly **שנין לגלותנו**, 'year . . . of the years of our captivity' (Chwolson, CIH. 267, BA5); hardly . . . **מן מנין**, 'from the reckoning of' the destruction of the Temple (s. *ibid.*, 176-177, 119, 6-7).