

THE AMMAN CITADEL INSCRIPTION

(PL. LIV)

By : Siegfried H. Horn

In 1961 excavations were carried out on the southwest crest of the **Jebel el-Qala'ah**, the Citadel mound, of Amman by the Department of Antiquities under the direction of the department's assistant director, Mr. Rafiq W. Dajani. In the course of the excavations outside the Roman wall remains of the Iron Age fortification of Rabbath-Ammon were discovered, and in the Iron Age level a stone slab came to light which has an inscription of eight lines on one side. The stone is now in the Archaeological Museum in Amman and carries the number J9000. In July, 1968, the author of **this article** was entrusted with the publication of the inscription by its discoverer, Mr. Rafiq Dajani, to whom the author wishes to express his gratitude for this generosity.

The stone is of white fine-grained limestone. Its greatest height is 26 cm. and greatest width 19.4 cm. at the height of the first line. Its thickness is irregular. In the lower right corner a rectangular piece is carefully cut out, evidently to fit the stone into something which required an odd-shaped building block. All four sides, except for the already mentioned corner, are irregularly cut to form a rectangle of approximately 26 x 19 cm. in size. It was probably in the course of this rough dressing operation that the face of the stone suffered badly and lost several of its letters through flaking off of parts of the outer limestone layer. It is possible that this damage occurred when the stone was placed face-down on an uneven rock, while its sides were cut off with a hammer without the use of a chisel. The face of the stone does not show any signs of corrosion or a long exposure to the forces of nature. Wherever the stone is not damaged through some loss of the uppermost layer the surface is smooth and the characters, being sharply incised in the stone, can be identified without difficulty.

In the process of the mutilation of the original inscribed stone, the beginnings and endings of every line were lost, perhaps also some lines at the bottom, because there is no way of ascertaining whether the eighth line of the preserved text was the last line. On the other hand it seems that the first line of our text was also the first line of the original inscription, because the lines are rather uniformly spaced, and there is enough well-preserved space left above the first line to show that there had not been any text preceding that first line. Neither the preserved stone fragment nor the text provides any evidence to indicate how much text material has been lost, or what the size of the stone slab had been before its mutilation.

The preserved inscription consists of about 33 words including incomplete words. There is considerable uncertainty with regard to some words, because of the irregular dots and spaces between words. **76 characters are well enough** preserved to make their reading certain. Six are slightly uncertain. They are marked in the transliteration of the text by a dot placed over the characters. Nine characters are very problematic. The remaining traces make certainty impossible. They carry a small circle in the transliteration.

The individual characters are very **uneven** in size, and even some differences in shape are noticeable. The **lamed** varies from 12 to 20mm. in length, the **kaph** from 18 to 28 mm., the **yod** from 10 to 15 mm., and the samekh from 13 to 26 mm. Although the eight specimens of the letter **mem** show a superficial uniformity, variances can be observed in details and stance of their tails. Two of the **alephs** (lines 1 and 3) are alike, but the shape of the third **aleph** (line 6) differs markedly from the other two. One **ayin** (line 3) is closed as in early Phoenician inscriptions, another is open at the top (line 6) as in postexilic Hebrew inscriptions, while a third one (line 2) looks like a little hole, or an extra-large word divider, so that this character is marked as uncertain in the transliteration.

Two characters are unique - **teth** and **sade**. No close parallels to the shape at these two letters seem to occur in known Phoenician or Hebrew inscriptions , although their general appearance is clear enough to assure their identification. The **teth** of the Amman Citadel Inscription is an oblique standing oval with a line dividing the oval into two halves. It looks similar to a Greek **theta** of which it was, of course, the ancestor. The closest examples of this **teth** in other inscriptions are found in the Aramaic Hadad Inscription of Zenjirli from the early 8th century, and in the Aramaic Sefire Stela I of the middle of the 8th century. In both inscriptions the **teth** consists of an oblique standing oval with a cross inside.

The **sade** looks like a **kaph** with the arms pointing in the wrong direction. That the **sade** differs from other known specimens of this letter is, however, not too strange in view of the great variety of existing forms of this letter in early Phoenician and Hebrew inscriptions.

The shape of the letters shows that the date of the Amman Citadel Inscription is not far removed from that of the 9th century **Moabite Stone**. In fact, two of the **alephs**, also the letters **y, n, s, r, s** and **t** are very closely related to those of the **Moabite Stone** (ca. 840), but the letters **b, d, h** and **m** and the **aleph** of line 6 are closer to the **Kilamuwa Inscription** (ca 825) which is slightly younger than the **Moabite Stone**.

The only preserved **heth** has only two horizontal bars against three such bars regularly found in Phoenician inscriptions, the **Moabite Stone**, and elsewhere. However, several **heths** of the **Samaria ostraca** — probably originating in the 8th century — have only two horizontal bars.

The one open **ayin** of line 6 also points to the later period. In fact, open **ayins** do not

begin in Phœnician inscriptions before the 5th century. However, one cannot date the Amman Citadel Inscription so late on the basis of that one (**ayin**).

It must therefore be considered an exception. It seems safe to conclude from these observations that the Amman Citadel Inscription is younger than the Moabite Stone, and even somewhat younger than the Kilamuwa Inscription. A date in the early 8th century B. C. seems to be conservative.

Transliteration

1. . . m] Ik. *bñh*. Ik. *mb*) t. *sbbt* [. . . .
2. . . .] *kk*. *msbb* (Ik. *mtymtn* [. . . .
3. . . .] *khd*) *khd*? k1. *m(rb* [. . . .
4. . . .] *wb* k1.?? *tyl nd sdq* [. . . .
5. . . .] *l*. *tdl tbdl* t. *bñ krh* [. . . .
6. . . .]??*h*. *tst* (*bñ*)*lm*?? [. . . .
7.] *ws* ? ? ? ? ? [. . . .
8.] ?? *lm*. *Ik. w* ? ? ? ? [. . . .

Translation

1. . . Mi] Ikom has built for you entrances round about [. . . .
2. . . .] according to all that surrounds you from **Tymtn** [to
3. . . .] what had been destroyed I . . . throughout the west [. . . .
4. . . .] and on every threshold . . . of the legitimate wall [. . . .
5. . . .] door, at the inner door he dug [. . . .
6. . . .] . . . fear was among the men of the portico [. . . .
7.] [. . . .
8.] . . . for you [. . . .

Detailed linguistic and lexicographical notes to this tentative translation will be published in the **Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research**, No. 193 (February, 1969).