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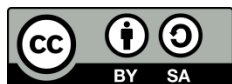
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Table of Contents

ARTICLES

Ioannis LIRITZIS, Artemios OIKONOMOU Archaeometric Studies in The Aegean (3000-3000 BC and 800-200 BC): A review	1
Haggai OLSHANETSKY The Israelite-Judaean Military Service in the Armies of Assyria	33
Larisa PECHATNOVA Spartan King Agesilaus and the Case of Sphodrias	47
José ORTIZ CÓRDOBA <i>Alieni in Corduba, Colonia Patricia: desde la fundación de la ciudad hasta la Antigüedad tardía</i>	65
María José ESTARÁN TOLOSA Arse-Saguntum, la ciudad de los dos nombres	109
Konstantinos ARAMPAPALIS Manipulating the Past: Antiquarian Comments in Cicero's <i>De Haruspicum responso</i>	133
Pedro TRAPERO FERNÁNDEZ Territorial modelling using Ancient viticulture parameters in Roman Times. A case study in the betic colony of <i>Hasta Regia</i>	147
Gabriel Mircea TALMAȚCHI, Cristian CEALERA New information on roman monetary discoveries in the vicinity of the Tropaeum Traiani (com. Adamclisi, county Constanța) in the context of the second century AD	173
Casian GĂMĂNUȚ A Dacian soldier from Mauretania Caesariensis. The case of Decineus and his <i>frater</i>	191
Bogdan Constantin NECULAU L'éducation chez les anciens Israélites. Une analyse de la perspective de la pédagogie moderne.....	199

INTERVIEW

Vasile DIACONU

Archaeology across the ocean. Interview with Professor Ashley Dumas - UWA.....213

The Israelite-Judaeen Military Service in the Armies of Assyria

Haggai OLSHANETSKY¹

Abstract. *The Israelite-Judaeen Military Service in the Armies of Assyria has not been fully discussed, and this article is an attempt to offer a fuller picture of this phenomenon. This article is composed of two parts. The first will concentrate and discuss all the evidence we have for Israelite and Judaeen units that were absorbed into the Assyrian army, which will be used as a foundation for the second half of the article. All this will attempt to show that the inscription detailing the Assyrian capture of 200 Israeli chariots, rather than 50 as is written in two other inscriptions, is the more accurate one, and then discuss the implications of such a conclusion. The second part is the first attempt to concentrate all the names of possible Assyrian soldiers who are of Israelite and/or Judaeen origin. The first and second parts together encompass the first attempt to concentrate all the evidence for Israelite and Judaeen service in the Assyrian army in one place. This will prove that Israelites and Judaeans served in the Assyrian army in a continuous manner from at least the fall of Samaria until the fall of the Assyrian Empire.*

Rezumat. *Servicul militar al iudeilo în armatele asiriene nu a fost supus unei discuții exhaustive, iar articolul de față vine să completeze imaginea acestui fenomen. Prima parte a articolului va aborda evidența unităților din Israel din armata asiriană. Partea a a doua se concentrează pe numele soldașilor asirieni care ar putea avea o origine idee/israelită.*

Keywords: Kingdom of Israel, Kingdom of Judea, Assyria, Chariots, Ancient warfare, Battle of Qarqar.

Between the tenth and the ninth centuries BCE, in the days of the heirs of King Solomon, the United Monarchy of Israel split into two entities – the Kingdom of Judea, in the southern parts of the land of Israel, and the Kingdom of Israel to the north, which was the larger, stronger and more important of the two. At the end of the eighth century BCE, the Kingdom of Israel (also known as the Kingdom of Samaria, after the name of its capital city) was conquered by the Assyrians. At the time, the Assyrian Empire was the largest empire in the Near East and a major power in developing and utilizing cavalry in war.² The Assyrians exiled most of the inhabitants of Samaria and dispersed them across the vast areas of their empire. While doing so, the Assyrians recruited many of the exiles to their army and even integrated entire units of the defeated enemy's army into the Empire's army. Their service in the armies of the Empire may indicate the reputation of the Israelites and the willingness of Israelites and Judaeans to enlist into a non-Jewish army.

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² About the Assyrian cavalry, see: DEZSÓ 2012b.

This article is composed of two parts. The first will concentrate and discuss all the evidence we have for Israelite and Judaeen units that were absorbed into the Assyrian army, which will be used as a foundation for the second half of the article. All this will attempt to show that the inscription detailing the Assyrian capture of 200 Israeli chariots, rather than 50 as is written in another inscription, is the more accurate one, and then discuss the implications of such a conclusion. The second part is the first attempt to concentrate all the names of possible Assyrian soldiers who are of Israelite and/or Judaeen origin. The first and second parts together encompass the first attempt to concentrate all the evidence for Israelite and Judaeen service in the Assyrian army in one place. This will prove that Israelites and Judaeans served in the Assyrian army in a continuous manner from at least the fall of Samaria until the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

Exile as a Method

Before dealing with the testimonies regarding the conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians, we first need to understand the Assyrians' methods of conquest and subsequent expulsion of populations. Whenever the Assyrians conquered new territories, or had to subdue rebellious areas, they normally exiled the native population to another part of the Empire. Yet, they never expelled the entire population; not even a majority of it. They always expelled the elite of the population and thus, prevented them from inciting and leading a rebellion, as well as the soldiers and craftsmen, who could professionally and materially sustain a rebellion.³

The expelled elite would end up in another territory administered by the Assyrians.⁴ In the new location, the exiled elite actually replaced the original local one which had also been expelled and transferred to a third territory.⁵ The elite, settled among the local foreign population, retained their status and rank thanks to the Assyrian regime, so in return they owed service to the Assyrians.⁶ They acted as the administration of their new territory and provided a garrison and a reserve force in the area allocated to them. Sometimes, they provided troops to the Royal Army i.e. the field army of Assyria.

This recruitment of mercenaries and soldiers from the armies of conquered enemies was very common during antiquity.⁷ The Assyrian army was no different than any other army

³ For further reading about the Assyrian method of expulsion, see: NA'AMAN 1989; For the usage of exiled people in the Assyrian army, see: DEZSÓ 2016, 39-40.

⁴ Regarding the Assyrian methods and its implementation in Samaria see also: KOCH 2019; RADNER, 2019.

⁵ OLSHANETSKY 2017.

⁶ On another exile, Jehoiachin's Exile see: GLATT-GILAD 2017.

⁷ DEZSÓ 2016, 39-40.

and such recruitments of many nationals are well documented before the eighth century BCE,⁸ and not only of Israelites and Judaeans.

Evidence for the Recruitment of Israelites from the Fall of Samaria

There are various depictions, both literary and artistic, of the Assyrian conquest of Samaria. One of those of interest to us comes from two findings from the modern-day city of Khorsabad, once the ancient city of Dur-Sharrukin. The first is a display inscription while the second is taken from the Annals, whose missing parts were completed according to the same display inscription.⁹ In both, Sargon II declared that he had besieged the city of Samaria, conquered it and expelled 27,290 inhabitants. Furthermore, the Assyrian king mentioned that he had formed a new unit composed of 50 chariots and their crews, who had been taken from amongst the captives.¹⁰ The number fifty was preserved in full in both inscriptions. It is written as so in the complete display inscription:

"I besieged and conquered the city Samaria. I took as booty 27,290 people who lived there. I formed a unit of 50 chariotry from them, and I allowed the rest to pursue their own skills. I set my governor over them, and I imposed upon them the (same) tribute as the previous king."¹¹

As we can see, Sargon formed a unit based entirely on chariots and crew from the defeated Kingdom of Israel.¹² From this, we can deduce that the Israelites were highly skilled in the art of chariotry and were sought after by the Assyrians in that capacity.¹³ It will be examined in later pages whether a unit comprised of non-Assyrian soldiers, whose origins were centred in one geographical location, was the norm or an uncommon feature in the Assyrian army.

This extract from the Annals suggests that chariots are not the sole form of Israelites' service in the Assyrian Army. One should notice the phrase, "I allowed the rest to pursue their own skills".¹⁴ As mentioned, after the conquest of foreign lands and peoples, the Assyrians tended to deport the elite, craftsmen and soldiers. Therefore, does this specific

⁸ See Kaplan's research that deals with the recruitment of non-Assyrians to the Assyrian army in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE: KAPLAN 2006; see also Kaplan's first part of his MA thesis that was published in English as a book chapter: KAPLAN 2008.

⁹ TADMOR 1958, 33.

¹⁰ Both sources explicitly mention the number 50, including in parts of the annals which were complete. Both texts can also be found in: COGAN 2003, 57-61, 63-66.

¹¹ DALLEY 1985, 34-35.

¹² In both II Kings and in the Babylonian chronology, both mention that the Assyrian king that conquered Samaria was Shalmaneser V. But in 8 inscriptions, Sargon II is proclaimed as the conqueror of Samaria. Sung Jin Park solved the conundrum by showing a new angle that settles the conflicting evidence. He claimed that Sargon II was actually a general in the army of his half-brother Shalmaneser V, and he conquered the city in this capacity. After Sargon II finished to conquer the city, he used his army to commit a coup d'état against his half-brother: PARK 2012.

¹³ DALLEY 1985, 35-37.

¹⁴ It was suggested by ASTER-ZELIG (2019, 602) that it could be also translated to "I trained the remnant in their crafts".

phrase refer to the inhabitants of Samaria that were left there after the destruction of the kingdom, or to all the other Israelites that had been exiled, except for the crews of the 50 chariots?¹⁵ In my opinion, it seems that the second option is more probable if the translation offered by Stephanie Dalley is preferred. However, it is impossible to know for certain. If Sargon II did indeed allow all the Israelites to pursue their old professions in their new settlements, this will mean Israelite soldiers, by profession, started to serve in garrisons and units of the Assyrian Army.

A further source on the conquest of Samaria is the Prism inscriptions of Nimrud,¹⁶ which will be compared to the contents of the Annals describing the same events:

"The Samaritans, who had [conspired?] against the king my [predecessor] not to endure servitude nor to bring tribute, became angry(?) and did battle. With the army of the great gods my lords I fought against them. I counted as spoil [x+] 7280 people including [their] chariotry and the gods their help. I formed a unit of 200 chariots from them as part of my royal army, and I resettled the rest of them in Assyria. I repopulated Samaria more than before, and put into it people from the countries which I had conquered."¹⁷

When looking at the Prism inscription, its similarity to the inscription in the Annals is clear, especially regarding the number of Samaritan deportees recorded in both. With regards to the x+, the scholar Hayim Tadmor suggested that it should be two, thus bringing their total number to 27,280. In addition, he explained that the ending of the number of deportees mentioned in the Annals is a bit murky, which may allow for reading it as either 80 or 90. This makes the full number of deportees 27,280 or 27,290, similar to, or even just the same as the one recorded in the display inscription from Dur-Sharrukin.¹⁸

From the quoted section above, we can gauge the method of deportation the Assyrians used. The description of the expulsion and the exchange of populations is similar to what we learn from other scribes about places conquered by the Assyrians.¹⁹ If indeed the basic method of deporting soldiers was preserved in the procedures used in Samaria,²⁰ then it strengthens the assumption that Israelite soldiers composed a meaningful number among the deportees. Moreover, if deportees had generally maintained their profession and occupation, as suggested in the display inscription, then these soldiers would have continued as military personnel serving their new rulers.

¹⁵ Regarding the debate to who this phrase was meant for, see: ASTER-ZELIG 2019, 602-603.

¹⁶ Cogan refers to it as a display inscription (כתובת ראווה/סיכום): COGAN 2003, 62.

¹⁷ DALLEY 1985, 36.

¹⁸ TADMOR 1958, 34-35.

¹⁹ DALLEY 1985, 36.

²⁰ Regarding the Assyrian methods and its implementation in Samaria see also: KOCH 2019; RADNER, 2019.

Furthermore, these sources assert that the Israelite chariots were formed as one unit comprised entirely of Israelites. Yet, we need to remember that both Na'aman and Cogan only mention that the chariots were recruited among the Israelites but not as a unit of their own.²¹ On the other hand, Stephanie Dalley and Shawn Aster-Zelig were in favour of the translation, "I formed a unit of ... chariots from them."²² I am more inclined to accept the opinion of the latter since it seems that *aḫṣurma* should be read as "to form into a unit."²³

Both the display inscription from Dur-Sharrukin and the Prism inscriptions of Nimrud are in tandem in not mentioning either captured horses or Israelite cavalry,²⁴ which fits with the idea that there were none in the Samarian (Israelite) Army.²⁵

However, there is a salient discrepancy between the two accounts when it comes to the number of Israelite chariots captured by the Assyrians. While the Annals claim 50 chariots, the Prism inscription speaks of about 200.²⁶ Discrepancies between Assyrian inscriptions are very common. There could be a number of reasons for those discrepancies: political reasons, the sources used by the author of the inscription, different styles of writing, mistakes, etc.²⁷ If indeed the number 200 is the correct version, it would have meant three things. Firstly, the army of Israel had a significant chariot force until the very end which consisted of many more than 200 chariots, as it is highly likely they lost a considerable number on the battlefield. Secondly, the chariot unit held and managed by the Israelites inside the Assyrian army was a significant portion of the entire Assyrian equestrian force.

²¹ COGAN 2003, 62; NA'AMAN 1989, 50.

²² DALLEY 1985, 36; ASTER-ZELIG 2019, 602.

²³ The second definition of *kaṣāru*, which is: "to organise, assemble a body of soldiers into a military formation, to form a herd of animals, to make regulations, to organise a group, a country, to set up a battler (array), to prepare for battle, to plot evil." See CAD, Volume K, p. 257 of the Assyrian dictionary.

²⁴ The current article is following the footsteps of Dalley's article (1985), but the current article tries to bring new knowledge and insights in comparison to Dalley's article, relating to the Israelite army, its strength and the size of its chariot force.

²⁵ It is certain that Israelites knew how to ride a horse. But we do not have any real evidence for the use of cavalry in battle and for the existence of a cavalry arm in the army of the Kingdom of Israel. Chaim Hertzog and Mordechai Gichon claimed that an Israelite cavalry arm existed and that their number in Qarqar was so small "as not to have deserved a mention." However, that is not in tandem with the Kurkh monolith, which even mentions the 10 chariots from the army of Arqad and the 30 chariots from the army of Shian. It is especially puzzling as Hertzog and Gichon quoted the Kurkh monolith on the same page they made the remark. They even claimed that there were cavalry units in earlier periods in the army of Israel without bringing any evidence: Hertzog and Gichon 1978, 116, 118; It seems that Dean is repeating a similar claim by relying on Hertzog and Gichon's publication. He claims that there was a cavalry arm in the army of the Kingdom of Israel and that King Ahab had chosen to bring to Qarqar only his chariots and not his cavalry. Dean did not bring any proof for his claims: DEAN 2017, 35.

²⁶ OLSHANETSKY 2017.

²⁷ Regarding the numbers in Assyrian inscriptions and the different reasons for that, see: SAAS - III.

Thirdly, that the kingdom of Israel was a significant economic power until the very end of the kingdom.²⁸

In order to find which of the two given numbers is closer to the truth, we shall check the Horse Lists. These lists were found in Fort Shalmaneser (also known as the Review Palace) situated in the modern city of Nimrud. This document contains a detailed list of officials, equestrian officers and units in Sargon's Army. The Lists differentiate between two types of units. One section is devoted to units whose origins are in Assyria proper, while the other section deals with non-Assyrian units. The Samarian unit is the sole non-Assyrian unit identified by nationality or city of origin. This means the Israelites were privileged by being allowed to keep a whole unit of their own. This privilege may have been given due to the Assyrian appreciation of the Israelites' skills,²⁹ and their importance in the defence of the Empire.³⁰

In my opinion, getting permission to erect a unit of their own inside the Assyrian army indicates that the Assyrians saw the Israelites as especially loyal, who would not break their oath. Thus, concentrating them in such organic units would have brought no danger to the empire. There were prominent leaders in the Kingdom of Israel such as Hoshea Ben Elah, who betrayed Assyria,³¹ but their deeds did not necessarily indicate the common loyalty among the Israelites, especially among the lower classes. This instance of a non-Assyrian unit composed entirely of one ethnicity can suggest that certain acts made by certain leaders did not affect the reputation of the common Israelite people with regards to their loyalty.

According to the Horse Lists, there were 13 officers in the Samarian unit,³² each of them holding the title "commander of teams" (*rab urâte*).³³ Here, the term "teams" meant

²⁸ It is widely agreed that chariots needed many more horses, the equivalent of 2 to 4 cavalry men to one chariot. On the other hand, O'DANIEL CANTRELL (2011, 70-72) claimed that chariots were not that expensive, especially for the Kingdom of Israel, thereby countering all other opinions saying otherwise. There are a few problems with her claim. She suggests that since there were no prices found for chariots from the Iron Age, other than in the Bible, this meant that chariots were actually very cheap and easy to maintain and manufacture. She parallels this with the lack of prices for large kraters, which we know were homemade and were not traded. The difference between the two is obvious. Many men are needed to produce or extract the materials needed for chariot production and transport them to the craftsmen. Moreover, many different craftsmen were needed to produce chariots. Her solution to these issues is that the material was in abundance and all the men required in the production chain of a chariot were slaves, including the craftsmen. The only expense was the food for the slaves. There is a logical problem with this argument. If indeed the Kingdom of Israel had hundreds or thousands of chariots, this would mean that the King had thousands, if not tens of thousands, of slaves who produced the material and thousands of craftsmen maintaining and building the chariots. Even if so and the purchase of slaves was free, the facilities needed to maintain, train, house and feed them would cost a fortune.

²⁹ On the matter see also: O'DANIEL CANTRELL 2011.

³⁰ DALLEY 1985, 32.

³¹ Kings II. 17: 1-6.

³² CTN III 99: Obv II 16-23; the list is repeated almost identically in: 108: CTN III 108: iii 33-41.

³³ Regarding the term see DALLEY 1985, 32; CTN III, 170-179.

teams of chariots and charioteers and not of cavalry,³⁴ as nowhere in the display inscription or the Prism inscription was there any mention of cavalry among the plunder from Samaria.³⁵

Thirteen teams mean a very large unit, the second largest in the Horse Lists,³⁶ and probably in the whole Assyrian Army, which alludes to the important role the Samarian unit may have played in the Empire's Army.³⁷ If it was indeed the second largest equestrian unit in the Assyrian Army, then it makes sense that it was composed of more than 50 chariots. It would also be considered logical if there were 200 chariots, as we know that the kingdom of Israel had the infrastructure to train and maintain numerous horses and chariots, as is evident from the excavations in Megiddo.³⁸ Moreover, this number can be considered more accurate as in the century preceding the fall of the Kingdom of Israel, this kingdom had a significant military force. For example, massive chariot forces were recorded as being deployed by the Israelites, as can be seen in the Kurkh Monolith, where the battle of Qarqar from 853 BCE is depicted.³⁹ According to this monolith, King Ahab's Israelite force included 2000 chariots.⁴⁰ Another inscription from the period which mentioned their military might is the Tel Dan Stele, where the armies of the Kingdom of Israel under King Jehoram, and of the Kingdom of Judaea under Ahaziah of the House of David, had 2000 chariots at their disposal.⁴¹

Moreover, the list of officers of the Samarian unit included names that were clearly of West-Semitic origin. However, only two of them have the theophoric component *ia'u*, which refers to the God of Israel. Most of the names have no parallel in the bible, with

³⁴ Regarding the terms and its uses, see DEZSÓ 2012/2, 130-132.

³⁵ There is lack of evidence for the use of cavalry by the kingdom of Israel: OLSHANETSKY 2020; On the other hand we have plenty of evidence for the use of chariots by the kingdom: O'DANIEL CANTRELL 2011; fourteen kings of Israel and Judah are mentioned in the bible in connection to chariots until the time of the fall of Samaria: Saul: First Samuel 13:5; Second Samuel 1:6; David: Second Samuel 8:4, 10:18; Solomon: First Kings 10:26-29; Rehoboam: First Kings 12:18; Asa: Second Chronicles 14:8-10, 16:8; Zimri: First Kings 16:9; Omri: First Kings 16:16; Ahab: First Kings 22:34-35; Jehosaphat: First Kings 22:29; Jehoram king Judah: Second Kings 8:21; Ahaziah: Second Kings 9:27; Jehoram king of Israel: Second Kings 9:24; Jehu: Second Kings 9:33; Jehoahaz king of Israel: Second Kings 13:7.

³⁶ You can see the list neatly organized in: DEZSÓ 2012b, 204.

³⁷ DALLEY 1985, 32.

³⁸ O'DANIEL CANTRELL, FINKELSTEIN 2006; FRANKLIN 2019.

³⁹ HERTZOG, GICHON 1978, 118; SCHNEIDER 1995; O'DANIEL CANTRELL 2011, 36-37; DEAN 2017, 32-33; OLSHANETSKY 2020, 28-30.

⁴⁰ Cogan sees this number as exaggerated. In his opinion the scribes made a mistake and wrote 2000 instead of 200: COGAN 2016; Na'Aman thought so too. Regarding his opinion that the Kingdom of Israel did not have the economic and logistic capability to match the Assyrians: NA'AMAN 2005, 4-10; Na'Aman's opinion was mentioned by Grabbe, who in turn argued that Na'Aman was looking at it with modern eyes. Hence, he offered explanations on why this would be feasible for the Kingdom of Israel: GRABBE 2007, 81; O'DANIEL CANTRELL (2011) and FRANKLIN (2019) are of the opinion that the numbers in the Kurkh Monolith are accurate because of the stables that were found in Megiddo, and the Tel Dan Stele.

⁴¹ The different translators agree that the number of chariots mentioned is 2000: SCHNIEDEWIND 1996; LEMAIRE 1998; KOTTSEPER 2007; O'DANIEL CANTRELL 2011, 38.

regards to either Israelites or Judaeans.⁴² I believe this is evidence for the diversity of the names of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Israel. Due to this fact, when attempting to find Israelites or Judaeans in the Assyrian army through the usage of theophoric components such as *-ia-ú/u*, we will find only a fraction of the Israelites and Judaeans who served in that army. However, the names of the Samarian officers in the Horse Lists are completely different from the Biblical names. So even if we broaden the search to all the names that are remotely close to Biblical names that relate to Israelites or Judaeans, it would still only be a fraction of the numbers which actually served. Yet from the names that we do find, we have enough of them to prove that the Israelites and Judaeans served in a continuous manner, at least from the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel until the fall of the Assyrian Empire. The origins of that service may even be from before the fall of the Kingdom of Israel.

The names of the men serving in the Samarian unit were not the only ones of West Semitic origin. Other West Semitic names, found on an ostrakon in the same building where the Horse Lists were found, belonged to another unit whose name is unknown. Scholars assume this unit to be a different foreign unit that has not been mentioned in the Horse Lists, but due to a lack of any geographical identification, its origins are attributed either to Samaria/Israel or to Ammon.⁴³ Thus, the possibility of more than one unit based entirely of Samaritans cannot be rejected off-hand.

Israelite units were not the only ones to be recruited, raised and absorbed into the Assyrian army. As it seems, units that were composed of Judaeans could also be found in the ranks of the Empire's army. There is evidence for such units close to the time of the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. This testimony comes from Hezekiah's surrender to Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, which is backed by three different versions.⁴⁴ In those versions, the *Urbī* and the elite force that were brought to Jerusalem by Hezekiah were taken to Nineveh by Sennacherib.⁴⁵ *Urbī* is a term meaning "a band of mercenaries",⁴⁶ which due to the recent events of the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, may have been Israelite soldiers or immigrants who searched for a new life. Yet, it is unclear who the *Urbī* were, but it is clear that entire units from the defeated Judaeans army were moved to Assyria proper and were most probably absorbed by its army as organic units. According to Tadmor, at least the force

⁴² The names as they appear in CTN III 99: Obv ii 16-23 : (*ib-ba-da-la-a*), (*da-la-* PAP), (*ia-u-ga-a*), (*a-tam-ru*), (PAP-*id-ri*), (*ab-di-mil-ku*), (EN- BAD), (*na-ar-me-na-a*), (*gab-bi-e*), (*sa-ma-a*), (PAP-*id-ri*), (*ba-hi-e*), (PAP-*i-ú*) ; They appear in Dalley's article as: "*ib-ba-da-la-a*, *da-la-a-ahu*(PAP), *ia-u-ga-a*, *a-tam-ru*, *ahu*(PAP)-*id-ri* I, *ab-di-mil-ku*, *bēl*(EN)-*dūri* (BAD), *na-ar-me-na-a* (variant *armenā?*), *gab-be-e*, *sa-ma-a*, *ahu*(PAP)-*id-ri* II, *ba-he-e*, *ahi*(PAP)-*i-ú*." DALLEY 1985, 32.

⁴³ DALLEY 1985, 32.

⁴⁴These are the Taylor Prism, the prism of the Eastern Institute in Chicago and the Rassam Cylinder: TADMOR 2006, 275.

⁴⁵ OIP III 33: III 39.

⁴⁶ This is the definition of *Urbī* in: CAD, Volume U/W, p. 213 of the Assyrian dictionary.

that is described as the "elite force" or the "chosen force" was composed of Judaeans.⁴⁷ It is also possible that except for those two units, there were other Judaeans units that were taken away and may have been used by the Assyrian army. And so, we can see that there were more than one incident at the end of the eighth century BCE in which a unit from the geographical area of the land of Israel was absorbed into a foreign army, the army of the Assyrian Empire.

Other Testimonies for Judaeans-Israelite Service

The once vast Assyrian Empire has left us many documents which may guide us to better understand the realities of that empire. By searching through all these documents, we can find many Western-Semitic names that could have belonged to the Israelites or Judaeans. For example, the groom Salamanu's name is found as the third witness on a document from the second half of the seventh century BCE,⁴⁸ relating to the purchase of a house. This example demonstrates the problem in searching after Israelites or Judaeans who have served in the Assyrian army. Firstly, a groom could either be a military or a civilian role. Secondly, Salamanu is a general Semitic name, not necessarily unique to Jews. Yet, there is a similarity between this name and other Israelite and Judaeans names, for example King Solomon. It is important to note that the name was only partially complete in the original document. The scholars thought that, according to the missing letters, the name is most probably Salamanu.

Another Salamanu was a commander of a unit that was connected to the king's mother and was most probably assigned to protect her.⁴⁹ His name appears in a document listing members of the royal court. In the same document, there is another man with a general Semitic name, who is possibly an Israelite. His name was Hanunu,⁵⁰ a commander of a different military unit, this time not subordinate to the Queen's mother but to the Chief Eunuch. On the same list, we also find the name of the guardsman Gada.⁵¹ It is possible that this Gada is the same Gada that is defined as a bodyguard (ša-šēpī)⁵² and appears in a separate document from Nineveh which refers to the accommodation of higher ranking personnel.⁵³ In another high ranking personnel list from Nineveh, there is a third mention of a man named Gada.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, his specific role was lost; it is possible that all three references are for the same person.

⁴⁷ TADMOR 2006, 276-282.

⁴⁸ ([sa-la-m]a-nu), SAA XIV 262: r.4.

⁴⁹ (Sa-lam-a-nu), SAA VII 5: II.30.

⁵⁰ (Ha-nu-nu), SAA VII 5: II.10.

⁵¹ (ga-da-a), SAA VII 5: II.33; Kaplan (2006, 36) defined him as "קרוב".

⁵² According to Dezső (2012a, 120-123), bodyguards that were defined in that manner existed only from 791 BCE until the military reforms of Sargon II.

⁵³ (ga-da-a), SAA VII 9: r.i 26; KAPLAN 2006, 36.

⁵⁴ SAA VII 11: r5.

In a document from the days of Esarhaddon, we find a person named Danī who seems to be in charge of the royal bodyguards.⁵⁵ This name is also a Western-Semitic name and not necessarily a Jewish one. From this period, we have a few other texts that speak about a high-ranking official named Salamanu⁵⁶ whose position is unclear. What is certain is that he was an important administrator who also had to take care of military business, for example deserters from the army.

While West-Semitic names are not certain to be of Israelite or Judaean origin, we do have other documents which contain names ending with the theophoric suffix of ya'u, which appears in the Assyrian texts as *-ia-ú/u*. A theophoric suffix of this nature was defined by scholars as the only definitive way to verify that the person believed in the God of Israel.⁵⁷ While other theophoric suffixes, similar in sound, could also be referred to other deities, the *-ia-ú/u* suffix refers only to the God of Israel.⁵⁸

The first example is Nadbi-Ya'u the charioteer,⁵⁹ whose name appears as the fourth witness on a contract from the year 709 BCE. The contract was for the purchase of slaves by Šumma-ilani, a charioteer in the royal army, of Sargon II.⁶⁰ The fact that the buyer was a charioteer in the royal army explains why one of the other witnesses would also have been a charioteer. It is probable that Nadbi-Ya'u was Šumma-ilani's friend and served with him in the same unit. Even if this is not so and they were not friends, the professional connection between the two is clear and would still indicate that Nadbi-Ya'u was a charioteer in the Assyrian army.

One prominent figure in the Assyrian documents is Sama (Sa-ma-a), whose name appears as part of the Samarian chariot unit in the Horse Lists found in Nimrud. Dalley suggested that he had been the same person that we have met in a few documents from Nineveh.⁶¹ In those four documents he appears at the head of the list, which means he was a very prominent figure. In three of them, his role is defined as *murabbānu ša mār šarri*, which means the horse breeder of the king's heir.⁶² In the fourth document, his title is *murabbānu ša Nergal-šumu-[ibni]*, which means the horse breeder of Nergal [...].⁶³ In all of the lists, other

⁵⁵ (*da-ni-i*), SAA XVI 90: r.7.

⁵⁶ SAA XVI 136: 3; SAA XVI 137: 3; SAA XVI 138: 3; SAA XVI 140: 3.

⁵⁷ KAPLAN (2006, 37) refers to this assertion in his sub-chapter 2.1.6. There he relies on the opinion of Efal. Kaplan claims that while the theophoric suffix should be attested to Jews only, while the theophoric prefix could belong to Jews and Arabs as well; DALLEY (1990, 21-22) claims that there is a larger number of theophoric suffixes that indicate a belief in the God of Israel.

⁵⁸ Regarding the use of these names by Judaeans in Babylonia, even in later centuries long after they were exiled, see: PEARCE, WUNSCH 2014; PEARCE 2016; PEARCE 2018.

⁵⁹ (*Na-ad-bi-ia-u*), SAA VI 34: r.9.

⁶⁰ KAPLAN (2006, 38) refers to this in his research.

⁶¹ DALLEY 1985, 40; KAPLAN (2006, 41-42) was also of the same opinion.

⁶² SAA VI 37: r.7; SAA VI 39: 16; SAA VI 40: r.4.

⁶³ SAA VI 41: r.5.

members of the chariot force appear, strengthening the assumption that Sama was a member of the army and that he was the same Sama mentioned in the Horse Lists.⁶⁴

We find many Israelites in high-ranking positions, but we do not always know their exact role. For example, we have a list of officials, where one of their names is Ahi-Yau.⁶⁵ This list is from the reign of Esarhaddon, dated to between 672-669 BCE and deals with crimes that occurred in Guzana. Three Israelite/Judaeans appear in a different document linked to the same event including Niri-Ia'u, the accountant of the province who is in charge of the budget, and Palti-Ia'u, the deputy governor.⁶⁶ They appear as witnesses in the first half of the document. As deputy governor, Palti-Ia'u was also in charge of military logistics, such as preparing food stores for the army, for both day to day use and for times of emergency.⁶⁷ A third man named Halbišu is certainly from the land of Israel due to the fact that the document explicitly mentions that he is from Samaria.⁶⁸ Yet, his name is not typically Jewish and the date of the document is much later than the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. It is always possible that he was not a native of Samaria, but was settled there by the Assyrians and later moved to Guzana. As the document is fragmented, we are not certain of the role of Halbišu. We only know that he served the king and it was suggested that he may have been the informant who reported the investigated crimes.

From the reign of Ashurbanipal, we find a text mentioning a bodyguard named Azar-Ya'u,⁶⁹ which is dated between the years 663 to 661 BCE.⁷⁰ There is also a commander of a unit consisting of 50 soldiers, stationed in the area of Ahabū, whose name was also Azar-Ya'u. However, we do not know the exact date of this document.⁷¹ Another testimony of a member of the army, who was certainly a Jew, is the archer Ahi-Ya'u who may have been a mounted archer.⁷² He was the third witness of what was left from a document that we are not certain of its nature. This document arrived from Nineveh and it is believed to be from the second half of the seventh century BCE.

⁶⁴ KAPLAN 2006, 41-42.

⁶⁵ SAA XVI 51: 5.

⁶⁶ SAA XVI 63: 4, 27.

⁶⁷ Regarding the military logistics of the Assyrian army, and the roles of governors and their deputies in it, see: DEZSÓ 2016, 73-76.

⁶⁸ (*hal-bi-šú*), SAA XVI 63: r.9.

⁶⁹ (*a-zar-ia-u*), SAA VII 118: II.3.

⁷⁰ Azar-Ya'u was also mentioned in: KAPLAN 2006, 38.

⁷¹ (*a-zar-ia-u*), SAA XI 183: 6.

⁷² SAA XIV 421: r.3.

Conclusions

The Kingdom of Israel was so confident in its capabilities in this type of warfare that they never bothered to create a meaningful cavalry force; they mostly, if not solely, relied on the expensive chariots, which needed many horses and regular maintenance. Their confidence in their capabilities brought Ahab to create and nurture one of the largest chariot forces of the time, maybe even of all time. Their prowess received fame among the nations and so the Assyrians were glad to recruit Israelites into their ranks after the conquest of the Israelite kingdom. The Assyrian respect can be seen in the unique privilege of allowing them to create a unit entirely composed of Israelites, which was highlighted by the name of the unit. This unit was the second largest among the mounted units in the Assyrian army and the largest chariot unit in their army. This meant that it was an essential element in the protection of the borders of the empire. The unit's ethnical segregation to Israelites only may have been due to the unique nature of Israelite chariot tactics. The number of officers in this unit, according to the Horse Lists, supports the number of 200 chariots given in Sargon II's Prism found in Nimrud, as more accurate than the number of 50 chariots found in an inscription from Dur-Sharrukin. The number 200 also indicates that the Israelite army still had a decent number of chariots and, as a result, financial capabilities until the very end of the Kingdom. The Israelites in this unit were not the only Israelites serving in the Assyrian army. We have the names of many soldiers and officers of Israelite or Judaeen origin, in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. They provide evidence that loyalty and the word of honour were a main feature in Judaeen-Israelite belief and culture. Furthermore, the military profession, including soldiers and mercenaries in non-Jewish armies, was well established among those believing in the one God. All in all, the Israelite-Judaeen service in the Assyrian army can be considered as continuous, at least from the fall of Samaria until the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

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