

THE MEANING OF ARIEL

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THE word *Ariel*, which occurs a number of times in the Bible and the Mesha-stone,¹ has been interpreted in many different ways by exegetes, who have been unable to find a satisfactory basic meaning from which all the passages can be explained. In the various passages the word seems to have some four distinct values, which will be discussed in this paper:

1. II Sam. 23 20 the hero Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, is said to have slain **את שני אראל מואב**; in the parallel passage I Chr. 11 22 the word is spelled **אריאל**. Θ has $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \delta\upsilon\omicron\varsigma\ \nu\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon$ **Ἀριῆλ τοῦ Μωάβ** = **את שני בני אריאל**. Robertson Smith, *Rel. of the Semites*, p. 488 f., explains the word, as *altar-pillar*, following Ez. 43 1., and supposing that **הכה**, *he smote*, means *he overthrew*. In Am. 9 1, **הכה** is used of striking the **כפתר** and causing the **ספים** to tremble, but not of overthrowing a pillar. Moreover, it is hard to see the heroism involved in smiting two pillars, and the reading of Θ is inexplicable. Wellhausen and others accept the reading of Θ and consider Ariel as a personal name (Ezr. 8 16). If this were correct, Ariel would be the progenitor of a race of giants, like Anak and Rapha (see below). The Targum Jonathan renders **תרין רברבי מואב**, two mighty men of Moab; Raši and Kimḥi similarly explain the word by **גבורי**,² but their etymology (**ארי** *lion* + **איל**, *strong*) is naturally untenable. The renderings of Θ and the Targum seem

¹ II Sam. 23 20; I Chr. 11 22; Ez. 43 15 f.; Is. 29 1, 2, 7; Is. 33 7; Mesha, 12, 17.

² This is apparently supported by *Fr. Syr.*, *hero, mighty man*, אריאל = *ארי* איל = *lion* איל, *strong*.

to reflect two recensions, שני אראלי מואב and שני בני אראל מואב where אראלי = בני אראל.³

2. In Ez. 43 15f. אראל is, without doubt, the place where the sacrifices are brought, a part of the altar. Like the Herodian altar it had four horns (Jos. *Bel. Jud.* 5, 5, 6). The name of the הראל, which is also four cubits high, is only a variation of אראל; א has ἀμυλ for both. The usual derivation from a supposed Ar. *irīah*, hearth, is not acceptable, as there seems to be no such word (Albright). Starting from the popular etymology, *lion of God*, Raši explains that the fire on the altar took the form of a crouching lion: על שם אש של מעלה שהיתה רובצת. כארי על נבי המזבח. It is improbable that the original form of the word was *ariel*, since we find אראל in Samuel and Mesha, and הראל in Ezekiel; the *keré* in Samuel is evidently based upon the popular etymology. While we might take הראל to be the ground-form, regarding the altar as the symbol of the world-mountain, the reading in א and the usage in Samuel are both against this view.

3. In Is. 29 1, 7 אריאל is without question a name for Jerusalem, as shown by the explanation קרית חנה דוד. Targum Jonathan, however, follows Ezekiel, translating מדבחה. The Mišnah, *Middōt* 4 7, interprets the word as *temple*, and combines the popular etymology with this treatment in a very curious way: וההיכל צר מאחריו ורחב מלפניו ודומה לארי שנאמר הוי אריאל וגו'.

The explanation of the word as *temple* is an extension of the meaning *altar* adopted by most Jewish exegetes, followed by Duhm. But אריאל לי והיתה does not fit into this theory, and Duhm's view that the city will become like a sacrificial hearth because it runs with blood is out of the question, blood not

³ Klostermann's emendation, שני בני הארי אל מחבואם, is based upon the second half of the verse, and is both grammatically and linguistically out of the question. Young lion is כפיר or גור. Halévy thinks that אראל means envoy (cf. Is. 33 7) or priest, in which he is followed by Lidzbarski and others, but no etymology is offered. Grimme explains the word as *priest of the Urim*, giving a fantastic derivation for the latter. But at best the killing of two priests can hardly have been regarded as a heroic deed worthy to be placed beside the slaughter of three hundred men.

being mentioned at all. The assumption that the city received its name from the altar is very improbable, and v. 2 is inexplicable on the supposition that אריאל means *altar* here. Accordingly most scholars look elsewhere for the solution of the difficulty. Thus Marti, following Cheyne, reads *Uriel*, which might be a monotheistic adaptation of the name Jerusalem. While it is true that the element *šulem* resembles Šulmanu, a name of Inurta (*KAT.*, 475), we should at least expect the writing ירואל like ירושלים; moreover, it would be most extraordinary that the name is found only here. The Assyrian spelling *Urusalim* is merely the cuneiform reproduction of **Ierusalem*, as there is no *ii* in Assyrian. Grimme, *OLZ.* IV 44, derives *Ariel* from *har-el*, mountain of God (Ez. 43 15); Jerusalem is called in the Psalms הר קדשי and also ירכתי צפון (Ps. 48 3), referring to the world-mountain in the north. According to this view the altar would be symbolic of the mountain of the world, identified with Mt. Zion. But Grimme cannot explain the second verse satisfactorily.⁴ The view of Jeremias (*ATAO.*,² 558) that we have here the Babylonian word *arul(l)û* in its two meanings *world-mountain* and *underworld* is much more in accord with the context, where Ariel appears both as a name of Mount Zion and as a place of sorrow and weeping like the lower world.

4. Is. 33 7: הן אראלם צעקו חוצה מלאכי שלום מר יבכיון. Targum Jon. renders בר אתגלי להון אראלם as אראלם and לם as להם, *to them*. This interpretation is excluded by the parallelism, to say nothing of its grammatical difficulty. The Talmud explains אראלם as the name of a class of angels. Dunaš, following Saadya, thinks that אראלם is a plural meaning *nobles* or *caravan chiefs* (lit. *camel-riders*), but these theories are based on the context, and do not apply to other passages. Menahem

⁴ Winckler's theory (*Geschichte Israels* II, 255) that אריאל means *Schutzgott* is unprovable, and demands too many changes in the text. Ben Yehuda explains the word here without reference to the other occurrences as *Pilgerstadt*, following Saadya Gaon, but the opinion of the latter is based on a late etymological combination with ראה, *see* (Ariel is the place to which one comes to see God). Even if the name is connected with ארה, *gather*, and rendered *the assembly of God*, the second passage would remain inexplicable.

ben Sarûk renders *They wept over the altar*, disregarding the resulting absence of a subject. Kimhi regards the word as a synonym of מלאך, *messenger*.⁵ Dulm takes the word to mean *hero*, comparing II Sam. 23 20, and refers it to Judas Maccabaeus, who was compared to a lion. It seems to me, however, that Neubauer⁶ is correct in explaining *inhabitants of Jerusalem*; we may then read מלאכי שְׁלֹם, *messengers of Jerusalem*, in the second hemistich. The passage seems to mean that Hezekiah sent envoys from Jerusalem to the Assyrian monarch, bewailing the desolation of the land and bringing gifts as a token of submission.

5. On the stele of Mesha we have (12 f.) ואשב משם את אראל ואקח משם דודה ואסחבה לפני כמש בקרית. In 17 f. he says: א[ראל] לי יהוה ואסחבה לפני כמש. From the little town of 'Aṭarot Mesha took one אראל; from the city of Nebo he took several. Halévy explains the word here as *priest*; Grimme and Lidzbarski follow him. Winckler (*KAT.*, 225) reads Ariel-Dôdah, like 'Aštar-Kemôš. The word can hardly be used in the sense of *priest*, as the capture of a priest would not be a great event, nor can it mean *hero*, as Mesha states that he slew all the men. The second passage is decidedly against Winckler's view. It is also impossible to explain אראל here as *altar-hearth* (Meyer, IV., 257) since an altar-hearth cannot be carried captive. Since the אראל belonged to a god, could be carried into captivity like a man, but had to be dragged, I would render it as image (פסל) or rather as *massebah representing deity*. The ancient Orientals were accustomed to carry the statues of foreign gods into captivity, placing them in their temples as a symbol of the submission of conquered peoples. Thus the Elamites carried the image of Nanâ away from Erech about 2285 B. C., and the Hittites took the images of Marduk and Šarpânît to Ḫana some centuries later. The Assyrian kings carried off the gods of conquered peoples as a general rule, as stated repeatedly in their inscriptions. Similarly, the Philistines took the ark of Yahweh, which, at least according to their view, symbolized Yahweh himself, into captivity.

⁵ For other explanations see Ben Yehuda's *Thesaurus*, s. v.

⁶ *Athen*. 1886, 400 (Gesenius-Buhl, s. v.).

6. It appears therefore that we have אֲרִיאֵל in four different meanings: *hero*, *altar* or *place where sacrifices are offered*, a name of Jerusalem, and *image of god* or *maṣṣabah*. What was the original meaning of the word? All the places where it appears seem to be archaic or archaistic in character. The different spellings, such as אֲרִיאֵל, אֲרִיאֵל, אֲרִיאֵל, אֲרִיאֵל indicate that the word is a loan from a foreign language and variously adapted by popular etymology to Hebrew speech-consciousness. The diversity of meaning shows that the common basic significance had already fallen into disuse and must be recovered by combination. It seems to me that this basic significance had something to do with death or the dead. The Sumerians called the abode of the dead Arali, whence Babylonian Aral(l)û, just as in Is. 29 2 the underworld is called אֲרִיאֵל. The dead is the father of the living, and seen through the magnifying glass of memory is generally conceived of as a hero. Accordingly the heroes of the past are called אֲרִיאֵלִים, just as רִפְאִים means both *shades* and *heroes*. This explains the passage in Samuel, where אֱל has שְׁנֵי אֲרִיאֵלִים (י) מוֹאב and ה' had שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אֲרִיאֵל מוֹאב, just as we have as expressions meaning *heroes of the past* both בְּנֵי הַרְפָּה and רִפְאִים, both בְּנֵי עֵנָק and עֵנָקִים. An ancient Hebrew name of the burial place, where offerings of food and drink were made to the dead, seems to have been אֲרִיאֵל. While מִזְבֵּחַ from a root meaning *slaughter* was the name applied to the altar of sacrifice, אֲרִיאֵל was then perhaps the name of the altar of offerings to the dead. Ezekiel, who is fond of archaisms in general, appears to use the old word אֲרִיאֵל as a synonym of מִזְבֵּחַ. The Mesha stele shows that the word also had the meaning *maṣṣabah*, which may indicate that the grave stele as well as the table of offerings which stood before it was included under the designation אֲרִיאֵל. The extension of the use of *maṣṣabah* from *grave stele* to *stele representing deity* carried with it a similar development of the meaning of אֲרִיאֵל, corresponding to the evolution of the private cult of the dead to a public cult of the gods. If the restoration of the second passage on the Mesha stone is correct, we may suppose that the אֲרִיאֵלִים were *maṣṣabôt* or Yahweh and his subordinate divinities.

The cult of the dead was, of course, well-known in ancient

Palestine. The numerous vessels and cup-marks discovered in connection with tombs show that the dead were provided with food and water; cf. also Ben Sira, 31 17f. The Massoretic pointing **בְּמוֹתֵם מַלְכֵיהֶם** in Ez. 43 7 indicates that high-places were supposed to be attached to the tombs of the kings at Jerusalem, though **בְּמוֹתֵם** is probably the original reading. Also Is. 65 4 proves that offerings were made at the tomb; even in Israel there were remnants of this pagan cult, against which the Law contended (Deut. 26 14). In this connection it may be noted that the same word is used for *coffin* and for *ark of Yahweh*. Similarly the **זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים** may have been originally an offering made to the dead, part of the feast, the blood, being given to the spirit.⁷

Having shown the connection between the differing meanings of Ariel, it remains to explain its association with the city of Jerusalem. In Is. 29 1 the city of David referred to is, of course, Zion, and **צִיּוֹן** means also tomb. When Josiah asked (II Kings 23 17): **מָה הַצִּיּוֹן הַלֵּז**, the answer was **הַקֶּבֶר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים**. In Zion the people of the surrounding country may have buried their dead. In the southern part of the mountain, near Siloam, tombs have recently been found, which may have belonged to the first kings of Judah.⁸ Accordingly the name Ariel may be equivalent to *necropolis*, like Zion. Possibly also the name Jerusalem contains the element *šalem*, dead, and means *city of the dead, necropolis*. Salem, Zion, Ariel are three names belonging to different periods; according to tradition Salem was employed at the time of Abraham, and Zion at the time of David.

While the Talmud cannot be considered a direct source for early Palestinian conceptions, it contains many valuable traditions, and mentions many survivals of an older period. The word **אֲרָאִלִים** in the Talmud refers to the angels of death. When Rabbi Judah died bar-Kappârâ said (*Ketûbôt*, 104): **אֲרָאִלִים**

⁷ In Assyrian *šalamtu* (whence Aram. *šeladdâ*) is *corpse*, and *šalâm šamši* is *sunset*, properly *death of the sun* (Albright, *AJSL*, XXXIV, 142). Ar. *salîm* means *wounded to death*.

⁸ Elsewhere I will discuss the question of these tombs, especially on its topographical side.

ומצוקים אחזו בארון הקדש נצחו האראלים את המצוקים ונשבה ארון הקדש. The Mešûkîm are the angels of the upper world, and the Er'elîm are the angels of the lower world, who defeat the former and carry the ark of God (i. e. Rabbi Judah) captive. Midraš Kônen (Ben Yehuda, *Thesaurus*, s. v.) names as different classes of angels the אראלים, מלאכים, and אופנים, so that the Er'elîm appear as the lowest category, the Ôfannîm being the angels in the מרכבה, or Chariot of God.

THE BABYLONIAN TEMPLE-TOWER AND THE ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERING

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The studies of my friend Mr. Feigin have placed the old problem of Ariel in a much clearer light, though I am not able to agree with all his suggestions. There can be no doubt that the balance of probability is now in favor of the Assyrian etymology long maintained by Jeremias and others. In Mesopotamian cosmology Mount Aral(l)û. Sum. Arali (for etymology cf. *AJSL.*, XXXV, 191, n. 1), in the far north was the home of the shades, whence Hades was called in Sumerian *kûr*, mountain, and in Assyrian *hursîn*, mountain, as Zimmern has recently shown. Aralû is written ideographically *É-KUR-UŠ* (*BAD*), House of the mountain of the dead. Aral(l)û is also the mountain of the gods, *É-garsag-gal-kûr-kûr-ra*, House of the great mountain of the lands, and is further identified with the fabulous mountain of gold in the land of the gods. As *É-kûr* and *E-gar-ag-kûr-kûr-ra* were two of the most popular names of *ziḫḫurûti*, or temple-towers, we may safely suppose that the latter, being the terrestrial representations of the mountain of the gods, shared its name Aralû. Originally, of course, the mountain of the gods and the mountain of the shades were distinct conceptions, but since both were placed in the far north they were naturally confused.