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. 23:29 the hero Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, is said to have slain נֵּטֶנֶךֶשׁ אִרְיֵּא; in the parallel passage I Chr. 11:22 the word is spelled נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ אִרְיֵּא. אִרְיֵּא has τοῦ Λόας Λοᾶς Λοᾶς Λοᾶς. Robertson Smith, Rel. of the Semites, p. 488 f., explains the word, as altar-pillar, following Ez. 43 1 , and supposing that הוהי, he smote, means he overthrew. In Am. 9:1, הוהי is used of striking the נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ and causing the נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ 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 אִרְיֵּא is inexplicable. Wellhausen and others accept the reading of אִרְיֵּא 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 נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ אִרְיֵּא Moab, two mighty men of Moab; Rashi and Kimhi similarly explain the word by נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ אִרְיֵּא ,2 but their etymology (נֵטֶנֶךֶשׁ אִרְיֵּא, strong) is naturally untenable. The renderings of אִרְיֵּא and the Targum seem

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

2 This is apparently supported by Fr. mer, hero, mighty man, a X E pir άνώπερ from Cn, ite.
to reflect two recensions, a and b. 

2. In Ez. 43 15 f. אֶרָכָל 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 אֵרוֹת, which is also four cubits high, is only a variation of אֶרָכָל; ג has απηλ for both. The usual derivation from a supposed Ar. ʾirāḥa, 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: כָּבָר לְעָלֶשׁ אֵשׁ שֶל מַעַלְּהַת שֵׁהְתָה רְבוּחַת. It is improbable that the original form of the word was ʾariel, since we find אֶרָכָל in Samuel and Mesha, and אֵרוֹת in Ezekiel; the ʾerē in Samuel is evidently based upon the popular etymology. While we might take אֵרוֹת to be the ground-form, regarding the altar as the symbol of the world-mountain, the reading in ג and the usage in Samuel are both against this view.

3. In Is. 29 1, 7 אֶרָכָל is without question a name for Jerusalem, as shown by the explanation קרית תְּהָה דֹּר. Targum Jonathan, however, follows Ezekiel, translating מִרְבָּה. The Mišnah, מִדְדּוֹת 4 7, interprets the word as temple, and combines the popular etymology with this treatment in a very curious way: מִרְבָּה יָהֲרֵי מִדְדּוֹת מֵרְבָּה אֵרָכָל עַל לוֹ נַבּוֹת. The explanation of the word as temple is an extension of the meaning altar adopted by most Jewish exegetes, followed by Duhm. But אֵרוֹת 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

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2 Klostermann’s emendation, שְׁנֵי בֵנֵי אֶרָכָל, is based upon the second half of the verse, and is both grammatically and linguistically out of the question. Young lion is יֵאַרְאֵל or يֵאַרְא. Halévy thinks that אֵרוֹת 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 לאריאא 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 שָלֶם resembles Šelmann, a name of Inurta (KAT., 475), we should at least expect the writing לאריאא like לאריאא; moreover, it would be most extraordinary that the name is found only here. The Assyrian spelling Urusalim is merely the cuneiform reproduction of *Jerusalem, as there is no ji in Assyrian. Grimm, OLZ., IV 44, derives Ariel from har-el, mountain of God (Ez. 43 15); Jerusalem is called in the Psalms יְשֵׁשׁכָּר יְרוֹמֵה and also דֵּרְכֵיהוּ תַּמּוּן (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 Grimm cannot explain the second verse satisfactorily. The view of Jeremias (ATAO, 2 558) that we have here the Babylonian word urul(l)u 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: קְרוֹאָם צֶעָקָה חֲזוֹן מַלָּאכִי שָלֹה מִרְבְּכִים קְרוֹאָם צֶעָקָה. Targum Jon. rendersขา as מַלָּאכִי and כָּה as כַּה, to them. This interpretation is excluded by the parallelism, to say nothing of its grammatical difficulty. The Talmud explains הַלַּאֲרָא as the name of a class of angels. Dumaḥ, following Saadya, thinks that הַלַּאֲרָא 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 11, 255) that הָרָא means Schutzgott is unprovable, and demands too many changes in the text. Ben Yehuda explains the word here without reference to other occurrences as Pilgerstadt, following Saadya Gaon, but the opinion of the latter is based on a late etymological combination with הָרָא, see (Ariel is the place to which one comes to see God). Even if the name is connected with הָרָא, gather, and rendered the assembly of God, the second passage would remain inexplicable.
ben Saruf renders *They wept over the altar*, disregarding the resulting absence of a subject. Kimhi regards the word as a synonym of משלא, messenger. Duhrn 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 Neubauer is correct in explaining *inhabitants of Jerusalem*; we may then read מלואים, 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.) והשב מתים Anaolare. In 17 f. he says: מתים Anaolare. In 17 f. he says: מתים Anaolare. From the little town of 'Atarot Mesha took one Anaolare; 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-Dōdah, like 'Aštar-Kemōš. 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 לארא here as altar-hearth (Meyer, IV., 257) since an altar-hearth cannot be carried captive. Since the לארא belonged to a god, could be carried into captivity like a man, but had to be dragged, I would render it as image (בצל) or rather as massēbah 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 Nanā away from Erech about 2285 B.C., and the Hittites took the images of Marduk and Šarpānit to Ḥana 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 (Geschnius-Buhl, s. v.).
6. It appears therefore that we have לארש in four different meanings: hero, altar or place where sacrifices are offered, a name of Jerusalem, and image of god or massëbah. 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 לארש, לארש, לארש, לארש 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 Arâlî, whence Babylonian Aral(l)i, just as in Is. 29:2 the underworld is called לארש. 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 לארש, just as לארש means both shades and heroes. This explains the passage in Samuel, where מז and ש'ל אָרָלָא and כֹּל אָרָלָא, just as we have as expressions meaning heroes of the past both מז and ש'ל אָרָלָא מז and ש'ל אָרָלָא מז. An ancient Hebrew name of the burial place, where offerings of food and drink were made to the dead, seems to have been לארש. While מז from a root meaning slaughter was the name applied to the altar of sacrifice, לארש 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 לארש as a synonym of מז. The Mesha stèle shows that the word also had the meaning massëbah, which may indicate that the grave stèle as well as the table of offerings which stood before it was included under the designation לארש. The extension of the use of massëbah from grave stèle to stèle representing deity carried with it a similar development of the meaning of לארש, 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 לארש were massëbât of 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 17 f. The Massoretic pointing בּוֹתָן in Ez. 43 7 indicates that high-places were supposed to be attached to the tombs of the kings at Jerusalem, though בּוֹתָן 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 בּוֹתָן שָלָמִים may have been originally an offering made to the dead, part of the feast, the blood, being given to the spirit.  

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 זִיִּים means also tomb. When Josiah asked (II Kings 23 17): בּוֹתָן אֶלְעַיֶּנָה, the answer was המִזְיִים הָלָה אֶלְעַיֶּנָה. 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. Accordingly the name Ariel may be equivalent to *necropolis*, like Zion. Possibly also the name Jerusalem contains the element *salem*, 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 בּוֹתָן in the Talmud refers to the angels of death. When Rabbi Judah died bar-Kappárá said (*Ketübot*, 104): בּוֹתָן  

7 In Assyrian *salamtu* (whence Aram. *šelaidda*) is *corpse*, and *šalām šamši* is *sunset*, properly *death of the sun* (Albright, *AJSL*, XXXIV, 142). Ar. *salām* means *wounded to death*.  

8 Elsewhere I will discuss the question of these tombs, especially on its topographical side.
The Meššekim are the angels of the upper world, and the Er'elim are the angels of the lower world, who defeat the former and carry the ark of God (i.e. Rabbi Judah) captive. Midraš Konen (Ben Yehuda, *Thesaurus, s. v.* ) names as different classes of angels the Masāleš, Malāleš, Levāleš, and so that the Er'elim appear as the lowest category, the Ofannim being the angels in the ărāve. 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)ū, 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 kūr, mountain, and in Assyrian hurlūn, mountain, as Zimmer has recently shown. Aralū is written ideographically ʾE-KĪʾR-UŠ (B.1.D), House of the mountain of the dead. Aral(l)ū is also the mountain of the gods, ʾE-gārsay-gal-kūr-kūr-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 ʾE-kūr and ʾE-gārsay-kūr-kūr-ra were two of the most popular names of zikkurātī, or temple-towers, we may safely suppose that the latter, being the terrestrial representations of the mountain of the gods, shared its name Aralū. 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.