

THE INSCRIPTION FROM 'EN ḤAẒEVA

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Remnants of at least two lines of an ink- or paint-written text were traced on one of the narrow sides of a stone figure from 'En Ḥaẓeva (Fig. 1; see Ben-Arieh, this volume: Cat. No. 76, Figs, 44–46). None of the letters in the first line could be identified with certainty, but the downright stance of one letter indicates that the writing was not seventh- or sixth-century BCE Hebrew, but rather Aramaic. However, the geographical context and the discovery of an Edomite seal at the site may point to the possibility that the script could have been Edomite. In the second line, three letters are discernible: a *šin*, probably a *het* and a *pe*. Unfortunately, *šhp* seems to me meaningless in this context.

The script of the Edomites was essentially the same as that of the Moabites. It presumably did not differ from the Hebrew script in the ninth century BCE, as can be seen in the Mesha' Inscription. In the last third of the eighth century BCE, the Assyrians appeared on the King's Highway and the political and cultural influence of Israel and Judah on Moab and Edom ceased. Consequently, as Aramaic became the official language and script in the western provinces of the Assyrian Empire, the scripts of the Moabites and Edomites began to

absorb Aramaic elements; in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, the Aramaic elements prevailed and only a few letters preserved their Hebrew form.

The downright stance in the Edomite script occurs mainly in lapidary inscriptions, e.g., on seals and other artifacts with engraved texts. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that this blurred short inscription was written in Aramaic. It should also be remembered that in the fifth and mainly in the fourth centuries BCE, the Edomites used the standard Imperial Aramaic language and script.

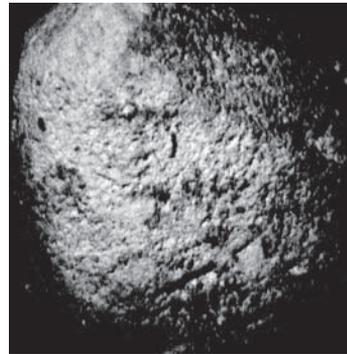


Fig. 1. The inscription.

REFERENCE

Ben-Arieh S. This volume. Temple Furniture from a Favissa at 'En Ḥaẓeva.

