

The Johns Hopkins University

Baltimore, Maryland

July 8th, 1938

Dear Nelson,

Your letter of June 23rd beat your letter of the 22nd by several days. The new seal-impression is extraordinarily interesting. Your reading, "Gaus-nl servant of the king," looks quite all right, though the last part of the name is very strange. Can it be pl or ml? Either would have the advantage of being a known verb, but nl is quite mysterious. If the letter-forms are right this inscription also belongs to the seventh century B.C., though it is lapidary Hebrew, not cursive or semi-cursive Aramaic. Can you send me copies or prints of the micro-photographs when you have them made?

In view of the new evidence I advise you to let me print only those parts of your paper this time which will not be affected by a lowering of the date of the last stratum by a century or more, as will be necessary, I suspect. It is likely that the seal belongs to an Edomite official of his own government, not of the Jewish state--perhaps an official of Gaus-gabri, the last known king of Edom. Remember that the Arabs were permitted by Assurbanipal to settle in the land of the Edomites about 650 B.C. or a little later. The first half of the seventh century would be eminently satisfactory for both the inscriptions (assuming that our copies are correct). At all events, the discoveries at Khaleifish are so important that it would be a pity to rush into print and then have to reverse the first conclusions to so considerable an extent as will probably be necessary. Even if your chronology should turn out to be right after all, no harm can be done by waiting a few months before publishing the inscriptions and a reconstruction of the history of the site.

Now that the European situation is really glotting down for a bit, I can really set about enquiring with regard to sailings. I hope to visit the American Express office in a few days, after which I shall let you know what my tentative sailing dates are. I must reach Brussels by Sept. 5th and leave Oxford as soon as possible after Sept. 23rd.

The last galley proofs of Tell Beit Mirsin II come in tomorrow. Otherwise the book is entirely set and all the plates and charts are ready. The latter are mostly very good--much better than I had expected. Some time ago I finished a 50-page MS on the chronology of Tell el-'Ajjul for AJSL (October number). I differ as politely as possible from every date and dynasty of Sir Flinders. With the help of Ginsberg and Gordon, both of whom contributed essential observations, I have succeeded in eliminating the moon-god Terah, Ashdod, and other Negebite elements from the RSh. picture. I expect to present a paper on the subject at Brussels, thereby making myself still less popular with Virolleaud and Dussumier.

That 300 L.P. surplus in the House account is grand. The improvements were all most needed ones. You will have the School in wonderful shape by the end of your four years if nothing happens. The news from Palestine these days is very saddening, but one can hardly expect anything else, I fear, for the present.

With best wishes to Helen from Ruth and me, I am

Yours W.F. Albright