

Abright

The Johns Hopkins University

Baltimore, Maryland

July 2nd, 1938

Dear Nelson,

It was a real treat to receive your letter of June 12th and the MS of your article for the BULLETIN on Tell el-Khaleifeh. It is very interesting and is written with your customary verve and enthusiasm. Being as interesting it will form an admirable entrée for the October Bulletin, which should go to press in late August, just before I sail for Belgium (if I do, which is problematical, in view of the European situation).

Since it is much too long, especially in view of the wealth of illustrations, it must be cut. Here there is a chance to avert future trouble by cutting some of the topographical and chronological part. I think that it will be prudent to wait for the clearing and decipherment of the jar-stamps before publishing a provisional historical reconstruction. In the first place, it is quite evident from the inscription in Aramaic characters that the last settlement must come down into the seventh century. I enclose a tracing of the characters as I see them for comparison with the original. I read preferably

l'ngbr, with alternatives l'ngbr and l'ng hr. Just as there is a superfluous vertical stroke at the bottom of the bet, so I suspect a superfluous stroke at the left of the giml (?), though the former is easy to explain as a clip of the incising tool while the latter is hard to explain this way. Perhaps an inspection of the original will help. I regard all the characters as certain except the g - l. The name would be Amri-gabar, "My People has Prevailed," or the like. There are a good many Aramaean and Edomite names of the sixth-seventh centuries B.C. which have this formation; e.g., Ilm-gabri (7th cent.), Ilm-gabar (7th cent.), Ilm-gabri, etc. (7th cent.), Sl-gabbari (7th cent.), Sam-gabri (7th cent.), etc. I have examined the material for comparison without finding anything like the giml, if it is one, and there are no well-attested personal names or elements to take the giml possible. The bet and gal are used like lapidary Aramaic forms on inscriptions of the fifth to the third centuries B.C.; the lamed and the ayin can be duplicated anywhere in the seventh and sixth centuries (except in strictly cursive script; the ayin is best in place in the seventh century; the giml fits in almost anywhere. In other words the inscriptions cannot be older than the seventh century and may go down to the sixth; it cannot be earlier or later unless it is an aberrant specimen of some kind.

Now, it would be too bad if I were to publish your provisional conclusions and they should prove to be entirely wrong after the jar-stamps had been deciphered. I suggest that I eliminate the topographical discussion and your historical deductions (except for the pre-Solomonic and Solomonic periods). If you are right you can print the topographical discussion in the BULLETIN or elsewhere after the epigraphic data are fully studied; otherwise you can work the material up afresh to suit the new facts. If you don't like this idea, I suggest that you oblige me to hold the material for further instructions; otherwise I shall go ahead and eliminate the doubtful matter from the present report (without changing it otherwise, except verbally where advisable).

Enberg is the next Field Secretary of the Schools. There are three new Trustees, as you have doubtless heard, Harrington, Altschul, and Kuschardt. Gordon is to be Research Fellow at Smith College next year, where he will prepare the Amarna collection there for publication.

It is fine to hear about the fourth year you are to have in Jerusalem!

CONFIDENTIAL

This is very fine, from every point of view. Now, if nothing happens, you can finish the T.J. Survey as well as your excavations at Tannur and Kheleifeh, and can return to work the latter up with an easy conscience. You are doing well!

Torczyner will sizzle some more when he sees the October BULLETIN, where I hope to print a short article by H.L. Ginsberg on the Lachish Letters. Confidentially, I am reviewing Torczyner's book at length in Kirjath-Sepher. I pointed out to Joel that my review would be none too favorable, but he insisted that I go ahead, saying that he relied on me to keep away from personalities. Don't say a word about this to anyone there, since it might create an awkward situation at the University, where Torczyner is not very well liked (I don't need to tell you that).

With my best regards to Helen, whom I hope to see in Brussels,

Very sincerely yours,

W.F. Albright