An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan

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TEL DAN, formerly known as Tell el-Qadi, located at the foot of Mt. Hermon in the Galilee in northern Israel, is identified with biblical Dan mentioned in Judges 18:29 and the phrase 'from Dan to Beersheba' (Judges 20:1 *et al.*). The excavations at Tel Dan were initiated in 1966 as an emergency project by the Israel Department of Antiquities, and soon developed into a full-fledged archaeological expedition. In 1974 it became the major archaeological project of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. In the course of these past 27 years much has been learned about ancient Dan and its precursor, Laish,[1] but very little written material had been found, until the discovery on 21 July 1993 of an inscribed basalt stone, which appears to be a fragment of a large monumental inscription (Fig. 1).

The stone, a fragment of a larger block, was found in secondary use in the remains of a wall bordering the eastern section of a large pavement or *piazza* at the entrance to the outer gate of the city of Dan (Figs. 2, 3). The outer gate forms part of an elaborate gate system of the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. erected at the foot of the Middle Bronze Age ramparts. From the outer gate a stone pavement, dated to the middle of the ninth century B.C.E., led to the main gate and hence towards the city on top of the mound, at a distance of over 80 m. An upper gate was built there at the beginning of the eighth century B.C.E. The stone pavement, assumed to be a royal processional road, was found, in earlier excavation seasons, to extend beyond the outer gate. It was, however, completely uncovered only in 1992 and 1993, in conjunction with the work of conservation and restoration undertaken by the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Government Tourist Corporation.

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1 See A. Biran: *Tel Dan — 25 Years of Excavations at Tel Dan*, Tel Aviv, 1992 (Hebrew).

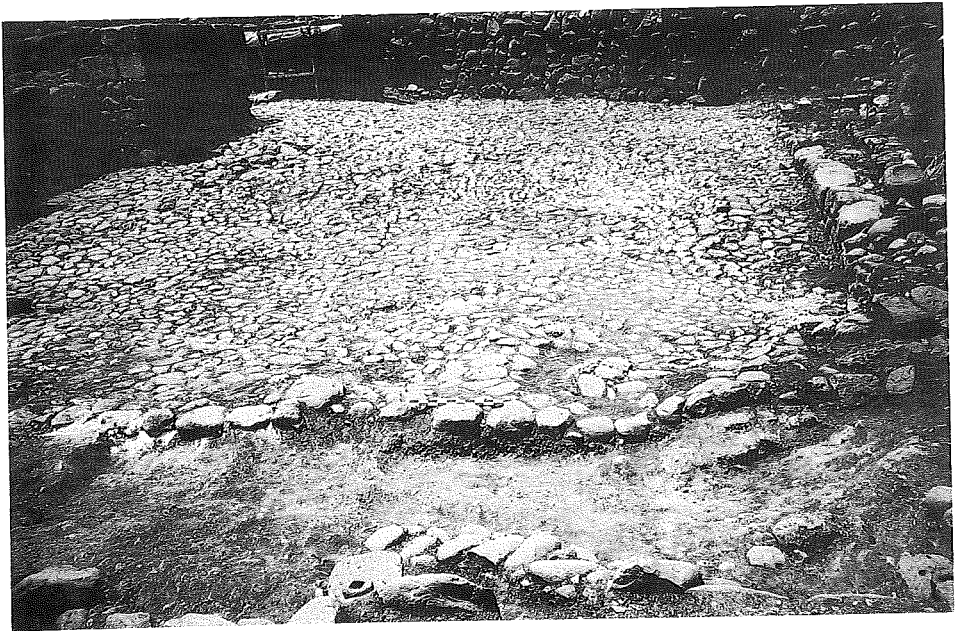Fig. 1. Tel Dan: the stele fragment *in situ* (photo: A. Biran).

Fig. 2. The *piazza* in front of the outer gate. In the background: the city-wall; on the right (east): the wall at whose end the fragment was found (photo: A. Biran).
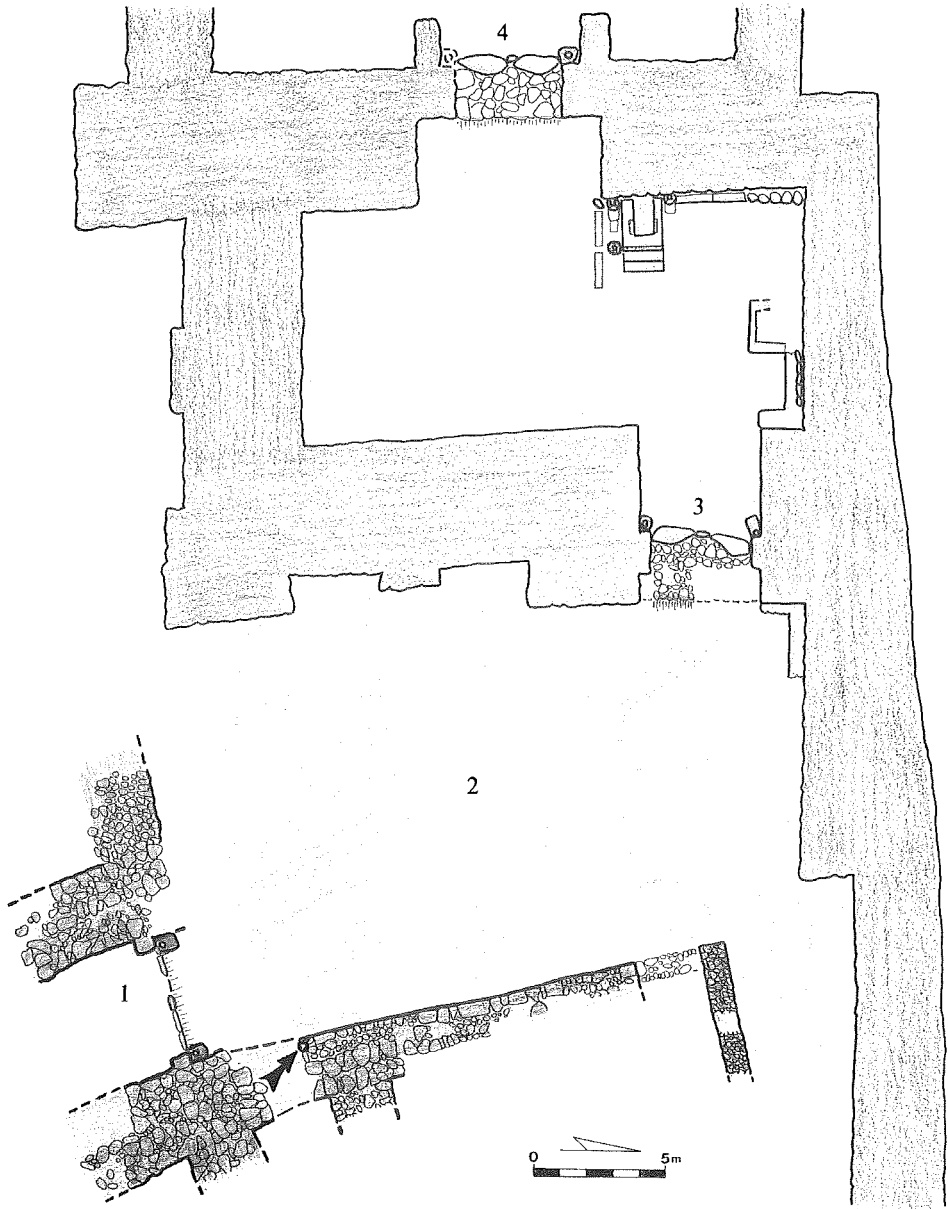
Fig. 3. Plan showing the location of the fragment with the newly discovered gate (1), the *piazza* (2), the outer gate (3) and the main city gate (4) (drawn by Gila Cook).

The almost square *piazza* covers an area of approximately 400 m². At its east side there is a wall found to have undergone considerable change, including damage by the construction of an irrigation channel during the Roman period. It could not be

determined whether the *piazza* extends further. On its southern side its limits are not clear because of later construction which left a row of stones visible at the edge of the *piazza* (Fig. 2). There is sufficient evidence, however, to suggest that it extended further south to the threshold of a previously unknown gate (Fig. 4). The unique feature of this gate is two basalt stone pivots set into the door sockets. They served to hold the axes of the doors, which could then open and close with ease (Fig. 5).

The inscription, on the basalt slab, was first noted by the surveyor of the expedition, Gila Cook. Taking a closer look at the stone while still *in situ* and helped by the direction of the early afternoon rays of the sun which illuminated the engraved lines on the stone, we could see the contours of the letters quite clearly. The stone was easily removed as only a small part of it was embedded in the ground. Turning the stone to face the sun, the letters became even more legible. The words, separated by dots, sprung to life (Fig. 6).

The height of the fragment is 32 cm.; its maximum width 22 cm. From the nature of the break we concluded that the original block of basalt was smashed in antiquity. Its original size was estimated to be 1 m. high and perhaps 50 cm. wide (see below, pp. 86–87). According to Dr. Ariel Heimann of the Geological Survey of Israel, who examined the mineral contents of the stone, the stele is of local basalt. The face of the stone had been smoothed for writing, as had been one of its sides.

Fig. 4. The newly-discovered 4 m. wide gate at the southern edge of the *piazza*. Note the sockets at either end (photo: A. Biran).

Fig. 5. The western pivot in its socket, *in situ*. The gate's axis originally fitted into the square hole in the pivot (photo: A. Biran).

The stilus used was probably of iron and had a round edge, as none of the letters show any sharp points.

The latest possible date for the secondary use of our fragment is determined by the date of the level of destruction covering it. According to the archaeological evidence, the gate complex — the outer gate, the main gate, the upper gate, the chambers and the pavement — was destroyed in the third quarter of the eighth century B.C.E., the time of Tiglat-Pileser III's conquest of northern Israel in 733/2 B.C.E. Accordingly, the stele fragment was set in the wall sometime before that
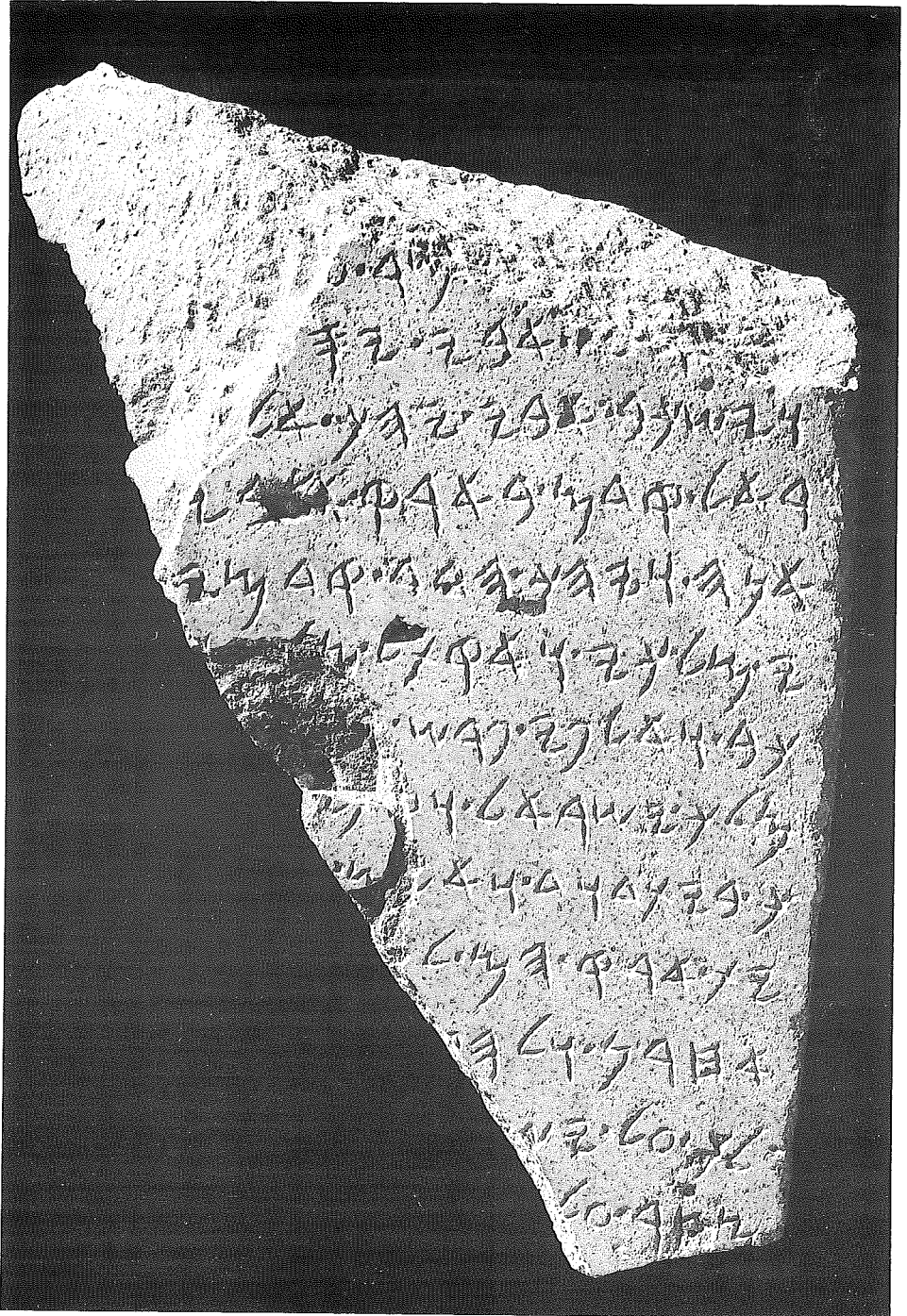
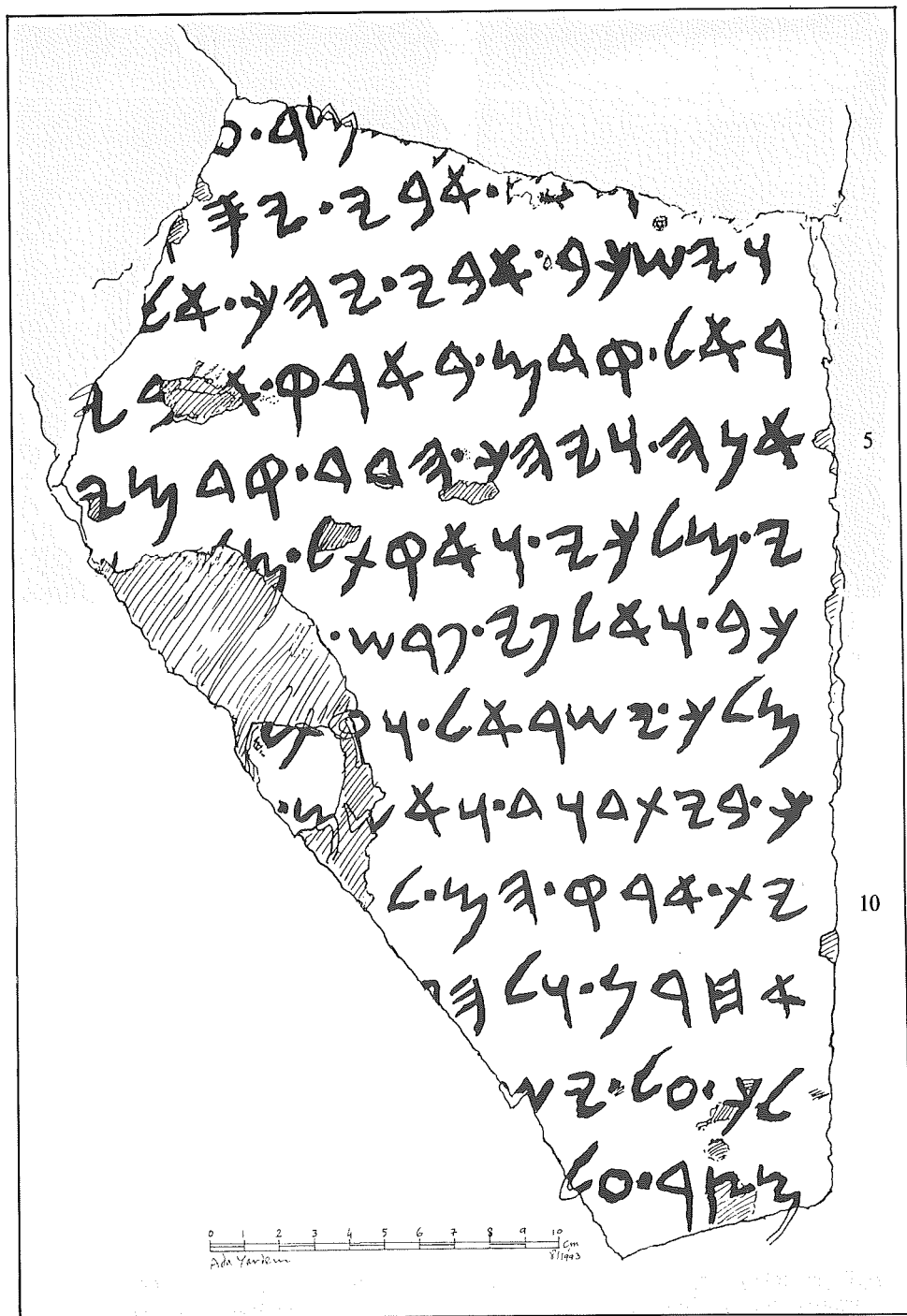Fig. 7. The inscription (photo: Z. Radovan).

Fig. 8. Facsimile of the inscription, drawn by Ada Yardeni.
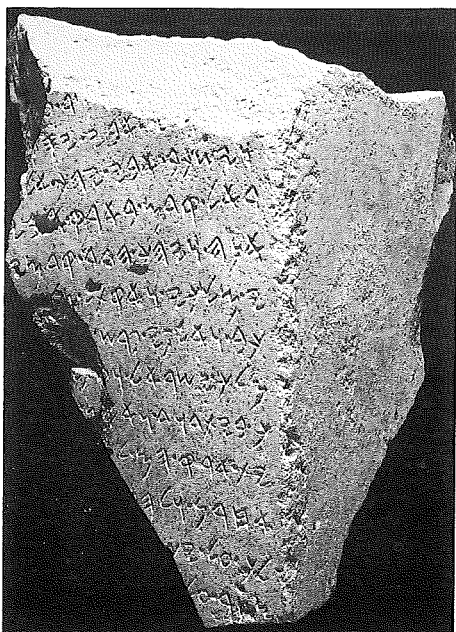
Fig. 9. Two sides of the stele
(photo: Z. Radovan).
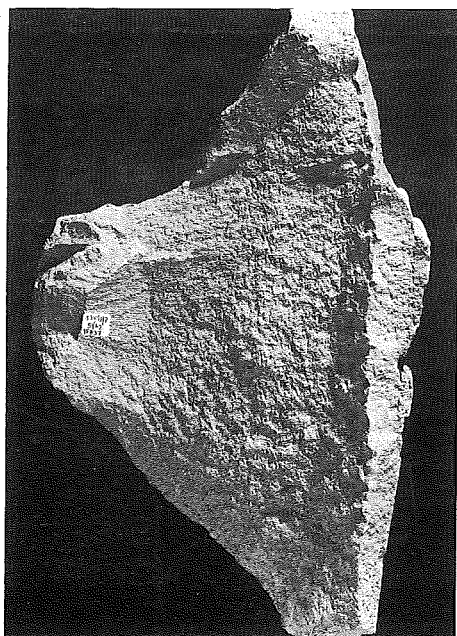
Fig. 10. The back of the stele
(photo: Z. Radovan).

Translation

1. ...
2. ... my father went up ...
3. ... and my father died, he went to [his fate ... Is-]
4. rael formerly in my father's land ...
5. I [fought against Israel?] and Hadad went in front of me ...
6. ... my king. And I slew of [them X footmen, Y cha-]
7. riots and two thousand horsemen ...
8. the king of Israel. And [I] slew [... the kin-]
9. g of the House of David. And I put ...
10. their land ...
11. other ... [... ru-]
12. led over Is[rael ...]
13. siege upon ...
    ...

Commentary

Line 1. In the first line of the fragment only three letters, parts of two words, have been preserved. The first of these may perhaps be reconstructed ‏[א]מר‎ 'he said'. It is impossible to determine how many lines are missing from the beginning of the stele. Judging from the mention of his father in lines 2–4, the writer might

have informed us, after introducing himself, that he was the legitimate heir to his father's throne. In this case, line 1 may perhaps be line 1+2 or 1+3.

Line 2. יסק is the third person singular imperfect of סלק. The words אבי יסק mean 'my father ascended' (see below, next section). Two reconstructions come to mind: אבי יסק [באשר ...] or [על ...] אבי יסק. In Sfire IA:5 the treaty was also made ועם בנוה זי יסקן [באשרן]ה 'and with his sons who will come after [him]'; see also Sfire IC:3–4 (*KAI*, 222). In Akkadian, [*man*]*nu šarru ša illâ arkiya* 'whatever king will arise after me'.[8] For the equivalent Hebrew עלה אחרי 'to follow', see 1 Sam. 25:13: ויעלו אחרי דוד 'and they went up after David' and 1 Kings 1:40: ויעלו כל העם אחריו 'and all the people came up after him'. Biblical עלה does not indicate the ascent to the throne. The phrase [על ...] אבי יסק may mean 'my father went [against (to make war)]', 'my father attacked'. Indeed, this usage of עלה is very common in the Hebrew Bible; see also גבל (על) עלי in the Aḥiram inscription from Byblos (*KAI*, 1).

The use of the imperfect in a narrative text describing events of the past is well known in biblical prose, in the Mesha inscription, in Zakkur inscription I, lines 11 and 15 (*KAI*, 202) and in the Deir 'Alla plaster inscription.[9] There the imperfect is generally preceded by *waw* consecutive. In the Dan stele, such forms are: וישכב (line 3), ויהך (line 5), ואקתל (line 6) and ואשם (line 9). Here, יסק (line 2) and יהך (line 3) also refer to the past, but do not follow a *waw*. These are simply imperfects with past meaning, similar to those in Ugaritic and biblical Hebrew poetry.[10]

Line 3. ... וישכב אבי יהך אל 'my father died, he went to ...' may be followed by בית עלמה 'his house of eternity', but this expression is known only from later sources; it occurs in Eccl. 12:5 כי הולך האדם אל בית עולמו 'because man goes to his eternal home' and in contracts from Naḥal Ḥever and Wadi Murabba'at.[11] In Joshua 23:14 והנה אנכי הולך היום בדרך כל הארץ 'And behold, I go today the way of all the earth'; see also 1 Kings 2:2. In Akkadian, 'he died' is *ana šimtišu illik* 'he went to his fate'.[12] שכב may also mean 'lay ill'; see 2 Kings 9:16 כי יורם שוכב שמה 'for Joram lay there'; see also the later Jewish Aramaic expression שכיב מרע 'dangerously ill'. Thus one may translate the words in this line 'and my father became sick (and)

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8 See *CAD*, 'E', p. 123, *s.v. elû*.

9 See Jo Ann Hackett: *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla*, Chico, CA, 1984, pp. 118–119; J.C. Greenfield: Philological Observations on the Deir 'Alla Inscription, in J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij (eds.): *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-evaluated*, Leiden, 1991, pp. 111–112 (see especially n. 15 on p. 112).

10 R. Degen: *Altaramäische Grammatik*, Wiesbaden, 1969, pp. 114–116; J.C.L. Gibson: *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, II: *Aramaic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1975, p. 15; J. Blau: *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Wiesbaden, 1976, pp. 86–87.

11 See, for example, Y. Yadin: Expedition D, *IEJ* 12 (1962), p. 245; J.T. Milik in P. Benoit et al.: *Les Grottes de Murabba'at*, I–II (*Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* II), Oxford, 1960 1961, No. 20.

12 *AHW*, p. 1239, *s.v. šimtu*; *CAD*, 'A', Vol. I, p. 321, *s.v. alāku*.

died'. However, it seems preferable to consider וישכב as synonymous to יהך אל ... : 'he died, went to [his fate(?)]'. Both the biblical וישכב (עם אבותיו) and the Akkadian *ana šimtišu illik* indicate natural death.

Lines 3–4. ...יש]/ראל קדם בארק אבי could perhaps be reconstructed '[And there ruled PN king of Is]rael formerly in my father's land'. The word קדם followed by -ב cannot be the preposition 'before', but may be an adverb, similar to fifth-century B.C.E. Aramaic קדמן(י).[13] For קדם in the sense of 'of old', see Ps. 74:2 and 119:152. It may be that the inscription originally stated that in previous times (קדם) Israel ruled 'in the land of my father'. Compare with Mesha, line 10, ואש גד ישב בארץ עטרת מעלם 'and the men of Gad had settled in the land of Ataroth from of old'.[14]

Line 5. [...] אנה ויהך הדד קדמי. The word אנה closes the previous phrase; see Zakkur I, line 2: איש ענה אנה 'I am a humble man'. ויהך הדד קדמי means 'and Hadad went in front of me', i.e. 'caused my victory'. In the Kurkh Monolith inscription of Shalmaneser III (853 B.C.E.) it is Nergal who goes in front (*ālik maḥri*) of the king.[15] For biblical parallels to this expression see Deut. 1:30; 31:8.

Line 6. מלכי 'my king' following the mentioning of Hadad reminds one of the Bar-Rakib stele, lines 5–6: הושבני מראי רכבאל ומראי תגלתפליסר על כרסא אבי 'my lord Rakibel and my lord Tiglathpileser seated me on my father's throne' (*KAI*, 216). The expressions מראי and מלכי indicate that the writers of both stelae — of Bar-Rakib and from Dan — were vassals (see below, p. 96). The *yod* preceding מלכי may perhaps allude to a phrase like [ואהך ברגל]י מלכי '[and I followed (lit. went in the footsteps of)] my king'. See Panamu, line 16: מת אבי בלגרי מראה תגלתפלסר מלך אשור 'my father died while following his lord Tiglathpileser king of Assyria' (*KAI*, 215).

ואקתל. The dissimilation of the emphatics is quite common in Early Aramaic. For קתל > קטל, see Sfire III:21 (*KAI*, 224): יקתלו; Panamu, line 8: קתילת.[16] The suggested reconstruction [ואקתל מנ]הם (or [ואקתל.מן.הם]) is based on phrases such as ויך מהם שלשים איש 'and he (Samson) slew thirty men of them' (Judges 14:19) and וקטלו בהם, which is frequent in the Aramaic version of the Bisitun inscription.[17] For the tentative

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13 A. Cowley: *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1923, 30:25; 37:8; Aḥiqar, line 46; G.R. Driver: *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1957, p. 108 (Glossary, *s.v.* קדמן).

14 In this damaged text קדם may also be considered a geographic name.

15 *CAD*, 'A', Vol. I, p. 318. *ANET*, p. 279a.

16 In the first Nerab inscription (*KAI*, 225), line 11, there is another dissimilation of the same root: יכטלוך; see S. Segert: *Altaramäische Grammatik*, Leipzig, 1975, p. 108; J.C. Greenfield: The Dialects of Early Aramaic, *JNES* 37 (1978), pp. 93–99.

17 See Cowley (above, n. 13), pp. 248–271; J.C. Greenfield and B. Porten: *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great — Aramaic Version*, London, 1982.

reconstruction [... עמא] ואקתל מן 'and I slew of [the people ...]', see Mesha, line 11. The text should be followed by the numbers of people (see Mesha, line 16), infantry and chariotry; for the number of horsemen, see line 7. A good parallel to our text is 2 Sam. 10:18: ויהרג דוד מארם שבע מאות רכב וארבעים אלף פרשים 'and David slew (the men) of seven hundred chariots of Aram and forty thousand horsemen'.

Line 7. For the reconstruction [... ר]כב '[X foot-soldiers, Y cha]riots', see above, commentary to line 6. אלפי פרש means 'thousands of horsemen'. However, since in the Assyrian and biblical lists of the enemy's casualties the numbers are definite, אלפי seems to be the construct state of the dual אלפין*, 'two thousand'.

Line 8. מלך ישראל occurs in Mesha, lines 5, 10–11, 18. The title מלך ישראל without mentioning the king's name is common in the narratives of the Book of Kings. The perfect [וקתל.] or [וקתל.ת] (see below, commentary to line 9), although preceded by *waw*, refers to the past.

Line 9. ביתדוד, lit. 'the House of David', is the dynastic name of the kingdom of Judah; see *Bīt Ḫumri* for Israel, *Bīt Agusi* for Arpad, *Bīt Ḫaza'ili* for Aram-Damascus[18] and *Bīt Adini* in the Assyrian inscriptions.[19] Note also biblical Beth Rehob and Beth Maacah discussed below.

In this fragmentary context, one cannot determine the subject of [וקתל] (and slew) in line 8. Theoretically it could be מלך ישראל (the king of Israel) in line 8, מל]ך ביתדוד] ([the kin]g of the House of David) in line 9, or מלכי (my king) in line 6. The most logical reconstruction, however, seems to be [וקתל.ת] 'and [I] slew'; this reconstruction parallels the first persons of ואקתל in line 6 and ואשם in line 9, and fits ארק.הם in line 10. The rendering [וקתל.ת] 'and [I] slew' in line 8 allows the following reconstructed translation:

6. ... my king. And I slew ... [X₁ footmen, Y₁ cha-]
7. riots and two thousand horsemen [... of]
8. the king of Israel. And [I] slew [X₂ footmen, Y₂ chariots and Z₂ horsemen of the kin-]
9. g of the House of David. And I set [their towns to ruins and I turned]
10. their land into [desolation ...][20]

6. ... my king. And I slew ... [X_1 footmen, Y_1 cha-]
7. riots and two thousand horsemen [... of]
8. the king of Israel. And [I] slew [X_2 footmen, Y_2 chariots and Z_2 horsemen of the kin-]
9. g of the House of David. And I set [their towns to ruins and I turned]
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18 H. Tadmor: The Southern Border of Aram, *IEJ* 12 (1962), pp. 114–122.
19 I. Eph'al: 'The Samaritan(s)' in the Assyrian Sources, in M. Cogan and I. Eph'al (eds.): *Ah, Assyria ... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (*Scripta Hierosolymitana* XXXIII), Jerusalem 1991, pp. 37–38.
20 The following reconstruction of lines 9–10 is based on the extant Early Aramaic (including Samalian) vocabulary:

9. ר.בית דוד.ואשם.[אית.קרית.הם.חרבת.ואהפך.א]
10. ... ית.א.ארק.הם.לנישמן [

reconstruction [... עמא] ואקתל מן 'and I slew of [the people ...]', see Mesha, line 11. The text should be followed by the numbers of people (see Mesha, line 16), infantry and chariotry; for the number of horsemen, see line 7. A good parallel to our text is 2 Sam. 10:18: ויהרג דוד מארם שבע מאות רכב וארבעים אלף פרשים 'and David slew (the men) of seven hundred chariots of Aram and forty thousand horsemen'.

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10. ... ית.א.ארק.הם.לנישמן [

Line 10. ית.ארק.הם can be reconstructed [א]ית.ארק.הם. For the accusative particle אית, see Zakkur II, lines 5, 15, 16 and Sfire IB:32; IIC:5(bis), 14. Since Mesha mentions [א]רץ מהדבא 'the land of Medeba' (lines 7–8) and ארץ עטרת 'the land of Ataroth' (line 10), one tends to see in the second word of ארק הם a geographic indication 'the land of Ham'. Actually such a place is mentioned in Gen. 14:5: ובארבע עשרה שנה בא כדרלעמר והמלכים אשר אתו ויכו את רפאים בעשתרת קרנים ואת הזוזים בהם 'And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham'.[21] It seems preferable, however, to read ארק.הם as 'their land'; see Zakkur I, line 9: ומחנות.הם 'and their armies'; in Bar-Rakib II:7: נבשת.הם 'their souls' (*KAI*, 217) and Mesha, line 18: ואסחב.הם 'and I dragged them'.

Line 11. אחרן 'other'. Compare Cowley 30, line 8: חילא אחרן 'other forces'. אחרן may also serve here as an adjective of another noun, e.g., [מלך] אחרן '(an)other [king]' (see line 12), or '(an)other [battle]' in which (according to line 13) a siege might have been laid.

Line 13. For על מצר, see Zakkur I, line 9: ושמו כל מלכיא אל מצר על חזרך 'and all these kings laid siege to Hadrak'; and lines 15 and 16: זי מחאו עליך מצר 'who laid (lit. struck) a siege to you'.

Discussion[22]

The script of the Dan fragment should be compared with that of other monumental inscriptions from the ninth century B.C.E., both Aramaic and Phoenician. At that stage of development we cannot as yet distinguish between the Phoenician and Aramaic scripts. Most of the extant ninth-century inscriptions belong to the second half of the century. Only the Nora inscription and the archaic Phoenician inscription from Cyprus were assigned to the early ninth century B.C.E.[23] There are some affinities between the scripts of these two inscriptions and that of the Dan stele, but there are also similarities to the scripts of the later monumental

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21   This is the only occurrence of הם (Ham) in the Bible, unless one follows Biran's emendation and reads חותיהם in Numbers 32:41 as חות הם; see A. Bergman (Biran): The Israelite Occupation of Eastern Palestine in the Light of Territorial History, *JAOS* 54 (1934), p. 176.

22   Thanks are due to our colleagues Profs. Israel Eph'al and Hayim Tadmor for their valuable remarks. The opinions expressed here are solely the responsibility of the authors.

23   *KAI*, 30, 46; Gibson (above, n. 10), III: *Phoenician Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1982, pp. 25–30. On the scripts of the ninth-century monumental inscriptions, see F.M. Cross: Epigraphic Notes on the Amman Citadel Inscription, *BASOR* 193 (1969), pp. 14–17; *idem*, The Stele Dedicated to Melcarth by Ben-Hadad of Damascus, *BASOR* 205 (1972), pp. 39–40. Cross does distinguish between ninth-century Aramaic and Phoenician scripts. However, significant differences can be seen only from the mid-eighth century B.C.E. onwards. See J. Naveh: *Early History of the Alphabet* (2nd ed.), Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 78–80.

inscriptions, namely those of Bar-Hadad, Kilamuwa, Zakkur and the Amman
Citadel inscription,[24] as well as to the scripts of Hazael's booty inscriptions.[25]
Palaeographically, the Dan fragment can be dated to the middle of the ninth century
B.C.E. However, this date should not be taken as definite and it might fall within a
range of some decades earlier or later.

Since the text is very fragmentary and no name of a king has been preserved, be
it of Aram, Israel, or Judah, one may theoretically attribute the Dan stele fragment
to almost any king of Aram who, according to the extant sources, fought against
Israel in the ninth century. There are, however, some qualifications: Hazael the
usurper, 'son of nobody' (*ANET*, p. 280b), does not seem to be a good candidate
since the writer's father is mentioned at least three times (lines 2–4). However, the
stele could have been erected by his vassal (see below, p. 98). In the middle of
the ninth century B.C.E., Ahab of Israel took part in Adad-idri's coalition against
Shalmaneser III of Assyria. At any rate, the mention of 'the House of David' in line 9
indicates that the king of Judah was involved in the events described in the stele.

It may be assumed that in the ninth century there was a series of battles between
Aram and Israel, although only a few were recorded in the Book of Kings, mainly
in the prophetical narratives. Most of these battles took place east of the Jordan.
The prophetical narratives in 1 Kings 20 and 22 describe, in addition to a siege
of Samaria, battles at Aphek (in the vicinity of Fiq in the Golan) and at Ramoth
Gilead. In the latter battle Jehoshaphat king of Judah was on the side of Ahab
king of Israel. 2 Kings 8:28–29 and 9:14–16 recount a battle between Hazael and
Joram son of Ahab at Ramoth Gilead, in which Ahaziah king of Judah seems
to be the ally of Joram. This battle preceded Jehu's coup in 842 B.C.E. Hazael's
invasion into 'all the borders of Israel' was 'east of the Jordan' (2 Kings 10:32–33;
see below, p. 98). This presumably occurred in the last third of the ninth century,
when Hazael was relieved of Assyrian pressure. Another account, 2 Kings 12:18–19,
relates that after Hazael captured Gath he proceeded to march on Jerusalem, but was
persuaded to turn back by the heavy tribute of Joash king of Judah. None of these
passages mention the Galilee; nevertheless one may surmise that the fate of the
Galilee did not differ from that of the other parts of Israel.

1 Kings 15:16–22 (// 2 Chron. 16:1–6) is the only account of an Israel–Aram war
in the Galilee: Ben Hadad I, bribed by Asa king of Judah, attacked Baasha king
of Israel, 'and he sent the commanders of the hosts which he had against the cities
of Israel, and he smote Ijon, and *Dan*, and Abel-Beth-Maacah, and all Kinneroth,

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24 *KAI*, 24, 201, 202, 232. Whereas the script of the Amman Citadel inscription follows the
    Phoenician–Aramaic tradition, that of the Mesha stele has some Hebrew traits. The script
    of the Tell Fahkariyah inscription, whether archaic, eccentric, or artificially archaizing,
    does not belong to this category and cannot be taken as evidence; see Naveh (above, n.
    23), pp. 214–216.
25 I. Eph'al and J. Naveh: Hazael's Booty Inscriptions, *IEJ* 39 (1989), pp. 192–200.

with all the land of Naphtali' (1 Kings 15:20). This campaign is dated to *c.* 885 B.C.E. Could this be the occasion after which Ben Hadad I erected the stele at Dan?

Although the fragment mentions the king of Israel and presumably that of 'the House of David', it does not reveal how Judah was involved. As stated above, the subject of [...]קתל in line 8 is uncertain. However, should the reconstruction in the commentary to line 9 — וקתל[ת. 'and [I] killed' — be correct, then the king of Judah was the writer's foe. In this case the story of Ben Hadad I, Asa and Baasha would not fit the text of the Dan fragment. Thus, the stele must have described some circumstances in which the king of Judah was the ally of Israel, and the writer fought against both of them. As stated above, such a theory can be corroborated by ארק.הם 'their land'.

The word מלכי 'my king', in line 6, seems to indicate that the writer of the inscription was a dependent of a king. Since in the ninth century the kings of Aram-Damascus were sovereign, one may assume that the stele was erected by one of the commanders of the Damascene king (cf. שרי החילים אשר לו in 1 Kings 15:20), who might have become governor of Dan and its vicinity.[26] However, as the inscription seems to emphasize the writer's right to the throne, and even mentions 'my father's land' (ארק אבי), we are inclined to assume that the writer was a king, subordinate to the king of Aram-Damascus (מלך עזר, 1 Kings 20:16). Following this line of thought two neighbouring small kingdoms come to mind, Maacah and Beth Rehob. Maacah was situated to the east of the northern part of the Jordan, adjacent to the northern Galilee, and Beth Rehob to the north of Dan.

The kingdom of Maacah (or Beth Maacah) presumably flourished in the eleventh century B.C.E. At that time Abel-Beth-Maacah, Dan's neighbour town, belonged to the territory of Maacah; this is evident from its name 'Abel of the House of Maacah'. The king of Maacah (מלך מעכה) fought against David in an Aramaean coalition headed by Aram-Beth Rehob and Aram-Zoba (2 Sam. 10:6; see below). After David's victory, the king of Maacah — together with the other participants in the coalition — became his vassal, and Abel-Beth-Maacah was annexed to David's realm; in 2 Sam. 20:19 it is called עיר ואם בישראל 'a city and a mother in Israel'. It seems likely that after the division of Solomon's state, the kingdoms of Zoba, Rehob and Maacah ceased to be under the rule of Israel. Presumably, with the strengthening of Aram-Damascus, they became satellites of Ben Hadad (I), but Abel-Beth-Maacah, and presumably Dan as well, remained within the borders of Israel. When Ben Hadad I accepted the offer of Asa king of Judah, he attacked Baasha and captured 'Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-Beth-Maacah, and all Kinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali' (see above).[27]

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26 Azitawada, whose long inscription was inscribed on the gate of Karatepe (*KAI*, 26), was not king, but a vassal 'whom Awaraku the king of the Danunians made powerful' (אש אדר אורך מלך דננים).

27 See B. Mazar: Geshur and Maacah, *JBL* 80 (1961), pp. 16–28.

Aram-Beth-Rehob, as mentioned above, was at the head of an alliance that came to the aid of the Ammonites against David. In 2 Sam. 10:6, Aram-Beth-Rehob is followed by Aram-Zoba, Maacah and Tob. In verse 8, the order of the kings is Aram-Zoba, Rehob, Tob and Maacah. 2 Sam. 8:3 recounts how David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zoba (הדדעזר בן רחב מלך צובה); in verse 5: הדדעזר מלך צובה). One may ponder whether Beth Rehob was a minor state, or a dynasty of Aram-Zoba, or whether it was a part of a personal union that Hadadezer formed between Zoba and Beth Rehob.[28] At any rate, according to Judges 18:28, Dan was in the Valley of Beth Rehob: ותהיא (דן) בעמק אשר לבית רחוב.

The events described in the Bible concerning these states antedate those of the Dan fragment by more than a hundred years. In the ninth century Maacah, Beth Rehob and Zoba presumably were the subjects of Aram-Damascus, and they might have participated in the war of a Damascene king, thus regaining Dan and the northern Galilee, territories that previously (if our interpretation of קדם in line 4 is correct) were theirs. With this background in mind, one may better understand the mention of ארק אבי 'the land of my father' in the Dan stele. Both Beth Rehob and Maacah might have had a claim to this region based on historical rights. If 'Baasa son of Ruhubi' in the Kurkh Monolith inscription of 853 B.C.E. (*ANET*, p. 279a) alludes to a king of Beth Rehob,[29] then a descendant of Hadadezer of Beth Rehob seems to be the preferable candidate for the vassal who erected the stele of Dan.

If it was the king of Beth Rehob, or the king of Maacah, or another vassal (one of 'the thirty-two kings', mentioned in 1 Kings 20:1, 16), who erected the stele at Dan, the date of the stele is still questionable. Who was the Damascene suzerain king whom the writer of the stele called 'my king'? If it was Adad-idri (Ben Hadad II), the erecting of the stele should have taken place in the early years of Ahab's reign. It should antedate not only Ahab's participation in Adad-idri's coalition against Shalmaneser III, but also Ben Hadad's liquidation of the satellite states (1 Kings 20:24).[30] In this case we have to assume that in a 30-year period (*c.* 885–855 B.C.E.) Dan changed hands four times: Ben Hadad I captured Dan in 885 B.C.E. (1 Kings 15:20), then Dan was regained by Israel (presumably by Omri); in the early days of Ahab it was occupied by the writer of the stele. Later, Ahab received it back from Ben Hadad II (Adad-idri) as described in 1 Kings

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28 A. Malamat: The Aramaeans, in D.J. Wiseman (ed.): *Peoples of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1973, pp. 141–143 and the bibliography there in n. 20 (p. 151); W.T. Pitard: *Ancient Damascus*, Winona Lake, IN, 1987, pp. 90–92.

29 See N. Na'aman: Two Notes on the Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser III from Kurkh, *TA* 3 (1976), p. 98, n. 20.

30 B. Mazar: The Aramean Empire and its Relation with Israel, *BA* 25 (1962), p. 108. The assumption that in Adad-idri's coalition there was a king of Beth Rehob does not go well with the removing of the satellite kings recorded in 1 Kings 20:24.

20:34.[31] Such an assumption may fit the pottery found beneath the stele fragment, which is dated to the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. (see above, p. 86). Thus one may surmise that Ahab smashed the stele and his builders reused a piece of it in the paving of the *piazza*.

Several scholars, however, maintain that Israel was quite powerful during the reign of Omri and Ahab, and therefore there were no hostilities between Aram and Israel. Accordingly, the battles described in 1 Kings 20 and 22 should be dated to the time of Joahaz son of Jehu and to Joash son of Joahaz, and the latter's contemporary Ben Hadad son of Hazael.[32] Scholars who maintain this theory would presumably assign the Dan fragment to the time of Hazael.

If Dan was captured by one of Hazael's vassals, one may perhaps find some allusion to this event in 2 Kings 10:32–33. Verse 32 reads: בימים ההם החל יהוה לקצות בישראל, ויכם חזאל בכל גבול ישראל 'In those days, YHWH began to reduce Israel. Hazael struck at them *on all the borders of Israel*', but verse 33 describes only the territory east of the Jordan: מן הירדן מזרח השמש, את כל ארץ הגלעד, הגדי והראובני והמנשי מערער אשר על נחל ארנן, והגלעד והבשן 'from the Jordan to the east, all the land of the Gilead — the Gadites, the Reubenites, the Manassites — from Aroer by Wadi Arnon, including the Gilead and the Bashan'.[33] Perhaps verse 33 deals only with the main invasion led by Hazael himself, whereas the campaign of his vassal to the Galilee was omitted in the biblical records.

The nature of the biblical sources on the one hand and the fragmentary state of the Dan inscription on the other, do not allow us to draw definite conclusions. There may be other possible scenarios, and only the uncovering of additional pieces of the stele may provide answers to the problems raised by the discovery of our fragment.

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31 If one takes 1 Kings 20:34 literally — 'The cities that my father took *from your father* I will restore' — one should assign the Dan fragment to the time of Omri.

32 See A. Jepsen: Israel und Damaskus, *AfO* 14 (1941–1945), pp. 153–172; J.M. Miller: The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars, *JBL* 85 (1966), pp. 441–454; *idem*, The Fall of the House of Ahab, *VT* 17 (1967), pp. 307–324; *idem*, The Rest of the Acts of Jehoahaz (I Kings 20 22:1–35), *ZAW* 80 (1968), pp. 337–342; J.M. Miller and J.H. Hayes: *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 250–311; Pitard (above, n. 28), pp. 114–175; N. Na'aman: Forced Participation in Alliances in the Course of the Assyrian Campaigns to the West, in Cogan and Eph'al (above, n. 19), pp. 82–83.

33 Translation of M. Cogan and H. Tadmor: *II Kings* (*The Anchor Bible*), New York, 1988, p. 105.