

Baasha of Ammon

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The identification of the members of the western coalition who fought Shalmaneser III at the battle of Qarqar has engaged Assyriologists since the 19th century. Among the more elusive members of the alliance has been *Ba²-sa mār Ru-ḫu-bi KUR A-ma-na-a-a*, listed in the Monolith Inscription, column II, line 95.¹ The majority view holds that the toponym *A-ma-na-a-a* refers to Ammon, the small state located in Transjordan = biblical *ammōn* (Gen. 19:38, etc.). This identification originated among late 19th and early 20th century scholars,² is repeated in more recent works,³ and appears in standard translations.⁴

The minority view was first offered by E. Forrer,⁵ who identified the word with Amana, the mountainous region of southern Syria, more specifically the

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1. For the original, see H. C. Rawlinson, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* (London, 1870), 3: plates 7–8.

2. F. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* (Leipzig, 1881), 294; F. Hommel, *Geschichte Babylonien und Assyriens* (Berlin, 1885), 609; C. P. Tiele, *Babylonisch-assyrische Geschichte* (Gotha, 1886), 201; E. Schrader, *Sammlung von assyrischen und babylonischen Texten* (Berlin, 1889), 1:173; R. W. Rogers, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria* (New York, 1901), 77; H. Winckler, *The History of Babylonia and Assyria* (New York, 1907), 220; A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* (New York, 1923), 136; E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* (Stuttgart, 1931), II/2:333; and T. H. Robinson, *A History of Israel* (Oxford, 1932), 1:295.

3. W. F. Albright, "Notes on Ammonite History," in R. M. D. Carbonell, ed., *Miscellanea Biblica B. Ubach* (Barcelona, 1953), 136, n. 26; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that Was Babylon* (New York, 1960), 96; W. W. Hallo, "From Qarqar to Carchemish: Assyria and Israel in the Light of New Discoveries," *BA* 23 (1960), 39; H. G. May, *Oxford Bible Atlas* (London, 1962), 70; B. Mazar, "The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel," in D. N. Freedman and E. F. Campbell, eds., *Biblical Archaeologist Reader 2* (Garden City, NY, 1964), 144 (however, see Mazar below in n. 6); C. H. Gordon, *The Ancient Near East* (New York, 1965), 197; Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (New York, 1968), 81; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1972), 239; F. M. Cross, "Notes on the Ammonite Inscription from Tell Siran," *BASOR* 212 (1973), 14; F. Zayadine, "Note sur l'inscription de la statue d'Amman J.1656," *Syria* 51 (1974), 135; M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer neuassyrischen Darstellungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975), 128, n. 646; and N. Na³aman, "Two Notes on the Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser III from Kurkh," *Tel Aviv* 3 (1976), 98, n. 20.

4. D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, 1926), 1:223, §611 (henceforth *ARAB*); A. L. Oppenheim, in *ANET*³, 279; and D. J. Wiseman, in D. W. Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York, 1961), 47.

5. E. Forrer, "Ba³asa," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 1:328.

Anti-Lebanon range = biblical $\text{ʔ}ā\text{m}ā\text{n}ā\text{h}$ (2 Kgs. 5:12Q, Song 4:8). This opinion has also gained wide acceptance, especially among Israeli scholars.⁶ The main points raised by the proponents of this theory are as follows: a) the spelling of *A-ma-na-a-a*, with single *m*, contrasts with other Akkadian spellings of Ammon with geminated *m*; b) the reference lacks *bit*, which is usually prefixed to other references of Ammon; and c) the patronymic *Ruḥubi* refers to the small Aramean state Beth-rehob (1 Sam. 8:3), in which case *mār* means “citizen of.”⁷

A curious compromise position is offered by two scholars, E. Honigmann and G. M. Landes. Both agreed that *Ba-²-sa* was king of Ammon, though the former noted that his country “gehörte der Dynastie von Bet-Rehob an,”⁸ while the latter referred to Baasha as “the ‘son’ of Ruḥubi (i.e., Beth-rehob).”⁹ Still other scholars appear too cautious even to venture a guess as to which area is meant by *A-ma-na-a-a*.¹⁰

As the title of the present article indicates, I propose to argue anew for the majority position. The three points raised to bolster the identification of *A-ma-na-a-a* with Amana shall each be reviewed; then we shall offer some further arguments.

First, the spelling *A-ma-na-a-a* with single *m* is obviously ambiguous. The single *m* can stand for either simple *m*, as in the biblical spelling $\text{ʔ}ā\text{m}ā\text{n}ā\text{h}$, or for geminated *m*, as in biblical $\text{ʕ}ā\text{m}mō\text{n}$. Moreover, the Akkadian orthography gives us no clue as to whether the initial consonant is West Semitic $\text{ʔ}ā\text{leph}$, as in $\text{ʔ}ā\text{m}ā\text{n}ā\text{h}$, or $\text{ʕ}ā\text{yin}$, as in $\text{ʕ}ā\text{m}mō\text{n}$. But to return to the writing of the single *m*, let us examine the data more closely. Not only is “Ammon” consistently spelled with double *m*, e.g., *Am-ma-na*, *Am-ma-na-a-a*, *Am-man-a-a*, etc.,¹¹ but so is “Amana,” to wit, *Am-ma-na* (1x), *Am-ma-na-na* (4x).¹² Accordingly, the evidence from the Akkadian scribal

6. E. Michel, “Die Assur-Texte Salmanassars III. (858–824),” *WO* 1/2 (1947), 70, n. 13; H. Tadmor, “Azriyau of Yaudi,” in C. Rabin, ed., *Studies in the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1961), 245; H. Tadmor, “The Period of the First Temple, the Babylonian Exile and the Restoration,” in H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 121; B. Mazar, “Amana,” in *Ensiqlopedia Miqraʔit*, 1:436 (however, see Mazar above in n. 3); B. Oded, “Ammon, Ammonites,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2:857; A. Malamat, “The Aramaeans,” in D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford, 1973), 144; T. C. Mitchell, “Israel and Judah until the Revolt of Jehu (931–841 B.C.),” in *CAH* 3/1:478, n. 272; and M. Cogan, “. . . From the peak of Amanah,” *IEJ* 34 (1984), 258–59. Another scholar who adheres to this view, though apparently with some equivocation, is J. D. Hawkins, “The Neo-Hittite States in Syria and Anatolia,” in *CAH* 3/1:393. In his list of the allies he includes “Beth Rehob and ‘Amana.’”

7. For this meaning of *māru* see *CAD*, M/1:315. The usage “citizen of” is attested in the Neo-Assyrian period.

8. E. Honigmann, “Bit-Ammana,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 2:34–35.

9. G. M. Landes, “Ammon, Ammonites,” in *IDB* 1:111.

10. Thus the following two sources do not attempt an identification, though given the scope of their surveys one might be expected: M. Elat, “The Campaigns of Shalmaneser III against Aram and Israel,” *IEJ* 25 (1975), 25–35; and A. K. Grayson, “Assyria: Ashur-Dan II to Ashur-Nirari V (934–745 B.C.),” in *CAH*, 3/1:261. Technically, there is still another opinion concerning the identification of *A-ma-na-a-a*. R. Borger in K. Gallig, ed., *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen, 1979), 50, equates it with the Amanus Mountains, but one must agree with Cogan, “From the Peak” (above, n. 6), 259, n. 25, in calling this view eccentric.

11. S. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 76.

12. *Ibid.*, 16. See also P. Rost, *Die Keilschrifttexte Tiglat-Pileasers III* (Leipzig, 1893), 1:20, 74; Luckenbill, *ARAB*, 1:289, §804, *ARAB*, 2:168, §390; 175, §411; R. C. Thompson and R. W. Hutchinson, “The Excavations on the Temple of Nabû at Nimrud,” *Archaeologia* 79 (1929), 136; and J. Lewy, “The Old West Semitic Sun-God Ḥammu,” *HUCA* 18 (1944), 456, 458 (with additional bibliography).

tradition is neutral in this regard. Furthermore, there are numerous analogies to occasional monoconsonantal spellings amidst numerous biconsonantal spellings. Thus, from Neo-Assyrian sources we can cite two cases of *A-rap-ḥa/u* among several dozen examples of *Ar-rap-ḥa*,¹³ one case of *Ḥa-la-ḥi* vs. eight cases of *Ḥa-laḥ-ḥa/i/u*,¹⁴ and five instances of *A-šur* among hundreds of *Aš-šur* spellings.¹⁵ Lastly, as H. Tadmor has emphasized, the inscription was “copied rather carelessly by some local—not very experienced—scribe”; it “contains over fifty scribal errors, omissions, and mis-spellings”; “the names of foreign countries are often mis-spelt”; and “in the passage dealing with the battle of Qarqar (rev. 90–102), there are about ten mistakes”; e.g., the spellings *Gu-a-a* for *Gu-bala-a* and *Ši-za-na* instead of *Ši-a-na*, the omission of the city determinative before *U-sa-na-ta-a-a*, etc.¹⁶ Accordingly, too much should not be made of the spelling *A-ma-na-a-a*.

Fluidity in Assyrian scribal practice also can be used to explain the second point mentioned above. Various places are consistently referred to as Bīt-X, though occasionally we note the absence of *bīt*. Thus, e.g., *Bīt-Bunakki* is once written simply URU *Bu-na-ku*,¹⁷ *Bīt-Zamāni* appears once as KUR *Za-ma-a-ni*,¹⁸ and even Ammon is recorded once as KUR *Ba-an-am-ma-na-a-a* (cf. biblical *bēnê ʿammôn*) without *bīt*.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Monolith Inscription is the first reference to Ammon in Assyrian literature. Subsequent references do not begin until more than a century later, during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III.²⁰ In Shalmaneser III’s day, it is possible that the writing Bīt-Ammān had not yet become fixed in Assyrian scribal tradition. Therefore, just as too much emphasis should not be placed on the spelling with single *m*, the same holds for the omission of the expected *bīt* in our reference.

On the third point little can be said, because it is a moot issue whether *Ru-ḥu-bi* is to be taken as a toponym, i.e., Beth-rehob, or as an anthroponym. But it should be noted that Solomon’s son and successor, Rehoboam, was born to Naamah of Ammon (1 Kgs. 14:21, 31), suggesting the possibility that the element *rḥb* was used in Ammonite names.

In sum, there is nothing in the statement *Ba-²sa mār Ru-ḥu-bi* KUR *A-ma-na-a-a* which *a priori* suggests that Amana is the intended country. The passage is essentially ambiguous. However, collateral information, culled from our increased knowledge of the Ammonites in recent years, appears to sway the debate in favor of the equation of *A-ma-na-a-a* = Ammon. Two additional points may be raised in this respect.

13. Parpola, *Toponyms*, 32.

14. *Ibid.*, 142.

15. *Ibid.*, 41–54. Neo-Assyrian texts include additional attestations of the spelling *A-šur* referring to the deity, e.g., ND 1120 obv. 8, 12, 14, 24, for which see G. van Driel, *The Cult of Aššur* (Assen, 1969), 200–3.

16. H. Tadmor, “Que and Musri,” *IEJ* 11 (1961), 144–45.

17. Parpola, *Toponyms*, 79.

18. *Ibid.*, 91.

19. *Ibid.*, 76. I admit, however, that the absence of *bīt* here is probably due to the inclusion of *ba-an-*, which may have been seen as its functional equivalent. On the other hand, a second instance of *bīt*-less Ammon may occur in URU *Am-ma-a-(na)*, for which see Parpola, *Toponyms*, 16.

20. This has been noted previously by Mitchell, “Israel and Judah” (above, n. 6), 478, n. 272.

First, regardless of which side one takes in the controversy concerning *A-ma-na-a-a*, all are agreed that the royal name *Ba-²-sa* corresponds to West Semitic alphabetic *b^cš²*, “Baasha.”²¹ This name is known to us, of course, from the Bible, where it appears as the royal name of an Israelian²² king from the tribe of Issachar (1 Kgs. 15:16, etc.). Important for our present purposes is the presence of this name in the Ammonite onomasticon. Specifically, it appears as *b^cš²[²]* in Heshbon ostracon 4, line 6, as the name of an Ammonite dignitary c. 600 B.C.E.²³ In light of our scanty knowledge of personal names from the Amana region (Hadadezer in 1 Sam. 8:3 would be one example), it may be unfair to exploit our greater knowledge of the Ammonite onomasticon. Nevertheless, it may be significant that among the approximately one hundred attested Ammonite names²⁴ appears *b^cš²[²]* = Assyrian *Ba-²-sa*.²⁵

Secondly, we should take note of where *A-ma-na-a-a* appears in the list of the western coalition members. I do not refer to its placement as the last of the eleven allies, for clearly its number of troops—the exact figure cannot be determined due to a break in the text,²⁶ but it is at least 1,000 and probably more—exceeded the contingents of other allies mentioned earlier in the list (Byblos, Arvad, Usnu). Instead, I assume that the mention of *Ba-²-sa* the *A-ma-na-a-a*²⁷ immediately after *Gi-in-di-bu-’* KUR *Ar-ba-a-a* is significant. The other countries in the list are collocated for good reason: Damascus, Hamath, and Israel, apart from being generally close geographically, may be labeled “the Big Three”; Byblos and Egypt are mentioned together because of the traditional relationship between them;²⁸ and Arqa, Arvad, Usnu, and Shiana are all northern Phoenician city-states.²⁹ Thus, the placement of the last two allies should be intentional.

21. Thus virtually every author cited in nn. 2–6 who refers to the king by name normalizes *Ba-²-sa* as “Baasha.” See also S. E. Loewenstamm, “Baasha,” in *Ensiqlopedia Miqra²it*, 2:303–4. The equation is based on the well-known rule whereby Assyrian *s*-signs represent West Semitic *š* and vice versa; see H. Tadmor, “The Campaign of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study,” *JCS* 12 (1958), 39–40; S. Page, “A Stela of Adad-Nirari III and Nergal-ereš from Tell al Rimah,” *Iraq* 30 (1968), 148; and A. Millard, “Assyrian Royal Names in Biblical Hebrew,” *JSS* 21 (1976), 4.

22. Israelian = Northern Israelite. For the term, cf. H. L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York, 1982).

23. F. M. Cross, “Ammonite Ostraca from Heshbon: Heshbon Ostraca IV–VIII,” *AUSS* 13 (1975), 2–3; and K. P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age* (Chico, CA, 1983), 51–52 (the latter refers to this inscription as Heshbon ostracon 1). It is true that the final letter must be restored, but all are agreed that ²*aleph* is to be supplied.

24. For a complete study, see K. P. Jackson, “Ammonite Personal Names in the Context of the West Semitic Onomasticon,” in C. L. Meyers and M. O’Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN, 1983), 507–21.

25. Elsewhere the name is attested in two Neo-Punic inscriptions, spelled *b^cš²* in *KAI* 166:2 and *b^cs²* in *KAI* 145:37.

26. Consult the original in Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions* (above, n. 1), rev., end of line 94.

27. Note, parenthetically, that *A-ma-na-a-a* is a gentilic form.

28. On the identification of *Gu-a-a* = Byblos and *Mu-uš-ra-a-a* = Egypt, see Tadmor, “Que and Musri” (above, n. 16), 143–50; and Tadmor, “Azriyau” (above, n. 6), 245.

29. On the identification and location of these cities see the literature cited by Elat, “Campaigns” (above, n. 10), 26–27, n. 7.

The juxtaposition of *Ba⁻²-sa* the *A-ma-na-a-a* with Gindibu of Arabia is understandable if the former is identified as an Ammonite king. For as all who have studied ancient Ammon have noted, no other people in greater Canaan had such intimate contacts with the peoples of the Arabian peninsula. The evidence is of two types, linguistic and archaeological. The linguistic evidence stems mainly from the Ammonite onomasticon which includes a large percentage of Arabian³⁰ elements.³¹ On the archaeological side, there is evidence of the Ammonite involvement in the substantial caravan trade from Arabia northward with a concomitant Arabian influence on the Ammonite material culture.³² The following quotation from G. M. Landes summarizes the relations between Ammon and Arabia rather succinctly: "As may have already been gathered, the existence of Ammonite names, or name-elements, showing a north Arabic provenance is now clearly recognized, and fits well with what we know of Ammon's long-standing close relationship with the desert and of Ammonite political custom reflecting nomadic practice. For throughout their organized political history the Ammonites maintained a more intimate contact with the desert than did either of their southern neighbors, Moab or Edom. . . ."³³

These last two points raised, viz., the presence of the personal name *b^cš[^p]* in an Ammonite inscription, and the contacts between Ammon and Arabia, have not been taken into account in the debate as to the identification of *Ba⁻²-sa mār Ru-ḥu-bi* KUR *A-ma-na-a-a*. If they are given due consideration, it would seem that the scales have been tipped and that we should affirm the majority opinion recognizing "Baasha of Ammon."

30. By Arabian I mean Thamudic-Safaitic-Lihyanic, Arabic, and Epigraphic South Arabian.

31. See G. Garbini, "La lingua degli Ammoniti," *AION* 20 (1970), 249–58; G. Garbini, "Ammonite Inscriptions," *JSS* 19 (1974), 159–68; Oded, "Ammon" (above, n. 6), col. 855; and Jackson, "Ammonite Personal Names" (above, n. 24), 508. Garbini has gone too far in labeling Ammonite an Arabian dialect, for recent studies have all correctly placed it within the Canaanite group; but the Arabian element in the Ammonite onomasticon is still noteworthy. According to F. Israel, "The Language of the Ammonites," *OLP* 10 (1979), 144, n. 3, Garbini has surrendered his theory and now recognizes Ammonite as a Northwest Semitic dialect. On Ammonite as a Canaanite dialect, see Israel, *ibid.*, 143–59; D. Sivan, "On the Grammar and Orthography of the Ammonite Findings," *UF* 14 (1982), 219–34; Jackson, *Ammonite Language* (above n. 23), 107; and W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia, 1985), 205–35.

32. Albright, "Notes" (above, n. 3), 133; and G. M. Landes, "The Material Civilization of the Ammonites," *BA* 24 (1961), 65–86.

33. Landes, *Ibid.* 84.