Jews in Arabia
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7 April 2019

The Jewish Revolts
66 – 73 C.E. – The Great Revolt
132 – 135 C.E. – Bar-Kokhba Revolt
Translation:
1. This is the memorial of Isaiah, the Councillor, son of Yosef, chief citizen of Tayma' which erected
4. over him Amram and Ashmu
5. his brothers in the month of Iyar
6. year 20 + 20 + 20 + 10 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 of the Province.
Year 98 (+105) = 203 C.E.

Aramaic Inscription in Nabatean Script
Tayma, Northern Arabia, 203 C.E.
1. This is —— which ——
2. Ḥady'on son of Ḥoni son of Samuel chief citizen
3. of Hagra for [its over] Mawyah his wife, daughter of
4. ʿAmru son of Ḥadyon son of Samuel chief citizen of Tayma, who died in the month of
5. ʿAb in the year two hundred and fifty-
6. one at the age of thirty-
7. eight.

Aramaic inscription in Nabatean script
Hagra (= al-Hijr) – 251 (+105) = 356 C.E.

Hegra sundial
Manasseh bar Natan “peace”
מנסח בר נתן שלם
(in Aramaic)
Istanbul Museum

Jewish Nabatean-Aramaic-Arabic inscription
“Yea, may ʿOwšo be remembered well and be secure before the Lord of the World. And this writing he wrote on the day of the Feast of Matzot, the year one hundred and ninety and seven.”

Jewish Nabatean-Aramaic-Arabic inscription (197 + 105 = 302 C.E.)
Ahmad Al-Jallad
Ohio State University

Region of Northwest Arabia

עֲמָדֶה בֶּן גָּזָר
as-Samaw'al bin ‘Ādiyā’
Samuel ibn Adiya
(1st half of the 6th century C.E.)

Jewish poet and warrior of Tayma,
built a castle near Tayma,
described by A’shā Maymūn (c. 600)

Hartwig Hirschfeld,
Jewish Quarterly Review 17 (1905), pp. 431–440

Kingdom of Himyar (in red)
Several kings, including Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās (r. 517-525 C.E.),
converted to Judaism
Kingdom of Aksum (Christian) (in green)
The two leading products and exports from southern Arabia in ancient times.

Excavations at Zafar, Yemen (2008)

Rock-cut chambers, Zafar, Yemen

Sabaic inscription mentioning a man named ‘Judah’, ‘his people of Israel’ and ‘the synagogue’

Ẓafar (Yemen) – c. 400 C.E.

Hebrew graffito at the center of the inscription:

“Judah wrote this, may he be remembered for good, amen, shalom, amen”

Ẓafar (Yemen), c. 400 C.E.
Sabaic inscription mentioning 'their people of Israel'
Zafar (Yemen) – 460 C.E.

‘their people of Israel’
Ṣafar (Yemen) – 460 C.E.

‘El lord of heaven and earth’
Ṣafar (Yemen) – 460 C.E.

South Arabian Synagogue Dedication Inscription
Rayda, Yemen (70 km north of Ṣan’a)
August 433
Ry 534 + MAFI/Rayda 1

South Arabian Synagogue Dedication Inscription
Rayda, Yemen (70 km north of Ṣan’a)
August 433 / Rayda, Yemen

1 Ilīya’ Arṣal ibn Ḥasbāh, Ya’guf, Yqʾmwt dhu‐Sufār
2 and Ashraq dhu‐Ṣḥt, prince of the two communes Ḍuḥayl and Suṭa’ā, has gra‐
3 ned to the Lord of the Sky four plots, next to this rock, descending
4 until the fence of the cultivated area, to bury the Jews there, with the guarantee
5 that the burial of a Gentile next to them will be avoided, so that they may fulfil their
6 obligations towards the Jews. As for the three plots
7 and the well which are within the fence, [they are meant] as a concession, to the
8 mikrāb Ṣūrīʾīl

South Arabian Jewish Cemetery Dedication Inscription
Ḥaṣi, Yemen (250 km southeast of Ṣan’a)
[no photo available]

1 Ṣa’dā’ Aršāl ibn Ḥasbāh, Ya’guf, Yqʾmwt dhu‐Sufār
2 and Ashrāq dhu‐Ṣḥt, prince of the two communes Madhā’ī et Suṭā’ā, has gra‐
3 ned to the Lord of the Sky four plots, next to this rock, descending
4 until the fence of the cultivated area, to bury the Jews there, with the guarantee
5 that the burial of a Gentile next to them will be avoided, so that they may fulfil their
6 obligations towards the Jews. As for the three plots
7 and the well which are within the fence, [they are meant] as a concession, to the
8 mikrāb Ṣūrīʾīl

Marthadʾīlān Yarīm ibn Hamdān, Suʾrān, Aṣwaf and Agra’ . . . have
built and completed this synagogue (mikrāb) Barīk for Ilīya’ Arṣal ibn Ḥasbāh, Ya’guf, Yqʾmwt dhu‐Sufār
and Ashraq dhu‐Ṣḥt, prince of the two communes Madhā’ī et Suṭā’ā, has gra‐
ed to the Lord of the Sky four plots, next to this rock, descending
until the fence of the cultivated area, to bury the Jews there, with the guarantee
that the burial of a Gentile next to them will be avoided, so that they may fulfil their
obligations towards the Jews. As for the three plots
and the well which are within the fence, [they are meant] as a concession, to the
mikrāb Ṣūrīʾīl, in order that he may fulfill its obligations
and provide satisfaction. . . .
... In compensation, they (the Jews) have given, chosen and yielded to the lineage dhu-ʿĀmir (um) a plot of same importance and same value, and to the lineage dhu-ʿĀmirum, they have conceded a well and land which produces summer harvests and autumn harvests, (having) the importance and value of this well and of (this) land. With the guarantee, the prohibition and the threat of the Lord of the Sky and of the Earth, one shall avoid burying a Gentile on these plots, between Him and against those who do not give to the mikrābits land and to the Jews their plots.

Concerning the incumbent of Ṣūrīʾīl, his subsistence has been provided for, as well as (that) of all who will serve the mikrāb, with a well made of masonry downhill from the wādī Akbadī, with the guarantee that he will use the well (which is) at the place of those who will be used for Ṣūrīʾīl.
Tomb of Isaac, 5th century C.E.
Himyar – Southern Arabia – Yemen
(Sabaic inscription)

“Le judaïsme de Himyar,”


Christian Robin
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (C.N.R.S. – Paris)

Hebrew inscription
from Bayt Ḥādir
(15 km east of San‘ā’)

List of the 24 mīšmarot

9 of the names appear in 1 Chronicles 24

Zoar, Jordan
location of Zoar at the southern end of the Dead Sea

Thousands of Jewish and Christian burials at Zoar, Jordan, 3rd–6th centuries C.E.

Konstantinos Politis (British Museum)

Thousands of Jewish and Christian burials at Zoar, Jordan

Sample burials at Zoar, Jordan
Jewish tombstones from Zoar

Tombstone of Saridas Pitholaou, archisynagogos (head of the synagogue)
Zoar, Jordan

Aramaic tomb inscription found in Zoar, Jordan
"Yosef son of Awfa, of the town of Zafar in the land of Himyar, who moved to the land of Israel"
Dated to the 400th year of the destruction of the Temple = 470 C.E.

Bet She’arim burial caves (northern Israel)

Stone sarcophagi inside the catacombs of Bet She’arim
Section of the Himyarites in the catacombs of Bet She’arim

Greek inscription at Bet She’arim ‘of the Himyarites’

Greek inscription at Bet She’arim ‘of the Himyarites’

2600 km from Himyar to Bet She’arim

Mecca and Medina in central Arabia

Abu al-Faraj al-İsfahānī (897–967 C.E.)

Kitāb al- Ağānī “Book of Songs”

Mentions that Jews arrived in the Hijaz in the wake of the Roman-Jewish wars.
Jewish tribes in or near Medina
7th century C.E.,
mentioned in the Qur’an and other sources

Banū Naḍīr
Banū Qaynuqā’
Banū Qurayẓah

Jewish tribes in or near Medina
7th century C.E.

Banū Naḍīr (P)
Banū Qaynuqā’
Banū Qurayẓah (P)
al-kāhinān ‘the priests’

Tübingen Qur’an Manuscript
dated c. 650-675 C.E.

Mecca and Medina in central Arabia

Jews in Arabia
תודה!
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