

“THE SELF-DESTRUCTION OF DIVERSITY”: A TALE OF THE LAST DAYS IN JUDAH’S NEGEV TOWNS

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Summary: “The Self-Destruction of Diversity”: A Tale of the Last Days in Judah’s Negev Towns

The prosperous settlement system that developed in the Negev desert frontier towards the late Iron Age was characterized by the presence of various ethnic groups, including permanently settled and nomadic elements—most of whom took part in the long-distance Arabian trade. This multicultural reality experienced by Judeans, Edomites and Arabs is reflected in the rich archaeological and paleographical assemblages uncovered in Negev towns, attesting to diverse stylistic traditions. Alas, the flourishing urban system came to an abrupt end—marked by heavy destruction layers and abandonment patterns—which altered the region’s settlement system and subsistence economy for many years to come. Traditionally scholars have suggested that one of two malefactors brought about this violent end: the Babylonian empire or the Edomite kingdom—that is, external forces. A renewed study of late Iron Age IIC material culture from Negev sites has identified a third possibility. According to this reconstruction, following the decline of the Assyrian empire, Iron Age II Negev society experienced increasing socio-ethnic tension between local semi-nomads of an Edomite orientation on the one hand and on the other Judean sedentary groups. This escalating conflict eventually led to the inevitable collapse of a delicate symbiosis which had flourished in the region for over a century.

Keywords: Desert frontier – Edomite – Multicultural – Semi-nomads

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Resumen: “La autodestrucción de la diversidad”: Una historia de los últimos días en las ciudades del Negev de Judá

El sistema próspero de asentamientos que se desarrolló en la frontera del desierto del Negev hacia fines de la Edad de Hierro se caracterizó por la presencia de varios grupos étnicos, incluyendo asentamientos permanentes y elementos nomádicos—muchos de los cuales participaron del comercio árabe de larga distancia. Esta realidad multicultural experimentada por judaítas, edomitas y árabes está reflejada en los ricos conjuntos arqueológicos y paleográficos descubiertos en las ciudades del Negev, atestiguando las diversas tradiciones estilísticas. Por desgracia, el floreciente sistema urbano llegó a un abrupto fin—marcado por una fuerte destrucción de estratos y patrones de abandono—el cual alteró el sistema de asentamientos de la región y la economía de subsistencia durante muchos años. Tradicionalmente, los investigadores han sugerido que uno de dos villanos ocasionó este violento fin: el imperio babilónico o el reino edomita—esto es, fuerzas externas. Un estudio renovado de la cultura material de finales de la Edad de Hierro IIc identifica una tercera posibilidad. De acuerdo con esta reconstrucción, siguiendo el declive del imperio asirio, la sociedad de la Edad de Hierro II del Negev experimentó un incremento en la tensión socio-étnica entre grupos semi-nómades de orientación edomita por un lado y, por el otro, grupos sedentarios judaítas. Este conflicto ascendente llegó eventualmente al colapso inevitable de una delicada simbiosis que había florecido en la región por más de un siglo.

Palabras Claves: Frontera del desierto – Edomita – Multicultural – Semi-nómades

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of social relations within towns—ancient and modern alike—is a matter of a continuous discourse.¹ While the ancients often thought of their cities as oases of civilized life in a wild and chaotic landscape,² conflicting forces were also at work in urban settings, influencing and shaping the reality of town residents. The tension that existed between constructive and de-constructive elements in towns provides one example of these conflicting forces. As much as the values and interests of a city’s inhabitants contributed to its development and prosperity, the very same ideals could eventually lead to its ultimate destruction. The history of the southern Levantine desert frontier—the biblical “Negev” of the late Iron Age (mid eighth-early sixth centuries BCE)—presents a good case study for this sort of counteraction.

¹ Simmel 1964; Sjoberg 1965; Park 1967; Faust 2003.

² Van de Mieroop 1997: 44–46; Portugali 2000: 65, 335.

The late Iron Age saw the development of the Negev desert frontier's first prosperous settlement system, incorporating urban centers, fortresses, small settlements and an administrative center (**Fig. 1**). While this flourishing settlement system has been extensively discussed in the archaeological and historical literature,³ recent studies have highlighted the role of internal social processes as prime movers behind cultural changes in the desert frontier, and of the local inhabitants as active agents in shaping their socio-political environment.⁴

The early sixth century BCE brought major cultural change to the Negev, marking the end of the Iron Age. This change was manifested archaeologically by heavy destruction layers at most excavated sites, followed by widespread evidence of abandonment and desertion that changed settlement and subsistence patterns in the region for centuries.⁵ While most scholars have maintained that external factors were responsible for the destruction of Negev sites, recent archaeological evidence and developments in our understanding of Negev society and politics during the late Iron Age have given rise to other explanations.

This paper seeks to examine the potential contribution of archaeological evidence from Negev sites to such an alternative socio-historical reconstruction of the Iron Age II desert frontier in its last days. In broader terms, this study aims to explore the self-destructive potential of ancient urban forms, the role that internal social forces played in the collapse of ancient systems and the ways in which these mechanisms are expressed through the archaeological record.

For this purpose, IAIIb-c Negev settlement system will be presented along the geopolitical background for its development. Sedentary-tribal relations in the IAII southern desert frontier will be analyzed with an emphasis on the special role that semi-nomadic groups with Edomite orientation played in the region at the eve of the destruction. The archaeological description of the settlement system destruction will be followed by the two currently dominating

³ See discussion and previous literature in Thareani 2010a: 28–32.

⁴ Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001; Tebes 2007; Whiting 2007; Thareani 2008; 2009; 2010b; Singer-Avitz 2011.

⁵ E.g. Tel 'Ira Stratum VI (Beit-Arieh 1999: 176–177); Tel Arad Strata VII–VI (Herzog 2002: 40–49); Tel Malhata Stratum III (Beit-Arieh 1998: 34–35); Tel 'Aroer Stratum IIb (Thareani 2011: 307); Horvat 'Uza Stratum III (Beit-Arieh 2007: 23–24, 53); Horvat Radum (Beit-Arieh 2007: 306–310); Horvat Qitmit (Beit-Arieh 1995: 12).

explanations and by their critical view. These will provide the basis for a new understanding of the identity of the demolishers of the IAI Negev settlement system.

THE NEGEV URBAN SYSTEM IN THE LATE IRON AGE

The transition to the eighth century BCE (Iron Age IIb) brought a dramatic change in the status of the desert frontier as the region became part of the kingdom of Judah and was integrated into the long-distance trade network with Arabia. The importance of land-based trade during this period, the Negev's location at the edge of the settled region, with Judah to the north, Edom to the east, the Philistine coast and the ports to the west, Egypt and the nomads to the south contributed to and intensified the Negev's status as a buffer zone between distinct social and political entities. However, this major transition in the role of the Negev desert frontier was also largely due to changing geopolitical circumstances—namely, the approach of the most influential political power of all: the Neo-Assyrian empire. The arrival of the Neo-Assyrian empire into the southern Levantine arena entirely altered the political situation and deeply influenced foreign policy and internal affairs of the newly-subordinated southern Levantine kingdoms. The reduction in conflict between Judah and its neighbors brought relative peace and political stability, and stimulated the development of flourishing settlement systems and long-distance trade networks from as early as the mid-eighth century BCE.⁶

Of the fifty late Iron Age Negev sites documented in surveys and excavations, ten are large (more than 10 dunams). Some of these were political and economic centers.⁷ Five are classified as forts.⁸ One, Tel Beersheba, was an administrative center.⁹ Another forty small, unfortified sites in the region were also founded.¹⁰

⁶ Otzen 1979: 255–256; Na'aman 1995: 113.

⁷ Tel 'Ira (Beit-Arieh 1999), Tel Malhata (Beit-Arieh 1998), Tel 'Aroer (Thareani 2011) and Bir es-Seba' (Gofhna and Israeli 1973; Panitz-Cohen 2005).

⁸ Horvat Radum (Beit-Arieh 2007), Horvat 'Uza (Beit-Arieh 2007), Tel Arad (Herzog 2002; Singer-Avitz 2002), Horvat 'Anim (Kochavi 1972: 82, site 250; Cohen 1995: 118) and Horvat Tov (Cohen 1995: 116).

⁹ Aharoni 1973; Singer-Avitz 1999.

¹⁰ Thareani-Sussely 2007a: 73; and see the exceptional compound at Horvat Qitmit: Beit-Arieh 1995.

While the imperial control strategy exercised by the Assyrians in northern Palestine and along the Coastal Plain was direct and accompanied by typical Assyrian architecture and other material culture manifestations,¹¹ Assyrian presence in the Negev desert frontier was limited to indirect rule through the subordinated client kingdom of Judah.¹² This is indicated in the archaeological record of Iron Age II Negev sites by such evidence as traditional architecture and typical Judean ceramic repertoires, as well as the Judean weight system, script and names.¹³ While the Negev settlement system mostly preserved its local character, the imperial presence in the rest of the southern Levant had a significant positive effect on the sense of safety and economic prosperity, parts of which region had never before been permanently settled. Under imperial patronage, client kingdoms such as Judah could develop large hierarchic settlement systems incorporating several urban centers such as fortresses, administrative centers and satellite sites in the economic hinterland.

A valuable tool for our understanding of the economic and political role of the Iron Age II Negev system are the faunal assemblages of Negev sites, which from the eighth century on show a steady increase in the number of camel bones, mostly dromedaries (*Camelus dromedaries*).¹⁴ Thus far camel bones have been identified at Tel 'Ira, Tel 'Aroer, Tel Beersheba and at western Negev sites such as Tel Jemmeh.¹⁵

During the eighth and seventh centuries BCE the Negev also saw the first appearance of trade-related objects and Assyrian imported goods such as (Fig. 2): animal-shaped weights; ceramic vessels imitating Assyrian metal bowls and bottles; Assyrian glass cup; and cylinder seals; *ostraca* bearing Arabian signs; a seal containing an Arabian name; and small limestone altars.

The appearance of the camel (the breeding conditions and maintenance of which are expensive), as well as imported goods from Assyria, Arabian script and foreign names at Negev sites should all be interpreted in the context of the Negev settlements' integration into the framework of the long-distance Arabian trade.¹⁶

¹¹ See for example the plan of Stratum III at Megiddo (Peersmann 2000) and the vaulted mud-brick structure at Tel Jemmeh (Ben Shlomo and Van Beek 2014).

¹² I prefer to use the term "client kingdom" instead of the common term "vassal kingdom." For its adoption in the study of the Assyrian world see Postgate 1992: 204–207.

¹³ Stern 2001: 151–163.

¹⁴ Jasmin 2006: 147; Motro 2011: 268, 276–277, Table 3.60.

¹⁵ Wapnish 1981; 1984; Dayan 1999: 480–487; Kolska-Horwitz 1999: 488–494; Jasmin 2006: 147; Motro 2011: 268, 276–277, Table 3.60.

¹⁶ Finkelstein 1992: 161–162; Singer-Avitz 1999: 55–58; Thareani-Sussely 2007a: 138–139.

A *longue durée* view of the Negev shows that establishment of new urban centers in the region has often been accompanied by the arrival of persons involved in trade (tribal elites, traders, tax collectors, caravaners and the like) who have taken an active role in the organization and maintenance of the trade network. In such periods of economic florescence, trade-related institutions and services have emerged within and outside Negev towns. These have included trade quarters such as the extramural neighborhood at Iron Age IIB-c 'Aroer,¹⁷ commercial centers such as the store avenue in Nabataean-Roman Mampsis,¹⁸ the Ottoman Bedouin market at Beersheba¹⁹ and caravansaries such as the Iron Age IIB-c caravanserai at 'Aroer and Nabataean Mampsis.²⁰ These institutions provided food and shelter to the trade caravans that passed through the Negev and enabled the concentration of products and goods in towns, selling or transporting them onwards to Judah, Egypt, Transjordan or the coastal ports.

Having outlined the settlement pattern of the late Iron Age Negev, another important aspect of social life in the region requiring attention is the interaction between the sedentary and nomadic systems.

SEDENTARY-TRIBAL RELATIONS IN IRON AGE II NEGEV TOWNS

The important position of semi-nomadic societies in frontier areas in general and in the Negev desert in particular has been extensively explored. Early discussion of the term "nomad" was affected by diverse biased imaginary views that saw nomads either as independent stateless entities existing outside the civilized world or as barbaric groups swaying from the desert the helpless inhabitants of the settled land.²¹

According to this view, nomadic groups concentrate in arid zones that are not suited to agricultural processing. Nomads focus on animal husbandry; they live in autonomous groups, operating an autarchic economy reliant on

¹⁷ Thareani 2008.

¹⁸ Negev 1988: 163–167.

¹⁹ Ben-David 1990: 191.

²⁰ Thareani-Sussely 2007b; Negev 1988: 191–194.

²¹ Szuchman 2009: 2; and see, for example, the ideology which underlays perception and presentation of nomads by historians and geographers of the ancient Mediterranean, and the way this attitude influenced the perception of nomadism in modern western thought (Shaw 1982–1983).

animal products and bereft of sedentary population contacts. Nomads are hostile to central authority and wait for windows of opportunity when they can take advantage of its weakness and attack.²²

From the 1960s on, many studies have emphasized the economic aspects of pastoral nomadism, arguing that pastoral nomadism is an economic adaptation in which mobility is a by-product of a specialized economy. Economic necessity was held responsible for close reciprocal relationships between nomadic and sedentary populations in a way that distinction between the two communities is not always possible.²³ The Near Eastern pastoral nomadism was multi-resourced, that is an economic adaptation depending upon diverse resources such as small-scale cultivation, trade, crafts, raiding etc. Pastoral nomads operate along a continuum of economic and social activities. Under certain socio-political conditions²⁴ semi-nomads may maintain symbiotic relations with the sedentary system and even settle in urban environments, whereas in times of trouble and distress²⁵ even permanent settled populations can adapt their subsistence patterns and become nomads.²⁶

With these understandings in mind, scholars agree that nomads can become city dwellers without this interfering their nomadic identity and tribal kin while the nomadic identity is being kept even in the context of residential stability.²⁷ Settled nomads are identified as members of a tribe. Past theories, such as that of Sahlins²⁸ and Service,²⁹ have seen the tribe as a segmented organization integrated through mechanisms of lineage and other forms of organizational solidarity. It is now realized that the tribe is a flexible, adaptive and highly variable entity involving communal decision making and exercising several forms of political authority. Therefore, tribes may exhibit urban features and political hierarchies, while still remaining in some sense, tribal.³⁰

Prominent in this context is the settlement of members of the tribal elite, who function as mediators between the tribe and the town. This becomes possible when elite members receive political power³¹ or become land owners,

²² Musil 1928; Reifenberg 1955; Barth 1961; Patai 1971.

²³ Marx 1984; Khazanov 1994.

²⁴ *E.g.* strong central authority, development of long-distance trade, etc.

²⁵ *E.g.* threat or collapse of central authority.

²⁶ Barth 1961: 93–100; Rowton 1974; Marx 1984; 1992: 256–258; Khazanov 1994: 202–212.

²⁷ Rowton 1973: 201; Szuchman 2014: 3.

²⁸ Sahlins 1961; 1968.

²⁹ Service 1971.

³⁰ Szuchman 2014: 4–5, with further reading.

³¹ *E.g.* when the tribe leader becomes the town's governor.

military officers or administrators. Consequently, part of the tribe continues to practice semi-nomadism while others settle.³² In this way, elite groups in both communities, the sedentary and the semi-nomadic, become leaders in towns by directing the value systems of their origin group, functioning as bridges between the two communities and gaining an economic power that often becomes political.³³ This behavioral pattern is also evident in the *longue durée* of the southern Levantine desert frontier.³⁴

In light of this review, any study of socio-political change in the history of the Negev desert frontier will have to take into account the nomadic, tribal, kingdom and imperial aspects into consideration in order to build a comprehensive picture of the diverse elements that generated and affected this change.

THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF IRON AGE II NEGEV TOWNS

The crucial role that the Negev played in the Arabian trade network determined its function as a node of interaction and had a direct influence on the social fabric of its towns and fortresses, which included people of various ethnic origins and social classes. The historical records and the archaeological finds from Negev sites reflect three main social groups who resided in the region during the Iron Age IIB-C: Judeans, Arabs and the so-called “Edomites.”

Evidence for Judean presence at Negev sites includes the appearance of Judean weight system, Judean names and script, Judean pillar figurines and a massive amount of ceramics which are doubtless Judean.³⁵ The architectural layout of Negev sites is also similar to those of other Judean regions. The impression is that Judeans were the largest and most influential social group in the Iron Age II Negev. Moreover, the fact that the 35 settlements of the Negev are included in the list of towns of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:21–32) supports the claim that the area was included within the southern territory of the Judean kingdom by the seventh century BCE—the time that text was composed.³⁶

³² Rowton 1976: 244–246; Marx 1992: 258; Khazanov 1994: 212–221.

³³ Ahmed 1973: 76.

³⁴ For the archaeological and historical reflection of this imperial strategy see Thareani 2009.

³⁵ The same repertoire is typical of unequivocally Judean sites at the end of the Iron Age, such as Jerusalem, Lachish and ‘En Gedi (Stern 2001: 151–163).

³⁶ Alt 1925; Na‘aman 2005: 345–347.

A much less evident social factor in the Iron Age Negev—at least as far as is reflected in the archaeological record to date—is the Arabian element. Various Arabian inscriptions and objects from several IAIIb-c Negev and some other Judean sites illustrate a commercial activity that is usually associated with the long-distance Arabian trade from as early as the eighth century BCE (see discussion above on p. 189).

Pottery sherds bearing Arabian signs have been traced at Tel Jemmeh, Tell el-Kheleifeh, Tel 'Aroer, Tel Beersheba and the City of David.³⁷ In addition, Negev sites such as Tel Beersheba and Hazeva have yielded several stone seals bearing Arabian signs or names (**Fig. 3**).³⁸ Some of these seals are of local manufacture: the Arabian seal from Beersheba was carved from local stone.³⁹ Arabian signs from 'Aroer and the City of David have also been shown to be local Judean products.⁴⁰ The appearance of local seals bearing Arabian names and signs on local Judean vessels supports the impression that Arabian merchants settled in Judean centers and managed their business affairs from there. These people may have presaged the massive Arabian presence in the Negev from the Persian period onwards.⁴¹

Apart from the Judean and Arabian presence, another social element that is most relevant to our discussion is the so-called “Edomite” group. The appearance of the “Edomites” in the Iron Age IIB-c Negev is often associated in the scholarly literature with a group of pottery vessels identifiable by their light-colored fabric and characteristic forms.⁴² This pottery is known mainly from Edomite sites in Transjordan but is also found in smaller quantities at Iron Age IIB-c Negev, Arava and Sinai sites.⁴³

³⁷ Ryckmans 1939; Shiloh 1987: 289, Fig. 1:3, 4; Singer-Avitz 1999: 50–52; Thareani 2011: 206–207, 228, 304–305; van der Veen and Bron 2014: 203–226 .

³⁸ Singer-Avitz 1999: 50–52; Naveh 2001: 197–198.

³⁹ Singer-Avitz 1999: 50–52.

⁴⁰ Shiloh 1987: 292; Thareani 2011: 228.

⁴¹ Eph'al 1982: 197–200.

⁴² Initially, the distinctive style in which some of these vessels were painted was called “Edomite” (Glueck 1934–1935: 124–137). In the 1990s it was suggested to rename it “Busayra Painted Ware” after the site where it was most commonly found (Bienkowski 1992: 7; Thareani 2010b; Tebes 2011b).

⁴³ Sites as: Tel 'Aroer (Thareani 2011: 120–157), Horvath Qitmit (Freud and Beit-Arieh 1995: Figs. 4.2: 17; 4.4: 11; 4.14: 12; 4.17: 37; 4.23), Tel Beersheba (Singer-Avitz 2004; 2014), Tel Malhata (L. Freud, pers. comm.), Tel 'Ira (Freud 1999: 194, Figs. 6.83:5; 6.90:4, 16), Tell el-Kheleifeh (Pratico 1993: 47, Pl. 37–8–12), Kadesh Barnea (Bernick-Greenberg 2007: 168–70, figs. 11.74–11.77) and 'En Hazeva (Cohen 1993: 593).

The “Edomite” ware (**Fig. 4**) includes undecorated vessels alongside vessels that are decorated in a distinctive style.⁴⁴ Although this style is often regarded as a foreign influence of a Transjordanian origin, petrographic analyses have well established that the “Edomite” assemblage is mostly produced locally.⁴⁵ One should add to this the handmade and wheelmade “Edomite” cooking pots, some of which were imported from the Edomite plateau and southeastern Negev. “Edomite” cooking pots were unearthed at Tel Malhata, Kadash Barnea and at ‘Aroer where they were found together with pig bones bearing butcher marks.⁴⁶

While pig bones are considered foreign to Iron Age II archaeozoological Judean assemblages,⁴⁷ their presence—with cut marks, and in association with imported Edomite cooking pots—in the southernmost Judean town implies that this forbidden animal was consumed by people who were ethnically distinct from Judeans.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, the ceramic and faunal evidence do not stand alone; they are supported by a unique array of finds from the cultic site of Horvat Qitmit and elsewhere which have parallels in artifacts from sites along the Edomite Plateau.⁴⁹ The paleographic evidence from Horvat Qitmit is of the same typological group as lapidary inscriptions from seventh-early sixth centuries BCE Transjordan.⁵⁰ The name *qos*—after the Edomite god—appears in a cultic context at Horvat Qitmit and in an administrative context at Arad.⁵¹ A *qosa* seal has been found at ‘Aroer.⁵² Another seal, bearing the Edomite inscription *lmsqt ben wehazam*, comes from Hazeva.⁵³ The Edomite-oriented names ‘*aznael* and ‘*danael* were in use at Tel Malhata.⁵⁴ The Edomite ostrakon from Horvat ‘Uza, on which an Edomite grain transport to the fortress is document-

⁴⁴ Whiting 2007; Thareani 2010b.

⁴⁵ Iserlis and Thareani 2011: 179–187, with previous literature.

⁴⁶ Bernick-Greenberg 2007a: 192–193; Thareani 2011: 184–185; Motro 2011: 278; Freud 2014: 285–286.

⁴⁷ Hesse 1990: 197–198; Sapir-Hen *et al.* 2013: 9–11, 13, Table 1.

⁴⁸ Motro 2011: 278; Thareani 2011: 304–305.

⁴⁹ Beck 1995: 186–187; 1996; Beit-Arieh 1995: 261–262, 264–267, 303–305.

⁵⁰ For comparative analysis see Beit-Arieh 1995: 266, Fig. 5.8.

⁵¹ Aharoni 1981: 26; Beit-Arieh 1995: 267.

⁵² Avigad and Sass 2011.

⁵³ Naveh 2001: 197–198.

⁵⁴ Kochavi 1993: 936.

ed, is yet another indication of the presence of people bearing an ethnic “Edomite” orientation that resided in the Negev desert frontier.⁵⁵ This collection of paleographic evidence is important for our understanding of the “Edomite” ceramic group.

Scholars have disputed the origin and nature of these Edomite settlers. The traditional position has been that Edomites arrived in the Negev as intruders from the east. According to this view the Edomites crossed the Wadi Arabah and conquered the Judean Negev.⁵⁶ This image of Edomites invading the Negev from the east is founded upon a general assumption that relationships between Judeans and Edomites during the Iron Age were mostly hostile in nature—an assumption deeply-rooted in anthropological and biblical studies.

From the anthropological perspective, the late 19th and early 20th centuries were dominated by a hypothesis (see p. 190–191 above) that posited a perpetual hostility and friction between sedentary and nomadic populations. From the biblical point of view, this argument relied upon the negative image of Edom as reflected in several prophetic sources (see p. 199 below).

Contrasting with these viewpoints is that which holds that Edomite-Judean relations were more complex. According to this view the strong archaeological evidence reflects co-existence rather than hostility, and that the wide range of “Edomite” material culture supports the notion that its geographical distribution has no connection with the modern concept of ethnicity or with the borders of the Iron Age II Edomite kingdom; the border status of Wadi Arabah is merely a modern bias.

On this background it was suggested that the Negev frontier was inhabited by local semi-nomadic tribes of some sort of Edomite orientation who benefited from the long-distance trade on the one hand, and on the other conducted random raids.⁵⁷ The military *ostrakon* from ‘Uza implies that local “Edomite” mercenaries served in Iron Age II Judean fortresses, alongside local “Edomite” tribes who settled in Judean towns (see note 55 below).

This substantial collection of archaeological evidence, especially the appearance of Edomite material culture in clear Judean contexts, suggests that autochthonic semi-nomadic groups of an Edomite orientation that had once been nomads in the Iron Age II Negev desert frontier settled in Judean towns and held symbiotic relations with the Judean population.

⁵⁵ Beit-Arieh 2007: 332–335; Na’aman 2012: 214–216, 225.

⁵⁶ Beit-Arieh 1996; Bienkowski and Galor 2006.

⁵⁷ Finkelstein 1992: 158–159; Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001: 37–39.

Against this background, it is likely that the inhabitants of the late Iron Age Negev originated from different ethnic groups—Judeans, Arabs and Edomites—and various social classes—merchants, administrators, soldiers' families, local tribal groups, etc.—comprising a multi-cultural desert frontier society in which diverse traditions co-existed as elements of a single social community.

Neo-Assyrian imperial rule, overseeing semi-autonomous communities, stimulated the creation and development of such multi-cultural societies. Although Assyria did not control the Negev directly, the Assyrians used local proxies (Judean and local tribal elites) as agents of their economic and political interests, a policy that is well attested in the material culture and textual data from Assyria and other pre-industrial empires.⁵⁸

Given the clear Assyrian interest in Arabian trade, all subject cultures of the Negev—the dominant Judean community, the local semi-nomadic tribes, the Arab-oriented population and others—had no choice but to co-exist with each other. Imperial interests far stronger than those of Judah forced the southern kingdom to practice a tolerant socio-political strategy. The archaeological evidence supports the impression that under imperial patronage different cultural groups demonstrated relative tolerance in their daily life.

Negev towns constituted a delicate social organism. Equilibrium between the empire whose spirit hovered over the region, local semi-nomadic groups, a sedentary system and a subordinated kingdom—all contributed to the prosperity of the Iron Age II desert frontier.

WHO SHUT UP THE CITIES OF THE SOUTH?

The thriving Iron Age II Negev settlement system came to an abrupt end. Destruction layers have been found in most of the central sites and fortresses; in some cases patterns of abandonment have been detected. At Tel 'Ira, Stratum VI yielded evidence for conflagration. Collapsed stones, ash remains and broken vessels were discerned in several rooms of Area C, probably indicating the collapse of a second storey. A thick destruction layer was also unearthed in Area L, especially in a building adjacent to the city wall; floors were thickly covered with debris in which were found storejars, kraters and burnt wooden beams. A group of juglets was found above the collapsed stones, most likely having fallen from the shelves of an upper storey.

⁵⁸ Thareani 2009 with references.

Evidence for a conflagration was also attested in one of the casemate rooms of Area E, where a skeleton was detected in an ash layer.⁵⁹

Stratum IIB at Tel 'Aroer also came to a violent end. A conflagration layer 0.3–0.7 m thick sealing its remains was detected in most of the excavated areas: in the caravanserai of Area A; in the intramural town; and in buildings abutting the exterior of the city wall. This destruction layer included fallen stones, burnt mudbricks and ash which buried assemblages typical of late seventh-early sixth century BCE Judah.⁶⁰ A total of 101 complete vessels dating to the last phase of the Iron Age II occupation at 'Aroer were retrieved from Stratum IIB, supporting the violent end of what used to be a thriving trade town. In one case, in the extramural road station of Area C on the bank of Nahal 'Aroer, a pattern of abandonment was detected, implying a convergence of population around town in times of warfare.⁶¹

Preliminary results from the excavation of Tel Malhata have indicated a fierce conflagration of Stratum III that dates to the same time of Stratum IIB at 'Aroer. Burnt cedar beams and many smashed vessels were found on the floors of two large mudbrick structures. Thick mudbrick debris (up to 1.5 m in depth) appeared to have fallen from the second floors of buildings and from the upper sections of fortifications.⁶²

The evidence from the Negev fortresses is equally telling. At Tel Arad, the most important Judean administrative and military center in seventh century BCE Negev, Strata VII–VI were destroyed in a fire.⁶³ Conflagration remains from this phase include Eliashib's Archive, which is vital to our understanding of affairs in the region at this crucial.

Not far from Arad, Horvat 'Uza suffered a similar fate. Signs of conflagration were discerned throughout the area of the fortress gate, where collapsed stones of the Iron Age walls and burnt cedar beams—perhaps door remains—were found on the surface. Smashed pottery and *ostraca* were recovered from a small adjacent room and in the gate passageway itself.⁶⁴ The fortress interi-

⁵⁹ Ayalon 1999: 45–49; Beit-Arieh 1999: 176–177; Biran 1999: 115; Finkelstein and Beit-Arieh 1999: 76; Fig. 3.66.

⁶⁰ Thareani 2011: 25–33, 49–55, 107–108, 111–112, fig. 2.29.

⁶¹ Thareani 2011: Table 3.6, 66–67.

⁶² Beit-Arieh 1998: 34–35.

⁶³ Aharoni 1981: 150; Herzog 2002: 102. Strata VII–VI at Arad are referred here as one stratigraphic horizon contrary to the excavators' opinion (Aharoni 1981: 8, 149; Herzog 2002: 40–49) and in light of subsequent stratigraphic, ceramic and paleographic analyses (Mazar and Netzer 1986: 90; Zimhoni 1997: 204–205).

⁶⁴ Beit-Arieh 2007: 23–24.

or—mainly the western section—included empty rooms with few if any Iron Age II finds. This dearth may be explained by an ashy dump at the western end of the site, containing much Iron Age II pottery—the result of Hellenistic-period clearance work.⁶⁵ Although evidence for the Iron Age II destruction at Horvat ‘Uza is thus far limited to the fortification area, it seems reasonable to assume that the entire fortress experienced a violent destruction by the end of the period.

The fate of Horvat Radum, ‘Uza’s smaller neighbor to the south, was somewhat different. Only a few sherds and several Hebrew *ostraca* were detected on the surface of the gateway and inner rooms of the fortress. A layer of ash covered a whole side of one room.⁶⁶ In light of the absence of settlement at Radum in later periods it seems safe to assume that the site was abandoned by its inhabitants towards the final stage of the Iron Age IIc—in the excavator’s words, “due to threatened or actual enemy attack.”⁶⁷

Finally, the single-period shrine at Horvat Qitmit ended its relatively short life in a conflagration. A ca. 20 cm-thick layer of ash mixed with sherds and animal bones was uncovered in the rooms.⁶⁸

Archaeologists, historians and biblical scholars have debated the question of when the Negev desert ceased to be part of the kingdom of Judah. One school of thought has dated the destruction of Negev towns to the Babylonian campaign of 598 BCE. Alt argued that the Negev had already been cut off from the Judean kingdom in 598/7 BCE, in a punitive campaign carried out by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.⁶⁹ His view was supported by Noth, Welten, Bartlett and Dykehouse.⁷⁰

Another view, held by most scholars, attributes the conquest and destruction of the Negev to the year 587 BCE, contemporary with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.⁷¹ Lipschits has claimed that Negev towns fell

⁶⁵ Beit-Arieh 2007: 53.

⁶⁶ Beit-Arieh 2007: 306–310.

⁶⁷ Beit-Arieh 2007: 314.

⁶⁸ Beit-Arieh 1995: 12.

⁶⁹ Alt 1925: 108.

⁷⁰ Noth 1958: 283–284; Welten 1969: 166; Bartlett 1982: 23; 1989: 149–150; Dykehouse 2013.

⁷¹ Kochavi 1970: 23; Biran and Cohen 1981: 272; Beit-Arieh 1985: 20, 25; 1986: 33, 35; Na’aman 1987: 15. Based on the ascription of two occupation layers at Arad to the seventh century BCE, Rainey (1987: 23–24) dated the destruction of Stratum VII at that fortress to the Babylonian campaign of 598 BCE and that of Stratum VI to the 587 BCE campaign, prior to the conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. This view, however, has remained a minority one.

one after another following the Babylonian campaign and the destruction of Jerusalem.⁷²

Several candidates have been put forward by historians and archaeologists as possible destroyers of the Negev settlement system. According to the traditional view it was the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who razed the Negev.⁷³ It was to this time that Alt attributed Jeremiah's lamenting prophecy:

*Say thou unto the king and to the queen-mother:
'Sit ye down low;
For your headtires are come down,
Even your beautiful crown.'
The cities of the South are shut up,
And there is none to open them;
Judah is carried away captive, all of it;
It is wholly carried away captive.
(Jeremiah 13:18–19)*

While some scholars consider the biblical text as proof of a complete or near-complete obliteration of early sixth century BCE Judean towns,⁷⁴ others have suggested that the literary evidence is a creation of the post-exilic Judaeo-Babylonian immigrant community that does not reflect historical reality.⁷⁵

On the other hand, the antagonistic mention of Edom in prophetic and other biblical books⁷⁶ have contributed significantly to the more common view that relations between Edom and Judah were always hostile in nature and that the Edomites should be held responsible for the destruction of the Negev towns.⁷⁷

This argument has further support in paleographic evidence provided by Ostrakon 24 from Arad, which contains an order to Eliashib, the commander of the fortress, to send reinforcements from Arad and from Qinah to Elisha son of Jeremiah, the commander of the garrison at Ramat-Negeb, in anticipation of attack there. Much emphasis is placed on warnings:

⁷² Lipschits 2005: 144–146, 181–182.

⁷³ Alt 1925: 108; Noth 1958: 283–284; Welten 1969: 166; Bartlett 1982: 23; 1989: 149–150.

⁷⁴ Albright 1949: 142; Stern 2001: 304–331.

⁷⁵ Blenkinsopp 2002: 177–178; Tebes 2011a, and see a rejoinder in Stern 2004.

⁷⁶ Ezekiel 35: 1–36; Psalms 137; and especially Obadiah 11–14, where Edom is singled out.

⁷⁷ Mazar 1963: 5–6; Myers 1971: 390–392; Lemaire 1977: 192–193; Aharoni 1982: 278–279; Kletter 1995: 24.

*From Arad 50 and from Kin[ah]...
and you shall send them to Ramat-Negeb by the hand of
Malkiyahu the son of Qerab'ur and he shall hand them
over to Elisha' the son of Yirmiyahu in Ramat-Negeb, lest
anything should happen to the city. And the word of the
king is incumbent upon you for your very life! Behold, I
have sent to warn you today: [Get] the men to Elisha':
lest Edom should come there.⁷⁸*

Some scholars have taken the Edomite ostrakon from Horvat 'Uza together with Ostrakon 24 from Arad as an indication that there was a temporary Edomite conquest of the Judean fortresses prior to their final fall.⁷⁹ However, this argument is not supported by the evidence from Negev sites where only one major destruction horizon is detected. The presence of a military *ostrakon* written in a foreign language should not necessarily be taken as indicative of foreign military conquest. Rather, this could reflect Judah's hiring of mercenaries of various origins to man its forts—a common practice during the Iron Age II.⁸⁰ Moreover, the picture drawn from the *ostraca* presents Judean-dominated fortresses hosting groups of diverse ethnic origin, some of whom were local semi-nomads who resided in the desert frontier and were integrated in the administration and maintenance of Iron Age II Negev forts. The Arad *ostraca*, for example, mention that the men stationed in the fortresses included elite troops of Kittim (*ktym*), most likely of Aegean origin.⁸¹ Na'aman has argued that the Kittim were hired by the Judean king and sent to the Negev fortresses in advance of an expected Edomite attack.⁸²

In a historical critique of the hostile description of Edom in the book of Obadiah, E. Ben-Zvi has argued that Edom was selected in order to contrast its traditional “brotherhood” with Israel against the deep-rooted historical hatred that existed towards Edom in post-monarchic Judah.⁸³ More recently, Guillaume has called for a new reading of Arad Ostraca 24 and 40, arguing that far from being warnings of an Edomite threat, their subject are quarrels over grazing rights and their date should be lowered to the Babylonian era.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Aharoni 1981: 46–49.

⁷⁹ Aharoni 1981: 150; Blenkinsopp 2002: 186; Beit-Arieh 2007: 332–335.

⁸⁰ Na'aman 2012: 225.

⁸¹ Aharoni 1981: 12–13; Fantalkin 2001: 140–142.

⁸² Na'aman 2011: 83.

⁸³ Ben-Zvi 1996: 230–246.

⁸⁴ Guillaume 2013.

To sum up, the traditional scholarly views concerning the role played by both the Babylonian empire and the Edomite kingdom as the destroyers of Judah's southern frontier relies upon literary evidence the chronology and meaning of which are doubtful. I thus believe that archaeology can shed new light on the old question of the Iron Age II Negev system destroyers' identity.

NEW FRAMEWORK – NEW CANDIDATES?

The crucial role of the “Edomite” ethnic group in the socio-political history of Negev towns is reflected in the archaeological and paleogeographical record: the so-called “Edomite” vessels, some of which are decorated in a distinctive style; locally-made and imported cooking pots; *ostraca* and seals bearing Edomite script and names; and the pig bones found at ‘Aroer (see pp. 193–195).

Earlier, it was suggested that decorated Edomite vessels along with other Edomite material culture manifestations reflect components of sharpening tribal identity.⁸⁵ The use of typical Edomite style and objects was intended to preserve certain social behaviors and to transform a stylistic message about the ethnic identity of its users, in a milieu in which sub-groups from local tribes settled in an urban environment and interacted with a variety of ethnic groups within the framework of the Arabian trade system.

Although political conditions in this desert frontier stimulated the creation of a multicultural community and brought economic prosperity and political stability to this arid region, the material culture from Negev sites suggests that relationships between local semi-nomadic and sedentary populations were not egalitarian. These distinct groups shared economic interests and created a communal code that enabled the coexistence of various traditions following diverse cultural lines.

While the economic and socio-political advantages of such multiculturalism are clear, pluralism comes at a price. Thriving multicultural urban centers own a built-in tendency toward self-destruction. First identified by the social activist Jane Jacobs who in her seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* argued that the “self-destruction of diversity” constantly causes urban hubs to shift their centers.⁸⁶ Although Jacobs' contention that urban centers come wired with a clear potential for self-destruction was

⁸⁵ Thareani 2010b: 51–52.

⁸⁶ Jacobs 1961: 255–257.

developed with modern cities in mind, the basic principal is also applicable to ancient urban forms.

Pluralistic societies are destined to experience a permanent tension between the distinct elements of which they are composed. At the time of the Assyrian peace, when semi-nomadic groups settled in urban environments and when traders, soldiers, sheikhs, administrators and farmers coexisted, the necessity to sharpen identity components and mark social and cultural boundaries would increase. Some aspects of the group become translated and changed, and others remain closed. Therefore ethnic tension is an inevitable and integral part of the multicultural experience.

In his article “Dimorphic Structure and the Tribal Elite,” Michael Rowton showed how western Asian semi-nomadic tribes who formed part of territorial states tended to strengthen their autonomy whenever the power of the central authority weakened.⁸⁷ More recently Eveline van der Steen illustrated how throughout history settlement patterns and power structures of Near Eastern tribal societies have been continuously shaped by territorial rights and ownership of the land. In this framework, territorial conflicts formed a crucial cause of stress and socio-political change in tribal societies.⁸⁸

We saw earlier that a full-scale long-distance Iron Age II trade system necessitated the presence of a strong and effective security force to guard the route and patrol the desert frontier—a policy most likely exercised for over 150 years by the collaboration of the Judean kingdom with the local semi-nomadic tribes. Towards the third quarter of the seventh century BCE, when the Assyrian empire retreated from the region and Judah entered a period of political turmoil that would divide its society between pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian camps, it seems reasonable to assume that these years were characterized by an increasing tension between the beleaguered Judean rulers on the one hand and the local semi-nomads on the other.

In the absence of any imperial protection that would force co-existence among different ethnic groups, the previous socio-political order that was based on a delicate balance between the sedentary and the semi-nomadic systems was undermined. An increasing ethnic tension and political uncertainty may have tempted the local Edomite groups of the Iron Age II Negev to challenge the Judeans ruling the desert frontier.

⁸⁷ Rowton 1976: 240. Similar behavioral patterns have been identified for other regions of the ancient world. See: Lattimore 1940; Marfoe 1979; Adams 1981.

⁸⁸ Van der Steen 2013: 80, 262.

In this socio-political climate, even a single event that damaged the ability of the Judean political and administrative institutions to preserve their former level of activity could have generated the snowball that may ultimately led to the Negev's final destruction. This event may have been the Babylonian campaign of 587 BCE, which applied such a pressure on the administrative center in Jerusalem that as a consequence the regular maintenance of the kingdom's internal affairs suffered. The first to feel the effects were the frontier areas. Local semi-nomadic groups took advantage of Judah's political and administrative weakness, acting in collaboration with the Babylonian forces. While the latter conquered the region and destroyed several of its urban centers, the local Edomites completed the process. It is probable that this was not a systematic razing which occurred as a single event, but rather a short series of unorganized destructions taking place over a limited amount of time.⁸⁹

A growing perceived necessity for identity assertion as well as a desire to maximize profits from trade and other sources, previously controlled by Judah, stood behind the unavoidable conflict between Judean rule and local semi-nomadic tribes. According to this reconstruction the Iron Age II Negev towns were destroyed as a result of an internal socio-ethnic conflict between local semi-nomadic and sedentary groups. It is not clear whether the local Edomites collaborated with Babylonian troops or with Judah's neighbors (who had long awaited such an opportunity). It is also difficult to ascertain the exact time when the Negev settlement system was destroyed, although it seems that the latter ceased to function as part of the Judean kingdom in or about the same time as the destruction of Jerusalem.

Against this background, "the evil that Edom made..." could be interpreted differently than it traditionally has been. Does the name "Edom" necessarily refer to the tribal kingdom that lay southeast of Judah? Could it be alternatively be interpreted as a local semi-nomadic power that saw a window of opportunity and took an active role in destroying the settlement system from which it had so long profited?

⁸⁹ For examples of a socio-political and settlement change that were generated by inter-tribal conflicts of both the nomadic and the sedentary systems see Van der Steen 2013: 127, 248.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE NEGEV DESTRUCTION

Long-term factors of built-in ethnic tension underpinned the social conflict and ultimate early sixth century BCE violent destruction of the Iron Age II Negev settlements, from which the area did not recover for many generations. Several scholars have suggested that there was continued occupation of the Negev into the Neo-Babylonian period, citing evidence such as the possible Neo-Babylonian period Tomb 23 at Tel 'Ira.⁹⁰ Without getting into a detailed discussion, the scarcity of such evidence highlights its exceptionality, especially by comparison with the previous period. It is thus clear that, if it existed at all, Negev settlement in the Neo-Babylonian period was very limited in scope.

Archaeological excavations and surveys carried out in the Negev desert frontier indicate a sharp decline in the number and construction quality of settlements, as well as a decrease in the level of their socio-political complexity in the Persian periods (**Fig. 5**). Most of the Iron Age II fortresses were destroyed or abandoned by the early sixth century BCE. Only two sites (Arad and Beersheba) were settled during the Persian period, based on wall remains and Aramaic *ostraca*.⁹¹ A similar process is reflected in Negev towns. Three of the four late Iron Age II Negev towns were destroyed by the end of the period. Meager architectural remains of the Persian period were detected at Tel 'Ira and pottery sherds were unearthed at Tel Masos and Tel Malhata.⁹² Tel 'Aroer was not reoccupied until the Roman period. Small unfortified sites were deserted as well, maybe as a result of the movement of their inhabitants to the central sites.

By the Hellenistic period the western border of Idumaea reached Hebron and included the central and the southern Shephelah. Kasher claimed that this was a gradual process of Edomite penetration from the east, stimulated by the Babylonian deportations and by the displacement of the Edomites by the Arabs.⁹³ Lipschits has argued that this process is crucial for understanding the role of Edom in the Negev's destruction.⁹⁴ Glueck, however, determined that "...it is not to be imagined that all of the Edomites emigrated *en bloc* out of

⁹⁰ Beit-Arieh and Baron 1999: 162–165; Lipschits 2005: 227, 229.

⁹¹ Naveh 1973: 79, 82; 1981: 153–176.

⁹² Ayalon 1999: 49; Beit-Arieh 1999: 173; Biran 1999: 126.

⁹³ Ronen 1985: 9; Kasher 1988: 11–12.

⁹⁴ Lipschits 2005: 144–146.

their former territory to settle in southern Palestine, where the district in which they lived became known as Idumaea.”⁹⁵

Contrary to the biblical description (Jeremiah 13:18–19), the archaeological evidence attests that the Negev was not totally forsaken by its inhabitants in the transition from the Iron Age to the Persian period. This is indicated by evidence from Tomb T23 at Tel ‘Ira,⁹⁶ and by the appearance of Judean names in Aramaic *ostraca* from Arad and Beersheba.⁹⁷

Never has the Negev desert frontier been an extensively settled area. Unlike the Coastal Plain and the valleys, occupation in the arid zone has usually been dependent on the initiative and strength of a central authority. As long as the latter had sufficient political and economic means to control the region, resources were directed to that end—and to the general benefit of local settlements and their inhabitants. However, it would be wrong to assume that that population would simply fade away in the event of the central authority’s decline. It is more likely that at least part of the local population continued to exist in the region, at a lower degree of social complexity, practicing a different subsistence strategy and experiencing an entirely new political reality.

Even if local Negev inhabitants deserted the area for a while, not long afterward some of them returned and resettled former Judean sites. Various ethnic groups joined them, including members of the semi-nomadic and Arab groups⁹⁸—thereby creating a new community in the Negev desert frontier.

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⁹⁵ Glueck 1970: 166.

⁹⁶ Beit-Arieh 1999: 173, 177–178.

⁹⁷ Aharoni 1973: 79–82; 1981.

⁹⁸ Naveh 1981: 175–176; Eph‘al 1982: 200.

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TABLES

Table 1. Selected Assyrian imported and style objects in Iron Age IIb-c Negev sites, shown in Fig. 2.

Nº.	Object	Reg. Nº	Site and Stratum	Description	References
1	Glass cup	F/47/1	'Aroer III	A piece of an Assyrian glass cup with a diamond cut	Barag 2011: 259–260, Plate VIII; Pl. 48:2
2	Weight	F/414/2	'Aroer IV	A duck-shaped weight measuring six Mesopotamian <i>shekels</i> . Hematite	Thareani 2011: 209, Fig. 3.98, Pl. 1:3
3	Weight		Arad	A crouching lion weight. Bronze	Herzog 2002: 80, Fig. 35:3; Ornan 1997: 276–277. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University
4	Cylinder seal		Arad	Linear style. A seated figure and a bird	Herzog 2002: 80, Fig. 35:1–2. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University
5	Cylinder seal		Beersheeba	From Suhu, dedicated by Rimut-ilani to the great deity Apla-Adad	Rainey 1973: 61–70. Courtesy of Ze'ev Herzog, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University
6	Decorated bottle	5025/43	'Aroer	Well-levigated, light brown clay. Exterior wheel-burnished. Black stripes decoration	Na'aman and Thareani-Sussely 2006: 70–71, Fig. 4:4
7	Imitation of Assyrian Palace-Ware	309/25	'Aroer	Well-levigated clay, thin-walled with a plastic petal decoration	Na'aman and Thareani-Sussely 2006: 70, Fig. 4:1

Table 2. Selected Arabian objects in Iron Age IIB-c Negev sites, shown in Fig. 3.

Nº.	Object	Reg. N°	Site and Stratum	Description	References
1	Ostrakon	F/7110	‘Aroer, mixed locus	Incised Arabian letter ׳π on a broken sherd of a locally-made storejar	Thareani 2011: 228, Plate IV, Pl. 231:1
2	Ostrakon	F/6302	‘Aroer, mixed locus	Incised Arabian sign on a broken sherd of a locally-made cooking pot	Thareani 2011: 228, Plate V, Pl. 207:1
3	Inscribed seal	10735/50	Beersheba II	A rectangular limestone object bearing the inscription: <i>khn</i>	Singer-Avitz 1999: 50–52, Fig. 15:1. Courtesy of Lily Singer-Avitz, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University
4	Stopper	11533/50	Beersheba II	Small stone object	Singer-Avitz 1999: 52, Fig. 15:2. Courtesy of Lily Singer-Avitz, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University
5	Inscribed seal		‘En Hazeva		Naveh 2001: 197–198. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit
6	Small altar	2681	‘En Hazeva	Limestone. Cuboid	Ben-Arieh 2011: Figs. 42–43, No. 75. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit
7	Small altar	F/36	‘Aroer III	Limestone. Cuboid with short legs	Thareani 2011: 206–207, Fig. 3.96, Pl. 49:8
8	Small altar	F/7103	‘Aroer III	Limestone. Cuboid with short legs. Residue of organic materials	Thareani 2011: 206–207, Fig. 3.97, Pl. 77:3

Table 3. Edomite pottery assemblage from Tel ‘Aroer, shown in Fig. 4

No.	Object	Reg. No.	Loc.	Stratum	Description
1	Bowl	391/1	130	IIb	Exterior red slipped. Exterior and part of interior burnished. Exterior decorated. Black horizontal stripes.
2	Bowl	322/1	102	IIb	Interior wheel burnished.
3	Bowl	50/8	39	III	Many mending holes. Interior partially red slipped and burnished.
4	Bowl	9643/53	1909	III	
5	Bowl	537/10	417	IV	
6	Bowl	25/1	32	IIb	
7	Bowl	315/57	102	IIb	
8	Bowl	621/1	Surface	Surface	Exterior white slipped. Exterior and partly interior wheel burnished. Decorated. Red and black horizontal stripes. Big black point.
9	Bowl	4177/20	970	IIa	Exterior decorated and wheel burnished. Red and black horizontal stripes and projections.
10	Bowl	1083/1	628	IIb	Exterior and rim wheel burnished and decorated. Black and red horizontal stripes.
11	Bowl	3102/1	838	Mixed	Exterior decorated and wheel burnished. Red and black. Horizontal stripes and points.
12	Bowl	3219/1	879	IIa	Exterior and rim decorated. Red and black horizontal stripes. Short vertical lines and complex geometric design.
13	Bowl	32/4	36	IIb	
14	Bowl	309/20	102	IIb	
15	Bowl	9643/57	1909	III	Exterior ridged and decorated. Black horizontal stripes.
16	Cup	6459/4	1333	III	
17	Cup	6556/8	1343	Mixed	Two rows of perforated holes.
18	Cooking pot	319/63	105	IIb	Exterior white paint.
19	Cooking pot	1324/12	515	IIa	
20	Holemouth jar	351/10	122	IIb	Plastic decoration. Small projections.

FIGURES

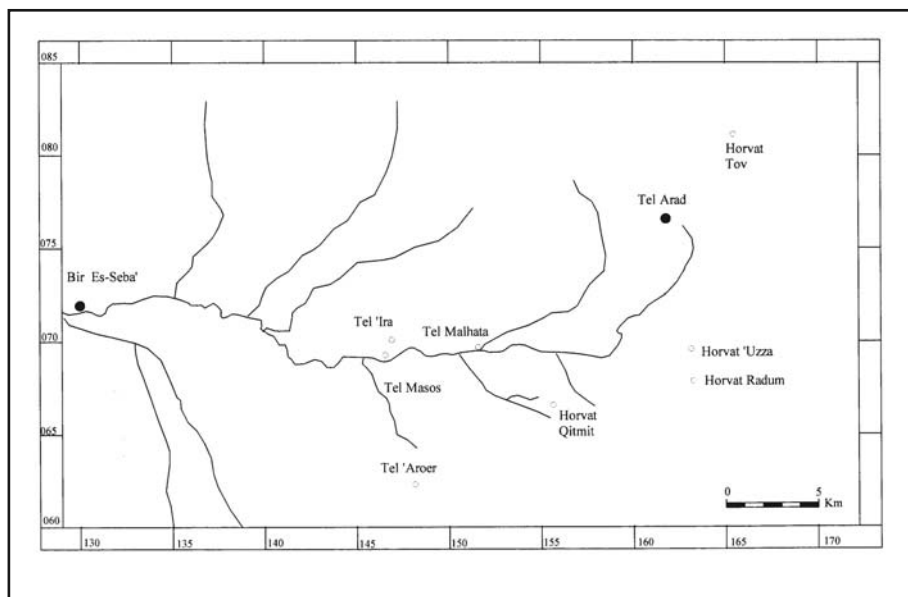


Fig. 1. The Negev settlement system in the Iron Age IIB-c.

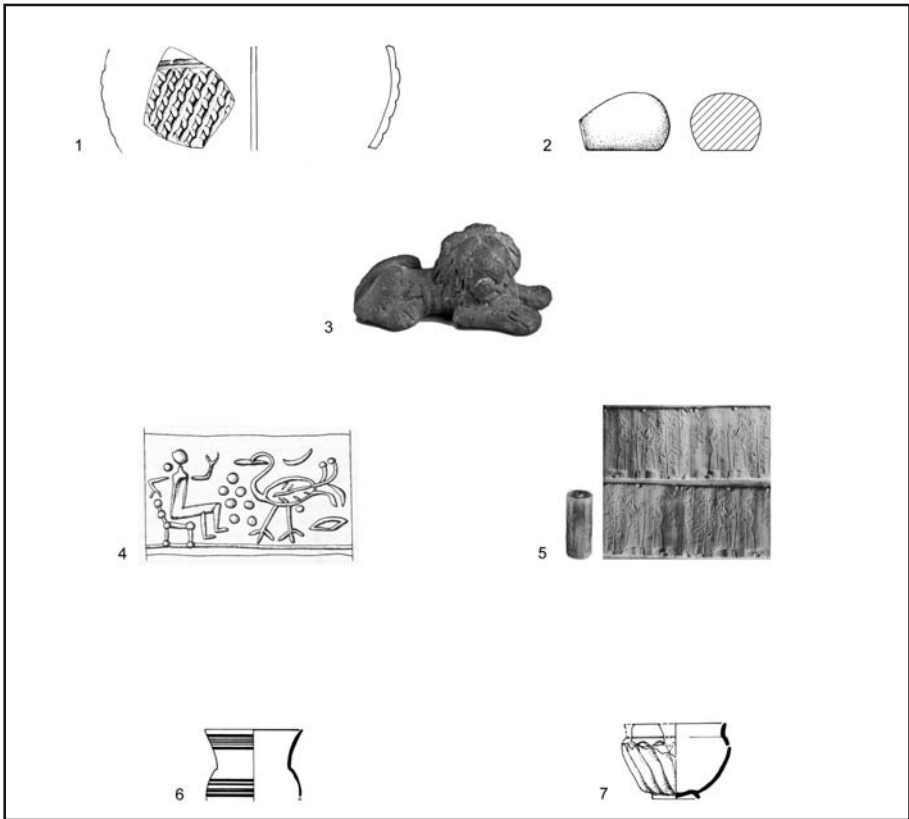


Fig. 2. Selected Assyrian imported and style objects in Iron Age IIB-c Negev sites.

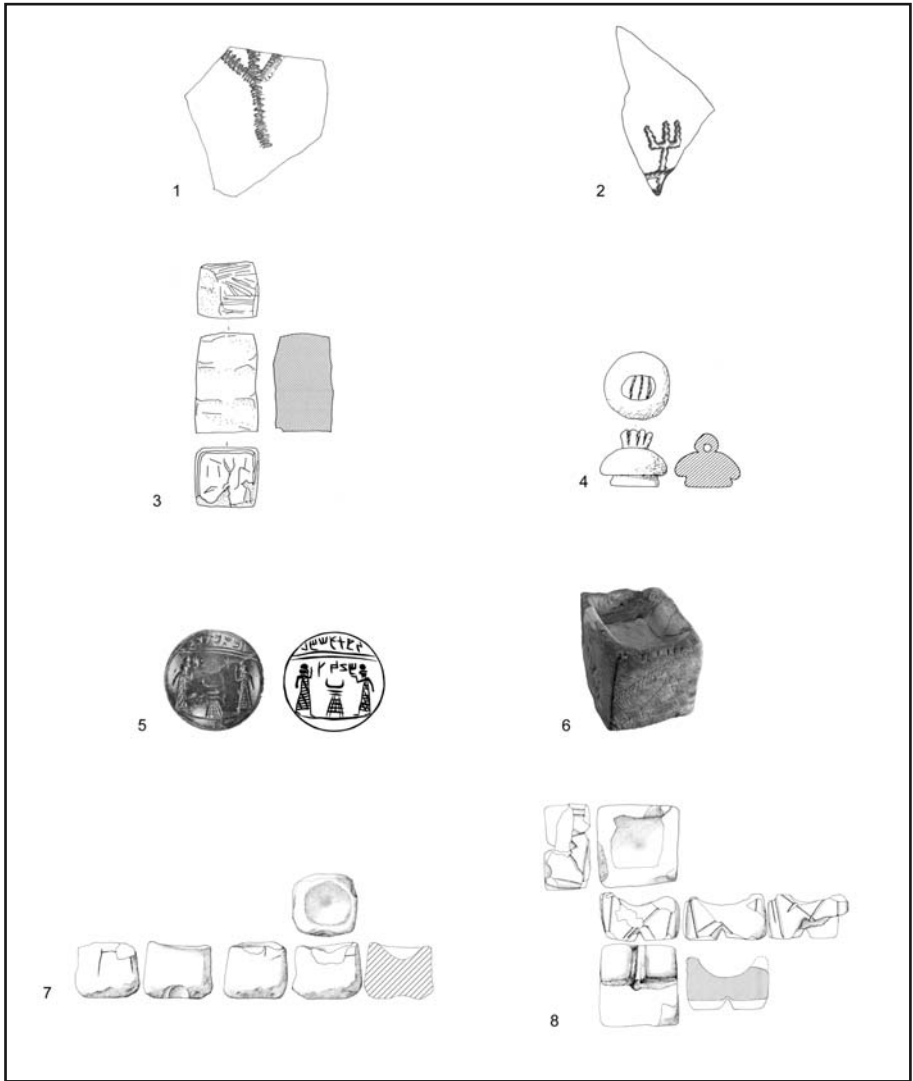


Fig. 3. Selected Arabian objects in Iron Age IIb-c Negev sites.

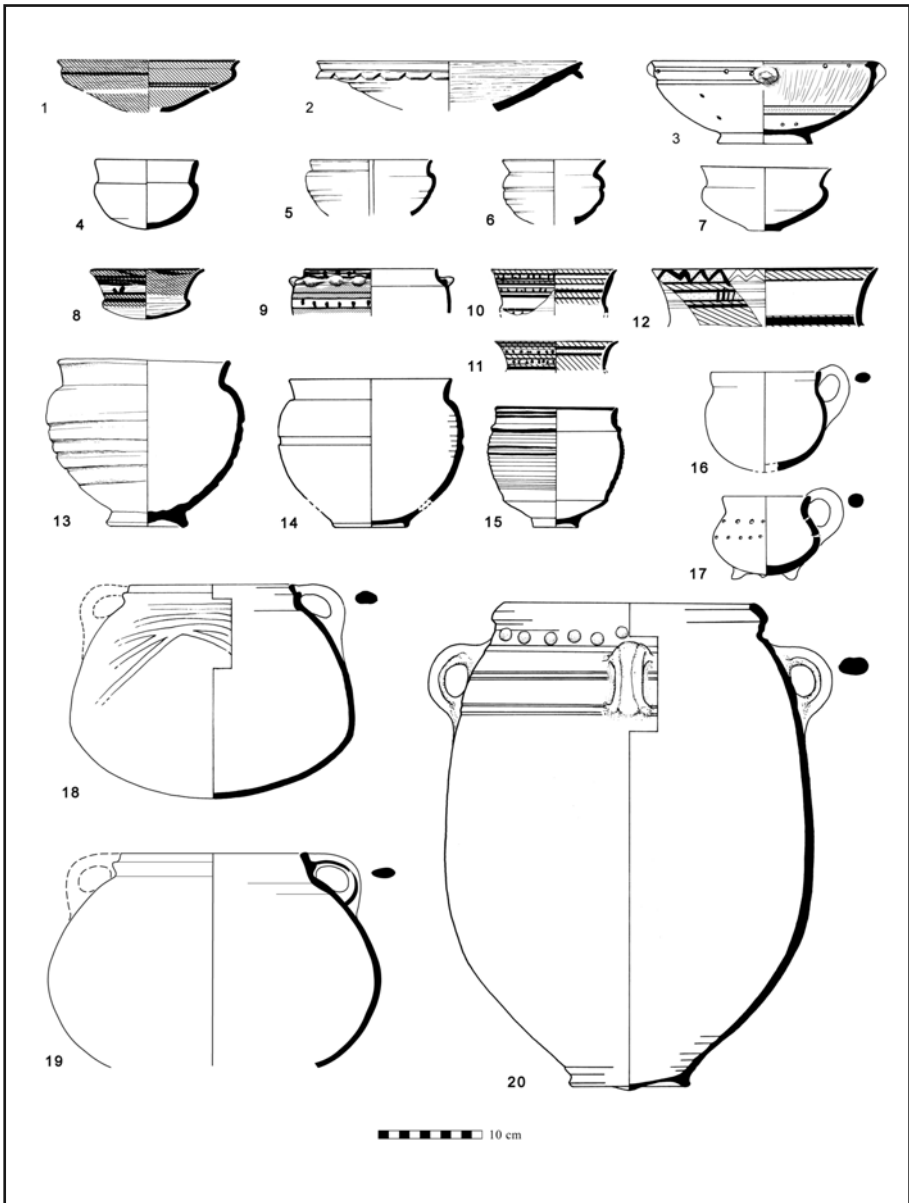


Fig. 4. Selected Edomite pottery from Tel 'Aroer.

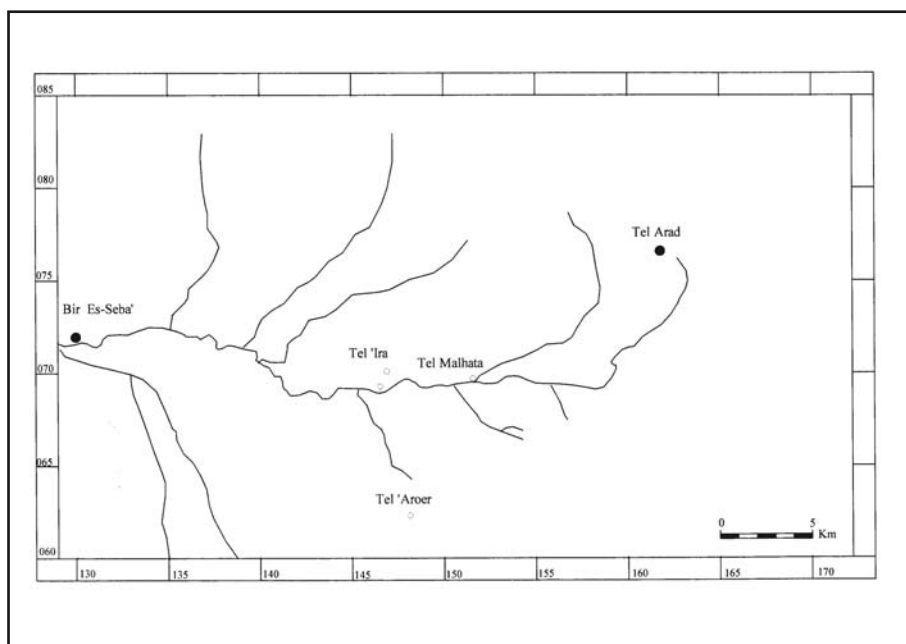


Fig. 5. The Negev settlement system in the Persian period.