

The Priest of Dor

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THE object under discussion is a Hebrew seal, now in private possession, which is said to be a surface find made recently near Sebaste, ancient Samaria. It has the form of a quasi-scaraboid, is flat on both sides and is 17 mm. long, 13 mm. wide and 5 mm. thick. It is of greyish limestone, perforated lengthwise and inscribed on both sides (Pl. 10:C, D).

Side A. Within a single border line is engraved a two-line inscription in classical Hebrew characters, perfectly preserved. It reads:

לצדק
בן מכא

*Belonging to Šadoq
son of Mikha'*

Side B. This side is slightly smaller: 16 × 12 mm. It is decorated with a two-winged *uraeus* of the type current in Egyptianizing Phoenician art and frequently found on ancient Hebrew seals. The Egyptian *uraeus* originally symbolized royal and divine power, but on this seal it may have some magic or apotropaic meaning. Above the *uraeus* is a two-line inscription in the same characters as those on side A. The initial letters of the first line are effaced. The inscription reads:

[] כריו
כהן דאר

The first word should most probably be restored as [לז]כריו and the complete legend therefore reads:

[לז]כריו כהן דאר [*Belonging to Ze*]kharyau priest of Dor

The seal was apparently used by two persons of the same family belonging to two generations. This assumption is highly plausible albeit not absolutely proven, since one of the inscriptions lacks a patronymic. We know, however, of seals which passed as heirlooms to descendants who had their names engraved on the plain back of the seals.¹ In our case, the motivation for reusing the seal must have been

¹ Cf. יהוחל בן יהוחל + לאלזכר בן אלזכר (D. Diringer: *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi*, Firenze, 1934, Nos. 42-43); and שעריתהו + לשעריתהו בן חניהו (a hitherto unpublished seal in the possession of Mr. P. Altman, Paris).

sentimental and not economic, since it is not made of precious stone. If our assumption is correct, then inscription A must be the earlier one since the patronymic is not identical with the name in inscription B. Thus the seal seems to have belonged initially to Šadoq son of Mikha'; if, however, we exclude paternal relationship then of course the priest may have been the first seal-owner.

In the Bible several persons by these names (Zadok and Micah) are mentioned, among them priests and Levites. None can be identified with the persons cited in the seal inscription. צדק, 'just, righteous', is the hypocoristicon of צדקיהו, and מכא (= biblical מיכא) is the hypocoristicon of מיכאל, 'who is like [the god] El'.

Zekharyau used his epithet and omitted his patronymic. The name זכריהו (Zechariah) is very common in the Bible. In our seal it is spelled זכריו. The abbreviated divine element יי (to be pronounced as a diphthong — *yau*) is typical of names found in the eighth-century Samaria ostraca. It seems to have been the common practice in the northern kingdom of Israel, but was very rare in Judah where the full form יהו prevails. Our seal inscription is in total agreement with this assumption since Dor, the priest's city of residence, is located in Israel.

Dor is written with *alef*, in common with the Phoenician Eshmun'azar inscription,³ and Akkadian *Du'ru* (see below). In the Bible both spellings דאר and דור are used. Dor was a Canaanite town on the Sharon coast.⁴ It is identified with Khirbet el-Burj near Tanṭura north of Caesarea. So far only trial excavations have been made on this site,⁵ which revealed archaeological evidence of continuous occupation from the Late Bronze Age to the Byzantine period.

Joshua defeated the Canaanite king of Dor (Josh. 12:23). It lay in the territory of Asher but was given to the tribe of Manasseh (17:11) which, however, did not expel the Canaanites (Judg. 1:27). About 1190 B.C. Dor fell into the hands of the Tjeker (*t-k-r*), one of the Sea Peoples associated with the Philistines. The harbour-town and its prince Beder are mentioned in the story of Wen-Amon, the Egyptian priest, who sailed in c. 1100 B.C. from Egypt to Byblos in order to acquire trees for the construction of a sacred barque.⁶ The name of Dor is also included in an Egyptian list of Canaanite coastal towns from the time of Ramses II.⁷

² The spelling מכא appears in a Hebrew seal impression, see *ibid.*, p. 141, Pl. xvii:8.

³ H. Donner and W. Röllig: *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, I, Wiesbaden, 1966, No. 14, line 19.

⁴ For general treatments of Dor see G. Dahl: *The Materials for the History of Dor*, New Haven, 1915; Y. Aharoni: *The Land of the Bible*, London, 1967, index.

⁵ J. Garstang: Tanturah (Dora), *Bulletin of the British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem* 4 (1924), pp. 35-45; idem, *ibid.*, 6 (1926), pp. 65-75; G.M. Fitzgerald, *ibid.* 7 (1927), pp. 80-98. For a recent summary and bibliography see: *Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 334-337.

⁶ *ANET*, p. 26.

⁷ B. Mazar: Dor and Rehob in an Egyptian Topographical List, *Yediot* 27 (1963), pp. 139-144 (Hebrew).

In the time of David, Dor passed into Israelite hands and probably served as the main port of northern Israel. It became one of Solomon's twelve district capitals (נִסְחָ דָּאָר). Its importance is demonstrated by the fact that it was governed by the King's son-in-law (1 Kings 4:11). In 733 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III is believed to have made Dor (cuneiform *Du'ru*) the capital of an Assyrian province.⁸ Dor is mentioned in a treaty of Esarhaddon granting the city to Ba'al king of Tyre.⁹ In the Persian period the plain of Sharon, including Dor and Joppa, was handed over by the Persian king to Eshmun'azar, king of Sidon.¹⁰

It is obvious that our second seal owner, who bore a Yahwistic name, served as 'Priest of Dor' in a Yahwistic sanctuary at a time when the town belonged to Israel. The Bible makes no mention of a sanctuary at Dor; it provides, however, valuable information on the existence of numerous sanctuaries and cultic places in ancient Israel. In the pre-monarchic period of the Judges, centres of worship were scattered throughout the country, and it seems that each town had at least its own high-place.¹¹

After the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem, attempts were made to centralize the cult in this Temple. However, the political division of the monarchy after Solomon's death was followed by a religious schism. Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, set up two rival sanctuaries to Jerusalem at Dan and Bethel where he put up golden calves and installed priests (1 Kings 12:26-33). Both places were traditional centres of worship with a long history. A statement of chronological value regarding the function of the priest at Dan is preserved in Judg. 18:30: 'And the children of Dan set up the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land' (i.e. until the conquest by Tiglath-pileser III in 733 B.C.). The sanctuary at Bethel, on the other hand, seems to have continued to function, at least partly, after the Assyrian conquest in 722 B.C. (see 2 Kings 17:27-28), and its altar was finally dismantled by Josiah during his great reform (2 Kings 23:15).

It appears from archaeological evidence that, besides the two royal sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel which were condemned by the prophet Amos together with Gilgal and Beer-sheba in Judah (Amos 5:5; 8:14), various other places of worship existed in Israel as well as in Judah, some of which were not mentioned in the Bible.¹² Among

⁸ E. Forrer: *Die Provinzeinteilung des assyrischen Reiches*, Leipzig, 1920, pp. 52-69; A. Alt: *Das System der assyrischen Provinzen auf dem Boden des Reiches Israel*, *ZDPV* 52 (1929), pp. 220-242 (esp. 236-237).

⁹ E. Weidner: *Der Staatsvertrag Assurnirâris VI. von Assyrien mit Mati'ilu von Bit-Agusi*, *AFO* 8 (1932-3), p. 32.

¹⁰ *ANET*, p. 505.

¹¹ For convenient summaries on this subject, see R. de Vaux: *Ancient Israel*, New York, 1961, pp. 289-308; M. Haran: *Enc. Miqr.*, v, Jerusalem, 1968, cols. 322-328 (Hebrew).

¹² Cf. the temple discovered at Arad: Y. Aharoni: *Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple*, *BA* 31 (1968), pp. 18-32.

them we may count with certainty a hitherto undocumented sanctuary at Dor, the existence of which is now attested by the seal of one of its priests. Future excavations on the site may reveal remains of this sanctuary. It was perhaps founded by Jeroboam, as were the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel. The latter are situated at the northern and southern extremities of Israel, whereas the sanctuary at Dor probably served its coastal district.¹³

Priesthood in Israel was a royal appointment and most probably the priests of Dor were also installed by the king. In carrying out his office, the priest sometimes depended on the use of a seal. Our seal must have belonged to a priest of some consequence whose duties were not restricted to ritual acts. It is the first seal of this kind to be found in this region¹⁴ and supplies us with valuable and rare information on Israelite Dor. Interestingly, the formula כהן כהן דאר finds its closest parallel in the analogous and contemporary designation: אמציה כהן בית אל, 'Amaziah, the priest of Bethel' (Amos 7:10).¹⁵

As to the date of the seal, a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the Assyrian occupation in 733 B.C. This is suggested by the information furnished by the Bible on the termination of the function of the priests of Dan (see above). Paleography may also prove helpful. Generally it can be said that the script on both sides of the seal reflects the Hebrew formal cursive script of the eighth century B.C. It is a blend of the hand found in the Samaria ostraca (c. 770 B.C.) and that of the Siloam inscription (c. 700 B.C.).

Two letters are worthy of notice. The formal *alef* of the seal occurs in the Siloam inscription, but is absent in the Samaria ostraca. It has, however, parallels in the contemporary ostraca from Tell Qasile.¹⁶ These are, so far, the earliest known *alefs* of this type.¹⁷ The other letter of interest is the *kaf* which appears twice in inscription B. Its peculiar feature is the two parallel short strokes at the top, instead of the usual converging strokes seen in the corresponding letter in inscription A. A somewhat

¹³ Corresponding with the system of border-temples proposed by Aharoni in connection with the temple at Arad; see *ibid.*, pp. 28–29.

¹⁴ A seal-impression was recently published by the present writer bearing the epithet of a high priest from Jerusalem in paleo-Hebrew script dating from the second–first centuries B.C.; see A Bulla of Jonathan the High Priest, *IEJ* 25 (1975), pp. 8–12.

¹⁵ Other appellations of priests denoting the place of office are: יתרו כהן מדין 'Jethro, the priest of Midian' (Exod. 3:1) and פטיפרע כהן אן 'Potiphera, priest of On' (Gen. 41:45). In contrast, compare the more common association with a divine name: כהן הבעל, כהן יהוה etc. in the Bible; and כהן בעלת, כהן עשתרת, כהן בעל שמם, כהן אשמך etc. in Phoenician inscriptions.

¹⁶ B. Maisler (Mazar): The Excavations at Tell Qasile, *IEJ* 1 (1951), Fig. 13:b, f (p. 204); Pls. 37:A, 38:A; S. Moscati: *L'epigrafia ebraica antica*, Rome, 1951, Pl. xxxi:1–2.

¹⁷ F.M. Cross: Epigraphic Notes on Hebrew Documents of the Eighth–Sixth Centuries B.C.: II. The Murabba'at Papyrus and the Letter Found near Yabneh-yam, *BASOR* 165 (1962), p. 36, points out the seal of 'Ashna' servant of Ahaz (c. 725 B.C.) as the first example of this type of *alef*.

similar *kaf* can be found in one of the Tell Qasile ostraca.¹⁸ This, however, may be accidental. A closer parallel is the *kaf* in the tenth-century Gezer tablet,¹⁹ but this is too remote in time to be of comparative value.

Thus we may date our seal approximately to the middle of the eighth century B.C., allowing each of the two inscriptions to find its place on either side of this date.

¹⁸ Mazar, *op. cit.* (above, n. 16), Pl. 37:A.

¹⁹ Diringier, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), Pl. 1:1-2, line 5.