Abstracts

Two **Limestone Stelae Depicting Canaanite Deities in the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum, University of Haifa**

Rivka Merhav

This article presents two small stelae from the museum's collection each depicting a deity carved in low relief: an enthroned god with a footstool at his feet (plate I) and a standing goddess (plate 11) - unique finds in the iconography of Canaanite gods. The stelae were acquired in the antiquities market, and it was reported that their origin is in the area of Tell Beit Mirsim. The absence of reliable details regarding the provenance of the finds and their archaeological context, hinders the identification of the figures, or the ritual associated with them.

The two stelae have many common attributes: material, dimensions, !echnique, form and style. On each, there is a figure, identified as a deity by its horned headdress. Both figures look to the right at a plant comprised of long stems topped with three leafed flowers raising their right hand in an attitude of benediction. The subject common to both scenes was surely ment to reflect intimate attitude of the god and the goddess towards the plant in front of each, certainly a magical 'tree'. The similarity between the stelae, in form and motif, strengthens the assumption that their origin is at a single site and that the two were connected to the same cuI t.

The search for parallels to these stelae lead us to U garit of the Late Bronze Age. Some of the parallels relate to the general depiction, such as the striking resemblance between a bronze gilded statuette and an enthroned god depicted on a stela (fig. 1: 1-2), and the image of the god in the Hecht Museum stela. Other parallels reflect similarity in particulars such as the winged nursing goddess portrayed on an ivory plaque who wears a horned headdress with a large sun disc in the center (fig. 2: 1), identical with the crown of the goddess in the Hecht stela.

These parallels and others demonstrate that the two stelae are products of Canaanite culture of the Late Bronze Age. Yet, the similarities we have noted also beg the question: is the affinity limited solely to form or perhaps it is indicative of some substantive resemblance?

If we accept the common identification of the god depicted in the statuette and the stela from Ugarit (fig. 1: 1-2) as portraying 'El', the head of the Canaanite pantheon in the U garitic epics, then that identification should also be excepted for the enthroned god in the Hecht stela. Furthermore, if the headdress of the gods is a significant in their identification, then the nursing goddess from Ugarit (fig. 2: 1) and the goddess in the Hecht stela wearing an identical crown may depict the same deity.

In trying to identify the nursing goddess from U garit - whether Asherah or Anat - the latter could perhaps be favoured, as this goddess is described in the texts as a nursing goddess and also provided with wings. It is tempting however, to suppose that the Hecht stela might depict Asherah, El's consort, whose cult was well-entrenched in Canaan and among the Israelites. In this case, the site were these two stelae were found may have been the location of a cult of El or Asherah, the leading couple of gods in the Canaanite pantheon. Nevertheless, in the absence of any written or oter conclusive evidence, their identification remains a speculation. It must also be added that the possibility that the goddess in the stela is Ashtoret, should not be completely rejected. Although in U garitic texts she does bear an important role, the biblical records suggest that her cult was widespread in Canaan. The difficulty in identification is compounded by the fact that all three - Asherah, Anat and Ashtoret - were fertility goddesses and are not easily distinguished.

The scenes in the Hecht stelae present the motif of a god or goddess in juxtaposition with a sacred magical plant, here in the form of long stalks with lily flowers, which to the best of my knowledge is unparalleled in the Late Bronze Age. In my opinion, however, there is some affinity to the motifs on clay Late Bronze plaques and metal pendants of a nude female goddess, crowned with horns and with sun disc in center (fig. 3: 1, 2) which may perhaps portray the same deity in the erotic capacity.

It is the Syro-Phoenician art of the First Millennium BCE, especially the ivory craft, which provides us with the best parallels for the motifs in the Hecht stelae (fig. 4). They are clearly linked by subject matter and composition and may evince a continuity of Canaanite iconography from the Late Bronze Age to the Syro-Phoenician art of the Iron Age.

Without any doubt the stelae from the Hecht museum, which we date to the 14th century BCE are an important contribution to our understanding of the religious iconography of Canaan,

depicting gods who had cults and are mentioned in written sources. The stelae also shed new light on the links between the art of southern and northern Canaan and Egypt.

The Gems from the Hecht Museum Collection, University of Haifa Malka Hershkowitz

Gems are semi-precious stones carved in intaglio (i.e., an engraving below the surface of the stone, which renders an impression in relief). The gems were set in rings and served as personal seals, amulets of magical or religious significance or as decorative charms.

Much of what is known about the use of gems and the miniature carving technique in the Classical World has been taken from the writings of the First Century CE Roman author Pliny, who recounted the flourishing of the art of gem carving during the reign of the Emperor Augustus Caesar. During that period the pattern of the figures, was fixed and the use of rings set with gem stones became widespread throughout the Roman Empire. This was to be repeated by artists in later days, with minor stylistic changes.

For the carving of figures and scenes a variety of semi-precious stones was used: carnelian, jasper, sardonyx, agate, chalcedony, amethyst, garnet and others. The value of the gem rose according to the quality of the work and whether it was set in rings of gold, silver, bronze or iron.

The gem was prepared in several stages: cutting the stone and shaping its form with a domed face or lenticular profile; engraving of the scene and setting the gem in the ring. **In** shaping the stone, the engraver employed a variety of wheelspun drills with rounded or pointed heads. The engraving created straight grooves and round depressions which were smoothed and polished to finish the shape. From the First Century BCE artificial gems were also created from glass paste, which imitated in colour and pattern.

The scenes were taken from the classical mythology including specific images of gods with their attributes. Particularly popular were figures from the Dionysian circle, as well as animals, floral patterns and scenes from daily life.

The Hecht Museum collection includes twelve gems of which seven are made of carnelian, three are of sardonyx and two of jasper. Most are oval or lenticular, and with convex, trapezoidal or flat section. The gems date from the First Century BCE to the Third Century CE and belong to the classic style (revival of well known classical motifs with Hellenistic influence).

Five of the gems depict images of gods, who were the patrons of good fortune and success and added a religious and magic aspect to the jewelry (gems no. 1-5). Gem number 6 depicts a Satyr, a Dionysian figure, who

symbolizes the love of life. The bucolic scenes which appear in two of the gems (nos. 7-8) were quite popular. Gem number 9 bears an Archaic style warrior. Two additional gems (nos. lO
11) depict animals - the eagle and the bull, and on. number 12 appears the cornucopia, a symbol which expresses abundance or desire for it, which appears both in Jewish and in pagan artistic descriptions.

The gems have been dated according to parallels found in this region in Caesarea, Gadara and gems from other countries. Comparisons have been made according to a number of criteria: the subjects, the iconographic depiction, the style, the carving technique and to contemporary coms.

This group of gem stones is a typical assemblage in which the topics depicted upon them, the consistence of the stones and the style of carving were well known throughout the Roman Empire and characteristic to the period ranging from the First century BCE to the Third century CE.

Fourt Segments of Inscribed Parchments from the Judean Desert

Hagai Misgav

1) a fragment of parchment, apparently comprising part of a legal document. Text of the document:

] 1:J 1~N[. . . . . N1[. .] !)/'n
\!I vI ~ !) I jm~m 1[']YJ11 1'[. . .
I ilmn m\!l JNJ[

(?) EP]ME[NEIA

Translation: (l)...]a from [...] (...) (2) [X sela]s, and three quarters and a half, one *ma'ah, sh[ekel]* (for other possibilities, see below) (3) (...in X) of Ab eighth year (4) translation?

This text is apparently a confirmation of receipt for an amount of money for a certain time period ending in the month on Ab of the eighth year. The document was written apparently in Aramaic and was followed by a Greek translation. In this case the date recorded does not denote when the document was written and is of no importance for verifying the document itself, but is part of its
contents, and can therefore appear at the end. Since the intention is not to indicate a particular day upon which
the note was written, but to mark a time period in which the money was paid,
the expression employed is 'from this day in this month until such a day on such a month' and not 'of the month',
which appears only when the intention is to mark the date when a note is written. This suggestion also explains why no king or ruling authority is mentioned - this detail is required only to give legal validity to a document, and as noted such a requirement is unnecessary. A text of similar construction and language was preserved in Nahal Hever. There, a receipt for payment of child support which Babta received for her son

concludes with a notation of the period for which the money was paid. Before and after the Aramaic version is a Greek version, with the latter section beginning with the word 'translation', Le. of the former.

The script is cursive, but not excessively, and is similar to documents from the Judean Desert of the Second Century CE. The Hecht Museum catalog number of the document is H-1804.

2) fragment of a parchment scroll from Qumran, upon which may be discerned the following words (fig. 2):

1] YO/J[. .

Y]1Jm

]N ny'l" ['V

ilJ[. .

The document in this case is not Biblical, but rather part of a sectarian scroll of one of the Judean Desert sects. It is not possible to reconstruct the original text.

The script is of the hand of a scribe and is similar to that of other scrolls from the Dead Sea, which are generally accepted to date from the First Century BCE. As the present text does show some signs of development, it is possible that the text should be assigned to the end of that century. The Hecht Museum catalog number of the document is H-1560.

3) A piece of parchment, with the remains of letters. These do not form part of a larger text with the exception of:

l'N N'

I will not go

Most likely this is part of a Biblical text, or at least a text of religious importance, as indicated by the ornate scribal script. The text was probably written in the First Century BCE and belongs to the sectarian writings of the Judean Desert.

To the left of the above section is another poorly preserved group of which the following letters can be identified (fig. 3):

'V)v ['}J

?'/JY

n'N The Hecht Museum catalog number of the document is H-1804.

4) A fragment of parchment containing some preserved letters which cannot be collated into any complete words. All that can be said is that the script is formal and perhaps somewhat earlier than document no. 3. The Hecht Museum catalog number of the document is also H-1804.

'Yehuda' Coins at the Beginning of the Hellenistic Period

Arie Kindler

The Alexandrian conquest did not effect the monetary habits of the population of Yehuda in the late fourth century BCE and the tiny silver coins (oboloi etc.) so well known from the

Persian Period continued to be current currency even at the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule.

It is therefore likely that the types a. fa1con/lily; b. bird/head of a horse and c. Hellenistic head/forepart of a winged lynx, were struck during the period between the conquest of Yehuda by Alexander the Great and that of
Pto le my **I,** i.e. during the years 332 and 301 BCE.

Denominations, such as triobols, obols, hemiobols and tartemorioi which bear the portrait of Ptolemy I and sometimes of Berenice **I,** his wife, were issued in Yehuda at the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule. These portrait coins could, however, not have been struck prior to the issue of Ptolemaic portrait coins at the mint of Alexandria or any other Ptolemaic mint. **In** the Ptolemaic monetary system the small silver denominations, such as we have dealt with above, and among them even triobols, did not exist. We may therefore conclude that the coins under discussion were no longer legal tender after about 298/297 BCE.