

State Formation in the Southern Levant – The Case of the Arameans and the Role of Hazael’s Expansion

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Abstract: In accepting that there was no *united monarchy* in 10th century BCE Jerusalem and no *division of kingdoms* under Rehoboam and Jeroboam, state formation in Israel and Judah can be considered a new start in the north with the Omrides and the Nimshides in Samaria and in the south with Amaziah, Asariah, and Jotham in Jerusalem. This paper parallels Aramean and Israelite state-formation and enquires about the repercussions of these processes. The formation of these polities was triggered significantly by economic factors, such as copper production and long-distance trade. Hazael’s campaign to the south aimed to control both, and this is seen as decisive for the development of Judah, the Shephelah, and the Negev. By coming under the patronage of Hazael and the Arameans, Judah was able to get rid of the subjugation which prevailed under the Nimshides in the 9th century BCE. State formation in Judah in the late 9th/8th centuries BCE will be seen as an outcome of the larger regional development. The campaign of Hazael and the emergence of Judah as a state also triggered the development of the Edomite polity in the Negev and the southern Beersheva Valley in processes of territorial clustering which at last gave birth to Edom as statehood centered in Transjordan.

1. Parallels between Aramean and Southern Levantine State Formation

Broadly and more or less traditionally speaking, the emergence of the Phoenician and Philistine so-called “city-states,” and the territories of Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab, and Edom are the aftermath of the breakdown of the second millennium Late Bronze Age system of city-states in the Levant. The entities mentioned above are said to have filled a vacuum which was left by the collapse of the international trade system, which had been run by the sophisticated Late Bronze Age cultures. Including the many politico-economic, demographic, social, and environmental stress factors such as changes in the

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climate, a series of earthquakes, political upheavals, the decline of international trade, wealth and poverty distribution, luxury saturation etc., A. Bernhard Knapp and Stuart W. Manning have recently summarized the process as an extended chain reaction. “Along with the collapse of towns, city-states and kingdoms and the demise of the highly specialized production and trade networks in which they were involved, a flurry of ‘migrations’ took place in the 12th to 11th centuries BCE: Arameans and Neo-Hittites in the Northern Levant, Israelites in the southern Levant.”¹ In the same way that the Israelites filled in the alleged political vacuum, Aramean micro-states are said to have “filled the vacuum left by the collapse of the Hittite Kingdom in northern Syria.”²

It should suffice to remember that things are more complicated than the simple classifications of “collapse” and “vacuum.” There was no total breakdown at the end of the Late Bronze Age. In fact, “traffic and the movement of goods, however, did not stop.”³ To define the interactions and repercussions, the continuities and discontinuities as well as regional variance is a difficult task of crucial importance. At least the discussions on the “New Canaan”⁴ or on Taita, king of Palestine,⁵ remind us not to be too simplistic; in bold strokes, the parallelization of the Aramean and Israelite state formation absolutely makes sense. The decline of the Late Bronze Age systems was the birth-pangs of evolving social and economic entities, which are most often defined ethnically, despite knowing that ethnicity is not an appropriate category to describe the unifying factors of these newly emerging Iron Age entities. While all the narratives of change were formerly built on large-scale migration processes – be it the Sea People, the Arameans, or the Israelites – the invasion theories have nowadays taken a backseat. Recently, more or less indigenous processes have replaced waves of mass-invasions into the southern Levant. Israel emerges from within Canaan, the Philistines are no longer exclusively exogenous, but rather formulated by merged peoples originating from Northern-Syria, the Aegean and the Levantine coast. Finally, the Arameans are no longer foreigners to Syria, but rather mostly indigenous as well, although for instance Guzana was founded by settlers of southeast Anatolia,⁶ and the Anatolian influence upon the emergence of Arameans is crucial. Herbert Niehr puts it in the introduction to his Aramean volume as follows: “Their existence, therefore, has to be seen as part of a lengthy ethnogenesis and not simply as immigration.”⁷

Very roughly speaking, we can observe processes of clustering power that are based or originate in cities and on the urban fringe. The cities are ruled by clan-based leaders or chiefs and these leaders expand their power following political or economic success.

¹ KNAPP/MANNING, *Crisis*, 135.

² KELLE, *Ancient Israel*, 16–17, quoted by GHANTOUS, *Paradigm*, 1; cf. the latest discussion of the breakdown and the use of the term “vacuum” by KNAPP/MANNING, *Crisis*, 127; YOUNGER, *Arameans*, 68, 166.

³ GILBOA/NAMDAR, *Beginnings*, 266.

⁴ The term was first used by FINKELSTEIN, *City-States*, 77–79 to denote the continuity of the Late Bronze-cities in the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys, Megiddo, Kinneret, Beth-Shean, Yoqne‘am, Tel Rehov, which lasted at least until the 10th century.

⁵ See the overview in ČECH, *Goliath*, 63–68.

⁶ See NOVÁK, *Muskhu*, 293–309.

⁷ NIEHR, *Introduction*, 7.

The outcome of these centripetal processes is a territorial extension of dominion. Other micro-states are integrated into the rule of a centralized territorial state. Aram-Damascus in the 9th century BCE is a perfect example of a micro-state becoming a territorial state.

The baselines of this development hold true in larger scale for the so-called Aramean “kingdoms” and for the Philistine city-states (esp. Gath, Ashkelon, and Ashdod) and for state formation in Israel as well. But this requires some presuppositions: we have to accept that Shechem, Penuel, Tirzah, and Samaria are not a sequential row of capitals of an early and singular state of “Israel” which was more or less full-blown from the beginning – as the biblical account prompts us to assume. The origin of the northern state of Israel was not an outcome of a greater Davidic-Solomonic unit, which was divided under Jeroboam and which then instituted a monarchy in Shechem. Rather, the biblically mentioned “capitals” in the north were local hosts of a clan-based leadership in the 10th and early 9th centuries BCE, that is to say “village-states” which were successively clustered into regional centers and at last into one territorial state under Omride rule in Samaria.⁸ Following the impressive evolution of the Omride state, administrative development then grew most significantly under the Nimshide Jeroboam II in the 8th century. From this perspective, it becomes clear that secondary state formation in the southern Levant moves forward roughly from north to south and from west to east.⁹ However, the role of the Arameans in these processes was not only in initiating this sequence, it was also indicative in terms of state formation in the south itself. This concerns Israel, Judah and – as I will put forward in this paper – Edom as well.

2. Hazael, from Mongrel to VIP

In the biblical story of his designation from nobody to king, Hazael – induced by the superior god Yhwh and his prophetic agent Elisha – submissively called himself a dog (2 Kgs 8:13). Hazael was a nobody (*mār lā mammāna*): not only in his usurpation of the Damascene throne around 843 BCE but also in the scholarly reconstruction of the history of the southern Levant in the previous century. His instrumental role and importance were mostly neglected in scholarly research until the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription in 1993 (and few other inscriptions¹⁰), which was presumably ascribed to him. Several monographs and papers engaged in the subject of his political role

⁸ See FREVEL, *Geschichte*, 77–78. I will not go into the kingdom of Saul and the role of Shechem in the Late Bronze Age here. In my understanding the kingdom of Saul as a first territorial state in the Iron I–early Iron IIA has been overemphasized in recent discussion on statehood (see FREVEL, *Geschichte*, 32–34).

⁹ Alongside the question of the character of the Saulide and Davidic “state,” I disregard the existence of the early Moab polity south of the Wadi Mujjib here. See for this issue FINKELSTEIN/LIP-SCHITS, *Genesis*.

¹⁰ These are the dedicatory inscriptions on the blinker and the horse-frontlet from a sanctuary in Samos, and the famous Zakkur inscription, where Hazael is mentioned as the father of Bar-Hadad II. See NIEHR, *König Hazael*, 349–350; EPH’AL/NAVEH, *Inscriptions*, 192–200.

thereafter, mostly building on the pathbreaking article by André Lemaire, which was already published in 1991.¹¹

19th century histories are marked exceptions to the undervaluation of Hazael, as can be observed, for instance, in Heinrich Ewald's *History of Israel*, where he says: Ben-Hadad "was succeeded by Hazael, under whom the Aramean monarchy rose most vigorously to new power."¹² By this positive evaluation Ewald is not building on archaeological or historical sources, but rather on the Septuagint supplement in the Jehu story. The *kaige*-tradition text reads in 2 Kings 9:16 ὅτι αὐτὸς δυνατὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος δυνάμεως, "for he was mighty and a powerful man" which is attested in Codex Vaticanus. In contrast to the other supplements of the LXX which repeat the information on Jehoram's battle מֶלֶךְ אַרָם (v. 14) or בַּהֲלַחְמוֹ אֶת־הַזַּוְאֵל מֶלֶךְ אַרָם (v. 15) this short characterization of the reign of Hazael goes outside of the envelope of the Masoretic text, which refrains from any evaluation of his mastery. Since it is missing in the Antiochene tradition it is difficult to assume the priority of this particular addition although it is suitable to link 1 Kings 22, 2 Kings 8:28, and the Jehu coup. Jonathan Robker recently argued in favor of this small addition because, for him, it is more likely that the positive image of the king of Aram had been removed later than it was added.¹³ Be that as it may, the phrase emphasizes the role of Hazael in history either in the original version or in the reception of it.

The often discussed Antiochene addition in 2 Kings 13:22 on Jehoahaz (ca. 818–802 BCE) may corroborate this view. It reads at the end of the verse: "And Azael took out of his (Jehoahaz') hand the ἄλλόφυλον from the sea, the one to the evening direction, to Aphek" (... καὶ ἔλαβεν Ἀζαῖλ τὸν ἄλλόφυλον ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς καθ' ἑσπέραν ἕως Ἀφέκ.) Adrian Schenker and others have argued in favour of the priority of this addition.¹⁴ Along with other arguments, he points to the fact that the Philistines were not subjugated by Joahaz according to the biblical record, so that the ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ may be original and was then erased by a harmonizing redactor. Reading the Philistines as object of "he took" implies a former subjugation of the Philistines by Jehoahaz which is historically not very probable. In contrast, Shuichi Hasegawa sees the ἄλλόφυλον as a corruption of an original הערים "the cities" misread as הערלים "the uncircumcised," and thus he reconstructs the Vorlage as וַיִּקַּח הַזַּוְאֵל מִיַּד הַזְּוֹאֵל אֶת־הָעִירִים מִכְּנֵרוֹת עַד יַם־הָעֶרְבָה. For him, the Lukian plus "is most probably editorial, added by the editor who is also responsible for the passage in 2 Kings 10:33."¹⁵ As in 2 Kings 10:33; 13:7; 14:25a the addition is an expansion of an existing passage, here 2 Kings 13:3, 25a "in order to accentuate the vicissitude of the Jehu dynasty."¹⁶ Hasegawa evaluates the addition of v. 22 in the light of v. 25 where it is

¹¹ LEMAIRE, Hazaël, 91–108, for the history of research see HAFBÓRSSON, Power, 17–30.

¹² EWALD, History, 93 (quoted from the English translation of 1871). Cf. the German edition: EWALD, Geschichte, 234.

¹³ See ROBKER, Jehu, 21.

¹⁴ SCHENKER, Textgeschichte, 115; see also FINKELSTEIN, Kingdom, 125; EHRlich, Philistines, 105, 151. For Jehoahaz and Joash, see FREVEL, Geschichte, 188–189, 191–193.

¹⁵ HASEGAWA, 2 Kings 13:22, 61.

¹⁶ HASEGAWA, 2 Kings 13:22, 61, 76.

stated that Joash *recovered* the Israelite *cities* from Ben-Hadad (ויקח את־הערים מיד) בן־הרדד בן־חזאל אשר לקח מיד יהואחז אביו במלחמה “and he took out of the hand of Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, the cities which had been taken from his father Jehoahaz in war”). Remarkably, ἀλλόφυλος never occurs in the singular in the LXX, thus it is less probable that the translator rendered הערלים “the uncircumcised” instead of הערים.¹⁷ However, if the original version indeed lacks the “foreigner” or “Philistine,” as Hasegawa has suggested, the way is clear for not only detracting the ים הערבה from the Mediterranean Sea, but also to identify Aphek not with the latter Antipatris Tell Ras el-En in the Sharon Plain, but rather with Aphek east of the Sea of Galilee in the Golan. The name is continued in el-Fiq (2162.2424), but due to the archaeological record it should be identified with Khirbet el-Asheq (2102.2435), which is ‘En Gev¹⁸ 2 km east of Hippos/Sussita. Although Aphek/Tell Ras el-En was also destroyed by Hazael,¹⁹ the Transjordan “solution” for Aphek in 2 Kings 13:22 makes more sense. However, in following Deuteronomy 3:17, Hasegawa does not read Aphek but Kinneret (מכנרות) in the presumed Vorlage of the Antiochene text. This goes one step too far. The Lukian text 2 Kings 13:24b does clearly attest Aphek as does 2 Kings 13:17 MT.

If the Hebrew Vorlage has indeed read ים הערבה 2 Kings 14:25 comes into mind in which the Dead Sea is mentioned. The addition would then address the Transjordan expansion of Hazael’s reign from the region of the Sea of Galilee to the northern end of the Dead Sea. This reading changes the reading of 2 Kings 10:32–33 with two minor differences: the annexation of Transjordan is dated to the time of Jehu instead of the time of his son Joahaz, and the conquest goes south as far as Aroer (מערער אשר על־ן נחל ארנן), although the Dead Sea is a relatively natural border, which may include the territory down to the Arnon. Since the literal reading of the Antiochene text makes less sense historically, the original reading “and Hazael took *the cities* out of his hand from the Dead Sea to Aphek” (despite describing Hazael’s conquest strangely from south to north) is tempting.

The addition brings Jehu and his military putsch closer to Hazael’s policy to gain power in the southern Levant and to enhance the sphere of his influence not only in the contested zone north of the Jezreel Valley and the Gilead, but also in the whole territory of the Omride state of Israel in the late 9th century BCE. The situation in 2 Kings 13:22 would best precede Hazael’s campaign in the Shephelah.

While perhaps the Omride king Jehoram tried to aggress Aram²⁰ in the “Thronwirren” (turmoils) after the death of Hadad, the usurper Hazael not only fought back against Israel, but induced Jehu to stage a coup against the weakened Joram and his brotherally Ahaziah.²¹ Together with the Tel Dan stele, this may be a clue for the interpretation

¹⁷ HASEGAWA, 2 Kings 13:22, 65 points at other instances of ἀλλόφυλον to support the singular as translation of a Hebrew plural *and* the possibility to read Ἄζαήλ τὸν ἀλλόφυλον as “Hazael of Aram.”

¹⁸ The most elaborate discussion of the several Apheks in the southern Levant can be found in GASS, Ortsnamen, 138–150, who is pretty sure to identify the Aphek in the Golan with Khirbet el-Asheq. For the identification of En Gev with Aphek and the transformation of Aphek to Khirbet el-Asheq see also LIPINSKI, Skirts, 380–382.

¹⁹ See KLEIMAN, Aphek, 227.

²⁰ See for this interpretation SERGI, Schlacht, 43, 49–50.

²¹ See for this interpretation FREVEL, Geschichte, 45–60.

that the putsch of Jehu was masterminded by Hazael more specifically than the murder of Jehoram and Ahazjahu was the deed of the Aramean king. The reign of the military officer Jehu, perhaps a member of a local elite family from Tel Reḥov or its neighborhood,²² or even the dynastic reign of the Nimshides, was a more or less natural outcome of Hazael's policy. It began more or less in 845 BCE (traditional dating). While this becomes a majority position in historical debates, the link between the revolt of Jehu in Samaria and the subversion of Athaliah in Jerusalem is still undervalued. There is not only a literary parallelization; the events are also in historical respect two sides of the same coin. I cannot go into detail here, but let me sketch the framework with a few lines:

My starting point is the agreement upon the evaluation of the 10th century BCE: there is no strong evidence for Jeroboam and Rehoboam and much less for a foregoing *united monarchy* in any shape or form. With many others, I presume that state formation in the north actually emerges with the Omrides and was fostered in a second phase during the Nimshides under Jeroboam II. Up to the late 9th century Jerusalem was more or less a developed chiefdom that was dominated or even subdued by the Omrides. Thus, generally speaking, Judah was *not* an autonomous political state before the 8th century and the Hazael campaign. It was rather a collateral branch, a client state of the Omrides, ruled by members of the royal family from Samaria.²³ As a starting point, the local chief Jehoshaphat was subdued by Omri; Joram, Ahaziah and Athaliah were Omrides themselves. This dependency on Samaria was continued under the Nimshides. The Judean kings Joash, Amaziah, Azariah and Jotham were in fact "Davidic" Nimshides in Jerusalem.

Ahaziah was most probably a sort of client of Samaria and was probably the younger son of Ahab and the brother of Joram/Jehoram. When (following the Tel Dan stele) Hazael (or following the biblical account Jehu probably with Aramean approval) killed Jehoram and Ahaziah (most probably in 842/841 BCE²⁴), the only remaining Omride was Athaliah in Jerusalem.²⁵ Perhaps she resisted the Aramean pressure for a short while, but the elite of Jerusalem evaluated the power of Jerusalem differently: they opted for a continuation of the subordination to Samaria and the Arameans. In contrast to the biblical account, Joash was not a member of the monarchic Davidic family hidden by Yhwh priests, but rather installed by the "Aramean" Nimshides when Athaliah was removed from power in Jerusalem. Be that as it may, if Jehu was a vassal or client of Hazael till 841 BCE, which seems probable but unverifiable, Joash, the king of

²² See AHITUV/MAZAR, *Inscriptions*, 43–44, 64.

²³ This practice has its parallels for instance in the Hittite kingdom and the Assyrian relation between Assur and Babylon in the 2nd millennium before the reign of Hammurabi of Babylon (see YOFFE, *Deep Pasts*, 161; NIELSEN, *Sons*, 6, 14). "Typically the head of the family lived in Assur, an eldest son or other family member was based in the Assyrian merchant's quarter (*kārum*), which were established between 1920 and 1740 B.C." (HOWARD, *Transnationalism*, 34). For further examples see YOFFE, *Myths*, 58 who speaks of "Assyrian family-firms" that "maintained merchant colonies in Anatolia, one of which Kanesh, has supplied thousands of texts." The system is very strongly related to trade. Interestingly enough, Tudhaliya was faced for instance with "an open challenge of his authority by members of collateral branches of his own family" (BRYCE, *Empire*, 58).

²⁴ See SERGI, *Schlacht*, 41f.

²⁵ For Athaliah see recently SERGI, *Queenship*, 99–111, and FREVEL, *Geschichte*, 250–253.

Jerusalem, was subjected to the Arameans indirectly, too. When Hazael went south he made the subjugation more direct by demanding a tribute from Joash (2 Kgs 13:4–5). Perhaps Joash was in fact of Nimshide origin and was actually installed, replacing Athaliah in Jerusalem, when Hazael tried to achieve regional hegemony in the southern Levant.

Hazael *in fact* installed a new order in the region by limiting the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the strategically less important hill country and driving back its power in Bashan to Gilead proper. It remains obscure how strong the remaining Samarian power was in the “New Canaan”-region. Hazael severed the Galilee from Samaria’s control and took over most of the strategical important cities in the upper Jordan Valley and the Jezreel Valley.²⁶ Nadav Na’aman has convincingly put forward the idea that the destruction of Jezreel, Megiddo VA–IVB, Taanach IIB, Yoqne’am XIV, Tel Rehov IV, Tel ‘Amal III, and even Gezer VIII have to be attributed to Hazael,²⁷ so that there are indications of a growing influence not only in the far north at Dan, Hazor or Abel Beth-Maacah. The northern state of “Israel” was reduced to a rump state for a short period of time. Despite this, the entanglement of Judah was not completely dissolved, but the main pole of influence changed with the instalment of Joash in Jerusalem. It was no longer the Omrides and Samaria which controlled the economy and politics of Jerusalem; Jerusalem was now dominated by the Aramean power. On the western side of Judah, in the economically prosperous coastal zone, the power of the Philistines especially in Gath was replaced by the Aramean interests.

“Israel’s fate was intimately tied to the fate of Damascus and their fortunes depended on the nature of their interaction. ... Samaria’s glorious century was the result of the entente cordiale between Israel and Aram-Damascus.”²⁸ While “entente cordiale” in the statement of Hadi Ghantous may be a euphemism for the real political situation, he strengthens the view that Aramean influence on the development of Israel in the 9th/8th century BCE was more than military antagonism. By *installing* the Nimshides in Samaria and perhaps even in Jerusalem, Israel became part of Hazael’s claim of hegemonic power. We have to see the outcome of this process in a more dramatic way, following Israel Finkelstein: “In fact, the new order set by him brought about a change in the borders of these kingdoms, a change that shaped the territorial landscape of the region until the end of the Iron Age.”²⁹

This dramatic change gave birth to the expansion of Judah in the western Shephelah and the south which took place in the shadow of the Arameans.

3. Hazael’s Campaign and the Birth of Political Judah

In emphasizing the crucial role of Hazael’s campaign for the political order in the south, it is all the more important to define the role of Judah’s expansion to the west and south

²⁶ ATHAS, Inscription, 289; KLEIMAN, Subjugation, 62.

²⁷ NA’AMAN, Notes, 126–127; see also GHANTOUS, Paradigm, 22.

²⁸ GHANTOUS, Paradigm, 183.

²⁹ FINKELSTEIN, Kingdom, 125.

and its relation to Hazael's campaign.³⁰ Several aspects have recently come under discussion: The role of Judah as an Aramean vassal in the late 9th century, the date of the expansion and the range of Judean control in the Levantine coast and the Negev, and finally the date of Jerusalem's development in the Iron IIB.

Regarding the subjugation of Judah, which is reflected in 2 Kings 13:2–5, we have to briefly discuss the situation in Tell es-Safi/Gath as it is reported by the excavator Aren Maeir. This is all the more necessary because David Ussishkin continues to challenge the view that there is archaeological evidence of a siege in the end of the 9th century, so that the assumption of Hazael besieging Gath is only supported by 2 Kings 12:18.³¹ In the Iron Age II the city of Gath had reached the size of about or even more than 50 hectares with a population of more than 10,000 people³² and this makes it the most important political factor in the coastal plain/Shephelah or even in the southern Levant. No other major urban center was comparable to the size of Gath.

Following the excavator, there are several traces of destruction at the end of the 9th century BCE: "In the course of our excavations, extensive evidence for the destruction of Gath of the Philistines, in the second half of the 9th century BCE, has been uncovered. Seen in several excavation areas throughout the site, clear evidence of a massive destruction has been uncovered."³³ The destruction layer of Stratum A3 is 80 cm thick and yielded a rich assemblage of intact ceramic vessels³⁴ and even five unburied bodies.³⁵ The destruction phase was a longer time period, not just a single event. The "destruction horizon may have (had) taken tens of years to accumulate."³⁶ Tell es-Safi/Gath was not resettled in a substantial manner for about one hundred years after the massive destruction in the last third or third quarter of the 9th century.³⁷ In the middle of the 8th century the site was struck by a major seismic event. Following Maeir, Tell es-Safi/Gath provides evidence for a prolonged siege, which indicates a foreign power that is able to do so. While the earliest evidence for sieges in the southern Levant comes from Megiddo, Jerusalem, and particularly in terms of archaeological evidence from Lachish with the Assyrian ramp, the excavator suggests that "the finds from Tell es-Safi/Gath can now provide the first archaeological evidence for a prolonged siege from the ancient Near East, one that fits in well with the textual evidence."³⁸ This textual witness is **יִלְחָם עַל-נֶת וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ** from 2 Kings 12:18. The archaeological evidence is a siege trench over

³⁰ For the broader context of the processes discussed below and particularly on the south-west-expansion of Judah and its connection with the state formation of Judah see SERGI, *Rise; Expansion; Formation; Emergence*.

³¹ USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 129–134.

³² Taking a coefficient of 250 people per ha. See BROSHI/FINKELSTEIN, *Population*, 48; STAGER, *Impact*, 344.

³³ MAEIR, *Philistia*.

³⁴ Cf. NAMDAR et al., *Destruction Layer*.

³⁵ NAMDAR et al., *Destruction Layer*, 11.

³⁶ NAMDAR et al., *Destruction Layer*, 11.

³⁷ Radiometric data suggest a date in the third quarter of the 9th century BCE as MAEIR/GUR-ARIEH, *Aspects*, 229 reveal. USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 132, who points at FINKELSTEIN/PIASETZKY's calibrated dates 895/94–820 BCE.

³⁸ MAEIR/GUR-ARIEH, *Aspects*, 230.

2.5 km with more than 70,000 m³ of stones which surrounded the whole city. Parallel to the trench – away from the city – an additional berm was built with the debris of the trench. The berm included three small stone built towers. Maeir argues that the only comparable siege trench in the Levant is Aramean, too; it is the siege of Hadrach/Hazrak by the son of Hazael, Bir-Hadad, which is described in the Zakkur inscription from Tell Afis/’pš.³⁹ Whether *hrš* in line 10 of the Zakkur inscription denotes “trench”⁴⁰ or not, is not decisive, but in assessing the city planning of the Arameans it seems very plausible to expect a moat in Hazrak.⁴¹

In contrast, Ussishkin challenges the existence and date of the surrounding moat as part of a systematic siege against the city of Gath. Whether the city was fortified at all, is still unclear in his understanding (although the situation is now much clearer in archaeological respect showing the existence of a massive fortification in the 2015 excavations⁴²), and if the suburb was not fortified a siege-trench makes less sense. Although he sees no proof for Hazael’s siege in the archaeological record, he approves that Hazael destroyed Gath.⁴³ He only does not accept that the date of the siege was around 830 BCE, but rather dates it much later in the *beginning* of the 8th century, although he has no alternative interpretation for the “moat.”⁴⁴ The consequences of his suggestion are substantial for the understanding of the Hazael-Judah-relations. Ussishkin implicitly challenges that Jehoash surrendered the temple treasure of Jerusalem during the destruction of Gath and Hazael’s campaign.

All the more challenging for the role of Hazael is that Ussishkin does not accept the view that Lachish Level IV is built *after* the destruction of Gath Stratum A3 and thus the expansion of Judah cannot be the outcome of the destruction of Gath,⁴⁵ a view which is held by Omer Sergi, Ido Koch, Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, Gunnar Lehmann and Hermann Michael Niemann, Alexander Fantalkin and Israel Finkelstein, among others.⁴⁶

Ussishkin holds on to his view: “In conclusion, the pottery assemblages of Gath Stratum A3 and Lachish Level IV are typical to the later stage of the Iron Age IIA, hence they are contemporary, and the settlements in which they were found lived side by

³⁹ See MAEIR, Hazael, 273. The origin of the Zakkur stele from Tell Afis may be corroborated by a spolia at the Sheik Khasan cenotaph, said to be probably the base of the stela, see AMADASI-GUZZO, Tell Afis, 54.

⁴⁰ In agreement with Maeir is DONNER/RÖLLIG, *Inschriften*, 205. SCHUELE, Introduction, 99. NIEHR, *Religion*, 168 translates “ditch.” It seems that a depression is the most accepted understanding of *hrš*, but Eph’al (EPH’AL, *City*, 77, 81 n. 143) and D. Ussishkin (USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 133) assume that it is rather a “tunnel,” so that there is no archaeological evidence in Gath. See for discussion MAEIR, Hazael, 273–275.

⁴¹ See GHANTOUS, *Paradigm*, 76: “Bar-Hadad seems to have perpetuated his father’s tactic and method of siege.” For the evidence of Aramean “moats” see NOVÁK, *Architecture*, 261–262, who mentions the textual evidence and states: “Archaeological data is still scant, but at least in some cases, like Guzana, the moats are still visible” (261).

⁴² See MAEIR, *Involvement*, 79–87.

⁴³ USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 138, 144.

⁴⁴ USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 132, 134.

⁴⁵ USSISHKIN, *Gath*, 138.

⁴⁶ See for discussion KLEIMAN, *Subjugation*, 64–65.

side.”⁴⁷ In addition to that, Na’aman has recently argued that the four subphases of Lachish IV may not fit in the small window, which opens between Hazael and the beginning of phase III under King Amaziah in ca. 788 BCE.⁴⁸ Hence in his view “Level IV at Lachish must ... have been fortified before Hazael’s destruction of the city of Gath.”⁴⁹ However, although plausible, the beginning of Lachish III is not fixed to the escape of Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:19/2 Chr 25:27) and the unexpected damage of Lachish IV may be attributed to an earthquake rather than the military destruction by Hazael. “There is no evidence for a willful destruction or for destruction by fire,”⁵⁰ Ussishkin admits. If the destruction of Lachish IV postdates the Hazael account, but instead took place in the first half of the 8th century BCE, the lack of *lmlk*-stamps, which is indicative to this stratum as well as to the earliest Jerusalem expansion strata (see below), finds an easy explanation.

According to Ze’ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz the pottery assemblage of Lachish originated in the late Iron IIA,⁵¹ but this does not necessarily include that the latest phase of Gath and Lachish IV are contemporaneous. The excavator Maeir takes a completely different position regarding the ceramic assemblage: “It is without a doubt earlier than the well-known late 8th century BCE assemblages from the region”⁵² and “in addition, absolutely no Assyrian or other late 8th century BCE finds were found in the vicinity of the trench and the berm,”⁵³ so that for him “the only viable suggestion is to relate it [the destruction] to the conquest of Gath by Hazael in the late 9th century BCE, as mentioned in 2 Kings 7:18.”⁵⁴

We cannot answer this crucial question of dating without further evidence (preferably regionalized comparisons of pottery assemblages *combined* with radiocarbon dates) but we may in addition point to the fact, that the pottery of Lachish IV mostly originated in the late Iron Age II, so that a later date in the 8th century BCE is as possible as the late 9th century BCE. Although Ussishkin rejects the successive emergence of Lachish IV after the destruction of Gath A3 vehemently, this option remains rather possible, if not probable. However, Ussishkin’s assumption, which is borrowed from Na’aman, that “peaceful relations between Judah and Gath enabled the Kingdom of Judah to expand into the Shephelah region, and that the Level IV fortress-city was built by agreement between the Kingdoms of Gath and Judah,”⁵⁵ is mere speculation and cannot be substantiated by any historical argument. This assumption is a necessary precondition for the expansion of Judah in the Shephelah *earlier* than the late 9th century BCE, but it

⁴⁷ USSISHKIN, Gath, 138.

⁴⁸ NA’AMAN, Kingdom of Judah, 254.

⁴⁹ NA’AMAN, Kingdom of Judah, 254.

⁵⁰ USSISHKIN, Gath, 137.

⁵¹ HERZOG/SINGER-AVITZ, Iron Age IIA–B, 236.

⁵² MAEIR, Background, 322.

⁵³ MAEIR, Background, 325.

⁵⁴ MAEIR, Background, 323. Aren Maeir goes even a step further by assuming that Amos 6:2 refers to the campaign of Hazael, mentioning Calne, Hamath, and Gath as points of his military interest.

⁵⁵ USSISHKIN, Gath, 137 with reference to NA’AMAN, Kingdom of Judah, 254, 264.

cannot be substantiated: “It is unclear why the kings of Judah chose to build their most important fortress-city on the border with the Kingdom of Gath.”⁵⁶

If we accept the strong position of Gath in the Shephelah before Hazael’s account, it is much more plausible to date the expansion of Judah after the fall of Hazael, as Omer Sergi and others have argued. “Only the reorganization of the Shephelah after Hazael’s campaign made a construction such as at Lachish Level IV possible.”⁵⁷ Lachish IV was built to defend the southern border of the Aramean vassal Judah; thus, it was more likely built as an agreement between Hazael and Joash than the rulers of Judah and Gath. Hazael filled the vacuum of power in the southern Shephelah and encouraged his ally to back up the control by building the fort of Lachish IV. In my view there is no need to assume northern engagement by the Aramean vassal Jehu as Lehmann/Niemann suggested,⁵⁸ although such an endeavor cannot be ruled out. When Amaziah fled to Lachish because Joash got the supremacy of Israel over Judah once more, he again tried to separate the south from the kingdom of Judah. He erected a counter-kingdom for a more or less short period of time (2 Kgs 14:19). If *not* destroyed by an earthquake later on, Lachish IV was perhaps destroyed when Joash of Israel ended Amaziah’s secession-attempt.⁵⁹ This brings us to the situation of political organization and dominion in the southern Shephelah. But let us first take a quick look at the relation between Lachish and Jerusalem in the situation mentioned above in the decades after Hazael’s campaign.

The discussion on the extent of Jerusalem in the Iron Age never comes to a rest. This does not only concern Iron IIA and the role of the Ophel building, but also the growth of the city in the 9th and 8th centuries. Most recently Joe Uziel and Nahshon Szanton have put forward the view that the Middle Bronze fortifications at the Gihon Spring were used in the late 9th century when the city began to grow.⁶⁰ In the record of the earlier phase not only *lmlk*-handles but also Judean pillar figurines are absent, thus it is obvious to date it in the late 9th/early 8th century. The date is also attested by bullae and the related iconography. It is now clear, that we have to dismiss the refugee hypothesis, according to which the growth of Jerusalem is related to the breakdown of Israel and the conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE. Jerusalem gradually began to expand from village to city in the time of the Omrides in Jerusalem in the later third of the 9th century.⁶¹ If we accept the relatively modest development of Jerusalem in the early 9th century BCE and the boost of expansion in the 8th century, it is much more probable to date Lachish III within these processes of expansion than *contemporarily* to a strong position of Gath in the Shephelah. There are simply no identifiable reasons why the kingdom of Judah would expand Lachish rather than its capital. To restate Ussishkin: “The main dramatic change in the history of Jerusalem occurred in the 8th c. BCE, when

⁵⁶ USSISHKIN, Gath, 145.

⁵⁷ See for instance also LEHMANN/NIEMANN, Shephelah, 89.

⁵⁸ “It might have been Jehu of Israel (841–814 BCE) and/or Joash of Judah (840–801 BCE), who built the administrative center of Lachish Level IV. As vassals of Hazael, they thus filled the power vacuum in the Shephelah created by the destruction of Gath,” LEHMANN/NIEMANN, Shephelah, 89.

⁵⁹ See FREVEL, *Geschichte*, 190–191, 238–239, 249–250, 253, 258. See the latest statement by DAGAN/CASSUTO, Ḥorbat Shim‘on, regarding the “Judahite” textile industry in Ḥorbat Shim‘on.

⁶⁰ UZIEL/SZANTON, Excavations, 237.

⁶¹ UZIEL/SZANTON, Excavations, 247.

Jerusalem became a metropolis, heavily fortified, and had a magnificent royal acropolis.⁶² If we take the hoard of bullae in the fill of the rock-cut-pool in the Gihon Spring area as indication of an intensive administration, we now have the basis to address Jerusalem as a political center in the Iron Age II. Following Singer-Avitz, the pottery of the rock-cut-pool points to the 9th and 8th centuries, the Iron IIA and IIB periods, as a time frame.⁶³ If we resist speculations on Jerusalem in the early phase of the Iron IIA, as they are induced by the Large Stone Structure and the Stepped Stone Structure, then the 8th century/Iron IIB is at the core of Jerusalem's role in state formation.

This development can convincingly be combined with Judah's expansion into the Shephelah and the Negev following Hazael's capture of Gath on his way to the south. By making Joash a vassal he fostered the development of Judah and brought it into a new phase. What made Judah prosper? Probably not the reduced tax burden after being detached from the Nimshides in political and economic respects, because the Arameans would have supposedly held out a greater tin cup. Instead, it may be the participation in the long-distance trade with South Arabia after expanding into the Negev and the Shephelah. Judah settled in the Beersheva Valley, fortified their settlements successively (Arad, Beersheva etc.), and profited from the far-distance trade directed through the Negev and the Shephelah.

4. How Far Did Hazael's Campaign Reach and What Did He Actually Aim to Achieve?

The presupposition of Hazael's expansion in the south was the weakness of Assur around 830 BCE beginning in the last years of Shalmaneser and enduring until Shamshadad V (823–811 BCE).⁶⁴ Hazael subdued all his southern neighbors or at least he weakened them deeply. We already discussed the annexation of Transjordan between the Bashan and the river Arnon, which is reflected in 2 Kings 10:32–33 and perhaps in the Antiochene text of 2 Kings 13:22 (see above). Hazael also pushed Israel back to a line south of the Beth-Shean Valley and the southern fringe of the Jezreel Plain and possibly Dor or even further south.⁶⁵ The most important part however was wrestling down the kingdom of Gath after an effortful siege (see above). In archaeological respect, there are indications that Hazael's campaign did not only affect the regional power of Gath but also other places in the Shephelah and the Negev. Besides Tell es-Safi/Gath, destruction layers can be identified for instance at Tell el-Far'ah (South), Tel Sera', Tel Azekah, Tel Zayit, Lachish, Beersheva, Arad, and other places as well.⁶⁶ However, it is still an

⁶² USSISHKIN, Gath, 144.

⁶³ SINGER-AVITZ, Date, 13; for the comparable Lachish IV, see ZIMHONI, Pottery.

⁶⁴ See NIEHR, König Hazael, 342.

⁶⁵ HASEGAWA, Aram, 68 discusses the destruction layers Megiddo VA–IVB; Dan IVB; Hazor IX; Jezreel enclosure; Yoqne'am XIV; Taanach IIB; Tell el-Hammah lower; Jebel 'Adatir Stratum III; 'En Gev Stratum IV; Tel Rehov IV; Tel 'Amal III; Tel Gezer VIII, and further possible Aramean occupation layers of Kinneret III; Bethsaida V; Tel Soreg; Beth-Shean Lower V; Dan IVA; and Hazor Stratum III.

⁶⁶ See LEHMANN/NIEMANN, Shephelah, 88, and most recently KLEIMAN, Subjugation, 58.

open question how far south Hazael went in his campaign. The role of seaport in Elath and its role in the early trade networks is still nebulous, and the context of 1 Kings 14:22 and its relation to 2 Kings 16:6 is open for discussion.

While Hazael's military agenda in the north and in Transjordan aimed at annexation,⁶⁷ and in case of Transjordan it already sought to control the Kings Highway; what was the aim of Hazael's southwestern campaign around 830 BCE? It was Benjamin Mazar, in a paper in 1962, who emphasized Hazael's interest in controlling the seaport at the Gulf of Aqaba,⁶⁸ though he deduced this interest simply from the policy of Hadad-ezer in the time of David. Mazar did not mention copper at all. Following the change of copper production in the first millennium, the decline of the Tel Masos chiefdom, and the importance of the Edomite copper mining, it has nowadays become more or less a consensus that Hazael's campaign aimed at copper trade. However, I do not agree with the view that Hazael *terminated* the copper production and trade in the southern mining zone to privilege Cyprus. Following Finkelstein and Piasezky, the copper production ended shortly after Hazael's expansion to the south at the end of the 9th century BCE and the export from the Faynan region ran more or less dry. The copper trade moved to the resumed Cypriote resources and the trade routes along the Phoenician coast again.⁶⁹ Following this view, Hazael obtained control over an important factor of the Iron Age economy, and this control "served to expand the Cypro-Phoenician copper trade by weakening the flow of the competing Edomite copper."⁷⁰ We will see below that this view does not fit the entire evidence.

In the course of his imperial ambitions Hazael was in need of the support of natural resources. Political power implies economic power. Building cities and a state with military power did not only require a high amount of resources but was also very expensive. By controlling the copper trade in the Negev, Hazael could achieve regional power *and* resources alike. We have to take into account that interregional trade of resources was always a matter of custom duties by the regional power, for instance Gath in the coastal periphery. In expanding his dominion along the coast, Hazael could foster the trade without paying too many taxes. The destruction of Gath's regional power was the most significant brick in this project.

In the following, I will put forward the interpretation that the main interest of Hazael was to control the copper industry *and* the trade networks in the south.

a) Control of copper supply: There is an ongoing discussion on the date of the copper production in the Faynan area and the very end of the industrial production in the Arabah. Either Hazael wanted to cease manufacturing copper in Faynan to privilege or even monopolize the copper supply from Cyprus as Fantalkin and Finkelstein suggest,⁷¹

⁶⁷ GALIL, David and Hazael, 81. Note that Galil uses the characterization of Hazael's reign to parallel it with Judah under David and Solomon to evince the probability of a mighty united monarchy. H. Ghantous in contrast has argued perhaps more appropriate that Hazael was "the model for Israel's most glorious king ever, David" (GHANTOUS, Paradigm, 185).

⁶⁸ MAZAR, Empire, 103, 114. See the discussion of 2 Kgs 14:22 and 2 Kgs 22 and the archaeological background of Elath/Tell el-Kheleifeh in the 8th century FREVEL, Geschichte, 21, 242, 259–260.

⁶⁹ FINKELSTEIN/PIASETZKY, Copper Production, 86–91.

⁷⁰ TEBES, Fluctuations, 10.

⁷¹ FANTALKIN/FINKELSTEIN, Sheshonq, 31; YAHALOM-MACK et al., Insights, 174.

or he was interested in integrating the resources in his control by eliminating the local power of Gath. There can be little doubt, that there was Cypriot copper in the 9th century BCE as could be traced by lead isotope analysis performed on an ingot from Hazor, but additional evidence of Cypriot copper in the region is still small.⁷² On the other hand, there is evidence from Neve Yam that nine ingots came from the Faynan area.⁷³ However, at the end of the day that is not enough evidence to conclude a complete replacement of the Cypriot copper supply in the Iron II. The alternative interpretation by Vasiliki Kassianidou is arguing in favor of a broad continuity in copper supply from Cyprus,⁷⁴ is likewise not verifiable from the archaeological evidence. However, she agrees that the temporal breakdown of the Late Bronze Age changed the market completely, and “this perhaps provided the copper regions of Faynan and Timna the opportunity to flourish and to begin again to export metal.”⁷⁵ But Assyrian sources from the 9th century onwards also indicate that Cypriot copper was not absent from the market in the western Levantine coast, rather it was no longer prevailing. All in all, at the moment we can only attest that the majority of copper came from the Faynan/Arabah region although not completely replacing Cypriot copper. Thus, the suggestion that Hazael’s campaign intended to give preference to Cypriot copper cannot be proved. The same holds true for a termination of production in the 9th century BCE in Faynan, which was allegedly brought about the region by Hazael. According to radiocarbon dates the industrial-scale production of copper in Khirbet en-Nahas had its peak in the 10th century but was continued until and throughout the 9th century BCE. The fort that was built in the 10th century was used as a copper workshop itself in the 9th century.⁷⁶ Recent results from Erez Ben-Yosef have revealed a prolongation of Timna copper production into the 10th–9th centuries BCE.⁷⁷ The exact date of the end of the copper production in the region is not quite clear. Andreas Hauptmann sees the production in Faynan enduring throughout the Iron IIC, and in the Arabah covering the Iron IIB “based on archaeological finds and ¹⁴C-dates.”⁷⁸ However that may be, the main site’s production in Khirbet en-Nahas continues after the campaign of Shishak throughout the 9th century BCE, but, following the excavator, the main site of production was abandoned at the end of the 9th century BCE.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the peak of industrial scale production in the 10th–9th century,

⁷² KASSIANDIOU, *Copper*, 266; YAHALOM-MACK et al., *Insights*, 191.

⁷³ See YAHALOM-MACK et al., *Insights*, 191. Three bi-metallic knives from Megiddo and Khirbet Qeiyafa from the Iron I also attest the use of Arabah-copper in metalworking industries. However, the technique used, may point to a Cypriot influence, see YAHALOM-MACK/ELIYAHU-BEHAR, *Transition*, 300, 302.

⁷⁴ KASSIANDIOU, *Copper*, 266.

⁷⁵ KASSIANDIOU, *Copper*, 267; cf. YAHALOM-MACK et al., *Insights*, 175.

⁷⁶ LEVY/BEN-YOSEF/NAJJAR, *Perspectives*, 201 and most recently LEVY/BETTILYON/BURTON, *Complex*, 4.

⁷⁷ BEN-YOSEF, *Solomon’s Era*, 191.

⁷⁸ HAUPTMANN, *Archaeometallurgy*, 154. See also the watchtower in Rujm Harm Ifdan for Iron IIC evidence, LEVY/BEN-YOSEF/NAJJAR, *Perspectives*, 208. We cannot discuss the riddle of Khirbat al-Jariya here, which evinces intensive use in the 8th–6th century but reveals no mining or melting activity, see LEVY/BEN-YOSEF/NAJJAR, *Perspectives*, 206.

⁷⁹ LEVY/BEN-YOSEF/NAJJAR, *Perspectives*, 204; LEVY et al., *Excavations*, 90, 97, 121–122.

there is “little evidence for later Iron Age IIC (7th and 6th centuries BC) metallurgical activities,”⁸⁰ which remains difficult to interpret.

In sum: If we date Hazael’s campaign around 830 BCE, the copper production still lasted till the end of Hazael’s reign in 803 BCE. Like Pharaoh Shishak, Hazael was interested in the control and supply of copper, and he could still gain profit from the resources produced in the Faynan and Arabah region during his reign.

b) Control of the trade along the Mediterranean coast. Could Hazael not only be interested in the copper trade but also in the long-distance trade and the emporium in Gaza? We are used to two assumptions regarding the international trade networks: the total breakdown of the Late Bronze Age trade with the decline of the city-state culture, and the emergence of the long-distance trade from Arabia in the mid to late 8th century BCE associated with the appearance of the Assyrians. Only from this time onwards, commodities such as frankincense and spices began to play a major role. This picture has to be adjusted from both sides: Neither the change from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age I yielded a total breakdown of far-distance trade, nor was the expansion of Assyria to the west the starting point of the Arabian long-distance trade. Although the evidence is still circumstantial, the emergence of the “Frankincense Route” may be assigned to the early Iron Age and perhaps even the Late Bronze Age.⁸¹ Evidence comes from the oasis of Tayma,⁸² the chiefdom of Qurayyah,⁸³ the distribution of the painted Qurayyah-pottery in the Arabah, and the Negev etc.

It is not only copper but spices, incense and perhaps frankincense which was brought by camels and particularly donkeys through the Negev to Gaza.⁸⁴ The role of Gaza in the Iron II is still vague; due to the lack of archaeological excavations we know little about it.⁸⁵ We may assume that it was one of the urban centers in the early Iron IIA but this is more or less deduced from the importance of Gaza as “Canaan” in the Late Bronze and the assumption of an early trade hub at the end of the Nahal Besor/Wadi el-Ghazze and the Nahal Beersheva. In the sea trade, the Gulf of Aden was a real bottleneck and it was allegedly less hazardous to reload the commodities at the Yemenite coast to transport them by land to Gaza or other emporia.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ LEVY/BEN-YOSEF/NAJJAR, Perspectives, 210.

⁸¹ FINKELSTEIN, Archaeology, 247; KITCHEN, Sheba, 136; vs. LIVERANI, Trade; ARTZY, Incense; JASMIN, Emergence; Organization; cf. summary in KNAUF et al., Trade.

⁸² HAUSLEITER, Tema; North Arabian Kingdoms.

⁸³ TEBES, Fluctuations, 12–13.

⁸⁴ The importance of the donkey in the long-distance trade cannot be underestimated, see SHAI et al., Importance, 1, 5, 16, 18 with emphasis on the Early Bronze Age. It is probably not by chance that Aram-Damascus is called the *māt ša-imērišu* “the land of his donkeys” which may indicate the engagement of Damascus in trade relations within the southern Levant. Recently also the standard assumption regarding the domestication of camels was questioned by SAPIR-HEN/BEN-YOSEF, Introduction, 277, who summarized that “the first significant appearance of camels in the Aravah Valley was not earlier than the last third of the 10th century BCE.”

⁸⁵ See recently SADEQ, Overview, 241. For Tell el-‘Ajjul and the Iron Age Campaign by E.H. Mackay and M.A. Murray see SADEQ, Overview 242; further LEHMANN/NIEMANN, Shephelah, 85.

⁸⁶ See GILBOA/NAMDAR, Beginnings, 275 with further details.

Usually the far-distance trade in the Negev is associated with the appearance of the Assyrians and conceptualized as incense and spice trade from South-Arabia via the Oasis of Tayma in the late 8th century BCE. But this has to be corrected for several reasons,⁸⁷ following recent residue analysis of spices (*cinnamon*) from the early Iron Age.⁸⁸ Indications of a pre-Assyrian far-distance trade can be found at several sites in the region, for instance in Tel Masos or Tell el-Hesi.⁸⁹ It is plausible to assume that the copper was not traded separately from other goods and that Hazael obtained control over the trade system which was ready to boost in the 8th century BCE.

That it was not only copper which nurtured the early chiefdoms in the south but rather the locally managed trade is indicated also by the role of the Tel Masos chiefdom in the early Iron Age, which was a hub for exported local copper, imported luxury goods from Egypt and the Mediterranean *and* imported “Arabian” commodities. Michael Jasmin has emphasized that Tel Masos “was also an interface site for the nomads in control of this trade: the meeting place between the nomadic groups living in the semi-arid Negev and the Wadi Arabah, on the one hand, and the sedentary inhabitants of the Mediterranean zone to the north, on the other.”⁹⁰ As the center of a powerful chiefdom Tel Masos controlled the end of the routes in the Beersheva Valley. “Tel Masos doubtless owed its importance to its role in the interregional trade, and while the site imported goods from Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt and the Hejaz, it exported copper from the Arabah mines.”⁹¹ The Tel Masos chiefdom was abandoned in the late 10th century following the Shishak campaign. What happened to the trade with the southern Levant when it was under the control of Shishak? Parts may be redirected to the south via the sea trade route in the Gulf of Elath. But the semi-nomadic group who operated the trade with the sedentary population in the Beersheva Valley would have been against an alternative handling of their cargo to keep the commerce with the southern Levant alive. If we assume that it was still active and connected with the copper trade from the Faynan region, it is natural to connect Hazael’s interest with the combined trading of copper and far-distance commodities in the Beersheva Valley.

To conclude our argument, let us briefly come back to 2 Kings 14:22. It says that Azariah (who was in my view most probably a Nimshide vassal in Jerusalem) recaptured Elath, but the biblical text does not mention the opponent who held power over the harbor before. However, 2 Kings 16:6 does so and blames Rezin recovering Aram from Judah, adding the odd addendum that the Edomites live there until today (יִשְׁבוּ שָׁם) (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה). While MT has the *Kētib* אֲרָמִים the *Qerē* reads אֲדוֹמִים as the Ἰδομαῖοι in LXX. The frequent textual confusion of Aram (אַרַם) and Edom (אֲדוֹם) is one possibility; another is the Aramaic protégé on the Edomites as a sort of vassal.⁹² One of the problems is the archaeology of the harbor region: Ezion-geber, which

⁸⁷ See FREVEL/PYSCHNY, Introduction.

⁸⁸ GILBOA/NAMDAR, Beginnings, 265, 275–276.

⁸⁹ JASMIN, Emergence, 145; BLAKELY/HARDIN/MASTER, Border, 46.

⁹⁰ JASMIN, Organization, 145.

⁹¹ TEBES, Fluctuations, 11.

⁹² See LEVIN, Aram, 188–193. Usually it is assumed that Edom was subjugated under Judah, see NA’AMAN, Judah and Edom, 199–200.

perhaps has to be identified with the natural harbor Jezirat Faraun, should be dated earliest to the 8th century (certainly not in the time of Shishak and the aftermath of his campaign). The same holds true for Elath/Tell el-Kheleifeh, which is dated slightly later.⁹³ Accordingly, traces of a sea harbor as emporium in the Gulf of Elath date into the 8th or earliest into the late 9th century. 1 Kings 22:49–50 describes Jehoshaphat (868–847 BCE) as already engaging in a sea endeavor which failed at the end.⁹⁴ This may be correct or too early, but it supports the view, that the Hazael campaign could have had an interest in gaining power on that southern entrepôt.

Perhaps we can put forward the idea that it was Hazael who took control of the important hubs of this trade after his campaign to the south. Besides copper, it was the growing Arabian long-distance trade at which Hazael aimed. “Regarding spices specifically, in the present state of research we cannot even assess if later spice trade – of the Persian period and onward – was indeed ‘tapping’ into age-old networks, or if trade routes fluctuated with time and political setting.”⁹⁵

The tribute of “Edom” together with Israel, Philistia, Tyros, Sidon, to Adad-nirari III from 811 to 783 BCE and the conquest of Damascus on the Nimrud Slab (or Calah Orthostat) indicates that there was “something” relevant in the south. Perhaps, following a guess of Juan Manuel Tebes, “the Faynan chiefs offered tribute to escape the control of Damascus (and the potential control of Judah?), as Damascus had recently been in the ascendancy across the region.”⁹⁶ Although this is only one possibility, it indicates that the international trade systems and the combination of commodities have to be discussed anew. We are in need of more chemical analysis that indicates commodities and their origin in the Iron Age.

5. The Contribution of the Shephelah and the Negev to the Processes of State Formation

What was the Shephelah like before Hazael’s campaign? I will not go into details of Philistine dominion here and into the development of the five rulers (חמשת סרניי פלישתים [Josh 13:3; Judg 3:3; 1 Sam 6:4, 16, 18]). If we look at the non-simultaneous development of the regional centers Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, we can state the absolute dominance of Gath in the 10th and 9th century while the power of Ashdod and Ekron rose thereafter in the 8th and 7th century.⁹⁷ The rise of Ekron/Tel Miqne is due to the

⁹³ For a recent archaeological overview see FINKELSTEIN, *Archaeology*, 134–135, who sees Tell el-Kheleifeh as Ezion-geber, a fort close to Elath which was located in present day Aqaba. Notwithstanding some architecturally unrelated sherds of the Qurayyah Painted Ware from Iron I, the casemate fort of Tell el-Kheleifeh dates in the Iron IIB 8th century.

⁹⁴ The participation of the Omrides in this endeavour is likely, although 1 Kgs 22:50 says that Jehoshaphat rejected the cooperation-offer immediately. Kuntillet ‘Ajrud tells another story, which we cannot tell here!

⁹⁵ GILBOA/NAMDAR, *Beginnings*, 275.

⁹⁶ TEBES, *Fluctuations*, 10.

⁹⁷ See the table in NIEMANN, *Neighbors*, 250.

Assyrian influence in the 7th century BCE, Ashdod was the regional power after the decline of Gath in the 8th century till it is seized by Sargon II in 712 BCE and Ashkelon is a remaining power in the southern coastal area before the attack of Sennacherib in 701 BCE.⁹⁸ Nothing can be seen from Jerusalem or Judah in the first half of the 9th century in the Shephelah. In a recent paper, Lehmann and Niemann argued that in the early Iron IIA the Shephelah was inhabited by “relatively complex but small rural groups without urban centers that lacked large scale political integration with state-like features.”⁹⁹ These segmentary kinship groups were characterized by “their inability and unwillingness to form stable polities larger than their immediate kinship group or to submit to political authority outside of their own kin.”¹⁰⁰ One factor of change was the demographic development in the Shephelah because not only Gath grew in size and population, but also the rural sites in the Shephelah¹⁰¹ grew from 2,500–5,000 in the Iron I to 9,000–18,000 in the early Iron IIA. The villages formed more or less autonomous decentralized units which profited by the cities, especially Gath, in the coastal plain. They conclude that in the profound reorganization after the conquest “the region was given to Hazael’s vassals, either Israel or Judah,”¹⁰² but “whatever role the kingdom of Israel may have played in the 9th century BCE Shephelah, by the end of the century Judah was in possession of the region.”¹⁰³ I agree with Lehmann/Niemann that the “acquisition of the Shephelah was one of the main reasons for the dynamic development of the Judahite state during the 8th century BCE.”¹⁰⁴ This process was an aftermath of the Hazael account in the south; it was induced, enabled and fostered by this historical process. To collect tribute from the reign of Joash presupposes a certain economic growth of Judah, which goes *hand in hand* with the expansion of Judah into the west and the south. On the heels of Hazael and the reversion of the power structure in the Shephelah and the Beersheva Valley, Judah was enabled to build fortified towns or better administrative hubs in the border-zones, e.g. Beth-Shemesh (Stratum 3), Lachish (Stratum IV), Arad (Stratum XI), and Beersheva (Stratum V).¹⁰⁵ This process was approved and accepted by the Arameans, because the emerging Judah was seen as an ally. The Negev remained a transition zone, which was affected by the shift of regional power.

Hence, let me draw briefly upon Edom and the “state formation” in the southern Negev. In a paper published in 2015, Na’aman persuasively demonstrated the striking limitations of Edom in the Book of Kings.¹⁰⁶ It is first and foremost an entity in the southern Negev border zone instead of a political centered “state” (or better with Juan

⁹⁸ See BLAKELY/HARDIN/MASTER, *Border*, 34 who hint at the Assyrian “devastating campaign (by Sennacherib that) was directed against two kingdoms: a political entity centered in Ashkelon ruled by Sidqa and one in Judah ruled by Hezekiah.”

⁹⁹ See LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 77: “... was inhabited by independent – or at least autonomous – rural kinship groups that were not dominated by the ‘United Monarchy’.”

¹⁰⁰ See LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 84.

¹⁰¹ See LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 85.

¹⁰² LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 88.

¹⁰³ LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 88.

¹⁰⁴ See LEHMANN/NIEMANN, *Shephelah*, 90.

¹⁰⁵ SERGI, *Expansion*, 226.

¹⁰⁶ NA’AMAN, *Judah and Edom*, 200, 203. See also FREVEL, *Esau*.

Manuel Tebes, the *Buseirah chiefdom*¹⁰⁷) on the Edomite high-plateau in Transjordan which was connected to Bozra, Tawilan and Umm el-Biyara in the Iron IIB.¹⁰⁸ Na'aman concluded, that there existed an “early kingdom during the ninth-eighth centuries located in the lowlands”¹⁰⁹ which was connected with the intensive trade in the region. Historically, Edom was not a territorial state, but roughly speaking an organized entity of proto-Arabian tribes which were strongly connected to the copper production and long-distance trade in the Beersheva Valley as well as on the King's Highway in Jordan. The campaign of Hazael first imposed power on the trade and its region, but when he was pressured by the Assyrians, the region fell into a political vacuum, which was filled with the expanding Judah and the emerging “Edom.” Control was never imposed by one of the parties forever, but rather the affiliation oscillated. This holds true at least for the Negev fortresses of the 8th/7th century BCE¹¹⁰ that marked the southern “border” of Judah. Whether Tell Jemmeh, Tell Haror, Tel Sera', Tel Ira, Tel Masos, Tell 'Aroer, Hirbet Rogem, Horvat Uzza, Horvat Raddum, Tel Malhata etc. were continuously Judean, is still a matter of discussion. The area, formerly controlled by the “Iron IIA Tel Masos-Beersheva-Negev Highlands entity”¹¹¹ and afterwards by the Arameans, became more and more a contested border zone which no longer took the gains from the copper trade but rather from the long-distance trade with North Arabia operated by the semi-nomadic tribes in the Beersheva Valley.¹¹² The Negev became an “area of intense (and intensifying) interaction among diverse cultural groups,”¹¹³ and later on a “buffer zone and an economic intermediary between Assyria, the Arabian tribes, and Egypt.”¹¹⁴ Within this contested zone, the distribution of the Buseirah Painted Ware can show the emergence of the Negev as transition zone, which was under the influence of proto-Arabian tribes and their engagement in the trade. Perhaps it is not too farfetched, if we see the Aramean dominance of the 9th century BCE as a trigger for the emergence and formation of Edom as a state.

6. Conclusions

My paper aimed at the processes of emergence of stabilized regional dominion in the dynamic intermediate between clan-based chiefdom and monarchical reign of a territorial state. It attempted to stress the linkage of the processes and their rough move from north to south. That Judah is delayed in the development was already a common insight in the last decades when statehood was still developed from the assumption of the

¹⁰⁷ TEBES, *Fluctuations*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ CROUCH, *Making*, 42.

¹⁰⁹ NA'AMAN, *Judah and Edom*, 200.

¹¹⁰ See THAREANI, *Self-Destruction*; THAREANI-SUSSELI, *Archaeology*, 73.

¹¹¹ FINKELSTEIN, *Southern Steppe*, 89.

¹¹² NA'AMAN, *Judah and Edom*, 208; cf. TEBES, *Fluctuations*, 14.

¹¹³ CROUCH, *Making*, 71. For the Edomite inscriptions in the Negev see the overview in ROLLSTON, *Script*. For further arguments on the intermediary culture of the Negev see the details in FREVEL, *Esau*.

¹¹⁴ THAREANI-SUSSELI, *Archaeology*, 74.

division of monarchic power which stretched out over all regions from the Upper Galilee to the southern Negev. In contrast to that, the emphasis was laid on the impact which Hazael's account may have had on the secondary state formation in the southern Levant. Israel's development under Nimshide rule, the boosting development of Judah under Aramean protégé, and finally the emergence of Edom in the 8th/7th century have been described as the aftermath of the Aramean dominance in the southern Levant in the early 8th century BCE. We stressed various factors for the processes, first of all economic. The economic interest in far-distance trade and copper production in the Arabah and the Negev were a crucial trigger for the political development. Following the economic development, a second factor is the boost of governance and administration, which made the secondary states grow and prosper. The influence of the Arameans on these processes cannot be undervalued, not only in the north as it is discussed recently, but also in the far-reaching south of the southern Levant.

Let us evaluate the influence of the processes described above on the so-called "state formation" processes in three points:

1. The polity formation was very much triggered by economic factors, such as copper production and long-distance trade. The operation of far-distance trade by camels has played a crucial role in expanding capacities of the trade with South Arabia. Notwithstanding the focus on the employment of camels, one has to consider the involvement of donkeys in the transport history a little more. The trade of luxury goods, spices, and resources cannot be underestimated in the processes of state formation, as can be shown by the commodity *cinnamon*: "The early Iron Age cinnamon also demonstrates that spices from the east continued to be traded westward and were in demand even after the Bronze Age collapse and the downfall of most of its elites. Access to such commodities must have played some part in shaping early Iron Age social identities."¹¹⁵

2. If we accept that Edom does not designate the polity on the Edomite high plateau east of the Arabah, but rather in the region of the Negev including the southern Beersheva Valley, as recently most convincingly argued by Na'aman,¹¹⁶ then the emergence of Edom becomes more comparable to the other state formation processes starting in the northeast of the Levant and moving to southwest: the Aramean states, the Philistine city-states, the state formation of Moab and Ammon, and the formation of centrality in Israel and Judah. Finally, the clustering of power stood at the beginning of the emergence of Edom as a secondary state or better polity in the southern Levant.

3. Hazael's account has not only caused the decline of chiefdoms, which formerly controlled the emporia of the copper trade and long-distance trade, but also triggered the emergence of Judah on the one hand, and Edom on the other.

¹¹⁵ GILBOA/NAMDAR, *Beginnings*, 276.

¹¹⁶ NA'AMAN, *Judah and Edom*, 200.

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