Wheat and Wine
A New Ostracon from the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection

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... חִטָּה וְדַם־עֵנָב תִּשְׁתֶּה־חָמֶר

Deut 32:14

Mr. Shlomo Moussaieff, who is known for his unparalleled collection of Hebrew seals and ostraca, very kindly brought this ostracon to my attention and allowed me to publish it[1].
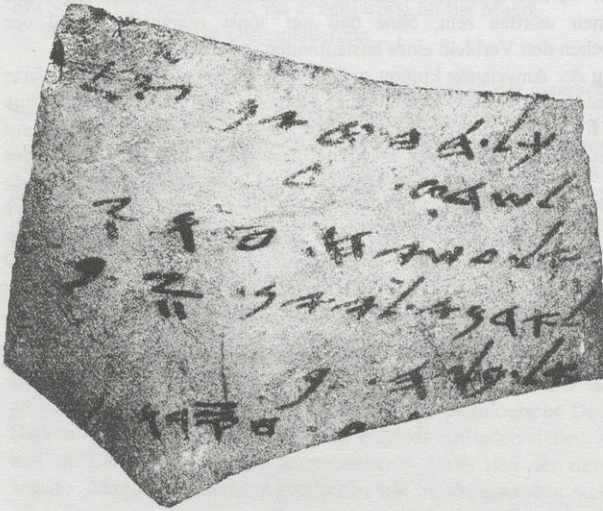

Fig. 1: Ostracon "Wheat and Wine"

The inscription was written on a sherd that presumably was part of a bowl or pithos. Measuring the surface (the convex side) of the ostracon yields the following data: left upper side 70 mm, left lower side 42 mm, upper side 102 mm, right upper side 53 mm, right lower side 49 mm. Its weight is 127.14 g, its thickness about 9 mm. The provenance of the ostracon is unknown.

The inscription is easily legible. The Hebrew letters look similar to those known from Arad Stratum VI (AI: 133). At least four signs should be read as Hieratic signs. One sign probably designates a corn measurement, commonly interpreted as the *ephah*, the meaning of the other signs is disputable. Unfortunately, the ostracon is not complete, but it seems that only a part of the last line is missing. The concave side of the ostracon has not been used for writing.

Proposed Reading of the Ostracon

1	kl*hḥtym	< amounts of wheat > < seah? 6? >
2	lṣ/šdq*	.
3	ʾl*ˈšyhw	· w < z_1 >
4	lˈdmy*lyyn*	< z_2 > b
5	ʾl*blgh*	b
6	[xxxxx]xb*ḥsrw	1

Palaeographical Remarks

The ostracon has clearly visible word-dividers. The script should be classified as belonging to the VII.th/VI.th century.
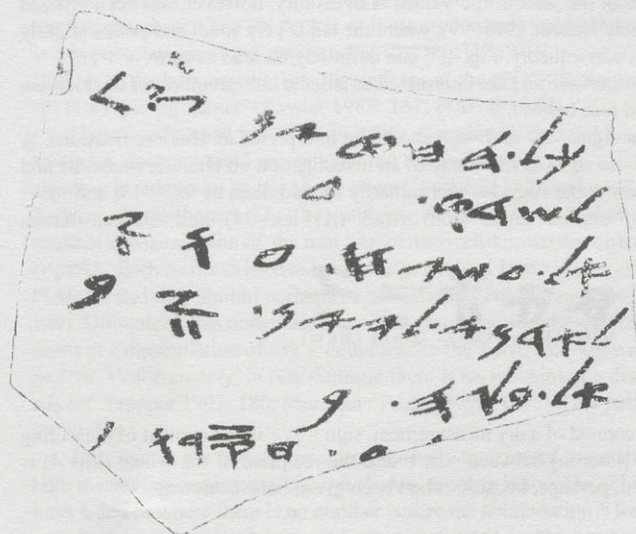

Fig. 2: Ostracon "Wheat and Wine", drawing.

a. The *bet* seems to have a tendency to open; cf. the *b* in the PN *blgh* (line 5). This tendency also appears on ostracon no. 78:3.6 (Deutsch / Heltzer 1995: 89; Lehmann 1998: 410), and on the "beqaˈ of Jerusalem" - ostracon (Heide 2003).

b. *dalet* and *reš* are clearly distinguished, compare HAE II/1: 117

c. The upper horizontal of the *he* extends far to the right of the vertical (especially line 1), and the lower two horizontals converge slightly with the upper horizontal to the left (line 1; cf. Herr 1998: 50), a feature known from the cursive script of the 7th century.

d. The *yod* does not show its horizontal line, the "tail", at the lower right and therefore has a "7"-form (cf. Renz 1999: 137), known mainly from the VII.th/VI.th century of Arad (AI no.1 - 21 etc.) and Lachish (HAE II/1: 151).

Fig. 3: *šin*, line 3

Fig. 4: *šin / ṣade*, line 2

e. In line 2, the second letter could be read as *ṣade* or as *šin*. If it is read as *šin*, its shape seems to differ not very much from the very clear *šin* in line 3. Unfortunately, the reading *lšdq* would be unexplainable, since there is virtually no Hebrew root *šdq*, and no PN embracing these characters is known (in lines 3-5 there is a PN in each line). If we look more closely at both

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letters, they reveal a greater difference than might be expected:

While the *šin* in line 3 (Fig.3) has a clear V/ arrangement (Lehmann 1998: 412 n.45), known from other ostraca of the VII.th/VI.th century (Heide 2003), Fig. 4 was composed differently. The left stroke of the letter was drawn first, a "z"-like stroke following. The inception of the "z" rests slightly below the middle of the left dash and is very thin. The left stroke looks as if the scribe had been interrupted for a second and then continued, moving his hand slightly upwards, and, dependent on that, the remainder of the letter was turned anti-clockwise. So we may tentatively read Fig. 4 and 5 as the letter *ṣade*. In his article on the "Palaeographic Dating of Judaean Seals", Vaughn (1999: 46) suggested that "the letter with the most notable degree of variation is *ṣade*". The missing of the leftward tail at the right end of the letter (Fig. 4, 5) is, of course, not a common feature of the late seventh and early sixth century's cursive script. A *ṣade* written in that way would normally appear on Judaean seals (Vaughn 1999: 46) or on monumental inscriptions and ostraca of earlier times (HAE II/1 191: a, b; Lehmann 1998: 418). A similar cursive form of the *ṣade* of the VII.th/VI.th century, however, has been utilized in ostracon no.79:10 (Deutsch/ Heltzer 1995: 99), where the tail is very small and points slightly upwards (Renz 1999: 143); consequenly, Fig. 4, 5 can definitely be read as *ṣade*.

Fig. 5: *ṣade*
(turned by 30°
clockwise).

If Fig. 4 and 5 are read otherwise and are interpreted as *šin*, the interpretation of the Hebrew root *šdq* has to be discussed (see below).

f. The two very peculiar signs $<z_1>$ and $<z_2>$ should be interpreted as Hieratic fractions. S. Wimmer, who will study these signs in the frame of an investigation on Hieratic numerals and other signs in palaeo-Hebrew texts, suggests preliminarily to read them as $<z_1>$: 1/8 and $<z_2>$: 2/8. He noticed possibly similar signs from Arad (AI no. 34) and Qadesh-Barnea (Lemaire/Vernus 1983: 304f.):

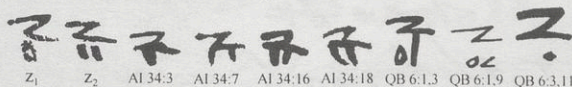| z_1 | z_2 | AI 34:3 | AI 34:7 | AI 34:16 | AI 34:18 | QB 6:1.3 | QB 6:1.9 | QB 6:3.11 |

Fig. 6: Hieratic fractions (?)

Sign $< z_1 >$ was used in the context of a dry measurement, sign $< z_2 >$ in the context of measuring wine. An (expected) unit '[issaron] between $< z_1 >$ and the recipient of the wheat (line 4) is missing - perhaps by chance, perhaps, because it had been given before anyway.

Translation and Meaning of the Ostracon

Evidently this ostracon represented a list of quantities of grain and wine given out or sent to various persons.

1	All the wheat:	<amounts of wheat> < seah/6? >
2	to Ṣadoq	'[issaron 1],
3	to 'Aśyahu	'[issaron 1], and $< z_1 >$
4	to the Edomite. Of the wine:	$< z_2 >$ b[ath 1],
5	to Bilgah	b[ath 1].
6	[xxxxxx] lacking are	[bath?] *1*

Line 1: *All the wheat <amounts of wheat> < seah/6? >*. In the pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions, *wheat* was commonly written in the plural form חטם (AHI 349); the form חטים, attested in the OT and in post-Exilic inscriptions (DCH III: 201), is unusual. Contrary to Aramaic, which utilized *yod* to indicate its plural ending *-īn* e.g. already in the Tell Fekherye inscription (SHAO 166), no pre-exilic Hebrew inscription using *yod* to indicate the masculine plural suffix *-īm* has been published (GEH 190; cf. Zevit 1980: 33; PPG § 222). Our ostracon belongs to the domain of the informal texts, so this fact should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy in the face of quite a number of Hebrew ostraca that have an informal character but do not show any plene writing of the masculine plural morpheme.

The Hieratic sign designating "amounts of wheat" (Naveh 2000: 4) is usually interpreted as the *ephah* (AI no. 31. 32) or the *lethech* (AHI xix).

It is tempting to read the last Hieratic sign in line 1 as the number 6, but the two small strokes usually visible on top of this sign are missing (cf. Möller 1912: 59; Verhoeven 2001: 212).

Line 2: *to Ṣadoq: '[issaron 1]*. For the argument of reading *lṣdq* instead of *lšdq* on palaeographic reasons, see above. The PN צדק is well attested in epigraphic Hebrew. צדק may be interpreted as a hypocoristicon of the common PN צדקיהו "[YHWH] is (my) righteousness" (Fowler 1988: 162), or as the hypocoristic, epigraphic form of the PN צדוק, known from the OT and meaning "[YHWH] is righteous" (Fowler 1988: 167; HAE II/1: 82).

There is, of course, still the possibility of reading *lšdq*. Looking for a NW-Semitic root *šdq*, however, does not yield any convincing results; there is only a doubtful attestation of *šdq* (its meaning is unknown) on the Meša' stone (DNWSI 1112), and another (doubtful) one in Official Aramaic. Nevertheless, *šdq* (the grapheme *š* embracing both phonemes, /ś/ and /š/) may be the result of a dissimilation of the root *ṣdq*; cf. the well-known dissimilation of *ṣ* ☞ *ś* in the PN יצחק ☞ ישׂחק. Both forms existed side by side in Biblical Hebrew (Bergsträsser I: § 14f; GVG I: 156; PIAP 8), and they should perhaps be classified as belonging to different dialects (BL 28; PIAP 129). Ultimately, this understanding of the grapheme *š* in the expression *lšdq*, i.e. viewed as the result of a dissimilation of *ṣ* ☞ *ś*, could lead to the same, well-known PN צדק, written differently as שדק. Unfortunately, in NW-Semitic there is no incident of a dissimilation of the root *ṣdq* to *śdq* (cf. Tropper 1993: 180; Muraoka / Porten 1998: 18)[2]; so the palaeographic solution remains preferable.

The *'ayin* at the end of line 2 is tentatively interpreted as an abbreviation for עמר or עסרן, both measuring one tenth of the *ephah*. Any number before the abbreviation is missing; cf. also lines 4 and 5, where there is no number before the abbreviation *b* for "bath 1". AI 31:2 and 61:1 were both interpreted as having an *'ayin*, abbreviated for *'br* "grain", but a specific measurement is to be expected here in line 2.

Line 3: *to 'Aśyahu '[issaron 1], and < z₁ >*. עשׂיהו is very common in epigraphic Hebrew (AHI 466), meaning "YHWH made" or "YHWH created". The OT has the shortened form עשׂיה. Lines 2 and 4 utilize the preposition ל, while lines 3 and 5 have אל before the PN. Since any verbal form is missing in lines 1-5, the PN together with the prepositions may be reconstructed as having the following formula:

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2 In contrast to any expected dissimilation of *ṣdq* to *śdq*, the Ugaritic PN *ṣdkn* may result from a dissimilation of *q* ☞ *k* (Tropper 2000: 98). The change of *ṣdq* to *zdq* in Syriac is an assimilation of *ṣ* ☞ *z* before *d* (GVG I: 166). Only the Amorite writing *la-aš-du-uq* etc. may be viewed as a dissimilation of *ṣdq* to *śdq* (Huffmon 1965: 257), but it is a specific East-Semitic development, showing the effect of the de-affrication of *ṣ* ☞ *š* immediately before *d* (Streck 2000: 230; cf. GAG³ §30g).

[ntn] *l* +PN: <measurement>   "given to PN <measurement>"   and
[šlḥ] *'l* +PN: <measurement>   "sent to PN <measurement>"   respectively.
The recipient of the verbal form נתן is usually introduced by לֹ (cf. AHI: 445), the addressee of
שלח is sometimes introduced by לֹ, but more often by אל (AHI 493f.; cf. GEH 208f.).

The ו at the end of line 3, together with the Hieratic sign $< z_1 >$ (see discussion above), starts a new sequence that continues to line 4.

Line 4: *to the Edomite. Of the wine:* $< z_2 >$ *b[ath].* *To the Edomite* was given $< z_1 >$ of the wheat (lines 3 and 4). *The Edomite* is to be understood as a nickname, by which people were called in their own social circle (Naveh 1990: 112f.). These nicknames could designate a person's origin, occupation, characteristics etc. (Naveh 1990: 117). The ethnicum אדמי, without a PN in apposition (more probably האדמי: the article regularly coincides with the preposition לֹ) may mean, that this man was or had been an Edomite, or that he was either affiliated to somebody from Edom or that his father or grandfather had been in Edom etc. Some ethnica attested in various pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions and in Masada do likewise not have a PN in apposition. The gentilic or informal name, מצרי, e.g., is attested on a pithos from Kuntillet-Aǧrūd (PIAP 279), on ostracon no.79 (Deutsch / Heltzer 1995: 99) from the Shlomo Moussaieff collection and on further NW-Semitic inscriptional material (Deutsch 1999: 129; Lehmann 1998: 436), and is probably to be interpreted as "the Egyptian". The name הקרני "the Qarnaite" or "the Cyrenian" appears on ostracon no. 421 from Masada (Naveh 1990: 115). Informal Hebrew names designated by an ethnicum are also known from the OT. הָאֲדֹמִי (line 4) is comparable to הָאֲדֹמִי דֹּאֵג "Doeg the Edomite" in 1Sam 21:8[3]: the apposition הָאֲדֹמִי is a nickname and does not necessarily denote Doeg as a foreigner.

After the writer of the ostracon has listed three persons to whom he gave or sent wheat, he continues with wine, giving first the amount total which he had given out: *Of the wine:* $< z_2 >$ *b[ath].* לֹ designating "of" is well known from Hebrew seals and bullae (*l* + PN: "belonging to"), from some ostraca, e.g. *lḥdš* "of the month" (AI no. 8:3.4; 17:8) and from the OT (HALAT 484: 15). The Hieratic sign $< z_2 >$ was discussed above. For writing *b*, without a number, for "bath 1", cf. AI no. 10:2; 22:1.2.

Line 5: *to Bilgah: b[ath 1].* Up to now, epigraphic Hebrew attested only the form בלגי (AHI: 303), which also appears in the book of Nehemiah (Neh 10:9). This is the first reference of the form בלגה outside the Bible, known from 1Chr 24:14 and Neh 12:5.18. This PN signifies "shining forth" or "cheerfulness".

Line 6: *[xxxxx] lacking are [bath?] 1?* . The last line states the balance. The expression חסרו presumably pertains to wine. At the end of line 6, only a vertical stroke ("1") is readable, but in face of the plural form חסרו we would expect a greater number (hieratic "6"? Any other Hieratic sign?). The verbal form חסר appears, without any context, on a jug from Arad (AI no.98). If the Qal of חסר is used in the context with specific goods that are lacking or decreasing, they are fluids. So, both water (Gen 8:3) and oil (Ecc 9:8) can be subjects of חסר, cf. especially 1Ki 17:14: הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלָה וְצַפַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תֶחְסָר "the meal in the barrel shall not waste, neither shall *the oil in the cruse fail*".

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3 The expression הֲדַד הָאֲדֹמִי , "Hadad the Edomite" (1Ki 11:14), however, is in its context clearly signifying Hadad's origin, and הָאֲדֹמִי should here not be classified as an informal name.

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Abbreviations (except for Journals and series):

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AHI	Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*
BL	Bauer-Leander, *Historische Grammatik der Hebräischen Sprache*
DCH	Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*
DNWSI	Hoftijzer / Jongeling: *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*
GAG³	von Soden, *Grundriß der akkadischen Grammatik*, 3rd edition.
GEH	Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*
GK	Gesenius / Kautzsch: *Hebräische Grammatik*
GVG	Brockelmann: *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*
HAE	Renz / Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*
HAH	Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch*, 18th edition
HALAT	Koehler / Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*
IH	Lemaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques*
IPN	Noth, *Die isralitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*
m.l.	*mater lectionis*
OT	Old Testament
PIAP	Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography*
PN	personal name
PhPG	Friedrich / Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik*, 3rd edition.
QB	Qadesh-Barnea
SHAO	Freedman, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*
WSS	Avigad, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*

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