

Census and Ritual Expiation in Mari and Israel

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staple diet of the people, very much resemble those in the rock surfaces of the MB I sites of the Negeb. Furthermore, the circular stone houses with thatched, conical roofs of a Basutoland village look as if they might be a modern restoration of the houses of site 345, for instance. Whether or not the MB I houses had thatched roofs is a very moot question, but otherwise there is quite a close relationship in appearance between the dwellings of the two periods, which are some four thousand years apart. The use of cup-holes extended through many periods in ancient times. Insofar as our experience goes, those in the Negeb seem to occur only at MB I sites. One cup-hole that we found was covered with a fitted stone lid. There must have been others like it.

We also found some MB I sites in and near the Wâdī Ruth, the largest of which was site 369, coördinate 026.4-101.9. Others of the same period were encountered alongside or near the Wâdī Abyaḍ, in addition to others previously discovered. They were sites 372 and 373, at coördinates, respectively, 035.7-106 and 037.9-107.4 on the Nitsanah map.

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## CENSUS AND RITUAL EXPIATION IN MARI AND ISRAEL

E. A. SPEISER

References to the census play a significant part in the Old Testament and take up considerable space. The law on the subject is contained in Exod 30:11-16. The book of Numbers, which owes its very name to the census, deals with it in chapters 1-4 and 26. And in II Samuel 24 the sequel of the same institution is a pestilence of unusual severity. Yet there is much about the census in the Bible that has long been a puzzle.

We do know that the underlying purpose was military. Those involved were males from twenty years old and upwards (Exod 30:14, etc.) who were capable of bearing arms (e. g., Numbers 1:3, 26:2). The results could be used as a basis for new land grants, in which case the actual distribution was determined by lots (Numbers 26:55). Nevertheless, some of the technical terms employed in this connection have caused trouble and led to makeshift translations. Above all, however, it has never been made clear why such an essential administrative measure should require offerings of expiation or atonement (*kofer*, Exod 30:12) in order to ward off plagues; nor is it immediately apparent how one such plague in the reign of David could be traced back to the census (II Samuel 24).

The issue as a whole involves various problems in the fields of linguistics, government, and religion. It goes without saying that complex issues of this kind had best be left alone unless and until there is new evidence to justify a review of the case. In the present instance, the required new evidence has fortunately come to light recently with the publication of the Mari letters. The relevant material from Mari bids fair to solve the outstanding difficulties connected with the biblical

census; and it stands to gain much, in turn, from a comparison with the biblical evidence. The respective sources, in short, can be mutually illuminating, more so in fact than is apparent at first glance. A closer look at their combined testimony is therefore in order.

Parallel texts have to be handled with due caution, particularly when the distances between them amount to several centuries and hundreds of miles. In the case before us, however, the correspondence is at once too detailed and manifold to be distrusted. For one, the terms in question—and there are several of them in each instance—reflect the same technical idioms, and sometimes also the same etymologies. For another, the institutions involved are identical in character and objectives. And for still another, we find in both instances the same ritualistic component.

Furthermore, Mari and the Bible share certain other ties that have nothing to do with the census, while no comparable links exist between the Mari records and other cuneiform sources. The independent status of prophecy in Mari is one such case in point.<sup>1</sup> Another is the form of the covenant.<sup>2</sup> The pertinent Mari phrase *ḥayarum DUMU (prob. bin) atānim*<sup>3</sup> is reproduced verbatim in the biblical *ʿirô bnî ʾatônô* “his ass’s colt” (Gen 49:11; cf. Zech 9:9). Then there is the prominent employment in Mari of the term *šiptu* in the sense of a disciplinary warning or measure, on a par with Heb. *šefāṭim*; with this goes the action noun *šāpīṭum*, in significant harmony with the biblical *šōfēṭ*, which is universally mistranslated as “judge.” In the light of so much detailed agreement, the mention of nomadic Benjaminites in the Mari documents, or of military leaders who bore the title of *dawidûm*, gains added suggestive appeal. All in all, therefore, a close connection between the biblical census and that of Mari, in their administrative application as well as religious overtones, should occasion little if any surprise.

A comprehensive statement on the subject of the census in Mari was published in 1950 by J. R. Kupper.<sup>4</sup> In his penetrating analysis Kupper surveyed the relevant cuneiform material and called attention to the biblical analogues. The one thing that gave him pause was the use of the word *tēbibtum* (and related forms) as the technical term for the institution as such. In a subsequent statement, which appeared in 1957,<sup>5</sup> Kupper modified his position, on etymological grounds; he restored *tēbibtum* to its primary sense of “purification,” thus reducing the census to a secondary and incidental procedure.

It goes without saying that where etymology and usage would seem to diverge, the interpretation should be guided by usage and not the

<sup>1</sup> For a recent statement on the subject and the pertinent older literature, cf. A. Malamat, “‘Prophecy’ in the Mari Documents,” *Israel Exploration Society IV* (1955), pp. 1-12 (in Hebrew).

<sup>2</sup> See G. E. Mendenhall, “Puppy and Lettuce in Northwest-Semitic Covenant Making,” *BULLETIN* 133 (1954), pp. 26-30; M. Noth, “Das alttestamentliche Bundschliessen im Lichte eines Mari-Textes,” *Mélanges Isidore Lévy* (1955), pp. 433-444 [*Ges. Studien zum Alten Testament*, pp. 142-154].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G. Dossin, *Syria*, 1938, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> See his “Le recensement dans les textes de Mari,” *Studia mariana* (ed. A. Parrot), 1950, pp. 99-110.

<sup>5</sup> See his book on *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari*, pp. 23-29.

other way about. Nevertheless, M. Kupper's change of position is easy enough to understand in view of the prominent place which the texts accord not only to the abstract designation *tēbibtum* but also to the corresponding action nouns *ebbum* and *mubbibum* and the verb *ubbubum*, all of which have a common denominator in the adjective *ebbum* "pure." Accordingly, in any attempted re-evaluation of M. Kupper's present stand, the burden of proof rests with the critic. He must show that *tēbibtum* was indeed a process that was primarily administrative rather than cultic; and, to make his case, he should also be able to indicate the steps whereby a cultic term came to describe such an administrative act. I believe that both these requirements can be fulfilled. To do this, however, it is necessary to place the biblical and Mari evidence in closer juxtaposition than has yet been done. This will involve a brief survey of certain intricate idioms on both sides, as well as reference to significant religious beliefs and practices. I trust that results will repay the effort.

To concentrate, then, for the moment on the question of usage alone, the texts under review make it abundantly clear that *tēbibtum* and the several forms related to it refer specifically to the institution and process of census taking. Thus the characteristic phrase *aššum šābim ubbubim* "in regard to the *u.* of the troops" alternates with *aššum šābim paqādum* (cf. ARM<sup>6</sup> III 21. 5: 19. 5); hence *ubbubum* is in this context a synonym of *paqādum* (for which see below), except that the latter verb lacks any cultic implication. The process itself may be carried out under the supervision of the ruler's sons or some of the higher officials, who in turn appoint (*aškun* ARM III 21. 10) or deputize (*alput* 19. 14) the appropriate functionaries (who are called *ebbū* in both instances). It is evident, therefore, that an *ebbum* (or *mubbibum*) was not a priest or even a permanent official, but someone appointed *ad hoc*. This fact should suffice in itself to bring out the essentially secular character of the *tēbibtum*. And this is borne out by the further fact that among the groups involved in the process were the Benjaminites.<sup>7</sup> It is scarcely conceivable that the efficient and tolerant regime of Shamshi-Addu<sup>8</sup> would seek to impose on the fractious Benjaminite elements any religious constraints whatsoever.

There is, moreover, ample evidence to the effect that the main purpose of the *tēbibtum* was to furnish dependable records of the available military manpower. Virtually every reference to the *tēbibtum* involves writing and tablets.<sup>9</sup> The lists are to be prepared methodically, place by place (*ālišam*, e. g., ARM III 19. 13; 21. 13), and name by name (*šumišam*, e. g. ARM I 42. 9, 23). They are sometimes detailed enough

<sup>6</sup> *Archives royales de Mari* (transliterations and translations); for the texts, see TCL (*Textes cunéiformes, Louvre*) XXII ff.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Dossin, *Mélanges Dussaud* (1939), pp. 981-996; Kupper, *Nomades*, pp. 47-81.

<sup>8</sup> Most of the texts in question are dated to the period when his son Yasmaḥ-Addu was vice-regent of Mari. The relevant material from Chagar Bazar (see below) stems from the local archives of Yasmaḥ-Addu.

<sup>9</sup> This fact is duly emphasized by M. Kupper himself, whose discussion (cf. n. 4, above) affords a fuller survey of the material than is possible in the present paper.

to cite separately (*ana ramānimma*) the soldiers and their reserves, the men who have been requisitioned for campaigns and those too old for such tasks (cf. ARM III 19. 23 ff.).<sup>10</sup> The normal subject matter is the military personnel; lands and towns are mentioned only by metonymy. Occasionally, the *tēbibtum* has as its objective the allotment of land to the conscripted personnel,<sup>11</sup> which must be carried out with utmost care (ARM I 7. 39 f.).<sup>12</sup> In short, the Mari *tēbibtum* covers the same ground as the biblical census, even down to such details as readiness for combat (cf. *yōšē' šāvā'* Numbers 1: 3, etc.) and new land grants (Numbers 26).

Were it not, therefore, for etymological considerations, no one would hesitate today to view the *tēbibtum* texts as straight census records. Why, then, does the terminology have a cultic bearing? M. Kupper would seek the answer in a "ceremony of purification" aimed at the absolution of sins and hence capable of affording spiritual relief to the absolved.<sup>13</sup> It is extremely doubtful, however, as was suggested earlier, that piety was so potent a factor in the case. At a minimum, such a purging ceremony should have been a regularly scheduled and country-wide festival in the charge of duly qualified priests; yet none of this is known to apply to the *tēbibtum*. The passage on which M. Kupper bases this particular suggestion does state that, after the *tēbibtum* had been performed, *libbi mātīm uttiḫ* (ARM IV 57. 12) "the heart of the land was at peace." But even if one were to take this phrase at face value, it does not follow that it denotes here an edifying religious response. For the same phraseology reappears in a familiar later passage about the death of a substitute king, which ends on this note: "The Akkadians were in fear (*iptalḫū*). We have reassured them; they are at peace" (*libbi nušāškinšunu ittūḫū*).<sup>14</sup> Evidently, therefore, the *tēbibtum* could give rise to fears, which it was important to forestall. Such a need might well account for the cultic bearing of the pertinent terminology. But why would a routine census engender fear and require the help of ritual as a prophylactic measure? It is on this point that the relevant biblical parallels can shed fresh light.

The technical Hebrew terminology on the subject comprises the phrase *nāsā' rōš* and the verb *pqd*. The two appear to be used interchangeably (cf., e. g., Numbers 1: 2 and 3: 14). The men thus enrolled are called *p<sup>e</sup>qūdīm* (passim). How did these terms come to be employed for this particular purpose?

<sup>10</sup> This significant passage may be retranslated in full as follows: "The men (*šābum*), whose replacements went off to Babylon while they remained behind, have been recorded (reading *šatrū*, with v. Soden, *Orientalia* 21, 1952, p. 84) separately; the men not called up (*šabtū*) for a (military) campaign—whether officials (*sāliḫu* is approximately the same as *gugallu*) or free citizens—have been recorded separately; and the old men unable to go [on campaigns] have been recorded separately."

<sup>11</sup> According to Numbers 26: 55 such lands were apportioned by lot. And the Nuzi text JEN 333. 13-14 makes the significant distinction between a *bēl zitti* and a *bēl pūri*, that is, between those who acquired their lands by inheritance and those who obtained them by lot from the crown.

<sup>12</sup> The order reads *ina tēbibtimma ḫ[ut]ḫi sunniqma* "make that *tēbibtum* precise and accurate."

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Nomades*, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Harper, ABL 437, rev. 7-8.

The literal meaning of *nāśa' rōš* "he lifted the head" lends itself to a variety of uses. The act may be a symbol of pride (Psalms 24: 7) or a sign of pardon (Gen 40: 13; II Kings 25: 27); but it also can signify an execution (Gen 40: 19). In addition, however, we find the same phrase in the idiomatic sense of "to take stock, notice." A striking case in point is Gen 40: 20, where it is stated that Pharaoh "took notice" of his two incarcerated courtiers; the author had already made subtle use of the identical phrase to refer to a pardon in one instance (v. 13), and a death sentence (cf. our "beheading") in another (v. 19). Apparently, "to lift the head" had developed the specialized meaning of "to pick out the essentials," or the like. It is in this derived sense that *nāśa' rōš* figures so prominently in connection with the census (Exod 30: 12; Numbers 1-4; 26, *passim*). And we learn from Numbers 31: 26 that the term could be applied to animals as well as human beings. It is worth stressing that what is involved in all such cases is more than a mere tally, which would scarcely make any sense in Gen 40: 20. The point throughout is not "to take count" but "to take into account."

Since *nāśa' rōš* interchanges in the census passages with *pqd*, it should not be surprising to discover that the idiomatic sense of the former matches the basic meaning of the latter. To be sure, there is probably no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble as *pqd*. Its semantic range would seem to accommodate "to remember, investigate, muster, miss, punish, number," and the like. Actually, however, this seemingly lawless profusion reduces itself readily to the single common denominator of "to attend to with care." The important thing in each instance is to start out with this underlying common value and not pay undue heed to a specialized and remote application of the verb. Failure to observe this principle, for instance, has saddled *pqd* with the meaning "to number," which this verb never actually possesses as such.<sup>15</sup> Counting can be the incidental result of attending to given tasks, whether the performer is a shepherd or a census taker. But *pqd* itself does not specify such possible byproducts. Where a tally is desired, the text will say *mnē(h)* (II Samuel 24: 1) or add *mispar-* (v. 3).

Now, associated with the biblical census is the ritual act of furnishing a *kofer* (*-nefeš*). This amounted to the payment of half a shekel, so as to ward off a plague in the wake of the census (Exod 30: 12). The phrase designates a personal (*nefeš*) payment for purposes of propitiation or expiation (*kofer*). But the connection between such an offering and the census is not immediately apparent. We are told, however, in II Samuel 24 that a devastating pestilence afflicted the land following a census

<sup>15</sup> An amusing sequel to one such old misinterpretation is found in I Samuel 11. The clear original intent of the passage was to demonstrate Saul's courage against forbidding odds. His rescue of the besieged garrison of Jabesh Gilead was a perfect case in point. When people responded to his call, "he mustered them (*wayyifqēdem*) at Bezeq" (v. 8). But later readers took the verb to mean "he numbered them." In that case, what was the total? According to the present Hebrew text, the Israelites alone (not counting the Judeans!) added up to 300,000; and the Septuagint doubles this number. Yet, quite apart from their inherent improbability, such figures are directly contrary to the purpose of the account, which was to point up Saul's heroism.

which had been ordered by David. Since nothing is said there about a *kofer*, one is justified in assuming that the omission of that precautionary measure was somehow linked with the subsequent plague.

We are now ready to compare the combined biblical evidence on the census with the pertinent material from Mari—as well as added pertinent texts from Chagar Bazar.<sup>16</sup> Both the Hebrew and the Akkadian texts feature distinctive technical terms. The one group yields *nāsā' rōš*, *pqd*, and *kofer*; the other displays *tēbibtum/ubbubum* and *paqādum*. The verbs *pqd* and *paqādum* are, of course, identical etymologically; and we shall see presently that their special technical meaning is also the same. And just as *pqd* interchanges with *nāsā' rōš* in Hebrew, Akk. *paqādum* alternates with *ubbubum*, which thus yields the technical equation Heb. *nāsā' rōš*: Akk. *ubbubum*. Semantically, however, *ubbubum* must be placed alongside Heb. *kipper* (Exod 30: 15); and *tēbibtum* is the same as *kofer*. In other words, Akk. *ubbubum/tēbibtum* has the special census meaning of Heb. *nāsā' rōš*, together with the cultic bearing of Heb. *kipper/kofer*. This juxtaposition is immensely helpful in more ways than one. It shows at a glance how closely related the respective institutions really were; and it points the way to a solution of the cultic tie in both instances, as we shall see directly. The sole difference between the biblical and the cuneiform material is the employment of *nāsā' rōš* in the Hebrew passages under review. Yet even on this score, Akkadian supplies a complete semantic analogue, although this does not figure in the census texts. Interestingly enough, however, the meaning of the pertinent Akk. idiom, *rēša(m) našû(m)* can now be defined more precisely than was possible hitherto, thanks to the established value of Heb. *nāsā' rōš*.

In analyzing the occurrences of *rēša našû* in the Harper letters, A. L. Oppenheim assigned to this phrase three distinct derivative values: (a) “to cite, summon”; (b) “to examine, control”; and (c) “to start.”<sup>17</sup> But in the light of the Hebrew evidence that was summed up above, these three separate connotations can now be more sharply evaluated and brought under a single heading. The decisive criterion, of course, is actual usage and not interdialectal correspondence. Nevertheless, when all the instances cited by Oppenheim have been rechecked, it becomes clear that the common concept of “to take into account, to take notice of”—as established for the Hebrew passages—will not only suit each Akkadian occurrence in question, but do it better. And the same meaning stands up also in other passages; cf., e. g., the Middle Assyrian version of the Etana Epic: *Šamaš ina šaggiši rēsu lišši* “may Shamash call him to account in common with murderers.”<sup>18</sup> This is obviously the nuance

<sup>16</sup> For these cf. C. J. Gadd, *Iraq* 7 (1940), pp. 22 ff. The Chagar Bazar material (see above, note 8) reflects the same age and society as the Mari texts. The Mari letters, however, deal with the *tēbibtum* as something that has either been ordered or carried out. On the other hand, the administrative documents from Chagar Bazar have more to say, naturally, about the economic details involved. Exact counterparts of the latter type should turn up among the as yet unpublished texts from Mari.

<sup>17</sup> See JAOS 61 (1941), pp. 254-55.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Ebeling, AfO 14 (1941-44), pl. 9. 5 and p. 299, n. 5.

of Heb. *pqd* in *pōqēd 'āwōn* "visiting iniquity."

In respect to the census passages, the technical parallels obtained thus far may be tabulated schematically as follows (with divergent semantic analogues shown in brackets):

OT	Mari (and Chagar Bazar)
<i>nāsā' rōš</i>	<i>ubbubum</i> [ <i>rēša(m) našū(m)</i> ]
<i>pqd</i>	<i>paqādum</i>
<i>kofer</i> [cf. <i>kippūrīm</i> Exod 30: 16]	<i>tēbibtum</i>

The direct link is furnished by *pqd/paqādum*. In view of all the other manifold ties, this specific and complete correspondence cannot possibly be ascribed to pure chance. It argues the most intimate kind of agreement between the underlying institutions under review. The respective terms, however, are sufficiently specialized otherwise to raise this further question: are Heb. *pqd*: *nāsā' rōš* and Akk. *paqādum*: *ubbubum* mere stylistic variants in these contexts, as they would seem to be on the surface? It can now be shown that this is not the case, and that *pqd/paqādum* adds a highly significant detail to the census process. The essential clue is provided by the cuneiform sources.

It was previously mentioned in passing that the Mari census involved detailed written records. "Let the troops . . . be recorded on a tablet by name" (*šābum . . . šumišam lū šaṭer*) is a characteristic request (ARM I 42. 22-24; cf. 8-9). Indeed, *šābam šaṭārum* "to record the troops" may alternate with *šābam paqādum* (ARM III 21: 10-11: 19. 7). The *tēbibtum* calls for experienced scribes; cf. e. g., ARM I 7. 37-8: *u mārū<sup>pl</sup> edubbi*<sup>19</sup> *ummēnu ina qātīm šutamšū* "there are enough skilled scribes on hand"; the Chagar Bazar texts say the same thing repeatedly.<sup>20</sup> It follows, therefore, that in these census documents from Amorite centers *paqādum* has the technical sense of "to make note in writing, to conscript."<sup>21</sup> Nor can there be much doubt that in the parallel biblical passages *pqd* must be given the same specialized meaning. For definite confirmation we need look no further than the census passage in Numbers 4: 32. The text reads there *bēšēmōt tifqēdū*, which cannot mean anything but "you shall record by name," cf. Mari *šumišam lū šaṭer*. Therefore all the occurrences of *pqd* in the OT census passages can now be rendered simply, and significantly, "to record, enroll." Hence *pēqūdīm* becomes "the enrolled ones"; and the hitherto troublesome *'ōvēr 'al happēqūdīm* (Exod 30: 13, 14) emerges as "one who is entered among the enrolled."

With this demonstration of the special technical force of *pqd/paqādum* we have all that is needed to clear up the one major difficulty of the

<sup>19</sup> Not *gá-dub-bi* as given in the transliteration in ARM I, both on account of the Chagar Bazar parallels (see next note) and on internal grounds. The initial syllable could be read either *gá* or *é*, the actual difference between the two signs being very slight. But the preceding "sons of" goes with *edubba* "school" and not *GÁ*. DUB.BA/ *šadubba*, which signified a high administrative official, cf. B. Landsberger, JCS 9 (155), p. 125, n. 22. And this point is clinched here by the appended *ummēnū* "men of skill."

<sup>20</sup> DUMU.MEŠ *é-dub-bi*, Iraq 7, Nos. 971, 978, 990, 996; DUMU.MEŠ *um-me-ni*, Nos. 920, 988, 989, 995.

<sup>21</sup> A semantic parallel is provided by Akk. *ḥasāsum* "to think," *taḥsistum* "memorandum."



census texts, one which the respective biblical and cuneiform documents have in common, namely, their cultic connection. For under "the dramatic concept of nature"<sup>22</sup> which is known to us from Mesopotamia and is echoed in the Old Testament, the writing down of names could on certain occasions be a very ominous process. "In the House of Dust . . . [lives] Ereshkigal, Queen of the Nether World. [And Bēlit-]šēri, recorder of the nether world, kneels before her. [She holds a tablet] and reads out to her" (Gilg. VII iv 49-52). Further, "The Anunnaki, the great gods, foregather. Mammetum, maker of fate, with them the fates decrees: Death and life they determine. (But) of death, its days are not revealed" (Gilg. X vi 36-39). Thus, on periodic occasions, the higher powers made lists which determined who among the mortals was to live and who was to die.

Now, the same basic concept confronts us throughout the history of Jewish religious thought. Moses says to God: "Efface me, I pray Thee, from Thy book which Thou hast written," and God replies, "Him only who has sinned against Me will I efface from My book" (Exod 32: 32-33). According to the Mishna *Rosh ha-shana*, the mortals are judged by God on New Year's Day, passing before him in review like *troops*<sup>23</sup> (I 3). The appertaining liturgies carry this thought further. "On New Year's Day they are recorded, and sealed on the Day of Atonement: how many are to pass away and how many to be brought into being, who is to live and who is to die."<sup>24</sup> More relevant still is a passage from another old Jewish poem which refers to the same occasion: "On it are the creatures recorded (*yippāqēdū*), to assign them to life or to death."<sup>25</sup> We have here the technical verb *pqd* itself, in its special idiomatic sense, which tradition had somehow managed to hand down although the correct meaning of the corresponding biblical occurrences had long been lost.

To be sure, these are views relating especially to the New Year. But there are no compelling grounds for assuming that such ideas were always restricted to that one juncture. The two Gilgamesh passages, for instance, which were cited above, lack any reference to the cultic calendar. There must thus have been a time when the ancient Near Easterner shrank from the thought of having his name recorded in lists that might be put to unpredictable uses. Military conscription was an ominous process because it might place the life of the enrolled in jeopardy. The connection with the cosmic "books" of life and death must have been much too close for one's peace of mind. It would be natural in these circumstances to propitiate the unknown powers, or seek expiation as a general precaution. In due time, such a process would be normalized as a *tēbibtum* in Mesopotamia, and as a form of *kippūrīm* among the Israelites.

It should be borne in mind in this connection that the census reflected at Mari and Chagar Bazar on the one hand, and in the Old Testament

<sup>22</sup> Cf. H. and H. A. Frankfort, in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (1946), p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Reading *bnwmrwn* (*benūmrōn*), with Dalman, for the enigmatic traditional *bnēy mārōn* "lambs," cf. P. Fiebig's edition, p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> In the prayer *Unetanne toqef*, see *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

on the other, is not just a routine mustering process. In both instances it is linked to new land grants and relatively recent political structures. This may well be the reason why we hear nothing about such an institution elsewhere in Mesopotamia, or find no narrative account of it in the Bible after the time of David. Moreover, the "Amorite" states of Mesopotamia had many traditions and practices of their own. At any rate, the fear of enrollment was still so great there in Old Babylonian times that the census took its name from the incidental process of ritual "purification." And such fears would be kept alive by plagues, which must have decimated crowded camps more than once. With the passing centuries, however, society becomes resigned to the inevitable. Unwelcome as the census was in biblical times, it no longer called for a euphemistic designation. To be "called to account" was still something ominous, but not necessarily in a religious sense. The sole survival of older and more awesome concepts was the *kofer*, but by then this had taken the form of a routine monetary payment in the amount of a half of a shekel. Such incidents as the one recorded in II Samuel 24 were manifestly exceptional.

The Mari material has opened up many new vistas. Not a few of the disclosures have an important bearing on the Bible; and the Bible, in turn, may be in a position to reciprocate. When such a comparative treatment is justified, one has the opportunity of dealing, beyond mere words or texts, with the very roots of an integral civilization.

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## THE ASSYRIAN OPEN-COURT BUILDING AND ITS PALESTINIAN DERIVATIVES

RUTH B. K. AMIRAN and I. DUNAYEVSKY

The thesis advanced here is primarily twofold: a) That the type of building under consideration, called in literature by the very characteristic name "the open-court building," is foreign to Palestine; b) that once introduced it enjoyed quite a long and complicated history here, showing at least two distinct phases of development.

Though "A History of Architecture in Ancient Palestine" has not yet been written, the future author will find more than a few relevant chapters scattered throughout the various excavators' reports and general handbooks.<sup>1</sup> Long and detailed chapters have been devoted by Albright to very many architectural problems of city-walls, city-gates, and private and public buildings in his compactly written reports on the excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim.

Despite the statement made by the authors of *Megiddo*, Volume I, in reference to the two buildings which constitute the best examples of our type, that "this type of court building is common throughout the

<sup>1</sup> As for example, A. Barrois, *Manuel d'archéologie biblique*, I, 1938; S. Yeivin, article "Architecture" in the *Entsiqlopediya Miqra'it*, II, 1954 (in Hebrew); M. Avi-Yonah and S. Yeivin, *Qadmoniyot Arşenu*, 1956 (in Hebrew).