

The Native Land of the Nabataeans

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The classical sources could be considered the earliest sources dealing with the Nabataeans as an ethnic entity.¹ The name 'Nabataeans' was used by Diodorus of Sicily in his description of the two military campaigns launched by Antigonos against the Nabataeans, either in order to impel them not to form an alliance with the Ptolemies, who were their main competitor in controlling the Orient,² or due to the desire of Antigonos himself to take hold of the sources of Nabataean wealth.³ The first campaign aimed at conquering Petra ended in the defeat of his troops, which prompted Antigonos to launch a second campaign led by his son, Demetrius. But that campaign ended with the concluding of an agreement with the Nabataeans (or Barbarians as they were described by Antigonos when he learned about that agreement).⁴

After that event there is no information on the Nabataeans until the mid-second century BC, when Jewish sources depicted the then Nabataean leader, Aretas I (169–168 BC) as a tyrant.⁵

The Nabataeans emerged as a political and ethnic power playing a significant regional role until the Roman Emperor Trajan (AD 78–118) took his decision in AD 106 to annex the Nabataean Kingdom to the Roman Empire. It thus became an administrative province among other small regalities separating the Roman and Parthian empires, paving the way for the launch of his military campaigns against the Parthian Empire.⁶

However, the question is from where did these Nabataean Arab tribes originally come?⁷ Were they originally nomadic tribes who lived in that same region? Or were they migrating tribes who were forced by certain circumstances to quit their original place to settle in that region?

Some hold that they originated from Edom, while others hold that they originally came from northern Najd, namely from the Hā'il mountains. Some specialists hold that they originally came from the south of the Arabian Peninsula, while others think that their native land was north-eastern Arabia. Yet other researchers are of the opinion that they originated from central western Arabia.

The opinion holding that the Nabataeans originated from the Edom region or its eastern part is weak.⁸ Archaeological studies on the period between the sixth and fourth centuries BC (a period during which the political control of Edom was taken over by both the Chaldaean and Achaemenid empires, i.e. in 552–336 BC) provide no evidence of constant human settlement in Edom, which suggests a civilizational gap of several centuries between the Edomite remains (such as pottery and other relics) and the Nabataean ones in the first century BC (such as pottery).⁹

Studies conducted by Emory University on 148 sites in the Karak plateau indicated that there was no archaeological evidence of any late Persian presence (500–250 BC).¹⁰ Also, the archaeological survey made by Macdonald in al-Hessa Valley, Jordan, indicates that there were archaeological sites dating back to the Iron Age (Edomite) which were not used during the Persian era,¹¹ while the archaeological sites relating to the Nabataean era in the Edomite plateau date back to the first century BC.

The paucity of the archaeological findings related to the Achaemenid era is, according to Bartlett, a result of the fact that the Achaemenids had no interest in that area: their interest was focused on the Edomite mountains.¹² This leads us to think that the Achaemenids used the Syrian routes to connect the orient and occident. No significant interest was given by them to the roads crossing Edomite territories, which were left to nomad Arab tribes (settling between Gaza and Ienysus (? al-'Arish)). They assisted Cambyses' army (525 BC) when it crossed those territories on its way to Egypt.¹³ The Achaemenids rewarded such Arab tribes by exempting them from tribute payments. Thus, if the Nabataeans had originally been from Edom or its proximity, we should have at least found some continuity of Edomite civilization during the period. The Nabataeans, apart from continuing worship of the god Qaws (Qos), demonstrated over time different civilizational conceptions from those of the Edomites, who migrated to the north after the campaign of Nabonidus,¹⁴ leaving their territories to the new tribes (including the Nabataeans)¹⁵ whose early social and cultural conceptions indicate that they had no contact with the civilizational centres.

Some scholars hold that the south of the Arabian Peninsula is the native land of the Nabataeans.¹⁶ According to them, the Nabataeans migrated after the collapse of the Mārib Dam during the fifth century BC.¹⁷ The basis on

which they suggest that location is the similarity in some particular architectural aspects in the water system adopted by both the Nabataeans and the other tribes of Southern Arabia.

It should be noted here that the said water system does not refer to the systems which were extensively known in the Achaemenid era¹⁸ and existed in various areas of the Arabian Peninsula, such as al-Ḥasā',¹⁹ Najd (particularly site No. 212-63 in al-Ḥarj, and Layla whose waterways date back to the Hellenistic era),²⁰ and the Hijaz (particularly al-'Ulā, whose waterways, according to Nasif, also date back to the Hellenistic era).²¹

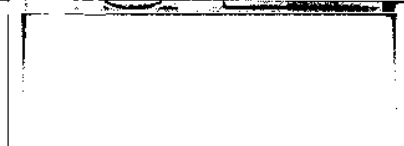
The similarity referred to here is that of water tanks used as reservoirs for rainfall water. The Nabataeans used to dig 100 × 100 ft tanks with relatively small top openings, fill them, conceal the opening and designate it with a particular mark known only to them.²² In Southern Arabia water tanks were generally rectangular or round, 20-130 ft in diameter, 13-26 ft in depth and with small openings. Some of them had stairs reaching down to the floor.²³

This is not sufficient evidence that the Nabataeans abandoned their supposed homeland in southern Arabia. If they had actually done so, they would have transferred with them other civilizational aspects, e.g. their writing system, as was done by the Minaean settlers who established settlements in al-'Ulā for trade purposes during the fourth century BC (i.e. in the period of Nabataeans).²⁴

Furthermore, archaeological findings of various Nabataean areas, such as architectural systems, artwork, decoration and pottery (which Peter Parr considered to be of Hellenistic origin²⁵) have no relation to those known in Southern Arabia. Therefore, the study of archaeological findings of both regions suggests that this opinion requires to be more clearly proved.

On the other hand, to hold that the Nabataeans were originally from northern or central-western Hijaz,²⁶ or emerged from the Qedar tribe²⁷ is not convincing. The Hijaz (particularly its northern areas) played a considerable trade role since the second millennium BC (a fact based on the studies of Peter Parr on the pottery of Qurayyah, located in the far north-west of the Hijaz, which dates back to the second millennium BC and demonstrates Egyptian influence).²⁸ However, the continuity of human settlement there is not clear.

Studies prove that there was no constancy of population in the beginning of the first millennium up to the beginning of the Assyrian intervention in the region in the seventh century BC, i.e. in the first three or four centuries of the first millennium BC.²⁹ In fact, Arab tribes started in this period to flow to settle in the region (Assyrians encouraging the Arab tribes to settle in Syria to prevent them from infiltrating into Mesopotamia),³⁰ and the trade routes between the North and the South (and to Egypt, Syria and



Mesopotamia) started to prosper, which prompted both Chaldaean and Achaemenid Empires to seek to control the strategic areas in the northern and north-western Arabian Peninsula (such as Dūmat al-Jandal, Taymā' and Dedan, etc.). The Achaemenid Empire took considerable interest in the trade route that linked the south to the north of the Arabian Peninsula.³¹

In fact, the non-existence of Achaemenid civilizational effects on the life of the tribes populating the region (apart from some few aspects, such as waterways) was due to the fact that the relationship between the tribes and the Achaemenids was strong enough for the Achaemenids to allow the local population to keep their own traditions. The Achaemenids were very tolerant in this respect.

The same thing was done by the Assyrians with some old Aramaean cities. Archaeological studies indicate that cities having independent and antagonistic tendencies against Assyria were more influenced by Assyrian effects than the Aramaean cities which unhesitatingly accepted Assyrian control and, therefore, were left free as far as their own local traditions were concerned.³² Similarly, the local population of the northern Hijaz was allowed by the Persians to keep on demonstrating its own traditions. However, this does not mean that there were no Achaemenid effects at all. Indeed, certain effects did exist in various aspects of life at important centres, such as al-'Ulā, which we shall see when effective archaeological excavations are made in the region.

Hence, saying that northern Hijaz is the native land of the Nabataeans is based in no significant scientific evidence. There is no evidence of constant settlement in that region during the period from the end of the first millennium BC to the seventh century. Besides, such regions as Dedan had during the sixth and fifth centuries BC a high level of civilization (based on the written evidence indicating the existence of a kingdom in Dedan before the decline of Babylonia and the intervention of the Achaemenids),³³ in contrast with what we already know of the nomadic society of the Nabataean Arabs in the fourth century BC and with saying that they are a part of the Qedar tribe.³⁴

Other scholars hold that the Hafūf area, in al-Ḥasā', was the homeland of the Nabataeans, based on the following:

1. J. Milik proposed that north-eastern Arabia was the Nabataean homeland, relying on the cult of the god Š'bw.³⁵
2. There is a hieroglyphic text on a cartouche found in the Amoun temple denoting Arabs as 'Haḡar'. 'Haḡar' is the old name of al-Hafūf. The Nabataeans were themselves already known as connected to the Hajarrians who played a trade role between the Arab Gulf and Egypt.



3. The linguistic similarity among the Arab groups which left Arabic inscriptions, known as proto-Arabic, found in Ur, Nippur, Uruk and Abū Ṣalabīḥ, as well as the Arabic inscriptions found with Aramaic and Nabataean ones in Tāj, al-Hafūf and 'Ayn Ġawān.³⁶

But these pieces of evidence unfortunately do not fit with what we already know of the early Nabataeans as described by classical writers. If the Nabataeans had an ethnic relation with the Hajarians, they would have shared with them the cultural conceptions they had acquired as a result of their contact with southern Mesopotamia, which had, as is known, a relationship with the Arab Gulf starting at the Early Dynastic period.³⁷ Also why did they not acquire with them the script which the Hajarians used in the inscriptions found in eastern Arabia (al-Ḥasā') and southern Mesopotamia?³⁸

All the above-mentioned theories fail because they neglect the fact that the Nabataeans in their early emergence tended more to nomadism than to civilization. The said theories relate them to civilizational centres far from nomadism.

To identify more accurately the native land of the Arab Nabataean tribes, we are of the opinion that we must take into consideration the information given in the classical sources and writings (e.g. Strabo whose information on them was drawn from his friend, the philosopher Athenodorus). They describe them in their beginnings in detail and provide us with much information on their traditions, customs and conceptions. An example is the description of their conditions at the beginning of the fourth century BC given by Diodorus of Sicily: 'It is their custom neither to plant grain, set out any fruit-bearing tree, use wine, nor construct any house, and if anyone is found acting contrary to this, death is his penalty. They follow this custom because they believe that those who possess things are, in order to retain the use of them, easily compelled by the powerful to do their bidding.'

This means that during that period the Nabataeans held on to nomadic conceptions. They detested anything that might lead to stabilization and settlement, such as building houses and engaging in agriculture. They were very fond of freedom and inured to the desert which they used as a refuge whither they resorted if they were attacked by an enemy—as when Antigonus waged his second campaign against them.³⁹

Therefore, they were nomad tribes and some political or natural circumstances forced them to abandon their native land which was certainly to the south of Dūmat, the land of the Qedar, during the sixth century BC, as mentioned by the Bible sources and as indicated by the inscription of Ashurbanipal who stated that he had reached a waterless remote area where he had fought the Nabataeans (see footnote 1). Youthā'e (Yathe'e),

the so-called King of the Arabs, ran away from the Assyrians to the South (south of Dūmat and Wadi al-Sirhān) where the Nabataeans' land existed, as it was the most remote desert place.⁴⁰

Accordingly, the native land of the Nabataeans (as mentioned in the Old Testament and Assyrian documents) is situated to the south of the Qedar territories, approximately the area between Hā'il and al-Qaṣīm, i.e. in the Northern Najd or, more specifically, the deserts situated to the north-east of al-Qaṣīm, where no water exists, nor bird lives.⁴¹

Notes and References

1. I am extremely grateful to Professor John Healey who read the draft of this article and made suggestions for its improvement.
We set aside for the moment the fact that some researchers believe that the *Na-ba-a-ti* mentioned in the Assyrian documents and Nebaioth mentioned in the Old Testament refer to the ancestors of the Nabataeans before their migration from their native land. For a discussion on the change of *t* to *ṭ* in Semitic inscriptions, see Abu Taleb, M., 1984, 'Nabayati, Nabayot, Nabayat and Nabtu: The Linguistic Problem Revised', *Dirāsāt* 11, 2–11. The possibility should also be taken into consideration that the writers of such differently pronounced forms for the word *nbṭ* did not know the Arabic language. This is a common mistake currently noted in the writings of western writers when they express the names of tribes and places in the Arab world, and vice versa. So, the writer might, by mistake, write *t* instead of *ṭ*.
2. While M. Mahrān mentions that the support of Ptolemaeus I (322–283) was the reason behind the campaign against Petra (see Mahrān, *Tārīḥ al-'Arab al-qadīm*, Alexandria, 1994, 317).
3. Jones, A.H.M., *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, Oxford, 1971, 232; Bartlett, J., 'From Edomites to Nabataeans: A Study in Continuity', *PEQ* (1979), 55; Bartlett, J., 'From Edomites to Nabataeans: the Problem of Continuity', *Aram* 2 (1990), 27; Knauf, E., 'The Persian Administration in Arabia', in H. Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History: Centre and Periphery. Proceedings of the Groningen, 1986, Achaemenid History Workshop*, Leiden, 1990, 202. But the reason that motivated Antigonos to take over Petra seems to have been that political stability would prevail in the region and life in its trade routes would, in turn, recover, which would lead to economic prosperity.
4. *Diodorus of Sicily*, translated by C.H. Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library, New York, 1933, 93, 105. For more information about the campaigns see Lawlor, J., *The Nabataeans in Historical Perspective*, Michigan, 1974, 31–3; Bowersock, G., *Roman Arabia*, Harvard, 1983, 12–4.
5. The title 'tyrant' is applied to Aretas I in the Book of Maccabees, see Ph. Hammond, *The Nabataeans, Their History, Culture and Archaeology*, Gothenburg, 1973, 107. See also al-Fāsī, H., *al-Ḥayāh al-iḡtimā'iyyah fī šamāl ḡarb šībḥ al-ḡazīrah al-'arabiyyah fī al-fatrah mā bayn al-qarn al-sādis qabl al-mīlād wa-al-qarn al-tāni al-mīlādī*, Riyadh, 1993, 168.

6. Mahrän, 334; Negev, A., 'The Nabataeans and the Provincia Arabia', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II Principat 8, Berlin, 1977, 640–2.
7. This point has been thoroughly discussed by J.F. Healey; see 'Were the Nabataeans Arabs?' *Aram* 1 (1989), 38–44.
8. Bartlett, *PEQ* (1979), 65.
9. Glueck, N., 'Explorations in Eastern Palestine', *ASOR* 15, 1935, 139. However, some specialists prolong the time period to extend from the sixth to the first centuries BC. See Hart, S., 'Survey and Soundings Between Tafleeh and Ras en-Naqb 1985', *Liber Annuus* 35 (1985), 412. The survey made by Mattingly in the Kerak Plateau proved that of the 150 sites dating back to the Iron Age only 18 remained up to the Persian period. See Mattingly, G., 'Settlement on Jordan's Kerak Plateau from Iron Age IIC through the Early Roman Period', *Aram* 2, 1990, 325. But what confirms the theory of Glueck is that Nabataean sites were established on many Edomite sites, which indicates two facts: first, the Nabataeans did not totally take over Edom in a short time, but settlement in Edom extended over a prolonged period of more than a century; second, the Nabataeans arrived in the region when it was almost vacant (see note 15). The absence of Nabataean archaeological relics in the area in the fourth to first centuries BC is, according to Bartlett, due to the fact that Nabataeans used timber and sheepskin instead of pottery. See Bartlett, *Aram* 2 (1990), 33.
10. Mattingly, *Aram* 2 (1990), 117.
11. Macdonald, B., *The Wadi el Hasa Archaeological Survey 1979–1983 West-Central Jordan*, Waterloo, Ontario, 1988, 191.
12. Bartlett, *Aram* 2 (1990), 28. Archaeological studies confirm that the Edomite mining in the southern Levant, mainly in the Feinan area, was active from the eighth century BC (see Bienkowski, P., 'The chronology of Tawilan and the Dark Age of Edom', *Aram* 2 (1990), 36). An ancient Jewish writer drew attention to the copper and iron mines in the Edom mountains in use until the fourth century BC (see Thackeray, H.J., *The Letter of Aristeas, translated into English with an Introduction and Notes*, London, 1904, 27).
13. Herodotus indicates that littoral Arab territories situated between Gaza and Ienysus did not pay taxes to the Persians (see Herodotus, *Historiae*, translated by A.G. Godley, London, Loeb Classical Library (1918), vol. 8, 88, 97). Eph'al, after interpreting the word *dōra* 'gifts' as a sort of tax, holds that the Arab kingdom between Gaza and al-'Arīš was established by the Achaemenids for customs purposes. The tribes collected taxes and custom duties in favour of the Achaemenid Empire. See *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on Borders of the Fertile Crescent 9th–5th Centuries B.C.*, Jerusalem, 1984, 207–8. This is improbable since the Achaemenids could have established Achaemenid squads to collect taxes and custom duties, particularly as they had better experience and competence than the Arabs of the area.
14. Occasionally researchers suggest that Edom was removed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, but others would deny it, because of the support given by the Edomites to Nebuchadnezzar during his campaign against Ammon and Moab (see Parr, P., 'Aspects of the Archaeology of North-West Arabia in the First Millennium B.C.', *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, ed. by T. Fahd, Leiden, 1989, 49.

15. The arrival of Nabataeans in the region seems to have occurred after the political decline of Edom. This decline resulted in economic disorder which forced them to migrate to the north, fleeing from the economic weakness that resulted from the war and the destruction of their capital, Bosra. Only very small numbers remained. This contradicts what is suggested by Hammond who states the Edomites lived under the despotic rule of the Nabataeans (see Bartlett, *Aram* 2 (1995), 33–4), which is improbable because if communities of farmers and shepherds, had remained, they would have influenced Nabataean civilization during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. The adhesion of the Nabataeans to the nomadic life up to the fourth century BC indicates that the Edomites left Edom before the arrival of the Nabataeans to the Edomite territories.
16. Glueck, N., *Deities and Dolphins*, New York, 1965, 4; Starcky, J., 'Pétra et la Nabatène', *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 7 (1966), 900–3.
17. Negev, *PEQ* (1976), 123, repeats the opinion of the Islamic historians, when they were dealing with the migrations of the Arabian tribes from southern Arabia after the collapse of the Mārib Dam.
18. For more information see English, W., 'The Origin and Spread of Qanats in the Old World', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112 (1968), 170–181.
19. Potts, D., 'Northeastern Arabia in the Later Pre-Islamic Era', *Arabie Orientale, Mésopotamie et Iran Méridionale de l'age du fer au début de la période islamique*, Paris (1984), 190–10.
20. Zarins, J. and others, 'Preliminary Report on the Survey of the Central Province 1978', *Atlat* 3 (1979), 28.
21. Nasif, A., 'Qanats at al-'Ula', *PSAS* 10 (1979), 76. His dating needs re-examining in the light of the other finds of this site.
22. Negev, *PEQ* (1976), 126. In another work, Negev did not rule out the possibility that these reservoirs or water tanks were developed by the Nabataeans during the times of the Babylonians or even the Assyrians; see Negev, A., *Nabataean Archaeology Today*, New York, 1986, 5.
23. Negev, *PEQ* (1976), 131.
24. For more information see al-Fāsi, 79–81; and for the Minaean settlements see Barbini, G., *Inscrizioni Sudarabiche, I: Inscrizioni Minee*, Naples, 1974, nos: 247, 392, 398.
25. Parr, P., 'The Nabataeans and North-West Arabia', *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology* 8–9 (1968–9), 252.
26. Parr, *BIA* 8–9 (1968–9), 250–3; Healey, J.F., 'The Nabataeans and Madā'in Šālih', *Atlat* 10 (1986), 109.
27. Knauf, E.A., 'Nabataean Origins', in *Arabian Studies in Honour of M. Ghul*, 1984, ed. by M. Ibrahim, Wiesbaden (1989) 57–61. Qedar is an Arab tribe which emerged in the seventh century BC when they were defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and later by Ashurbanipal. Their territories extended from Dūmat in the east to the coasts of the Red Sea in the west, and north to Gaza and Sinai. They used Aramaic in their inscriptions.
28. Parr concludes that the trade route between Taymā' and Qurayyah originating from the south of the Arabian Peninsula was utilized at that time, and that Egypt took its share of incense and perfumes before the 13th century BC. See Parr,



- L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel* (1989), 42. But this is improbable, since the commercial roads did not flourish (according to the archaeological studies) except during the first millennium BC. And because the continuity of human settlement in the Yemen is not clear during the second millennium BC, it is not clear that Egypt took its share of incense and perfumes during the 13th century (see Sauer, J., Blakely, J., 'Archaeology along the Spice Route of Yemen', in *Araby the Blest, Studies in Arabian Archaeology*, ed. by D. Potts, Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Copenhagen (1988), 91–115).
29. Adams, R. et al, 'Preliminary Report on the First Phase of the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey Program', *Atlat* 1 (1977), 36.
 30. Against Parr, who believes that the Assyrians encouraged the Arabian tribes to settle in Syria in order that these tribes would protect the commercial routes (see *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, 1989, 44).
 31. The Achaemenid control of al-'Ulā could be indicated by the word *fh*, 'governor' (see Winnett, F., Reed, W., *Ancient Records From North Arabia*, Toronto (1970), 115–7; Winnett, F., *A Study of the Lihyanite and Thamudic Inscriptions*, Toronto (1937), 50–1). Al-Ansary has a different opinion from Winnett. He maintains that *fh* means 'digging canals and wells' (see al-Fāsī, 164, n. 13), which we rule out, since the only logical interpretation is the meaning given above. Bartlett thinks that there were Achaemenid rulers in Edom and Moab, because of the established evidences for the existence of Achaemenid rule in both al-'Ulā (Dedan) and Judah. See Bartlett, *PEQ* (1979), 59.
 32. Frankfort, H., *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, Harmondsworth, 1954, 166.
 33. Parr, *L'Arabie préislamique* (1989), 51.
 34. This is in any case difficult to prove (see 'Abbās, I., Abū Ṭālib, M., *Samāl al-ḡazīrah al-'arabiyyah fī al-'ahd al-'āsūrī*, Ammān, 1991, 25).
 35. Milik, J., 'Origines des Nabatéens', in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 1, ed. by A. Hadidi, Amman, 1982, 261–5, Milik holds that their location was Mutayer in south-eastern Kuwait. The god Š'bw is identified according to Graf as the fortune deity of the Nabataeans (see Graf, D., 'The Origin of the Nabataeans', *Aram* 2 (1990), 46).
 36. Graf, *Aram* 2 (1990), 45–75. Millar described Graf's conclusion as a conjecture (see Millar, F., *The Roman Near East 31 B.C.–337 A.D.*, London, 1993, 401, n. 101).
 37. Dayton, J., 'Herodotus, Phoenicia, the Persian Gulf and India in the First Millennium BC', in *Arabie Orientale, Mésopotamie et Iran Méridionale*, 1984, 363.
 38. There is still controversy about the classification of these inscriptions discovered in southern Mesopotamia and in al-Ḥasā' written in Monumental South Arabian script. For a brief review of these opinions, see Potts, D., 'Thāḡ in the Light of Recent Research', *Atlat* 7 (1983), 89–90; Potts, *L'Arabie orientale Mésopotamie et Iran Meridionale* (1984), 113–8. Al-Badir points to the interchange of influence between Sind and the civilizational centres of the Arabian Gulf, though he mentions no archaeological evidences to confirm this (see al-Badir, A., 'Makān al-ḥaliḡ al-'arabi fī ḥaḡarat al-šarq al-'adnā al-qadīm', in *Scientificallly Arbitrated*

- Bulletin of Researches in Geography*, published jointly by the Geography Department of Kuwait University and the Kuwait Geographic Society (1981), 13.
39. Negev, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II* (1977), 524; 'Abbās, I., *Tārīḥ dawlat al-anbāt*, Amman (1987), 29–30.
 40. Al-Hāshimī, R., 'al-'Arab fī ḡaw' al-maṣādir al-mismāriyyah', *Faculty of Arts Journal* 18, Baghdad University, 654, 657, 659. For details on such inscriptions and for further information see Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, 416–51. Bartlett maintains that the location where there was no water or birds is not far from Damascus (see Bartlett, *PEQ* (1979), 64) but this contradicts the presumption that they lived in the south Qedar territories. Also, to the south-east of Damascus there are no oases suitable for settlement.
 41. W. Albright believes that Ḥā'il was the native land of the Nabataeans (see 'The Biblical Tribe of Massa and some Congeners', *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* I, Rome (1956), 12), a view supported by Winnett (see Winnett, Reed, *Ancient Records*, 100).