



BERLIN STATUE PEDESTAL RELIEFS 21687 AND 21688: ONGOING RESEARCH

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In *JAIE* 2:4 (2010), 15-25 we published our findings on the Berlin pedestal relief 21687.¹ It was argued that the fragmentary topographical list contains three name rings of which the left and central ones can be read clearly as Ashkelon and Canaan. The third name ring, of which almost half is missing due to secondary use, is more difficult to decipher, however. Nevertheless, our investigations confirmed that Manfred Görg's suggestion made in 2001, that the name could be read as *i[3]-š3-ir* (= I/e-ša'-El or I/e-šar-El = Yašar-El/Israel), has much to

commend it. But our examination of the relief, as well as of relief ÄM 21688 (only briefly discussed in the article) has continued since our publication in 2010.

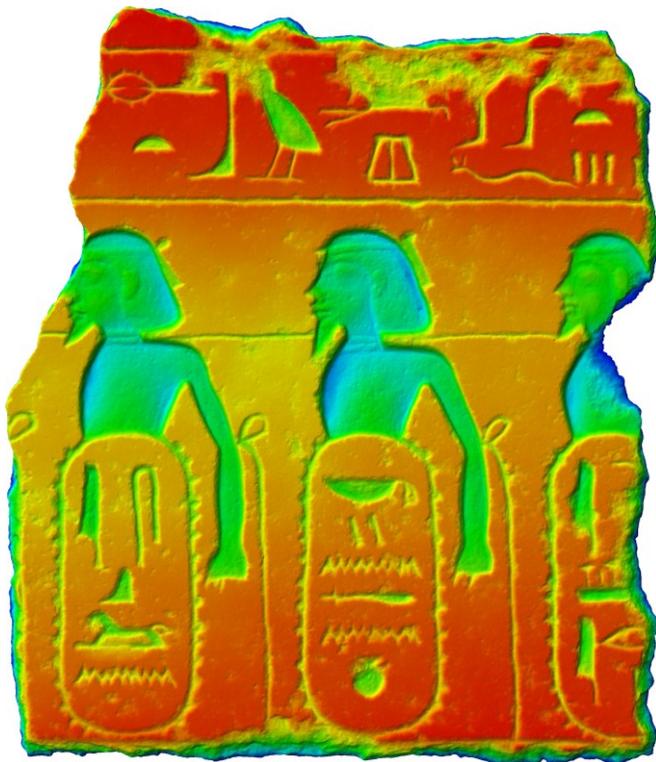


Figure 1: Scanned height image of ÄM 21687 (TrigonArt 2011; © Arbeitsgruppe für Biblische Archäologie, Germany). It depicts the contours of the individual hieroglyphs in all name rings more clearly. See especially the outer body contours of the “vulture hieroglyph” at the fracture line to the right.



Figure 2: New reconstruction drawing of the third name ring based on the available 3 D scans and the cast made of the original. The simplified representation of the vulture hieroglyph is largely based on the vulture depicted in the bottom row of the central name ring on ÄM 21688, which was bought by Ludwig Borchardt together with ÄM 21687 and is believed to have derived from a related context.

3-D laser scanning was undertaken in July 2011 by TrigonArt/Bauer-Praus GmbH, Berlin, which produced important additional information on the third name ring, as well as on the very damaged left name ring of ÄM 21688. It proved positively that the “beak-like” feature in the top row of ÄM 21687 was indeed *engraved* and hence was part of an original hieroglyph, either (most preferably so) of the 3-vulture (G 1), or alternatively of an M 23 *šw*-plant, or a U 33 *t*-pestle.² This was also confirmed by plasticine impressions taken in November 2011. Moreover, depth and height images of the stone, as well as casts produced after scanning, suggested that the fracture line at the top right follows the outer contours of a neck and belly, most likely those of the G 1 vulture. Similar breakages can also be seen in the band of hieroglyphs above the three prisoners. The “claw”-like feature vaguely visible to the lower right of the flowering reed (M 17), could now also be recognized more easily. Its shallowness may be due to the fact that the surface is very worn in this area. We plan to have the name ring re-scanned in search of possible traces of colouring, so as to establish with more certainty the precise nature of the relevant hieroglyph. It has been argued by some,³ that the first row (when the width of the name ring is reconstructed on the basis of that of the other two name rings)

could not possibly have contained the width of a full vulture hieroglyph. Closer examination of topographical name rings with similar bird figures sharing company with other hieroglyphs in the same row, however, reveal that their sizes can vary considerably, simply to “make them fit” the available space.⁴ Despite any remaining questions, the reading *i/3]-š3-ir* (= I/e-ša-El or I/e-šar-El = Yašar-El/Israel) still seems to be the most conclusive reconstruction by far of what can be seen on the relief.⁵

As for the left name ring of ÄM 21688, the following remains of hieroglyphs could be detected after scanning: a long vertical sign (perhaps a *h3*, M12) and part of what appears to be a D 21 mouth hieroglyph. Görg has proposed the reading *h3-r/l-b(w)* (= Aleppo) for this name ring, but his reconstruction must remain tentative. His most recent suggestions have now been published.⁶ While I agree with his approximate attribution of both reliefs to the reign of Amenhotep II (based especially on name renderings, such as that of Canaan (most probably to be reread as “Canaanites,” a term so far only attested under this Pharaoh)), I disagree with his speculation that the name “Israel” (reread by him as “Aschir-El”) was derived from the verb “to sing.”⁷

NOTES

¹ For a popular report on our reading and its consequences see H. Shanks, “When Did Ancient Israel Begin?,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38:1 (2012), 59-62, 67.

² This issue was raised by some, who sought to maintain the older suggested reading Yašup-Il. But this is not possible. All attestations of that name have the double flowering reed (M17). Personal communication with Dagmar Stockfisch, University of Mainz, June 2011. Also no evidence of a “p” (Q 3) is found anywhere on the relief, neither to the right of š3 (M 8) nor beneath it.

³ Especially so by Daniel Martens of Berlin University, email exchanges, October 17, 2011. Martens went to see the original relief on one occasion.

⁴ For instance E. Edel and M. Görg, *Die Ortsnamenlisten im nördlichen Säulenhof des Totentempels Amenophis' III., Ägypten und Altes Testament* 50 (Wiesbaden:

Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), from left to right: Pls. 2 (top: 2nd name), 5 (bottom: 3rd name), 8 (center: 5th name), and especially so Pl. 11 (top: 1st name).

⁵ A conclusion also reached by Dr. Stefan Wimmer, pers. communication, October 2012.

⁶ Especially see Manfred Görg, “Weitere Beobachtungen und Aspekte zur Genese des Namens ‘Israel,’” *Biblische Notizen NF* 154 (2012), 57-68; “Die Fremdnamen des Fragments Ägyptisches Museum Berlin 21688,” *Göttinger Miszellen* 234 (2012), 61-64.

⁷ The recurrent use of M 17 and G 1 together, for instance as initial *aleph* of “El” or “Ilu” in New Kingdom geographical and personal names, shows quite clearly that the first row can be read as both *ē* or *i*.

* Manfred Görg died on September 17, 2012. His death is a great loss to us all.