

# The Jerahmeelites and the Negeb of Judah

GERSHON GALIL

University of Haifa

Who were the Jerahmeelites and what do we know about their origins? On the one hand, the genealogies in 1 Chronicles indicate that they were not only an integral part of the tribe of Judah but one of the most central and “Israelite” clans of the tribe. Their ancestor is presented as the “firstborn” of Hezron, who was the first son of Perez, son of Judah (1 Chron. 2:5, 25). Yet, on the other hand, the prevalent opinion is that “the Jerahmeelite, similar to the Kenite, was originally one of the nomadic tribes in the fringe of the land of Judah, and was annexed to the tribe of Judah only during the course of the latter’s settlement.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first part of this article various aspects of the genealogy in 1 Chron. 2:25–33 are reexamined: form, function, and socio-political and geographical features. The second part examines the toponym “Negeb of Judah” in relation to the origins and the history of the Jerahmeelites.

## I

The Jerahmeelites are mentioned in a few Biblical and extra-Biblical sources. The most important source is the segmented genealogy of the sons of Jerahmeel in 1 Chron. 2:25–33. This list enumerates six sons of Jerahmeel, and his descendants to the eighth generation. Along with this list, 1 Chron. 2:34–41 contains a list of the forefathers of Elishama, who traces his lineage to Jerahmeel through the daughter of Sheshan and his Egyptian slave Jarha. The two lists differ in form and function. The first is segmented, while the second is linear. According to the first, Sheshan had a son named Ahlai (2:31), while the second maintains that Sheshan had no sons, only daughters (2:34). The first begins and concludes with the formula: “The sons of Jerahmeel were” (25) . . . “These were the descendants of Jerahmeel” (33), but the second list is not included within this frame. It is therefore clear that the second list is a late addition that was appended to the early source to which the first list belongs. The two lists reflect different periods and they are to be examined separately.<sup>2</sup>

---

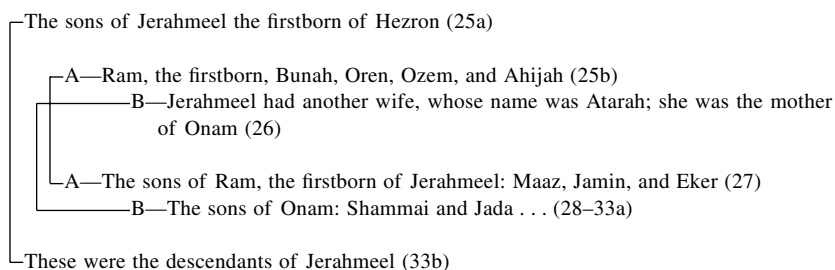
1. J. Liver, “Jerahmeel, Jerahmeelite,” *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Jerusalem, 1958), 3.861 [in Hebrew]; E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle, 1906), 402; M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 3rd ed. (Goettingen, 1950), 181–82; S. Herrmann, *Geschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (Muenchen, 1973), 82, 103; R. de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (London, 1978), 747. In Meyer’s opinion the Jerahmeelites were annexed to Judah only in the Persian period.

2. For earlier discussions of the genealogies of the Jerahmeelites, see J. Wellhausen, *De Gentibus et Familiis Judaeis quae 1 Chr. 2. 4. enumerantur* (Th. Diss. Goettingen, 1870), 18–19, 24–26; M. Noth, “Eine Siedlungsgeographische Liste in 1 Chr. 2–4,” *ZDPV* 55 (1932), 97–124; G. Galil, *The Genealogies of the Tribe of Judah* (Ph. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1983), 31–47, 235–39 [in Hebrew];

The Jerahmeelites are mentioned in two additional Biblical texts: 1 Sam. 27:10 speaks of “the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,” after the “Negeb of Judah” and before the “Negeb of the Kenites,” and 1 Sam. 30:29 mentions the “towns of the Jerahmeelites” before the “towns of the Kenites” in the list of the cities and the areas to which David sends his spoils, in order to draw them closer to him and to establish his monarchy over Judah.

The Jerahmeelites and their settlements are most probably also mentioned in a hieroglyphic inscription of Shishak, King of Egypt, that is engraved in the southern entrance to the temple of Amon at Karnak. This list includes about 150 toponyms that were captured by Shishak during his campaign to the Land of Israel ca. 925 B.C.E. “Arad Beth Yrhm,” which is mentioned in this inscription (nos. 110–12), is identified as Arad of the Jerahmeelites, and the names *Fltm*, *Yrhm*, and *Ann* (nos. 121, 139, 140) are identified with Jerahmeel, Onam (his son), and Peleth (a descendant of Onam), who are mentioned in the genealogy in 1 Chron. 2:25–33.<sup>3</sup>

The genealogy of the Jerahmeelites in 1 Chron. 2:25–33 contains clear structural signs: it opens and concludes with opening and concluding patterns (25a; 33b), and the body of the list is composed with a unique structure in which are listed alternately the first sons of Jerahmeel (A) and the sons of Atarah, Jerahmeel’s other wife (B):



This genealogy describes the organization of the Jerahmeelite families in a given period of time. It is also indicative, however, of earlier and complex processes in the annals of the family, and possibly also of its origins. The Jerahmeel family is divided into two main genealogical branches: (a) Ram, his sons, and his brothers, and (b) the descendants of Onam son of Atarah. In contrast with Ram and his brothers,

R. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, 1986), 45–46; M. Kartveit, *Motive and Schichten der Landtheologie in 1 Chronik 1–9* (Stockholm, 1989), 46ff.; M. Oeming, *Das Wahre Israel*, BWANT 128 (Stuttgart, 1990), 102ff.; S. Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, 1993), 82ff.; W. Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles: Vol. 1: 1 Chronicles 1–2 Chronicles 9: Israel’s Place among the Nations*, JSOT Supp. 253 (Sheffield, 1997), 50ff.

3. B. Mazar, “The Campaign of Pharaoh Shishak to Palestine,” in J. Liver, ed., *The Military History of Israel in Biblical Times* (Tel Aviv, 1964), 187 [in Hebrew] = idem, “Pharaoh Shishak’s Campaign to the Land of Israel,” in S. Ahituv and B. A. Levine, eds., *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (Jerusalem, 1986), 148–49; Y. Aharoni, *The Land of The Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A. F. Rainey, rev. ed. (London, 1979), 328; K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)*, (Warminster, 1973), 439–41; cf. S. Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1984), 60, 65, 93–94, 202.

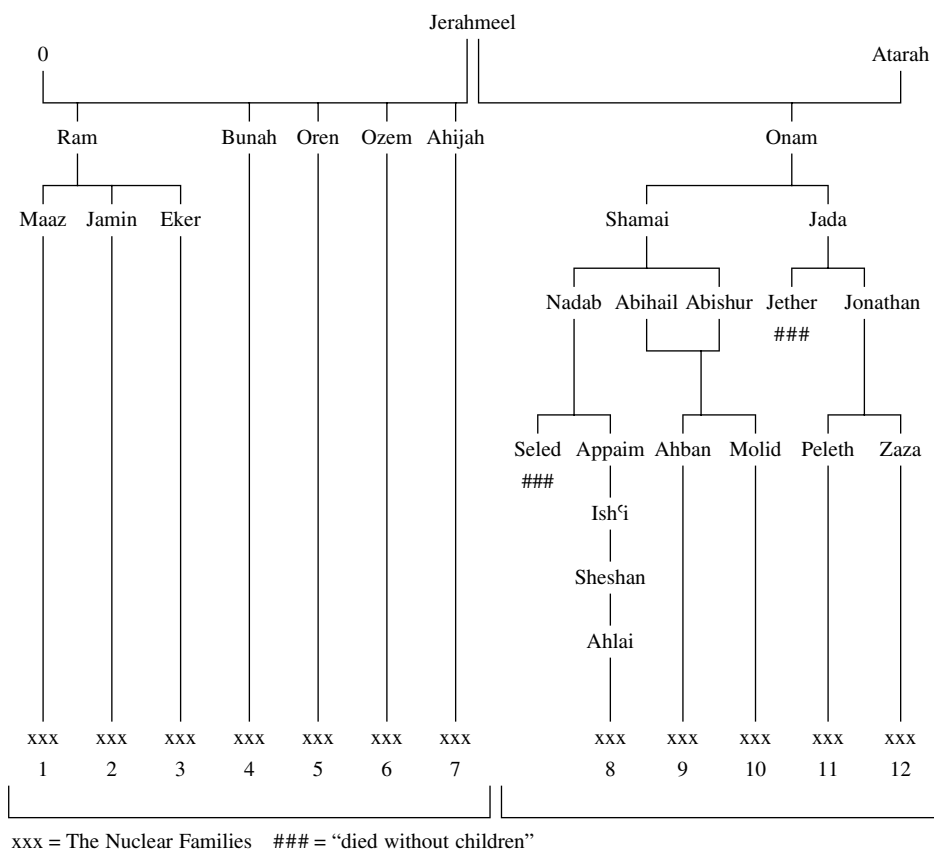
Onam's lineage is from Atarah, who is called "another wife." This appellation most probably means that the descendants of Onam did not fundamentally belong to the Jerahmeelites, but were appended to this family. As opposed to the initial nature of the family, which was West-Semitic (see the names of the members of the first four "generations," and especially those of the first sons of Jerahmeel), some of the descendants of Onam bear Hurrian names (Sheshan, Peleth, and possibly also Zaza).<sup>4</sup> The terms "the firstborn" and "the firstborn of Jerahmeel" are applied to the brothers and sons of Ram, attesting to the senior status enjoyed by his descendants. The appellation "another wife" may convey something of the status of the descendants of Atarah, on the other hand, namely, that their rights were not equivalent to those of their brothers, the descendants of Ram and his brothers; and that they do not possess their landholding in their own right but rather are under the protection of their "brothers," who, according to this conception, are the legitimate heirs of Jerahmeel. It is they who may lay claim to the family landholding or the pasture land of the family.

The formula "X died childless" may be understood to indicate the dissolution of previous ties and the disappearance of the extended family, with the annexation of its nuclear families to other clans. The author of the genealogies did not record annals, but rather composed them for everyday needs: the past is mentioned solely in order to impart legitimacy to the present. It may therefore be assumed that the family of Jerahmeel comprised at that time at least twelve kinship groups, of which seven traced their lineage from Ram, his sons, and his brothers, and five from Onam (see the table below). Three groups trace their lineage to the sons of Ram: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker, and four to his brothers: Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah/m. Among the descendants of Onam, the lineage of three is attributed to his son Shammai, through Ahlai, Ahban, and Molid, and of two to Jada, through Peleth and Zaza. The exact number of genealogical groups cannot be determined, since we do not know whether the intermediate genealogical segments (such as: Sheshan, Ish'i, Shammai, and others) were only genealogical factors that linked these kinship groups, or whether there were extended families who traced their lineage to them, not by means of the twelve kinship groups mentioned above.

The genealogy in 1 Chron. 2:25–33 does not include the names of any cities, in contrast to the other genealogies in 1 Chronicles 2, 4, and in especially marked contrast to the list in 1 Chron. 2:42–50a, which, scholars concur, was taken from the same source from which the Chronicler derived the list of the Jerahmeelites. The exclusion of cities from this list led scholars to put forth the highly likely supposition that in the period reflected in the list the Jerahmeelites were seminomadic, in contrast with the Calebites, who were permanent dwellers in the hill country.<sup>5</sup> The reference to "the 'towns' (*‘ārîm*) of the Jerahmeelites" (1 Sam. 30:29) does not suffice to alter this hypothesis. The anonymous wording "the towns of the Jerahmeelites," without specifying their names, attests that the intent is not to actual cities, similar to the other cities mentioned in that list, such as Hebron and others, but is rather a

4. For a detailed discussion of the names mentioned in the genealogy of Jerahmeel, see Galil, *The Genealogies*, 33–39.

5. Wellhausen, *De Gentibus*, 24–26; de Vaux, *The Early History*, 537.



general reference to Jerahmeelite settlements. The term *‘ārîm* as used in the Bible also may refer to nomadic encampments, as in: “Are the towns (*he‘ārîm*) they live in open (*ha-bemaḥānîm*, i.e., encampments) or fortified” (Num. 13:19). This testimony is supported by the mention of *Yrhm*, *Ann*, and *Fltm* in the list of Shishak. These names seemingly refer to the region inhabited by this family; in consequence, the same name was applied to the people and the territory. These appellations indicate that the members of the family unit and its landholdings were regarded as a single entity, regardless of the origin of the name: either in the name of the (real or fictitious) father of the tribe, or in the ancient name of the area in which the tribesmen settled.

The firstborn status enjoyed by the Jerahmeelites among the offspring of Hezron, which is reflected in the description of their father as “the firstborn of Hezron,” is surprising, because the family of Caleb was seemingly the largest and most important of the families of Judah at that time, and certainly so after the lineage of the descendants of Hur was attributed to it as well. Two possible resolutions of this difficulty may be suggested: (1) the description is reflective of an earlier period in Judahite history; during that time, the Jerahmeelites were the strongest and largest

of the families of Hezron (cf., e.g., the status of the tribe of Reuben); (2) the standing of the nomadic Judahites was higher than that of the permanent dwellers; this assumption may reflect the nomadic nature of the descendants of Judah in the early period.

The depth of the Jerahmeelites genealogical list is not uniform; it ranges between two and eight generations. This lack of uniformity would seem not to teach of the disappearance of the units whose progeny are mentioned only to the second and third generation (such as, for example, the descendants of Ram and his brothers), for it is not said that they died childless—in contrast to what is specified regarding Seled or Jether. Similarly, we are not to ascribe special significance to the excessive ramification of the sons of Onam, and this does not necessarily indicate the size of this branch. We should rather surmise that the author required this ramified expression because of the complexity of the relationships between these families of Onam. Likewise, the list gives expression to the exceedingly complex processes of ramification and assimilation, of division and unification, the details of which we might never know with certainty because of the vast number of possibilities and our inability, at present, to distinguish between the mention of natal formation and that of the centripetal annexation of extended families to the early clan nucleus.

B. Mazar presumed that Zabad son of Ahlai, who is mentioned as one of David's valiant warriors (1 Chron. 11:41), was included among the Jerahmeelites, that is, among the kinship group of Ahlai (among the descendants of Shammai son of Onam).<sup>6</sup> This ostensible hypothesis is likely to support the view that the list of the Jerahmeelites reflects the end of the settlement period and the beginning of the monarchy, because the father of Zabad, Ahlai (or the ancient forefather of the family), is mentioned in the genealogy of Jerahmeel in the last "generation," while Zabad is not mentioned in it. It might also be possible to explain in a similar manner verse 31, which exceeds the context of the lineage of the offspring of Onam: it enumerates in a linear list the genealogy of the sons of Ahlai. The special interest exhibited by the author in the kinship group of Ahlai might possibly not be coincidental.

The names of some of the Jerahmeel families also appear in the genealogies of other families and tribes. Such a phenomenon might suggest, *inter alia*, a possible affinity of origin between the Jerahmeelites and the neighboring Calebites (Shammai), the sons of Simeon (Jamin), and the sons of Seir the Horite (Onam, and possibly also Aran). Nothing may be stated with certainty on this point, except for emphasizing the general phenomenon already noted by scholars, namely, that the members of the same family have their lineage traced to different tribes or subtribes, depending upon the place where they dwell. This situation resulted from complex and prolonged settlement processes. It is conceivable that the offspring of a few families possessed a dual "identity card," one reflecting their origin, and the other, the new reality in which they found themselves at the conclusion of the settlement process, or during its course. Compare the origin of Hiram: "King Solomon sent for Hiram and brought him down from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a Tyrian" (1 Kgs. 7:13–14). The text in

---

6. B. Mazar, "The Military Elite of King David," in S. Ahituv and B. A. Levine, eds., *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (Jerusalem, 1986), 96, n. 63.

Chronicles, however, indicates that he came from the tribe of Dan: “the son of a Danite woman, his father a Tyrian” (2 Chron. 2:13).

Our attempt to determine the region of the Jerahmeelites is aided by the references: “the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites” (1 Sam. 27:10) and “the towns of the Jerahmeelites” (30:29), and by the names Arad Beth *Yrhm*, *Fltm*, *Yrhm*, and *Ann* mentioned in the list of Shishak (nos. 110–12, 121, 139, 140). These references reflect clearly an association of the Jerahmeelites with the Negeb.

Israelite Arad is mentioned in Josh. 15:21 in the corrupted version “Eder” (but in the Septuagint: Arad) and in the Arad ostraca (nos. 24:12; 48:1; 99). It is identified with Tell Arad, 9 km. northwest of the modern city of Arad, which was apparently also the location of the Arad *Rbh* (“the great”) mentioned in the Shishak inscription.<sup>7</sup> It is commonly assumed that the Arad Beth *Yrhm/Yrhmel* is located in proximity to Tell Arad, and that in some manner each of these names influenced the other (whether Arad received its name because of its association with Arad Beth *Yrhm*, or whether Arad Beth *Yrhm* was so called because of its connection with Arad *Rbh*). Their territorial proximity is also to be gathered from their textual juxtaposition in the list of Shishak. It is additionally commonly accepted that the Kenites were connected with Arad (*Rbh*), as is shown by Judg. 1:16: “The descendants of the Kenite, the father-in-law of Moses, went up with the Judites from the City of Palms to the wilderness of Judah; and they went and settled among the people in the Negeb of Arad.” It would therefore seem that the Biblical pair “the towns of the Jerahmeelite” and “the towns of the Kenite” that is also mentioned in the formulation “the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites” and “the Negeb of the Kenites” may be compared with the pair appearing in the Shishak inscription: “*Hgrym*, Arad *Rbh*, and Arad Beth *Yrhm*.”

The list of the cities of Simeon (Joshua 19; 1 Chronicles 4) indicates that the Beer-sheba region was settled by the descendants of Simeon. Likewise, the mention of the term “the Negeb of Caleb” (1 Sam 30:14) alludes that the Madmannah area was Calebite. The region of the Jerahmeelites may therefore be determined in the area between Arad and Beer-sheba, bounded on the north by Calebite territory, on the east by the Kenites, and to the west by Simeonite land.<sup>8</sup>

Scholarly opinion is divided regarding the identification of Arad Beth *Yrhm* that appears in the Shishak inscription, and that of Canaanite Arad that is mentioned in Num 21:1; 33:49 and in Josh 12:14. It is not clear whether Canaanite Arad is to be identified with Arad *Rbh*, or with Arad Beth *Yrhm*; some scholars have even questioned the accepted view that Canaanite Arad was a city. This difficulty is intensified in light of the absence of archaeological finds from the Late Bronze Age in the Beer-sheba Valley, despite the many surveys and excavations conducted in this area. A

---

7. For the identification of the fort of Arad “the Great” with Tell ‘Arad, see Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms*, 66. For the untenable suggestion to read *haqal* (= field) instead of *hagar* (= fort), see J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, 1994), 235–37. ‘Arad Rabba seems to be the name of a city or a fort and not of a field.

8. For the possibility that the Jerahmeelites dwell not only in the northern Negeb, but also near Bir Rahama and Wadi Rahama, which are located between Kurnub and Biyar-‘Aslug, see F. M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* (Paris, 1933), 1.273–74.

number of suggested resolutions of this problem have been raised. Aharoni proposed identifying Canaanite Arad (which, in his opinion, following the Israelite settlement, was called: "Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel") with Tell Malhata, which is situated approximately 12 km. to the southwest of Tell Arad.<sup>9</sup> Mazar is of the opinion that the name Arad in the Canaanite period was not the name of a city, but rather of a region.<sup>10</sup> Mazar compares the term "the Negeb of Arad" (Judg. 1:16) with the terms "the Negeb of Caleb" and others, and he links Arad with 'Irada, a descendant of Cain (Gen. 4:17–18). He further maintains that Arad Beth *Yrhm* is to be identified with Kh. Kseife, 6 km. to the southwest of Tell Arad and approximately 6 km to the northeast of Tell Malhata, which he identifies with Hormah.

The identification of Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel with Tell Malhata is the most plausible, and is consistent both with the literary sources and with the archaeological data. Excavations were conducted at Tell Malhata in 1967 and 1971 by M. Kochavi. The site was settled in the Middle Bronze Age IIB, and was destroyed in the sixteenth century B.C.E., apparently by the Egyptians. The area remained desolate for more than five hundred years, and was rebuilt only in the tenth century B.C.E., becoming the largest settlement in the Beer-sheba Valley at the time. The settlement was devastated in the late tenth century, most probably during the campaign of Shishak, but was rebuilt in the ninth century, and continued to exist until its destruction in the sixth century B.C.E., in the late First Temple Period.<sup>11</sup>

It may therefore reasonably be assumed that in the late eleventh century B.C.E., in the time of Saul and the beginning of the time of David, Jerahmeelite families lived in the Tell Malhata region, in tent encampments or in temporary structures that the Bible terms "the towns of the Jerahmeelites." During the reign of David or of Solomon a royal citadel was erected on this location, which was known as "Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel." The name "Arad" was seemingly borrowed from nearby Arad, which was called "Arad *Rbh*" to distinguish it from the new Arad. The name of the settlement at Tell Malhata in the Middle Bronze Age IIB has not been determined, nor that of the settlement that existed at Tell Arad in the Early Bronze Age II. Tell Arad may already have been called Arad in the Early Bronze Age II, but in light of the fact that this site lay desolate for about 1,700 years, it is not inconceivable that the name Arad is a new one, given to the site only upon the renewal of the settlement at Tell Arad in the eleventh century B.C.E.

The distinction between "Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel" and the names *Yrhm*, *Ann*, and *Fltm* in the Shishak inscription allows for the possibility that Jerahmeelite families also resided in other areas of the Negeb and the Negeb hill country.

In the eighth century B.C.E., when the city list of the Negeb of Judah in Joshua 15 was most likely composed (or in the seventh century, during the revision of this list), the name "Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel" was no longer known. The passage enumerates a number of cities which should be located in the "Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," including Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor-hadattah, and Kerioth-hezron, that

9. Aharoni, *The Land*, 329.

10. B. Mazar, *Canaan and Israel: Historical Essays* (Jerusalem, 1974), 123–24 [in Hebrew].

11. For the excavations in Tel Malhata, see M. Kochavi, "Malhata, Tel," in E. Stern, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (New York, 1993), 3.934–36.

is, Hazor. The name “Ziph” may possibly be preserved in Kh. el-Mazbah or Kh. Kseife, and Bealoth is probably Baalath-beer, which, in our opinion, is to be identified with Tell Masos. The name “Hazor” is new, as is indicated both by the wording “that is,” and by the explicit mention of Hazor-hadattah, that is to say, the new Hazor, which is none other than (i.e., it was called in the past) Kerioth-hezron. The meaning of the name Kerioth-hezron is “the cities of Hezron,” with a patent connection to the family of Hezron. Morphologically, this name accordingly resembles the wording “the towns of the Jerahmeelites.” Since the Jerahmeelites were among “the sons of Hezron,” we cannot categorically reject the possibility that these two expressions refer to the same place, namely, the Jerahmeelite center that in the eleventh century was given the general name “the towns of the Jerahmeelites,” and in the center of which the city “Arad Beth *Yrhm*/Jerahmeel” was founded in the tenth century B.C.E. It is quite plausible that the place was known in the eighth or seventh century B.C.E. by its general appellation “Kerioth-hezron” (= Hazor = the new Hazor).

## II

The hypothesis that the Jerahmeelites were “non-Israelites” is based mainly on what is written in 1 Sam. 27:10: “‘The Negeb of Judah’, and ‘the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites’, and ‘the Negeb of the Kenites.’” According to most scholarly opinion, these three areas are different units, and the detailed description indicates separation and differentiation between them. This detail by itself, however, proves nothing, and the relationship between the Negeb of Judah, the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites, and the Negeb of the Kenites may be as that between the general unit (the Negeb of Judah) and the specific details (the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites and the Negeb of the Kenites), parsing the *waw* in 1 Sam. 27:10 as a *waw explicativum*.<sup>12</sup>

This relationship can be satisfactorily understood if we first examine territorial parallels that also are to be found in the Book of Samuel. 1 Sam. 9:4–5 states:

He passed into the hill country of Ephraim.  
 He crossed the district of Shalishah, but they did not find them.  
 They passed through the district of Shaalim, but they were not there.  
 They traversed the (entire) territory of Benjamin, and still they did not find them.  
 When they reached the district of Zuph. . . .

Kallai has already shown that in this description, “the hill country of Ephraim” is the general term, while “the district of Shalishah,” “the district of Shaalim,” “the territory of Benjamin,” and “the district of Zuph” are details.<sup>13</sup> It is similarly indisputably clear that nothing may be learned from these definitions regarding the ethnic origin or tribal lineage of the units that are mentioned, but only of their geographi-

12. For the explicative function of the *waw* in Hebrew, see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto, 1970), §434; *BDB*, 252; D. W. Baker, “Further Examples of the WAW EXPLICATIVUM,” *VT* 30 (1980), 129–36; B. A. Mastin, “WAW EXPLICATIVUM in 2 Kings VIII 9,” *VT* 34 (1984), 353–55.

13. Z. Kallai, “Baal Shalisha and Ephraim,” in B. Uffenheimer, ed., *Bible and Jewish History: Studies in Biblical and Jewish History dedicated to the memory of Jacob Liver* (Tel Aviv, 1971), 194–95 [in Hebrew].

cal location. The Zuph family was undoubtedly Ephrathite (1 Sam. 1:1), while the Benjaminites, in contrast, were certainly not considered to be of Ephrathite origin, and the families of Shalish/ah and Shual were of Asherite origin (1 Chron. 7:36–37).

The appellation “the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites” or the “Negeb of the Calebites” and similarly, “the territory of Benjamin,” “the district of Zuph,” and others mean: the territory of the family, the family landholding. The terms Jerahmeel, Onam, or Zuph are of double significance. They are, at the same time, the name of people and also the name of their land. Generally speaking, every family land area (except for minimal allotments) is divided into subareas named after the extended families that held them, and every family area (except the maximal, such as: the land of the Israelites) was part of a larger family region. This is the key to understanding these territorial terms. A region could be called, concurrently, “land A,” “land B,” and “land C,” with A a subunit of B, and B a subunit of C. There is no contradiction among these terms, just as a person could be called, at the same time: Peletite, Calebite, and Israelite. The same is true of the definitions: the Negeb of Judah, the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites, and the Negeb of Caleb (1 Sam. 30:14). In both texts (1 Sam. 27:10; 30:14), the Negeb of Judah (or “of Judah”) is the general term, while the Negeb of Caleb and the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites are the specific details. The specification of the areas and their textual and geographical proximity convey nothing concerning the tribal lineage of the families, as was shown above. The areas of the Kenites and of the Jerahmeelites were indeed close to one another, similar to the proximity of the territory of Benjamin to the district of Zuph, but this juxtaposition signifies nothing regarding any genealogical tie between the families. Such a link is not impossible; to the contrary, as was shown above, it is probable, but it is to be deduced from the genealogical lists and not from the geographical ones.

It is often held that the definition “the Negeb of Judah” does not include within it the area of the Calebite and Jerahmeelite families, even though their lineage from the tribe of Judah is known. It is held, in addition, that “the Negeb of Judah” does include the area of Simeon, maintaining that other names were attached to other areas of the Negeb. This hypothesis is, however, faulty.<sup>14</sup>

The tribe of Simeon is not included, genealogically, in the organization of the families of Judah, and is always spoken of as an independent tribe (1 Chron. 4:41, etc.). Consequently, it cannot be assumed that the term “the Negeb of Judah,” in the sense of the Negeb that belongs to those whose lineage is traced to Judah, also includes the Simeonite territory. The latter area is included, for administrative purposes, in the Negeb district of the kingdom of Judah, which is already called “the Negeb of Judah” in 2 Samuel 24, although this is an administrative, and not an ethnic, designation.

The history of the term “the Negeb of Judah” and its connection to the Jerahmeelites and their territory may be summarized as follows: the Negeb of Judah was initially the region of those families descended from Judah (the Calebites, the

---

14. Y. Aharoni, “The Settlement of Canaan,” in B. Mazar, ed., *Judges* (Givatayim, 1971), 102ff.; Z. Kallai, *Historical Geography of the Bible: The Tribal Territories of Israel* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1986), 350ff.

Jerahmeelites, and others), and this term was not associated with the area of the tribe of Simeon. The latter region was, apparently, called “the Negeb of Simeon,” but certainly not the Negeb of Judah, in its ethnic sense. In a later period the Negeb as a whole was regarded as a single administrative unit, as is indicated by 2 Samuel 24, from the description of the boundaries of the tribal holdings, and from the list of the cities of Judah in Joshua 15. The removal of the division between Judah and Simeon (in administrative terms) may be ascribed to David, as emerges from a description of the census conducted by David (2 Samuel 24), and it may be assumed that already during his time the entire Negeb (the Judahite and the Simeonite) was administratively termed “the Negeb of Judah,” with its apparent center in Beer-sheba.

Even after the term “the Negeb of Judah” came to include the entire expanse from the desert to the territory of the Philistines, the early ethnographic terms undoubtedly retained their vitality, as is clearly shown by the list of Shishak, which includes areas such as “the Negeb of Ashht,” and others within the territory of the expanded “Negeb of Judah.” It may likewise be presumed that the term “the Negeb of Judah” served concurrently as an administrative and ethnographic term. The administrative term encompassed the entire Negeb, from the Judean Desert to Philistia, while the ethnographic term referred only to the areas inhabited by families descended from Judah.

In conclusion: the territorial definitions of “the towns of the Jerahmeelites” and “the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites” do not indicate an alien origin for the Jerahmeelite family. And since there is no evidence of this from any other source, it cannot be assumed that the Jerahmeelites were considered to be “non-Israelite” in their origin (in contrast, for example, to the emphasized non-Israelite origin of Caleb, the forefather of the Calebites, who is called “the Kenizzite”).