

## AN INSCRIBED JAR FROM MEGIDDO

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The 1932 excavations at Megiddo brought to light an inscribed sherd belonging to a well-known type of Middle Iron Age jar, and it



FIG. 1.—P 5161

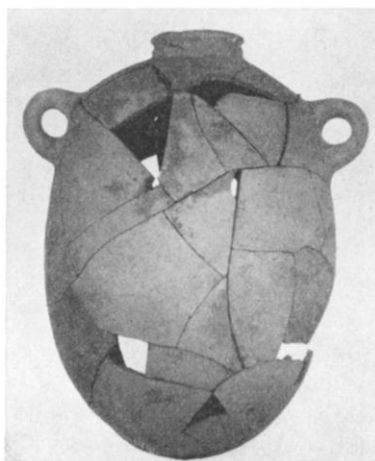
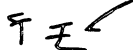


FIG. 2.—P 5171. Type of jar. Scale  $\frac{1}{10}$

is to be dated toward the end of that period, or *ca.* 800–600 B.C. The ware may be described as follows: medium ware, many light grits,

heavily fired, blue-black core, brown-ochre to burnt-umber surface. The inscription, incised on the shoulder before the firing of the vessel, reads  (ל יו). The form of the waw makes possible a further limitation of the date of the inscription to the period *ca.* 750–650 B.C.<sup>1</sup> We may translate, “Belonging to Yo.” The name is an alternative form of the divine name YHWH (יהוה), and it is known in this form in personal names such as יואב, יואה, etc., being at times interchangeable with יהו.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription is to be compared with that on a bowl from Samaria, upon which ל יו is scratched.<sup>3</sup> There have also been discovered at Jericho thirteen fifth- or fourth-century stamped jar-handles, ten bearing the legend יהו, and three יה.<sup>4</sup> The writer has seen similarly stamped jar-handles of the same period from Tell en-Naşbeh in the Palestine Museum, and they have also been found at Jerusalem. The contents of the vessels thus inscribed may have been dedicated to the shrine, representing temple tribute or taxes,<sup>5</sup> or perhaps they were for use in religious festivals, or the numerous sacrifices and libations. It is just possible that we have an obscure reference to this custom, with a hint of the accompanying inscription “To Yahweh,” in Zech. 14:20, 21.<sup>6</sup> The significance of these inscribed vessels has been discussed in detail by others. What concerns us here is the peculiar character of the inscription on our Megiddo jar.

Since there is good evidence that יהו and יה, which occur in personal names, are also used as independent words, it has also been plausible that the same is true of יו. The Megiddo inscription now makes this a certainty. The Samaria ostraca destroyed the hypothesis that יו was merely an abbreviation of יהו in the personal names of

<sup>1</sup> The waw has a distinctive character during this period. See Dussaud, *Syria*, VI, 335, Fig. 6.

<sup>2</sup> It also occurs in the personal names on the ostraca from Samaria. See Reisner, Fisher, and Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria*, I, 241, No. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Reisner, etc., *op. cit.*, II, Pl. 55b. The bowl apparently belongs to an earlier part of the Middle Iron Age.

<sup>4</sup> Sellin und Watzinger, *Jericho*, pp. 158, 159 and Pl. XLII.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lev. 27:30. The tithe of the produce of the soil and fruit trees is described ליהוה קדש הוא ליהוה הוא קדש ליהוה. Such temple tribute is most probable for the post-Exilic period; cf. W. F. Albright, *The Archeology of Palestine and the Bible*, pp. 173, 174.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sellin und Watzinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–90.

the late period only, and the Megiddo inscription establishes it as an independent alternative form of the divine name.

In the post-Exilic period יהה, יי, יהו, and יהוה were accepted as alternative forms of the divine name, and the same may now be maintained for the pre-Exilic period, as is evidenced by the inscribed vessels from Megiddo and Samaria, the Moabite Stone, and the early seals.<sup>7</sup> How these various forms came into existence must remain for the present a hazardous conjecture. They may be due to dialectic differences in the language of the devotees of this deity. However this may be, they probably existed as independent alternatives before the days of the Hebrew kingdom, and very possibly before Israel's entrance into the land of Canaan. The Amarna records suggest that the deity was known to the Habiru as יה, if we may judge from the personal name Ia-šu-ia.<sup>8</sup> The inaudible ה has been omitted,<sup>9</sup> and the name is the equivalent of the biblical יהושיע, in which יהה has become יהו. יהו, and possibly יה, was known to the people of "Northern Judah" in North Syria in the first half of the eighth century. The mention of *aš-ri-ia-u mat-ia-u-di-i* in the cuneiform records confirms the use of יהו in both personal and place names in this district.<sup>10</sup> The Zinjirli inscriptions may point to the fact that this place name was also known in a form containing the divine name יה, for it is written יהר, and perhaps is to be pointed יהר.<sup>11</sup> The personal name Iaubidi in the cuneiform records evidences the use of יהו in Hamath,<sup>12</sup> while the name Joram in II Sam. 8:10 witnesses the use of the form יי in the tenth century at the same place.

We may conclude from this that the divine name was known out-

<sup>7</sup> For יהו as a part of personal names on seals from this period see I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*, Figs. 252, 253, and 274. יהוה occurs in l. 18 of the Moabite Stone.

<sup>8</sup> J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, No. 256, l. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the form יהיע (Neh. 8:17).

<sup>10</sup> Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Pl. 9, No. 2, l. 4. An early North Syrian יהו is possibly in the name of Esau's wife יהוהרת, the daughter of Beer, the Hittite (Gen. 26:34).

<sup>11</sup> G. A. Cooke, *Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, No. 61, l. 1, etc. The substitution of the *aleph* for *he* in יהר is difficult to explain if the cuneiform *ia-u-di* is accepted as a basis for the pointing, for we should expect יהוהרת. The substitution of an *aleph* for the inaudible *he* is quite simple.

<sup>12</sup> D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria*, II, 55.

side of Canaan, and possibly in all its various forms, and that the Hebrews and others brought them into Canaan. For this reason a discussion of the evolution of the various forms is beset with difficulties. The Old Testament can throw little light on this question, for the development took place outside the sphere of its interests. Certainly it is hazardous to postulate an origin of the divine name at Sinai or in Egypt, for the evidence points chiefly toward the north. The attempt to associate it with an Egyptian liturgical formula and 18th dynasty monotheistic influences must be rejected on this and other grounds.

The probable existence of the four forms of the divine name among the early Hebrews in Canaan suggests an explanation of the incident of Yahweh's revelation of himself to Moses in the burning bush on Sinai, especially as regards the emphasis on the name as *YHWH*: "This is my name for all time, and this is my title for age after age."<sup>13</sup> This Elohist tale may not only be reminiscent of the adoption of a new deity in the place of the earlier deities of the non-Judean tribes, but it may also be the expression of an attempt to give special sanction and official recognition to the tetragrammaton as the correct form of the divine name, under which the Hebrews could be more closely united, both politically and religiously. This attempt was certainly not successful, for the shorter forms of the divine name remained more popular. The origin of such a tradition cannot be exactly determined. It must have been much later than Moses, who seems to have worshiped the snake deity of the Levites.<sup>14</sup> It arose sometime after the Levites had become Judah's religious caste, accepted Judah's deity, and introduced the story of their own exodus into the Judean and Israelite traditions.

The writer has assumed throughout this discussion that יהוה (יהוה), etc.) was Judah's deity, and that, as has been suggested by others, the name of that deity is to be found in the word יהוה. This conclusion seems highly probable in view of the fact that יהוה was certainly a deity of the Judah in North Syria. It may also explain why the J

<sup>13</sup> Exod. 3:15.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Num. 21:8, 9 and II Kings 18:4. The name of the tribe also suggests this. Professor Olmstead's suggestion that the exodus party consisted of the Levite tribe is very attractive. See A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, pp. 247, 248.

source of the Pentateuch, which is the southern or Judean source, uses יהוה to designate the pre-Exilic deity, while the northern, or E source does not use this name until after the revelation at Sinai. We may also now more easily understand how the Levites became protagonists of Yahweh after they had become the priestly caste of Judah.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> יהושע was later identified with the Ephraimite hero יהושע, and cannot be considered evidence of early Ephraimite Yahwism (Num. 13:8, 16). It may be suspected from Josh. 19:49 ff. that Joshua was a non-Ephraimite whom the Israelites allowed to settle in their midst. Were his more original associations with Judah?