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Abel-Maim

→ Abel-Beth-Maacah

Abel-Meholah

This place name, meaning "Meadow of Dancing," is mentioned three times in the Hebrew Bible:

1) Judges 7:22 includes it as one of the sites in the direction of which the Midianites fled after their defeat at the hand of Gideon's army. It is described as a border settlement. Because the Midianites seem to have fled east and south in the Jordan Valley, the site is usually located somewhere in the Valley south of Beth Shean.

2) 1 Kings 4:12 contains a list of the officials and administrative districts of the court of Solomon. Abel-Meholah seems to be at the eastern or southeastern border of the 5th district including Megiddo and Beth Shean.

3) Its largest claim to fame is in 1 Kings 19:16 where it is the home town of the prophet Elisha, but no other information can be gleaned from the text. There is no explanation in these texts why the name is connected with dancing, though some have speculated that it could be connected to celebrations connected with the wine harvest.

Eusebius (260–340 CE) placed the site west of the Jordan River, equating it with a site named Bethmaela south of Scythopolis (Beth Shean), perhaps based on the similarity of the second element of the name (*Onom.* 34:23). In 1946 N. Glueck rejected Eusebius' identification as "erroneous" and suggested Tell el-Maqlub in the Wadi Yabis well east of the Jordan River, based on the name of a nearby site, Kefr Abil, and his speculative association of wine production with the site. Several commentators have followed Glueck.

Another site suggested by some is the important Bronze and Iron Age site of Abu al-Kharaz, recently excavated by a Swedish team led by P. Fischer, but he makes no attempt himself to make any biblical identification. The site lies east of the Jordan River near its confluence with the Wadi Yabis. Because many scholars assume Solomon's 5th administrative district would not have gone east of the Jordan River, they place the site west of the river, perhaps at Tell Abu Sus, a suggestion to which B. MacDonald tentatively ascribes, as well (see his discussion for other sources).

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Abel-Mizraim

→ Atad

Abel-Shittim

→ Shittim

Abendmusik

The German notion of *Abendmusik* (Evening Music) refers to concerts in the Marienkirche in Lübeck conducted by Dietrich Buxtehude in the 17th century and continuing throughout the 18th century. Possibly originating from organ entertainments for traders, they developed into performances of biblical oratorios extended over five Sundays around the end of the church year and Advent.

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Abez

→ Ebez

Abgar, Epistle of Christ to

- I. Christianity
- II. Islam
- III. Visual Arts

I. Christianity

The story of King Abgar of Edessa who received a letter from Jesus is told for the first time by Eusebius, who mentions a Syriac charter as its source (*Hist. eccl.* i.13). The king, severely ill, asks Jesus in a letter to heal him. Jesus responds with praises of the king's faith and the promise to send a disciple. After the Ascension, Jesus indeed sends Thaddeus (Addai), one of the 70 disciples, to Edessa in order to heal the king.

The correspondence between Jesus and Abgar is mentioned by other 4th-century CE sources, such as the pilgrim account of Egeria. She mentions the great awe with which Jesus' letter to Abgar was treated in Edessa, where the document functioned as a protective relic. The legend was translated into many languages. In the Middle Ages it enjoyed great popularity as the model of the tradition of Heavenly Letters.

The story of Abgar is also included in the Syriac *Doctrine of the Apostle Addai* and in the Greek *Acts of Thaddeus*. In the latter a legend was added according to which it was not a letter but Jesus' sweat cloth, i.e., the Mandyllion, bearing an imprint of his portrait, that was sent to Abgar. According to this legend Abgar was cured upon receiving the sweat cloth instead of by Thaddeus.

The idea of the existence of a portrait of Jesus caused fierce debate during the Iconoclast controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries (*Libri Carolini* iv.10). Adherents of icons referred to the legend in order to strengthen their case, while iconoclasts dismissed it as apocryphal.

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Els Rose

II. Islam

A letter supposedly sent by Jesus to Abgar, king of Edessa (modern Urfa), is the basis of an enduring legend in the Islamic world, too. In the Byzantine period, interest in the letter competed with a portrait of Jesus, the mandylion, which was apparently sent to accompany it. Claims about the two artifacts reflected power dynamics between the Christian communities in Edessa. This continued into the Islamic period, and in fact the primary reason for the Byzantine attack on Edessa in 944 was to secure the mandylion, although a copy of the letter was also taken to Constantinople at the same time.

The letter was held to act as a defense of Edessa because of an added concluding sentence which promised divine protection. Thus, the Muslim reconquest of Edessa from the Crusaders was a particular blow: "The news was carried throughout Christendom that the city of Abgar had fallen to the Moslems" (Segal). The letter's talismanic character remained significant during the early Muslim period, when Arabic versions of the *Legend of Abgar* appeared, expanding upon the original.

The *Disputation* between a monk of the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē (probably near al-Ḥīra in southern Iraq) and an unnamed Muslim courtier, which is usually dated to the early 8th century, suggests strongly that Jesus' correspondence with Abgar was accepted as historical by Muslims of the time. The Muslim interlocutor tells the Christian that he knows of the icon which Christ "caused to be made of himself and sent it to Abgar, the king of Edessa" (Griffith: 28).

The stated reason for the correspondence between Jesus and Abgar was the latter's request for

healing. Even in modern times, Muslim pilgrims who hope for cures from eye and skin ailments drink from the courtyard well of Urfa's great mosque where, according to tradition, the towel bearing the image of Jesus was thrown.

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III. Visual Arts

The importance of the Mandyllion is divided between its role as evidence for Christian art and its own iconographic development. Beginning with the entry by Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* i.13.5 and 22, the normal variations in legendary narrative evolve over time. At issue is whether or not Abgar's emissary received the Mandyllion upon which Jesus had impressed his face or if that emissary, later identified as Hannan, was an artist who painted the portrait that cured his king's illness. At further issue is whether Abgar was healed simply by seeing the Mandyllion or by placing it upon his ailing body. The initial versions represent a masculine counterpart to the biblical narrative of the Veil of Veronica, also known as the Vernicle, while the more elaborate narrative incorporating the role of Hannan may be an initial defense of the role of Christian artists. Prior to the Iconoclastic Controversies, Eastern Christianity had accepted the Mandyllion as a historical reality, and its story became one of the foundations for the spirituality of the icon, and later the defense against iconoclasts as evidenced in John of Damascus's mid-8th-century *On the Holy Images* (1).

One of the earliest icons depicting the Mandyllion of Edessa is in the collection of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai. The story of the miraculous restoration of Abgar's health once he held this *ach-eiropoietos* is depicted on one of the side panels of what was once a triptych, or three-panel, icon. However, such narrative depictions of the Mandyllion are rare as it may be best known, even among believers, as the "True Face," or *vera eikon*. As such, the Mandyllion typically presents Jesus full face with long hair and beard, and heavy eyebrows in a manner that is identified as the Byzantine Pantocrator. Little known in the West after the Middle Ages, the story and image of the Mandyllion is often fused, or confused, with that of the Veil of Veronica, or the Shroud of Turin. This conflation is based as much upon the miraculous origins of both relics as upon 6th- and 10th-century documents, most famously, the *Codex Vossianus Latinus Q69*, that describe the cloth received by Abgar as being imprinted with "not only a face but the whole body."

The Mandyllion was credited not simply with the cure of Abgar's disease, ostensibly leprosy, and

the conversion of his kingdom to Christianity, but further with its invincibility of the city – first Edessa, then Constantinople – that displayed it. The Mandylion had a convoluted history and was reputed to have disappeared within the walls of the city of Edessa during the periods of pagan rule and Persian conquests. The Mandylion miraculously resurfaced in 544 and was credited with the Edessan Christians' recovery of that city as described by Evagrius Scholasticus in his *Ecclesiastical History* (593). According to Arab legend, the Mandylion was thrown down a well – at the site where the city's Great Mosque would be erected – to protect it from the Persian conquest of 609. The Mandylion resurfaced again in time to be exchanged for a group of Muslim prisoners, and transferred in 944 to Constantinople where it was revered as a primary relic and honored with a special feast day. Following the infamous sacking of Constantinople by Western Christian crusaders in 1204, the Mandylion was reportedly either “taken” by French Crusaders or sold by Crusaders to the French in 1207. Variations of the Mandylion's history relate that it was either lost at sea or deposited at the Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, where it was probably destroyed during the French Revolution. Alternative traditions have the Mandylion safely ensconced in St. Peter's Basilica Church, Vatican City; Cathedral of San Silvestro, Rome; Cathedral of San Bartolomeo, Genoa; the Armenian Church, Isola di San Lazzaro, Venice; or in Cyprus.

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Abi

Abi (also Abijah; MT ^ʾĀbī, ^ʾĀbīyāh; LXX Ἀβού, Ἀβιά) is listed in the regnal notice of her son Hezekiah who succeeded his father Ahaz as king of Judah (2 Kgs 18:2; Abijah in 2 Chr 29:1). Her father's name is Zechariah. Josephus calls her Abia and describes her as a native of Jerusalem (*Ant.* 9.260). The name Abi, if correct, is an abbreviated form of the longer name, Abijah (“My [Divine] Father is YHWH”). The short form of the name is not attested elsewhere in the Bible, but it is found once in the inscriptions (*Hebrew Inscriptions*, Mur. 1B, line 2).

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Abia

→ Abijah

Abi-Albon

A warrior counted among David's 30 men whose name appears as Abi-Albon (MT ^ʾĀbī-ʿAlbôn; 2 Sam 23:31). Textual corruption is frequently assumed, however, given Septuagint Αβιηλ υἱος τοῦ Αρ-αβωθίτου “Abiel son of the Arbathite” and the reflex of the name in 1 Chr 11:32 (^ʿbyʿl hʿrbty “Abiel the Arbathite”; LXX Αβιηλ ὁ Γαραβεθου). The name is not attested at Qumran. The Aramaic tradition has ^ʿbyʿlbwn “Abialbon” (*Tg. Neb.*) and ^ʿby br ^ʿby ^ʿlmwn “Abi son of Abialmon”; the Vulgate reads *Abialbon Arbathites*.

The four commonly cited reconstructions of the *Vorlage* of MT of 2 Sam 23:31 are as follows (for clarity, reconstructed forms are marked by preceding asterisks, *matres lectionis* are omitted in accordance with preexilic orthography, and periods indicate word division):

1. ^ʿbʿl.b̄t.hʿrbt “Abiel the Beth-arbathite” > MT ^ʿbʿlbn through parablepsis of hʿlbn “the Shalbonite” from 1 Sam 23:32 (cf. Klostermann cited in Driver: 370). LXX is assumed to have emended ^ʿbʿt in the *Vorlage* to ^ʿbn, or it parsed MT as two words.
2. ^ʿbbʿln “Abibaalon” > MT by metathesis; LXX ^ʿbʿlbn “Abiel son of” results from emendation of ^ʿbʿl > ^ʿl (cf. Zadok: 105).
3. ^ʿbbʿl.bn.hʿrbt “Abibaal son of the Arbathite” > MT by elision of the second *bet* and fusion of ^ʿbn (cf. Wellhausen cited in Knoppers: 540; Elliger: 48; Mazar: 316). LXX is assumed to have emended or otherwise misread ^ʿbʿl > ^ʿl.
4. ^ʿbʿl.b̄t.hʿrbt “Abial the Beth-arbathite” > ^ʿbʿl.b̄t.hʿrbt “Abial son of the Arbathite” (^ʿbn as emendation of a posited misreading of ^ʿbt “daughter of”; cf. McCarter: 492) > LXX; MT by fusion of ^ʿbn.

These ingenious proposals, however, all seem to give undue weight to the LXX in assuming corruption of an easier *Vorlage* (both ^ʿbʿl and ^ʿbbʿl are securely attested in Northwest Semitic, and the names are all sensible) into the MT's otherwise unattested ^ʿbʿlbn through scribal error and/or emendation. None of them seriously considers the possibility that MT ^ʿbyʿlbwn represents a genuinely obscure name levelled by the LXX.

MT ^ʿbʿlbnhʿrbt (preexilic orthography) explains the evidence most economically and plausibly. The LXX translator simply parsed it as ^ʿbʿl.bn.hʿrbt (cf. McCarter). The sequence ^ʿbʿlbn is more susceptible to misreading as a Baal name (through transposition of, or haplography and “correction” of, *bet*, thus reversing the reconstructions of Elliger; Zadok; Mazar) and subsequent emendation to an El