

PETRA REVISITED: A REVIEW OF
A SEMITIC CULT COMPLEX

EUGENE D. STOCKTON, *University of Sydney*

The scripture scholar seeks to understand references to cultic practices in the Bible in much the same way as he seeks the meaning of a key word. He looks to examples of usage which are likely to show meaning and which are closest in time, place and thinking to those under study. To be assured of the highest degree of proximity, he is not content with only an external similarity since he knows that a single item derives much of its meaning from the context and that it can change meaning in different contexts. In other words, comparison between practices in different religions should go beyond the isolated practices and should take account of the respective cycles to which they belong. Furthermore, the researcher is interested in the meaning of the institution for the people most involved, to acquire, as it were, an "inside feel" towards it—contrast, for example, the description of a Christian sacrament in terms of its external ritual as an outsider would see it and an account of its theological and mystical meaning as seen by a believer. It is the meaning for the believer that is the valid term of comparison in the parallels studied.

Petra has long been a rich source of parallels for the student of the Bible, particularly in its cultic apparatus, such as sacred pillars, votive monuments, high places and instruments of sacrifice. Despite foreign influences on architectural expression, the conceptual base of these institutions remained a thoroughly Semitic religion of a civilisation which flourished on the borders of the Holy Land in the century preceding and the century following the birth of Christ. The unusually rich inventory of cultic elements, their state of preservation and the availability of literary references offer a unique opportunity of reconstructing the complex as a coherent whole. The present study does not seek to repeat a detailed description of the Nabataean religion and of the archaeological remains¹ but to look at the chief components of the Petra cult as an organic unity.

It is the adherent of the local cult who is most likely to be aware of the organic unity of a sacred place, knowing what is central and what is peripheral, what is the relationship of single items to the whole and their relative importance. This is the kind of viewpoint on which the Byzantine lexico-

● References at end of article.

grapher, Suidas, draws for his description of the cult of Dushara (Gr. *Dusares*), under the heading *Theus Ares*²: "This is the god Ares in Petra of Arabia. The god Ares is worshipped by them and they honour him above all. The idol is a black stone, quadrangular, aniconic, four feet high and two broad, and it rests on a gold-plated pedestal. To it (him) they offer sacrifices and pour out the blood of the victims. This is their libation. The whole temple is rich in gold and (there are) many votive offerings." It remains to consider the archaeological data in the framework provided by this description.

THE DUSHARA BLOCK

The black stone has vanished but, even in the absence of literary testimony, one would have to suspect the importance of a squat, quadrangular pillar at Petra, where it is portrayed over a hundred times on vertical rock faces. In its simplest form it is represented as a flat-topped, double-cubed block within a rectangular niche, the whole carved in relief out of the living rock (fig. 1, a). Occasionally the niche can be highly ornate, with false pillars and architrave like a temple facade, and the block can be shown to be standing on a base (usually trapezoid). The most notable variation is in the number of blocks contained in the niche—sometimes two, more often three, even up to ten can comprise the one group (fig. 1, b).

Apart from these niche baetyls, Dushara blocks are found reproduced in other media. A lintel from a temple at El Umtaiyye (south of Bosra) shows an altar-like structure in each of five arcades (fig. 1, e). On the central one stand three objects like round-topped pillars, or omphaloi, to which ascend what looks like a flight of three steps.³ A similar scene is featured in several Bosra coins celebrating the *Actia Dusaria* (fig. 1, d): a stand, three steps, three boulder-like objects of which the central one is the largest.⁴ In view of the express mention of the *Actia Dusaria*, these objects are probably intended to allude to the cult of Dushara and as a triad are paralleled by groupings of three blocks in some of the baetyl niches. An ovoid baetyl figures on coins struck under Elagabalus and others deriving from Adraa (Der^ea) where in each case the legend alludes to Dushara.⁵ The omphalos occurs at Medain Salih (El Hijr) and occasionally at Petra, though whether always in connection with the cult of Dushara is uncertain. Starcky notes that one example at Petra was the work of a pilgrim from Adraa, as an accompanying inscription reveals.⁶ The hemispheroid form may be proper to another deity, which later came to be assimilated to Dushara, or it may be a permissible, regional variant of the

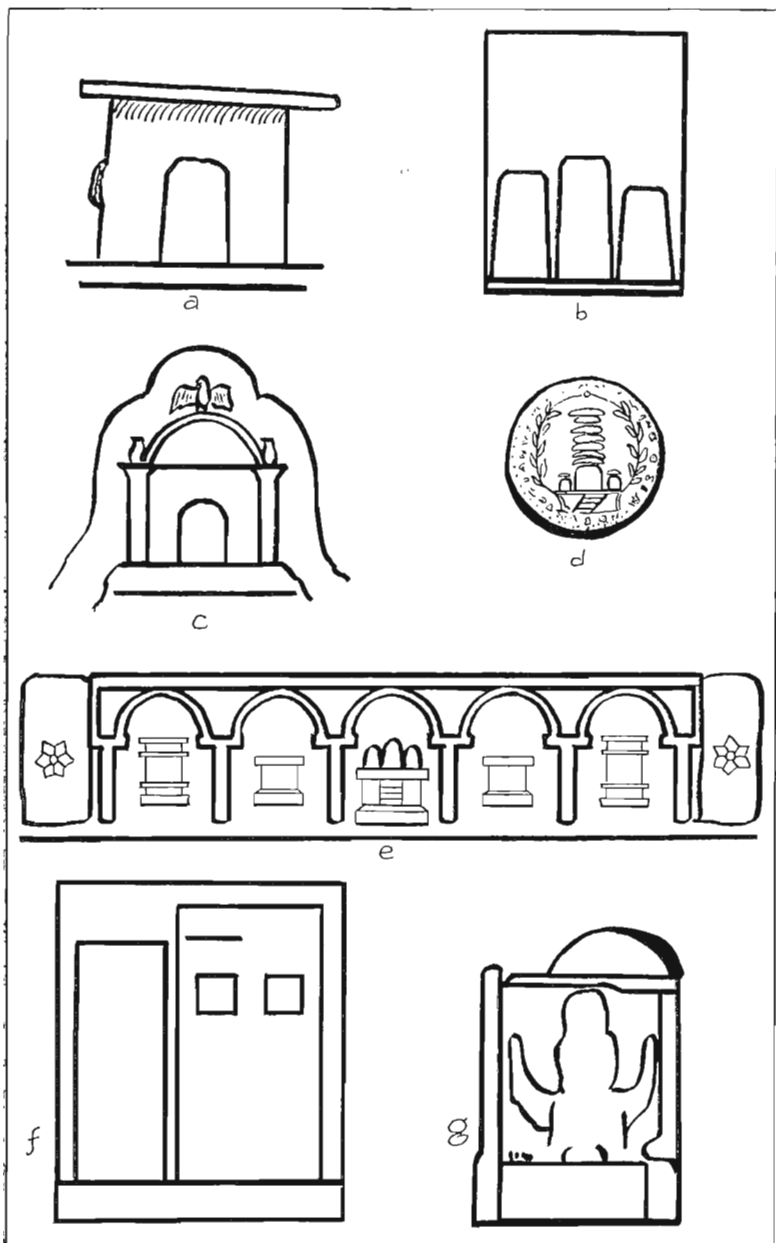


FIG. 1: BAETYL REPRESENTATIONS

(a) single block in niche; (b) triad of blocks in niche; (c) omphalos in ornate niche, Meda'in Sa'ih; (d) coin of Bosra celebrating "Actia Dusaria"; (e) lintel from El Umtaiyye; (f) pair of baetyls in niche at cliff sanctuary, Ramm; (g) Allat figure at Ramm.

Dushara block. If one speculates that Dushara was originally a mountain deity, "He-of-Shara" or "He-of-Seir" (i.e., of the local mountain *massif*), one could easily allow the possibility of either the omphalos or the squat block being an iconographical development of a mountain symbol.

Common terminology shows that Nabataean relief-baetyls are comparable with free-standing pillars among other Semitic peoples. At Qattar ed-Deir there is a block, deeply incised with a unique "Cross of Lorraine" device, and alongside an inscription states, "This is the *msb'* of Bosra, made by Untel for his own welfare and the welfare of Rabbel, king of Nabatene".⁷ "These are the *nsyby* of El 'Uzza and of the Master of the Temple, made by Waha-ballahi, the plasterer" is the inscription to an empty niche (where some "plasterwork" may have since vanished or the empty space may have been intended for a movable set of stelae).⁸ Another form, *nsbt'*, is to be found at Ramm.⁹ These variants can be compared with Hebrew *massebah*, Arabic *nasb* or *nasib*, Phoenician *nsb* or *msbt*, to name a few terms based on the root *nsb* "to set up" and referring to sacred pillars. The Nabataean examples are shown by their designations to be assimilated to other Semitic cult stones, although they are not free-standing and have not been "set up". The same terms, which are used of reproductions of the Dushara block, are probably applicable to the Dushara block itself (if one may judge from the wide application of the biblical *massebah*).¹⁰

It is already apparent from the *nsyby* inscription above that Dushara did not have a monopoly on the block-shaped pillar. At the spring sanctuary of Ramm inscriptions more readily identify the various carved devices than at Petra, and from these it is clear that this form of pillar can be appropriate to different deities. "This is El 'Uzza and the Master of the Temple (*mr byt'*) . . ." is the legend to an unequal pair of baetyls in a single niche, where the larger block on the right is incised with two square outlines (fig. 1, f), like the stylised eyes in some anthropomorphic stelae at Medain Salih and in South Arabia.¹¹ Another pair of baetyls, this time in separate niches, has the one on the left bearing somewhat more ornate "square eyes" and an oblong "nose" and is accompanied by an indistinct inscription mentioning El 'Uzza at the end of the line. One can fairly assume that El 'Uzza is the lady with the square eyes, but who is the Master of the House? Sura 106 of the Koran describes Allah as "the Master of this House" in respect to the Kaaba at Mecca. At Petra one could identify him with Dushara, the principal deity of the temple, but at Ramm the nearby temple was probably sacred to Allat.¹² The title might be compared with the Arabian *rabb el bait*, a man of high standing

entrusted with the custody of the *bait*,¹³ especially as most of the Ramm inscriptions refer to construction workers, who could have been engaged on building the Ramm temple.¹⁴ Furthermore, in the Ramm instance the Master of the House is made inferior to the goddess. A solution may lie in identifying him with the deified king, since deification of kings was not unknown among the Nabataeans.¹⁵ At Ramm, Dushara is not forgotten, but by far the favourite deity is Allat. She is named in a cartouche inscription, "this is the goddess Allat of Bosra . . . made by . . . servants of the *afkal* (a religious leader) . . ."¹⁶ Alongside is a strange figure, which is susceptible to endless discussion but at least one can say that it incorporates a column-like structure in three tiers, standing on a base, while from mid-height spring the upturned horns of a crescent (fig. 1, g). The intention to suggest an anthropomorphic shape is inescapable, and in this it compares with a column, head and crescent device at the entrance to the Diwan at Medain Salih and, I would suggest, with the Phoenician "Sign of Tanit".¹⁷

From the above it appears that not only is the block-shaped pillar applicable to deities other than Dushara, but in the cases where identification is certain, Allat is associated with a crescent and El 'Uzza has stylised eyes and a male "companion". Perhaps the single baetyl block, without further specification, is understood to represent Dushara, while it needs the addition of a characteristic symbol to be recognised as another deity. This may affect the identification of the "Cross of Lorraine" baetyl at Qattar ed-Deir and of another Petra relief, where a baetyl niche is surmounted by a medallion enclosing a human bust. To the crucial question whether the head of the bust wears vineleaves (so representing Dionysus = Dushara¹⁸) or an upswept coiffure (hence a goddess, perhaps Atargatis¹⁹), the present line of thought would favour the latter opinion.

This discussion has relevance to the question of block reliefs occurring in twos and threes. In every pair that has come to my notice the components have been unequally matched: they might represent El 'Uzza and the Master of the Temple, Dushara and a lesser god or goddess, or the frequent Arab pairing of Allat and El 'Uzza. (The question of the two great free-standing obelisks guarding the approach to the High Place will be deferred to the consideration of that site.) In a group of three, the central baetyl is usually larger than the other two. Probably such a group is intended to represent three divine beings since triads of deities are not uncommon in the Semitic world.²⁰ Since the intention behind the portrayal of a triad is obviously a pious *tour de force* invoking the top-ranking members of the local pantheon, one is justified in

seeing Dushara, the chief deity of Petra, represented in the central block. To judge from Nabataean memorial inscriptions it appears Allat and El 'Uzza occupied a rank of favour second only to that of Dushara and could easily have completed the trio. Among the Arabs in general, these two goddesses were highly revered, often together.²¹ Whether such triads represented three distinct identities or, as it were, various hypostases of the one,²² is of no importance to the present study.

PLACEMENT OF THE DUSHARA BLOCK

Suidas' description of the Dushara block in the temple at Petra gives prominence to the base on which it stood. A base occurs at times, but only rarely, in baetyl niches at Petra. The Allat figure at Ramm and the A^cra *msgd'* at Medain Salih both stand on bases. Hence it would appear that the base is an important adjunct of the sacred pillar, but distinct and dispensable.

The funerary inscription on the Qabr at-Turkman at Petra names as those to whom the place is dedicated: "Dushara, the god of our master, and his *motab* (,) Harisha and all the gods". The term *motab* and its connection with the following name have been variously interpreted, but there is solid opinion for seeing in it the base of the Dushara block, having its own name and some kind of divine status.²³ With the easy exchange of *shin* and *tau* in Semitic languages, *motab* could be equivalent to the *moshab* in Ezek. 8:3 ("the seat of the image, or slab, of jealousy"). Starcky sees examples of the *motab* in the sloping base of a baetyl in the house of Dorotheos and in a desk-like object on which has been engraved a baetyl at Qattar ed-Deir, as well as in similar representations on coins from Bosra.²⁴ Whether it is apt to describe such objects as "thrones", by analogy with recognisable thrones supporting baetyls or "sacred emptiness" in Phoenicia and elsewhere, is a moot point. The sloping upper surface may have been executed simply for perspective. A throne may be related to, but is not exactly the same thing as, a baetyl base, nor is there certain evidence of a throne being associated with the cult of Dushara. On the other hand, a base is highlighted in Suidas' account of the worship of Dushara and would be the best candidate for that significant thing called "his *motab*".

Appurtenances of the Dushara cult are certainly portrayed on the *Actia Dusaria* coins of Bosra, and possibly on the temple lintel from El Umtaiyye, where the three baetyls are shown standing on an altar-like base. This base is distinctive for the flight of three steps fronting it. An archaeological illustration of

this is found in a courtyard-house on El Mu^ceisra. Sharing one of the courts with a triclinium is a rock-cut block, 3.5 x 3 (wide) x 1 m. (high), reached by a flight of three steps and topped by the stump of "what may well be the worn down baetyl of Dushara",²⁵ the whole possibly illustrating the kind of domestic oratory described by Strabo.²⁶ The stepped altar facing the temple may have served as an occasional base for the Dushara cult object, but a better parallel has been noted at the focal point of the High Place (fig. 4). Here, facing a triclinium, with an altar to one side, is a great rectangular block measuring 2.78 (wide) x 1.87 x .9 m. (high), with three (and a slight fourth) steps to the front and a slot (1.1 x .35 x .15 m.) along the top.²⁷ It might be supposed that this slot held a portable baetyl or, better, three.²⁸ Note that the frontal dimensions of the base are in the ratio of 3:1, as at El Mu^ceisra and on the coins of Bosra.

From all this one may hypothesise that (a) such a distinctive stepped base provided the normal setting of the cult object of Dushara, (b) yet it was distinct and hence did not need to be reproduced in the baetyl niches, (c) it shared in the sanctity of the Dushara block, perhaps even to the extent of being divinised as a goddess.

Epiphany refers to the celebration at Petra of the virginal birth of Dushara, the only-begotten of the Master.²⁹ One approaches this testimony with caution because Epiphany is not a critical reporter and because as a Christian he naturally seizes on certain aspects of pagan cult which parallel Christian belief, and furthermore one is uncertain how much such cult has begun to be influenced by Christianity. But leaving aside matters of theological interest to the writer, it is worthwhile giving attention to the virgin's name *Kaabu*. The name does occur in Nabataean, but as a man's name.³⁰ Confusion could easily arise in Arabic where the same radicals are found in *ka^cibah* "virgin" and *ka^cbah* "cube". It has been readily suggested that the reference is to the quadrangular base of the Dushara block in the temple,³¹ and it is not difficult to imagine how the report of a ritual of bringing forth the Dushara block from its *kaabu* would have elicited in the mind of a Christian conversant with Arabic the idea of virginal birth.

However the base may not have been strictly cubical, if extant parallels can be a guide (v. *supra*), so, supposing that the Arabic term demands geometric exactitude, one must consider another object, associated with the Dushara block, which more closely approximates to the cube form. In fact, *Ka^cbah*, "the Cube", is the name for the central object of veneration at Mecca,

a cella of approximately cubical proportions. It is now, but was not always, unique—Philby lists four in the Arabian world at the birth of Mohammed³² and there is record in Arab sources of an earlier *ka^cbah* at Ghafatan.³³ Such a central cubical cella was prominent in Nabataean temple architecture, as is clear from the remains at Ramm (fig. 2, a),³⁴ Khirbet et-Tannur (fig. 2, b),³⁵ Qa^r Gheit in Sinai,³⁶ and at Si^c, Sur and Sahr in southern Syria.³⁷ G. H. H. Wright, in discussing the square-within-a-square plan of the Amman temple in the light of later Nabataean and Iranian temples, adverts to “the sacral significance of a square (and, *a fortiori*, a cube) . . . especially among the Semites”.³⁸ The Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple was in the shape of a cube (1 Kg. 6:20; 2 Chron. 4:8; Ezek. 41:4) and so, surprisingly, will be the heavenly city of Jerusalem (Rev. 21:16).

The Petra temple³⁹ is almost exactly square, but is built on a typically Syrian tripartite plan—pronaos, naos, adyton—of which the adyton is itself divided into three square chapels (fig. 2, c). There is an obvious effort, within the dictates of prevailing Syrian fashion, to preserve the square within a square. Behind the temple, against the back wall of the central chapel, the remains of the plaster decoration still allows one to make out three small edicules, which were probably intended to portray the chapels within. In the central edicule of this plasterwork there is an outline of what can only be assumed to have been the representation of a Dushara block, since removed. Possibly this indicated—perhaps in fact for the faithful who once thronged outside—the presence within the central chapel of the actual Dushara block. In any case it is the most reasonable assumption for the location of the object described by Suidas.⁴⁰ The assumption might be extended to see in the three cellae place for the three cult stones of the Petra triad (*v. supra*).

Such then would have been the *oikos polychrysos* in Suidas’ description. *Oikos*, not a common term in Greek for a temple, must certainly represent *bait*, the usual Semitic word for the house of a god, whether it be a baetyl, a *ka^cbah* cella (that of Mecca is also called *Bait Ullah*) or a complete temple structure. So Suidas’ source may have used the term for either the temple or its inner chapel, or even both. *Bait* housing *bait* presents no special incongruity, any more than the box-within-box approach to temple planning, which is remarkably exemplified at Khirbet et-Tannur but indeed in any plan featuring a central cubical cella.

Baetyl niches have been considered from the aspect of what they reflected at the focus of cult, but it is open to speculation

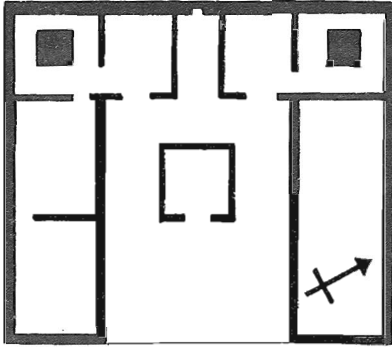
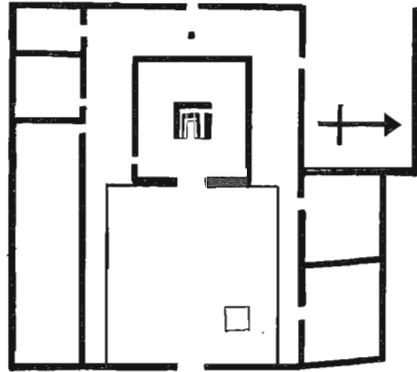


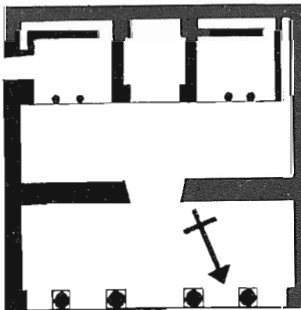
Fig. 2: Nabataean temple plans.

a) Ramm

b) Khirbet el-Tannur



c) Petra



that the niche itself may be not only a functional frame to the relief but also an allusion to the cubical housing of the cult object, especially where the niche is decorated with architectural motifs.⁴¹

VOTIVE OBJECTS

Suidas' final observation is that *ho de oikos hapas esti polychrysos kai anathemata polla*. The whole description has brought out the centrality of the Dushara block, dwelling in turn, as in broadening arcs, on the cult object itself, the base, the temple and finally the *anathemata*. Just as *oikos* is the etymological equivalent of the Semitic *bait*, so *anathemata*, from *anatithemi*, "to set up", corresponds to the derivatives of *nsb* (v. *supra*). The latter could refer to votive objects set up within the temple itself, but the wording leaves it open to include those outside the temple. In fact the valley is teeming with rock-cut cult articles ranged about the temple and it would be strange if Suidas' source had made no account of these. They range from the spectacular tombs through a wide variety of niche reliefs to the humble *nephesh* outlines and memorial inscriptions. They occur, of course, where nature allows and some groups apparently constitute independent cult complexes—cliff sanctuaries like Qattar ed-Deir and En-Numeir, domestic oratories as at El Mu^ceisra, triclinium arrangements within the larger tombs and high places. But the overwhelming impression on the visitor is that these loci are secondary cult centres, like private chapels in a cathedral, ultimately related, together with all the other monuments at Petra, to the principal focus of the total valley complex. This impression of over-all unity of elements at Petra, admittedly a subjective thing, seems to have imposed itself on Suidas' informant, who takes, if indeed he is not dependent on, the viewpoint of the Dushara cultists themselves.

A review of other Nabataean places of worship demonstrates that the siting and layout of cultic installations was less determined by strict compass orientation and conventional plan as by a feeling for the terrain.⁴² High, lone peaks provided obvious locations for the sanctuaries at Avdat and Khirbet et-Tannur. The latter overlooks the confluence of the Wadi el Hasa and Wadi Laaban, with its wild landscape, and faces east possibly towards a strange black mass of intrusive volcanic rock across the wadi.⁴³ The cliff sanctuary of ^cAin Shellaleh, looking down towards the temple of Ramm, nestles in a little gully high in the mountain. The collection of baetyl niches, inscriptions and stone ruins evidence a cultic

complex about the spring or grotto at the head of the gully. At this spot, a ruined masonry edifice associated with a dedicatory inscription of Rabbel II is thought to have been the remains of a small shrine, altar or base for cult object.⁴⁴ Jebel Ethlib at Medain Salih is a cluster of weird onion-domed peaks of a sandstone *massif* that is now all but submerged in sand. Within the maze of peaks and passages is a variety of rock-cut votive monuments—niches, single and grouped plinths, omphaloi, altars, reliefs suggestive of human form, inscriptions.⁴⁵ The focal point appears to be the artificial cave or room called the Diwan: at this stage one can only guess whether, with proportions approaching a square, it was meant to be a hewn-out *ka^cbah* and whether it housed a cult object or a “numinous presence”. There are two or three other groupings of votive monuments in the Jebel Ethlib (whether independent or secondary is difficult to judge) and associated with these are (a) an open grotto housing a baetyl-niche relief, approached by three steps, with two basins to one side, and (b) another squared room, in the wall of which are found niches and an inscription referring, it is thought, to a statue. As at Petra, the valley of Medain Salih abounds in rock-cut tombs, whether drawn there by the sanctity of the place or by the convenience of its rock-faces. The association of baetyl niches and squared cave, itself housing a pedestal or block, is also recorded at Sela, an isolated jagged hill precipitously overlooking Wadi el Hirsh.⁴⁶ Petra is far more extensive and complex than any of these religious centres, but it is comparable in its harmonisation with nature and in its over-all unity of elements. It now remains to consider the outer ring, as it were, of this unity, the various votive monuments centring in on the cult object of Dushara.

Niched baetyls have already been studied inasmuch as they represent the form of the Dushara block. What of their own role in cult? Is the presumption of their votive character justified or could they have been themselves cult objects? The few inscriptions accompanying such reliefs designate them as *msb'* or *nsyb* and recall the biblical *massebah*, which can be used for a cult object, as for example the *massebah* set up by Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:11-22 *et al.*). As evidence of veneration Starcky draws attention to the kind of baetyl which “comporte en effet assez fréquemment des alvéoles où verser des libations, un rebord ou des degrés pour y déposer des offrandes, des mortaises pour en accrocher d'autres”.⁴⁷ It is possible to see an idol referred to in an inscription at En-Numeir: “This is the statue (*salma*) of Obodat, the god, made by the sons of Honaino . . .”.⁴⁸ More daringly the inscriptions

identify the baetyls at ʿAin Shellalah, stating baldly “this is the goddess Allat of Bosra”, or “this is El ʿUzza and the Master of the Temple”. Savignac is surely correct in hesitating to press this identification.⁴⁹ The case need be no different from that of ikons of Christ set up in our churches as expressions of piety, where “this is” is equivalent to “this represents” and the object is meant to draw worship not to itself but to the one represented. Furthermore, Christian piety sees no incongruity in using such an image to direct worship to the object of worship in a sacred place, and even when marks of honour are paid to it these are understood to be deflected to the focus of religious attention. The positive argument in not seeing such reliefs as cult objects is the fact that so many have survived changes of religion. It is axiomatic that the most sacred articles have been marked out in times of crisis for special action, whether for reasons of protective reverence or of hostile reform, and that therefore only rare circumstances have saved them for the archaeologist’s shovel. By contrast, the baetyl niches of Petra, by the very fact of surviving, are shown to be little more sacred than coins and other functional articles which display the revered symbol of Dushara. If they are sacred, it is in perpetuating the religious attitude of those who had them carved.

The same can be said of other items such as carved altars and thrones: they may not be in themselves what they portray but simply expressions of piety. At Petra incense altars are recognisable by their corner horns. They are designated by the term *msgd'*,⁵⁰ which is derived from the root *sgd* “to prostrate, bow down in worship” and persists in Arabic as *Masjid* “mosque”. Such altars are also found at Medain Salih, but carved in bas-relief, so that they could not in fact function as real altars. There, too, the word *msgd'* occurs, but with a carved relief facing the Diwan which appears more like a baetyl than an incense altar.⁵¹ Given the etymology and broad application of the word, it is preferable to see in it a general term for an “adoring”, i.e., votive, monument, including representations of incense altars. A portrayal of an altar is as suitable a token of a worshipful attitude as any other. Other kinds of *ex votos* may be suspected in carved beasts and the like at Petra. If the choice of subject in votive monuments appear to us incongruous, again one need only to reflect on some of the votive objects to be found in Christian shrines.

For want of other evidence, one may look for the religious intent behind these monuments in the numerous commemorative inscriptions, often no more than graffiti, at Petra and other Nabataean sanctuaries. For example, near Ed-Deir is this inscription: “*zkyr* Obaido, son of Wakihel, and his companions of the

symposium of °Obodat".⁵² At Medain Salih: "zkyryn °Abd °obodat, °Aydo, Eudemos and the rest of their companions . . . because they have dedicated this place to the Master of the Temple . . . The Master of the Temple has said yes".⁵³ The initial word appears to be a verb, impersonally used, hence "may X (or X, Y and Z) be remembered." Similarly, at Ramm a Greek inscription begins: "mnēsthē Ananios . . .".⁵⁴ Are such formulae addressed to future visitors as a request for prayer, or to a god as a request to be always kept in mind in his sacred spot? The favourable response of the Master of the Temple, in the second example above, would support the latter interpretation. More clearly is this so in the case of those memorial inscriptions at Ramm which are addressed to Allat: zkrt Allatu . . . "May Allat remember X (or X, Y and Z)."⁵⁵ The desire seems to be to retain a perpetual remembrance of the votary before the presence of the god. It is possible that such memorials (and *a fortiori* votive monuments⁵⁶) sprang from, and gave lasting expression to, a religious act of the votary, as in the zkyryn example above. So, for example, Ben Sira (35, 7) seems to allude to a commemorative object as a permanent counterpart to sacrifice: "A virtuous man's sacrifice is acceptable, its memorial (*mnēmosynon*) will not be forgotten."

Petra is surely best known for its spectacular tombs hewn out of the cliffs, particularly those that face the temple across the valley. Such a tomb is more than an extravagant mausoleum—perhaps "funerary chapel" is a term more appropriate in view of the interior arrangements, which can include Dushara niches and a triclinium for the performance of funerary rites and commemorative repasts.⁵⁷

These monuments frequently incorporate a feature which is common to funerary architecture throughout the Near East, namely the pyramid or obelisk (fig. 3, a).⁵⁸ This device is carried over into obelisk reliefs, sometimes no more than outline tracings on rock surfaces (fig. 3, b). They can be found even in the interior of the great tombs. Accompanying inscriptions uniformly designate them as *nephesh*. Cognate variants of this word applied to funerary stelae, often in pyramidal form, are widespread. At Palmyra, both funerary towers and simple stelae surmounting tombs are termed *naphsha*.⁵⁹ Likewise a tomb tower at Serrin, Syria. Hebrew and Aramaic forms are found in rabbinic literature and as tomb epitaphs at Jerusalem and Beth Shearim (where, significantly, also occurs the term *bet naphsha*). *Nfs* is reported from South Arabia. A bilingual inscription renders the Nabataean *nephesh* in Greek as *stēlē*.⁶⁰ Hence it can be assumed that the *nephesh* reliefs at Petra are a local form of the free standing funerary obelisk.

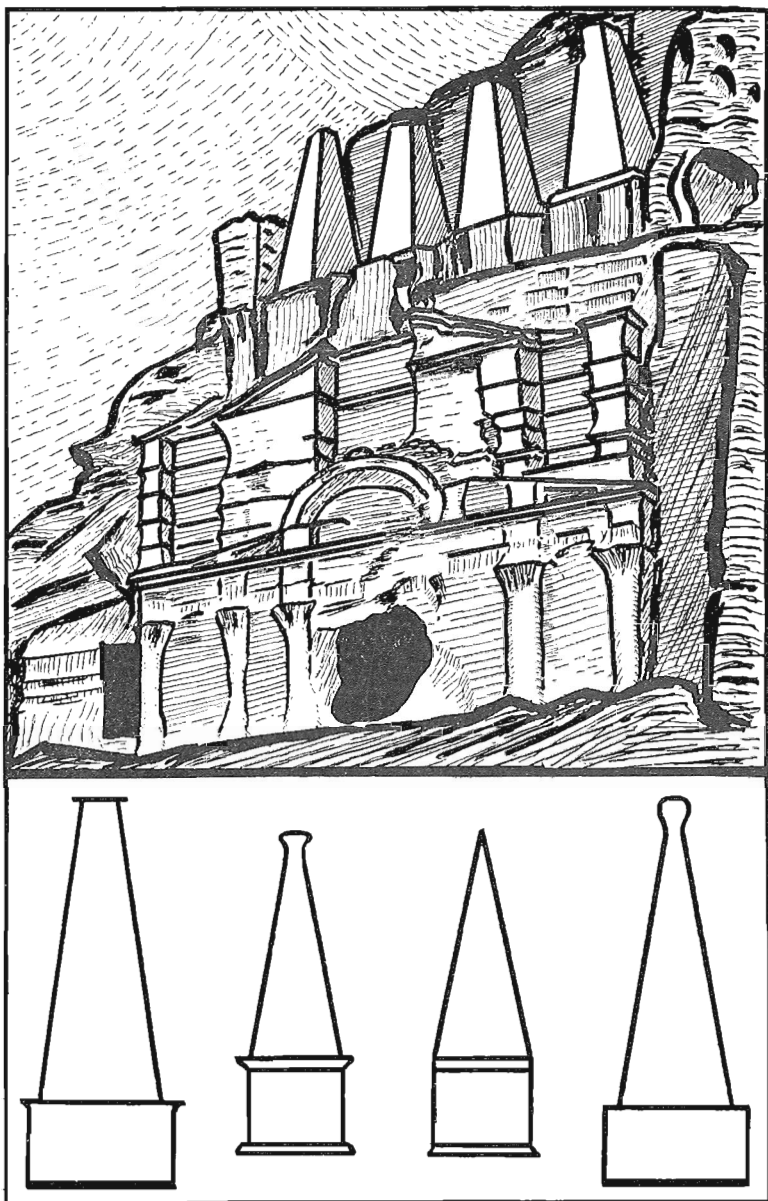


FIG.3: FUNERARY MONUMENTS AT PETRA
(a) large tomb topped with obelisks; (b) some nepesh outlines.

Such an obelisk is not simply a humbler version of the great tomb. A Madaba inscription reads: "This is the tomb and the two *nephesh* made by °Abd °obodat . . . for Ithaybel his father and for Ithaybel the son of °Abd °obodat . . ." ⁶¹ Tombs with multiple obelisks occur at Petra. There, and elsewhere, a tomb can be a family affair, but a *nephesh* belongs to an individual. ⁶² In fact the *nephesh* is not generally associated with a burial and on one at Petra it is specifically noted that its principal died and was buried at Jerash. ⁶³ Nor is it merely a memorial to the dead, for the formula "(this is) the *nephesh* of X" is quite different from the commemorative formulae considered above.

Nephesh, like the Arabic *nafs*, means "soul", and by extension, "person", and the standard studies have readily seen in the obelisk relief a means of providing the dead with a dwelling in the same way as a baetyl houses the god. ⁶⁴ So Starcky concludes: "Il y a là un curieux phénomène d'identification de la personne à l'objet qui la représente ou la signale, comme pour le bétyle qui d'une certaine manière est la divinité qu'il figure". ⁶⁵ Hence one is led to see in both the great tomb and the humble *nephesh* the desire to provide a continuing presence for the dead in the presence of Dushara.

THE HIGH PLACE

One cultic element which does not fit the general category of *anathemata* is the high place. Dalman has listed 36 of these, not to mention more recent discoveries, ⁶⁶ but the best known high place is that of Zibb °Atuf. Without repeating the details of description available in standard studies, ⁶⁷ it is enough to give an idea of a sandstone summit quarried away to form a platform, out of which has been carved a courtyard surrounded on three sides by a bench or triclinium (fig. 4). In the middle of the remaining side, isolated from the surrounding natural rock, is the stepped slotted block earlier proposed as a baetyl base. To the left of it is another, partly-hewn structure, supplied with steps to the side, a shallow circular depression on top and deep basins to the front and sides. There seems to be no reason to reject the general reconstruction of services associated with this installation: procession from the temple with the Dushara cult object (and possibly two other baetyls), ⁶⁸ the erection of the baetyl(s) in the slot of the principal stepped block, the immolation of the sacrificial victim on the structure to the side (whose saucer-shaped depression could serve to collect the blood shed), the anointing of the baetyls with the blood of sacrifice, the ablutions with water from the flanking

basins, the communion meal.⁶⁹ By-passing debate on these questions, the present study is more concerned with matters of the arrangement of cultic elements.

One problem is the nature of two large obelisks nearby. They are more than six metres high and have been cut out of the living rock. The amount of quarrying required to isolate these monuments would lead one to suspect that the work was contemporary with that of carving out the high place, and that despite the intervening distance they form one unit with the high place. It is unlikely that they are *nephesh* obelisks, for they do not conform with their standard shape and little additional sculpturing was needed to produce the requisite form. It is unlikely that they were baetyls, because the sacrificial arrangements of the high place are directed away from them. A personal impression is that they belong to the category of those pillars which frequently flanked the entrance of temples throughout the Near East. Here there is no temple, but they do stand at the junction of two approaches to the high place and as such have parallels in the *‘alamain*, or pairs of pillars, marking the entry points and procession routes in the *Haram* of Mecca.⁷⁰

Another problem is the orientation of the high place. It is directed due west, rather than towards the temple emplacement of the Dushara block, which is north-west. Yet its present form probably dates from the first century B.C.⁷¹ and so would be contemporaneous with the temple. Furthermore, whereas the exact focussing of the other monuments at Petra was limited by the rock faces from which they were carved, the same difficulty was absent on the quarried summit of Zibb *‘Atuf*. Of course, in the kind of ritual reconstructed above, the enthronement of a cult object on the high place would, for the time being, render irrelevant the relative location of the temple. Another solution might lie in noting that east of the high place rises the spectacular truncated cone of Umm el Biyara, which is the dominant natural feature in the whole valley (cf. fig. 4). The suggestion proposed is that this mountain set the orientation of the cultic complex of Petra even before the hey-day of that cult, as represented in the monuments here under study. The focus of cult was eventually located in a temple at the foot of the smaller mountain, el Habis, probably because of the convenience of the site and because, set at the lowest point of the valley, it became the centre of a natural amphitheatre, surrounded by tiers of “worshipping” stone monuments. But it still lay along an axis that had probably been established beforehand, and that axis terminated at Umm el Biyara. This would still leave most of the earlier monuments facing the direction of the newly placed cult

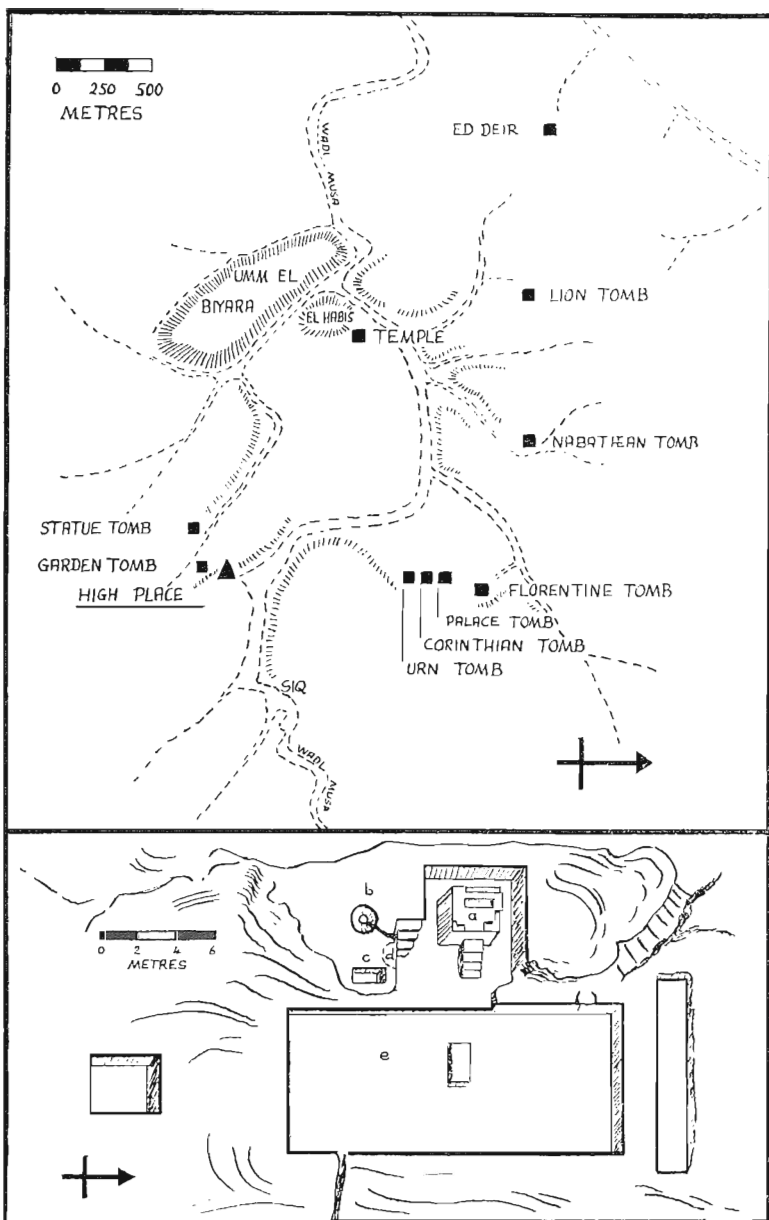


FIG. 4: PLAN OF PETRA AND OF THE HIGH PLACE

(a = proposed baetyl base, b = proposed altar, c and d = basins, e = court surrounded by triclinium).

object. Not so the high place, which, even if carved out at the time of change, may have been determined in its lay-out by a previous installation at that spot, as it frequently happens that earlier shrines exercise a conservative influence on successive cult structures on the same site. Hence, it is suggested, the orientation of the high place may be a witness to the prehistory of the Petra cult complex, when it and other elements focussed on a sacred mountain. A similar prehistory has been suggested for the high place of Khirbet et Tannur in its relationship to Jebel el-^cAban.⁷² If this hypothesis is correct, the history of religions is provided with another example of the development of the sacred pillar from the sacred mountain as an object of cult.

REFERENCES

1. The most recent, complete monograph is that of J. Starcky. "Pétra et la Nabaténe" *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* (DBS), VII (1964), cols. 886-1017. See also R. E. Brünnow & A. von Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia, I, II, III*, Strasbourg, 1904, 1905, 1909; G. Dalman, *Petra und seine Felsheiligtümer*, Leipzig, 1908, *Neue Petra-Forschungen und der heilige Felsen von Jerusalem*, Leipzig, 1912; A. Kammerer, *Pétra et la Nabaténe*, I II, Paris, 1929, 1930; G. and A. Horsfield, "Sela-Petra, the Rock, of Edom and Nabatene", *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*, VII (1938) 1-42, VIII (1939), 87-115, IX (1942), 105-204; R. Dussaud, *La pénétration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam*, Paris, 1955. Preliminary reports of the considerable archaeological activity over the last fifteen years have appeared regularly in *The Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* and the *Revue Biblique*.
2. *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, II, Leipzig, 1931, p. 713. This lexical entry would date about 1000 A.D., but that it is based on an early observation, probably contemporary, non-Christian and at close-hand, is suggested by (a) the tone of actuality and lack of antipathy, (b) the attention to detail concerning the black stone and the sacrifice, rather than to the tourist-pleasing adornments of the temple, (c) the Semitic background behind the Greek expressions for temple and votive offerings (*oikos, anathemata*). Worthy of comparison are temple descriptions by pagan writers such as Lucian, Pausanias, Tacitus, Herodian, Strabo, etc.
3. R. Dussaud, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
4. S. A. Cook. *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London, 1930, p. 25, Pl. XXXIII. J. Starcky. *DBS*, VII, col. 989-990, fig. 695.
5. *Ibid.*
6. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 990. Cf. col. 1009.
7. J. Milik, "Nouvelles Inscriptions Nabatéennes". *Syria* 35 (1958), pp. 246-249, argues that the attribution of this baetyl inscription is to a goddess named Bosra. J. Starcky, col. 989, prefers A^cra, under which name Dushara appears to have been venerated at Bosra.
8. J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen*, Paris, 1930, II, pp. 7-8. No. vi.

9. M. R. Savignac, "Le Sanctuaire d'Allat à Iram", *Revue Biblique* 43 (1934), p. 574, No. 16.
10. E. Stockton, "Sacred Pillars in the Bible", *Australian Biblical Review* (awaiting publication).
11. M. R. Savignac, *op. cit.* *Revue Biblique* 42 (1933), p. 414; 43 (1934), pp. 586-589.
12. M. R. Savignac & G. Horsfield, "Le Temple de Ramm", *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935), pp. 245-278. For the Nabataean graffiti addressed to Allat, see p. 265 f.
13. H. Lammens, "Le culte des bétyles et les processions religieuses chez les Arabes préislamites", *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'Hégire*, Beyrouth, 1928, pp. 152 ff.
14. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, cols. 978-9.
15. Cf. the inscription for the statue of "Obodat the god", Cantineau, *op. cit.* II, pp. 5-6.
16. M. R. Savignac, *op. cit.*, *Revue Biblique* 42 (1933), pp. 411-2.
17. M. R. Savignac, *op. cit.*, *Revue Biblique* 43 (1934), p. 582; J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1002; Jaussen & Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie*, I, Paris 1909, pp. 410 f. For a recent discussion on the Tanit symbol see W. Culican, "Problems of Phoenicio-Punic Iconography—a Contribution", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, I, 3 (1970), pp. 48-50. One could apply his expression, "a contrived expression of faith", to the Allat figure, which appears to be an anthropomorphic combination of symbols, including baetyl, base and crescent.
18. J. Starcky, *Bible et Terre Sainte*, 74 (mai 1965), pp. 10-11 (the figure is printed upside-down).
19. P. C. Hammond, "The Medallion and Block Relief at Petra", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 192 (1968), pp. 16-21.
20. Cf. S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London, 1930, pp. 144, 149-152, for summary discussion and references to triads at Elephantine, Byblos, Carthage, Amman, Palmyra, etc.
21. Cf. H. Lammens, *op. cit.* pp. 103-105, 119-121 for abundant references. See also the Koran 51; 19 (where the goddess Manat is also mentioned in the following verse, but seemingly separate from the other two) and C. M. Doughty's description of the three stones at Taif locally ascribed to El Hubbal, "El-Lata" and El 'Uzza (*Travels in Arabia Deserta*, London, 2nd ed. 1921, II, pp. 515-516).
22. Cf. S. A. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 24; J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1002 f.; "Le Temple Nabatéen de Khirbet Tannur", *Revue Biblique* 75 (1968), p. 227.
23. Cf. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 992; J. T. Milik, "Notes d'Epigraphie et de Topographie Palestiniennes", *Revue Biblique*, 66 (1959), p. 560. As a sample of other interpretations, Cantineau has "son épouse Harisa" (II, pp. 5, 112-113, *q.v.* for other references), C.I.S., II, 350 ". . . throno eius munito", Dussaud (*op. cit.* p. 41, f. 4) "son bétyle (bien) gardé". The suggestion of a baetyl rather than a base might find support in the kind of invocation wherein a list of deities includes reference to what could be called the characteristic symbol of a god. A tomb inscription from Medain Salih invokes the curse of "Dushara and his motab, Allat of Amnad, Manawatu and her qysh" (C.I.S., II, 198). At Salhad a temple was dedicated to "Allat and her wgr" (J. T. Milik, "Nouvelles Inscriptions Nabatéennes", *Syria* 35, 1958, p. 227). *Qysh* and *wgr* were undoubtedly cult objects associated with the respective goddesses—for further discussion, see J. Starcky, col. 1001. An oath formula from Elephantine reads, "by Yau the god, by the msgd' and by Anathyau" (A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century*,

- Oxford, 1923, No. 44). As regards the *motab* of Dushara, the question would be whether the base to the baetyl was sufficiently distinctive of the Dushara cult to be associated with him in such an invocation.
24. *DBS*, VII col. 1010.
 25. G. and A. Horsfield, "Sela-Petra, the Rock, of Edom and Nabatene", *QDAP* VII (1938), p. 34.
 26. Strabo, XVI, 4, 26: "They worship the sun, building an altar (*bomon*) on the top of the house, and pouring libations on it daily and burning incense".
 27. M. R. Savignac, "Le Haut Lieu de Pétra", *Revue Biblique* 12 (1903), p. 282.
 28. R. Dussaud, *op. cit.* p. 40; J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1013.
 29. Panarion 51. He intends to show that the idea of the virginal birth of a god is not unknown among the pagans and notes that such an event was celebrated at Alexandria, Petra and Elusa on the 6th January. In the temple (*idoleion*) of Petra "they chant hymns in Arabic, both to the Virgin, calling her in Arabic *Chaamou*, that is *Kore* or rather "Virgin", and to him whom she has brought forth, *Dusares*, that is the only-begotten of the Master (*monogenes tou despotou*). *Mu* and *beta* being easily confused both in writing and pronunciation, *Chaamou* would need to be read as *Kaabu*, i.e., in Arabic *Ka'bu*, to allow the etymology Epiphanius suggests.
 30. Cf. the 3rd century funerary inscription reported by Jaussen and Savignac, *Mission Archéologique en Arabie*, I, Paris, 1909, pp. 172-179.
 31. E.g., J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 992; A. Kammerer, *op. cit.*, p. 394; R. Dussaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.
 32. H. St. J. Philby, "Mecca", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 12th ed., 15-141a.
 33. J. Starcky, *DBS* VII, col. 1005.
 34. M. R. Savignac & G. A. Horsfield, "Le Temple de Ramm", *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935), pp. 245-278; D. Kirkbride, "Le Temple Nabatéen de Ramm", *Revue Biblique* 67 (1960), pp. 65-92. The identification of a baetyl beside an altar between two columns against the northern wall of the Temple (*RB*, 1935, p. 256 f.) needs to be treated with caution: it measures 72 cm. (high) x 64 cm. (wide) x 41 cm. and with these proportions it appears to be rather the base for a (portable?) cult object.
 35. N. Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins*, New York, 1966, ch. III ff. J. Starcky, "Le Temple Nabatéen de Khirbet Tannur", *Revue Biblique*, 75 (1968), pp. 206-235, examines Glueck's thesis that the central cubical object, a triple box-in-a-box structure, is an altar but concludes that there is equal weight in the evidence for the alternative thesis, viz. that it is a cella.
 36. J. Clédat, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 12 (1913), pp. 145-148, identified the smaller of two notable buildings of this Nabataean community as cultic, the larger as civic. The latter was recognised as having a temple plan by J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 980; *Syria*, 32 (1955), p. 153; and by D. Kirkbride, *Revue Biblique* 67 (1960), pp. 89-91.
 37. H. C. Butler, *Syria* (Publication of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-1905), Leyden, 1909, IIA, pp. 374-399, fig. 324; pp. 428-431, fig. 371; pp. 441-443, fig. 387.
 38. G. R. H. Wright, "The Bronze Age Temple at Amman", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 78 (1966), p. 355. For useful comparative studies of the temples discussed here, see G. R. H. Wright, *ZAW* 78 (1966), pp. 351-357; 80 (1968), pp. 9-16; *PEQ* 93 (1961), pp. 8-37; D. Kirkbride, *RB* 67 (1960), pp. 87-91; J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, cols. 973-981.

39. See G. R. H. Wright, "Structure of Qasr Bint Far'un: A Preliminary Review", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 93 (1961), pp. 8-37; J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, cols. 975-978. Nabataean parallels of this more evolved temple plan are drawn from Dhat Ras, Dhiban, Qasr Rabbah, Mhayy, Thawaneh, Jerash (?), and more recently from Rawwafah (P. J. Parr, G. L. Harding & J. E. Dayton, "Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia, 1968", *Bulletin* Nos. 8-9 of the Institute of Archaeology, London, 1970, pp. 215-219, fig. 8).
40. However, the suggestion that this chamber housed a statue as its cult object has been proposed on the evidence of a hand fragment of a huge statue (but found outside at the N.E. corner of the podium); cf. P. J. Parr, "Découvertes au Sanctuaire du Qasr à Petra" *Syria* 45 (1968), pp. 21-22.
41. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1009, notes that the baetyl relief (contrary to the case of the *nepeshi*) is normally placed in a niche, which is a replica of the edicule in the temple. M. R. Savignac & G. A. Horsfield, "Le Temple de Ramm", *Revue Biblique*, 44 (1935), p. 249, f. 1, make a comparison between the facade of the Ramm cella and the entrance to the Diwan (Medain Salih), El Madras and En-Numeir (Petra) and other Nabataean sanctuaries.
42. Jaussen & Savignac, *Mission Archéologique en Arabie*, I, Paris, 1909, apply to other cult centres the impression gained at Medain Salih: "Le site des installations cultuelles révèle toujours une préoccupation identique plus déterminée que leur aménagement; celui-ci varie beaucoup, celui-là est infailliblement en harmonie avec la nature, et, suivant le cas, pittoresque, mystérieux ou grandiose". These authors recall a similar observation made by Lagrange about Petra (*RB*, 1898, p. 180 ff.—unfortunately unavailable for this study) and their own impressions at Avdat (*RB*, 1905, p. 235 ff.). It is noteworthy that Nabataean temples, contrary to general practice in the ancient Near East, are not consistent in orientation.
43. J. Starcky, "Le Temple Nabatéen de Khirbet Tannur", *Revue Biblique*, 75 (1968), pp. 208-209.
44. M. R. Savignac, "Le Sanctuaire d'Allat à Iram", *Revue Biblique*, 42 (1933), pp. 407-411; 43 (1934), pp. 581-582.
45. Jaussen & Savignac, *Mission Archéologique en Arabie*, I, Paris, 1909, pp. 405-441.
46. N. Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan*, New Haven, 1940, pp. 166-171. Worthy of comparison are the hewn-out chamber facing Ed-Deir and those of El Madras and En-Numeir, all at Petra.
47. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1010.
48. J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen*, Paris, 1930, II, pp. 5-6; C.I.S., II, 354.
49. M. R. Savignac, "Le Sanctuaire d'Allat à Iram", *Revue Biblique* 43 (1934), p. 589.
50. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, cols. 1007, 1013.
51. Starcky (*DBS*, VII, col. 989) describes it as an altar but, unlike the Petra incense altars (which are paralleled at Medain Salih), it is tall and lacking horns. He likens it to what he sees as another type of altar, which is especially at home in the Hauran. But apart from the term *msgd'* in dedications is it certain that they are all altars? One type from Southern Hauran (E. Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909*, IV A, Nos. 23, 24, 38, 96) has base and capital as if to support an object and in this case it would be feasible that both support and object supported be comprehended under the designation *msgd'* of the inscription. Cantineau gives both "stèle votive" and "autel" as meaning for *msgd'* (*Le Nabatéen*, II, p. 116, q.v. for references).

52. J. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Cf. M. R. Savignac, "Le Sanctuaire d'Allat à Iram", *Revue Biblique*, 42 (1933), p. 415.
53. J. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 37; C.I.S., II, 235.
54. M. R. Savignac, *op. cit.*, RB 42 (1933), p. 406.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 412, 418-422.
56. E. Stockton, "Stones at Worship", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1970), p. 80.
57. For a possible allusion to such repasts and the associated fraternity organisation (*mrzli*), note the *zkyr* inscription from Ed-Deir (*v. supra*; J. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 7). Cf. R. Dussaud, *La Pénétration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam*, Paris, 1955, p. 33.
58. Cf. E. Will, "La Tour Funéraire de Palmyre", *Syria* 26 (1949), pp. 87-117; "La Tour Funéraire de la Syrie et les Monuments apparentés", *Syria*, 26 (1949), pp. 258-312.
59. For this and the following information, with references, see J. Starcky, "Palmyre", *DBS*, VI, 1960, cols. 1088, 1091.
60. J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen*, II, 25; C.I.S., II, 192.
61. J. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, II, p. 25; C.I.S., II, 196.
62. Concerning the tomb at Niha, Mouterde (*Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph*, XXIX, 1951-1952, p. 53) notes that it has "autant de cônes ou pyramides que la tombe contenait de defunts". Cf. the funerary monument with seven pyramids set up by Simon for his father, brothers and himself (1 Macc. 13:28).
63. J. Starcky, "Nouvelle Epitaphe Nabatéenne", *Revue Biblique* 72 (1965), pp. 95-97.
64. It seems anachronistic to press the distinction between the spiritual soul (*ruah*) and the vegetative soul (*nephesh*), which alone is given an earthly home and periodic nourishment in the Nabataean funerary arrangements (R. Dussaud, *op. cit.*, p. 32 ff). Such thinking belongs rather to Pauline and Scholastic psychology. It could hardly be said of the vegetative soul that "this *nephesh* is united to Shams (the sun)" (cf. J. Cantineau, *Inventaire des Inscriptions de Palmyre*, VIII, Nos. 6, 8, 37).
65. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VI, col. 1091.
66. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, cols. 1006-1007, signals the importance of high places on El Khubthah and El Habis. The identification of the Conway High Place (W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 1960, p. 163) is debatable: P. J. Parr, "Le Conway High Place à Pétra", *Revue Biblique* 69 (1962), pp. 64-79, sees it as the emplacement for a Nabataean round-tower fortification (cf. G. & A. Horsfield, *QDAP*, VII, 1938, p. 7).
67. E.g., J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1006; *Bible et Terre Sainte* 74 (mai 1965), p. 12 ff.; M. R. Savignac, "Le Haut-Lieu de Pétra", *Revue Biblique* 12 (1903), pp. 280-291; S. R. Driver, *Modern Research as illustrating the Bible*, (Schweich Lectures 1908), London, 1909, pp. 61-62.
68. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1006. Note the importance of the sacred procession or *tawaf* among the Arabs (cf. H. Lammens, "Le culte des bétyles et les processions religieuses chez les Arabes préislamites", *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'Hégire*, Beyrouth, 1928, pp. 101-179). A procession, for the purpose of enthroning a camel-borne baetyl in the temple, is illustrated by a bas-relief from Palmyra (H. Seyrig, *Syria*, XV, 1934, p. 159 ff., pl. XIX). As hinted above, some such ritual of bringing forth the Dushara block from the *ka^cbah* may lie behind the enigmatic text of Epiphanius. Dussaud (*op. cit.*, pp. 40-42) considers that the slot of the quadrangular block of the high place, with a length-to-width ratio of 3:1, was intended for the insertion of three

- baetyls. The resulting combination—three baetyls, base, flight of three steps—corresponds with what is represented on the El Umtaiyye lintel and on the Bosra coins described above.
69. This form of sacrifice, rather than holocaust, conforms with the testimony of Suidas and Strabo and with what is known of Arab sacrifices (cf. J. Starcky, *DBS*, VII, col. 1007; W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 3rd ed., New York, 1956, pp. 338 ff.). Yet it would be difficult to sustain that holocaust did not exist at all among the Arabs or Nabataeans, as witness the burnt remains, presumably of sacrifice, found in the cella at Khirbet et-Tannur (N. Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins*, New York, 1966, pp. 90 ff.).
 70. H. St. J. Philby, "Mecca", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 12th ed., 15-139^b.
 71. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Pelican Books), 1960, pp. 163-165; A-G. Barrois, *Manuel d'archéologie biblique*, II, Paris, 1953, p. 353.
 72. J. Starcky, "Le Temple Nabatéen de Khirbet Tannur", *Revue Biblique* 75 (1968), p. 209.
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