

SPAIN IN THE BIBLE: FROM ‘TARSHISH’ TO ‘SEFARAD’*

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Introduction

Biblical narratives describe that, between the 8th–6th centuries B.C., Hebrews fell captive to Tyrians (Book of Amos), were deported from their homeland (Book of Obadiah), were sold to the Greeks (Book of Joel¹), and were traded by the Tyrians (Book of Ezekiel²).

Nearly two thousand years later, in 1392 A.D., the Archdeacon Ferrand Martinez instigated the well-known massacre of Seville, in which a mob attacked and killed 4,000 Jews. The rest of Seville’s Jewish population was subjected to a ‘convert or die’ reality; and over the next 100 years, many thousands of Jews across Spain were killed.

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¹ Joel 3:4 “And also, what are you to Me, Tyre and Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying Me recompense? And if you are recompensing Me, I will swiftly return your recompense upon your head.”

A. Kapelrud, “Joel Studies”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68-4, 1949, 154.

² Ezekiel 27:13 “Javan, Tubal and Meshech, they were your traders; with the lives of men and vessels of bronze they paid for your merchandise”.



Exhibit 1: The Alhambra Decree

Worsening violence against the Jews culminated when, on March 31, 1492 A.D., Spain issued the Alhambra Decree (see Exhibit 1), or the Edict of Expulsion, against the Jews to ‘convert or leave.’ Between March and August 1492, more violence ensued. Based on the work of Baroja³, 250,000 ‘conversos’ lived in Spain around 1541; it can be estimated that less than 200,000 were converted in 1492. Meanwhile, they were monitored by Spain’s most fearful organization: the Inquisition.

The Jews who were unwilling to forfeit their beliefs and traditions were forced to sell their property at bargain prices and escape for their lives. Their numbers have been estimated as high as 130,000 households (or about 800,000 people)⁴ to less than 200,000 people.⁵ They left Spain in 1492 went mostly to Portugal and other Mediterranean countries (such as Greece, Italy and Turkey), as well as to Northern Africa (Morocco, Tunis, and others). They were self-labeled ‘Sefaradim’. The name ‘Sefaradim’ (also ‘Spharadim’, ‘Sfaradim’ or ‘Sephardim’) comes from the biblical word ‘Sefarad’ (‘Spharad’, ‘Sfarad’ or ‘Sepharad’). ‘Sefarad’ was the name given by Spain’s Jews to the land where they were born, raised their children, built their homes, and buried their ancestors for over 1500 years.

The Hebrews of biblical times used to call south-western Spain (today’s Andalusia) ‘Tarshish’. When did the Bible rename Tarshish as ‘Sefarad’? When

³ J. Baroja, *Los Judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*, 3 vols., Ediciones Arron, Madrid 1961, 1: 189-90.

⁴ H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von dem ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (History of the Jews), Amsterdam, 1898.

⁵ H. Kamen, “The Expulsion: Purpose and Consequence”, in *Spain and the Jews: The Sephardi Experience, 1492 and After*, Elie Kedourie, ed., London 1992, 74-91. H. Beinart, *Gerush Sefarad*, Jerusalem 1995, 269-75. M. Kriegel and B. Ron, “Diyun Zmanim: Gerush yehudei Sefarad,” *Zemanim* 41, Spring 1992, 6.

was the word ‘Sefarad’ used for the first time? When was the first time the word ‘Sefarad’ was recognized as Spain? Some authors are inclined to believe that Sefarad could have been Sparda (Sardes) in Lidia (Asia Minor), or Shaparda in Babylon, or Sabariam nearby Hama (Syria)⁶. Saint Jeronimo de Estridon’s 4th century A.D. Vulgata (the Bible in Latin) likely translated the Hebrew word b’Sefarad (where the prepositional first letter b’ means “in”) as Bosphoro.⁷ The answers to these questions and more will be addressed below.

1. 8th Century B.C.

In the first half of Jeroboam’s II reign (786-746 B.C.), the Northern Kingdom of Israel prospered. The Northern Kingdom of Israel grew trade with Tyre and Sidon, where the Hebrew tribe of Asher and its descendants lived since the 14th century B.C.⁸

Tyre and Sidon likewise grew their trade, expanding their maritime commerce to the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula.

⁶ J. Pérez, *Los judíos en España*, Marcial Pons Historia, Madrid 2005, 11-12.

⁷ *Vulgate* (Latin).

⁸ About the allotment of territories to the Tribe of Asher in the 14th century B.C. [Joshua 19: 24-31]:

Joshua 19:28 “And Ebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, to great **Sidon**”

Joshua 19:29 “And the border turned to Ramah, and to the fortress city **Tyre**; and the border turned to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof were to the sea from the lot of Achzib.”

About King David’s Census (10th century B.C.):

2 Samuel 24:6 “And they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan to the city of Jaan and round about to **Sidon**.”

2 Samuel 24:7 “And they came to the stronghold of **Tyre** and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites and they went out to the South of Judah, to Beer-Sheba.”

About the Prophet Elijah visiting Zarephath (9th century B.C.):

Kings 17:9 “Arise, go to Zarephath which belongs to **Sidon** and sojourn there. Behold I have commanded a widow there to feed you.”

Non biblical sources include: N. Ganor, *Who were the Phoenicians?* Kotarim International Publishing, 2009; P. Bordehuil et Mme. Claude Doumet-Serhal, “Un Nouveau Temple Phenicien a Sidon”. *Academie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres*. Janvier-Mars. Paris 2013. (Finding relates to 8th century B.C.)

1.1. Adversity hits the Kingdom of Israel

1.1.1. Tyre and Slavery (762 B.C.)

In 762 B.C., Tyre underwent civil war.⁹ Whether this had any implications on the Hebrew Tribe of Asher residing in the city is not known. However, this internal conflict weakened the coastal cities in the Levant and they lost their long held positions of influence. After Tyre's civil war, a major change in values and behavior followed.

One of Tyre's main commercial activities evolved to include slave-trading, and the enslavement of Hebrews. "They sold whole communities of captives to Edom."¹⁰ This was the breaking point between Hebrews and Canaanite-Tyrians and the moment when the Sidonians and Tyrian-Canaanites collectively became Phoenicians.

During the reign of Jeroboam II, the Hebrew prophet Amos lived in the Kingdom of Judah but preached in the northern Kingdom of Israel. Around 762 B.C, because of Tyre's slave-trading of captured Hebrews, Amos prophesied Tyre's destruction.

Contemporary to Amos, the Homeric poems *The Iliad* and its sequel, *The Odyssey*, were written.¹¹ Historical and literary analysis, most commonly date these works around the mid-8th century B.C.¹² Recent statistical modelling, based on language evolution, dates the writing somewhere between 760 B.C.–710 B.C.¹³

These poems were the first to label those who lived in the coastal cities of the Levant as "Phoenicians." *The Iliad* praised the Phoenicians as being great

⁹ H. Graetz, *History of the Jews - Vol. 1 - From the Earliest Period to the Death of Simon the Maccabee (135 B.C.)*, 1891, 233.

¹⁰ Amos 1:9 "So said the Lord: For three sins of Tyre, yea for four, I will not return them; Because they delivered a whole captivity to Edom and did not remember the brotherly covenant."

¹¹ P. Vidal-Naquet, "Le monde d'Homère" (The World of Homer), 2000, 19. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are considered among the oldest extant works of Western literature written in Homeric Greek, a literary amalgam of Ionic Greek and other dialects.

¹² R. Fox, *Travelling Heroes: Greeks and their myths in the epic age of Homer*, Random House, New York 2009, 360-4; R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982.

¹³ E. Altschuler, et al., *Linguistic evidence supports date for Homeric epics*. Wiley online: <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/bies.201200165/full>>, 2013.

merchants who barter their goods and the produce of their artisans around the world.¹⁴ But *The Odyssey* changed its tone and described the Phoenicians as slave-handlers, deceptive and tricky.

Tyre's slave industry also included piracy in the Mediterranean and became one of the pillars of its economy.¹⁵ Were the Phoenicians enslaving their Hebrew neighbors with whom they lived for more than six hundred years? Were they only enslaving members of the Hebrew Tribe of Asher who resided in Tyre and Sidon? Or were they also enslaving citizens of the Kingdom of Israel?

1.1.2. Big Earthquake (760 B.C.)

Amos predicted an earthquake two years before it happened.¹⁶ Geologists found evidence of a big earthquake throughout Israel, Jordan and Tyre, ranging between magnitude 7.8 and 8.2¹⁷. Based on stratigraphic analysis of the destruction debris, archeologists Yigael Yadin¹⁸ and Israel Finkelstein¹⁹ dated the earthquake at 760 B.C.

Archaeologists found ceramics in Tell Abu Hawam (today's Bat-Galim in Haifa, Israel) that also date to the time of Hazor's earthquake in 760 B.C. Other similar ceramics were likewise found in Tartessus (today's Andalucia, Spain) that match the Tell Abu Hawam ceramics, suggesting a relationship between the regions. The catastrophic effects of this earthquake could have promoted additional emigration to the western Mediterranean,²⁰ including the area of Gadir (Cadiz, Spain), and the settlement of Doña Blanca in the Cadiz Bay.

¹⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, 23: 744-746.

¹⁵ Herodotus, II, 54-55.

¹⁶ Amos 1:1 "The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake."

Amos 1:10 "And I will send fire into the wall of Tyre, and it shall consume its palaces."

¹⁷ S. Austin, G. Franz, and E. Frost, "Amos's Earthquake: An Extraordinary Middle East Seismic Event of 750 B.C.," *International Geology Review* 42, 2000, 657-671.

¹⁸ Y. Yadin, *Hazor the Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*, Random House, New York 1975.

¹⁹ I. Finkelstein, "Hazor and the North in the Iron Age: A Low Chronology Perspective", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 1999, 55-70.

²⁰ C. Aznar, J. Balensi, and M. Herrera, "Las excavaciones de Tell Abu Hawam en 1985-86 y la cronología de la expansion fenicia hacia occidente", *Gerion*, 23/1, 2005, 17-38.

1.1.3. Assyrian Attacks (740 B.C.–721 B.C.)

Tiglath Pielser III (745 B.C.–727 B.C.) brought Assyria out of its period of weakness, much to the fear of Assyria's enemies. His administrative and military reforms introduced a standing army, extensive communication lines and a sufficient supply of horses, metal, arrows and other military needs.²¹ Upon conquering a new territory, an Assyrian official was put in charge to supervise and ensure Assyrian interests, especially tribute payments. With his energetic campaigning and brutally effective Assyrian armies, many Levant coastal cities were doomed to lose their independence once again.

Continuous military aggressions by the Assyrians prior to the destruction of Samaria forced Hebrews of Northern Israel and other habitants of the coastal cities to escape. "Migration ... was responsible for the emigration of a great mass of Dan, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali [All northern Hebrew tribes], who thus evaded the captivity under Assyria [762–676 B.C.] and turned nomad."²² Assyrian wars also resulted in Phoenicians transporting Hebrews as slaves both eastward and westward into neighboring and distant countries.²³

1.1.4. Destruction of Samaria (721 B.C.)

For three years, under Shalmaneser V (727 B.C.–722 B.C.), Assyria besieged Israel's capital, Samaria. In 721 B.C., under a new king, Sargon II, Assyria destroyed Samaria and took 27,000 Israelites away as slaves. The Northern Kingdom of Israel vanished,²⁴ and henceforth became known as the 'ten lost tribes of Israel.'

As it had done with other nations it conquered, Assyria deported and dispersed large numbers of people. It made the Kingdom of Judah a vassal state. A "torrent of refugees"²⁵ moved into Judah, grew its population, and imported polytheistic practices from the Northern Kingdom.

²¹ M. Healy, *The Ancient Assyrians*, Osprey, New York 1991, 17-24.

²² G. Gair, *Geographical Environment and Race Movements*, 1932, read before the Victoria Institute or Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

²³ H. Williams, *The Historians' History of the World, Vol. 2: Israel, India, Persia, Phoenicia, Minor Nations of Western Asia*, Outlook Company, 1904.

²⁴ C. Johns, "The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel", *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 30, 1908, 107-115.

²⁵ I. Finkelstein and N. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, Simon and Shuster, 2002, 27.

1.2. Archeological findings in Spain

Can any evidence be found in Spain that correlates with a Hebrew presence there, during the 8th century B.C.?

1.2.1. The Signet Ring of Puerta de Tierra (Gadir, Cadiz)



Exhibit 2: The signet ring of Puerta de Tierra.
a) Delgado's sketch²⁶ b) The MAN photograph²⁷

The golden signet ring found in 1873 in Puerta de Tierra, Cadiz, Spain (Exhibit 2) belongs to the second quarter of the eighth century B.C., a time of intense trading activity between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon. Archeological evidence found in Tyre and Sidon confirms Hebrew presence in those cities. It is likely that the Hebrews living in the region of Tyre, Sidon, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, reached the coasts of Tarshish. Paleographic, onomastic, and iconographic studies show that this signet-ring is of Hebrew origin from northern Israel.²⁸

1.2.2. Samaritan Ceramics

Doña Blanca was founded in the 8th century as an offspring of Gadir/Cadiz. There is ceramic evidence confirming immigration of ‘Orientals’ to Tarshish.

²⁶ A. Delgado, “Nuevos métodos de la clasificación de las medallas autónomas de España”, Tomo I, Prolegónomos, Sevilla 1873, CXXXI.

²⁷ Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid.

²⁸ C. Zorea, “Was the 8th century B.C. signet-ring of Cadiz, Spain, Phoenician or Hebrew?”, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, Madrid, Septiembre-Diciembre 2016, tomo CCXIII, cuaderno III, pp. 455-496

Among the many pieces of ceramics found are the so called “ceramics of Samaria”²⁹ from the 8th century B.C. “Until now the archeological testimony confirms that the presence of Phoenicians in the south of the Peninsula is from the first half of the eighth century and in the area of Cadiz not before 770–760 B.C.”³⁰

Samaria was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, indicating that it was possible for the Hebrews of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to commerce with Tarshish, not only through non-Hebrew Sidonian and Tyrian Canaanites, but also directly through the members of the Hebrew Tribe of Asher who resided in Sidon and Tyre. The tragic events that occurred in the Levant from 762 B.C. to 721 B.C. brought ‘oriental refugees’ to Tarshish’s shores. Later, these oriental refugees would be labeled ‘colonizers’.

2. 7th Century B.C.

At the turn of and into the 7th century B.C., the Assyrians constantly pressured and attacked the Phoenician coastal territories of the Levant:

In 701 B.C., Assyrian King Sennacherib crushed a serious revolt by coastal cities and forced Tyre’s King Elulaeus to flee to Cyprus, where he died.

After Sidon revolted against the Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon (681 B.C.–669 B.C.), he sacked and destroyed it in 676 B.C., and in its place built a governor’s residence, called Kar-Esarhaddon, for a new Assyrian province.

The next Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (668 B.C.–627 B.C.) also laid siege to Tyre.

3. 6th Century B.C.

At the end of the 7th century B.C. and the beginning of the 6th century B.C., the Levant region suffered devastation from the Babylonian invasion. Babylon’s Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Assyrians and repeatedly attacked the Kingdom of Judah. Meanwhile, the Greeks developed a slave-based economy, relying on Phoenicians for slaves. The Greeks (Ionians) found colonies in France and Spain.

²⁹ J. López Amador, *et al.*, *Tartessos y Fenicios en Campillo (El Puerto de Santa María, Cadiz). Una aportación a la cronología de la Edad de l Bronce en Europa Occidental*. El Puerto de Santa María 1996, 97.

³⁰ J. Lopez Amador, *et al.*, 109 (translated).

A critical twenty-three (23) year chronology includes Babylon’s attacks and four Hebrew deportations:

- 605 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar took over the Babylonian Empire.*
- 605 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho (Battle of Carchemish on the Euphrates River).*
- 605 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar attacked the Philistines (Egyptian allies)*
- 605 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Hebrew King Jehoiakim paid tribute to Babylonian King. **First Deportation.***
- 604 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Ashkelon (Main Philistine city).*
- 601 B.C. *After four years, Hebrew King Jehoiakim stopped paying tribute.*
- 600 B.C. *Phocaea (Ionians) founded Massalia (Marseilles).*
- 598 B.C. *Second siege of Jerusalem. Death of Jehoiakim and the exile of King Jeconiah, his court and others.*
- 597 B.C. *Jehoiakim’s uncle, Zedekiah, became Hebrew King.*
- 597 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar pillaged Jerusalem and its Temple. **Second Deportation.***
- 594 B.C. *Hebrew King Zedekiah entered an alliance with Pharaoh Hophra and revolted against Babylon.*
- 588 B.C. *City of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Many were killed. The most important and valuable citizens were exiled. **Third Deportation.***
- 586 B.C. *Babylonians attacked and destroyed mainland Tyre.*
- 586-573 B.C. *Babylonians besieged the island of Tyre.*
- 586 B.C. *The Greeks (Ionians) from Massalia founded Emporion (Strabo Geography 3.4.8).*
- 582 B.C. *Gedaliah the Babylonian-appointed governor of the ‘Yehud Province’ was assassinated. Many fled to Egypt. **Fourth Deportation.***

3.1. Books of Obadiah, Joel, and Ezekiel (biblical narratives)

The biblical Book of Obadiah is the fourth of twelve Old Testament books that are named after the Minor Prophets. Obadiah has only one chapter consisting of twenty one verses, and is the shortest of all Old Testament books. The Book announces that the Day of Judgment is near for all nations, when all evil will be punished and the righteous renewed. The final verses prophesy the restoration of the Jews to their native land. The Book of Obadiah relates to a vision concerning

the fall of Edom for having helped the Babylonians loot the city of Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar's attacks. Obadiah 1:20 reads in Hebrew:

וּגְלַת הַחַל הַזֶּה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר כְּנַעֲנִים עַד צָרְפַת וּגְלַת יְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּסַפְרַד יִרְשׁוּ אֶת עַרְי הַנֶּגֶב

Existing English translations of Obadiah 1:20 have not always captured the essence of Obadiah's words.³¹ First, many versions of the Bible translate the Hebrew word 'galut' as 'captivity', although the more correct translation is 'exile'. Obadiah used the word exile ('galut' in Hebrew) and not captivity ('avdut' in Hebrew), hinting there could have also been free (not just enslaved) Hebrews in the land of Sefarad.

Second, Obadiah's verse refers to צָרְפַת (pronounced Tzarfat) which relates to France. This is different from צָרְפָתָה (pronounced Tzarephatah), which relates to Zarephath, Sarepta or Sariptu, a village 8.5 miles south of Sidon and 14 miles north of Tyre. (See 1 Kings 17:9).

As such, a reasonable translation of Obadiah 1:20 reads: "And the exile started, for the people of Israel being Canaanites, as far as Tzarfat (France) and those exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sefarad (Spain) shall inherit the cities of the Negev" (Translation by the author).

3.2. Dating the Books of Obadiah, Joel and Ezekiel

The authorship of Obadiah is difficult to date. Several authors believe that the components of the Book of Obadiah were written in different periods. Some scholars assume that verses 1-9 constitute a pre-exilic oracle, and verses 10-21 are a post-exilic complement. There are some who believe it was possibly written about 853 B.C.–841 B.C. Others believe it relates to the period 605 B.C.–586 B.C., when Jerusalem was attacked and destroyed by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and which led to the 'Babylonian exile' recorded in Psalm 137. Most scholars accept the later date, meaning it was written after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.³²

³¹ <<https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Obadiah%2020>>

³² B. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, CA 1999, 367. K. Koch, *The Prophets: The Babylonian and Persian Periods*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1982, 83-84. S. Pagán, "Obadiah", *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Edited by Leander E. Keck et al., Abingdon Press, Nashville 1996: 436. P. Raabe, *Obadiah: A New Translation with Introduction and*

The Book of Joel is easier to date. It was written in a post-exilic period after the destruction of the First Temple and the construction of the Second Temple (in 516 B.C).

The Book of Ezekiel was probably written by Ezekiel himself. He was born in 622 B.C. in Jerusalem and died in 570 B.C. He witnessed the Babylonian attacks.

3.3. Mogador

Better iron work meant better weaponry. As such, the conquering Assyrians demanded part of their tribute from Phoenicia in the form of iron. Phoenicia ended up sourcing this iron as tribute from one of its colonies, Carthage, and explored ways to produce more. It faced several challenges:

- 1) Where to find iron-ores?
- 2) Where to place these factories?
- 3) Where to find skilled operators?
- 4) How to man the operation? and
- 5) How to manage the production, transportation and trade of the newly manufactured products?

During the 8th century B.C., Phoenicia developed facilities all along the southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula. One of the regions selected for settlement was the territory of Velez Malaga, near the estuaries of the rivers as documented in the archaeological sites of Toscanos and Chorreras. Phoenicia selected this location based on the following strategic criteria: a) access to drinkable water; b) a defensible position; c) good communication with the interior; and d) access to fertile land.

During the same period, Phoenicia also developed a chain of facilities along the African coast of modern-day Morocco, including Lixus, Chellah, and Mogador. The island of Mogador would become the base for iron operations. Located south of modern-day Casablanca and four hundred miles south of Cadiz, Spain, it is the main isle of the Purpuraires Islands. It is less than 2 miles long and a mile wide, located only a mile from the Essaouira beaches. It was located fifteen miles southwest of the main iron-ore.

In 1956-57, site excavations in Mogador exposed abundant slag, nozzles and blackened mold pieces made of ceramics (in which mineral was melted) and

Commentary. The Anchor Bible 24D, Doubleday, New York 1996.

considerable amounts of charred wood.³³ Currently, the Archeological Museum of Rabat houses several nozzles of vitrified ceramics, pieces of molds, and furnaces found at this site.³⁴

“The place from where the displaced came to the island is a very relevant question that has resisted analysis.”³⁵ What is the essence of what the archeologists found that could provide some hints about the kind of workers who lived in Mogador? They came from different areas of the Levant.

Why did people from different origins and distinctive religious-beliefs find themselves in the same spot, thousands of miles from their own homeland? How did they live in Mogador?³⁶

- 1) Living places were deficient.
- 2) Basic elements common in ‘normal’ Phoenician housing were totally missing.
- 3) Furniture was inferior to what was found in typical Phoenician colonies.
- 4) Ceramics for daily use showed signs of having been repaired.
- 5) There were no pottery shops on the island.
- 6) Broken lamps were replaced by very rudimentary ones.
- 7) The quantity of graffiti on the ceramics (used in the tableware and amphorae) was very unique to this particular place – a very unusual element in comparison with other Phoenician establishments.

³³ C. Aranegui, C. Gómez Bellard, and A. Jodin, “Los fenicios en el Atlántico. Perspectivas de nuevas excavaciones en Marruecos”, *Revista de Arqueología*, año XX, n.º 223, 1999, 26-35. F. López Pardo y L. Ruiz Cabrero, “Marinos comerciantes y metalúrgicos en Kerne (Mogador): La onomástica”, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2006.

³⁴ F. López Pardo y A. Mederos Martín, “La factoría Fenicia de la isla de Mogador y los pueblos del Atlas”, Museo Arqueológico de Tenerife, 2008.

³⁵ The abstract in the article written by Fernando López Pardo y Luis A. Ruiz Cabrero “Marinos comerciantes y metalúrgicos en Kerne (Mogador): La onomástica” 2006, reads: This work collects the anthroponomy of the archaic Phoenician factory located in the island of Mogador (Morocco). Thanks to the analysis of the pottery it can be asserted that the people displaced to the island proceeded from the Bay of Cadiz. Their names, generally theophoric names, inform us about their principal divinities and therefore of their cult in Gadir. Also, the numerous anthroponyms permit to specify the metropolitan areas of origin of their ancestors. It is possible to indicate that an important part of the immigration proceeded from South Phoenicia, especially Tyre and Sidon zone, but some others came from the Kingdom of Israel, plus some few Philistines and at least a Moabite.

³⁶ López Pardo, 2006, 214-215.

- 8) They lived in common living facilities (forcing them to label their plates and bowls to avoid being taken by others).
- 9) There were no families with them.

There is a strong possibility there were two types of individuals living on the island and the surrounding mines. One group was the Phoenicians, who had total control on the operations, supervision, transportation (of ore and product), trading (with the locals and others), and sailing (back and forth between the island of Mogador and Gadir). The other group was people from Tyre and Sidon or their adjacent territories. They were committed to mining, loading and unloading the carts and vessels, working daily, some in perennial dark to extract the ore for iron-products.

What characterized these people?

- 1) They were literate.
- 2) Those in production were skilled.
- 3) They left inscriptions behind (that allowed onomastic analysis).
- 4) They worshiped different gods.
- 5) They seemed to come from different places (Phoenicia, Northern Kingdom of Israel, Moab and Philistia).

The archaeological findings identified people who were in conflict with each other back in their homelands (e.g. Hebrews and Phoenicians; Hebrews and Philistines; and Hebrews and Moabites).

What brought these literate men, of distinctive religious beliefs and different ethnic backgrounds, to Mogador, a place some 400 miles from Gadir and thousands of miles from their homelands? Why did they decide to work so hard under extremely poor conditions? Why did much of their graffiti include the words "save me" next to the name of their particular God?

Its workers did not arrive of their own free will. What could have been their motivation? Who would choose to volunteer to work in the darkness of the iron mines or be exposed to the heat of casting iron in the African summer?

Based on these poor conditions, the factory of Mogador was not a Phoenician colony. Instead, it was a Phoenician-run slave-labor camp for the purpose of mining and producing iron.

The situation seems similar to Toscanos (another Phoenician labor camp), which showed sharp contrasts in the quality and finish of the dwellings, indicating

the probable presence of “artisans and slaves.”³⁷ Remains of nozzles and slag found in Toscanos also confirm iron metallurgic activity in the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

3.3.1. Enslavement

What else could these individuals have had in common? Between 605 B.C.–582 B.C. (see Babylonian chronology above), most workers in Mogador³⁸ came from people who were badly defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army.

Although the Bible mentions the wars and the destruction left by the Babylonians against the Philistines, the Hebrews, and the Phoenicians, the Bible does not refer to Moab. It is Josephus the historian who preserved a number of facts related to the Moabites, one of which concerns the destruction of Ammon and Moab by Nebuchadnezzar.³⁹

Between 605 B.C. and the destruction of mainland Tyre in 586 B.C., Phoenician slave-traffickers were provided with a unique opportunity. Nebuchadnezzar’s deportations from the Kingdom of Judah specifically focused on Hebrew metallurgic craftsmen and smiths.⁴⁰ Phoenicians were known to enslave defeated soldiers from the battlefield to satisfy their own needs, or to trade them to the Greeks (Ionians) and others. Could it be that the Phoenicians took advantage of the opportunity and kidnapped, enslaved and traded some of these skilled Hebrews? As Homer pointed out in *The Odyssey*, the Phoenicians were known to be slave-traders whose “piracy served as a means of acquiring this lamentable human cargo.”⁴¹

3.3.2. Were ‘Mogador-Phoenicians’ from Gadir?

Phoenicians inhabited Mogador. From where did they come? The Phoenicians in Mogador were from Gadir or its nearby vicinity.⁴² According to Ruiz Mata,⁴³

³⁷ M. Aubet, “From Trading Post to Town in the Phoenician-Punic World”, Proceedings of the *British Academy*, 86, 1995, 47-65.

³⁸ López Pardo, 2006, 214-215.

³⁹ F. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, X, 9, 7.

⁴⁰ 2 Kings 24:16 “All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.”

⁴¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, 8:265-293.

⁴² López Pardo, 2008; López Pardo, 2006, 214-215.

⁴³ D. Ruiz Mata, “Las cerámicas fenicias del Castillo de Doña Blanca”, *Los fenicios en*

Mogador was fully dependent on Gadir and more specifically on the “Castillo de Doña Blanca.” It is from the Gadir area that the Phoenicians got their basic supplies, such as wine, oil, salted fish and perfumes.⁴⁴ It is reasonable that the last station for the slaves before arriving in Mogador was the Cadiz Bay area.

Some ceramics found on Mogador’s site may also justify the origin of the trip from Spain’s Malaga area.⁴⁵ Toscanos, which was only 20 miles from Malaga, also processed iron and likely operated slave-labor.

3.3.3. Mogador’s Gods

Archeological analysis of the graffiti identified the following deities as worshiped in Mogador: Baal, Astarte, Melkart, Eshmun, YHW, Hodesh, Sihar, Tanit and Chemosh/Kemos.⁴⁶ These deities were linked directly to different people in the Levant.⁴⁷ But could it be that the majority of the slaves were members of only one people, worshipping several Gods?

3.3.4. Hebrew Polytheism

The modern-day Jewish tradition is completely different from the religious beliefs of its ancestors.⁴⁸ In contrast to religious monotheism, ancient Jewish/Hebrew tradition included religious polytheism as evidenced by biblical records of the constant reversion of the early Israelites to worship gods other than Yahweh.⁴⁹ Such a reversion also occurred in the famous days of Solomon. Although remembered to be wise, he allowed cults of Canaanite gods and goddesses to flourish under his rule.⁵⁰

la Península Ibérica, vol. I, Sabadell 1986, 241-260.

⁴⁴ P. Cintas, *Contribution a l’etude de l’expansion carthaginoise au Maroc*, Publications l’Institut des Haute Etudes Marocaines, 56, Paris 1954.

⁴⁵ López Pardo, 2008.

⁴⁶ López Pardo, 2008.

⁴⁷ López Pardo, 2008.

⁴⁸ P. Schaefer, *The History of the Jews in Antiquity: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, 1st ed., Routledge: New York 1995, xi.

⁴⁹ R. Goldenberg, *The Origins of Judaism: From Canaan to the Rise of Islam*, 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, New York 2007, 26-27.

⁵⁰ J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 2nd ed., Sheffield Academic Press, New York 2002, 129.

During the Assyrian and Babylonian times, Hebrews worshipped the following gods:

a. Baal & Ashera

Verse 1 Kings 16:31-33 states:

“It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.”

It seems that the Bible uses four distinctive names regarding the goddesses known as Ashera or Astarte⁵¹:

- a) Ashtoret (I Kings 11:5, 33 and II Kings 23:13)
- b) Ashtarot (Judges 2:11-13; Judges 10:6 and I Samuel (7:3-4; 12:10 and 31:10)
- c) Asherot (Judges 3:7)
- d) Asherah (Judges 6:25-26; I Kings 15:13, 16:33, 18:19 and II Kings 13:6, 17:16; 18:4; 21:3-7 and 23: 4-6)

Practically, however, it refers to only two. The name Ashera corresponds to YHWH's consort, and its plural is Asherot. Ashtoret corresponds to the Phoenician goddess Astarte, and its plural is Ashtarot.

b. Shemesh/Shamesh

In addition to the several biblical texts; there are records testifying that Hebrews worshipped the sun and other celestial bodies. Archeologists have uncovered several examples of “sun disks” that appear to have been part of Hebrew religiosity. Exhibit 3 presents a picture of a Hazor Stele⁵². The stele shows hands rising towards a solar disc.

⁵¹ S. Anthonioz, “Astarte in the Bible and her relation to Asherah” in *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis: Transformation of a Goddess* (David T. Sugimoto, ed.), Academic Press Fribourg, Switzerland 2014. J. Hadley, *The cult of the Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge 2000, 108.

⁵² J. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven*, 2000, 60, Fig. 3.1.



Exhibit 3: Hazor Stele. The adoration of the solar-disc

J. Day even goes as far as to call the Hebrew religious belief system of this time a polytheistic ‘sun cult’⁵³. While the Bible contains several paragraphs regarding the sun,⁵⁴ additional archeological evidence of the adoration of the sun in ancient Israel can be found in the cult stand, discovered in Tell-Taanach (Exhibit 4). It was found in 1968, five miles southeast of Megiddo and corresponds to the late 10th century B.C.⁵⁵



Exhibit 4: Taanach Cult stand. Worshipping the sun

The upper tier, or ‘tier one,’ includes an animal, either a horse or a bull, above which is a sun-disk with wings (or rays). The scene is flanked by freestanding pillars.

⁵³ Day, 2002, 151-152.

⁵⁴ Joshua 10:12 “Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.”

Ezekiel 8:16 “Then He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’S house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun.”

Psalms 104:19 “He made the moon for the seasons; the sun knows the place of its setting.”

⁵⁵ P. Laap, “A Ritual Incense Stand from Taanak”, *Qadmoniot* 5, 1969, 16-17.

c. *Eshmun*

Eshmun could be the only god except for YHWH that originally related to the Hebrews. In the biblical Book of Numbers, the Nehushtan (or Nohestan) (Hebrew: נְחֻשְׁתָּן or נְחֻשֶׁת הַנְּחֹשֶׁת) was a copper serpent on a pole which God told Moses to erect to protect the Israelites from dying of fiery serpent bites. According to the Bible, it is in Kadesh, the desert of Zin⁵⁶, that God commanded Moses to make a copper snake and put it on a pole.⁵⁷

The origins of Eshmun may have originated in the 14th century B.C. when Asherites brought their healing god to the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon. Later, the Canaanites would adopt him as Eshmun. Eshmun is often depicted as the god of healing clutching a pole with a serpent coiled around it.

N. Ganor⁵⁸ gave a detailed report of the 1901 Macridy Bey excavations in Sidon. Bey discovered a temple to the Phoenician god, Eshmun, dating from the 7th century B.C. In this temple, he found an inscription that read, “God Eshmun Sar Kadesh”, or “God Eshmun ruler of Kadesh.”

Eshmun seems to be related to ‘Nehushtan’, the ‘copper serpent’ that became an object of idolatrous worship of healing. ‘Nehushtan’ became firmly rooted in the north for hundreds of years.⁵⁹ At the end of the 8th century B.C. (probably between 720 B.C.–710 B.C.), in an effort to abolish what he considered idolatry from his kingdom, Hebrew King Hezekiah⁶⁰ cleansed the Kingdom of Judah. He destroyed the ‘*ba’mot*’ (high places) and the idol of ‘Nehushtan’.

⁵⁶ Numbers 20:1 “The entire congregation of the children of Israel arrived at the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there.”

Numbers 27:14 “Because you disobeyed My command in the desert of Zin when the congregation quarreled, [when you were] to sanctify Me through the water before their eyes; these were the waters of dispute at Kadesh, in the desert of Zin.”

Numbers 33:16 “They journeyed from Ezion Geber and camped in the desert of Zin, which is Kadesh.”

⁵⁷ Numbers 21:8 “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live.’” 21:9 “Moses made a copper snake and put it on a pole, and whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake and live.”

⁵⁸ Ganor, 2009.

⁵⁹ 2 Kings 18:4 “He abolished the high places, and smashed the monuments, and cut down the asherah, and crushed the copper serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the children of Israel were burning incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan.”

⁶⁰ According to the Hebrew Bible, Hezekiah assumed the throne of Judah at the age of

d. Chemosh

Chemosh was the national deity of the Moabites. He was the national deity of the Ammonites as well (Judges 11:24). He was introduced in Jerusalem by King Solomon⁶¹ and was abolished by Josiah three hundred and fifty years later, at the end of the 7th century B.C. (2 Kings 23). Nonetheless, people continued to worship their gods in spite of the Hebrew kings' mandates.

e. Moloch

As a god worshiped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites, Moloch was associated with a particular kind of child sacrifice. Moloch appears as a forbidden form of idolatry in two biblical books: Deuteronomy (18:10) and Leviticus (18:21: "And thou shalt not let any of thy seeds (children) pass through the fire to Moloch"). In the Old Testament, Gehenna was a valley by Jerusalem, where Hebrew followers of various 'Baalim' and Canaanite gods, including Moloch, sacrificed their children by fire (2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31, 19:2-6).

f. Hodesh

On Rosh Hodesh (the beginning of the month), as on other festivals, the Hebrew people are commanded to be joyous, offer sacrifices, and be reminded of God's divinity (Numbers 10:10)⁶².

Hodesh was not a god, but a cause of celebration.

g. Shahar

Shahar was a Canaanite goddess of the dawn, sister of Shalim, goddess of the dusk. She was represented in the Ugarit Pantheon, as well as in the Hebrew Bible, in Psalm 110:3 (dawn's womb), and Psalm 139:9 (if I take the wings of Shahar, "dawn"), as well as Isaiah 14:12, where Helel, the morning star, is revealed to be the son of Shahar.

25 and reined for 29 years 2 Kings 18:2).

⁶¹ 1 Kings 11:7 "Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab on the mountain that is before Jerusalem and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon."

⁶² Numbers 10:10 "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your appointed seasons, and in your new moons, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God."

According to 2 Kings 23:4-7 and 2 Kings 23:10-14, Hebrew King Josiah (641 B.C.–609 B.C.) also attacked several gods, including Baal, Asherah, Moloch, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom and Asherim.

3.3.5. End of the Mogador Factory

Babylon defeated Assyria, destroyed mainland Tyre in 586 B.C., and sieged the island of Tyre for 13 years until 573 B.C. While Tyre was no longer obligated to pay tribute to Assyria, it lost its centuries-long and successful maritime commercial network. Tyre eventually reached an agreement with Nebuchadnezzar to lift the siege on its island. However, as a vassal state of the Babylonian Empire, Tyre was further weakened until its kingdom was lost. In 564 B.C., Babylon abolished the Kingship and appointed a Judge instead.⁶³ In 558 B.C., the Kingdom was re-established, but it was too late.

Carthage took advantage of the opportunity, declared independence from Phoenicia and discontinued tribute-payments to Tyre. It took over the Phoenician maritime commercial structure, including colonies, possessions, and slave facilities in the Mediterranean and Africa.

Carthage kept producing iron, but this time for its own use. Toscanos (whose population peaked to about 1000-1500 people) and Mogador were abandoned at the same time (c.550 B.C.). This coincided with Tartessus King Arganthonios' death, and the decline of Tartessus' political and economic structure.

The Greeks saw opportunity in the abandoned Phoenician maritime markets. They made a serious attempt to take over commerce with Tartessus, but it did not last very long and ended in the naval battle of Alalia (c. 540 B.C.) where Etruscans and Carthaginians defeated the Greeks. Carthage took over and dominated the Spanish territory and the coastal cities in Africa, thus ending Greece's attempts to go beyond the straits of Gibraltar.

The discoveries at Mogador show that Phoenicians may have a) used slaves to mine ores and produce products, b) enslaved Hebrews and maybe others to achieve their goals, and c) used the Gadir Bay-area as one of the slave-centers for the Tarshish mines and African installations. Although Mogador was abandoned, archeological findings have unearthed the 'secrets of Hebrew slavery in Africa.'

⁶³ J. Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, Jerusalem 1973, 74-75.

4. Greek Mythology: Hercules' labors and the Hesperides

4.1. Hercules (Heracles)

In Greek Mythology, Hercules (also known as Heracles, Alcaeus or Alcides) was the son of Zeus and Alcmena. Hercules was a divine hero and the greatest of Greek heroes. Hera, one of Zeus's three sisters and also Zeus's wife, drove Hercules mad to the point that he slew his own six sons and wife.

After recovering his sanity, Hercules regretted what happened. He traveled to Delphi to inquire how to atone for his actions. The oracle recommended Hercules to serve the new King, Eurystheus, for twelve years, and perform whatever labor might beset him. Hercules despaired at this, disgusted at serving a man whom he did not respect. In the end, Hercules agreed to follow the oracle's guidance.⁶⁴ Initially, King Eurystheus ordered Hercules to perform ten labors. However, he disqualified Hercules from two of the tasks, and added two replacement labors, for a total of twelve. Two of these labors are relevant to the present discussion:

- Labor # 10: Bring back the cattle of Geryon.
- Labor # 11: Steal the golden apples from the gardens of Hesperides.



Exhibit 5: The strait of Gibraltar and the Pillars of Hercules

For Labor #10 ("bring the cattle of Geryon"), Hercules traveled to Erytheia.⁶⁵ On his way, he crossed the Libyan Desert, the Greek name for North Africa. At the frontiers of Libya and Europe, at the Gibraltar strait, he erected two pillars: Calpe or Alyba on the north side and Abyla or Ceuta on the south side. Collectively, these are the famed Pillars of Hercules (Exhibit 5).

⁶⁴ W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1985.

⁶⁵ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliothèque*, II.5.10.

Erytheia, also known as the Red Isle, was a mythical island in the far west of the Okeanos River⁶⁶. This island was home to the giant Geryon, and his herd of red-skinned cattle. Geryon had three heads, three bodies, and a total of six arms. The three bodies were joined to one pair of legs, but apart from this weird feature, he appeared like a warrior. Geryon kept a herd of magnificent red cattle that were guarded by the giant Eurytion⁶⁷, son of Erytheia (and Ares), and a two-headed hound named Orthus.

When Hercules reached Erytheia's island, he was immediately confronted by Orthus. Hercules killed the dog. When Eurytion the herdsman came to assist Orthus, Hercules killed him too, with one huge blow from his wooden club. Aware of the disturbance, Geryon approached the area, carrying three shields, three spears, and wearing three helmets. Hercules killed Geryon with a poisoned arrow that pierced all of Geyron's bodies. He then herded the cattle to Eurystheus.

For Labor # 11, Hercules had to return to the same region of the Hesperides, the collective name of the three nymphs of the golden light of sunset: Aegle ("dazzling light"), Arethusa ("waterer"), and Erytheia ("red one", "sunset goddess" and nymph of the island that carries her name). The Hesperides used to take care of a nice garden 'in the far west corner of the world'. The three nymphs and their golden apples were apparently regarded as the source of the golden light of sunset. The garden was protected by Ladon, a never sleeping hundred-head dragon. Hercules slayed the dragon and stole the apples (Exhibit 6).



Exhibit 6: Hellenes in Iberia: Athena, Atlas, and Heracles with the golden apples of the Hesperides; marble relief, 5th century B.C.

⁶⁶ In ancient Greek mythology, the river Okeanos was a great, fresh-water stream which circled the flat earth. It was the source of all of the earth's fresh-water –from the rivers and springs which were fed by subterranean aquifers, to the clouds, which dipped below the horizon to collect moisture from its stream.

⁶⁷ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliothēke*, II.5.10.

4.2. Where were the Hesperides Islands located?



Exhibit 7: Location of Fortunate Islands, known today as the Canary Islands (bottom left corner of diagram).

After death, the souls of heroes and good men were taken to the Hesperides Islands, or the ‘Islands of the Blessed.’ However, there was some controversy regarding their location. Because they were thought to be somewhere outside the Pillars of Heracles, some have identified them as the Fortunate Islands (or Canary Islands) overlooking the African Atlantic coast (Exhibit 7).

Others have placed the islands in Benghazi (Libya). Ancient Greeks heavily colonized modern-day Benghazi and founded the city of Euesperides around 525 B.C. The name Euesperides was attributed to the fertility of the area, and gave rise to mythological associations with the Garden of Hesperides.⁶⁸

4.3. Stesichorus, Strabo and the Erytheia Island

Stesichorus (c. 640 B.C.–555 B.C.), a Sicilian Greek and contemporary to the Obadiah 1:20 verse, was the first great lyric poet of the West. According to the Suda⁶⁹, his works were collected in 26 books, but each of these was probably a long, narrative poem. The titles of more than half of them are recorded by ancient sources⁷⁰. Stesichorus wrote a song about Geryon named the “Song of Geryon”⁷¹:

Where monster Geryon first beheld the light,

⁶⁸ Ham, *Libya*, Lonely Planet, Melbourne 2002, 156.

⁶⁹ Suda is a massive 10th century Byzantine encyclopedia of the Ancient Mediterranean world.

⁷⁰ Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, Bristol Classical Press, 1982, 254.

⁷¹ Stesichorus, “Geryoneis”, Fragment S7, 6th century B.C. Stesichorus’ work dates from about the same time that the Greeks founded colonies in France and Spain. Tartessus was the name given to a region in the southern Iberian coast (south Andalusia). It was the first organized state of the peninsula, developed culturally and politically by the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. It was also the name of a river and probably a city or a trading area. E. Bromhead, *The Remains of Stesichorus*, (English version), 1849, p. 11.

Famed Erytheia rises to the sight;
Born near th' unfathomed silver springs that gleam
'Mid caverned rocks, and feed Tartessus' stream.

The Greek geographer Strabo (Strabōn; 64/63 B.C. – c. A.D. 24) recorded⁷² that the Hesperides Islands were located in Tartessus, in the south of the Iberian Peninsula (Exhibit 8).



Exhibit 8: Tartessus
(Tartessos in Spanish) Area

Strabo expanded⁷³:

The mountain in which the river Baetis is said to rise [in southern Iberia (Spain)] is called ‘Silver Mountain’ on account of the silver-mines that are in it... The ancients seem to have called the Baetis River [of Hispania] ‘Tartessos’; and to have called Gades and the adjoining islands ‘Erytheia’; and this is supposed to be the reason why Stesikhoros spoke as he did about [Eurytion] the neat-herd of Geryon, namely, that he was born ‘about opposite famous Erytheia, beside the unlimited, silver-rooted springs of the river Tartessos, in a cavern of a cliff.’ Since the river had two mouths, a city was planted on the intervening territory in former times, it is said, –a city which was called ‘Tartessos,’ after the name of the river... Further Eratosthenes says that the country adjoining Kalpe is called ‘Tartessis,’ and that Erytheia is called ‘Blest Island’ (*Nesos Eudaimos*).

The Hesperides originally included three islands: Erythia, Kotinoussa and Antipolis. According to Pliny⁷⁴, the red northern island of Erythia (where Gadir was located) was the smallest of all. Pliny wrote: “By Ephorus and Philistides it is called Erytheia. By Timaeus and Silenus: Aphrodisias and by the natives the Isle of Juno.”

⁷² Strabo, *Geography* (trans. Campbell, Vol. Greek Lyric III) (Greek lyric 7th to 6th B.C.).

⁷³ Strabo, *Geography*, (trans. Jones), 3. 2. 11.

⁷⁴ Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, c. 1st A.D., 4:36.

It is important to realize that the current landscape is different than it was between the tenth and sixth centuries B.C. (Exhibit 9). Today, there are two different estuaries: one at the Guadalquivir River and another at the Guadalete River. Back then, the whole area was considered the estuary of the Tartessus River (later renamed Baetis by the Romans, and renamed Guadalquivir after the invasion of the Moors). Ispal (modern-day Seville) could be reached by sailing north-east through the Guadalete from Gadir and then north through a passage that connected the Guadalete River with the Lake Ligur. North through the lake was the narrow portion of the Tartessus River leading to Ispal (Seville). This passage was an additional mouth of the Guadalquivir.

Neither the passage nor the channel that separated Erythrea and the much larger island of Kotinoussa exist anymore. Kotinoussa (also called Olive Island) is now connected to Erytheia. It held the necropolis at its northern end (closest to Gadir), and the temple of Melkart at its southern extremity. The third island, Antipolis, became the site of the Roman necropolis. All three islands are now part of the mainland. While the Hesperides Islands no longer exist, the city Gadir (Cadiz) stands as the oldest continuously inhabited city in Spain and one of the oldest in Western Europe.



Exhibit 9: The three Hesperides islands: Erytheia, Kotinoussa, Antipolis

The Cadiz Bay islands are also referenced in Psalm 72:10.⁷⁵ The verse expresses King Solomon’s wisdom and the respect he will get from the farthest reaches

⁷⁵ Psalm 72:10 “May the kings of Tarshish and the isles return tribute; may the kings of

of the world: the farthest west, represented by “Tarshish and the islands”; and the farthest south represented by the kingdoms “of Saba and Sheba” in South Arabia. Hebrews understood that the closest known islands to the Tarshish territory were the Hesperides Islands. As the most western base of maritime commerce, the Psalm’s islands relate precisely to these islands and no others.

For centuries, the Old Testament called this area “Tarshish.” After the Hebrew exiles from Jerusalem arrived in the same region, it was named Sefarad. Why was the name Tarshish abandoned? Why was the new name Sefarad chosen?

5. The word Tarshish is replaced by the word Sefarad

“The Kings of Tarshish and of the isles” (Psalm 72:10) relate to events that took place four hundred years prior to Obadiah’s writing, when King Solomon was respected throughout the whole world, or the furthest reaches of the known world in his time. The plural ‘kings’ indicates the possibility that more than one kingdom existed in Tarshish at the time of King Solomon.

Koch⁷⁶ wrote about the Old Testament’s isles. In Hebrew, isle is “א” (pronounced “ee”) and isles is “איים” (pronounced “ee-ym”). According to Koch, “Tarshish is the only geographical entity in the Mediterranean that was considered in the times of Solomon.” He notes that the Bible uses אים (isles) in regards to Crete and other Mediterranean islands, although regarding future events after King Solomon’s time. So, it is reasonable that the isles mentioned in the Psalm 72 relate to the isles of Tarshish, or the Hesperides Islands (and the city of Gadir).

Obadiah 1:20 was probably written after the occurrence of several events, including the:

- a) 588 B.C.: destruction of the Hebrew Temple.
- b) 573 B.C.: destruction of mainland Tyre, and the Babylonian siege of the isle of Tyre.
- c) c. 570 B.C.: take-over of Phoenician commerce and trade in the Mediterranean by Carthage.
- d) c. 550 B.C.: death of Tarshish King Arganthonios and the demise of Tarshish.

Sheba and Seba approach with a gift.”

⁷⁶ M. Koch, *Tarschisch und Hispanien: historich-geographische und namenkundliche Untersuchungen zur phonikischen Kolonization der iberischen Halbinsel*. (Translated by M. Prieto Vilas, *Tarsis e Hispania. Estudios Histórico-Geográficos y etimológicos sobre la colonización fenicia de la Península Ibérica*, 2003, 237.

The Kingdoms of Tarshish, once trading partners of Kings Hiram and Solomon at the beginning of the first millennium B.C., were gone. The Hebrews went from a strong monarchy with healthy economics and great military power to a displaced people struggling to survive. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was lost. The Hebrew Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. 'Tarshish vessels' were no longer sailing.

The Books of Amos, Obadiah and Joel, tell the story of captive Hebrews, their captors, traders, transporters, and final destination. The last portion of Obadiah 1:20 aims to remember the 'Hebrew-brothers' who for various reasons are exiled to Spain and its islands. Why did Obadiah 1:20 choose to identify Spain as "Sefarad" and no other name? If Tartessus did not exist, how should the region where the exiles lived have been named?

While Tartessus was vanishing as a political and economic entity, Hellenization was on the rise. It is possible that the author of the biblical verse knew of the Greek contemporary Stesichorus and his "Song to Gyron" and thereby knew that the Hesperides Islands and the city of Gadir were in front of Tarshish/Tartessus.

Stesichorus' work became so well-known and popular that artistic vase paintings contained motifs of the mythological protagonists described in his song.⁷⁷ At the same time that Stesichorus wrote his poems, Hebrews were forced to work in the iron mines of Mogador.

6. The Hebrew word 'Sefarad' (ספַרַד) derives from Hesperides

Semitic languages have a unique feature: the use of consonant roots. There are no vowels in Paleo-Hebrew or Phoenician alphabets. Most often, a root consists of three consonant letters. Roots are the most powerful tool in the process of word-building. For example, the family of words that are related with the word 'writing' uses the root (k-t-v) כתב⁷⁸. From this simple root, numerous words can be derived, all with different meanings but all related to 'writing'.

Sometimes, roots have four letters. Four-letter roots can be found mostly in 'borrowed' words, or words of foreign origin (for example, (t-l-f-n) טלפן, meaning

⁷⁷ D. Page, "The Geryoneis", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 93, 1973, 138-154. Sir Denys Lionel Page, (1908-1978), a British classical scholar at Oxford and Cambridge universities and President of the British Academy from 1971-74, observed that the representation of the Geryon episode in vase-paintings increased from the mid-sixth century and suggests that Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* provided the momentum for such artistic expression.

⁷⁸ Hebrew, reads from right to left.

‘telephone’). Likewise, the word ‘Sefarad’ does not derive from a Hebrew word. Therefore, having been derived from a foreign word, it is reasonable to assume it has a four letter root. The following process converts the word Hesperides to the word Sefarad:

- a) Start by writing the word HESPERIDES in Hebrew: הֶסְפֵּרִידִים, then
- b) Convert the Hebrew word into a four letter root by dropping the first and last letters: סְפָרָד (SPRD)
- c) How does SPRD convert into SFRD? ‘Pei’ (p) and ‘Fei’ (f) belong to the group called ‘labials’ together with the letters ‘bet’ (b), ‘mem’ (m) and ‘vav’ (v). Historically sounds ‘pei’ (p) and ‘fei’ (f) were represented by the same character, in both Paleo-Hebrew (𐤑 [fei]), as well as in biblical Hebrew (פ [fei]). Obadiah 1:20 uses biblical Hebrew.⁷⁹ The letter ‘pei’ did not exist then.

This is how the word סְפָרָד was created. In Latin characters, it reads SEFARAD (or SPHARAD or SEPHARAD).

In 1577 A.D., Spanish historian and Hebrew specialist Arias Montero wrote: “The Greeks called Spain ‘Sparda’.”⁸⁰ Whether Obadiah 1:20 was based on the Greek name (‘Sparda’) or taken directly from the name of the islands where Gadir was located (Hesperides) does not matter. Using the word ‘SPARDA’ as the base for transforming it into a Hebrew word gives the same result: SPARDA converts into SPRD (four letter root), then SFRD, and then SEFARAD (סְפָרָד). Whether Obadiah 1:20 wanted to identify exactly the same geographical area as Psalm 72:10 (‘Tarshish and the isles’) or intended to expand the original region by including new geographical areas within the Iberian Peninsula where Jewish exiles were living, is unknown.

7. When did the literature first recognize Sefarad as Spain?

More than five hundred years after the writing of Obadiah 1:20, the word סְפָרָד was adopted to identify the whole area of the country of Spain. Jonathan Ben Uziel’s 1st century A.D. translation of the Bible to Aramaic (also known as

⁷⁹ About 750 A.D., the character ‘fei’ was used to create the sound ‘pei’. This was called the Tiberian Hebrew that added ‘nikkud’, a system of diacritical signs used to represent not only vowels but to distinguish between alternative pronunciations of letters.

⁸⁰ B. Arias Montero, *Commentaria in duodecim prophetas*, Christopher Plantin, Antwerp 1571, 462-464.

the 'Targum Jonathan')⁸¹ included the word Aspamia/Espamia (Hispania) as the translation of the word Sefarad. Based on a later teaching in the compendium of Jewish oral laws compiled by Rabbi Judah Hanasi in 189 A.D.⁸², known as the Mishnah⁸³, 'Aspamia' is associated with a very far place, generally thought to be Hispania (the Roman name for the Iberian Peninsula, or Spain)⁸⁴. According to the Talmud, the Mishnah was recorded when Jews were persecuted and before their oral traditions of the Pharisees⁸⁵ from the Second Temple period (536 BCE–70 CE) could be forgotten.

Ever since then, Jews all over the world have called the whole Spanish country "Sefarad", and Jews descending from Spanish Jews are known as "Sefaradim".

8. Final Considerations

During the beginning of the first millennium B.C., regions in Southern Spain and Portugal were known by different names. The Bible called them Tarshish, the locals called them Tarsis, and the Greeks called them Tartessus⁸⁶.

In the 8th century B.C., the Assyrian presence in the Levant became a constant threat to the coastal cities. Nevertheless, it was at that time that the Phoenicians

⁸¹ J. Ben Uzziel, First century A.D., *Targum on the Minor Prophets*.

⁸² A. Ben David, *Seder Ha-Kabbalah Leharavad (Hebrew)*, Jerusalem 1971, 16.

⁸³ Mishna, or Mishnah, is the oldest authoritative post-biblical collection of Jewish oral laws, compiled by numerous scholars over a period of about two centuries. It was an effort to combine multiple sources into a single document of the Jewish Oral tradition known as 'Torah she'bal'peh' ("Oral tradition). The Mishna supplements the written, or scriptural, laws found in the Pentateuch. It presents interpretations of selective legal traditions that had been preserved orally since at least the time of Ezra (c. 450 B.C.). The Mishna is the first major work of rabbinic literature. Intensive study of the Mishna resulted in interpretations and annotations of it, called the Guemara. The Mishna and Guemara combined make up the Talmud.

⁸⁴ J. Hanasi, *Mishnayot* (with a commentary by Pinchas Kahati), *Baba Bathra* 3:2 s.v., אספמיה, Jerusalem (Hebrew), 1998.

⁸⁵ The Pharisees were a political party, representing school of thought in the land of Israel during the time of the Second Temple. After its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. Pharisaic beliefs became the foundation of the liturgical and ritualist basis for Rabbinic Judaism. The majority of the Mishnah is written in Mishnaic Hebrew while some parts are Aramaic.

⁸⁶ Koch, 2003.

developed a new industry: slave-trading. They continued this practice even during their struggles with the Assyrians⁸⁷. According to the Book of Amos, Tyrian Canaanites started enslaving Tyrian Hebrews prior to the big earth-quake (760 B.C.).

This new industry thrived, peaking again 150 years later, during the Babylonian attacks to the Levant at the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century B.C. The attacks culminated with the destruction of the first Hebrew Temple and massive deportations. The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar first deported skilled Hebrew metal-workers to avoid any possible weapon development and production. In turn, the Phoenicians captured and enslaved those skilled Hebrews to achieve their own objectives. Perhaps the combined messages of Obadiah 1:20 and Joel 3:4 and 3:6 (4:4 and 4:6 in the Hebrew Bible) indicate that Hebrews were in Spain at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, transported by either the Phoenicians or the Greeks.

According to archeological findings, Mogador could have been one of the infamous places where Hebrews were enslaved, asked their Gods for help⁸⁸, and died. Mogador was probably not the only place where this occurred. The close relation between Mogador and Gadir⁸⁹/Tarshish opens the door to assume that other such places existed, in particular in the region of the Tarshish-mines.

At the same time the Hebrews were exiled in Babylon and other countries, Carthage emerged as the new naval super-power dominating the Mediterranean. Later in 539 B.C., the Persians defeated the Babylonians and the Hebrews returned to Jerusalem to build their second Temple. Persia fell to the Greeks and Rome emerged as the new super-power. After the Romans defeated and destroyed the Carthaginian forces, they spent 200 years conquering Spain.

The history of the Hebrews in Spain in the 2nd and 1st millennium B.C. is part of the history of the Mediterranean, Tribe of Asher, Sidonians, Tyrians, Tartessians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans and others.

At the end of the first millennium B.C., this time under Roman banners, the Jews were again in Spain, and this time for the long haul.

⁸⁷ In the 8th century B.C., Homer's *Odyssey* represented the Phoenicians as slave traders.

⁸⁸ The term Jews refers to the Hebrews who lived in and were deported from the Kingdom of Judah.

⁸⁹ Ruiz Mata, 1986, 241-260.

With the help of Old Testament narratives, Greek mythology, and the identification of the Hesperides Islands, it is possible to pin-point where Sefarad was geographically located. Converting the words Hesperides or Sparda into a Hebrew four letter root helped resolve the mystery of the origins of "Sefarad." The relevant portion of Obadiah 1:20: 'וגלות ירושלים אשר בספרד' (pronounced "Vegalut Yerushalaim asher be'Sefarad") translates then to: "The Jerusalem exiles who are in Spain."

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Spain in the Bible: from ‘Tarshish’ to ‘Sefarad’

ABSTRACT: According to the Bible, Hebrews were in contact with Tarshish (or Tartessus, in present day Andalucía, Spain) since the time of King Solomon in the 10th century B.C. In the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., Hebrews were deported from the Levant by Assyrians, Babylonians and Tyrians, and many were enslaved in Phoenician-controlled iron mines in Africa (Mogador) and southern Spain. Around the middle of the first millennium B.C., for the first and only time in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Obadiah (Abdias), verse 1:20 documented the name Sefarad (also written as Sfarad, Spharad or Sepharad). Obadiah’s verse includes an historic message, and a rationale that links the name Sefarad with Spain. The word Sefarad is also connected to Greek mythology and a specific geography.

KEYWORDS: Bible, Tarshish, Tartessus, Sefarad, Hesperides, Mogador.

España en la Biblia: de ‘Tarshish’ a ‘Sefarad’

RESUMEN: De acuerdo a la Biblia, los hebreos estuvieron en contacto con Tarshish (o Tartessos, en la presente Andalucía, España) desde la época del Rey Salomón en el siglo X a.C. En los siglos VIII a.C. y VI a.C., los hebreos fueron deportados del Levante por los asirios, babilonios y tiros, y muchos fueron esclavizados en las minas de hierro controladas por fenicios en África (Mogador) y el sur de España. Alrededor de la mitad del primer milenio a.C., el nombre Sefarad (también escrito Sfarad) fue documentado por primera vez y solo en una ocasión en la Biblia hebrea, en el Libro de Abadías, verso 1:20. El verso de Abadías incluye un mensaje histórico, y una lógica que liga el nombre Sefarad con España. La palabra Sefarad también tiene conexión con la mitología griega y una ubicación geográfica específica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Biblia, Tarshish, Tartessos, Sefarad, Hesperides, Mogador.