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Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns in 734-732 B.C.: Historical Background of Isa 7; 2 Kgs 15–16 and 2 Chr 27–28

The history of Neo-Assyrian expansion can be divided into two periods. During the first period — the ninth and first half of the eighth centuries B.C. — Neo-Assyrian royal campaigns appear to have been, as many scholars have argued, mainly raiding incursions undertaken with the goal of collecting booty and acquiring cheap manual labor. Scholars also generally agree that with Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 B.C.) a new period of Neo-Assyrian expansionistic policy started⁽¹⁾. This new phase of Neo-Assyrian expansion could have taken place thanks to a new organization of the army, improved logistics and weaponry. Even though we can distinguish an improvement in Tiglath-pileser III's weaponry, in particular in siege engines, the weapons alone are never able to win a war unless used in a carefully planned campaign. In this paper I will investigate Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant in 734-732 B.C. On these campaigns I will illustrate the sophisticated logistics employed by the Assyrians in the second period of Neo-Assyrian expansion. This investigation will be divided into three parts. In the first part I will reconstruct the course of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant in 734-732 B.C., in the second part I will investigate the logistics of these campaigns, and in the third part I will consider the results of these campaigns. Thus, the main goal of this paper is to evaluate Tiglath-pileser III's genius which can be discerned behind the campaigns which deeply influenced political and religious events in Israel and Judah in the second part of the eighth century B.C.

1. Sources and historical background

The extant written documents mentioning Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant in 734-732 B.C. are of two kinds:

⁽¹⁾ H. Tadmor calls Tiglath-Pileser III's reign a "watershed" in the history of the ancient Near East; see H. TADMOR, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria*. Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary (Jerusalem 1994) 9. However, some scholars have contested this claim; see P. GARELLI, "Le Dynamisme Assyrien", *Assyria 1995*. Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995 (ed. R.M. WHITING) (Helsinki 1997) 65-68.

biblical and Akkadian. The first group of biblical documents presents the impact of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns upon the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 15,29-31). The second group of biblical texts represents the southern — Judahite — point of view (2 Kgs 15,32–16,20; Isa 7,1-25; 2 Chr 27,1–28,27). The Assyrian point of view has been preserved in three annals (Ann 18, 23, 24), three summary inscriptions (Summ. 4, 9, 13), in Eponym Canon C^b (2), and several letters (ND 2064, 2417, 2430, 2686, 2715, 2716, 2766, 2767)⁽³⁾. Besides written documents, reliefs from Nimrud depicting some scenes from this campaign as well as archaeological data from Israel are further witnesses to Tiglath-pileser III's activity in the Levant.

In 738 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III finished his campaign which aimed at subjugating northern Syria and Phoenicia. Then, between 738 B.C. and 734 B.C. he concentrated his attention on Media and Urartu. In 734 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III resumed his activity in the West. His military activity in the Levant lasted three seasons, because in 731 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III already fought against the rebels in the East. Thus, the time-span between the first and the second series of the campaigns against the Levant, i.e. the period when Tiglath-pileser III was busy in Urartu and Media (738-734 B.C.), turned out to be a period which gave the Levantine states a chance to aspire to independence⁽⁴⁾.

The Levant in the second half of the eighth century B.C. went through a series of changes reflected in the shifting of allegiance. Palestine and Syria were not an exception. When Israel allied with Aram, the previous partners Judah-Israel became enemies. The alliance between Aram and Israel has often been called the Syro-Ephraimite league. The result of this shift of allegiance was that Judah lost some territories and was even invaded by Aram, Israel, Edom and Philistia (2 Kgs 15-16, 2 Chr 28; Isa 7). In scholarly literature several theories about the nature and the goals of the Syro-Ephraimite league and their invasion of Judah have been advanced. B. Oded, whose opinion has been followed by most modern scholars, convincingly

(2) A.R. MILLARD, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC* (Helsinki 1994) 44-45.

(3) H.W.F. SAGGS, *The Nimrud Letters, 1952* (CTN 5; London 2001) 150-166.

(4) According to N. Na'aman the preparation for the rebellion started in 736 B.C.; see N. NA'AMAN, "Forced Participation in Alliances in the Course of the Assyrian Campaigns to the West", *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. I. EPHAL) (Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem 1991) 80-98.

argued that the main reason for the Aram-Israel attack against Judah was control over Transjordan. Thus, the coalition Aram-Israel was primarily interested in territorial expansion and not in forming an anti-Assyrian league as was thought earlier⁽⁵⁾. C.S. Ehrlich applied this logic to Phoenicia and Philistia⁽⁶⁾. Thus, both Phoenicia and Philistia, even though presented as Assyrian enemies, were primarily interested in controlling the lucrative Levantine trade routes and ports along the Mediterranean coast⁽⁷⁾. However, even though from the modern historians' point of view the Levantine states were not primarily interested in forming an anti-Assyrian league, from the Assyrian point of view the aspirations of the Levantine states for economic independence and their attempt to expand their territories were perceived as an anti-Assyrian activity. At the heart of this movement was Damascus (Aramean tribes) and Samaria (tribes in Northern Israel). Summ. 9:r. 4 adds that Tyre also plotted with Rezin, the king of Damascus and from other Assyrian inscriptions it is possible to conclude that Gaza and Arabian tribes led by queen Samsi were also part of this movement

(5) B. ODED, "The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimite War Reconsidered", *CBQ* 34 (1972) 153-65.

(6) C.S. EHRLICH, *The Philistines in Transition. A History from ca. 1000-730 B.C.E.* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden – New York 1996) 85-94.

(7) B. Oded first formulated an idea that the Assyrians noticed the expansionist tendencies of Aram and Israel only during their campaign against Philistia; see B. ODED, "Historical Background", 164. C.S. Ehrlich develops this idea further claiming that the Aram-Israel coalition became openly anti-Assyrian only after the Assyrian invasion of Philistia. He based his claim on the analysis of Neo-Assyrian letter ND 2715. According to his interpretation the Assyrians attempted to control the Phoenician trade in timber even before Tiglath-pileser III's invasion of the Levant, but to no avail. The Assyrian invasion of the Mediterranean coast including Philistia was a military step aimed at getting the trade under control. C.S. Ehrlich dates this letter before 734 B.C.; see EHRLICH, *Philistines*, 94-100. However, as was demonstrated by G. Van Buylaere, this letter should be dated shortly after 734 B.C. The reasons are as follows. First, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur's letter ND 2430 mentions Mitennu, the king of Tyre, who became king only after Hiram, i.e. after 734 B.C. Second, letter ND 2715 mentions that Qurdi-Aššur-lamur intended to bring the soldiers to Kašpunu which was conquered at the beginning of Tiglath-pileser III's intervention against the Levant. Third, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur's letters suggest that the Assyrians were already in charge of Tyrian territory, since they could prohibit removal of the cultic objects (ND 2686) and set up tax collectors (ND 2715); see G. VAN BUYLAERE, "Qurdi-Aššur-Limur", *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (ed. H.D. BAKER) (Helsinki 1998) 1021-1022.

(see below). Since the entire region between the Jordanian desert and the Mediterranean Sea was in the hands of this movement we can rightly call it a coalition. This coalition controlled the trade of the Mediterranean sea ports and along three major traffic routes — the sea route (coastal route), the hill route (route through the Judahite hills), and the king's route (Transjordanian route)⁽⁸⁾.

Whatever the primary goal of this coalition was, according to written, glyptic as well as archaeological evidence, Tiglath-pileser III considered the development in the Levant hostile enough to be punished by military intervention.

According to the second group of biblical texts, Judah perceived the expansionist policy of the Levantine states, in particular Aram, Philistia and Israel, from its own perspective. Judah lost Transjordan, was plundered by invading troops and a number of Judahites were exiled and killed⁽⁹⁾. Ahaz, the king of Judah, seeing his kingdom falling apart opted for a shrewd diplomatic move: he invited Tiglath-pileser III to save him⁽¹⁰⁾. This move, even though highly criticized by

⁽⁸⁾ M. COGAN – H. TADMOR, *II Kings*. A New Translation (Garden City, NY 1988) 191.

⁽⁹⁾ Three biblical accounts differ in describing the details of the Syro-Ephramite campaign against Judah. According to 2 Kgs 15,37 Rezin, the king of Damascus, and Pekah, the king of Samaria, started oppressing Judah as early as during Jotham reign (759-743 B.C.), whereas the Chronicler's account presents Jotham as a mighty king who expanded the border of Judah to the detriment of Amon. Second, according to Isaianic version the Syro-Ephramite coalition attacked the city of Jerusalem. Isa 7,1 adds a preposition עָלֶיהָ with a feminine personal pronoun indicating that the object of the attack was Jerusalem herself. The version presented in 2 Kgs 16,5 does not contain any indication that Jerusalem was attacked. However, this difference can be reconciled by the interpretation of the expression "they laid siege against Ahaz" which in view of verse 2 Sam 20,15 means to besiege a king in his city. Third, the versions also differ in presenting the intentions and results of the punitive campaign. Isaianic version emphasizes Ahaz's fear and the intention of Pekah and Rezin to substitute Ahaz with Tabeel. MT version reads in 2 Kgs 16,6 that Elath was added to Aram, whereas 2 Chr 28 refers to Philistians and Edomites who captured parts of Judah. 2 Chr 28 also lists Judahite dignitaries killed by Israel and the booty captured by Aram and Israel. Such booty is not mentioned in other accounts.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ahaz's invitation is mentioned explicitly in 2 Kgs 16,7 and 2 Chr 28,16 and it can also be derived from Isaiah's critique of Ahaz's decision (Isa 7). MT version of the Chronicler's account says that Tiglath-pileser III וָבֵא עָלָיו, "came against him" and adds וַיִּצַד לוֹ אֲשׁוּר מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וַיִּצַד לוֹ, "Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria besieged him/oppresed him". LXX interprets MT version that Tiglath-pileser III ἐπάταξεν αὐτόν, "struck him a heavy blow" (2 Chr 28,20). The Assyrian sources do not mention any invitation coming from Ahaz.

Isaiah (Isa 7), saved his country from the destruction which took place in Galilee and Syria, preserved partial independence for Judah, and above all assured Ahaz a royal throne in Jerusalem until the end of his life.

2. Reconstruction of the campaigns

The extant Assyrian and biblical data permit a reconstruction of Tiglath-pileser III's careful planning of these campaigns. Such a reconstruction is based on the following reference points.

First, according to the Eponym List Tiglath-pileser III organized three military campaigns against the Levant: first in 734/3 B.C. (12th *palû*) and was described as a campaign *a-na KUR.pi-liš-ti*, "against Philistia", the second in 733/2 B.C. (13th *palû*) and was described as a campaign *a-na KUR.di-maš-qa*, "against Damascus", and the third in 732/1 B.C. (14th *palû*) and was also described as a campaign *a-na KUR.di-maš-qa*, "against Damascus"⁽¹¹⁾. Thus, the surrender of the coastal cities of Philistia chronologically must have preceded the military operation in Israel, Syria and Transjordan.

Second, Summ. 4 listing the conquered groups of the Levant is divided into two parts. The first part, lines 1'-5', lists the tributes received in 738 B.C.; the second part, lines 5'b-7', lists the tributes paid in 734-732 B.C. The city of Kašpuna is listed in the second group. This indicates that the city Kašpuna came under Assyrian domination after 734 B.C.⁽¹²⁾

Third, according to Ann 23 the first attack on the city of Damascus did not meet with success and was followed by the plundering of Samsi's camp. Thus, the first campaign "against Damascus" (13th *palû*) mentioned in the Eponym List can be coordinated with the description of the Assyrian plundering of the environs of Damascus (Ann 23). Since the surprise attack of Samsi's camp followed the plunder of the environs of Damascus, Samsi's episode can be also connected with the first campaign "against Damascus" (13th *palû*).

Fourth, according to Tadmor's rearrangement of seven-line reliefs from Nimrud, Gezer was captured after Ashtaroth⁽¹³⁾. This means that Gezer was not destroyed during the coastal phase of the campaign as

⁽¹¹⁾ MILLARD, *Eponyms*, 44-45.

⁽¹²⁾ B. ODED, "The Phoenician Cities and the Assyrian Empire in the Time of Tiglath-Pileser III", *ZDPV* 90 (1974) 38-49.

⁽¹³⁾ TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 84.

suggested by M. Cogan, H. Tadmor and C.S. Ehrlich⁽¹⁴⁾, but after the conquest of Transjordan. Since Transjordan was conquered during the first campaign “against Damascus” (13th *palû*), Gezer must have been conquered only at the end of Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign.

Fifth, according to Ann 18 and 24 the destruction of Galilee preceded the Mitinti-Rubiktu episode in Ashqelon. Ann 18:8’-12’ suggests that Tiglath-pileser III also entered Ashqelon shortly afterwards. Thus, the settling of the Ashqelon problems can also be dated to the very end of the campaigns (see below).

On the basis of this data I propose to divide the whole campaign into three phases: coast, Transjordan and epicenters (Damascus and Israel).

a) First phase: coast (12th *palû*)

According to the Eponym List, the first part of the campaign was directed against Philistia, i.e. against the Levantine coast⁽¹⁵⁾. The biblical sources do not mention this part of Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign and it is also missing in the Assyrian annals. It is preserved only in Summ. 4, 8, and 9⁽¹⁶⁾. The center of the anti-Assyrian resistance in Philistia was Gaza under the rule of Hanunu⁽¹⁷⁾.

Tiglath-pileser III could attack Philistia in five possible ways, i.e. along five major routes:

- along the coast, i.e. via Şimirra-Tyre-Akzib-Akko-Dor-Ashqelon-Gaza;
- along the Beqa’ valley and then moving towards the coast: Laba’u-Danabu-Mahalliba-Tyre-Akzib-Akko-Dor-Ashqelon-Gaza;
- along the Beqa’ valley, avoiding Tyre, through Northern Galilee and then turning towards the coast, i.e. via Laba’u-Danabu-Akko-Dor-Ashqelon-Gaza;

⁽¹⁴⁾ EHRLICH, *Philistines*, 193; COGAN, *II Kings*, 180.

⁽¹⁵⁾ According to C.S. Ehrlich (see above) the anti-Assyrian character of the coalition developed only after the conquest of Philistia. However, it is necessary to note that whatever the primary goal of the Levantine coalition, the Assyrians considered it a hostile entity mingling with their political and economic interests. Moreover, the campaign against Philistia was also the military campaign and not a diplomatic mission. For these reasons, I prefer to take all three campaigns as part of one military operation aimed at re-establishing Assyrian control over the Levant.

⁽¹⁶⁾ For the synoptic reconstruction of the text see TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 222-225.

⁽¹⁷⁾ COGAN, *II Kings*, 491-492.

- along the road leading through Israelite hills to Gezer and Gaza;
- along the desert route, i.e. via Iabrudu-Hatarikka-Damascus-Northern Galilee-Akko-Dor-Ashqelon-Gaza.

For the following reasons the most plausible possibility seems to be the first of ones given above. During these campaigns Tiglath-pileser III attacked Kašpuna which is located only a few kilometers from the coast. Summ. 8:4 also mentions the conquest of the city “in the midst of the sea”, most likely referring to Arwad or Tyre located on the Mediterranean coast⁽¹⁸⁾. Moreover, in his campaign in 738 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III set up his officials in Šimirra, Usnu and Siannu, all of them located along the Mediterranean coast, which could serve as a starting point for the next campaign. Thus, the campaign took place along the coastal region of Syria and Lebanon⁽¹⁹⁾.

The Assyrian records also mention the capture of Tyre (Summ. 9:r.5-8). It stands to reason to coordinate these events: the conquest of

⁽¹⁸⁾ For a review of different opinions and their evaluation see N. NA'AMAN, “Tiglath-Pileser III's Campaigns against Tyre and Israel (734-732 B.C.E.)”, *TA* 22 (1995) 269-271; S.A. IRVINE, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis* (Atlanta, Ga. 1990) 48-50.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Since the fifth variant would require confronting Damascus as the first that contradicts the Eponym list, this variant should be excluded. The fourth possibility must also be excluded because Gezer was captured at the end of the campaign. The variant of the third route — avoiding Tyre — would mean attacking Northern Galilee first. This contradicts Ann 18, 23 and 24 according to which Galilee was captured in the 13th-14th *palû* (see below), i.e. in the second phase of the campaign. The most plausible possibility seems to be that the Assyrians attacked Tyre first and then moved southwards (route one or two). Even though, route number one is the most plausible solution, the second variant is also possible. The reconstruction of the first part of the campaign indicates that Tiglath-pileser III before attacking Tyre captured and pillaged Mahalliba together with other large cities (Summ. 9:r.6). This indicates that the Tyrian region was attacked from the east (variant two) and not from the north as would be logical if the campaign had been led along the Lebanese coast (variant one). N. Na'aman suggests that Mahalliba is situated along the coastal road leading from Byblos to Gaza; see NA'AMAN, “Tiglath-Pileser III”, 270. However, Mahalliba is identified with modern Mahalib situated about 30 km east-east-north of Tyre and the coastal road leads through coastal cities (Sidon-Sarepta-Tyre); see S. PARPOLA – M. PORTER, *The Helsinki Atlas of the near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (Helsinki 2001) 22. Thus, there are two possible explanations. Either Tiglath-pileser III attacked Tyre from the north-east using the Beqa' valley route, or he moved from the north along the coastal road and before attacking Tyre herself, he plundered the environs of Tyre, including Mahalliba. Since during his campaigns against the Levant he conquered Kašpuna and “the city in the midst of sea” (see below), the most reasonable suggestion is possibility number one; see NA'AMAN, “Tiglath-Pileser III”, 274.

Kašpuna, Tyre and Gaza. After the fall of Kašpuna Hiram, the king of Tyre, seeing Tiglath-pileser III's advancing army capitulated and recognized Tiglath-pileser III's sovereignty by kissing his feet (Summ. 9:r.7)⁽²⁰⁾. After the submission of the Tyrian region, Tiglath-pileser III moved southwards along the Philistine coast. The quick advance of Tiglath-pileser III's army did not meet serious Philistine resistance. There is no evidence of any help coming from the rest of the coalition. While Tiglath-pileser III's army was moving along the Philistine coast, Hanunu, the king of Gaza, seeing the advance of the Assyrian army, fled to Egypt.

b) Second Phase: first attack against Damascus and the conquest of Transjordan (13th *palû*)

This part of the campaign is described in Ann 23 and Summ. 9 and 13. A close reading of Ann 23 indicates that Tiglath-pileser III won the battle in the field but was unable to capture the headquarters of the rebellion — Damascus⁽²¹⁾. He destroyed the environs of Damascus and captured several cities in Southern Syria/Northern Transjordan. A slab in Nimrud has a relief depicting the conquest of Ashtaroth before Gezer. This indicates that Tiglath-pileser III was operating in Transjordan before attacking Israel. Thus, after having won the field battle with the Arameans, Tiglath-pileser III turned southwards into northern Transjordan and captured Gilead and the territory down to Abel-Shittim (Summ. 9:r.3-4)⁽²²⁾. Since the Samsi episode in Ann 23 follows the plundering of the environs of Damascus, it can be concluded that Tiglath-pileser III while operating in Transjordan confronted the army of the Arabian queen Samsi (Ann 23:18'; Summ. 13:3'-7')⁽²³⁾. Consequently, the second phase of the campaigns was first directed against Damascus, then against Transjordan, and ended with the defeat of Arabian queen Samsi.

⁽²⁰⁾ According to this reconstruction Tyre was the weakest link of the coalition. The compactness of the coalition can be seen in different interests. Phoenicians were primarily interested in the control of trade whereas the Aram-Israel group aimed at territorial expansion. Thus, the links between the Tyre and Aram-Israel group were different. Since in that time the Assyrians had at their disposal quite a sophisticated intelligence network, it is not to be excluded that the choice to attack Tyre as the first was the result of their knowledge of terrain, links between the members of coalition and different interests motivating the members of the coalition to act in anti-Assyrian way.

⁽²¹⁾ TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 79.

⁽²²⁾ For the reconstruction of the verse see TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 139.

⁽²³⁾ TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 228-230.

c) Third phase: conquest of Galilee, Israel, and Damascus (13th-14th *palû*)⁽²⁴⁾

In this phase of the campaigns Tiglath-pileser III moved through Israel from Galilee as far as Ashqelon. This phase of the campaign can be reconstructed on the basis of Ann 18 and 24⁽²⁵⁾ as well as biblical sources. Tiglath-pileser III captured Galilee (Ann 18:1'-7'; 24:1'-11'; 2 Kgs 15,29), then moved southwest and captured Gezer, and finally settled the problems in Ashqelon⁽²⁶⁾. The population of Galilee was deported and much booty was taken off to Assyria (Summ. 13:17'-8'; 2 Kgs 15,29). In Samaria Hoshea succeeded Pekah. The beginning of Hoshea's reign had a pro-Assyrian orientation (2 Kgs 17,3)⁽²⁷⁾, and this pro-Assyrian orientation was one of the reasons why Samaria was spared⁽²⁸⁾.

In this phase Tiglath-pileser III turned finally against Damascus, captured it, and executed Rezin (2 Kgs 16,9). Then he established his temporarily seat there and received the homage of the vassal rulers (Ahaz's visit to Damascus 2 Kgs 16,10).

3. Logistics of the campaigns

The reconstruction of the phases of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant leads us to reconsider the logistics of these campaigns. It seems that Tiglath-pileser III carefully prepared his intervention in order to achieve such impressive victory.

⁽²⁴⁾ H. Tadmor places the conquest of Galilee in the 13th *palû* of the reign of Tiglath-pileser III; see TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 235. It is impossible to decide this issue with certainty. The conquest of the Galilean cities described in Ann 18 and 24 precedes the episode of Ashqelon. Thus, the reconstruction of lines Ann 18:8'-12' suggests that shortly after the conquest of Galilee, Tiglath-pileser entered Ashqelon. Since the city of Gezer is on the way from Galilee to Ashqelon and Gezer was taken after the conquest of Transjordan, the operation Galilee-Ashqelon should be dated after the conquest of Transjordan. Whether this took place at the very end of the 13th *palû* or during the 14th *palû*, the reconstruction of Tiglath-pileser III's strategy and logistics remains unchanged. For this reason I prefer a longer time range (13th-14th *palû*) for dating the third phase of the campaigns.

⁽²⁵⁾ For a new reconstruction of Ann 24 see NA'AMAN, "Tiglath-Pileser III", 272-73.

⁽²⁶⁾ EHRLICH, *Philistines*, 99.

⁽²⁷⁾ TADMOR, *Inscriptions*, 281.

⁽²⁸⁾ This reconstruction indicates that the change on the throne in Samaria took place after the destruction of Galilee. Moreover, since Hoshea's ascent to the throne did not spare Gezer from destruction and Gezer later became an Assyrian administrative center (see below), it is possible to conclude that the city of Gezer at that time exercised a certain amount of independence from Samaria.

First, Tiglath-pileser III did not attack the epicenters of the rebellion (Damascus and Samaria) in a direct confrontation at the very beginning of his intervention but aimed his first campaign (14th *palû*) at conquering Tyre and coastal Philistia. Such an unexpected strategy caught Tyre and coastal Philistia off guard and Tiglath-pileser III quickly gained a strong foothold on the Mediterranean coast⁽²⁹⁾. Since the Assyrian army leaned heavily on its chariotry and cavalry, the decision to attack the coastal region first took into consideration the fact that the flat coastal terrain would allow the fast advance of Assyrian troops. This would not have been the case, if Tiglath-pileser III had decided to move his army through Israelite hills.

Only after this *Blitzkrieg* did Tiglath-pileser III venture on his first attack against the epicenter of the coalition — Damascus. After winning the field battle, he cut down the trees and captured 591 cities of the 16 districts of Damascus; however, he was unable to capture the Aramean capital. The strategy of cutting down the trees was well known in the ancient Near East and intended to cut off the rebels' food supply⁽³⁰⁾.

Operating in the environs of Damascus Tiglath-pileser III launched a surprise attack against Arabian queen Samsi which threw her camp into a panic and thus he gained another victory. Taking advantage of the impact which this unexpected victory made on the rest of the Arabian tribes, he generously accepted their submission (Summ. 13:8³-15³). As a result of this surprise attack and submission of the Arabian tribes, the coalition lost their control over the desert.

Besides the Arabian tribes the Transjordanian kingdoms — Edom, Moab, and Amon — also paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III (Summ. 7:r.10³-13³). Thus, Tiglath-pileser III was able to form a semicircle with his allies (Philistia-Judah-Edom-Moab-Amon-Gilead) surrounding the Ephraimite part of the rebellious coalition. This enclave separated Syro-Ephraimite coalition from its major support — Egypt⁽³¹⁾. This was achieved above all by the conquest of Gaza. Thus, Tiglath-pileser III blocked off the easiest access road along which the

⁽²⁹⁾ N. NA'AMAN, "Two Notes on the History of Ashkelon and Ekron in the Late Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.", *TA* 25 (1998) 222.

⁽³⁰⁾ S.W. COLE, "The Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare", *Assyria* 1995. Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995 (ed. R.M. WHITING) (Helsinki 1997) 29-40.

⁽³¹⁾ NA'AMAN, "Two Notes", 222.

Egyptians could come to the aid of the rebels. Furthermore, accepting the submission of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16,7-9)⁽³²⁾, conquering Transjordan and Jordanian desert and receiving tribute from Edom, Moab, and Amon, Tiglath-pileser III expanded the block of his southern allies further east and blocked off remaining access routes along which the coalition could get help from Egypt.

The result of this military strategy was quite impressive. The coalition became completely disrupted. Tyre was captured and any possible assistance coming from Egypt was blocked off by the wedge of allies Gaza-Judah-Edom-Moab-Amon. The Assyrian allies and kingdoms conquered by the Assyrians (Philistia, Judah, and Transjordan) encompassed Israel on three sides. The conquest of Gilead and the victory in the field battle in the environs of Damascus meant that both epicenters of the rebellious coalition — Samaria and Damascus — were separated from each other. As a result, Damascus not only lost its food supply, but also remained isolated in the middle of the conquered territory.

Only then did Tiglath-pileser III venture to bring his victory to a successful end: Galilee was conquered, in Samaria Hoshea succeeded Pekah, Damascus fell, and Rezin was executed.

This strategy was not brand new. Tiglath-pileser III already employed a similar strategy in his victory over the North-syrian coalition backed up by Urartu⁽³³⁾. In Tiglath-pileser III's 3rd *palû* (743 B.C.) Mati'il of Arpad rebelled and was able to gain the support of the northern states such as Urartu, Gurgum and Melid. Tiglath-pileser III instead of directly attacking the center of the rebellion — Arpad — he first eliminated its northern support (Urartu) on which Mati'il, king of Arpad, relied. Thus, attacking the territory between Kištan and Halpi, probably the weakest point of the coalition⁽³⁴⁾, Tiglath-pileser III inflicted a great defeat to the rebellious states: he captured 100 cities of Gurgum and Sarduri II, king of Urartu, fled on a mare. The result of this strategy was the separation of the center of the rebellion — Arpad

⁽³²⁾ It remains an open question when Ahaz asked Tiglath-pileser III for help. 2 Kgs 16,5-9 favors the view that it happened before the Assyrian intervention, whereas 2 Chr 28,20 favors the view that it took place while the Assyrians were already operating in the Levant, see T.R. HOBBS, *2 Kings*. (Waco, TX 1985) 215.

⁽³³⁾ Reconstructed on the base of Ann 17 and Summ. I B:21'-43'

⁽³⁴⁾ It is possible that the battle was fought in the vicinity of Til-Barsip and Kummuhi and thus besides separating Arpad from its northern support it guaranteed access to the fords of Bit-Adini.

— from its most important supporter — Urartu. Once this was achieved, in the following campaigns Tiglath-pileser III laid siege on Arpad and after three years conquered it (740 B.C.).

This strategy became one of the favorite military tactics of Tiglath-pileser III's successors as well. Sargon II in his campaign in 710-707 B.C. against Merodach-Baladan II and his Elamite ally, first drove a wedge between Elam and Babylonia by leading his army along the eastern bank of the Tigris. Once the members of the coalition were separated from each other, Merodach-baladan II left Babylon and the city fell into Sargon II's hands shortly after⁽³⁵⁾.

4. Results of the campaigns

The instability of the political scene in the ancient Near East was one of the characteristics of that period. Thus, to conquer states of the Levant and then to leave it on its own would mean losing in short time what was gained during sophisticated and costly military intervention. The account of the results of the campaigns and the reorganization of the region can illustrate another aspect of Tiglath-pileser III's genius.

a) Human losses

According to Table 1. Aram and Israel seem to suffer the most serious repercussions of the rebellion. Summ. 4:16' mentions that Tiglath-pileser III deported from Israel "all his (Pekah's) people". As for Aram, Tiglath-pileser III deported 800 people from the home of Rezin ([^{URU}X]-*ha-a-da-ra*), 750 captives from South-syrian cities Kuruṣṣa and Sama, and 550 from Meturna (Ann 23:13'-5'). Moreover, Tiglath-pileser III destroyed 591 cities of 16 districts of Damascus (Ann 23:16'-7'). Ann 18 and 24 mention a total of 13,520 deportees⁽³⁶⁾; however, their fragmentary status does not allow specifying where the deportees came from. These numbers do not include the captured soldiers mentioned in Ann 23:6'-7'. Biblical sources mention the deportation from Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and the land of Naphtali (2 Kgs 15,29). The Chronicler's account mentions the deportation of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (1 Chr 5,26) and the deportation of Beerah, the chieftain of the Reubenites (1 Chr 5,6).

⁽³⁵⁾ H.W.F. SAGGS, *The Might That Was Assyria* (Great Civilizations Series; London 1984) 96.

⁽³⁶⁾ NA'AMAN, "Tiglath-Pileser III", 273.

Another large deportation affected Arabian queen Samsi: 1,000 people, most likely her warriors, were deported (Summ. 4:20'). The last set of deportees came from Gaza. The royal family was deported to Assyria after Hanunu, the king of Gaza, fled to Egypt (Summ. 8:15'). Thus, the annals and summary inscriptions mentioned that the larger groups of deportees were taken mainly from Aram, Israel and from among Samsi's people. The recorded numbers of deportees is 16,620.

b) Material losses

In tributes and gifts Tiglath-pileser III received at least 80 talents of gold and 2,800 talents of silver (see Table 1.). Besides this, he seized the property of kings Hiram, Hanunu and queen Samsi and the property of at least 14,320 people.

Tiglath-pileser III's army had also devastating impact on the region. According to the biblical sources the Assyrian army captured these cities: Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor (2 Kgs 15,29)⁽³⁷⁾. According to Assyrian sources the Assyrians captured 14 major cities whose names appear in the inscriptions or on the reliefs from Nimrud and 621 smaller cities. This resulted in the destruction of 16 Aramean districts and 16 Israelite districts.

The destructive impact of the Neo-Assyrian invasion is documented by archaeological surveys and excavations. Z. Gal surveyed Galilee and showed that the region was destroyed in the late 8th century B.C. and most of the cities were never rebuilt. A similar picture emerges from the several excavations conducted in Golan, Gilead, and Galilee⁽³⁸⁾. Several cities such as Dan, Hazor, Chinnereth, Betsaida, Tel Hadar, 'En gev, Beth-Shean, Kedesh, Megiddo, Jokneam, Qiri, Acco, Keisam, Shiqnona, and Dor were destroyed in the 8th century B.C. Some of them were left abandoned for many years⁽³⁹⁾.

c) Administrative reorganization

Aram lost its independence and was annexed to Assyria. At the head of this new Assyrian province was appointed an Assyrian eunuch

⁽³⁷⁾ COGAN, *II Kings*, 174.

⁽³⁸⁾ Z. GAL, *Lower Galilee During the Iron Age* (Winona Lake, IN 1992).

⁽³⁹⁾ E. STERN – A. MAZAR, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods, 732-332 BCE* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York 2001) 7.

governor of the Damascus province (Summ. 4:7'-8'; 9:3-4)⁽⁴⁰⁾. This province included Transjordan, in particular Gilead, and the territory down to Abel-Shittim. Thus, Transjordan did not revert to Israel. After the defeat of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition Transjordan fell under the direct control of a new Damascene province⁽⁴¹⁾.

In Israel Pekah was succeeded by a pro-Assyrian king Hoshea (Summ. 4:17'; 9:10; 13:18')⁽⁴²⁾. Tiglath-pileser III turned the former Samarian kingdom into a new geopolitical district called Bit-Humri in Summ. 4:6'. This new geopolitical entity was limited to Samaria and its immediate vicinity west of the Jordan and south of Jezreel⁽⁴³⁾. It seems that Tiglath-pileser III resumed the usage of the old name for the hilly territory of Israel as used by his predecessor Shalmaneser III, according to the black obelisk. It is possible that from the Assyrian point of view the territory called Bit-Humri included not only what remained of the Israelite kingdom but also of the Judah since both Israelite and Judahite kings became Assyrian vassals⁽⁴⁴⁾. Moreover, a review of the archaeological records from Gezer demonstrates that at the end of the 8th and during the 7th century B.C. Gezer became an Assyrian administrative center⁽⁴⁵⁾. This archaeological evidence suggests that after Tiglath-pileser III's conquest of Gezer the city came under direct Assyrian control.

Ahaz's visit to Damascus (2 Kgs 16,10) suggests that Judah after having paid heavy tribute continued its vassalage and maintained its partial independence. This idea is also confirmed by 2 Chr 28,20: *וְלֹא יָרָדָה*. Since the verb *יָרָד* is in qal, the translation should be: "he (Tiglath-pileser III) did not overpower him (Ahaz)", because Ahaz

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Who succeeded Rezin in Damascus is not mentioned in the Bible; however, the Bible does not exclude the possibility that Aram lost its independence and was turned into an Assyrian province.

⁽⁴¹⁾ B.E. KELLE, "What's in a Name? Neo-Assyrian Designations for the Northern Kingdom and Their Implications for Israelite History and Biblical Interpretation", *JBL* 121 (2002) 660.

⁽⁴²⁾ According to the biblical sources Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea who became king instead of Pekah (2 Kgs 15,30). Even though there is no biblical evidence that Tiglath-pileser III was somehow responsible for the change of the kings in Samaria, it is quite possible that the winning party — the Assyrians — had to confirm the new king Hoshea. Thus Israel returned to the status of vassalage as was the case in the times of Menahem.

⁽⁴³⁾ KELLE, "What's in a Name?", 660.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 660-61.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ R. REICH – B. BRANDL, "Gezer under Assyrian Rule", *PEQ* 117 (1985) 41-54.

paid tribute⁽⁴⁶⁾. Thus, Judah did not suffer the repercussions such as destruction of cities and the deportation of the inhabitants; however 2 Kgs 16,6 indicates that the territory which Judah lost to the Edomites and Philistines was left unrestored⁽⁴⁷⁾.

In Gaza the rebellious king Hanuna after his return from Egypt and having paid a heavy tribute was reinstated on the throne (Summ. 4:13'-15'; 9:16) and the Assyrians established an Assyrian emporium there (Summ. 4:14'; 8:18'; 9:16). In Ashqelon Mitinti was succeeded by Rubiktu who expressed his loyalty to Tiglath-pileser III (Ann 18:10')⁽⁴⁸⁾. N. Na'aman, in his analysis of the Joppa enclave (Joppa, Beth-dagan, Bene-berak and Azor) mentioned in Sennacherib's annals, indicates that Tiglath-pileser III transferred the Joppa enclave to the administration of Ashqelon⁽⁴⁹⁾. The Arabian tribes (Summ. 4:33'; 7:3'-5'; 9:30-1; 13:8'-15')⁽⁵⁰⁾ and the Tyrian king (Summ. 9:5-7) acknowledged Assyrian sovereignty. Presenting the tribute and by the symbolic gesture of kissing Tiglath-pileser III's feet, the kings expressed their loyalty to Tiglath-pileser III and he in turn confirmed them on the throne. The heavy tributes paid by Rubiktu of Ashqelon, Mitenna of Tyre and Hoshea of Samaria suggest that all three kings were usurpers who had to pay to get their kingship recognized⁽⁵¹⁾.

d) Monuments recalling the Assyrian victory

The Assyrians left behind them not only ruined cities but also the monuments recalling their sovereignty. Tiglath-pileser III erected a victory stele in Gaza and "counted it among the great gods" (Summ. 8:16'; 4:10'-1')⁽⁵²⁾ Besides the stele, Tiglath-pileser III also left behind some living reminders of his might. Appointing Ibidi'ilu as the "Gatekeeper facing Egypt" (Summ. 4:34'; 7:6'; 13:16'), Tiglath-pileser III established his control over the border with Egypt and received information about the development in the region on a regular

⁽⁴⁶⁾ S. JAPHET, *I and II Chronicles. A Commentary* (London 1993) 906.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ IRVINE, *Isaiah*, 108.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ EHRLICH, *Philistines*, 100-103.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ NA'AMAN, "Two Notes", 222-223.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Finally, if Tadmor's interpretation of incomplete lines in Summ. 8:19'; 9:23-5; 13:1'-2' is correct, then even Egypt and the Menu'ite tribe recognized Assyrian sovereignty.

⁽⁵¹⁾ NA'AMAN, "Two Notes", 222.

⁽⁵²⁾ S.W. HOLLOWAY, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden – Boston 2002) 178-193.

basis⁽⁵³⁾ The defeat of the Arabian queen Samsi resulted in his appointing an Assyrian inspector in her territory backed by a regiment of 10,000 soldiers (Summ. 4:26; 7:2'; 9:22). Tax collectors were another reminder of the Assyrian presence. ND 2064 mentions taxes collected from Ekron and Gaza, SAA I 220 corn taxes from Samaria, and letters ND 2430, 2715, 2716, 2773 mention collecting taxes in Phoenicia. Finally, Assyrian officials visited the vassal cities and reported on the situation in the annexed territories. Thus, letter ND 2417 mentions an Assyrian official visiting Samaria.

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This review of the aftermaths of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns indicates that the Assyrians used several means to keep the territory under their control. The destruction of the cities, heavy tributes, and pillaging of entire regions economically debilitated the region. Even though the numbers of deportees are imprecise, Tiglath-pileser III's massive deportation of the local inhabitants and their substitution with exiles from another parts of the Empire weakened local resistance. Finally, the administrative reorganization strengthened Assyrian control and kept the royal court in Nineveh informed about the most recent developments in the Levant on a regular basis. Thus, the combination of sophisticated logistics with good administration was one of the prerequisites of successful Assyrian control of the Levant.

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SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to investigate Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant in 734-732 B.C. The campaigns can be divided into three phases. In the first phase, the Assyrians conquered Tyre and the coast. In the second phase, they defeated Syrian troops in battle, conquered Transjordan and made a surprise attack on the Arabian tribes. In the last phase, they conquered Damascus, Galilee and Gezer. In the second part of this article, the author investigates the logistics of these campaigns and at the end the author evaluated the consequences of the Assyrian invasion in terms of human and material losses and the administrative reorganization of the region.

⁽⁵³⁾ For other cases of collecting information from occupied territories in the Levant see ND 2662, 2686, 2773, and 2716.

Table 1. Material and human losses during Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against the Levant.

| Region | Human losses and deportation | Material losses and captured possession | Captured cities | Captured Livestock | Tribute |
|-----------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| Damascus region | Rezin's chief ministers were impaled alive (Ann 23:9-10 ³); 800 captives from [^{urw} x]- <i>ha-a-da-ra</i> (Ann 23:14 ¹), 750 captive from Kurussa and Sama, 550 captives from Metuna (Ann 23:13-17 ¹); <i>Rezin was executed</i> (2 Kgs 16,9). | Rezin's gardens and orchards were destroyed (Ann 23:12 ¹); Assyrians captured possession of 800 deportees of [^{urw} x]- <i>ha-a-da-ra</i> (Ann 23:14 ¹). | [^{urw} x]- <i>ha-a-da-ra</i> – Rezin home city; city of Kurussa, Sama and Metuna: 591 cities of 16 districts of Damascus (Ann 23:16-7 ¹ ; 18:3 ¹ ; 24:3 ¹); <i>Damascus was captured and its walls were torn down</i> (2 Kgs 16,9). | Cattle and sheep of 800 deportees of [^{urw} x]- <i>ha-a-da-ra</i> (Ann 23:14 ¹). | |
| Aram/Israel | 13-520 deportees (Ann 24:9 ¹); <i>deportation from the cities of Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and the land of Naphtali</i> (2 Kgs 15:29); <i>deportation of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh</i> (1 Chr 5:26) and <i>of Beerah, the chieftain of the Reubenites</i> (1 Chr 5:6). | Possession of 13,520 people (? Ann 24:9-10 ¹); Possession of Pekah and Hoshea (? Summ. 4:17 ¹ ; 13:18 ¹). | 15 citifes ...] (Ann 18:12 ¹) GALILEE (demolished) 16 districts of Bit-[Humri] (Ann 18:3 ¹ ; 24:3 ¹); ^{urw} Ki- [...] (Ann 18:5 ¹); Himatuna = biblical Hannathon (Ann 18:5 ¹); [Yal]bite = biblical Jothah (Ann 18:6 ¹); ^{urw} Sa- 'x'-[...] (Ann 18:6 ¹) = either Khirbet Saruna or Khirbet Semuniye (Tell Shimron); Aruma = Rumah (Ann 18:7 ¹); Marum = either bibl. Merom or Madon/Maron (Ann 18:7 ¹). Ashtaroth was captured (Tadmor, <i>Inscriptions</i> , fig. 11); TRANSJORDAN (Annexed) [...] ^{urw} mi'-re = Kenath; Gilead; [... ^{urw}]A-bi-il-x ₁ -x ₂ = Abel-Shittim (Summ. 4:6 ¹). <i>Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali</i> (2 Kgs 15:29). | | 10 talents of gold, [x] talents of silver [with their [property] from Hoshea (Summ. 4:18-9 ¹). |
| Ashqelon | Mittinti [died] in the middle of [conflagration] (Ann 18:9 ¹) | | Ashqelon and 15 cities (? Ann 18:12 ¹) | 100 talents of silver (Summ. 9:12) | |
| Gaza | Property of Hanunu and his gods (Summ. 4:10 ¹ ; 8:16 ¹) | | | | [x talents] of gold, 800 talents of silver, multi-colored garments, linen garments, [horses]. (Summ. 8:15 ¹ ; 4:14 ¹ -5 ¹) |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| Judah | | Gezer was captured (Tadmor, <i>Inscriptions</i> , fig. 11); <i>Tiglath-pileser III attacked and besieged Ahaz</i> (2 Chr 28:20). | | | <i>Bribe paid to Tiglath-pileser III</i> (2 Kgs 16:8; 2Chr 28:21); <i>presentation of Ahaz's gift at the occasion of his visit of Tiglath-pileser III in Damascus</i> (2 Kgs 16,10). |
| Samsi, queen of Arabs | [9,400] (of her people) were defeated and 1,000 captured (Summ. 4:20'). | 5,000 (pouches) of all kinds of spices, thrones of Samsi's gods (Summ. 4:21'; 9:r.18); Samsi's tents, the rest of her possession, her people's safeguard were burnt (Summ. 4:24'; 9:20; 13:4'); her gods, arms and staffs of her goddesses were captured (Summ. 8:25'). | | 30,000 camels; and their young 20,000 cattle (Summ. 4:20'). | Camels, she-camels and their young (Summ. 4:25'-6'; 9:21-2; 13:6') |
| Arabian tribes | | | | | Gold, silver, camels, she-camels, all kinds of spices (Summ. 4:31'-2; 7:5'; 9:r.30-1; 13:13'-4'). |
| Phoenicia | The plain filled with the bodies of their warriors Egypt (Summ. 8:10') | [...] of ivory, ebony, inlaid with precious stones and gold, fine oil all types of spices, horses of Egypt (Summ. 8:6'-7'); killed warriors' belongings (Summ. 8:11') | | Killed warriors' cattle, sheep, and asses (Summ. 8:11') | |
| Tyre | | Eunuchs, male and female singers (Summ. 9:r.8). | Fortified city of Mahalliba was captured together with (other) large cities (Summ. 9:r.6). | | 20 talents of [gold ...], multi-colored [garments], linen garments, horse of Egypt (Summ. 9:r.7-8); 150/50 talents of gold and 2,000 talents of silver from Mitenna (Summ. 7:16'; 9:r.26) |