

Summary

The presented thesis focuses on the comparison of the Tel Arad sanctuary with other Judean archeological sites (Beersheba, Lachish, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Tel Moza, Tel Halif), where an archaeological evidence of cultic places from the Iron Age IIa-b was found. A realistic reconstruction of the Arad and the Judean cults in the light of the latest findings was possible only after a research of epigraphic materials from Kuntillet Ajrud, Khirbet el-Qom and Khirbet Beit Lei. The thesis also analyzes the smaller cultic artefacts which are connected to the popular religion.

The first evidence of the Judean cult dates back to the late 11th or early 10th century B.C.E. and was found in Khirbet Qeiyafa. Nevertheless, most of the findings are from the official legitimate and illegitimate cultic sites of the 8th century B.C.E. In the end, they were canceled by different rendition (e.g. they were abandoned, dismantled or buried under the layer of earthen fill).

Many of the archaeological sites are still under excavation, which means, that the collection of the material culture is going to be larger and significantly more varied. We can use these artifacts to reconstruct and understand ancient Judean cult. There is a high possibility that the new future findings will challenge original theories from the last decades.

The author of the thesis wants to answer the following questions, if the Arad cult indicates any foreign influences (Egyptian, Assyrian etc.), if YHWH was worshipped at this location and if it is possible to define it as an official and aniconic cult. The presented text also examines differences and similarities with Judean sites where cultic activity (e.g. shrines, cultic rooms, altars) was found. Last but not least, the thesis focuses on the motif of the religious reforms at the end of the 8th century B.C.E. The text questions why was the Arad sanctuary dismantled and partly buried and compares the religious changes in Arad to other Judean cities of Iron Age II period.

Keywords

Tel Arad, archaeology, Israel, ancient times, Iron Age, sanctuary, cult, YHWH, Judah, cultic reform