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## Preface

The large proportion of ancient toponyms in the Holy Land that have survived for thousands of years, right up to modern times, is a remarkable and unique phenomenon, unparalleled in neighboring countries, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia or Asia Minor. This preserved toponymy provides a basis for research in the historical geography of the country, and is also of major importance for studies of the history of Hebrew and Aramaic, being a kind of ancient 'recording' of an archaic linguistic inventory. In addition, it has many implications for a wide variety of other scholarly fields, such as Bible studies, Rabbinics, Qumran and Samaritan studies, early Christianity, Arabic and Islam. This reserve of preserved place names is therefore frequently consulted and used by scholars for their purposes. Surprisingly, however, despite the importance of this subject, there have been very few attempts to 'put things in order' within its own limits, and for many years there have been no rules that might help to understand the changes that occur in toponyms. Accordingly, the prevailing situation in the field of historical geography is one of near-anarchy; lacking hard and fast rules, scholars could find support for their identification of an ancient toponym in any somewhat similar Arabic name. In the past, one sole study was devoted to the determination and formulation of rules for the evolution of place names in the Holy Land. Written more than a century ago by Georg Kampffmeyer, it dealt in detail with name preservation laws on the basis of 150 biblical toponyms that were identified in 19th-century literature with modern Arabic names. However, instead of stemming the flood of indiscriminate identifications, Kampffmeyer actually justified many of them, since the inventory on which he based his work consisted of names selected without any regard for earlier scholarly literature, thus converting a good many unsubstantiated conjectures into supposed 'laws of preservation.' In addition, some of Kampffmeyer's primary linguistic and historical premises are untenable. Apart from these considerations, the more than one hundred years that have elapsed since then have surely made many of the data obsolete. In the absence of any other similar material, Kampffmeyer has been quoted copiously and his conjectures accepted as facts.

In order to break this vicious circle of conjectures founded on dubious linguistic assumptions, producing 'preservation laws' which themselves provide

an alleged basis for historical identification, and so on, I have tried, first and foremost, to lay down objective criteria for the selection of positive identifications. On that basis, I have built up a corpus of 177 toponyms representing positive or almost positive identifications, upon which my study is based. Sixty of these toponyms are then reviewed in depth, tracing their documentation in all languages, throughout recorded history; in the process, I have tried to locate and analyze whatever changes occurred and when. The linguistic conclusions from the material follow, arranged according to the standard layout of grammar books. Innovative conclusions and ideas in the context of historical geography, which emerged in the course of the study, are listed alphabetically in the last part of the volume.

This volume is based on my Ph.D. dissertation written at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the direction of the late Professor Shlomo Morag, and submitted in 1993 to the Hebrew Language Department. In order to achieve the level of interdisciplinary knowledge needed for a study of this sort, I had to engage both in a variety of theoretical studies and in field work. The theoretical studies – the mastering of several languages and philology, archaeology and historical geography – were pursued mainly at The Hebrew University, under its best teachers in the various disciplines involved. The field work, which involved, besides acquiring a proper ‘feel’ for the material, location of reliable informants and reexamination, as far as possible, of recorded names in comparison with scholarly literature (where scholarly records differed among themselves), was done over several years of touring and field trips. The earliest of these trips took place under the aegis of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and the Ofrah Field School; I continue to tour the country with friends and students in the various schools where I have been teaching ‘Eretz-Israel studies,’ mainly at the Jerusalem and Herzog Colleges.

Within the available space, I cannot possibly name all those who have helped and supported me over the years. My teachers helped me with their advice, before and during preparation of the study, and their knowledge and ideas are frequently cited in the book. In the area of Hebrew and the Northwest-Semitic languages, I learned much from the late Professor Morag and from Professor Moshe Bar-Asher; in literary and colloquial Arabic, I benefited from many consultations with Professors Piamenta, Levin, Hopkins, and Hasson. My principal mainstay in Greek was Professor Raanana Meridor. In the area of biblical geography I consulted with Professor Zechariah Kallai, and in the historical geography of Greek and Roman sources I received much help from Professor Yoram Tsafrir, who in fact gave me free use of his *Onomasticon* when still in manuscript form. Friends and colleagues with whom I have studied and made various trips in past years, such as Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, Zeev Ehrlich, Professor Hanan Eshel and Dr. Amos Frumkin, contributed to

the clarification of various matters and also helped in some cases to collect evidence in the field. The book was translated into English by David Louvish; the translation was financed by the Leo Lubin Foundation and others. The material was edited and proofread by Sarah Fuchs and prepared for the press by Sergey and Ronit Nikolsky of *Daatz*. The publication process was entrusted to The Hebrew University Magnes Press under its able director, Dan Benovici. Considerable assistance was rendered by Dr. Jerry Hochbaum of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, as well as the Amos Fund for Encouraging Scholars and Writers founded by the President of Israel.

To conclude, let me go back to the starting point. My own roots, the source of my interest in the combined fields of land, history, places and names, lie in my home, at the table of my late father and teacher, Professor Yehudah Elitzur, scholar and student of Bible and biblical geography, a disciple and confidant of the prominent scholar of talmudic geography, Professor Samuel Klein. Just as in biblical Hebrew the root *yd'* has the connotation of both 'to know' and the most intimate relationship between man and woman, my father taught me to love the Land of Israel by coming to know it in all its dimensions.

Yoel Elitzur