“WHERE WILL YEHOYÍŠMA GO?": A RECONSIDERATION OF TAD B3.8

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Aramaic papyrus TAD B3.8 is a “document of wifehood” (סימן אמת) belonging to the family archive of ‘Ananyah, and it records the legal arrangements for the nuptials of Yehoyíšma’, daughter of ‘Ananiah and his wife Tamet, and ’Anani (‘Ananyah), son of Ḥaggai. In the present article I will present a brief overview of the contents of the papyrus and offer a new possible understanding of the section of it that deals with the consequences of divorce, in the hope of shedding new light on Yehoyishma’s complex legal situation.

Yehoyíšma’ is perhaps the least recognized among the three women whose life has become known to us from the archives of Elephantine. Her mother Tamet, an Egyptian slave married to a “servitor” of the temple of YHW has certainly drawn more attention, and so has Miptahyah, who is often cited as an example of a wealthy independent woman ahead of her times. Yehoyíšma’s name first appears in TAD B3.5, dated 434 BCE, in which her father ‘Anani names her and her brother Pilṭi as the only ones who would have legal rights (יְשׁלֵי) over his house. Pilṭi and Yehoyíšma’ were both children of ‘Anani and Tamet, a servant of Mešullam. However, while Mešullam in 449 BCE had renounced his rights over Pilṭi when Tamet’s document of wifehood was drawn up (TAD B3.3), Yehoyíšma’, not mentioned in that document and perhaps not yet born at the time, remains Mešullam’s servant, just like her mother, until they are both emancipated in a testamentary manumission in 427 BCE (TAD B3.6). In this document Mešullam emancipates the two women at his death. A further stipulation imposes that the two women will have to treat Mešullam, and his son Zakkur after Mešullam’s death, as a father, “as a son or daughter supports his father.”

It comes to no surprise, then, that it is in fact Zakkur, her “brother” and not Yehoyíšma’s biological father ‘Ananyah, who gives her away in 420 BCE in TAD B3.8, our document of wifehood, the longest, but also the most damaged document of this type in the two major family archives from Elephantine (figure 1). It is to Zakkur that the groom asks for the woman in marriage and, as we shall see in brief, it is Zakkur who provides for her dowry. However, her father ‘Ananyah was not completely excluded, as in TAD B3.11 he gives her landed property on the occasion of this marriage. The link between the landed property and the marriage is actually established in this text, in which Anani declares that the property is “an after-gift, because it was not written on your document of wifehood with ‘Anani son of Ḥaggai.” The seemingly obscure

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2 Lines 18 and 21.

Fig. 1: TAD B3.8 “Document of Wifehood” (Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research. Courtesy Brooklyn Museum; InscriptiFact Text ISF.TXT_00059; InscriptiFact Photo ISF.DO.05440).