

קדר

אבנר רמו



A relief from Room L of the North Palace at Nineveh, from the reign of Ashurbanipal (669-631 BC) depicting a battle with Qedarite/Arab tribes (riding on camels). The British Museum.

The Prophet Jeremiah tells us that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon planned to smote the Qedarites (Jer 49:28) and: **והיו גמליהם לבז, והמון מקניהם לשלל** - “And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil” (Jer 49:32).

In the Book of Ezekiel we read: **ערב וכל-נשיאי קדר, המה סחרי ידך; בכרים ואילים ועתודים** - “Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they were the merchants of your hand; in lambs, and rams, and goats” (Eze 27:21).

These words indicate that not only the Assyrians had associated the Arabs with the Qedarites.

There are several Assyrian documents from the middle of the 8th century BC onward describing a loose confederation of several nomadic tribes residing in the oases of the Northwestern desert of Saudi Arabia. Some of their place/tribal names are similar to those of the sons Ishmael mentioned in the Book of Genesis (Gen 25:13-15; see also: 1 Ch 1:29-31).

In addition to a place/people named **קדר** “Kedar”, there are also Hebrew words derived from the root **קדר** (qdr) which appear to have at least two different meanings.

The reading of several biblical verses indicates that in them **קדר** (qdr) means “dark” (the English word is not a metathesis of the Hebrew one). For example: in the Book of Joel we read: **שמש וירח קדרו; וכוכבים אספו נגהם** - “The sun and the moon became black, and the stars withdraw their shining” (Joel 4:15; see also: 1 Ki 18:45; Eze 32:7; Joel 2:10; Mic 3:6).

In other verses words from this root appear to mean “gloomy.” For example: in the Book of Psalms we read: **נעויתי שחתי עד-מאד ; כל-היום קדר הלכתי** - “**I am bent and bowed down greatly; I go gloomy all the day**” (Ps 38:7; see also: Jer 8:21; 14:2; Ps 35:14; 42:10; 43:2; Job 5:11; 3:28).

In several biblical verses words from this root appear to share both meanings. For example: in the Book of Jeremiah we read: **על-זאת תאבל הארץ , וקדרו השמים ממעל** - “**For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black**” (Jer 4:28; see also: Is 50:3).

However, the inner logic of this verse suggests that if “the earth mourns” the heavens might be “gloomy.”

It is rather interesting that already the Greeks had a term for a gloomy mood which they believed resulted from blackness of the bile - **μελαγχολία** (*melankholía*) - “melancholy.”