

Ariel

West–Semitic mythical figure, →DDD.
A. is attested with various meanings in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 46:16; 2 Sam 23:20; Ezek 43:15f; Isa 33:7) and in the Moabite inscription of King Mesha (KAI 181:12; see STRAWN 2005: 69–74, 124f). Mainly the last cited reference points to a cult object of a West–Semitic deity or a (mythical) figure of the divine realm. This is also suggested by the word’s most probable etymology *ʾryh* + *ʾl*, i.e., “lion of god” (→DDD). On the basis of an alternative semantic argument, MITTMANN (2002: 53f) recently suggested that A. should be identified as a mobile (→altar–)hearth. Such hearths are textually attested and iconographically represented, and were excavated in the Levant in Bronze and Iron Age contexts (MITTMANN 2002: 54–56). Nevertheless, due to the uncertain identification of the term A., they contribute little to the present discussion since the meaning “altar–hearth” does not fit all occurrences of the term “A.” It still seems preferable to link A. with the rich varieties of →lion iconography and derivative iconems, such as a warrior figurine with a feline face found at Tell Abu al–Kharaz in the Jordan Rift Valley (FISCHER 2006: 353–355, figs. 245A/B).

Selected bibliography MÜNGER 1999

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