

Nabataean gods

Task 1: Read the information below



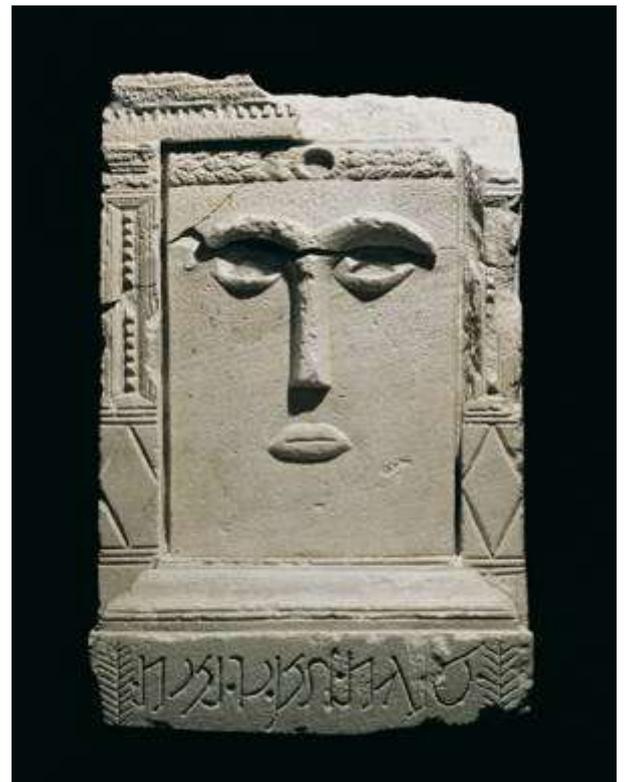
The Nabataeans had three main gods, Dhu'shara, Al-Uzza and Al-Lat. Dhu'shara was given various meanings such as, lord of the world, protector of the king, the one who separates day and night, or he of Shara, a mountain range north of Petra. He was responsible for seasonal cycles and rainfall

and linked to Greek god Zeus and his son Dionysus, as well as equated to Assyrian and Babylonian god Nabu, Aries, Mars and Hadad. As such his symbol animal was the bull. His main place of worship in Petra was a walled area in front of the important Qasr el-Bint Faroun temple with a huge altar, where he was symbolized by a black stone stele on a raised golden platform.

A stone stele (see pic below)

The stone stele symbolization originates from ancient megalithic, archaic Sumerian and older Egyptian cults. It is assumed that a Dhu'shara stele was also placed at the back niche in the Monastery. His presence was also commonly depicted by an eagle above tomb entrances. The most famous religious attraction in Petra was the Dhu'shara festival, which took place on 25th December to mark the birthday of the sun.

Based on the strong influence he had on Nabataean culture, the Dhu'shara cult spread to other areas in Phoenicia, Asia Minor and even Rome. Dhu'shara temples were also found in Madain Saleh at Jebel Ithlib, on Rhodes Island and at Puteoli (Pozzuoli) near Naples in Italy. These temples were not built by occasional travellers, but by Nabataean merchants, who were permanent residents there.



Al-Uzza is described as the all-powerful one, or the mightiest one, is the main goddess in Petra and assumed to be the virgin mother who gave birth to Dhu'shara and therefore represents the sun. In contrast to Dhu'shara she was the people's deity, and was associated with Isis the Egyptian goddess of fertility, mother of Harpocrates and further assimilated with Aphrodite, Venus, or Tyche.

References to other goddesses were made, such as: Ashtar in Mesopotamia, Ashtaroth in Phoenecia and Atargatis in Seleucida (Syria). Al-Uzza was first mentioned in an inscription at Dedan (al- 'Ula) in the 4th century BCE and later in the Qur'an as well. With al-Lat and Manat, she was regarded as one of the three daughters of god and in pre-Islamic times belonged to the trinity of Makkah goddesses, each with a different shrine. Al-Uzza was the most prominent with her shrine at Nakhlah, Manat near Qudayd and al-Lat at Taif.

Task 2: Answer the questions below. Write the answers in full sentences in your exercise books. Use the information you have just read to help you answer the questions.

1. Name the three main gods of the Nabataeans.
2. What is a stele?
3. What was the animal symbol of the male god?
4. What was the name of the most famous religious festival in Petra? What date was the festival held?
5. Which goddess represents the sun?
6. Which god did she give birth to?
7. This goddess was associated with an Egyptian goddess. What was the name of the Egyptian goddess?
8. What does Al-Uzza mean?
9. Which century is the inscription of Al-Uzza dated?
10. What other religion celebrates the birth of god on the 25th December?