**Clinton Bailey Portal**

This digital portal allows you to discover the photographs and recorded interviews from ethnographer Clinton Bailey’s work with men, women, tribal judges, Bedouin sheikhs, and influential notables in Beersheba and its surroundings, as well as in Sinai, dating from 1968 to 2007. The most important themes that emerge from these articles are judicial customs, Nabatean-Bedouin poetry, and proverbs.

Clinton Bailey was born in Buffalo, upstate New York in 1937. He came to Israel for the first time in 1957 to study for a bachelor’s degree in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University. He then returned to the United States and obtained a doctorate in Political Science specializing in Middle Eastern Studies from New York’s prestigious Columbia University. Fate led him to meet Paula Ben-Gurion when he visited Israel again in 1967, providing him with a link to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who suggested he came to work in a new school in the Sde Boker kibbutz in the Negev. Bailey settled there to work as an English teacher in 1968.

Bailey fell in love with the Negev Desert, becoming even more passionate about it once he got to know the Bedouins there. He was fascinated by their awareness and perspicacity, by key aspects of their way of life, and by their habituation to the desert climate and environment. This fascination led him to study their unwritten secrets transmitted through the customs of the tribes, to observe their judicial methods, their communal norms, and their life together in all of their various tribes, clans, branches, and subdivisions across the Negev. He took to roaming the Negev Desert, the Sinai Peninsula, and parts of Jordan, conducting more than 300 interviews in the process.

***Tribal Justice***

Tribal justice is a judicial system with local foundations and laws that Bedouins have passed down from one generation to the next. They are for the most part not written down on paper. Rather, the prevailing decrees on various issues, such as conflict resolution and vengeance, are learned by heart from the elders, who, in turn, acquired their knowledge on the authority of their fathers, local notables, and sheikhs. In this regard, Clinton Bailey’s interviews are an important source of tremendous value on judicial matters; Bailey interviewed dozens of *qadis* (tribal judges) and sheikhs from various tribes and clans, giving us a broad variety of perspectives and providing us with an important source for concepts and terminology in this field.

***Bedouin Poetry***

Bedouin and Nabatean poetry is directly related to Classical Arabic poetry and is organized and formulated in vertical columns, with the poem consisting of verses, each having *sadr* and an *’ajz* hemstitches, or “half-lines” as you might say. Poems can address a range of topics. Sometimes, it is the poet’s address to some tribal site or other. Sometimes, the poem is a descriptive narrative of a situation the poet has witnessed. There are various types of poems: eulogies (*qasīdat al-madh*), especially those expressing veneration for the tribal sheikh or honoring the head of the household; satires (*hujā’*) that criticize or exaggerate someone’s shortcomings; some offer wisdom or advice. Perhaps the most significant link to Classical Arabic poetry is the fact that they are memorized by rote and not written down. It is for this very reason that these interviews are one of the most important means of saving these poems from being lost forever.

***Proverbs***

Proverbs tell the story of everyday life. These proverbs represent the intuitions and genius of the Bedouins in relation to every situation they encounter. Arabic proverbs in general represent an ocean of meaning and the Arabic dialects are singular in their content in this regard. There are proverbs fit for every event and gathering that express and represent the spirit of the region in which the Bedouins live and in the dialect that prevails there. What sparks researchers’ particular interest is that these proverbs, both rhyming or not, connect with various other Arab cultures and societies. Just as poetry’s topics, purposes and paths are various, Bedouin proverbs are even more so. For every circumstance and personal situation, there are proverbs; Clinton Bailey has recorded in an incomparable English-language book. They are now available for you to listen to for yourself in the various articles on our website.