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Author(s): Oded Lipschits

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# The Ivory Seal of *šlm* (Son of) *klkl*, Discovered at Ramat Raḥel\*

ODED LIPSCHITS  
Tel Aviv University

**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents an ivory seal, discovered during the sixth excavation season at Ramat Raḥel (August 2010), with a heretofore unknown name in the corpus of Judahite names: *šlm* (son of) *klkl*. The name written on the upper register — Šallūm (or Šillēm) — is one of the most popular names in the Hebrew epigraphy, but the name in the lower register — Kalkōl — appears on only three other seal impressions and one bulla from the antiquities market; this is the first to be found in an excavation.

A careful study of the technical details of the seal may shed light on the scarcity of ivory seals in Judah and may suggest that the local Judahite artisans had difficulties with the unique characteristics of this expensive and infrequent raw material in the process of creating seals.

## INTRODUCTION

ON AUGUST 18, 2010, during the sixth excavation season at Ramat Raḥel,<sup>1</sup> a unique ivory seal with a heretofore unknown name in the corpus of Judahite names was discovered. It was found in a clear stratigraphical context and was well preserved. This is the first Iron Age seal to be discovered at the site, after the discovery of

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<sup>1</sup> The excavation project is directed by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming and is conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, and the Theological Seminary (Wissenschaftlich-Theologisches Seminar), Heidelberg University. The excavation staff includes Yuval Gadot (field director), Benjamin Arubas (architecture) and Liora Freud (registration). For early summaries of the excavation results, see Lipschits, Oeming, Gadot and Arubas 2006; 2009; Lipschits, Gadot, Arubas and Oeming 2010; 2011.

over 700 stamp impressions on jar handles from the late Iron Age as well as from the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, making the site of Ramat Raḥel the ‘capital’ of stamped jar handles in Judah.

Twenty of the many stamped handles excavated at Ramat Raḥel belong to the so-called ‘private’ stamp impressions because of their formula, which reads: ‘(belonging to) PN (the son of) PN’ (Aharoni 1956: 145; 1962: 16, 44; 1964: 32, 60; Lipschits 2008; Lipschits and Koch, forthcoming). Most of the names discovered at the site have known parallels in seals uncovered at Lachish, at other sites destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 BCE, or at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Some unique types were, however, discovered at Ramat Raḥel (Lipschits 2008; Lipschits and Koch, forthcoming). These finds, together with various architectural, administrative and other finds, demonstrate the importance of Ramat Raḥel as an administrative Judahite centre, probably for the collection of agricultural products, especially wine and oil jars that were produced, stamped and filled elsewhere. The new seal is the first administrative find that points to the administrators who served and functioned at this site.

Furthermore, this new ivory seal should be assigned to the large group of ‘private’ seals and stamp impressions known today, most of which were found within the borders of the Kingdom of Judah. Most of the ‘private’ stamp impressions on jar handles should be dated to the late eighth century BCE (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010: 22–27), but many other ‘private’ seals and bullae, as well as some exceptional stamped jar handles, were in use until the destruction of the kingdom in 586 BCE.

In most cases, ‘private’ seals (or stamp impressions) have two written registers, a single-line border, and one or two horizontal separation lines. In fewer than 10% of the finds, an emblem appears on the top of the seal, above the two written registers.<sup>3</sup> An emblem below the written registers is very rare,<sup>4</sup> and an emblem between the two written registers, instead of the double-line field divider, is even more infrequent,<sup>5</sup> as well as an emblem both above and below the written registers<sup>6</sup> or next to it.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, the new seal also displays a unique phenomenon, since all the letters were engraved on the left side of the seal (the right side of the stamp impression), leaving an unused space of about a third of the space of the front side of the seal. This differs from most of the seals, on which the letters

2 For a complete list of the types and actual finds of the ‘private’ stamped jar handles, see Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010: 22–27.

3 See, e.g., *WSS* nos. 5, 11, 16, 19, 25, 30, 57, 82, 84, 87, 113, 127, 143, 144, 163, 166, 180, 181, 194, 202, 215, 227, 238, 240, 246, 247, 263, 272, 273, 324, 329, 346, 385, 386; Ornan *et al.* 2008: 118, no. 1, and fig. 4 on p. 119.

4 See, e.g., *WSS* nos. 8, 13, 17, 24, 29, 86, 119, 310, 315, 394.

5 See, e.g., *WSS* nos. 35, 287.

6 See, e.g., *WSS* no. 279.

7 See, e.g., *WSS* nos. 15, 45; Reich and Shukron 2009: 358–359.

were equally spread along the written lines. A possible explanation may shed further light on the production process of seals and explain why the artisans preferred to use stone, rather than ivory or bone, as the raw material for seals. From the 31 'private' seals discovered in archaeological excavations,<sup>8</sup> most were made of stone of various types and quality. Only two were made of bone (Kloner and Davis 2000: 110; Ornan *et al.* 2008: 118, no. 3), and only one other was made of ivory (Ornan *et al.* 2008: 118, no. 2). In the corpus of 399 seals published by Avigad and Sass (most of which came from the antiquities market and are of unknown origin), fewer than 10% were made out of bone, and only five were suspected of being of ivory. This new seal is an important addition to this corpus and a good example of the difficulties that this expensive and rare raw material caused for the Judahite artisans in the process of the production of seals.

### THE SEAL

The seal (fig. 1) was discovered under a level of white crushed limestone constituting the floor of the courtyard of the edifice.<sup>9</sup> This floor is part of the second phase of the edifice, dated to no earlier than the late seventh century BCE (Lipschits, Oeming, Gadot and Arubas 2009: 7; Lipschits, Gadot, Arubas and Oeming 2010: 64–70; 2011: 20–34).

The pottery excavated together with this seal is part of a fill, which includes a mixture of late eighth- and seventh-century BCE types, as is the case in many other locations under the same pavement as well. Since the seal was excavated as part of the fill, we may conclude that it was discovered out of its original context as part of the material brought to this location from the immediate surroundings sometime in the second half of the seventh century BCE.

The ivory seal is oval (1.4 cm. long; 1.2 cm. wide). The width of its profile is *c.* 6 mm. on average; a hole in its rear, along the long side of the seal, was probably intended to thread a cord, allowing the seal to be hung around the neck.

#### *Execution of the Design*

A single-line border around the front side of the seal, less than 1 m. from the edge, along nearly its entire perimeter, was carefully engraved in a single continuous line, with a kind of angle in only one place (the lower left side). This single-line border becomes broader on the left side of the seal; it approaches the upper edge

8 26 'private' seals, discovered in excavations, were mentioned in *WSS*; three additional ones were discovered in the Mamilah tombs (Reich 1994; Reich and Sass 2006) and two in the City of David (Reich and Shukron 2009).

9 Reg. no. 7986/1, found in Area D-3 Square D-128, Locus 121971. Ido Koch (Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University) was the area supervisor, assisted by Donna Layard (Drew University, Madison NJ) and Carly Crouch (Cambridge University). The seal was discovered *in situ* by Carly Crouch in the course of excavations.



Fig. 1. Seal: a) front view; b) impression; c) rear view; d) side view

of the seal and stops along its upper right side, leaving a gap of approximately 4 mm, without a border line. It can be assumed that it was engraved from the centre of the upper side in a counter-clockwise direction, and that the artisan had probably hit a hard spot in the piece of ivory (still visible on its upper right side), which prevented him from completing the border line around the entire perimeter. The direction of the engraved line, slipping out of the border line, is still visible. At this spot, the colour and varnish of the ivory's surface is different. This probably also accounts for the attachment of the three letters engraved in the upper register to the left side of the seal.

The letters and the double-line field divider were clearly engraved after the engraving of the border line, since they intrude into it in several instances. The double-line field divider was probably engraved from the left side, exactly from the border line, and it breaches the border line on the right side. The 'tail' of the third letter on the lower register (𐤓) breaches — and even crosses — the border line in its lower part; the second letter in the upper register (𐤆) breaches it in the upper part; and the additional line to the right of the upper register breaches both the upper part of the border line and the upper line of the field divider — a clear indication that it is later.

Between the two lines of the double-line field divider (11.5 mm. long), a series of 13 inverted triangles are engraved. There are no other known 'private' seals with this simple pattern. The largest triangles (the fifth from the right and the fourth from the left) are 1 mm. wide, nearly double the width of the smallest triangles, especially the three to the right. It may be that the number of triangles was planned before the seal was engraved and the artisan, who started to engrave from the left side, made the last three triangles much smaller in order to obtain the required number.

Decoration of the space between the double-line field divider is well attested, although not very common. In many seals, the field dividers themselves were engraved as biconcave lines with lotus (and pomegranate?) ends.<sup>10</sup> This was probably the concept underlying the unique biconcave double-line field divider with very schematic lotus-flower ends (*WSS* no. 83), and the divider consisting of crossed lines with a dot in the centre and pomegranates at both ends (*WSS* no. 233). In many seals the lines are eliminated, replaced by a schematic lotus, combined with a central dot, one or few short vertical lines at both sides of the dot, and schematic lotus buds at both sides.<sup>11</sup>

In some cases there is a third line between the double-line field dividers;<sup>12</sup> in other cases, a dot or dots were added as decoration to the double-line field divider (*WSS* nos. 39, 239, 275, 390; Reich and Sass 2006: 313–314, no. 1). In two cases (*WSS* nos. 94 and 378), the double line was doubled and dots added between the two double lines (cf. no. 356). The best parallel to the ivory seal discovered at Ramat Rahel is a 'wall model' combined of one or two more fine horizontal lines between the field dividers and many small vertical lines, forming the image of a built wall.<sup>13</sup> A more abstract type of this 'wall model', with only small vertical lines between the double-line field dividers, appears as well.<sup>14</sup>

The two lines engraved as part of the second and third letters in the upper register (the *ב* and the *נ*) breach the upper line field divider in two places. The continuation of the engraving line is still visible in the upper part of the sixth inverted triangle from the right, a clear indication that the field divider and the

10 See *WSS* nos. 14, 20A, 67, 98, 102, 117, 120, 130, 134, 164, 205, 251, 331, 380A.

11 See *WSS* nos. 26, 42, 72, 77, 90, 107, 133, 167, 219, 234, 237, 265, 268, 278, 286, 299, 318, 336, 393; Kloner and Davis 1994: 110; Reich and Sass 2006: 313–314, no. 1; cf. *WSS* no. 131, which is the same model, but with only one line.

12 See *WSS* nos. 6, 157, 250, and cf. nos. 89, 139, 141, 184, which end in loops, no. 327, and 365, which end with a lotus flower, no. 76, which ends with a floral right end, no. 109, which terminates in pomegranates, and nos. 38, 71, 75, 186 and 387, which end with fan-shaped ends on both sides. The last one is the only seal with a five-line field divider.

13 Ornan *et al.* 2008: fig. 6 on p. 120. This ornament was described on p. 118 as 'zigzag field divider'.

14 See *WSS* nos. 125, 136, 223, 228, 366.

triangles were formed before the letters in the upper register. The letters in the lower register do not intrude into the lower line field divider. This probably is an indication of the direction in which the letters were engraved: from the upper part of the letters toward their lower part.

### *The Letters*

The upper written register consists of three letters in reverse order and in negative:  $\psi$ ,  $\beth$  and  $\mathfrak{n}$ . The  $\psi$ , which is small, was engraved diagonally, from the lower left side to the upper right side. It was formed as two small triangles pointing downward, with a small gap between them. The  $\beth$  and  $\mathfrak{n}$  are both oriented from the upper left side to the lower right side. The clear line of the engraving of the  $\beth$  is from the upper part of the seal toward the field divider, intruding into the separating field divider. The  $\mathfrak{n}$  was created with one long diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right with two adjacent, shorter parallel lines. These, combined with a short line from left to right, are still visible.

The lower written register consists of four letters: כלכל. Both כ were engraved the same way: a long diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right, joined at its centre with a nearly horizontal line, and then a third 45° line joining the angle created between the two other lines. Both כ have the same upper starting point, but the first one to the left has a line that is more rounded along the border line, and the second one is straighter, breaching the lower side of the border line and even passing through it. Both  $\beth$  were engraved in a similar way to the  $\beth$  in the upper register, but they are much smaller. In both cases, the starting point of the artisan was the field divider and the engraved line came to an end in the middle of the space created between the field divider and the border line.

### *The Empty Space at the End of the Two Registers*

On the right side of each register, there is an empty space of approximately the same size, about a third of the front side of the seal. In the lower register, some kind of decoration seems to have been engraved in the middle of this empty space: a small circle, created by the same engraving tool rather than by a drill. It was probably formed by creating a short line and a shallow drilling in its middle. A similar small circle seems to have been made in the upper register too. There are other examples of such circles (or dots on the stamp impressions) to the right of the written registers (see, e.g., *WSS* nos. 45, 293, 362, 379, 382).

A later vertical line was engraved immediately to the right of this small dot in the upper register, starting from the upper part of the seal and continuing to the double-line field divider, cutting through the border line. It seems that it was made unintentionally, during the time the seal was in use or even later. In any case, the fact that this line was unintentional is highlighted by the difference between its wide upper part and its narrow continuation downward, as well as by the continuation of this line into the double-line field divider.

## THE NAME

The two written lines of the seal can be read as follows:

שלם  
כלכל

As in other ‘private’ seals and stamp impressions, this should be understood as two personal names: PN (son of) PN.

The name in the upper register may be read as שָׁלֵם (*Šallūm*) or שְׁלֵם (*Šillēm*), and should be interpreted as ‘be sound’, ‘be in (or make) covenant of peace’, ‘compensate’, or ‘pay, reward, replace’ (Zadok 1988: 28–29; cf. *WSS* no. 535). Since שָׁלֵם (*Šallūm*) or שְׁלֵם (*Šillēm*) is a hypocoristicon of שלמיהו, or the like, it is to be interpreted as ‘YHWH has compensated/rewarded’. It is one of the most popular names in Hebrew epigraphy; it appears in many other seals and stamp impressions, as well as in Neo-Babylonian texts, written as *Ši-li-im-mu* (BE 9, 28, 14; see Zadok 2002: 38:71; cf. Zadok 1979: 39). Sixteen other stamped jar handles are known with the inscription לשלם/אחא, six with the inscription לשלם/אחא and three with לבכי/שלם (Lipschits, Sergi and Koch 2010: 24, nos. 20, 21, 24, with further literature).<sup>15</sup> The name also appears in the Arad ostraca (35:3 and perhaps 44:1; see Dobbs-Allsop *et al.* 2004: 76); in Lachish ostracon 3: rev. 4; and maybe also in the Barley Ostracon (C2101) from Samaria (see Dobbs-Allops *et al.* 2004: 488–489).

The name in the lower register is כלכל (*Kalkāl*), a hypocoristicon of the name כלכליהו/כלכליהו (Loewenstamm 1962; Zadok 1988: 31; *WSS* no. 218). The name is derived from the root כלל, and its meaning is ‘sustain, feed, support’. Three additional seals and one additional bulla bear the names כלכליהו/כלכליהו (*WSS* nos. 148, 217, 348, 489), all from the antiquities market and of unknown origin. The name כלכליהו also appears in Elephantine (Cowley 1923: no. 39:3 [= Porten and Yardeni 1986: 40]; Kornfeld 1978: 56 [= Porten and Yardeni 1993: 234]).

In the Old Testament, the name appears in 1 Kings 5:11 and 1 Chron. 2: 6.

## SUMMARY

The ivory seal discovered at Ramat Raḥel is the first small find indicating the actual presence of an administrator at the site. This is supported by other, still unpublished, finds, mainly bullae, the origin of which is uncertain.

The information we glean from the technical details of the seal may shed light

<sup>15</sup> Another similar name, שלם, appears on the upper register of a seal discovered at Lachish, but the lower register cannot be deciphered (*WSS* no. 360). Eight additional seals and three additional bullae with the name שלם are listed in *WSS* (nos. 359, 361–367, 631–633), but all are from the antiquities market and their origin is unknown.

on the scarcity of ivory seals in Judah. This was an expensive and infrequent raw material in Judah, and the local Judahite artisans probably had difficulties with its unique characteristics in the process of creating seals. As with other material, the artisan presumably began by engraving the single-line border, continuing with the double-line field divider, and finally engraving the letters — first the upper register and then the lower one. The letters were usually engraved from the upper side to the bottom. Only after the two written registers had been completed were the two dots engraved in the space to the right, probably with the same engraving tool rather than a drill. The line or ‘scratch’ to the right was added later, although it is difficult to determine when.

The unique ornament within the double-line field divider in the form of 13 small inverted triangles might also be due to the raw material used in the production of the seal. The number of triangles may have been planned before execution of the seal, and it seems that the artisan made a special effort at the end of the line to the right, preparing the exceptional triangles, to obtain this number.

The name written on the upper register — שַׁלְלֻם *Šallūm* (or *Šillēm*) — is one of the most popular names in the Hebrew epigraphy; it appears in many other seals and stamp impressions, as well as in a Neo-Babylonian text. The name in the lower register — כַּלְכַּל *Kalkōl* — appears on only three other seal impressions and one bulla from the antiquities market; this is the first to be found in a clear context in an excavation.

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