

NEW YEHUD STAMP IMPRESSIONS FROM EN GEDI

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Abstract

This paper presents six previously unpublished Yehud stamp impressions unearthed at En Gedi in the 1960s by Mazar and Dunayevsky. These, together with the three stamp impressions already published from that excavation and another one recently published from the village of En Gedi, bring the total of excavated impressions to ten, making En Gedi and Jericho the only two sites in the eastern zone of the province with stamp impressions of these types.

During their excavations at En Gedi in the 1960s, B. Mazar and I. Dunayevsky found nine jar handles with Yehud stamp impressions. To date, only three of these have been published (Mazar and Dunayevsky 1964: 126–127, Pl. 27: a–c; Stern 2007: 245–246). The six unpublished impressions (three others were too poorly impressed to confirm their readings or to confidently assign them to the Yehud stamp corpus), are presented in this paper. All of the finds from En Gedi were recently published by E. Stern in the final report of the excavation (2007).

Stamp Impression 1



This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-524, Locus 230), is on the upper part of a handle fragment, stamped diagonally. The letters are in a single line running from the upper to the lower side of the handle. The pottery is pinkish-brown with a few white inclusions and a light beige wash. The stamp impression is circular to oval, about 19 mm in diameter, and is angular on one side. The letters are not well preserved, and only the *he*¹ is clearly visible. However, the dimensions of the impression and the shape of the *he*¹ match better-preserved examples of Yehud stamp impressions, and our suggested reading is [y]h[wd]. If this is the correct reading, many parallels for the type are known.²

¹ The downstroke of the *he* slants to the left; its top bar forms a right angle with the downstroke and thus points down to the left. A single short, oblique stroke descends from the top bar near its end, parallel to the downstroke.

² For parallels see Aharoni 1962: Pl. 8: 1, Pl. 31: 11, 12; 1964: Pl. 19: 7, 8; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 147, L44 (well dated to Stratum 9 in the City of David).

Stamp Impression 2



This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-535; 1036/1) is incised horizontally on the upper part of a handle fragment. The pottery is reddish-brown with many white inclusions. The impression is nearly circular with a maximum diameter of 16 mm. There may be an inner impression produced by the ring in which the seal was set; this ring has a diameter between 10.5 and 12 mm.

Although the stamp is somewhat faintly impressed, it is evidently of the same type (although not certainly from the same seal) as the one cited in No. 1.

Stamp Impression 3



This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-539; G938/2) is on the upper part of a handle fragment that is broken on its upper side. The letters read from bottom to top. The pottery is pinkish-brown with a beige wash and many black inclusions. The impression appears to be rectangular with rounded edges. The preserved height of the stamp impression is 15 mm. Although it is only partially preserved and poorly impressed, we suggest that the reading is *y[hd]*. It is congruent with a very common stamp impression type well represented among published examples from Ramat Raḥel and Jerusalem.³

Stamp Impression 4



This rectangular stamp impression (17 × 13 mm; Excavation Number 67-545; 1487 and cf. Stern 2007: 246) with rounded corners is on the upper part of a handle fragment, with the letters running from the lower to the upper edge of the handle. The pottery is pinkish-brown with bright pink-yellow slip or wash. Only one letter is clearly visible—the *yod*. However, the faint *he* and *dalet*, the shape of the impression, its dimensions and the shape and placement of this one clearly visible letter suggest this stamp impression may be identical with two from the City of David, excavated by Reich and Shukron (Nos. 2236 A 970; and 2236 A 369), and published in this issue of *Tel Aviv* (see pp xxx). The reading in this case is *y[hd]*. The former has the same dimensions. This is a rare *yhd* type (see Vanderhooft and Lipschits in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp xxx).

³ For parallels see Aharoni 1962: Pl. 8: 2, 3, Pl. 31: 4, 5; 1964: Pl. 19: 6; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 149, L52.

Stamp Impression 5

This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-528; 1080/1 and cf. Stern 2007: 246) appears upside down on the upper part of a handle fragment. The pottery has a light pink wash over pink fabric, with tiny white and black inclusions and a grey core. The stamp impression is circular with a diameter of 19 mm and was set in a ring that was 24 mm in diameter. Two letters are clearly visible: a regular lapidary Aramaic *yod* and a poorly formed *he* with three bars, perhaps based on a palaeo-Hebrew model. Our reading is, therefore, *yh*. There are several *yh* stamp impression types (see Vanderhooft and Lipschits in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp xxx). This type is well known, and exact parallels, probably produced by the same seal, have been published from Ramat Raḥel and the City of David.⁴ This is the only example of this specific stamp impression type that does not come from Ramat Raḥel or Jerusalem.

Stamp Impression 6

This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-532; 2261) is on the upper part of a handle fragment, with the letters running vertically along the handle. The pottery is pink with a grey core and bright pink-yellow slip or wash. The shape of the stamp impression is oval and the upper part of it is broken. The stamp impression is 17 mm high. Part of what appears to be a *yod* is visible, and part of a *he*. The diameter is smaller than most *yh* stamp impressions, with the exception of two from the City of David, with which this one might be compared (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 151, L73 and L74). It is impossible to determine if all of these stamp impressions are identical.

Stamp Impression 7

This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-5485; 1134) is poorly preserved on a small part of a broken handle. The pottery is grey-brown with a grey core and white inclusions. The shape of the stamp impression is circular, with a diameter of 18.5 mm. The impression was very poorly impressed, and it is not possible to confirm the reading or to assign it confidently to the Yehud stamps.

⁴ For examples from Ramat Raḥel, see Aharoni 1962: Pl. 8: 4, Pl. 31: 6; 1964: Pl. 19: 2. For examples from the City of David, see Ariel and Shoham 2000: 151, L70 and L71.

Stamp Impression 8

This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-542; 1494) is on the upper part of a handle fragment. The pottery is pinkish-brown with grey core and only few visible inclusions. The stamp impression is circular, with a diameter of 17–18 mm. No clear letters can be deciphered, and its connection to one of the Yehud stamp impression types remains in question.

Stamp Impression 9

This stamp impression (Excavation Number 67-540; 1367/ג, Locus 231) is poorly preserved on the upper part of a handle. The pottery is pinkish-brown with many black inclusions and a grey core. The stamp impression is nearly circular, with a diameter of 22.5–23.5 mm. The impression was very poorly impressed, and it is not possible to confirm the reading or to confidently assign it to the Yehud stamps.

SUMMARY

It is interesting to note that in 1964 Mazar and Dunayevsky published three different types of *yhwd* stamp impressions: *yhwd*, *yhd* and *yh*. We are here adding two stamp impressions to each type, bringing the number to nine.

The First Group

This group contains the toponym *yhwd* in plene spelling in one line. Forty-two stamp impressions of this group are now known. Of these, 35 were found at Ramat Raḥel, two came from the City of David, one each from Gezer and Rogem Gannim, and, as mentioned, three from En Gedi. At least two and possibly more seals were used, and in those from En Gedi it appears that the two newly-published stamp impressions are not from the same seal.

The Second Group

This group contains the toponym *yhd*, spelled defectively in one line. This type is the second most well-represented among the different types of Yehud stamp impressions, with 96 exemplars: 57 of them were found at Ramat Raḥel, 19 at the City of David, eight at Tell en-Naṣbeh, three at Jericho and, as mentioned, three at En Gedi, two at Nebi Samwil and one each at Rogem Gannim and Khirbet Nisya. The origin of two other stamp impressions of this type is unknown. At least nine subtypes (produced by different seals with the same reading) can be observed within this group of stamp impressions. The three exemplars of this type found at En Gedi were each evidently impressed by a different seal.

The Third Group

This group contains the abbreviated toponym *yh*.⁵ This is the best-represented among the different types of Yehud stamp impressions, with 175 exemplars: 89 of them were found at Ramat Raḥel, 40 at the City of David, 11 at Nebi Samwil, ten at Tell en-Naṣbeh, four at Rogem Gannim, three, as mentioned, at En Gedi (the fourth was recently published by Hadas 2005: 49, Fig. 11: 1) and one each at Gezer, Tell Jemmeh and Kadesh Barnea. The origin of another stamp impression of this type is not known. At least seven subtypes can be observed within this group of stamp impressions, and it appears that the three exemplars of this type found in En Gedi were impressed by different seals.

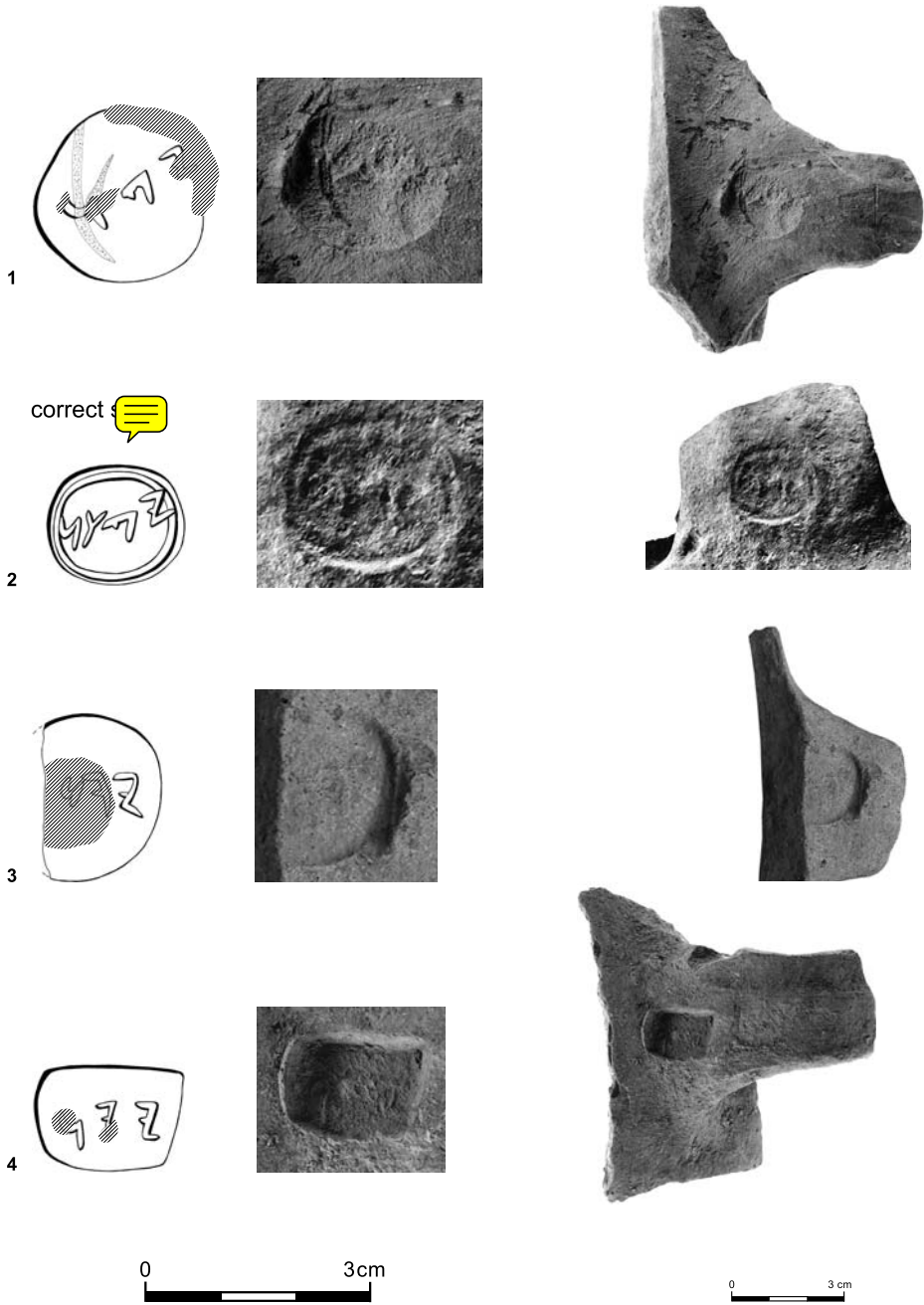
The large variety of the stamp impressions, and the fact that all of them were stamped in the area of Jerusalem during the 5th–4th or even 3rd centuries BCE (Goren 2004: 12) may attest to the random nature of these finds at En Gedi. Only nine stamped (wine?) jars—probably stamped by eight different seals and presumably brought to En Gedi from the Jerusalem area—represent a period spanning some 200 years. The reason for this fairly meagre representation and for the timing of this phenomenon is not known, and will be discussed within the more general discussion of the Yehud Stamp Impression corpus by Lipschits and Vanderhoof (forthcoming).

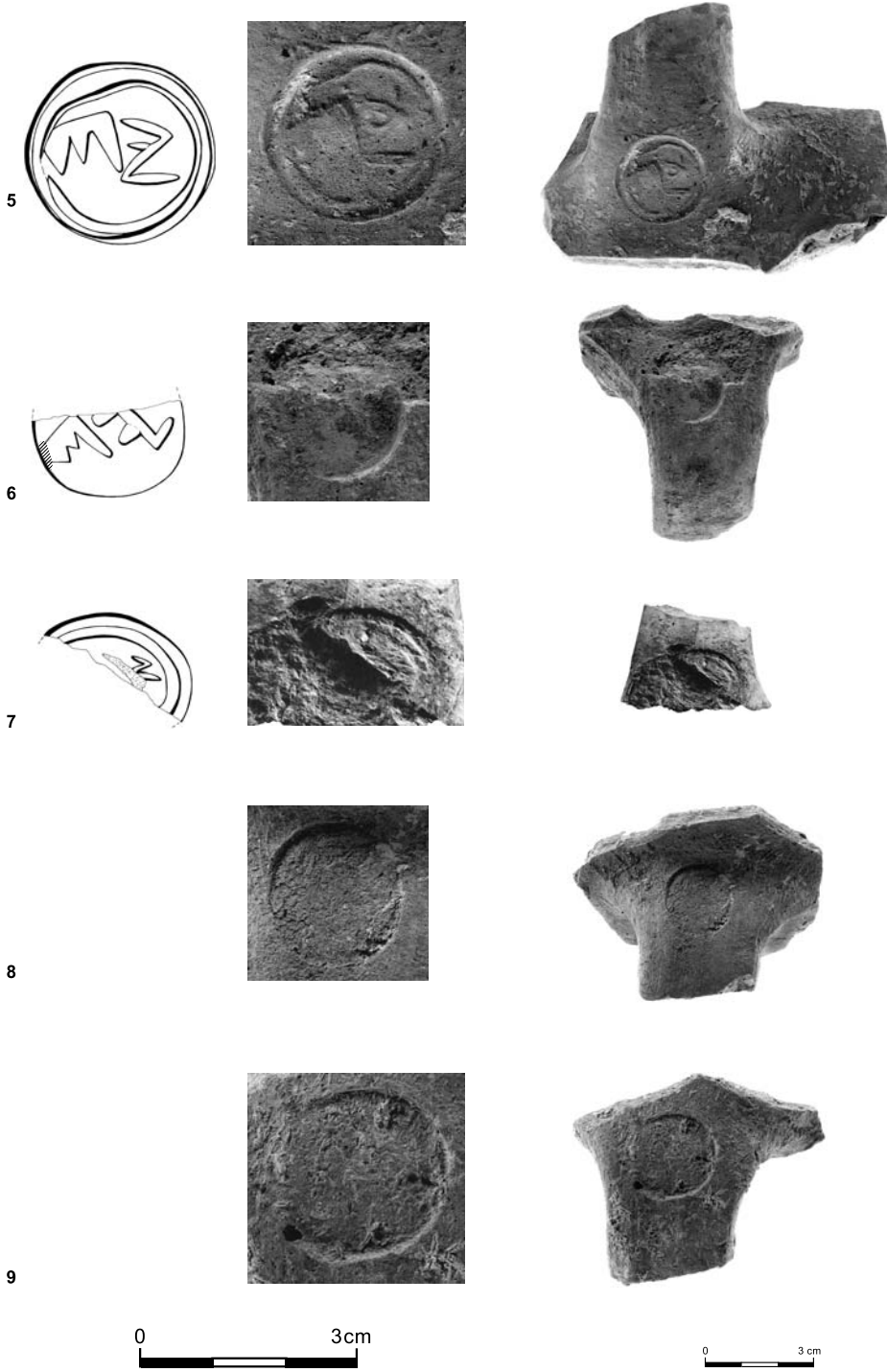
Acknowledgments

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⁵ Although the earliest excavated exemplars of this type led scholars to suppose that the stamp impression was an abbreviation of the tetragrammaton and thus related to temple administration, more recent scholars have concluded it is an abbreviation of the toponym *yhd*. This view is certain, and has clear parallels in seals from Ammon and in many coin types from Samaria, Gaza, Ashdod and Yehud (e.g., Meshorer and Qedar 1991: 14). On this subject, see Vanderhoof and Lipschits in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp xxx.





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