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## Yehud Stamp Impressions: History of Discovery and Newly-Published Impressions

Oded Lipschits & David Vanderhooff

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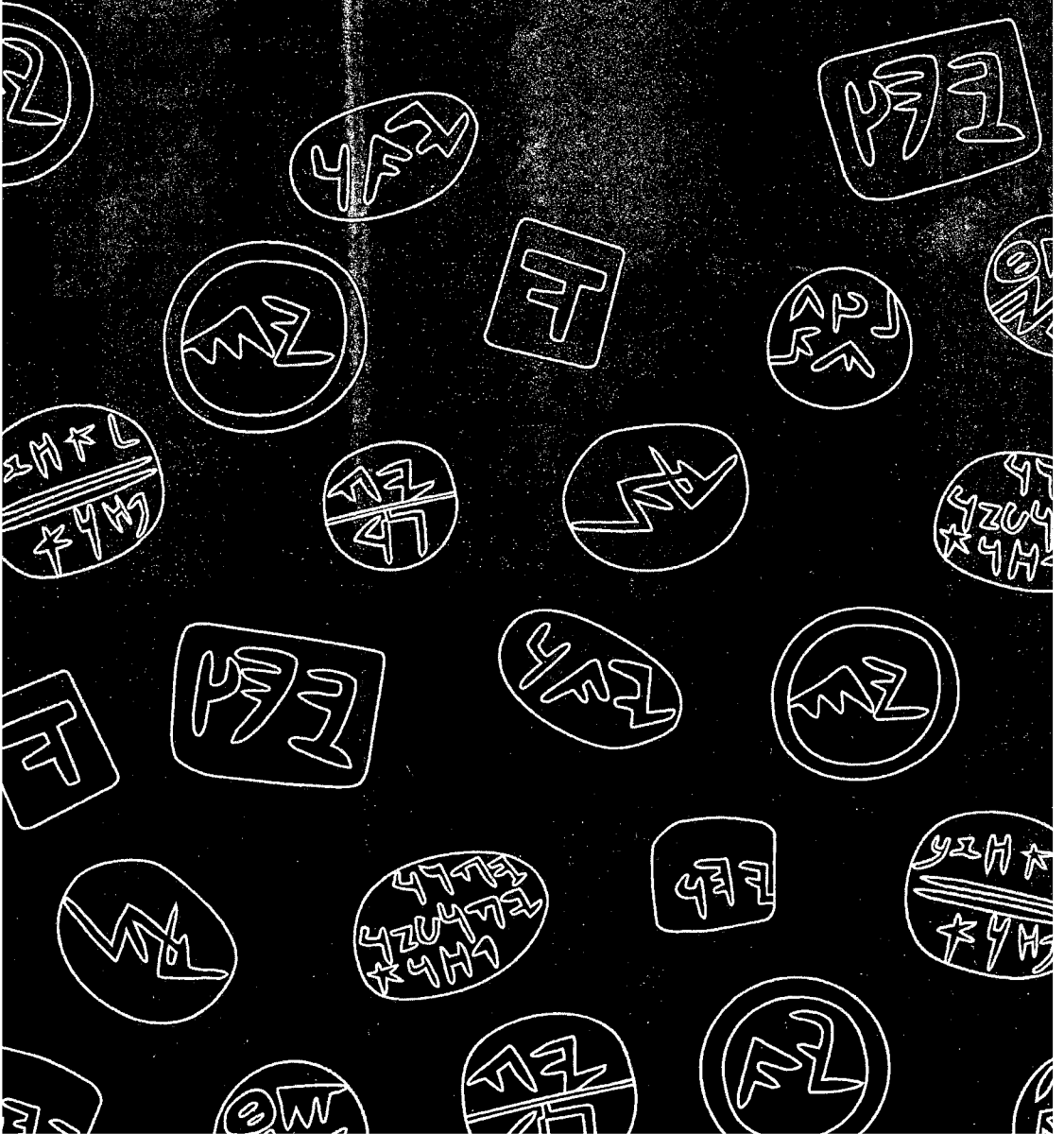
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## THE GROWING CORPUS OF YEHUD STAMP IMPRESSIONS: NEW FINDS AND NEW RESEARCH

*Oded Lipschits and David Vanderhooff, Guest Editors*

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### CONTENTS

Oded Lipschits and David Vanderhooff: Yehud Stamp Impressions: History of Discovery and Newly-Published Impressions.....	3
David Vanderhooff and Oded Lipschits: A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions.....	12
Yitzhak Magen and Benny Har-Even: Persian Period Stamp Impressions from Nebi Samwil.....	38
Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron: The Yehud Stamp Impressions from the 1995–2005 City of David Excavations.....	59
Ephraim Stern, Oded Lipschits and David Vanderhooff: New Yehud Stamp Impressions from En Gedi.....	66
Oded Lipschits, Manfred Oeming, Yuval Gadot and David Vanderhooff: Seventeen Newly-Excavated Yehud Stamp Impressions from Ramat Raḥel.....	74
Yoav Farhi: A Yehud Stamp Impression from North Jerusalem.....	90
Hillel Geva: A Chronological Reevaluation of Yehud Stamp Impressions in Palaeo-Hebrew Script, Based on Finds from Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem.....	92
Gerald Finkielsztein and Shimon Gibson: The Retrograde-F-Shaped <i>yh(d)</i> Monogram: Epigraphy and Dating.....	104
Oded Lipschits and David Vanderhooff: Summary Data of Yehud Stamp Impressions, Arranged by Type .....	114
<i>List of Abbreviations</i> .....	121

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# YEHUD STAMP IMPRESSIONS: HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND NEWLY-PUBLISHED IMPRESSIONS

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Five hundred and thirty-two Yehud stamp impressions are known at present. Fifty-six of these (more than 10% of the total number) are published in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, making it the third largest single group of stamp impressions of this type ever published at one time.

The first Yehud stamp impression was found on the Western Hill of Jerusalem and was published in 1898 (Bliss and Dickie 1898: Pl. 27: 47). From that time until the early 1950s, 88 stamp impressions were discovered, although not all of them were published. This represents about 17% of the stamp impressions known to us today. Half of the stamp impressions discovered before the 1950s (44) came from the City of David (43 in the Ophel excavations, just above what would become Shiloh's Area G, and one more in the excavations at the Tyropeon). The remainder were discovered at three other sites: Gezer (eight stamp impressions), Jericho (17) and Tell en-Naşbeh (18). One additional stamp impression is unprovenanced.<sup>1</sup>

Compared to the 17 types of Yehud stamp impressions presented in this issue (Vanderhooft and Lipschits, pp. 12–37), scholars in the period before the 1950s for the most part knew four main types: 40 exemplars of the *yh* type;<sup>2</sup> 24 of the *yhd-ṭ* type;<sup>3</sup> 15 of the *yhd* type;<sup>4</sup> and five of the so-called “*yh*-ligature” type.<sup>5</sup> Three other types of stamp impressions were known from one exemplar each: *yhwḏ ʾwryw* and *yhwḏ*, both from Gezer; and *lyhʿzr* (“Belonging to Yehōʿezer”) from Jericho.

During the 1950s and 60s, over 200 stamp impressions were discovered. Nearly all of them were unearthed by Aharoni at Ramat Raḥel. Aharoni published

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<sup>1</sup> This stamp impression was published by Diringier (1934: 128, 132; Pl. XIV, no. 14).

<sup>2</sup> Of the 40 known *yh* stamp impressions, 13 were discovered at Jericho, 16 at the City of David, 10 at Tell en-Naşbeh and one, unpublished, at Gezer, probably unknown to scholars.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 24 known *yhd-ṭ* stamp impressions, three were discovered at Gezer (one of them was not published); and 21 at the City of David.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 15 known *yhd* stamp impressions, three were discovered at Jericho; four at the City of David; and eight at Tell en-Naşbeh, one of them unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> Of the five known *yh*-ligature stamp impressions two were discovered at Gezer and three at the City of David. One was of unknown origin (see n. 1).

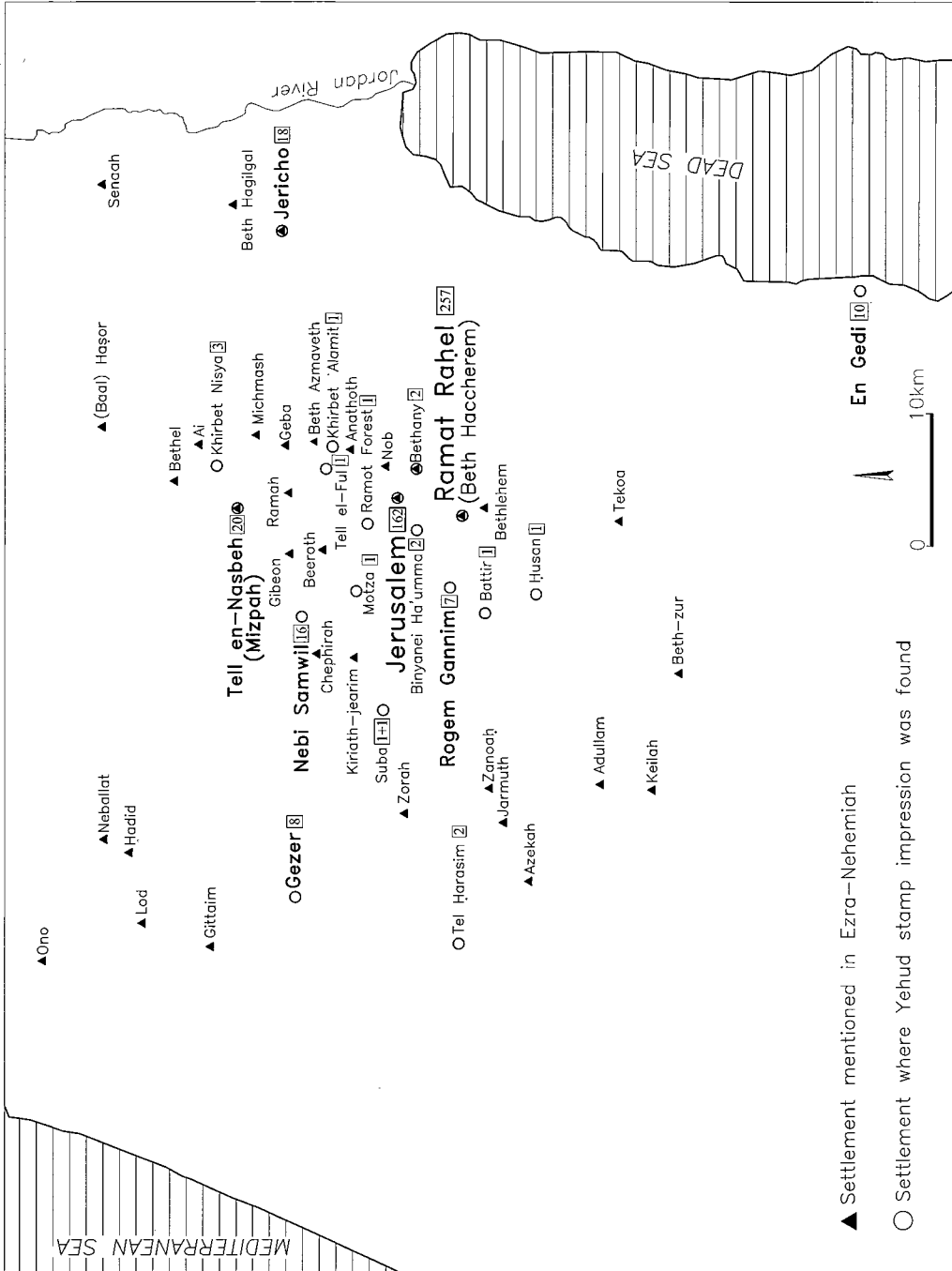


Fig. 1. Persian and early Hellenistic sites mentioned in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah, and/or where Yehud stamp impressions were discovered. The numbers represent the total number of Yehud stamp impressions discovered at each of the sites.

representative exemplars in several preliminary reports (1956; 1959a) and in the Ramat Raḥel excavation reports (1962; 1964).<sup>6</sup> With these, the total number of known and published stamp impressions increased threefold. Many exemplars were added to the previously known types, and new types were identified, including: *Phyb pḥw*<sup>2</sup> (“Belonging to Aḥīāb, the governor”);<sup>7</sup> *yhwḏ ḥnnh*; *yh / wd*; *yhwḏ yhwʿzr pḥw*<sup>2</sup> (“Yēhūd, Yehōʿezer, the governor”); and *yhwḏ pḥw*<sup>2</sup>.

During these two decades, a few more stamp impressions were published from additional sites such as Bethany (Saller 1952/3; 1957), Jericho (Hammond 1957a; 1957b) and En Gedi (Mazar and Dunayevsky 1964). The result of all the new discoveries was that a basic corpus of about 300 stamp impressions existed, and first summaries could be written. In the Hebrew (1973) and then English (1982) versions of his book, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538–332 B.C.*, Stern mentioned 342 stamp impressions, including the unprovenanced corpus of 65 bullae and two stamps published by Avigad (1976).<sup>8</sup> This figure was evidently the basis for Avigad’s estimation that there were “some 350 such impressions” (1976: 21).

Stern was unable to update the English version of his discussion with new discoveries from Tell el-Ful (published by Lapp 1981: 112–113) and Battir (Fulco 1978), or with three published stamp impressions from Kenyon’s excavations at Jericho that ran from 1952 through 1959 (Bartlett 1982). Stern also could not include newly-published and unpublished stamp impressions from different parts of Jerusalem discovered during the 1970s and early 1980s. These included the stamp impressions discovered in Avigad’s excavations of the Jewish Quarter (1969–1982),<sup>9</sup> the stamp impressions discovered in the first years of Shiloh’s excavations of the City of David (1978–1985)<sup>10</sup> and exemplars from David’s Citadel (Amiran and Eitan 1970: 13), the Armenian Quarter (excavated by Kenyon and Tushingham; Tushingham 1985) and Mount Zion (Broshi 1976; Geva 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Aharoni defined these publications, too, as preliminary, and that is why only representative items were properly published.

<sup>7</sup> This is a new reading proposed by us, and see Vanderhoof and Lipschits, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. 14–16.

<sup>8</sup> We do not include these materials in our corpus. The origin of the bullae and stamps is not known, and we cannot confirm their authenticity. The impressions on the bullae were not produced by the seals that were used for the jar handle impressions in the rest of the corpus.

<sup>9</sup> Stern was familiar with some of the finds from the Jewish Quarter excavations (and cf. Avigad 1974: 53–57), but they were properly published only many years later by Reich (2003) and Eshel (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Stern was also familiar with some of the finds from the City of David excavations, but they were only published by Ariel and Shoham in 2000.



During the 1980s and up to the early 1990s, only one publication of a new Yehud stamp impression appeared in the literature (from Belmont Castle, see Harper 1988; Millard 1989: 61). Then, five new publications appeared in 1995 and 1996: the new stamp impression discovered at Ḥorvat Ha-Moza (Billig 1995: 82); the stamp impressions from Tel Ḥarasim (Givon 1995; 1996; Naveh 1995); the first mention of the stamp impressions from Nebi Samwil (Magen and Dadon 1995; 2000; and see now Magen and Har-Even's paper in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. 38–58); the stamp impression from Tel Nimrin (Dempsey 1996); and the publication of a stamp impression from Babylon, a photograph of which is at the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin (Naveh 1996).

The publication of 79 exemplars discovered during Shiloh's excavations (1978–1985) of the City of David (Ariel and Shoham 2000) was, after Aharoni's material from Ramat Raḥel, the second largest corpus of stamp impressions of this type ever published (about 15% of the total corpus). Ariel and Shoham's exemplary publication includes many of the known types (13 out of the 17 types belonging to the Yehud corpus). However, 73 of the stamp impressions discovered at the City of David (more than 90% of the finds) belong to only five types: 22 stamp impressions of the *yh* type (out of 175 stamp impressions of this type known thus far); 20 stamp impressions of the *yh*-ligatured type (out of 54 known thus far); 12 stamp impressions of the *yhd-t* type (out of 85 known thus far); ten stamp impressions of the *yhd* type (out of 96 known thus far); and nine stamp impressions of the *ḥyḥ ḥw* type (out of 16 known thus far). The other six stamp impressions discovered in the City of David belong to five different types: one (out of four) stamp impression of the *yhd mlkyw* type;<sup>11</sup> two (out of five) of the *yhd ḥnh* type;<sup>12</sup> one (out of six) of the *yhd ḥwʿzr ḥw* type; and one (out of four) of the *gdlyh* type.<sup>13</sup>

In the last six years, 16 new Yehud stamp impressions were published: a new impression from the excavations at Kikkar Safra (City Hall), Jerusalem (Ariel 2004); 11 stamp impressions from Avigad's excavations of the Jewish Quarter (Reich 2003; Eshel 2006); new stamp impressions from the excavations at Binyanei ha-Umma (Barkay 2005); a new stamp impression from the excavations at the village of En Gedi (Hadas 2005); and one from Ramot Forest (Davidovich *et al.* 2006; and cf. Farhi in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. 90–91).

<sup>11</sup> This is the first stamp impression of its type ever discovered and the third one to be published. Ariel and Shoham (2000: 146) did not connect it to the other published stamp impressions, and the correct reading was suggested by Barkay (2005).

<sup>12</sup> The other three stamp impressions of this type were already known from Ramat Raḥel.

<sup>13</sup> Ariel and Shoham evidently followed Cross's reading in a publication of identical stamp impressions from Tell en-Naṣbeh. See discussion in Vanderhooft and Lipschits, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. 23–24.

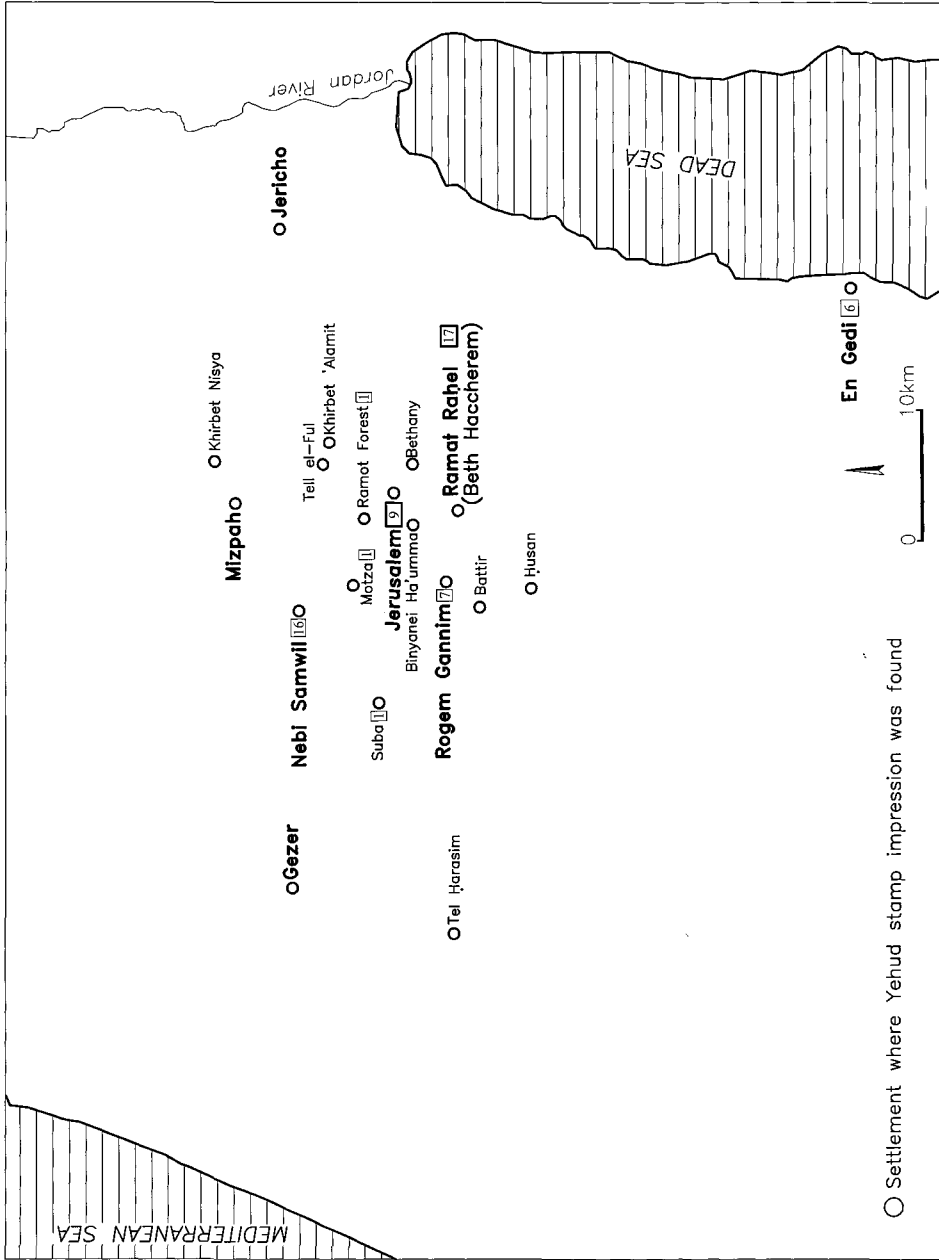


Fig. 2. Yehud stamp impressions published in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, according to sites. The numbers alongside the sites represent the number of new stamp impressions published here.

The stamp impressions published in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, therefore, bring the presentation of excavated Yehud stamp impressions almost entirely up to date. There are, however, a few stamp impressions from modern excavations that remain unpublished.<sup>14</sup> In addition, we discovered more than 100 stamp impressions in the artefact collections and excavation records of different museums and universities (especially originating from Tell en-Naṣbeh and Ramat Raḥel). All of these will be published by us in *Yehūd Stamp Impressions: A Corpus of Inscribed Stamp Impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah* (forthcoming).

Fifteen scholars prepared the following compilation of nine articles<sup>15</sup> on the 56 newly-excavated or newly-published Yehud stamp impressions (six others are uncertain)—all from the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Some of the stamp impressions come from older excavations (e.g., En Gedi), others from renewed excavations (e.g., Ramat Raḥel, the City of David) and still others from new or salvage excavations (e.g., Nebi Samwil, Tzova, Ramot Forest).

The newly published stamp impressions and the growing body of data they represent permit a more secure analysis of the chronological, typological and stratigraphical components of the Persian and early-Hellenistic stamp impression corpus. The growing corpus, in turn, illuminates economic and administrative realities of the province of Yehud during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

### Acknowledgments

Our thanks to Yura Smertenko of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University for drawing the maps on pages 4 and 7.

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<sup>14</sup> Barkay generously made information about some stamp impressions known during a conference at Tel Aviv University (Barkay 2004).

<sup>15</sup> We refer here also to Greenberg and Cinamon 2006.

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