

# Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.



Edited by  
Oded Lipschits,  
Gary N. Knoppers,  
and Rainer Albertz

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ODED LIPSCHITS, GARY N. KNOPPERS,  
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# Contents

Abbreviations .....	ix
Introduction .....	1
GARY N. KNOPPERS, ODED LIPSCHITS, AND RAINER ALBERTZ	
<b>PART 1</b>	
The History of the Fourth Century: A View from the Center	
The Achaemenid Empire in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Period of Decline? .....	11
JOSEF WIESEHÖFER	
<b>PART 2</b>	
Judah in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods	
The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study .....	33
ODED LIPSCHITS AND OREN TAL	
Administration in Fourth-Century B.C.E. Judah in Light of Epigraphy and Numismatics .....	53
ANDRÉ LEMAIRE	
Yehud Stamp Impressions in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Time of Administrative Consolidation? .....	75
ODED LIPSCHITS AND DAVID VANDERHOOF	
“And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit”: On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era .....	95
INGO KOTTSIEPER	
Archaeology and <i>Archaiologias</i> : Relating Excavations to History in Fourth-Century B.C.E. Palestine .....	125
LESTER L. GRABBE	

**PART 3**

Edom and Samaria:  
Judah's Neighbors in the Late Persian  
and Early Hellenistic Periods

- Idumea in the Late Persian Period (Fourth Century B.C.E.) . . . . . 139  
 AMOS KLONER AND IAN STERN
- The Onomasticon of Mareshah in the  
 Persian and Hellenistic Periods . . . . . 145  
 ESTHER ESHEL
- The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on  
 Mount Gerizim in Light of the Archaeological Evidence . . . . 157  
 YITZHAK MAGEN
- Do the Earliest Samaritan Inscriptions Already Indicate  
 a Parting of the Ways? . . . . . 213  
 BOB BECKING
- The Governors of Samaria in the Fifth and  
 Fourth Centuries B.C.E. . . . . 223  
 HANAN ESHEL

**PART 4**

Biblical Literature in the Late Persian  
and Hellenistic Periods

- The Late Persian Formation of the Torah:  
 Observations on Deuteronomy 34 . . . . . 237  
 KONRAD SCHMID
- The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Torah  
 in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.E. . . . . 253  
 REINHARD ACHENBACH
- The Canonical Alignment of the Book of Joshua . . . . . 287  
 RAINER ALBERTZ
- Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within? . . . . . 305  
 GARY N. KNOPPERS
- A New Model for the Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah . . . . . 333  
 JACOB L. WRIGHT

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Who Knew What? The Construction of the Monarchic Past in Chronicles and Implications for the Intellectual Setting of Chronicles .....	349
EHUD BEN ZVI	
“Those Doing the Work for the Service in the House of the Lord”: 1 Chronicles 23:6–24:31 and the Sociohistorical Context of the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period .....	361
JOHN W. WRIGHT	
The Development of Jewish Sectarianism from Nehemiah to the Hasidim .....	385
JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP	
Indexes	
Index of Authors .....	405
Index of Scripture .....	410
Index of Sites .....	421

# *The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study*

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This essay assesses changes in settlement archaeology in the “heart” of the province of Judah (*Yehud*) under Achaemenid and Ptolemaic rule. Using the results of archaeological excavations and surveys, we will try to reconstruct settlement changes between the end of the Persian period and the Hasmonean period (fourth to mid-second centuries B.C.E.), with a focus on the contribution of the fourth century to the process. Judah and especially Jerusalem, owing to their role in biblical literature and their religious impact on Western civilizations, have long been important in archaeological research. However, the research directed at the region’s first-millennium B.C.E. history was mostly focused on the periods that preceded and succeeded the one under discussion—that is, it was mostly focused on the First Temple period and the latter part of the Second Temple period—times when the country was a small but independent political entity. In the last few years, there has been growing interest in the settlement archaeology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian (Achaemenid) periods. The early Hellenistic period, however, has largely been ignored, partly because of the methodological problems that we will discuss below and partly because of its intermediate nature as a transitional period between the domination of the region by Eastern and Western powers.

The available data seem at first glance to be sufficient to tackle the problem at hand. However, they are actually quite problematic. In many of the large-scale excavations carried out in archaeological sites in Judah, the strata pertaining to the late Persian and early Hellenistic (Ptolemaic and Seleucid) periods were meager; some revealed few architectural remains with unclear building plans or pits (silos, refuse, etc.), while others yielded pottery at best, which was in some cases not classified by strata and did not represent proper occupation layers.



Suffice it here to mention sites such as Bethel, Tell en-Naşbeh (biblical Mizpah), Gibeon, Tell el-Fûl (biblical Gibeah of Saul), Nabi Samwil, Anathoth, Bethany, Ramat Raḥel, and Jericho.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Jerusalem, the Persian period city shrank back to its pre-eighth-century B.C.E. size, and the western hill was empty until the second century B.C.E. (Geva 2003: 521–24; Lipschits and Vanderhooft forthcoming).<sup>2</sup> Even this small city was apparently sparsely settled and mostly confined to the southern part of the City of David near the Pool of Siloam (Reich and Shukron 2007: 64–65). The most impressive building plan of the period under discussion in Judah was discovered at En Gedi (Building 234) and dated to the Persian period (see now Stern 2007). The stratigraphic relationship of the first fortress at Beth-zur to occupational layers of Persian date is questionable, and therefore we cannot assign its building plan to the Persian period with certainty (cf. Stern 1982: 31–40; 2001: 428–43, for a review of these sites). Other late Persian and early Hellenistic buildings were documented in non-urban sites. Worthy of mention are the fortress and agricultural estate of Har Adar (Dadon 1997) and the agricultural estates of Qalandya (Magen 2004) and Aderet (Yogev 1982).<sup>3</sup>

#### *Methodological Notes*

Using the results of archaeological excavations and surveys, we will compare the number and character of settlements in three areas that can safely be considered within the borders of the province of Judah during the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.<sup>4</sup> These include the hill country of Benjamin, the area around the Old City of Jerusalem, and the area south of Jerusalem—west of Bethlehem and Ramat Raḥel. In the hill country of Benjamin, 59 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 123 to the Hellenistic (Finkelstein and Magen 1993; fig. 3 below). In Jerusalem, 15 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 37 to the early Hellenistic period (Kloner 2000–2003; fig. 4 below). In the survey map of Nes Harim, 12 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 35 to the Hellenistic period (Weiss, Zissu, and

1. See Stern 2001: 428–43; Betlyon 2005: 20–26; Lipschits 2005: 154–81; Tal 2006: 15–163 (and index).

2. We find it difficult to accept the renewed “maximalist opinion” recently advanced by Ussishkin (2006), in which “Nehemiah’s wall” follows the line of the late Iron Age wall, even though most of the delimited area remained unoccupied.

3. For a list of sites of early Hellenistic date, see Tal 2006: 125–29, 145–54.

4. For a recent survey of the borders of Judah between the end of the seventh century and the second century B.C.E., see Lipschits 2005: 154–81.

Solimany 2004; fig. 5 below); and in the survey map of Deir Mar Saba, only 1 site was attributed to the Persian period and 10 to the Hellenistic period (Patrich 1994; fig. 6 below).

Another reason for focusing on these areas is the similar method of surveying and publishing the different maps within the Israel Antiquities Authority series entitled *Archaeological Survey of Israel*. For the purpose of this essay, we did not include the data of survey-oriented Ph.D. dissertations on the region under discussion (for example, A. Ofer's 1993 survey of the Judean Hills) or outside the region under discussion (Y. Dagan's 2000 survey of the Judean Shephelah). We also took no notice of the data given in the so-called "emergency survey" carried out in 1968 as an outcome of the Six-Day War. The reasons for excluding these sources were mainly because of the overlapping that these data produce with the *Archaeological Survey of Israel*, the different methods of surveying, the absence of some of the main periods from the publications (Ph.D. dissertations that are either First-Temple or Second-Temple-period oriented), and the fact that we have no way to check the results of these surveys.

For the sake of comparison and as a means of control, we also included surveys carried out in regions adjacent to the province of Judah that are both just outside its borders and surveyed and published employing a similar method. These include the map of Lod, which basically corresponds to the southwestern part of the province of Samaria, where 28 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 19 to the Hellenistic period (Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997; fig. 7 below); the map of Lachish, which basically corresponds to the northwestern part of the province of Edom, where 11 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 25 to the Hellenistic period (Dagan 1992; fig. 8 below); and the map of Naḥal Yattir, which corresponds to the southern part of the province of Edom, where 7 sites were attributed to the Persian period and 6 to the Hellenistic period (Govrin 1991; fig. 9 below).

Most late Persian and early Hellenistic sites surveyed are basically rural in nature, not exceeding 5 dunams in size, and normally located in rocky terrains next to agricultural terraces. Jerusalem—as the temple city of Judah—was thus flanked by villages and agricultural estates that formed the predominant type of settlement. Results from both excavations and surveys show a sharp decrease not only in the total number of settlements (as opposed to the late Iron Age) but also in the size of settlements in which late-Iron-Age, Persian-period, and Hellenistic-period occupation appears. These data allow us to define three types of settlements in the province of Judah: (1) centralized—

sites that functioned as administrative centers; (2) martial—military strongholds; and (3) rural—villages and agricultural estates. Centralized sites together with military strongholds were established at key junctures on roads of strategic and political importance and served as the seats of representatives of the ruling powers.

Unlike the pottery of the coastal regions of the country, the pottery of Persian and early Hellenistic period Judah mainly continued the ceramic tradition of the late Iron Age (Lipschits 2005: 192–206). In terms of morphology, many of the table and storage vessels shared similar forms with the vessels of the late Iron Age. Thus, in cases in which small fragments are involved (as is usual in surveys), it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a given piece belongs to the late Iron Age, the Persian period, or even the early Hellenistic period. Furthermore, many of the Persian types are similar to early Hellenistic types.<sup>5</sup> Early and late pottery types within the Persian or early Hellenistic period can thus scarcely be defined due to the continuous tradition of late Iron Age types and the absence of excavations with a stratigraphic sequence within each period. The frequent appearance of brownish-gray ware in both Persian and early Hellenistic period sites is not confined to Judah but also appears in Samaria and Edom. Nonetheless, several pottery vessels such as certain types of bowls, kraters, and lamps from the Persian period can be differentiated from late Iron Age forerunners and early Hellenistic predecessors. However, most of the Persian and early Hellenistic Judean vessels share similar morphological and fabric characteristics. This datum alone raises doubts about the credibility of the attribution of Judean sites to either the Persian or the early Hellenistic period. Moreover, the reliability of the surveyed pottery sampling has been questioned (Redman and Watson 1970; Schiffer, Sullivan, and Klinger 1978). For our purposes, it is important to emphasize that the appearance of Persian and early Hellenistic pottery in Judean sites does not necessarily testify to a clear continuity between the two periods, since sites can be occupied intermittently. However, in this essay, continuity is our preferred explanation, given the historical and political realia of the province of Judah.

Stamped seal impressions contribute much to helping us define the border of the province of Judah (Stern 2001: 545–51; 2004: 14). This is

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5. For example, Tushingham's Persian and Hellenistic pottery from the "early Jewish fills" in the Armenian Garden (e.g., 1985: figs. 12–19, *passim*) can hardly be morphologically attributed to either period alone. The same holds true for many of the locally manufactured vessel types retrieved from Lachish Level I (Fantalkin and Tal 2004).

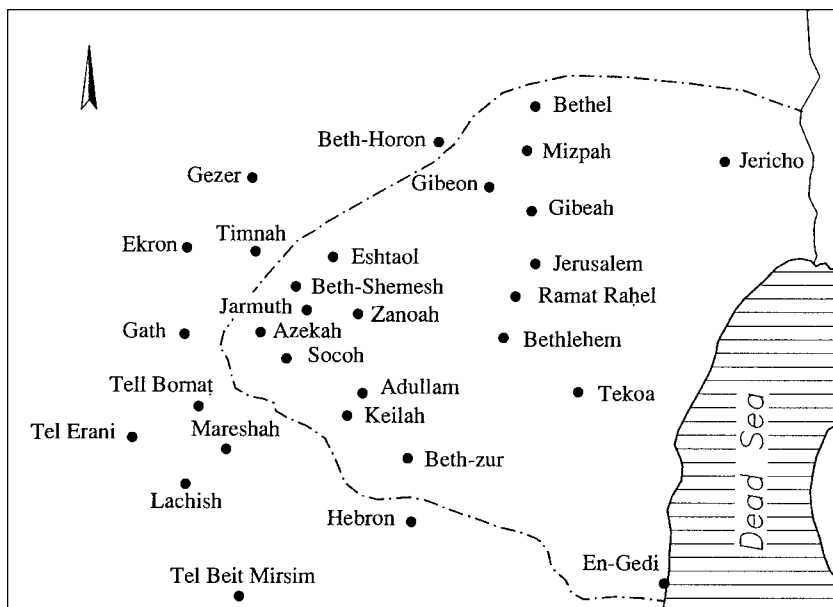


Fig. 1. Suggested Borders of the Province of Judah in the Persian Period (from Lipschits 2005: 183, map 6; reprinted courtesy of Eisenbrauns).

evident by the fact that storage vessels with Judahite seal impressions were circulated almost exclusively within the province. Up till now, more than 500 *Yehud* stamp seal impressions are known, as well as about 150 *lion* stamp seal impressions. New evidence will most likely be forthcoming due to the high number of archaeological excavations underway in Judah. First and foremost are the recent excavations at Ramat Raḥel. Lipschits and Vanderhooft suggest that there are three stages represented in the production of Judahite stamped seal impressions: the first stage was the late sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., the second was the fourth and third centuries, and the third was the second century (Lipschits and Vanderhooft, in this volume, pp. 75–94; Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007).

Another indicator of the province's borders that meshes well with the above consideration is the distribution of the *Yehud* coins. Their geographical distribution is restricted mainly to within the borders of Judah, with the exception of a few coins that were found at Tell Jemmeh, Mount Gerizim, and Ḥorvat ʿEtri (Ariel 2002: 287–94, esp. table 3). The

small number of Yehud coins retrieved from controlled archaeological excavations (a mere 23 coins) is supplemented by the many examples with supposed Judahite find-spots that came from the antiquities market. Yehud coins can thus be seen as currency that mostly belonged to an “inner-provincial monetary system” that operated under a Jerusalemite minting authority. The small number of Yehud coins found as strays or in excavations outside Judah lends support to our understanding that their primary use was as a local currency. In cases where Yehud coins were discovered outside Judah, they were either used at their nominal value or, if unacceptable as currency in the local market, at bullion value.

### *The Database and Discussion*

In what follows we will consider the data collected from the relevant survey maps by means of graphs.

When the evidence from the surveys in the geographical region of Judah is considered as presented above, we note a sharp increase in the number of the Hellenistic sites (fig. 2). This growth represents an increase of about 126% according to the cited survey maps. In fact, in all cited survey maps that are located within our defined limits of the province of Judah, the main conclusion is that the number of Hellenistic sites is more than double, if the results are accepted as provided. In the hill country of Benjamin (fig. 3), an increase of about 109% can be observed; in the survey map of Jerusalem (fig. 4), an increase of about 147% can be observed; in the survey map of Nes Harim (fig. 5), an increase of about 192% can be observed; and in the survey map of Deir Mar Saba (fig. 6), an increase of about 900% can be observed! This evidence, however, referring to some 87 Persian sites and 205 Hellenistic sites is misleading. This is because only in the survey of Jerusalem (Kloner 2000–2003: 3.30\*–32\*) was an attempt made to distinguish early from late Hellenistic (namely, Hasmonean) sites—albeit, even with these attempts, the multiple site number trend remains the same! However, it should be pointed out that this distinction was made with many limitations, because of the nature of the finds (as discussed above), in that most Hellenistic sites without Persian occupation reflect Hasmonean settlement activity rather than Ptolemaic or Seleucid settlement activity. This view is supported by the results of many Second Temple period excavations in Jerusalem and its environs. In most sites, the earliest Hellenistic stratum is normally attributed to the second half of the second century B.C.E. or the first half of the first century

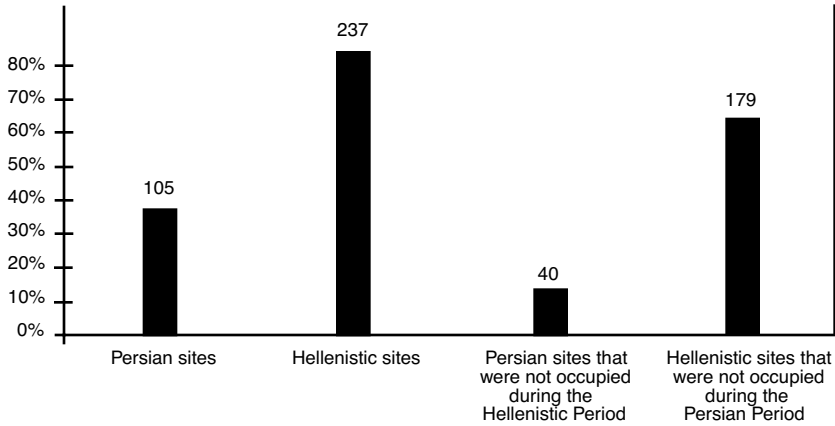


Fig. 2. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to surveys carried out in the province of Judah and bordering regions.

Survey Maps	Persian sites	Hellenistic sites	Persian period sites that were not occupied during the Hellenistic period	Hellenistic sites that were not occupied during the Persian period
Map of the hill country of Benjamin: <sup>a</sup>				
Beit Sira (south)	8	16	1	9
Ramallah (south)				
el-Bireh (south)				
En Kerem (north)	33	70	8	51
Wadi el-Makukh	3	10	1	9
Jerusalem (east)	15	27	9	21
Map of Jerusalem <sup>b</sup>	15	37	5	27
Map of Nes Harim <sup>c</sup>	12	35	6	29
Map of Deir Mar Saba <sup>d</sup>	1	10	—	9
Map of Lakhish <sup>e</sup>	11	25	7	21
Map of Naḥal Yattir <sup>f</sup>	7	6	3	2
Map of Tel Malḥata <sup>g</sup>	—	1	—	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>179</b>

a. See Finkelstein and Magen 1993.

b. See Kloner 2000–2003.

c. See Weiss, Zissu, and Solimany 2004.

d. See Patrìch 1994.

e. See Dagan 1992.

f. See Govrin 1991.

g. See Beit-Arieh 2003.

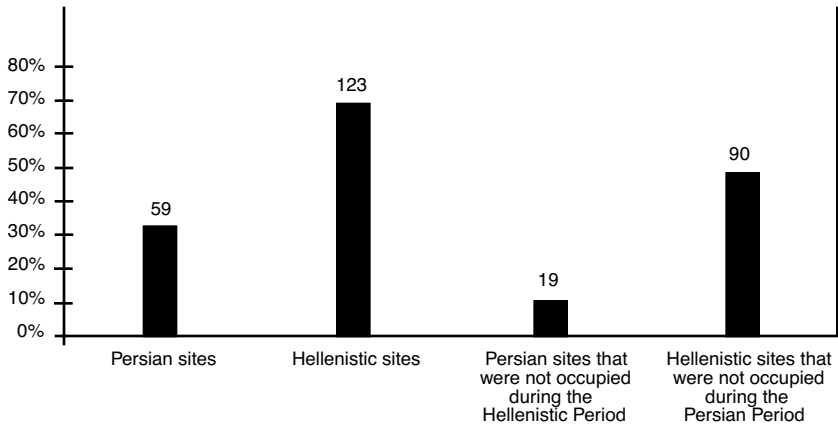


Fig. 3. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey maps of the hill country of Benjamin.

Survey Maps	Persian sites	Hellenistic sites	Persian period sites that were not occupied during the Hellenistic period	Hellenistic sites that were not occupied during the Persian period
Map of the hill country of Benjamin: <sup>a</sup>				
Beit Sira (south)	8	16	1	9
Ramallah (south)				
el-Bireh (south)				
En Kerem (north)	33	70	8	51
Wadi el-Makukh	3	10	1	9
Jerusalem (east)	15	27	9	21
<i>Total</i>	59	123	19	90

a. See Finkelstein and Magen 1993.

B.C.E.—a period, when Judah as a political entity was in firm Hasmonean control. Notable among these is the recently published final report of Avigad's excavations of the Jewish Quarter (Geva 2003: 524–26). The same holds true for the numerous Second Temple period tombs excavated and documented in Jerusalem (Kloner and Zissu 2003: 67–68). It thus appears that Jerusalem and the “province of Judah” during



Fig. 4. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Jerusalem.

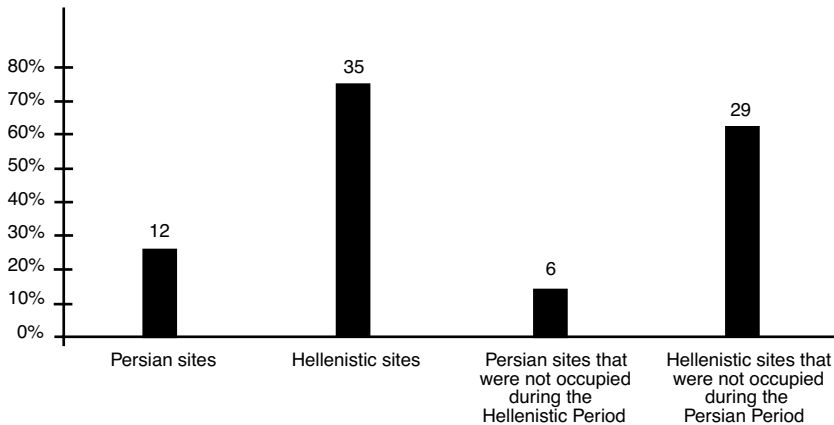


Fig. 5. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Nes Harim.

the late fourth, third, and early second centuries B.C.E. did not witness major changes in size and number of sites in comparison with the Persian period (Bahat 1990: 36).<sup>6</sup>

6. The indirect evidence on the size of Jerusalem (as a prosperous urban center) from the *Letter of Aristaeus* is most likely related to its Hasmonean past, because most scholars tend to attribute this source to the late second century B.C.E. (cf. Honigman 2003: 128–30).



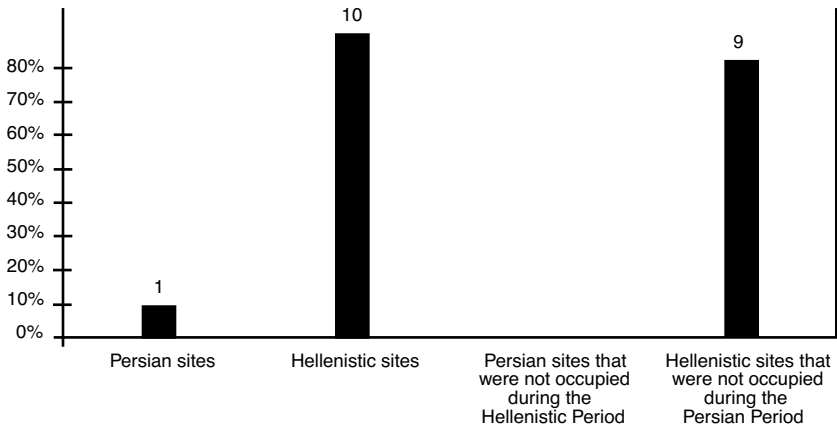


Fig. 6. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Deir Mar Saba.

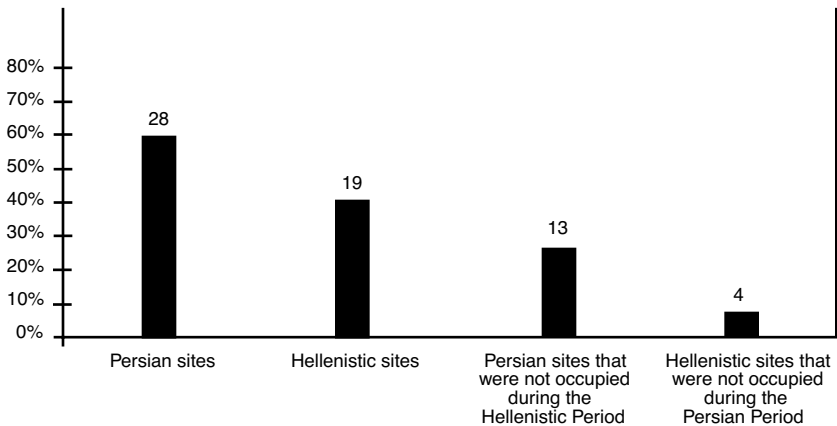


Fig. 7. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Lod.

The Dead Sea region may present what may be termed as a radical case study for this phenomenon, because both excavations and surveys on the western shores of the Dead Sea yielded no early Hellenistic finds.<sup>7</sup> The same picture emerges from the excavations of ‘Ain ez-Zâra (Clamer 1997) and from surveys conducted on the eastern shores of the

7. See Bar-Adon 1972; see also “Operation Scroll,” in *‘Atiqot* 41 (2002), esp. the papers on Regions XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV.

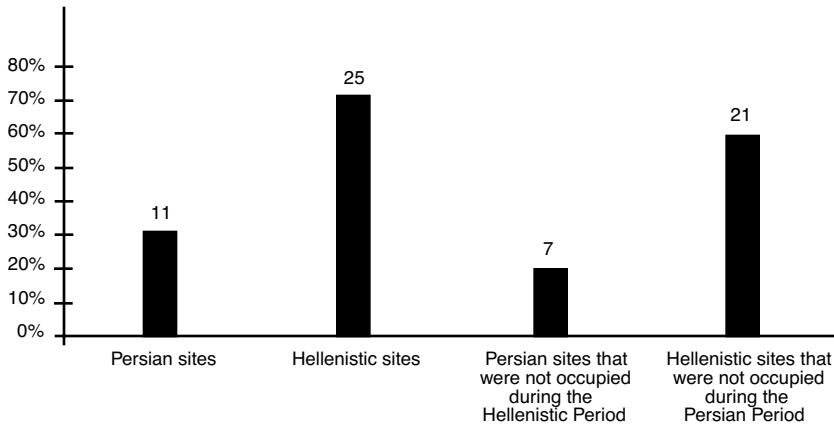


Fig. 8. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Lachish.

Dead Sea (Mallon 1924; Amr et al. 1996). Finds from En Gedi (Tel Goren) Stratum III (Mazar, Dothan, and Dunayevsky 1966: 39–44) and the forts of Mišpe En Gedi and Rosh Ma‘ale En Gedi (Ofer 1986), although they include a few Ptolemaic and Seleucid coins, should be attributed to activity during the Hasmonean occupation.<sup>8</sup> The lack of Ptolemaic and Seleucid coins in Regions XI, XII, XIII, XIV, and XV of “Operation Scroll” (Ariel 2002: table 1) corresponds well with this conclusion. Other “Hellenistic” remains, such as tombs (Hadas 1994),

8. In the publication of the first two seasons of excavation in En Gedi (Tel Goren), Stratum III was “dated with a great degree of certainty to the . . . 3rd–2nd centuries B.C.E.” (Mazar, Dothan, and Dunayevsky 1966: 39). This dating was based on stratigraphy (between Persian [V] and Hasmonian [II = Alexander Jannaeus] strata), pottery, out-of-context coins (“one Seleucid and several Ptolemaic”), and a reference to En Gedi in Sirach (24:6–15), which the excavators date to the first half of the second century B.C.E. In the publication of the fourth and fifth seasons, Stratum II was down-dated to the Herodians, and Stratum III was subsequently “stretched” down to the Hasmoneans (Mazar and Dunayevski 1966: 192). In the final excavation report of En Gedi, it was stated that “The Stratum III fort are [sic!] undoubtedly later than Stratum IV (Persian period) and are [sic!] earlier than the fort of Stratum II (the Hasmonean period, especially the reign of Alexander Jannaeus)”; the report then adds: “A fairly large quantity of the Hellenistic pottery was found in a stratigraphic context to be assigned to Stratum III, especially in Locus 2 . . .” (Stern and Matskevich 2007: 271), yet not a single fragment was published. Given the site and the region’s character, it is safe to assume that the fort of Stratum III is of Early Hasmonean date (John Hyrcanus?). The forts of Mišpe En Gedi and Rosh Ma‘ale En Gedi guarded the routes that led to En Gedi and are connected with the site’s Hasmonean occupation.

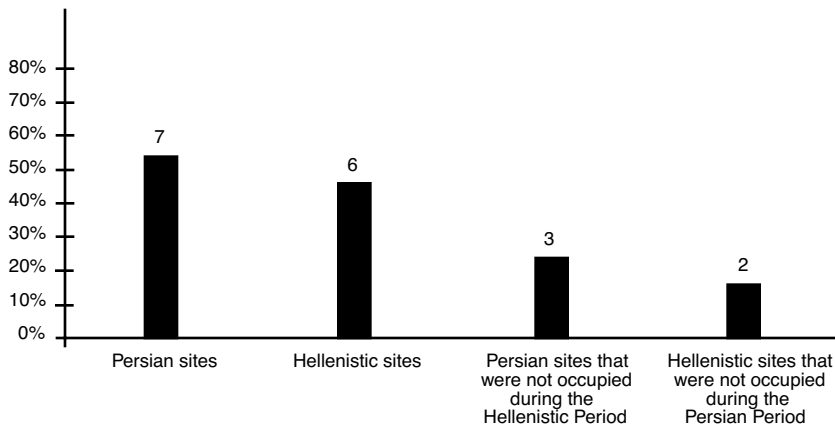


Fig. 9. Quantitative distribution of Persian and Hellenistic sites according to the survey map of Nahal Yattir.

anchoring tracts (Hadas 1993), and anchors (Hadas 1992) are preferably dated to the Hasmonean period (and to later times), because of geopolitical and archaeological evidence (Fischer, Gichon, and Tal 2000: 139–42). A similar phenomenon is evident from the survey maps carried out to the south, north, and east of Jerusalem, parts of which are adjacent to the northwestern sections of the Dead Sea region. Some of these areas (Hirschfeld 1985; Syon 1994: 50) yield no documentation on Hellenistic sites; in other cases (Patrich 1994; Syon 1997: 91; Kloner 2000–2003: 1.11\*; vol. 2; 3.30\*–32\*), the Hellenistic sites should be mainly attributed to the Hasmonean period. The same settlement activity can be discerned in regions south of this area, in the Negeb and Araba. Hellenistic or, preferably, Nabatean sites were documented in all survey maps (Sedé-Boqer, Har Nafḥa, Har Ḥamran, Mizpé Ramon, Har Ramon, Makhtesh Ramon, Har Saggie). Although the surveyors treated (in some maps) the Nabatean period as contemporaneous with the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, most sites should be dated to the first century B.C.E. onward. It is important to mention that the few Persian sites discovered in the region show no continuing Hellenistic occupation.

Thus, tracking the settlement archaeology of the province of Judah in Persian and early Hellenistic times cannot be based on surveys alone, because there is a clear contradiction between the evidence of

excavations and the survey finds. This contradiction is also apparent in survey maps of adjacent regions. The map of Lod, for example, shows an opposite trend: the number of Persian sites is far higher (by about 47%) than the number of Hellenistic sites (fig. 7). In contrast, on the map of Lachish, the same Judahite trend is apparent and an increase of about 127% is noted (fig. 8). A different trend is apparent on the map of Naḥal Yattir, where the number of Persian sites is almost equal to the number of Hellenistic sites (fig. 9). All of the above factors compel us to inquire further into the nature of our database by means of more “delicate” archaeological tools.

It was Stern (2001: 580–82) who, basing his argument on the administrative-oriented archaeological finds of the Persian period, suggested that the provinces of the country and their major administrative units became functional largely during the latter part of the Persian period. This view was recently corroborated for the inland regions of southern Palestine after studying the Lachish Level I finds of the renewed Israeli excavations. It became clear that the “substantial architectural remains” of Level I should be down-dated by about 50 years (Fantalkin and Tal 2004). In a subsequent study, Fantalkin and Tal (2006) argued for a reorganization of the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy by means of a “new” arrangement of the provinces’ boundaries, in about 400 B.C.E., once Egypt became independent, as is evident from the monumental building activities in a series of “southern” administrative and military sites. Among the administrative-oriented sites are Lachish, Tell Jemmeh, Tel Seraʿ, Tel Haror, Tel Ḥalif, Beth-zur, Ramat Raḥel, and En Gedi (Tel Goren), whereas the military-oriented sites are Ḥorvat Rogem, Ḥorvat Ritma, Meṣad Naḥal HaRoʿa, Ḥorvat Mesora, Arad, Beer-sheba, Tell el Farah (South), and possibly Kadesh-barnea and En Ḥazeva. It is clear that this new architectural landscape should be seen as a response to a new political reality: Egypt was no longer a part of the Persian Empire or subject to Achaemenid rule. Southern Palestine became one of the frontiers of the Persian Empire (see also Lipschits 2006: 35–38). Thus we suggest that only after this date should one look for established boundaries for the provinces of Yehud or Edom (and consequently of Philistia and Samaria as bordering centers). It seems that before this date the Persian authorities deliberately permitted a certain degree of independence with regard to the resettlement of the area. It is no coincidence that signs of autonomy, such as “municipal coin issues” of Jerusalem (Yehud) and “standardized” Aramaic seal impressions on local storage jar handles do not

appear (in all probability) before the fourth century B.C.E.<sup>9</sup> The same holds true for the several thousand Idumean ostraca that allegedly come from the site of Khirbet el-Kom (Lemaire 1996; 2002; 2006; Eph'al and Naveh 1996, all with additional bibliography) and the many dozens that came from Tel Arad (Naveh 1981) and Tel Beer-sheba (Naveh 1973; 1979). Southern Palestine experienced a significant transformation in its political organization: a higher level of direct imperial involvement in the local administration is apparent. What one can observe here is a completely different level of Achaemenid involvement in local affairs that most likely included a fixed arrangement of district boundaries, garrisoning of the frontiers, and, most of all, tight Achaemenid control and investment, as is witnessed by the unprecedented construction at many sites in southern Palestine (Fantalkin and Tal 2006; Lipschits 2006).

Persian domination over Egypt was reestablished for a short period between 343 and 332 B.C.E., prior to the Macedonian conquest (Briant 2002: 685–88, with further references). As a result, the frontier shifted once more, leaving Palestine deep in Achaemenid territory. In this context, for levels attributed to the late Persian periods, it is abandonment rather than destruction that we witness in southern Palestine. Some sites were never resettled after this abandonment (Tel Haror, Tell el Farah, Ḥorvat Rogem, Ḥorvat Ritma, Mešad Naḥal HaRo'a, Ḥorvat Mesora), while others were occupied at various times in the Hellenistic period (Lachish, Tell Jemmeh, Tel Sera', Tel Ḥalif, Beth-zur, Ramat Raḥel, En Gedi, Arad, Beer-sheba), a few of which preserved the administrative character of their Achaemenid predecessors (Tell Jemmeh, Beth-zur, Ramat Raḥel, En Gedi—the latter two most likely only during the Hasmonean period). The archaeological evidence allows us to argue that during the early Hellenistic period Judah experienced a smooth shift from its Persian (Achaemenid) past. In the case of Jerusalem, both Yehud coins and Yehud seal impressions are worthy examples.

As clearly demonstrated in this volume (Lipschits and Vanderhooft, pp. 75–94), the Yehud stamp impressions went through a fundamental change in form, style, paleography, and orthography at the end of the

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9. On the chronology of the Yehud coins, see Ariel 2002: 287–94, with additional references. On the Aramaic stamped seal impressions, see Ariel and Shoham (2000), where Persian types are differentiated from Hellenistic counterparts on the basis of contexts, comparisons, and paleography. See also Lipschits and Vanderhooft, in this volume, pp. 75–94.

fifth or beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. The new system, pointing to a simplification or consolidation of previous practices, persisted through the first half of the second century, when it underwent additional modification during the Hasmonean period.

The Hellenistic Yehud coins continued to be used in the same late-Persian-period denominations—quarter-obols in the main, weighing 0.18 gram on average. In both the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods, these coins were produced with a high elemental silver value of about 97%, a suitable currency for Temple payments. In other words, these coins were regarded as “pure silver issues” (Ronen 1998: 125 n. 5; Gitler and Lorber 2006: 19–25). In both periods, preference for Paleo-Hebrew over Aramaic is much evident. Early-Hellenistic-period coins demonstrate artistic ability on a similar level as their Persian counterparts, being influenced by monetary centers (Alexandria in the early Hellenistic period and Athens in the late Persian period). Early Hellenistic coins were, in fact, minted until the late 260s, during the reign of Ptolemy II (on their chronology, see Gitler and Lorber 2006: 6–16).

### *Summary and Further Thoughts*

When we compare the number of settlements in late Persian period Judah to the number in late Iron Age Judah, we note a sharp decrease not only in the total number of settlements but also in the amount of administrative-oriented sites. In other words, late Persian period Judah as a political entity may be defined, according to data retrieved from both excavations and surveys, as a rural province with no more than half the number of settlements as the late Iron Age. By contrast, methodical analysis of the late Persian and early Hellenistic sites reveals continuity of the settlement pattern and model from the Persian period in most centralized, rural, and military sites (Tal 2006: 15–163 [and index]). Moreover, there is no distinct increase in the territory of the province between the two periods or in the territory of the city of Jerusalem, which covered, roughly, the Temple Mount and the City of David. Furthermore, the military pattern has only a few examples, and in these there appears to be settlement continuity from Persian times. Thus a change between the two periods cannot be demonstrated. Our conclusion is strengthened by administrative-oriented finds, such as coins and seal impressions. This evidence suggests that the organization of the administrative system was continuous from the last days of the Achaemenids to the early days of the Lagids and Ptolemies.

The general trend of continuity in the settlement pattern and model is not confined only to Judah but is evident in to other regions of Palestine as well. This continuity could imply a similar administrative system in both the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods. However, within this continuity of settlement, we note marginal types of settlement change that occurred for local social, political, and economic reasons. One must emphasize, of course, that the evidence is limited, because short occupational gaps are barely traceable. However, with no finds to contradict this assumption, continuity still remains the logical explanation.

A broader look at the evidence collected here must take into consideration the so-called Hellenization process that the country underwent after the Greco-Macedonian conquest—that is, the alleged absorption of Greek cultural customs, spiritual and material, by the local populations. In the historical and archaeological research of the Hellenistic East, the term *break* is often used as a synonym for the Hellenization process, and *continuity* is often used as a synonym for local traditionalism. The province of Judah, based on our understanding of the archaeological data, retained traditional cultural patterns during the transition between the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The archaeological data provide evidence for the superiority of local traditions over foreign traditions and for continuity of settlements and of political organization. Partial and limited Hellenization did occur at a later stage but was mainly visible in the archaeological record in things related to the royal administration; but this is beyond the purpose of our study (Tal 2006: 323–35).

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