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CHAPTER SEVEN

BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND TEXT: A REEVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF JERUSALEM IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

Oded Lipschits

JERUSALEM AT THE END OF THE FIRST TEMPLE PERIOD AS A STARTING POINT

For years scholars have debated the size and nature of the settlement in Jerusalem and its surroundings at the end of the First Temple period; a general consensus has now emerged that gives a picture of the place and time.¹ At the end of the eighth century BCE the built-up area of the city expanded from the 5 hectare Southeastern Hill (the “City of David”) to the 45 hectare Southwestern Hill (the area of the modern day Jewish and Armenian Quarters and the so-called “Mount Zion”) (Avigad 1980, 31–60; Geva 2003b).² A new fortified neighborhood also developed on the eastern slope of the City of David (Reich and Shukron 2004), so that the total built-up area of the city in this period can be estimated at 65 hectares (Geva 2007, 55). The boundaries of this area are well marked by the tombs that encircled it (Barkay 1985, 472; 1991, 103), and unfortified neighborhoods arose to the north of the city walls, bringing the total settled area to about 100 hectares (Barkay 1985, 161–165, 500). A large and complex set of agricultural settlements was built around the city, including farms, hamlets and agricultural installations (Lipschits and Gadot 2008, with further literature), and large villages in the more remote circle, between Moza in the west, el-ʿAzariyah in the east, ʿAnate in the north and Ramat-Raḥel in the south, apparently delineating the territory known as “the environs of Jerusalem” (Lipschits 2005, 209, 215). A well-planned array of fortresses, which were within these boundaries, were built in a wide ring

¹ See, e.g., Gibson and Edelstein 1985, 139–55; Barkay 1985; Lipschits 1997, 246–75; 2001, 132–34; Feig 2000, 387–409; Geva 2007, 55–56.

² On the process of this expansion, see the different reconstructions of Naʿaman (2007) and Finkelstein (2007).

around the city in the French Hill, Giloh, Zur Baher, Kh. el-Burj(?) and Abu-Dis (Mazar 1981, 246–48; Barkay 1985, 371–73; Eisenberg and De Groot 2006; Lipschits and Gadot 2008, 89–94).

Based on this data, scholars have suggested different estimates of the population of Jerusalem at the end of the First Temple period. The higher estimates are between 20,000 and 25,000 people (Broshi 1974, 23; Shiloh 1981, 279; Faust 2005, 112). These estimates are based on the accepted calculation of the above number of settled hectares multiplied by a coefficient of 200–250 people per hectare.³ The main problem with these estimates is that they seem to overestimate the actual settled area in Jerusalem, not paying sufficient attention to the large areas in the Ophel and the Temple Mount area that were occupied by cultic, administrative and royal buildings. Besides, the archaeological data from the Southwestern Hill shows that it was sparsely populated, with large unsettled areas and even agricultural areas between houses (Geva 2007, 56).

The low population estimates for Jerusalem in this period suggest that there were between 6,000 and 10,000 residents (Wilkinson 1974, 50, Table 1; Auld and Steiner 1996, 40–41; Steiner 2001, 109, 114; Geva 2007, 56). These figures are calculated with an awareness of the different purposes of the built-up areas within the city walls, but probably underestimate the number of private dwellings and settled areas in the city that would have been restricted as a result of water resources in the city and natural limitations of food supply in the area around it.

Flanking these high and low estimates are the suggestions of other scholars that the population of Jerusalem was between 15,000 and 20,000 people (Kloner 2003, 21); 15,000 (Finkelstein 2001, 243; Lipschits 2005, 270, Table 4.3); or 12,000 (Finkelstein and Silberman 2006, 122). These estimates seem to be more balanced in their differentiation between the settled areas in the city and the areas that were occupied with cultic, administrative and royal buildings. They are based on more careful attention to the development of the agricultural areas around Jerusalem, especially the Rephaim Valley to the south, the area of Benjamin to the north and the area between Binyaney Ha'ummah and Motza to the west. These large agricultural areas developed at the end of the eighth century BCE, at the same time that the settled area in Jerusalem expanded and its population increased. They served as the

³ On the different methods for calculating the number of people based on estimates of settled hectares, see Geva 2007, 52–54.

agricultural hinterland of the city, and could supply the needs of the large population that once lived in the capital of the kingdom (Lipschits and Gadot 2008).

Scholars agree that at the beginning of the seventh century BCE the population of Jerusalem declined (Geva 2003b, 519–23), but it seems that the general estimates of the population in the city (around 15,000) and in the area around it (10,000) remained stable, and can be estimated at about 25,000 people.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY THE BABYLONIANS AND “THE MYTH OF THE EMPTY LAND”

According to the biblical description, the Babylonians showed Jerusalem no mercy; about one month after the city’s surrender, Nebuzaradan, the chief cook, reached the city and began to destroy it systematically.⁴ As depicted in the Bible, the Babylonians burned “the house of the LORD,” “—the house of the king (= the palace),” “all of the houses of Jerusalem,” and “every large house,” and “tore down the walls of Jerusalem all about” (2 Kgs 25:9–10). The purpose of this description was to generalize, stating that the Babylonians destroyed all of the cultic, administrative and royal structures, as well as all the residences in Jerusalem. This description accords with the account by Nehemiah (2:13–15) in his survey of the city walls some 130 years later, as well as with the archaeological finds that were revealed in the excavations in various parts of the city.

A clear picture emerges from the archaeological finds.⁵ The significance of these finds is that the Babylonian destruction is well documented by archaeological research, and even more—there is no evidence of human activity of any kind in Jerusalem between the time of the Babylonian destruction in 586 BCE and the beginning of the Persian period. It would seem that the inevitable explanation for this is that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and was emptied of most of its population.

⁴ Regarding the date of the destruction of the city, and the meaning of the gap of one month between its surrender and the beginning of its destruction, see Lipschits 2005, 79–80.

⁵ For a summary of the archaeological picture of the area of Jerusalem at the end of the 7th and during the 6th centuries BCE, see: Lipschits 2001, 129–42; 2005, 210–18.

Also according to the biblical description, the destruction of Jerusalem was followed by the deportation of the city's inhabitants. In addition to the exile of many of the nation's elite 10 years before,⁶ in 2 Kgs 25:11 (and cf. Jer 39:9; 52:15) there is a description of the deportation of three groups to Babylon:⁷ "the rest of the people that were left in the city" are apparently the military forces that remained in Jerusalem after its surrender, including the defenders who were not killed during the long siege of the city or after its surrender, and did not escape the city with Zedekiah and "all the men of war" (2 Kgs 25:4–5; Jer 39:4; 52:7). "Those who had deserted to the king of Babylon" consisted of those who surrendered themselves to the Babylonians during the siege; some of them were military men and some were civilians who, in light of the situation, decided to flee (and cf. Jer 37:12; 38:19). "The rest of the multitude" probably included the remainder of the populace of Jerusalem, who were trapped in the city following the siege.

The conclusion from this description is that the Babylonian intention was to define a total deportation of the residents of Jerusalem, with no reference to other parts of the kingdom. Since the economic, political, and religious elite had already been in Babylon for more than 10 years, this deportation was probably a focused and well-considered act, initiated by the Babylonians, who probably carefully winnowed the exiles taken from the city, in order to remove those elements that were likely to interfere with the establishment of the new arrangements they planned for Judah.

The Babylonians brought about an utter and deliberate destruction of Jerusalem and its immediate environs, and the region was almost completely emptied of its population. As part of the military activity, the Babylonians destroyed the main cities and fortresses of Judah's western border in the Shephelah. It seems that the hinterland areas

⁶ The biblical description of this deportation is complex (Lipschits 2005, 299–304, with further literature), but even if it left no archaeological remains there is no room to doubt its actual historicity. There are clear parallels between the biblical description and the Babylonian Chronicles from that period, which stated that Nebuchadrezzar "– encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city [and] seized [its] king" (Grayson 1975, 102 [Rev. L. 12]). On the history of the events conducted during these months, see: Lipschits 2005, 70–84. The presence of King Jehoiachin in Babylon, together with some high-profile captives or hostages has been well-known ever since the Weidner Tablets were discovered in the southern palace of Babylon; it mentions the king among other dignitaries (Weidner 1939, 925–26).

⁷ For a detailed discussion, see: Lipschits 2005, 82–83.

in the south and east of the kingdom toppled in a longer, more complex process with ruinous consequences. The thriving array of settlements that had existed in the Judean Desert, Jordan Valley, and Dead Sea environs disappeared completely and the border fortresses of the Judean kingdom in the Beersheba–Arad Valleys collapsed, together with the settlements that had existed alongside them. However, the area of Benjamin, north of Jerusalem, and the area south of the city, between Ramat Rahel and Beth-Zur, were left nearly untouched, and their populations continued to live in the same way, in the same place, and with the same material culture, as they had before the destruction of Jerusalem (Lipschits 2005, 206–57).

“THE MYTH OF THE MASS RETURN”

According to the description in Ezra 1, “In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia” the community of the exiled Judahites in Babylon was allowed to return to Jerusalem and its vicinity. The list of returnees in Ezra 2 makes the impression of a massive return from exile, and according to Ezra 3:1 soon after “the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem,” in order to start building the Temple.

Although many scholars have questioned the reliability of this description (Grabbe 2004, 271–76, with further literature), as well as the reliability of Cyrus’ decree as cited in Ezra 1:2–4 (Hebrew) and 6:2–5 (Aramaic),⁸ this description became the base for the accepted view among scholars that there was a major event of return at the beginning of the Persian period.⁹ In modern research, however, it became clear that “the Myth of the Mass Return” as a theological, social, and political idea continued “the Myth of the Empty Land.”¹⁰ There is no hint in any Persian document that refers to such a mass return, and the claimed return of divine images and people in the Persian empire actually refers to measures taken on a local scale, and has nothing to do with the return of Judahites from Babylon to Jerusalem

⁸ See, e.g., Galling 1964, 61–77; Smith 1987, 78, 186 n. 16; Blenkinsopp 1988, 74–76; Grabbe 2004, 271–76.

⁹ See the description of the theories in Grabbe 2004, 443, with further literature, and cf., recently expressed views by: Zevit 2009, 130–31, 134; Mazar 2009, 72.

¹⁰ Barstad 1988; 1996; Knauf 1994, 167; Becking 2006, 7; Lipschits 2003, 355–66; 2005, 348–78; Grabbe: 2004, 275.

(Kuhrt 1983, 87–88; Wiesehöfer 1994, 71–88; Albertz 2001, 98–100), while the “Cyrus cylinder” represents the propaganda and worldview of the Marduk priests of the Esagila temple at Babylon (Kuhrt 1983). The very few and very late clues within the biblical texts regarding the beginning of the Persian period attest to a very limited presence of people in Jerusalem, both in number and in its ability to found Jerusalem as a cultic center, not to mention its strength to build Jerusalem as an urban center (Lipschits 2006, 32).

As many biblical scholars have observed, there is no room for theories regarding a “mass return” at the beginning of the Persian period (Becking 2006, 3–18, with further literature). From the archaeological perspective, the return of Judahites to Judah did not leave its imprint on the material culture, and no demographic change can be perceived (Lipschits 2003, 365). As a historical assumption, based only on the biblical texts, one may reconstruct some small waves of return that lasted for over a century (Hoglund 1992b; Knauf 1994, 167; Carter 1999; Kinet 2001, 190–202; Lipschits 2005, 122–26, 267–71; 2006, 30–34; Becking 2006, 8–10).

It seems that only three historical assumptions, based on the understanding of the biblical texts and, as will be discussed below, with no clear archaeological support, may be used as a base for reconstructing a slow and gradual process (Lipschits 2006):

During the early years of the Persian period, the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt and the cult was renewed. According to Ezra 6:15, “The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.”¹¹ There are, of course, no archaeological traces of this event, but the different attempts to redate it to a much later period (Edelman 2005, 151–208, 332–351) cannot be accepted.

The existence of the Temple was the main reason for the actual “return.” It was, however, a slow and gradual process that lasted into the late sixth and through the early fifth century BCE, during which the Judahite community in Babylon re-established its social, religious, and fiscal power around the Temple in Jerusalem. One cannot detect this process with archaeological tools, since the changes were too slow

¹¹ These dates and this reconstruction have major chronological problems (see, e.g., the survey of Edelman 2005, 3–9), but it seems that most scholars still agree with this basic assumption.

and too small, and because, as will be discussed below, there are only scanty remains from the Persian period in Jerusalem.

The slow development of Jerusalem neither formed nor crystallized before the middle of the fifth century BCE, when a wall was built around the City of David, and the city again became the capital (*bîrâh*) of the province, replacing Mizpah. Also in this case, one cannot detect the building of the wall with archaeological tools. However, this is the most important event, the one that stands at the core of the Book of Nehemiah, and the impression that it gives is one of the most conspicuous and most important at that time, and the one that led to enormous expectations for the renewed status of Jerusalem (Lipschits 2007). This impression was emphasized by the editing of the list of “the builders of the wall” (Nehemiah 3) in Nehemiah memoirs, and it stands behind the story of the repopulation of the city (Nehemiah 7) and the composition of Nehemiah 11 (Lipschits 2002). It is part of the idea emphasized by the editing of this book, that in this period, one historical circle was closed: Jerusalem’s status was renewed. A temple, fortifications, and a status of a central political city were restored in Jerusalem.

As said previously, there are only questionable and scanty archaeological remains of this wall. The remains from Persian period Jerusalem are sparse, and can only indicate the size of the settlement in Jerusalem during the Persian period, with no indication of any process of development.

THE SCARCE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS FROM PERSIAN PERIOD JERUSALEM

The lack of Persian period archaeological finds in Jerusalem is not a mere coincidence. It is the outcome of a unique period in the history of the city, when it was not a capital of a kingdom, and there were no kings in the city to invest the means and the manpower in order to glorify and fortify it. This period occurred during the middle of a long “interlude” between two periods of greatness in the history of Judah, since at the end of the First Temple period on the one hand (the late eighth and seventh century BCE), and the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods on the other hand (the second half of the second century and the first century BCE) Judah, and especially Jerusalem, went through short periods of expansion, building projects, and fortification.

In both periods, the Southeastern Hill was rebuilt and refortified, and the built-up area of the city expanded for a short time to the Southwestern Hill, and all this area was enclosed by strong fortifications (Lipschits 2009, 4–5).

The outcome of the long intermediate period, when Judah came under the rule of the Mesopotamian empires, and especially the destruction of the urban and administrative centers under Assyrian and Babylonian rule, was a marked process of attenuation in urban life in Judah (Lipschits 2006, 26–30, with further literature). The administrative and urban centers that survived the catastrophes of those periods were intentionally left small and weak, probably as part of the empire's interest to leave Judah as a rural area, with a small and feeble economical and urban elite living in the province. This is a period when one should not expect, therefore, to find magnificent palaces, huge public buildings, or strong fortifications in Jerusalem (*contra* Finkelstein 2009, 10–11).

The scarcity of building remains from the Persian period does not, however, fully reflect the actual, admittedly poor, situation at that time. Rather, it is the outcome of incomplete archaeological data (Stern 2001, 461–462), especially in the case of Jerusalem (Lipschits 2009, 4–6). The Persian and early Hellenistic period occupation levels were severely damaged by intensive building activities conducted in the late Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and later periods, especially because in very steep and narrow hilltop sites like Jerusalem, all structures—private and public—had to be based on the bedrock. In the case of Jerusalem it is much more dramatic, because of the scope and grandeur of the subsequent building efforts, as well as the frequent destructions of the site. Furthermore, the religious, cultic, and political status of Jerusalem likely motivated not only frequent political upheavals and destruction, but also a desire to remove previous political and religious structures, and to reshape the city (Lipschits 2009, 6–9, with further details and literature). This may explain why there are nearly no architectural finds from the sixth to third centuries BCE, and the small finds from this period were usually excavated in fills under structures from later periods, in small spaces that were left between them, or in the dumps down in the valleys to the east and to the west of the small ridge of the City of David. To the above one can add the fact that the Persian period did not end suddenly; there was a long transitional period to the Hellenistic period, and there is no destruction level assigned to this period in Judah in general and in Jerusalem in particular (Lipschits, *ibid.*).

The conclusion is that, contrary to views that regard the negative finds, especially in Jerusalem, as reflecting the actual situation in the city (see, for example, Finkelstein 2008, 505; 2009, 10–11), one should not rely on the absence of architectural finds and the scarcity of other finds as a realistic reflection of the situation in the city during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Explanations dealing with negative finds should be taken seriously, but in archaeology they cannot be the basis for the reconstruction of the development and contemporary situation in Jerusalem during most of the Second Temple period.

WHAT CAN BE DEDUCED CONCERNING THE HISTORY OF THE CITY FROM THE PERSIAN PERIOD ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN JERUSALEM?¹²

Many excavations were conducted in the various parts of the Southwestern Hill of Jerusalem, but only a few Persian period sherds and other small finds have been found, mainly in landfills from the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Stern 2001, 434–36; Lipschits 2009, 9–12, with further details and literature). The unavoidable conclusion is that throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, this area was abandoned.¹³ The fact that there are no Persian period burials in this area is probably the outcome of marked remains of the Iron Age houses and the destroyed city wall in the Southwestern Hill, side by side with some scattered houses and tilled pieces of land. The area was resettled only in the second century BCE (Geva 2003a; 2003b).

The most important administrative finds from the Persian period in Jerusalem were discovered in the northern area of the City of David, just below the Ophel, including many Persian period pottery sherds and dozens of *yehud* stamp impressions. All of the finds were discovered in fills that were brought to the area sometime before the late

¹² For a detailed discussion and comprehensive literature, see Lipschits 2009, 9–18.

¹³ This is the common view among scholars, and see, for instance, Kenyon 1974, 188–255; Tsafrir 1977, 36; Avigad 1980, 61–63; Geva 1983; 1991; 2000a, 24; 2000b, 158; 2003a, 113–14; 2003b, 524–26; Geva and Reich 2000, 42; Shiloh 1984, 23; Tushingham 1985, 85; Finkielstejn 1999, 28*; Lipschits 2005, 212–13; 2009, 9–12; Lipschits and Vanderhooff 2007, 108–12. Some lion and *mws* stamped jar handles might indicate towards limited activity in the upper part of the City of David, but the isolated and limited finds are not enough for any conclusion regarding any kind of activity in this region during the 6th century BCE.

Hellenistic and Roman periods (Lipschits 2009, 12–14). It seems reasonable to assume that the soil and debris laid as this fill was brought down from the Ophel Hill just above it. This is a wide area of about 2 hectares, between the ascension of the hill towards the Temple Mount and the northern part of the City of David. This is the only relatively wide, easy-to-settle area in the city. Its proximity to the Temple Mount on the one hand and the easy option to fortify it on the other probably made it the preferred option for settlement in the Persian period. There are, however, nearly no Persian period finds in this area, probably because of the many huge building projects conducted there from the Hellenistic period onwards (Lipschits 2009, 19–20).

Most of the other excavated areas in the City of David were outside the presumed narrow inhabited area of the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, which was limited to the upper part of the hill.¹⁴ Finds from the Persian period, even if not in large quantities, were discovered in all the different areas along the eastern ridge of the City of David—a clear indication that the Persian period settlement was spread all along the narrow area at the top of the ridge. In all cases, however, it is a combination of small finds that were probably washed away, eroded down the slope, or cleaned and pushed down as part of building projects in later periods; and there are no indications of stratigraphy or any clues hinting at different chronological stages within the Persian period. Three different phases of the Persian period (Y. Shiloh Stratum 9) were discovered in this central part of the ridge alone (Area E, especially in four squares, N–M \ 1–20). The early phase (9a) included the reuse of a large Iron Age building that was destroyed along with the rest of the city in 586 BCE, and was dated to the end of the sixth and first half of the fifth century BCE, that is, to the “pre-Nehemiah” period (De Groot 2001, 77–78; 2004, 15). A sloping level of quarrying refuse, the same as excavated in Area D1, 500 m to the south, and in some other locations along the eastern slope,¹⁵ was ascribed to the second stage (9b), dated to the middle of the fifth century BCE and assigned to the reconstruction of the city wall during this period all along the

¹⁴ For a detailed summary of these finds and schematic maps, see: Lipschits 2009, 15–18.

¹⁵ The quarrying activities above the eastern slope were documented in the excavations by Bliss and Dickie (1898), Weil (1920) and in Area K of the City of David excavations (Ariel and Magness 1992).

eastern ridge.¹⁶ A few terrace walls and some floors with ovens were attributed to the third stage (9c) of the Late Persian period (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000, 59).

The Persian period finds from the City of David can only be interpreted as an indication for a meager settlement that existed in the city sometime between the early sixth and the second centuries BCE.¹⁷ However, as against suggestions aimed towards minimizing the settled area in the city during all this period (Finkelstein 2008; 2009, 7–11, and cf. Ariel and Shoham 2000, 138; Reich and Shukron 2007, 64), the Persian and Early Hellenistic finds were discovered in almost all of the excavated areas along and under the eastern slopes of the City of David. This is about 350 meters north to south, with an average width of about 80–100 meters, and a settled area of about 2.8–3 hectares. To this area one should add the area of the Ophel, which included about 2 additional hectares.¹⁸ Altogether the total settled area in Jerusalem during the Persian period was about 5 hectares. Even if parts of the Ophel Hill were built up with public buildings, and only part of it was settled with private houses, this area should be included in the settled area of Jerusalem during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods. The population of the city should be estimated at about 1,000 to 1,250 people (Lipschits 2009, 19–20).¹⁹

What was the situation in Jerusalem during the 350 years of the Persian and Early Hellenistic period? Can archaeology indicate any process of development or change? The only archaeological tool that can supply an answer to this question is the study of the most important epigraphic and administrative find from Persian period Judah—the *yehud* stamp impressions.

¹⁶ See: Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000, 59, and cf. Shiloh 1984, 7; De Groot 2001, 78; 2004, 15; 2005, 82.

¹⁷ This is an observation shared by all scholars dealing with Persian period finds in Jerusalem, and see: Kenyon 1963, 15; Carter 1999, 285; Eshel 2000, 341; Lipschits 2003, 330–31; 2005, 212; 2006, 32; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007; Schniedewind 2003; 2004, 165–78; Grabbe 2004, 25; Geva 2007, 56–57; Finkelstein 2008, 501–4.

¹⁸ As against this assumption, see: Finkelstein 2009, 10–11.

¹⁹ This population estimate is very close to the accepted estimations in research in recent years—those of Carter (1999, 288) and Lipschits (2005, 271; 2006, 32)—of about 6 hectares and 1,250–1,500 people respectively, or that of Geva (2007, 56–57) of a settled area of 6 hectares and population estimate of about 1,000 people. One cannot accept the super maximalistic suggestion of Barkay (2008) of about 12 hectares, as well as the “ultra-minimalistic” views of Finkelstein (2008, 501–7) and Zwickel (2008, 216–17), and see the critique of Lipschits (2009).

THE SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF JERUSALEM IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD—
THE EVIDENCE OF THE *YEHUD* STAMP IMPRESSIONS

The *yehud* stamp impressions were most often stamped on the handles of jars, and only in a few cases on the upper part of the bodies of the same types of jars. This is the most important source of information concerning the administration in Judah in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. In the last five years this author, together with David S. Vanderhooft, collected and published a comprehensive catalogue of these stamp impressions, including a new typology, a new study of the distribution of the different types, and their implications towards our understanding of the administration in Judah during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods (Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007; Lipschits and Vanderhooft, forthcoming).

Seventeen main types of stamp impressions were classified, which belong to three main chronological groups: early (late sixth through fifth centuries BCE); middle (fourth and third centuries BCE); and late (second century BCE). The database used for the current paper includes 582 stamp impressions.²⁰

Three hundred and seven *yehud* stamp impressions were found in Ramat Raḥel (53% of the total number). One hundred sixty-three stamp impressions (28% of the total) were found in Jerusalem; of these, 136 are from the City of David and the area of the Ophel, and 27 were discovered in different areas of the Southwestern Hill and its immediate vicinity. Beside these two main centers, 71 *yehud* stamp impressions were found in five secondary centers (12% of the total number): 19 were discovered in Tel en-Naṣbeh; 16 in Nebi Samwil; eight in Gezer; 10 in En-Gedi; and 18 in Jericho. Seven more stamped handles were excavated in eṭ-Ṭârūd Tumulus in the modern Ir-Ganim neighborhood of West Jerusalem, just above the Rephain Valley (Greenberg and Cinamon 2006), which probably was an important production center for the wine and oil stored in the jars, and 21 more stamp

²⁰ This number was updated in May 2009, and it includes all known *yehud* stamp impressions—published and unpublished up to this date. It does not include the finds discovered later, including 28 stamp impressions discovered in the 2009 excavation season at Ramat Raḥel (Lipschits, Vanderhooft, Gadot, Oeming and Gross, forthcoming), 29 that were discovered in the 2010 excavation season at the site, and at least five more that were discovered during the restoration process of the Persian period finds from the site.

impressions (about 3.5% of the total number) were found at 16 small sites. The source of 13 stamped handles is not known.

These data shows that about 80% of the *yehud* stamp impressions were found in Ramat Raḥel and Jerusalem. About 92% of the entire corpus was found in a small ring between Tell en-Naṣbeh to the north of Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel to its south. Only about 7% of the stamped jar handles from known origin were found outside of this ring, including at Gezer and Tel Ḥarasim in the West, En-Gedi and Jericho in the East, and a few that were found farther afield, including one each in Tel Jemmeh, Kadesh Barnea, Tel Nimrin (East of the Jordan), and in the city of Babylon.

The distribution of stamp impressions in the different parts of Jerusalem, according to the different types as classified by Vanderhooft and Lipschits (2007), is the key to understanding the changes that occurred in the status and population of the city during the late sixth and fifth centuries BCE (the Early Types of the stamp impressions), the fourth–third centuries (the Middle Types), and the second century BCE (the Late Types).

From 128 stamp impressions assigned to the Early Types, only 17 were discovered in Jerusalem (13% of the finds). Nine out of the 17 came from the same seal (Type 1 according to Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007), and only seven out of the 12 Early Types are represented in the finds from Jerusalem, usually with one or two stamped handles for every type. Fourteen of them in the central and southern parts of the City of David (the Southeastern Hill) and only three in Area G, close to the northern part of the ridge, are Type 1 and were discovered out of clear context. Not even one handle bearing a *yehud* stamp impression of the Early Types was discovered in the excavations on the upper part of the ridge (especially those of Bliss and Dickie, where plenty of stamped handles of the Middle Type were excavated, and see below).

The conclusions from this data are that during the early Persian period, Jerusalem played only a minor role in the administration of the jars, and was not the main collection or distribution site of the products. The fact that in the northern parts of the Southeastern Hill the presence of this early group is very minor may indicate that in this period the concentration of the settlement and the administration was mainly in the southern parts of the hill. The probable reason may be that it was close to the source of the water from Hezekiah's Tunnel. It may also be that the northern part, with all the ruins from the

Babylonian destruction of the city, the steep slopes, and the many collapsed terraces, as can be seen in the excavations conducted in this area, was difficult to settle. The Temple on top of the ridge was probably far away from the few people that could have lived in the small city, and the description of the city in Nehemiah (2:12–15) suits the archaeological situation of this period. The gap between the settled area and the Temple might be more than symbolic, and the built Temple was not part of the city and was not a reason for people to come and settle nearby. In this period, no more than 2 hectares were settled, and the population could not have been far more than 400–500 people. The Southwestern Hill was left totally empty.

The 312 stamp impressions assigned by Vanderhooft and Lipschits (2007) as the Middle Types, are all dated to the fourth and third centuries BCE, and represent the administrative continuation from the Persian to the Hellenistic (Ptolemaic) rule. Fifty-nine stamped jar handles identified and classified as belonging to the Middle Types were discovered in Jerusalem (19% of the Middle Types). These stamped jar handles were excavated in various parts of the Southeastern Hill, mainly in the northern part. This is a sharp change from the earlier period, indicating that the center of demographic and administrative activity moved to the northern parts of the ridge. It seems that during the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE the Ophel became much more important from the administrative point of view, the settled area expanded and included also the northern part of the ridge and probably also the Ophel area became an integral part of the city. In this period, the Southeastern Hill was settled in all its parts, and the population can be estimated at about 1,000–1,250 people. Not even one stamped handle assigned to the Middle Types was discovered in the Southwestern Hill.

The 142 stamp impressions assigned by Vanderhooft and Lipschits (2007) as the Late Types, are all well dated to the second century BCE, and probably represent the administrative continuation from the Ptolemaic to the Seleucid rule until the establishment of the independent Hasmonean rule in Judah, when the system of local stamping jar handles disappeared. Eighty-seven stamped jar handles identified and classified as belonging to the Late Types were discovered in Jerusalem (61% of the Late Types). Sixty jar handles were excavated in the different parts of the Southeastern Hill, especially in its northern parts, and 27 additional jar handles were discovered in the Southwestern

Hill (Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007, 108–12). Some of the *yehud* stamped handles were discovered in clear Hasmonean archaeological contexts, in some cases together with *yršlm* stamp impressions and other material dated to this period (Geva 2007, with further literature; Lipschits and Vanderhooft, 2007, 111–12).²¹

These finds well demonstrate the expansion of the settled area of Jerusalem to the Southwestern Hill. The 27 *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in various areas of the Western Hill represent more than 30% of the total finds of the late group of *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in Jerusalem. This proportion is much higher than the Rhodian stamp impressions, of which only 5% were discovered in the Western Hill, while most of the rest were discovered in the City of David (Ariel 1990; 2003). The difference in the proportion of the two types of stamp impressions discovered in the Western Hill and in the City of David probably does not point to different population groups in these areas before the destruction of the Hakra in 141 BCE by Simeon (1 Macc 13, 49–51), as assumed by Finkielsztejn.²² Instead, this fact likely indicates that the settlement on the Western Hill did not start before the beginning of the second half of the second century BCE (Geva 1985, 30; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007, 112), a period in which there was a sharp decline in the importation of wine from Rhodes (Ariel 1990, 21–25; 2000, 267–269). We can also assume that the settlement process of the Western Hill during the second century BCE was a much slower and more gradual process than described by some scholars—very similar to the process of the expansion of the settlement during the eighth century BCE (and cf. Na’aman 2007).

²¹ Five stamp impressions belonging to the Late Types discovered in the Jewish Quarter excavations were excavated in a well stratified context, dated to the 2nd century BCE (Reich 2003; Eshel 2006, 404; Geva 2007). Other stamp impressions discovered on the Western Hill of Jerusalem came from post-Hellenistic stratigraphic contexts. Some were found in fills under buildings from the Herodian period, and others in fills from later periods.

²² See: Finkielsztejn 1999, 28*–31* with further literature, and see contra this idea Ariel 1990, 25; 2000, 269, 276–80.

SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS—THE SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF
JERUSALEM IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD: ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL
AND PALEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES

From the Persian period finds, especially the pottery sherds, it is clear that during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods Jerusalem did not become a real city, and was poor and small. The population of Jerusalem was no more than 10% of what it had been at the end of the First Temple period. However, based on this data, there are no possibilities to learn more precisely about the historical, demographic, and settlement processes that took place during this long period.

The new research of the *yehud* stamp impressions provides an archaeological tool that enables us to study in a much more accurate way the periods during which the gradual development of Jerusalem took place. According to the distribution of the three main groups of stamped jar handles in the Southeastern and Southwestern Hills—the Early, Middle and Late Types—one can detect the measure of human activity in the different periods and where exactly this activity took place.

The very few early types, dated to the late sixth and fifth century BCE, concentrate on the central and southern parts of the Southeastern Hill, close to the outfall of the water from Hezekiah's Tunnel and far from the Temple Mount. It seems that during this period the northern part of the ridge had nearly no inhabitants. It was marginal from the administrative point of view, and not more than 400–500 people lived in the area of about 2 hectares in the lower areas of the hill, far from the Temple on the top of the ridge. This situation supports the description in Nehemiah (2:12–15), and in any case, the Temple itself was not an integral part of the city.

Not before the second half of the fifth and especially during the fourth century BCE the settlement in Jerusalem expanded to the northern part of the ridge, and probably also further north—to the Ophel area just between the City of David and the Temple Mount. This is the period when the population reached its maximum size between the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem and the Hasmonian expanded city of the Second Temple period. It is interesting to mention that exactly at the beginning of this period of expansion, a letter was sent from Elephantine, addressed by Jedaniah the priest and the Jews of Elephantine, to Bagavahya, the governor of Judah (Weipert 2010, 481–84, with further literature). This is the only epigraphic

find that actually describes Jerusalem as a city with a High Priest and priests and some “nobles of the Jews.”

A further stage of slow expansion of the settlement to the South-western Hill occurred during the second century BCE, quite similar to the process that occurred during the eighth century BCE. The settlement in this period probably expanded to the same size and extent.

More than 400 years after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the city recovered to its full extent and size. It was, however, a long and slow process, much different from what is described in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah—and less dramatic; it is certainly much more complicated than what is usually described by historians.

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