

A NEW TYPOLOGY OF THE YEHUD STAMP IMPRESSIONS

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Abstract

This paper presents a new framework for studying the Yehud stamp impressions of the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. It includes a new typology of 17 types divided into three different chronological groups, resting on a more precise chronological system informed by palaeography, stratigraphy, distribution and comparative analysis. It also proposes new readings of four stamp types, and suggests a new type not yet recognized.

No scholar has yet analyzed the complete corpus of Yehud stamp impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Y. Aharoni's excavations at Ramat Raḥel produced the largest number of Yehud stamp impressions (YSI), and he made available continual updates and assessments of the stamp impressions excavated at the site (1956; 1959; 1962; 1964). E. Stern provided a thorough survey of this class of stamp impressions from the many sites where they were excavated. His analysis of "Local Seals and Impressions" included 334 stamp impressions in the Hebrew edition (1973) and 342 in the English edition (1982) of his book.¹ Stern integrated stratigraphical, palaeographical and chronological data into his study of the stamp impressions, and set his assessment of the corpus into a reconstruction of the material cultural repertoire of the Persian period in Yehud. Subsequent scholars have relied heavily on Stern's catalogue, which has never been systematically updated.² The many stamp impressions found in the City of David excavations enabled Ariel and Shoham (2000) to refine Stern's catalogue somewhat in their publication of the epigraphic remains from the Persian period. Still, a complete catalogue of the stamps has not yet appeared.

The present authors seek to publish a complete corpus of YSIs from all sites (Lipschits and Vanderhooft forthcoming b). A prerequisite for the project is a reanalysis of the typology of the stamps. The present paper provides a preliminary account of the proposed new typology for all known stamp impressions based on

¹ In the English version of the book Stern added some of the bullae published by Avigad (1976). In our corpus we do not deal with those bullae.

² Christoph's dissertation (1993) built upon existing analyses, especially those of Stern, but concentrated on statistical analysis more than reassessment of the corpus.

their content, palaeography, stratigraphy and geographic distribution. A more detailed discussion, dealing with each YSI in turn, together with a full assessment of the function of the YSIs in the administration of Yehud, will appear in the forthcoming comprehensive publication (*ibid.*).

CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The content of the Yehud stamp impressions narrows the possible temporal range into which they must be fit. The appearance of the Aramaic toponym *yhwd* in the stamp impressions and use of the Aramaic official title *phwʾ*, ‘governor’ (with or without the toponym or a personal name [PN]) require a date after 586 BCE. Both of these elements are attested during the Achaemenid period when Yehud became a sub-province within the satrapy of Babylon and ‘Ebir Nāri, although they could theoretically be slightly earlier. By the beginning of the Persian period, biblical sources refer to the former kingdom as יהוד מדינתא, “*the province of Yehud*” (Ezra 5: 8; cf. Naveh 1996: 44). Similarly, the office of *phwʾ* was not established before the demise of the Judean kingdom; it never appears in Iron Age Hebrew seals or epigraphs. It was, however, definitely used as an imperially sanctioned title in the Levant and elsewhere during the Achaemenid era (Petit 1988; Williamson 1988; 1992; Naveh 1996: 44–45).³

Stratigraphical considerations, although limited for most YSI types, support this dating. There are no YSIs from late Iron II destruction levels in Judah. Decisive stratigraphical evidence comes from excavations in the City of David, where numerous types appear for the first time in the Persian period Stratum 9. Some of the early YSI types discussed below were found in early or middle phases of Stratum 9, together with a *mwšh* stamp impression (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 138; De Groot and Ariel 2004: 15).

If the first appearance of the stamp impressions dates no earlier than the beginning of the Achaemenid era, when do they cease to be used? Here stratigraphical and palaeographical evidence point to the 2nd century BCE. Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem demonstrate that the late YSI types were in use during the 2nd century BCE, together with *yršlm* stamp impressions (Avigad 1976: 27; Geva 2004: 16, and in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. XXX). Recent excavations at Suba (Kibbutz Tzova) provide similar stratigraphic evidence for the late YSI types (see Finkielsztejn and Gibson in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. XXX). These late types, meanwhile, do not appear in the same strata as the early types.

³ For a morphological analysis of the Aramaic form of the word, see Kutscher 1960–1961: 112–119.

TYOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGICAL SUBDIVISIONS

We have examined or recorded 567 stamp impressions of different types; about 150 of these have not been previously published. However, 38 stamp impressions that were originally published as YSIs have proved upon reinspection not to belong to the corpus; thus, the corpus currently stands at 529 stamp impressions.

Seventeen main types of stamp impressions exist. For a few of these types, all stamp impressions were produced by a single seal (e.g., Type 1). For many other types, multiple seals, similar but not identical, were used; where possible, we have assigned different seals within a given type to subtypes. In one case, Type 13, we have identified at least nine different seals with the same reading, Subtypes 13a to 13i.

Content, palaeographic typology, form and stratigraphic data lead us to group the 17 YSI types into three chronologically defined groups: Early (late 6th through 5th centuries BCE); Middle (4th and 3rd centuries BCE); and Late (2nd century BCE).⁴

The Early Group: Types 1–12

No absolute dates attach to the early group of YSIs. None of the PNs in the stamp impressions can be identified with known individuals. The relative dating of the stamp impressions therefore rests on other criteria: palaeography, form, content, stratigraphy and comparative data. We have listed 108 YSIs as part of this early group (20% of the total).

Type 1: *Phyb phw*⁵



“Belonging to ʾAḥîāb, the Governor”. This is a new reading (see below). Sixteen stamp impressions of this type are known: nine from the City of David, five from Ramat Raḥel and two from Nebi Samwil. All of them were impressed on jar handles. The two lines of script are separated by a double-line field divider. Only one other YSI type (Subtype 3b, below) has a similar field divider. Type 1 is unique among YSIs in using the genitive *lamed* with a PN followed by a title.⁵ Although these features are uncommon among the YSIs, they are very common among late Iron Age Hebrew (and other Northwest Semitic) seals and bullae belonging to officials and untitled individuals (see the many examples in Avigad and Sass 1997; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 29–57).

⁴ For a more detailed discussion on the Early and Middle types, see Lipschits and Vanderhoof forthcoming a.

⁵ Avigad published a single bulla reading *Pltn phw*⁵ (1976: Pl. 6: 5), which has the identical formula (and very similar script in the second line to our Type 1). We have left this unprovenenced bulla out of our corpus. Type 8 also has the genitive *lamed* before the personal name, followed not by a title but by the toponym *yhw*.

Precise measurements prove that all stamp impressions of this type were made with one seal. A composite drawing of the stamp impression was made, which indicates that the seal was nearly circular with a diameter of approximately 25 mm. Aharoni (1962: 63–64; 1964: 45) read the name as ʿhyw , but inspection of all exemplars preserving the final letter of the first line shows that it is indubitably a *bet*, not a *waw*. Ariel and Shoham (2000: 152–155), evidently following the readings of Cross (2003 [1969]: 143), Naveh (1970: 60) and Avigad (1976: 22), read ʿhzy , but, again, the final letter is certainly not *yod*. A careful examination of all the exemplars, including the unpublished examples from Ramat Raḥel and Nebi Samwil (see pp. xxx in this issue of *Tel Aviv*), shows that Aharoni was correct in reading the next to last letter as *yod*: a vestige of a horizontal stroke at the lower left of the downstroke appears in several stamp impressions. The final letter, however, is certainly *bet*. We therefore read the name ʿhyb .

Cross (private communication) proposed that ʿhyb is a variant spelling of original ʿḥḇ , ʿahṛāb , or, in the full spelling, ʿhyḇ , ʿahṛāb . The full form appears, e.g., on a late Iron Age II bulla from the City of David (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 47, B 37), and in a Persian-period document from Elephantine (Porten and Yardeni 1989: 110: 4, 18). In our stamp impressions, the name is spelled with elision of the second ʿaleph .⁶

The script of the ʿhyb stamp impressions shows archaic features. Both examples of ʿaleph are characteristic of the pre-5th-century-BCE Aramaic lapidary sequence, with two short oblique crossbars that form a horizontal ‘V’ and meet at a point to the left of the vertical downstroke (this is even more pronounced in the second ʿaleph). This type of ʿaleph is more characteristic of the 6th century BCE and earlier than the classic Aramaic lapidary of the 5th century BCE and later (Naveh 1970: Figs. 10, 11; Cross 1986: 388–389: Lines 5, 7).

Bet is definitely the final letter on the first line. It has an open head formed by a single curved line meeting the downstroke about a third of the way from the top. In the 6th century BCE, the head of the *bet* in the Aramaic lapidary script could appear in the older closed form or the typologically more advanced open form. By the 5th century BCE, however, the *bet* is consistently open. The form in our stamp impressions would therefore fit any time after the emergence of the open form in the lapidary, from about the mid-6th century BCE on.

Also diagnostic is the head of the *waw*. The form of the *waw* with a sharply-squared

⁶ Cross notes that we find the name אהב in Jer. 29: 21, but that it appears with the alternate spelling אהב in v. 22, i.e., with elision of the second ʿaleph , but also without the *yod* marking the first person possessive pronoun. The Septuagint, however, vocalizes both instances as Αχιαβ. The form in our seal, with the *yod* as *mater lectionis* but without the second ʿaleph , is merely a graphic variant of the same name. We are grateful to Professor Cross for his willingness to discuss these stamps, and for his very helpful suggestions in generating the present reading.

two-stroke head, as in this stamp impression, is archaic. Cross originally disputed the reading *phw* in the Judean stamps where this type of *waw* appears because it seemed too archaic for a Persian period provenance. He later abandoned this view, but rightly noted that “*waw* loses its right shoulder beginning in the seventh century BCE, an evolution complete by about 500 B.C. in the Aramaic lapidary script” (2003 [1969]: 143, n. 43). This type of head was replaced by a simple horizontal stroke, sometimes with an upward tick at its left edge (Cross 1986: 388–389). Avigad also concluded that the type of *waw* in the present stamp impression should date to about the second half of the 6th century BCE or the first half of the 5th (1976: 15).

The slightly curving head and downstroke of the *pe* in the second line is also a relatively archaic form, which gives way to a more sharply-angled, ‘figure 7’ form in the lapidary of the 5th century BCE.

Palaeography thus suggests a date in the 6th century BCE or the first half of the 5th. Other considerations support this. The appearance of the double-line field divider and the use of the genitive *lamed*, features so characteristic of late Iron Age seals, but not of later ones, suggests a date relatively early in the Persian period. Furthermore, stratigraphical considerations from several loci in Area E of the City of David, where nine stamp impressions of this type were recovered, support a date early in the Persian period (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 138 and Table 2; De Groot and Ariel 2004: 15).

Type 2: yhw d ʾwryw

One stamp impression of this type was excavated at Jericho, another at Gezer.⁷ The Jericho stamp impression was published by Hammond (1957a, and cf. *idem* 1957b), who dated it to the Iron Age, and read it as *ṣngd ʾwryw* (later as *lhgr ʾwryw*). Avigad (1957: 146–153) suggested the correct reading (and cf. Bartlett 1982: 539). The Gezer stamp impression, which is not complete, was incorrectly read by Macalister (1912: 2: 225, Fig. 374), but correctly deciphered by Aharoni (1959). Both impressions were stamped on the bodies rather than on the handles of jars. The inscription, in two lines, has a single-line field divider. The seal with which the stamp impressions were made is slightly oval.

Naveh (1970: 60), Cross (2003 [1969]: 143) and Avigad (1976: 22) all considered this among the earliest YSI types. The script is well executed. Like Type 1, it preserves archaic forms. The *ʾaleph* is again characteristic of the pre-5th-century-BCE Aramaic lapidary sequence. The *dalet* is decidedly archaic, with a closed, triangular head. To find such a *dalet* in the Aramaic lapidary script, one must go back to the 7th century BCE. The *he* is in the usual classical form with the top stroke angled downward and a single oblique stroke descending from it. Of the three examples of *waw* on the

⁷ We have thus far not been able to locate the original stamp impressions.

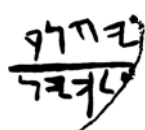
stamp impression, the two examples in the name $\text{y}wryw$ preserve the more archaic form with a cup-shaped head and slight right shoulder. The head of the *reš* is slightly open, but the triangular shape again preserves the ideal of the old lapidary form.

The diagnostic letters in this stamp impression type antedate the emergence of the characteristic 5th-century-BCE lapidary forms. One is hard-pressed to find datable parallels in the late 5th century BCE and certainly not in the 4th century BCE. This stamp impression must therefore date to the late 6th or the first half of the 5th century BCE, roughly contemporary with Type 1.

Type 3: *yhwd mlkyw*

Four such stamp impressions are known, one of which is unprovenanced.⁸ They are of two subtypes. All stamp impressions are on the bodies of the jars, not the handles.

Subtype 3a



The single unprovenanced exemplar, 21.3 × 18.7 mm, has two lines of script separated by a single-line field divider (Deutsch and Heltzer 1997: 76, Fig. 116). The letters of *yhwd* are virtually identical in shape, stance and spacing to those in Type 2, *yhwd ywryw*. Thus, this stamp impression, too, possesses a closed *dalet*, an archaic feature. The *waw* has a horizontal top bar with an upward tick on the left, but no right shoulder. The *kaph* is not diagnostic. We would date this stamp impression to about the same period as Type 2.

Subtype 3b



The three excavated exemplars, from a different seal, have two lines of script separated by a double-line field divider, like Type 1. The example from Tell Nimrîn measures 20 × 18 mm (Dempsey 1996: 76–77). The two published exemplars of this type are either fragmentary (from the City of David; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 145, L32) or very difficult to read from photos (from Tell Nimrîn; Dempsey, *loc. cit.*). A third, much clearer example was found in the Binyanei Ha'ummah excavations in Jerusalem and published by Barkay (2005). Barkay also corrected the reading of the stamp impression from the City of David according to his reading of this new one. The *dalet* in this subtype does not appear to be completely closed, as it is in Subtype 3a, while letters visible in the second line conform to 5th-century-BCE lapidary types. The *mem* is characteristic of the 6th century BCE and later. The palaeography and the two-line field separator suggest a date close to Types 1 and 2.

⁸ The unprovenanced stamp impression appears on the body of the jar and was impressed before firing, so it is not likely a forgery. Even so, we duly note that uncertainty surrounds the authenticity of this item.

Type 4: yhwd ḥnnh

Five stamp impressions from the same seal are known—three from Ramat Raḥel⁹ and two from the City of David.¹⁰ All appear on body sherds, not handles. They were all impressed with the same 23 × 19 mm seal. The inscription, in two lines, has a single-line field divider.

Clearly this type is closely related to Types 2 and 3, with the toponym in the first line and a PN in the second.

The palaeography of the toponym is virtually identical to the previous two types, except that while the *dalet* still possesses a triangular head, it is not fully closed. Otherwise, one could deduce that *yhwd* in Types 2–4 was engraved by the same craftsman (Naveh 1970: 59). We therefore conclude that this type belongs close to Types 2 and 3 chronologically. The letters *ḥnnh* are elegantly styled in a formal hand. We may note that Type 8 preserves a similar PN, *ḥnwnh*; see below for a discussion of the possible identification of these two individuals.

Type 5: yh/wd

Two stamp impressions of this type, formed by the same seal, are known. The word *yhwd* is elegantly and clearly written in two lines with a single-line field divider. The circular stamp impressions (18 mm in diameter) were found only on body sherds, not handles. One stamp impression is from the City of David,¹¹ the other is from Ramat Raḥel (Aharoni 1962: 32, Fig. 22: 6, Pl. 27: 4).¹² The layout of two letters in each of

⁹ A new stamp impression came to light during the summer 2006 excavations directed by Lipschits, Oeming and Gadot, and it is published in this issue of *Tel Aviv* (see pp. XXX).

¹⁰ Avigad published three unprovenanced bullae with very similar stamp impressions (1976: 4–5; Pl. 5: a–c). Their dimensions, 22 × 19 mm, match almost precisely one of the exemplars from Ramat Raḥel. The bullae show a distinct linear border not evident in the jar impressions and a different form of *waw*, so the bullae were evidently not impressed by the same seal as the jar stamp impressions, as Avigad noted. The authenticity of these bullae cannot be confirmed and we exclude them from our database.

¹¹ This stamp impression was found by chance in the area of the Ophel by Gefen of Kibbutz Dorot and brought to the IAA in April, 1971. Its IAA number is 1971-344. We would like to thank Deborah (Debi) Ben-Ami for assisting us with these details.

¹² Aharoni (1964: 44, Pl. 19: 9) reported a second stamp impression of the same type (also on a body sherd), but noticed that this second exemplar was different from the first. According to our close reading of this stamp impression, it is not like the two other circular stamp impressions; its dimensions are different as well (slightly oval, 15 mm wide and 17 mm high). The first letter on the right of the first line is certainly not a *yod* and may be a *he*, *het* or *mem*. The second letter is unclear but could be a *yod*, as Aharoni read it. The first letter on the second line is not clear but could be a *ṣade* or reversed *dalet*. The second letter is probably a *waw* or *he*. It might be a defective *mwsh* stamp impression but is certainly not a YSI.

the two registers is similar to the two-line *mwšh* stamp impression type from Tell en-Našbeh (McCown 1947: Pl. 57: 15, 16; Type B in Zorn *et al.* 1994: 173, Fig. 6).

The similarities in the palaeography to Types 2–4 suggest a date close to those types (Naveh 1970: 59). A date relatively early in the Persian period may also be supported by the parallel to the *mwšh* stamp impression, best dated to the 6th century BCE or slightly later (*loc. cit.*). Stamp impressions of this type are no doubt functionally equivalent to those of Type 6, which appear from their palaeographical typology to be slightly later.

Type 6: yhwd

This type contains only the toponym *yhwd*, always spelled with a *waw* in a single line. At least two and possibly more seals were used for the stamp impressions of this type, which appear exclusively on jar handles, not body sherds. This type is the fourth most common among the YSIs, with 42 stamp impressions, 35 of which were found at Ramat Raḥel, three at En Gedi, two at the City of David and one each at Rogem Gannim and Gezer. One from the City of David, found in Stratum 9, proves that stamp impressions of this type belong to the Persian period (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 147).

Subtype 6a



The first stamp impression of this type was produced by a nearly circular seal approximately 20 mm in diameter. The stamp impressions are all on handles. The downstroke of the *yod* slants to the left while its bottom stroke angles sharply upward to the right. The downstroke of the *he* also slants to the left. The *waw* is noteworthy for its oblique rather than horizontal top stroke; it joins the vertical downstroke near its middle. The very thick downstroke of the *waw* and this oblique upper stroke produce a distinctive ‘Y’ shape for the letter, making it easy to identify stamp impressions from this seal. The top of the *dalet* is very near the left edge of the seal. It is rarely fully impressed, but it appears to be open. The spacing and use of the ceiling line suggest an expert engraver.

Subtype 6b



Stamp impressions from seals of this type are nearly circular, approximately 19 or 20 mm in diameter. The seal is obviously based on the same model as Subtype 6a, but the palaeography is not identical, and thus at least two seals can be identified as belonging to Type 6, against Aharoni’s conclusion that there was only one (1964: 21, 44).

Palaeographical analysis of this type is fairly straightforward. The *yod* angles slightly to the left, while its foot angles sharply up to the right, as in Subtype 6a. Each

of the other three letters has an upright stance with almost vertical downstroke and perpendicular horizontals. The *waw* is noteworthy for its fairly long, horizontal top stroke that has a slight upward tick on its left. The *dalet* has an open, concave head formed by one curved stroke.

Typologically, Subtype 6b may be slightly later than 6a. The *waw* in Subtype 6b has no right ‘shoulder’, while the *he* is completely vertical, not leaning to the left. These features are characteristic of the standard Aramaic lapidary script of the 5th century BCE and later.

Type 7: yhw^d yhw^czr p^hw[?]



‘Yehud, Yeho‘ezer, the governor’. Six stamp impressions from a single seal are known: four from Ramat Raḥel (Aharoni 1962: 7–8, and Fig. 9: 1, Pl. 9: 2; 1964: Fig. 37: 9, Pl. 20: 9); one from the City of David (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 146, L34) and another from Tel Ḥarasim in the Shephelah (Givon 2004: 73). The oval stamp impression, 26 × 17 mm, has three lines of text and no other adornment; all the stamp impressions are on jar handles. This is the only type that preserves the toponym, a PN and a title.

The forms of the letters in these stamp impressions appear to be typologically later than those of Types 1–5 (compare Naveh 1970: 60). The seal was incised by a skilled craftsman in an elegant hand.

The letters in the word *yhw^d* differ from those in Types 2–5. The *yod* has a slight upward slant of the foot, unlike the horizontal foot of the *yod* in Types 2–5. The *he* is the classic 5th-century-BCE lapidary form with a nearly horizontal top stroke and very short oblique descending from it. The *waw* in *yhw^d* has an upward tick on the left of the horizontal stroke. The ‘Z’-shaped *zayin* may exhibit the same feature. The *dalet* and *reš* have open heads formed by two strokes; they are not modelled on the triangular ideal of earlier types. The *pe* is more angular than in Type 1. Except perhaps for the *ʾaleph*, these forms are typologically later than those seen in Types 2–5, and are in keeping with the development of lapidary Aramaic in the 5th century BCE and later.

These data suggest that Type 7 is palaeographically later than Types 1–5. How much later is not clear. The toponym *yhw^d* is still written *plene*, which appears, as Naveh thought (Naveh 1970: 59–60), to characterize the earlier stamp impression types. The use of the Aramaic form of the title, *p^hw[?]*, links these stamp impressions to the early Type 1, where the title also appears. Naveh’s suggestion of a 4th-century-BCE date (1970: 60), however, seems slightly too late.

Type 8: lḥnwnh yḥwd



Two stamp impressions of this type were published by Naveh (1996). The inscription is in two lines with a single-line field divider. One was excavated at Tel Ḥarasim (Givon 1996: 144, and cf. Naveh 1996: 45–47; compare Type 7, an example of which was also found at the same site). It was impressed on a jar handle and measures 22 × 15 mm. The second stamp impression was also impressed on a jar handle and was recovered in Babylon by the Deutsche Orientgesellschaft (Naveh 1996: 43–46).¹³ The stamp impressions may have been made with the same seal.

The script of this type is noteworthy for several reasons but poses one difficulty in decipherment. The second letter on the first line is effaced in the Tel Ḥarasim stamp impression but is preserved more fully in the photograph of the stamp impression from Babylon. Naveh read it as *ḥet*, resulting in *lḥnwnh*. However, the letter appears rather to be a *pe* or, less likely, a *gimel*, although this yields an unknown name: *lpnwnh*. For the present, we follow Naveh’s reading.

The *waw* is the usual lapidary form with a horizontal top stroke which possesses a slight upward tick on its left. The *he* is the typical form with sloping upper stroke. The script in the word *yḥwd* shows an unusual mixture of developed and archaic forms. The *yod* is the Aramaic cursive form, which appears in this type and in Types 9 and 10 (Naveh 1996: 45, n. 12). This form begins to occur in cursive Aramaic epigraphs by the late 7th century BCE, but it is rare in the lapidary sequence. Meanwhile, the *dalet* possesses a rounded, closed head. This form disappears from the lapidary sequence after the mid-6th century BCE, although we have seen the closed (or nearly closed), triangular head in Types 2–5. Clearly this seal was not produced by the same craftsmen as those of Types 2–6. The presence of the cursive *yod* suggests it is typologically later than Types 2–6, but this remains a tentative conclusion, especially since the stamp impression also possesses the archaic *dalet*. It would probably not be far wrong to place this type near Types 2–7 chronologically, roughly in the 5th century BCE.

One historical consideration might support this assessment. As Stolper proved, the Persian satrapy of ‘Babylon and Ebir Nāri’ was officially split into two units after 486 BCE (Stolper 1989). Thus, before 486, tributary subprovinces in Ebir Nāri, including Yehud, would likely have sent gifts or taxes to Babylon, the satrapal centre. Dandamayev showed that the governor of Byblos sent gifts to the temple in

*add
Givon to
references*

¹³ A thorough investigation in the stores of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin by J. Marzahn did not yield the actual handle but only the museum photograph, which was published by Naveh in 1996. We would like to thank Dr. Marzahn for his attempts to find the stamp impression, and for the copy of the picture he sent us.

Sippar during the reign of Darius I (CT 55: 435; see Dandamayev 1995). Given that one of the stamp impressions of Type 8 was found in Babylon, it might be reasonable to conclude that it was sent there before 486 BCE, when Babylon was the satrapal centre. Of course, this hypothesis is necessarily speculative.

Naveh raised the possibility that the person named in this stamp impression is identical to the *hnnh* of Type 4. Moreover, he understood both forms to be feminine *Qal* passive formations, *hānūnāh*, and concluded that the name belonged to a “female official in the administration of the province of Yehud” (1996: 46). The formal characteristics of the seals of Types 4 and 8 suggest, however, that they were not produced by the same craftsman. The script is completely different; the orthography of the PN differs; the use of the genitive *-l-* in Type 8 is absent in Type 4; while Type 8 has the same GN, but as the second element. These observations do not prove that the individuals named in Types 4 and 8 were different, but they do not support their identification either. Moreover, the popularity of names derived from forms of *hnn* in the Persian period suggests that caution is in order.

Type 9: *yʔzn br yšb / yhwd*



‘Yaʔazan, son of Yašub, Yehud’. This is a new reading. The single stamp impression of this type, excavated at Belmont Castle (Millard 1989: 61), was inscribed in three lines, with a single-line field divider between the second and third lines. Millard read *yʔl br yšc / yhwd* (1989). Naveh then proposed a reading close to the one given here: *yʔz br yšb / yhwd* (1996: 45), while Cross read the names *yʔzn br yd^c* (1998: 188, n. 54). The present reading agrees with Cross on the first name; there is a clear trace of the *nun* at the end of the first line. Naveh’s reading of *yšb* for the patronym, however, seems correct. The stamp impression is on a handle.

All three *yods* in the stamp impression are cursive, like those in Types 8 and 10. The *ʔaleph* again shows a tendency to archaism with the oblique strokes forming a sideways ‘V’ and crossing the downstroke. The *bet*, *reš* and *dalet* all have upright stances with open heads characteristic of the classic lapidary. The *he* has a horizontal upper stroke, unlike that of Type 8, which is angled. The presence of the cursive *yods* and the placement of the toponym in final position suggest that this stamp impression is probably close in date to Type 8. The use of the formula ‘PN son of PN’ is unique among the YSIs. As in Types 2–4, which also have the formula PN + GN, we have no way of knowing definitively whether Yaʔazan was the governor of Yehud, a functionary in the administration, a priest, a merchant, a vintner or something else.

Type 10: lyh^czr



‘Belonging to Yeho^cezer’. Thirteen stamp impressions of this type are known, 11 from Ramat Raḥel (Aharoni 1956: 145–146, Figs. 13–14 and Pl. 25: 5; 1962: 7, 32; 1964, 21 and Pl. 19: 10), one from Jericho (Sellin and Watzinger 1913: 158 and Pl. 41: i) and one newly published from Rogem Gannim (Greenberg and Cinamon 2006: 240). The circular stamp impressions are about 19 mm in diameter. The correct reading was already made by Lidzbarski in 1915 from the Jericho stamp impression. He recognized that the letters were engraved on the seal in positive, yielding a mirror-image impression (1915: 45; also Naveh 1970: 60). Aharoni originally accepted that the stamp impressions were in reverse, and proposed the reading *ldh^cyw* (1956: 145–146). Later, he argued that the correct reading was *yhw^d* plus a ‘monogram’ (1962: 7, 32; 1964: 21). Close inspection, however, reveals that Lidzbarski was correct.

The first line contains four letters, the second only two. The *yod* is cursive, like Types 8 and 9. The *he* is somewhat badly engraved, but it is clear enough and possesses an oblique upper stroke. The *ṣayin* is not fully closed. The *zayin* in the second line has a curved top stroke. The *reš* has an open head formed by a single angled stroke. The script is, on the whole, typologically more advanced than that of the types discussed thus far.

A Note on the Distribution and Inclusion of Type 10 in the Corpus

The appearance of 11 such stamp impressions at Ramat Raḥel and one at Jericho, where other YSIs have been recovered, argues in favour of the inclusion of this type in the corpus, even though it contains neither the toponym Yehud, nor the title ‘governor’. Of course, the individual named in this type may be identical to the *yhw^czr* of Type 7, as Naveh suggested (1970: 60). Eleven of 13 exemplars of Type 10 come from Ramat Raḥel, while four of the six exemplars of Type 7, *yhw^d yhw^czr pḥw^ṣ*, were recovered at the site. On the other hand, neither the orthography nor palaeography of the two types match. The identification must remain tentative.

Type 11: gdlyh



This is a new reading and therefore also a new type. Four stamp impressions of this newly deciphered type are known; at least three are identical. The first two were excavated at Tell en-Naṣbeh, and were published in 1969 by Cross in two sequential papers (1969a: 23 and Pl. V, 1–2; 1969b: 19–20 and Fig. 1). The City of David excavators followed Cross’s reading, ‘*yhw^d+ṭ*’ (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 147–48, L45). The newly-published stamp impression from Nebi Samwil (Magen and Har-Even, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. XXX),¹⁴ as well as the City of David stamp impression,

***Cross
69a
and b
missing
in refs***

¹⁴ The excavators at Nebi Samwil have now accepted our reading.

however, permits a new reading. The sign on the upper right of the stamp, identified by Cross as a *t*-shaped symbol, is in fact a reversed *lamed*. The middle letter in the upper line is a reversed *dalet*. The letter on the upper left of the stamp is a *gimel*. The letter on the lower right is clearly a *he*, as Cross read it, and is similar to the one in Type 10. The Našbeh stamp impression also preserves most of the *yod* in the lower left. The seal, however, was incised in the positive, yielding a mirror-image legend in the stamp impression, like Type 10. The correct reading, therefore, is *gdlyh*.

A Note on the Distribution and Inclusion of Type 11 in the Corpus

The stamp impression preserves no archaic letter forms and could fit anywhere in the 6th to 4th centuries BCE. Its recovery in Stratum 6 at the City of David (Roman period), out of context, provides no clue to a narrower dating. The stamp impression bears only a PN, not a title or toponym. Its inclusion in the corpus is predicated on the same logic as that pertaining to Type 10. Admittedly, no other YSI stamp impression bears this name.

Type 12: yh(w)d pḥw[?]



Scholars have long struggled with reading the 11 stamp impressions of this type. Ten come from Ramat Raḥel (e.g., Aharoni 1962: 8, Fig. 9: 2–3, Pl. 9: 3; 1964: 22, Pl. 20: 3; Lipschits, Oeming, Gadot and Vanderhooft, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. XXX) and one from Khirbet Nisya (Livingston 2003: 86). They represent two subtypes. Cross's decipherment has not been improved:

One notes immediately that the engraver . . . has copied a positive impression of *yhd* or *yhwd* on his master stamp with the result that it gave a reversed (negative) impression. The second line of each [type] is even more confused; the engraver has tried to make a negative reading on the *stamp* in order to give a proper positive impression. He carved the *pe* in the proper place . . . and in a proper stance; *ḥet* and *waw* were copied in the right stances for a negative *stamp*, but the engraver forgot to reverse the order, so that *ḥet* and *waw* have been metathesized on the *impression*. Finally, [?]*alep* is engraved correctly . . . on [one type], in reversed stance on [the other]. (Cross 2003 [1969]: 144 and Fig. 17.1, 5).

Analysis of all the exemplars confirms that Cross was correct in identifying the two subtypes.

Subtype 12a preserves the word *yhwd* in the first line, engraved in the positive, as Cross noted, producing a negative stamp impression. Subtype 12b has *yhd* in the first line. *yhd* is engraved in the positive, except for the *he*, producing a reversed impression. The *yod* is rotated 90 degrees on its side. *pḥw[?]* in the second line has the letters in the same order as Subtype a.

Such poorly executed stamp impressions have limited value for palaeographic typology. Our inclination is to include this type as the last among our ‘early’ types, for the following reasons:

- (1) The Aramaic title *phw*’ is characteristic of the early group and does not appear alongside the geographic name in the later types.¹⁵
- (2) Seals that are badly incised to produce a negative impression include Types 10 and 11, which we would also assign to the end of the early types. There seems to be a marked deterioration in the care given to inscribing these seals as time goes on.
- (3) This type has the toponym spelled both with a *waw* in Subtype 12a, and without a *waw* in Subtype 12b. In the middle and late stamp types, the toponym no longer appears spelled with a *waw*. This type therefore appears to be transitional from our early types to the middle types.

The Middle Group: Types 13–15¹⁶

We have listed 283 YSIs as part of this middle group (53% of the total number of YSIs).

Type 13: yhd

With Type 13, PNs or official titles no longer appear. Now the toponym *yhd* appears alone, always spelled defectively in one line. A new development is the appearance of many subtypes from rectangular shaped seals. All stamp impressions belonging to Type 13 appear on handles with one exception, Subtype 13h. This type is the second most numerous, with 96 stamp impressions: 57 exemplars come from Ramat Raḥel, 19 from the City of David and the Ophel, eight from Tell en-Naşbeh, three each from En Gedi and Jericho, two from Nebi Samwil, one each from Rogem Gannim and Khirbet Nisya and two are of unknown provenance.

As many as nine discrete subtypes belong to this type. Seventy of the 97 belong to Subtypes a, b and f, with five or fewer belonging to each of the other subtypes.

Subtype 13a



This subtype is oval. The *yod* and *dalet* have classic Aramaic forms, although the *yod* angles more sharply to the left and has a rounded head. The *he* is of the normal Aramaic two-bar type, but with a very long, sharply angled top stroke.

¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the Hebrew title *phh* does appear on Yehud coins in the 4th century BCE, late Persian or early Hellenistic period.

¹⁶ On the changes to be noted between stamp impressions of the early group and those of the middle group, see the discussion in Lipschits and Vanderhoof, forthcoming a.

Subtype 13b

This is a small, rectangular stamp impression with rounded edges and is the most well-represented of the type. The *yod* and *dalet* again have classic Aramaic forms. The *he* is of the three-bar type, which becomes characteristic of the palaeo-Hebrew style.

Subtype 13c

This is a relatively small stamp impression, between 16–18 mm wide and 13–14 mm high, slightly rectangular with rounded corners. The *yod* is upright with a horizontal bottom stroke. The *dalet* has a classic Aramaic lapidary form. The *he* is unusual: It has two short obliques descending from the top stroke instead of the normal single stroke of the Aramaic lapidary (Naveh 1970: 60).

Subtype 13d

This subtype measures about 17 mm by 13 mm, similar to Subtype 13c. The seal was slightly rectangular with rounded edges. It is thus also similar in form and layout to Subtype 13c. The *yod* is somewhat rounded on top. The *he* is similar to that of Subtype 13c, with two oblique strokes descending from the vertical, but they are not of equal length as in Subtype 13c. Once again, however, it appears possible that this form is influenced by palaeo-Hebrew. The *dalet* is still clearly Aramaic, with a long downstroke and open head.

Subtype 13e

This subtype resembles 13c and 13d in its layout and dimensions. The rectangular stamp impression measures between 15 and 17 mm wide by 13 to 16 mm high. The seal producing these stamps may be differentiated from that of Subtype 13d by the shape of the *yod*. In Subtype 13e, the bottom stroke of the *yod* does not break through the vertical downstroke. In Subtype 13d it clearly does. The *he* of Subtype 13e clearly has two short vertical strokes descending from the upper stroke, like Subtypes 13c and 13d. The *dalet* is the usual, open Aramaic type.

Subtype 13f

This is a rectangular stamp impression. All of the letters are atypical. The *yod* is upright with an unusually long horizontal bottom stroke. The *he* is again of the three-bar type, more characteristic of the palaeo-Hebrew style. The *dalet* is Aramaic, but inscribed in reverse.

Subtype 13g

This subtype includes two newly-published stamp impressions from the City of David (Reich and Shukron, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. xxx, numbers 1 and 8). The stamp impressions are circular, 18 mm in diameter. Although one of the stamp impressions is broken and the other faint, the letters all appear to be Aramaic and in the proper orientation. The *yod* is classical and formed with a slightly rounded head. The *he* is likewise classical, with an oblique upper stroke and a single stroke descending from it. The *dalet* also has the usual Aramaic form, with an open head formed from one angular stroke. The palaeography of this subtype is thus entirely in keeping with the usual classical Aramaic lapidary.

Subtype 13h

This subtype includes only two stamp impressions from Ramat Raḥel. Aharoni published them in 1956 without much discussion (1956: 148). One is known only from Aharoni's excavation records. One of the stamps appears on a body sherd, not a jar handle. The stamp impressions are round, approximately 20 mm in diameter. The form of the letters in Subtype 13h resembles those of Subtype 13g. The *yod* is mostly upright, as is the *he*. The *dalet* has an open, cupped head formed by a single curved stroke.

Subtype 13i

Ariel and Shoham recognized Subtype 13i as unique (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 149, L55). It has a diameter of 26 mm. The *he* has its horizontal bars facing upwards, while the *dalet* is reversed as in Subtype 13f.

In all subtypes of Type 13 the *yod* is classical Aramaic with or without an elongated bottom stroke; the *he* may be Aramaic, or, more often, the three-bar type characteristic of palaeo-Hebrew; the *dalet* is Aramaic, sometimes in reverse. The execution of the letters in Type 13 is generally much poorer than in Subtypes 6a and 6b. The appearance of palaeo-Hebrew forms suggests the type should be dated no earlier than the 4th century BCE, when the palaeo-Hebrew script begins to emerge (Cross 2003 [1961]: 3, N.4; Naveh 1998: 91).

Type 14: yh

Type 14 is the most numerous in the corpus of YSIs, with 174 exemplars: 88 come from Ramat Raḥel; 40 from the City of David and the Ophel; 13 from Jericho; 11 from Nebi Samwil; 10 from Tell en-Naşbeh; four each from En Gedi and Rogem Gannim; one each from Gezer, Tell Jemmeh and Kadesh Barnea; one of unknown provenance. Two main subtypes and several sparsely attested subtypes may be assigned to this category. The reading is not contested.

Subtype 14a

In the more common Subtype 14a, the *yod* is the classical Aramaic lapidary type with a slightly rounded top. The *he* in Subtype 14a has the classic Aramaic shape. Several different seals produced stamp impressions belonging to this subtype, although most of the examples of Subtype 14a come from a single seal. Ariel and Shoham claimed to identify at least three distinct seals belonging to this subtype, including a single, large (36 mm), oval example (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 150, L56).

Subtype 14b

In the less well-executed Subtype 14b, the *yod* is of the classical shape but without a rounded top. The badly incised *he*, however, is of the three-bar type, just as in many of the subtypes of Type 13. The seal was set in a ring that produces a characteristic round stamp impression.

The dimensions of both subtypes are quite consistent in the many stamp impressions, especially Subtype 14a: The exterior diameter is 25–27 mm, while the inner ring has an interior diameter of about 17 mm. Stamp impressions of Type 14 are fairly large in comparison with other types.

If scribal practice moved from fuller to more abbreviated writing of the province name, then Type 14 should date slightly later than the *yhd* stamps of Type 13. The second half of the 4th century BCE or the early Ptolemaic period would be suitable (Naveh 1970: 61; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 150). It is also possible, of course, that Types 13 and 14 overlap. Stratigraphical considerations likewise favour a later date—probably in the 4th century BCE—for Type 14, as excavations in the City of David (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 138) and the Jewish Quarter (Geva 2004) indicate.

Type 15: yh-overlapping

This type, thus far found only at Ramat Raḥel (e.g., Aharoni 1962: 6, Fig. 8: 5, Pl. 8: 5; Lipschits, Oeming, Gadot and Vanderhooft, this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. XXX), has been variously deciphered, but the present proposal is new. Close analysis of all 12 stamp impressions indicates that they derive from a single seal. The letters of the seal were not incised in the correct orientation or stance. The *yod* in the stamp impression appears on the left and the *he* to its right. The engraver inscribed the *yod* in positive. If viewed in reverse, the *yod* has a very long top stroke. The downstroke is relatively short and curved. The foot, extending to the edge of the seal, is horizontal and long. The *he*, too, was incised onto the seal in reverse and also upside down. Moreover, the two letters overlap with the upper stroke of the *yod* intersecting the oblique strokes of the *he*.

If this interpretation is correct, this type may be transitional between the *yh* stamp impressions (Type 14) and the later *yh*-ligature stamp impressions (Type 16). Reliable stratigraphic information is lacking for this type, but if we are correct to see it as transitional, then a 4th- or 3rd-century-BCE date seems suitable.

The Late Group: Types 16–17

Two late types of stamp impressions are known. Type 17 clearly belongs to the YSI corpus on the basis of content alone, while the inclusion of Type 16 rests on its tentative decipherment as a ligatured version of Types 14 and 15. We have listed 139 YSIs as part of this late group (26% of the total number of YSIs).

Type 16: *yh*-ligatured(?)



Stratigraphic evidence from the City of David (Hellenistic Stratum 7) and the Jewish Quarter (Geva 2004; see also Geva this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. xxx) demonstrates that stamp impressions of this type were in use as late as the 2nd century BCE. Fifty-four stamp impressions belong to this type: 23 were found in the City of David and the Ophel, 17 in various areas of the Western Hill of Jerusalem (which was part of the city in the Hasmonean period), three in Ramat Raḥel, two in Gezer, one each in Binyanei Ha-ummah, Husan, Ramot Forest and Suba and five are of unknown provenance.

The most thorough discussion of this type thus far is that of Ariel and Shoham, based on an array of stamp impressions of this type from the City of David (2000: 152–55). These authors identified five subtypes (2000: 153), although our research indicates that seven individual seals belong to this type.¹⁷ Many stamp impressions are square, and most of the seals were carved in relief, so that the single figure is impressed intaglio into the clay of the handle. All of the stamp impressions of this type bear a sign that looks like a reversed ‘F’, often with the top stroke extending beyond the vertical. The rectangular stamp impressions can be as large as 15 × 17 mm, while the sign itself is usually between 9 and 12 mm high. Several scholars, including Diringer (1934: 128), proposed reading it as *yod*. Aharoni’s proposal (1956: 149) that the sign may represent a ligatured *yod* and *he* has gained proponents, but as Ariel and Shoham indicate, even this is tentative (2000: 152). In view of the decipherment of Type 15 above—the overlapping of the *yod* and *he*—we consider Aharoni’s proposal the most likely. Although we have retained the designation ‘*yh* ligature’ for the moment, technically the

¹⁷ See Lipschits and Vanderhooft forthcoming b. Our analysis builds on the discussion of Ariel and Shoham and our Subtypes 16a–e correspond to their Types 1–5. We, however, have added Subtypes 16f and 16g.

single character of Type 16 does not represent a ligature, but two characters combined into one. Given the large number of subtypes that belong to this type, the character was widely recognized in Yehud stamp impressions, although it is not used on coins.

As noted, stratigraphical considerations from the City of David and the Jewish Quarter suggest that these stamp impressions were in use during the 2nd century BCE, perhaps specifically in the Hasmonean period. Seven examples from the City of David excavations came from the Hellenistic Stratum 7, none from the Persian Stratum 9 (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 138, 153; Geva 2004; and see Geva in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. xxx). The early YSI types do not appear in the same strata as such late ones as Type 16.

Type 17: yhd †



Eighty-five stamp impressions of this type are known, of which 37 come from the City of David and the Ophel, eight from the Western Hill of Jerusalem, 27 from Ramat Rahel, three from Gezer, two from Bethany, one each from Kikar Safra (near the Old City of Jerusalem), Ḥ. ha-Motzah, Tell el-Ful, Ḥ. Alamit and Ḥ. Nisya and three are unprovenanced.

Many subtypes are known. In all cases the toponym is written defectively below a †-shaped symbol. The order and layout of the letters varies according to the subtype. Some of the seals of this type were incised, and others were carved in relief (like Type 16), producing distinctly different stamp impressions. Most stamp impressions are circular, with a diameter ranging from 14 to 23 mm. The script is exclusively palaeo-Hebrew, not Aramaic, which parallels the predominance of palaeo-Hebrew script in Hasmonean coins. While debate persists among scholars about the significance of the revival of the palaeo-Hebrew script, there can be little doubt that it emerges toward the end of the Persian period and gradually gains centrality in the Hellenistic era. The *yhd †* stamp impressions fit squarely within this framework, and Avigad suggested that they belong to the 3rd–2nd centuries (1976: 25).

Stratigraphical distribution of the stamp impressions dovetails well with this dating. Six handles were excavated at the City of David in the Hellenistic Stratum 7 (Ariel and Shoham 2000: 159), while Geva has established a 2nd-century BCE date for those from the Jewish Quarter (2004 and in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. xxx). A similar stratigraphic situation can be found at Suba (see Finkielsztein and Gibson in this issue of *Tel Aviv*, pp. xxx).

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

The foregoing typology presents a new framework for studying the Yehud stamp impressions of the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. We have proposed new readings for four stamp impression types: Type 1, *l³hyb p³hw³*; Type 9, *y³zn br yšb / y³hwd*; Type 11, *gdlyh*; and Type 15, *yh*-overlapping. In addition, the typology rests on a more precise chronological system for the 17 types, informed by palaeography, stratigraphy, distribution and comparative analysis. In most cases, some chronological imprecision remains, but it can be confirmed, e.g., that the early types and late types do not appear together in excavated archaeological loci. Analysis of the spatial distribution of the corpus and formulation of a hypothesis about the economic and administrative systems in which the stamp impressions were embedded remains to be done. Both of these aspects will appear in the fuller publication of the corpus (Lipschits and Vanderhooft forthcoming b). The authors hope that the typology provided above will serve as a useful tool for excavators of additional Yehud stamp impressions or seals.

SCHEMATIC DRAWINGS OF YEHUD STAMP IMPRESSION TYPES

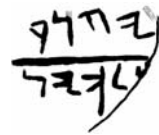
Early Types



Type 1



Type 2



Type 3a



Type 3b



Type 4



Type 5



Type 6a



Type 6b



Type 7



Type 8



Type 9



Type 10



Type 11



Type 12

Middle Types



Type 13a



Type 13b



Type 13c



Type 13f



Type 14a



Type 14b



Type 15

Late Types



Type 16



Type 17

Fig. 1. The drawings were made by David Vanderhoof. The scale is approximately 1:1.

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number
PEQ*

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