

JERUSALEM BETWEEN TWO PERIODS OF GREATNESS:
THE SIZE AND STATUS OF THE CITY IN THE BABYLONIAN,
PERSIAN AND EARLY HELLENISTIC PERIODS

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The history of Jerusalem between 586 and 167 BCE is an ‘interlude’ between two periods of greatness and political independence: the end of the first temple period on the one hand and the period of the Hasmoneans on the other. Between these two periods Jerusalem was a very small city and Judah was a small province under the rule of great empires.

According to both biblical and archaeological evidence, Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BCE and left deserted by the Babylonians for a period of nearly 50 years (Lipschits 2005: 210–18, with further literature). Biblical accounts assert that the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt at the beginning of the Persian Period. During this period, the city once again became the centre of the Judahite cult. According to an account in Nehemiah, the fortifications of Jerusalem were rebuilt in the middle of the fifth century BCE. As a result, Jerusalem became a *Bîrāh*, replacing Mizpah, which had served as the capital of the newly established province of Yehud for 141 years, from 586 BCE (Lipschits 2001a), through the Neo-Babylonian period (Lemaire 2003: 292), until the time of Nehemiah (445 BCE, Blenkinsopp 1998: 42, n. 48; *cf.* Lemaire 1990: 39–40; 2003: 292).² The available archaeological data for the Persian period that might

¹ *Author Note:* This paper is a summary of ten years of research on Jerusalem between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE (Lipschits 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; 2005: 206–71; 2006; 2009; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007a; 2007b). A comprehensive methodological discussion and a detailed archaeological survey concerning Persian Period finds in Jerusalem were published in Lipschits, 2009.

² On the word *Bîrāh* and its optional interpretations, see: Grabbe 2009: 133–34, who suggested the option (p. 135) that Jerusalem became the central city of the province later than the time of Nehemiah.

corroborate this biblical evidence is minimal, and scholars have assumed that the city did not become a large and important urban and administrative centre before the middle of the second century BCE.

The aim of this paper is to present the archaeological material from Jerusalem, dating between these two periods of greatness, and to consider its size and status in the sixth century BCE ('the period of the Babylonian Exile'), in the fifth to fourth centuries BCE ('the period of the return' and the time when Judah was a Persian province), and to add some observations regarding the history of the city in the Early Hellenistic period (third century BCE).

*Jerusalem in the Babylonian, Persian and early
Hellenistic periods – Some Methodological Notes³*

During the late eighth and seventh, as well as during the second century BCE, the built-up area of Jerusalem expanded to the Western Hill of Jerusalem (the area of the modern-day Jewish and Armenian Quarters and the so-called Mount Zion) and was enclosed by strong fortifications. The Southeastern Hill (the 'City of David') was rebuilt and fortified as well. These two periods, together with the later Herodian period, became the most defined and easily recognizable in the historical and archaeological research of Jerusalem in the First and Second Temple Periods. In contrast, not many building remains from the intervening period, i.e. the Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods, have been uncovered in Jerusalem. It is not a unique phenomenon to Jerusalem, but a well-known phenomenon in Judah and Samaria. Under the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rule, there was a marked process of attenuation in urban life in Judah (Lipschits 2006: 26–30, with further literature). No new cities were built, and the administrative and urban centres that survived the catastrophes of those periods were small and weak compared to their late eighth to seventh century or second-century BCE counterparts. However, this scarcity of building remains from the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods does not fully reflect the actual, admittedly poor, situation at that time. Rather, it is the outcome of incomplete archaeological data (Stern 2001: 461–62), especially in the case of Jerusalem (Lipschits 2009).

Contrary to views that take the negative finds, especially in Jerusalem, as reflecting the actual situation in the city ('the negative is as important as the positive', Finkelstein 2008: 505), I have suggested that the Persian

³ For a detailed discussion on the methodological subject of the finds in Jerusalem from the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods see: Lipschits 2009.

and early Hellenistic period occupation levels, which were not as strong, imposing and big as in the glorious periods of independence before and after them, were severely damaged by intensive building activities conducted in the late Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and even later periods (Lipschits 2009). The situation in Jerusalem is not unique or exceptional, especially when dealing with hilltop sites, but it is much more dramatic because of the scope and grandeur of the subsequent building efforts, as well as the frequent destruction of the site. 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. It seems that the main destructive force in Jerusalem is the efforts of people in later periods to build new buildings and leave their own impression in the city. Additionally, the topographical nature of the Southeastern Hill, which is very steep and narrow at the top, requires that buildings, especially the more prominent ones, be built on bedrock. This may explain why the remains from the intervening sixth to third centuries BCE were discovered mainly in 'pockets' between the late complexes, or in the dumps down in the valleys to the east and to the west of the hill. When discussing the meaning of the archaeological remains dated to the Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods discovered in the city, one should be very careful about concluding that the city was empty or nearly empty throughout these periods. In this case, it is more difficult to assert that the absence of finds means that there was nothing there; explanations regarding the negative finds must be taken seriously.

*Jerusalem in the 'Exilic' Period – Between
Destruction and Restoration*

The Assyrian's conquest of the Levant during the last third of the eighth century BCE caused heavy destructions upon most of the urban centres and a deportation of large parts of the population. We may assume that the Assyrian policy was to retain fortifications only in provincial capitals (Stern 2001: 50) and to build forts and Assyrian economic and military centres in strategic places all over the country (Lipschits 2006: 19–21). Most of the major towns were abandoned or only poorly rebuilt and most of the population in the Assyrian provinces, especially in the interior areas, used to live in farms and villages; there was a marked decline in the urban life.

The geopolitical and administrative character of the Levant did not change under Egyptian rule, during the last third of the seventh century BCE (Lipschits 2005: 31–5; 2006: 21–2), nor during the beginning of Babylonian rule which started with the military campaign conducted by

Nebuchadnezzar in Iudaea between June 604 and January/February 603 BCE (Lipschits 2005: 37–42). Besides Ekron and Ashkelon, there is no reason to ascribe any other destruction to the Babylonian army during the first years of the Babylonian rule in Palestine: most of the country was arranged in a line of provinces that dated back to the Assyrian period. It seems that the Egyptian retreat left the country unopposed to the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Babylonian policy in the region did not change even following Nebuchadnezzar's failed attempt to conquer Egypt, and the subsequent temporary weakening of Babylonian rule in the region (Lipschits 1999: 472–80; 2005: 49–52). However, the continued instability during the days of Psammetichus II (595–89 BCE), even more during the first years of Hophra (589–70), and the increasing threat by Egypt over the Babylonian rule in this region, caused Nebuchadnezzar to modify his policy (589 BCE): during the next years he conquered the small vassal kingdoms that remained close to the border with Egypt, annexed them and turned them into provinces (Lipschits 1998: 482–87; 2005: 62–8).⁴

The 586 BCE destruction of Jerusalem is one of the prominent archaeological finds to appear in the many years of excavations in the different parts of it. The excavations led by Avigad in the Jewish Quarter from 1969 to 1978 disclosed, adjacent to the late Iron age tower, the remains of a fire, and Scythian bronze triple-winged arrowheads (Avigad 1980: 52–4). In the excavations conducted by Kenyon on the eastern slope of the City of David in the 1960s, evidence was found of destruction of the wall from the end of the Iron age (phase 9) (Kenyon 1974: 170–71; Franken and Steiner 1990: 57). Excavations led by Yigal Shiloh in the City of David between 1978 and 1982 produced evidence of the destruction of all the buildings (including the wall) and of a fierce fire that sealed stratum X in areas D, E, and G (Shiloh 1984: 14, 18–19, 29). Remains of the Babylonian destruction were also found in excavations in the Citadel (Johns 1950: 130, Fig. 7, No. 1; Geva 1983: 56–8), and in part of the structures excavated by Eilat Mazar in the Ophel (Mazar 1993: 25–32).

The finds of the archaeological survey within the confines of the city of Jerusalem and its environs indicate the force of the destruction and the

⁴ Judah was the first goal of the Babylonians. Afterwards, apparently in 585 BCE, they attacked Tyre and Sidon, putting a closure on Tyre that lasted for 13 years (until 572 BCE) (Katzenstein 1973: 330; 1994: 186; Weisman 1991: 235; Redford 1992: 465–66; Vanderhooft 1999: 100–102). Apparently during the years of siege against Tyre, the Babylonians also attacked Ammon and Moab (Lipschits 2004), and established their rule also over Gaza, Arwad, and Ashdod. One may accept the idea, that the successful takeover of north Arabia by Nabunidus and his move to Tema (553–543 BCE) caused the disappearance of the kingdom of Edom and probably the integration of its territory within greater Arabia (Lemaire 2003: 290, and see also Briant 2002: 45).

degree of demographic decline in and around the city (Lipschits 2003: 326–34; 2005: 210–18). Even at the zenith of the Persian period the settlement in Jerusalem was limited to a narrow extension of the historic City of David; settlement in the city and its surroundings amounted to about 15% of what it had been on the eve of the destruction. The slight continuity reflected in the settlement patterns in this area calls for the assumption that previously, during the sixth century BCE, the condition of settlement and demography had been even worse (Lipschits 2003: 330–32; 2005: 215–18). The conclusion is that Jerusalem and its environs took a heavy blow from the Babylonians at the beginning of the sixth century BCE, and they were almost entirely depleted of their inhabitants.

The city remained desolate and deserted throughout the next 50 years (Lipschits 1999: 2001a: 129–42; 2005: 215–18). The laments that ‘the roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the appointed feasts’ (Lam. 1.4) and ‘all who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: “Is this the city which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?”’ (Lam. 2.15) faithfully reflect this historical reality. Nor is Jerusalem mentioned in the account of the rule of Gedaliah at Mizpah (2 Kings 25.22–26; Jer. 40.7–41.18) (Lipschits 2005: 304–47), and the events described encircle the city to the north (Mizpah and Gibeon) and to the south (around Bethlehem). In light of this, and in light of the archaeological data, it may be assumed that the systematic acts of destruction by Nebuzaradan, about four weeks after the conquest of the city, were accompanied by political instructions that created this situation and made it permanent (Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 319). This was the sight that met the earliest Returners to Zion (compare Zech. 1.12; 2.5–9), as well as the later (compare Neh. 2. 13–17; 7.6).

No information exists on events in Jerusalem between the time immediately after the destruction and the restoration period. Nevertheless, the perception that the status of ritual in Jerusalem was a result of Babylonian policy requires the assumption that any change in this status would have to be connected with a change in policy.

The fate of Jerusalem was not exceptional. Unlike the fate of the political entities along the Phoenician coast, the consequence of the new Babylonian policy was destructive of the southern part of Palestine as well as of the Transjordanian kingdoms.⁵ In all this area, Nebuchadrezzar

5 The Babylonians evinced a different attitude towards the kingdoms of Philistia and those on the Phoenician coast. The former were conquered and turned into Babylonian provinces. Although the fate of the latter is unclear, it appears that during most years of Babylonian rule, certainly during the Persian Period, they were ruled by kings (Katzenstein 1994: 46–8). For an explanation for this different attitude, see Oppenheim 1967; Brown 1969: 101; Katzenstein 1994: 48; Lipschits 2006: 26–9.

created a buffer zone between Babylon and Egypt that consisted of devastated, diminished provinces (Lipschits 2006: 22–4). There is no evidence that the Babylonians invested any kind of effort in economic development in this region, and it seems that Nebuchadrezzar used the destruction of the region as a lever for rebuilding those parts of Babylonia that had been damaged during the long years of war, devastation, and deportation caused by the Assyrians.⁶

Jerusalem in the Persian Period – The Geopolitical Background

During the long years of the Persian rule in Palestine many geopolitical changes and administrative reorganizations were made, especially along the coast, but also in the hill country and in the southern areas of Cis- and Transjordan. The main evidence for this can be found in the rich and big urban and commercial centres that were established at the very beginning of the Achaemenid period along the Mediterranean coast, most of them well built and planned, some according to the Hippodamian plan (Kenyon 1960: 311–12; Stern 1990; 2001: 380–401; 461–64; Lipschits 2003: 347; 2006:34).⁷ In contrast with the rich and well-developed cities along the coast, not many Persian period building-remains have been uncovered within the borders of the province of Yehud, as well as within the borders of the province of Samaria (Lipschits 2001b; 2005: 214–16; 2006: 29–34). This settlement pattern is a continuation of the process that began during the Babylonian period, after the harsh blow the Babylonians dealt to the small kingdoms in the hill country west and east of the Jordan. Neither the Babylonians, nor the Persians had any interest in encouraging and developing urban centres in the rural hilly regions on both sides of the Jordan. The Achaemenids, like the Babylonians, were interested in the continued

6 Total devastation of the southern part of Palestine was, however, against Babylonian interests, and the rural settlements all over the land continued to exist, even if on a much smaller scale (Lipschits 2004: 42–3; 2005: 212–61; 2006: 29–30). Since the Babylonians didn't have any direct policy of developing and protecting such areas, especially in the peripheral regions of the south, many changes occurred there, apparently as a side effect of the collapse of the central systems and the infiltration of semi-nomadic groups (Lipschits 2005: 140–47; 227–40).

7 The Achaemenid regime had governmental, military and economic interests in basing its rule along the Mediterranean coast, stabilizing the political situation in this area and encouraging the maritime and continental trade. One of the major goals of the Persians was to secure the Via-Maris, as well as the roads in southern Palestine, as part of the military, administrative and economic effort to keep the way to Egypt open (Eph'al 1998: 117; Stern 2001: 371). Another interest was to establish a strong political, military and economic coalition against the Greeks. From the economic point of view, the Persian regime tried to develop and encourage the maritime trade, dominated by the Phoenicians (Briant 2002: 383, 489–90).

existence of the rural settlement in the hill country. It was an important source for agricultural supply, which was probably collected as tax. They had no interest in establishing urban centres in the hill country and in creating new social, political and economical local power structures.

*Persian Period and Early Hellenistic Finds
in the Western Hill of Jerusalem*

Only few pottery sherds and other small finds from the Persian Period have been found in the many excavations conducted in the Western Hill of Jerusalem. In most cases, these finds were excavated in landfills from the Late Hellenistic and especially from the Roman Period and with no clear stratigraphic context.⁸ The unavoidable conclusion is that throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, the Western Hill was entirely abandoned, and the area was only first resettled in the second century BCE.⁹ This fact stands in agreement with the finds of *yehud* stamp impressions, since according to the new typology developed by Vanderhooft and Lipschits (2007), no stamp impressions belonging to the early (late sixth and fifth century BCE) or middle types (fourth and third centuries BCE) were discovered in any of the excavated areas outside the limits of the City of David (Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007a: 108–12). All the stamp impressions discovered on the Western Hill belong to the two late types (dated to the second century BCE, maybe even to the middle or second half of this century), and some of them came from clear Hasmonaean archaeological contexts, in some cases together with *yršlm* stamp impressions and other material dated to this period (Geva 2007a; Lipschits and Vanderhooft, 2007a: 111–12).¹⁰

8 For a detailed discussion of all Persian Period archaeological finds from the Western Hill, see: Lipschits 2009.

9 This is the common view among scholars, and see, e.g., Kenyon 1974: 188–255; Tsafirir 1977: 36; Avigad 1983: 61–3; Geva 1983; 1994; 2000a: 24; 2000b: 158; 2003a: 113–14; 2003b: 524–26; Geva and Reich 2000: 42; Geva and Avigad 2000b: 218; Shiloh 1984: 23; Tushingham 1985: 85; Broshi and Gibson 1994; Chen, Margalit and Pixner 1994; Sivan and Solar 1994; Finkielstejn 1999: 28*; Lipschits 2005: 212–13; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007a: 108–12.

10 See, for example, the six stamp impressions discovered in the Kenyon-Tushingham excavations in the Armenian Garden; all were excavated in a fill connected to the podium of Herod's palace, which includes a mixture of pottery from the First and Second Temple periods (Tushingham 1985: 37, Fig. 17: 18–23). Also in Amiran and Eitan's excavations in the Citadel a stamp impression was discovered in the fill of the podium of Herod's palace (Amiran and Eitan 1970: 13).

Persian Period Finds in the City of David

The northern part of the City of David, just below the Ophel, contains a significant number of Persian period finds. The fills in which these finds were found seem to have originated from the Ophel, just above this area to the north, and were laid before the late Hellenistic and Roman periods (Lipschits 2009).

The most important area where finds from the Persian period were discovered is the one excavated by Macalister and Duncan (1923–25), at the northern area of the City of David and just below the Ophel (Macalister and Duncan 1926: 49–51; Duncan 1931: 143).¹¹ Persian period finds were discovered a bit to the north of the Macalister and Duncan's Persian tower where Kenyon excavated her square AXVIII, and identified there part of 'Nehemiah's wall'.¹² Shiloh continued the excavations in this area as part of his Area G,¹³ and Eilat Mazar renewed the excavations in the same area in 2005.¹⁴ In 2007, as part of the conservation project of the Hasmonaean northern tower, Mazar excavated the landfill under the tower, and discovered the same Persian period material previously exposed by Kenyon and Shiloh.¹⁵ The fill in this spot contains finds only from the sixth–fifth centuries BCE, which seems to indicate that it was part of the cleaning of the area above it (in the northern edge of the city of David, just under the Ophel), which in turn indicates that that area was populated in the Persian period. E. Mazar suggested dating the tower and the wall attached to it (wall 27) to the fifth century BCE and identified it as a part of Nehemiah's wall (2007a: 49–60; 2007b: 17–21; 2008: 31–7).¹⁶

11 The Persian period finds from this area include a lot of Persian period pottery sherds, as well as 54 *Yehud* and 6 lion stamp impressions.

12 Kenyon (1963: 15; 1974: 183–84, 191–92, Pl. 77; *cf.* 1966: 83–4; 1967a: 69) observed that the tower was attached to an earlier wall that was built of large stones on a rock scarp about 7–8 metres high, dated the wall to the Persian period, and assigned its construction to Nehemiah. She dated the tower as part of the Hasmonaean fortification.

13 Shiloh (1984: 20–21, and figs. 27, 28; *cf.* the photo in Mazar 2007a: 64) connected the northern tower to the first century BCE glacis that was already excavated by Kenyon. Its connection to Macalister's northern tower was well demonstrated.

14 Mazar (2007a: 49–60; 2007b: 17–21) identified Kenyon's Persian wall as part of the northern Iron Age IIA fortification of what she called 'David's Palace'.

15 According to Kenyon, this fill was connected to the tower that was built on the bedrock, and this is why she attempted to date it to the Persian period. Franken (Franken and Steiner 1990), however, presented the drawing of the cut of Kenyon's Square XVIII and demonstrated that this fill was not connected to the wall, as Macalister and Duncan had earlier presumed.

16 The date of the landfill, where there are no indications for a late Persian material (including *yehud* stamp impressions) may indicate that it was laid before the landfill above it, discovered by Macalister and Duncan, but it is certainly not sufficient grounds to date the northern tower to the fifth century BCE or identify it as part of Nehemiah's wall.

On the same line of the upper part of the City of David, but on its western slopes towards the Tyropoeon, some more Persian period finds, including one *yehud* stamp impression, were discovered in Crowfoot and Fitzgerald's excavations (1927–28) at the 'western gate' of the City of David (Crowfoot and Fitzgerald 1929: 67). Pottery sherds dated to the Persian period, as well as another stamp impression, were excavated by Shukron and Reich, just a few metres to the north, in the Givati parking place (Shukron and Reich 2005: 8). These finds provide further evidence that the hill above this area – the Ophel and the northern part of the City of David – were settled during the Persian period.

Beside the upper part of the City of David, most of the Persian period pottery sherds and stamp impressions from the central and southern parts of the City of David were discovered in Shiloh's excavations along the eastern slope of the ridge, where three Strata were observed and dated to the period between the late sixth or early fifth and the second century BCE: Stratum 9 was dated to the Persian period, Stratum 8 to the early Hellenistic period, and Stratum 7 to the second century BCE (Hasmonaean Period). Stratum 9, however, does not appear in all the excavated areas (Shiloh 1984: 4, Table 2). Finds attributed to this Stratum appeared in Area D1 (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59–62; De Groot 2001: 77), Area D2 (Shiloh 1984: 8–9),¹⁷ and in Area G (Shiloh 1984: 20).¹⁸ Shiloh's finds from the Persian Period were also partially represented in Area E1 (Shiloh 1984: 14; De Groot 2001: 77), and included some chalk vessels (Cahill 1992: 191–98, fig. 14). Sherds dated to the Persian period were discovered in the fills in Area H, to the east of the Siloam Pool, on the eastern slopes of Mount Zion (De Groot and Michaeli 1992: 50–51; De Groot 2001: 78).¹⁹ Persian period sherds and seal impressions were discovered in Reich and Shukron's Areas A and B, above the Kidron Valley, ca. 200–250 m south of the Gihon Spring (Reich and Shukron 1998: 2007). The finds from these areas probably come from the settlement on the ridge above.

The most significant finds from the Persian period were excavated in Area E, where three different stages from the Persian period Stratum 9 were distinguished (De Groot 2001: 77, and *cf.* Cahill 1992: 191–98, fig. 14). The early stage (9C) is a reuse of a large Iron Age building that was destroyed along with the rest of the city in 586 BCE, and should be dated to

17 The finds assigned to Stratum 9 at Area D2 include a Lycian coin dated to 500–440 BCE (Ariel 1990: C1) and an ostrakon (Naveh 2000: IN 16).

18 In this area Kenyon also discovered Persian Period finds (dated by her to the fifth–third centuries BCE) in the fill adjacent to the Northern tower, and this is the reason why she assigned this wall to Nehemiah's fortifications. See, however, the critique of De Groot 2001: 78.

19 De Groot assumed that the finds from the Persian period are a proof that the Siloam pool was fortified during the Persian Period.

the end of the sixth and first half of the fifth century BCE (De Groot 2001: 77–8). A sloping level of quarrying refuse (composed of limestone chips with very little interspersed earth or pottery) was ascribed to the second stage (9b), and can be dated to the reconstruction of the city undertaken by Nehemiah in the middle of the fifth century BCE (De Groot 2001: 78; 2005: 82).²⁰ The Persian period date, the location of the works, and the long line along the eastern slope of the ridge, are all indications of the ‘missing’ wall of the Persian period.²¹ 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).

These Persian period finds may be combined with the observations of Ariel and Shoham (2000: 138) and Reich and Shukron (2007: 64) concerning the location of the *yehud* stamp impressions,²² and the conclusion that Persian and early Hellenistic settlement was restricted to the top of the ridge, to the south of Area G (cf. Finkelstein 2008: 506). The problem with this assumption is that it relates to the area down the slopes of the settled area on the ridge, where above the Gihon spring and Area G of Shiloh’s excavations, there were many more Persian period sherds and *yehud* stamp impressions that were excavated by Macalister and Duncan (1926: 49–51; cf. Cook 1925). The actual significance of the distribution of the Persian period finds in this area is that the Gihon Spring was not in use since the water flow in Hezekiah tunnel to the southern part of the City of David, and the spring itself, was blocked and covered, far below the limits of the city. The finds on the ridge of the City of David, as well as on the slopes

20 The same level of quarrying refuse appeared also in Area D1, 500 m to the south, and was dated to Stratum 9 (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59, and cf. Shiloh 1984: 7; De Groot 2001: 78). In some cases the levels of those chips were separated by thin layers of earth, without any coherent pattern. The quarrying activities above the eastern slope were documented in the excavations by Bliss and Dickie (1898), Weill (1920) and in Area K of the City of David excavations (Ariel and Magness 1992). It should be emphasized that the existence of such levels of quarrying refuse is an indication that the areas where it was discovered were outside the limits of the city (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59), but it also indicates that immediately above this area significant construction activity was undertaken.

21 It can be assumed that the heavy destruction of the city in 586 BCE forced the late sixth and fifth century BCE settlers to move the wall to the upper part of the ridge, where there was a need for preparation-quarrying activity.

22 Most of the *yehud* stamp impressions from Shiloh’s excavations originated in Areas B, D, and E. Of the eight stamp impressions discovered by Reich and Shukron on the eastern slope of the Southeastern Hill of Jerusalem, five originated in Area A, located in the Kidron Valley, some 200–250 metres south of the Gihon spring, two in Area B, at the mid-slope of the hill, above Area A, and next to Shiloh’s Areas B and D1. Only one *Yehud* stamp impression was retrieved in the areas excavated around the Gihon spring, where vast amounts of late Second Temple debris were excavated above a huge fill containing late Iron Age II pottery.

of the hill are indications for a poor but existing settlement all along the narrow ridge of the City of David (Lipschits 2009).

*Early Hellenistic Finds in the City of David, Yehud
Stamp Impressions, and Settlement Processes in
Jerusalem During the Fourth–Third Centuries BCE*

The Early Hellenistic Stratum 8 is fully represented in the City of David only in Area E2 (Shiloh 1984: 4, Table 2 and *cf.* to p. 10; De Groot 2004: 67–9). This Stratum is also partially represented in Areas E1 (Shiloh 1984: 14–15) and E3 (*cf.* to pp. 10–11), and scarcely represented in Areas D1 (*cf.* to pp. 7–8) and D2 (*cf.* to pp. 8–9). In this case, too, the finds that can safely be attributed to this Stratum are meagre, and mainly consist of three *columbaria* (De Groot 2004: 67–8; 2005: 84) and a structure (in Area E1) that yielded a rich corpus of pottery dating to the third century BCE.²³ The excavators did not find *yehud* stamp impressions of the late types, dated to the second century BCE, in either of these strata (Stratum 9 and 8). Most of the late types were discovered in Stratum 7 (Ariel and Shoham 2000, Table 1, and see also Reich 2003: 258–59 and Tables 7.1–7.2).

The 27 *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in different areas of the Western Hill are more than 30% of the total finds of the late group of *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in Jerusalem (59 more stamp impressions from the late group were discovered in the City of David). This proportion is much higher than the Rhodian stamp impressions, of which only 5% of the finds were discovered on the Western Hill, and most of the rest were discovered in the City of David. The difference in the proportion of the two types of stamp impressions discovered on 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 Akra in 141 BCE by Simeon (*1 Macc.* 13.49–51), as assumed by Finkielsztein (1999: 28*–31* with further literature, and see against this idea Ariel 1990: 25; 2000: 269, 276–80). 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 2007a: 112), a period in which there was a sharp decline in the importation of wine from Rhodes (Ariel 1990: 21–5; 2000: 267–69). We can also assume that the settlement process of the Western Hill was a much slower and gradual process than described by some scholars (see, e.g., Finkielsztein 1999: 28*).

²³ This is the only pottery assemblage of a pre-Hasmonaean phase in the City of David (Shiloh 1984: 15).

*Archaeological Finds, Demographical Processes
and the History of Jerusalem Between the
Sixth and Second Centuries BCE*

The archaeological finds from Jerusalem can only be interpreted as evidence of a meagre settlement, confined to the City of David, between the late Iron Age and the Hasmonaean period (early sixth to second centuries BCE).²⁴ The settlement in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods concentrated on the upper part of the ridge, in a very narrow north to south strip, with an average width of no more than 80–100 metres, and along the edge of the ridge, about 350 metres from north to south (Lipschits 2009). The settlement on the ridge included a settled area of about 28–30 dunams. However, since the area in the northern part of the ridge of the City of David is the richest with Persian period finds (with more than 75% of the finds from this period), and the finds in this area were mostly discovered in earth fills that probably originated from the area above it; namely, the Ophel hill, this area should be considered as an important settled area during this period (Lipschits 2009). The importance of the 20 dunams of the Ophel hill, between the ascension of the hill towards the Temple Mount and the northern part of the City of David, as the main built-up area in the Persian period, was never discussed in the archaeological and historical research. However, this is the only flat, easy to settle area in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Jerusalem. Its closeness to the Temple Mount on the one hand and the easy option to fortify it on the other, made it the preferable option for settlement in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods.

The settled area of Jerusalem during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods included an area of about 50 dunams. The population of Jerusalem did not include more than 1000 to 1250 people.²⁵ In light of this clear archaeological evidence, we should interpret the ‘Return to Zion’ as a slow and gradual process, that did not leave its imprint on the archaeological data. Even if a real change in the history of Jerusalem occurred in the middle of the fifth century BCE, with the rebuild of the fortifications of

24 This is an observation shared by all scholars dealing with Persian period finds in Jerusalem (Kenyon 1963: 15; Carter 1999: 285; Eshel 2000: 341; Lipschits 2003: 330–31; 2005: 212; 2006: 32; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007a; Schniedewind 2003; 2004: 165–78; Grabbe 2004: 25; Geva 2007b: 56–7; Finkelstein 2008: 501–04).

25 This population estimate is very close to the accepted estimations in research in the last years – these of Carter (1999: 288) and Lipschits (2005: 271; 2006: 32) – of about 60 dunams and 1250–1500 people respectively, or that of Geva (2007b: 56–7) of a settled area of 60 dunams and population estimate of about 1000 people.

Jerusalem, with all its dramatic implication on its status, it did not change the actual demographic situation of the city. Jerusalem did not become a real urban centre until the Hellenistic period.