'Atiqot 60, 2008

Four Hebrew Seals, One Depicting an Assyrian-Like Archer, from the Western Wall Plaza Excavations, Jerusalem

Tallay Ornan, Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah, Zvi Greenhut, Benjamin Sass and Yuval Goren

An Iron Age building, excavated opposite the Western Wall (Figs. 1, 2; Plan 3), yielded four Hebrew seals in 2008. Two of the seals were spotted thanks to wet-sieving. This procedure, introduced several years ago at various excavations in Jerusalem, has led to a dramatic increase in the number of seals and bullae discovered. In view of the interest of these four seals, not least for their Jerusalem provenance, it was decided to present them as soon as possible, rather than wait for the publication of the excavation report. The present discussion, written with no time to spare, should thus be regarded as preliminary.

The Excavation

Since 2005, large scale, year-round salvage excavations, covering c. 1.5 dunams (c. 1500 sq m), have been conducted in the northwestern

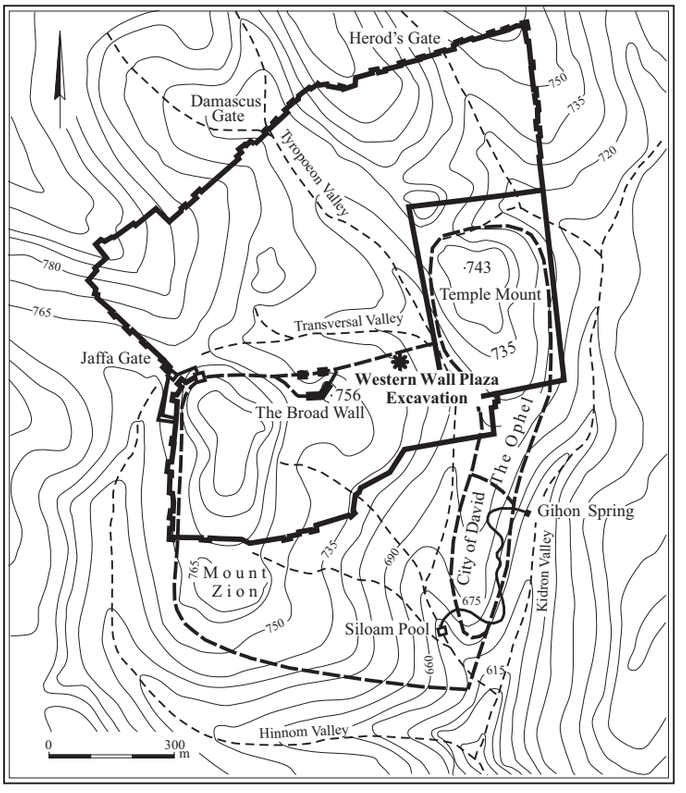
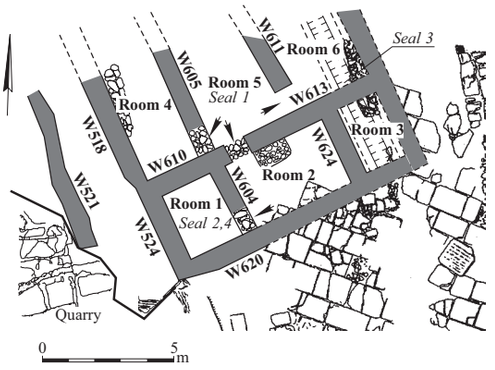


Fig. 1. Jerusalem during the late Iron Age and the location of the excavation.

Fig. 2. The Western Wall Plaza Excavations, looking northeast; the Iron II house is marked with an arrow.



Plan 1. The Iron II building, with indication of the seals' find spots.

corner of the Western Wall Plaza, 100 m from the Temple Mount (Figs. 1, 2; for preliminary results see Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2007; 2008).[1] A rich archaeological layer dated to the late Iron Age was preserved in the northwest of the excavated area, on the lower northeastern slope of the Western Hill (the Upper City). Quarries constitute the initial Iron Age activity, overlaid by the building in which the seals were found (see Plan 1; Fig. 3). This structure was buried by Iron II debris that was washed down from the houses upslope over the centuries following 586 BCE. This, in turn, was sealed by a wide, colonnaded street paved with large stone slabs, identified as the Eastern Cardo of the Roman colony Aelia Capitolina. It is unclear whether the area of the Iron Age building remained deserted until the Roman period, or whether the builders of the Cardo removed whatever had existed in between.

The building, probably a four-room house, is very well preserved: its walls, foundations included, still stand 4–5 meters high (Plan 1; Fig. 3). The leveling fills under the floors, presumably drawn from an unoccupied plot or rubbish heap nearby, did not include restorable pottery. Likewise, the building itself yielded no *in situ* restorable vessels, a fact that probably rules out a sudden cessation of habitation. The original floors, which had risen 10–15 cm during the lifetime of the building, were preserved in all rooms. In Rooms 1 and 2 they were sealed by a thick layer—in the former interspersed with yellowish-white clayey lumps, in the latter containing building stones that lay like fallen dominoes, indicating a swift collapse. The absence of a collapse layer in Rooms 4, 5 and 6 probably implies that only Rooms 1, 2 and possibly 3 had a second story (for Room 3 this is presumed, as it is mostly unexcavated). On top of the collapse layer in Rooms 1 and 2, and resting directly on the accumulation above the floors in Rooms 4–6, was deposited material from the Iron Age settlement upslope. Distinguishable by much smaller stones, this material continued up to the Cardo level.

A first analysis of the pottery, from the floors as well as from the fills underneath, revealed a rich Iron II repertoire with enough forms typical of only the seventh–early sixth centuries to indicate that the building cannot be earlier than the seventh century. Some

Fig. 3. The Iron II building, looking northeast.

longer-lived pottery types of the eighth, as well as the seventh century, are also present.

The Archaeological Context of the Seals

The four seals were found within the Iron Age building (Plan 1; Table 1). Seal 1 was found while wet-sieving the material removed from Room 5, near the doorway to Room 6. It originated in either the floor makeup of Room 5 or the accumulation just above (at this particular spot no distinction could be made).

Seals 2 and 4 came from the collapse debris in Room 1: Seal 2 was discovered through wet-sieving, and Seal 4, while dry-sieving the material from the dismantling of a baulk. The lumpy whitish material (quite different from the reddish earth in the other rooms) filled the intaglio of the seals; in Seal 4 particularly, it highlighted the motif and legend against the dark background of the stone (see English cover).

Seal 3 is the only one of the four seals to be spotted during actual excavation. It came from a Medieval wall (W609) that cut through Rooms 2, 3 and 6; the seal was found in the segment above Room 6. As W609 was built into the Iron Age layer and used its debris as bonding material, it yielded a large amount of Iron II pottery and other finds.

The seventh-century archaeological context of Seals 2 and 4 securely dates their *use*, even while a somewhat earlier manufacture cannot be ruled out. The provenance of Seal 1 indicates that it either predates the four-room house or dates to the occupation of the building. Seal 3 could have come either from the debris of the building or from the erosion of the houses upslope.

THE SEALS

Due to their Jerusalem provenance, our seals enrich the domains of Hebrew epigraphy and glyptic, but otherwise add little to what was already known about seals with Hebrew inscriptions. The uncommon imagery of Seal No. 4, on the other hand, is loaded with symbolic and historical significance. Although the motif of the archer is not as exceptional as would seem at first sight (see below, *The Motifs*), for such an extraordinary seal we could not rule out the possibility of a 'planted' forgery. Nonetheless, scientific examination

Table 1. Archaeological Particulars of the Four Seals

Seal	Excavated	Room	Floor Level[i]	Locus	Basket No.[ii]	Find Level	Sieved	Sieving Find No.
1	06.02.2008	5	724.80–724.70	6088	60573	724.75–724.61	18.02.2008	70229
2	10.02.2008	1	724.84–724.70	6091	60602	725.83–725.60	17.03.2008	70344
3	10.06.2008	[6]	[724.85–724.71]	W609	60841	726.97–726.20	–	–
4	17.07.2008	1	724.84–724.70	6158	61030	725.34–724.87	07.09.2008	71157

[i] The lower figure denotes the original floor level, the higher—the top of the subsequent habitation accumulation.
[ii] In Seals 1, 2 and 4 the 'basket' number refers to the pottery collected during the excavation from a certain point in the locus, as well as to the bale of excavated soil from the same point subsequently sent to sieving; in Seal 3 the 'basket' number stands for the individual find number, whereas in the case of Seals 1, 2 and 4 this ID was assigned at the sieving.

did not detect evidence of modern involvement (see below).

1. לנתניהו בן יאש (Fig. 4)
Sieving Find No. 70229, Room 5, L6088.
Plain-backed scaraboid of yellowish stone (limestone?), perforated lengthwise, 14 × 11 × 7 mm.

Single-line border, double-line field dividers, a garland of four pomegranates (one of them damaged during the carving) in the top register, and an inscription in the two lower registers. The inscription reads *lntnyhw bn y'š*. The bottom register also contains a dot attached to a vertical line.

2. לע/ט… י… (Fig. 5)
Sieving Find No. 70344, Room 1, L6091.
Two joining fragments of a plain-backed ivory scaraboid, perforated lengthwise, originally c. 17 × 14 × 10 mm; preserved length 7 mm. One fragment split further soon after discovery (Fig. 5:b, c).

Double-line border and field divider, two inscribed registers. The inscription reads *l'*… (or *lṭ*…) *y*….

3. לידעיהו אושא (Fig. 6)
Find No. 60841, W609 (above Room 6).
Plain-backed bone scaraboid, perforated lengthwise, 16 × 15 × 8 mm.

Single-line border, zigzag field divider within double line, two inscribed registers. The inscription reads *lyd'yhw 'wš'*.

4. לחגב (Fig. 7; English cover)
Sieving Find No. 71157, Room 1, L6158.
Plain-backed phosphorite scaraboid, perforated lengthwise, 14 × 12 × 7 mm.

No border line and no division of the field, upright archer to left pulling bow. The inscription, in the space to the left of the figure, reads *lḥgb*. (Note: throughout the description, 'left' and 'right' are as on the impression.)

Technique: The torso and parts of the limbs were carved with a straight-bladed gouge, details then added by incision. The few depressions, such as at the right shoulder and the face, are of irregular shape, an indication that they were made with a simple graver rather than a drill. The musculature of the arms and legs was probably begun as depressions at the elbows and knees, and subsequently fleshed out. As is common in certain glyptic styles, parts of the image—in our case the face and limbs—are not detailed.

Concerning the legend, it is hard to tell whether it was carved at the same time as the figure or was added later.

Description: The archer wears a fillet, higher in the front (cf. a pair of archers from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, Room V—Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner 1998: Pl. 55); otherwise his head is bare. The face is indicated by an incision for the nose, and a large and a small depression for the cheek and eye respectively. The three horizontal incisions

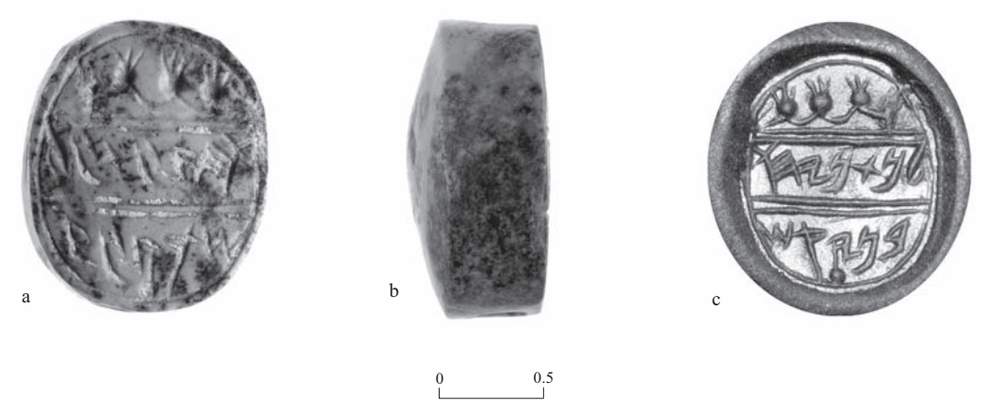


Fig. 4. Seal No. 1: (a) sealing surface; (b) side; (c) impression.

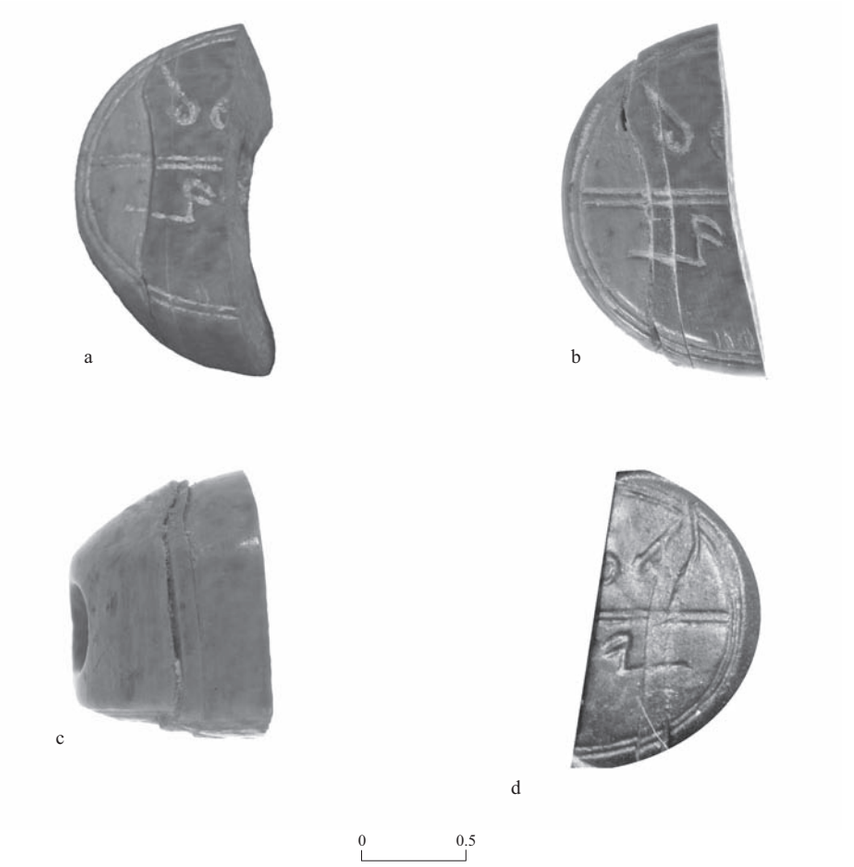


Fig. 5. Seal No. 2: (a) sealing surface as unearthed; (b) sealing surface after split; (c) side; (D) impression.

Fig. 6. Seal No. 3: (a) sealing surface; (b) side; (c) impression.

Fig. 7. Seal No. 4: (a, b) sealing surface after cleaning; (c) side; (d) impression.

below the face may represent the beard. The seemingly bare chest is crossed by the strap of the quiver (see below), frequently encountered on Assyrian reliefs. The archer holds the bow in his right hand, and draws with his left.[2] There is a hint of fingers at his right palm, and a suggestion of two fingers of the (palm-less) left hand, crooked around the (invisible) string. The short wraparound kilt overlaps in front, its outer end marked with a row of short diagonal strokes; the hem below and the belt above are each represented by two horizontal lines. The front contour of the figure is marked by an incised line, extending from the upper arm to the end of the kilt. The archer is barefoot.

The gear includes a bow and its arrow, a quiver, and a sword. The bow-string is not shown; a thin line parallel to the right arm indicates the arrow (cf. Madhloom 1970: Pl. 47:2). Of the seemingly empty quiver, only the top, meticulously detailed, is visible behind the archer's head (Madhloom 1970: Pl. 47:2, 4). The adjoining U-shaped element is perhaps the open lid,[3] tied to the quiver by a cord (cf. shut Elamite quivers, Madhloom 1970:51, Pl. 49:2); if so, the two short lines below may represent straps securing the lid when shut. Further study is needed to verify this suggestion. Presumably, the sword is inserted into the archer's belt, with only the tip visible behind the figure, as in many two-dimensional, small-scale Assyrian depictions. Parallels for the various features of the archer and his gear can be found in Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner 1998: Pls. 64, 153, 289 and *passim*).

The Script

All four seals are inscribed in Hebrew of the eighth–seventh centuries BCE, but each is by a different 'hand'.

The least elegant script is on Seal 3, as befits a seal made of the cheapest material (compare unprovenanced *WSS* 187, acquired before 1948 [see nn. 5 and 6]). Likewise, Seal 1 is inscribed in a confident, but not very refined 'hand' (similarly, e.g., *WSS* 70 from 'Arad).

The little that is preserved of the script of ivory Seal 2 is particularly fine; the precise double-line border, is often found on the best seals, such as three others that were found in Jerusalem (*WSS* 464, 689; Reich and Sass 2006:316). The long tail of the *yod* is noteworthy, with parallels on two monumental inscriptions from the City of David (Naveh 2000:1–2; Reich and Shukron 2008).

The script of Seal 4 is elegant as well, save the compactness of the *bet*, the result of a miscalculation of the space for the legend.

The Names

Both *'wš'* (Seal 1) and *y'š* (Seal 3) are hypocoristics of names such as *'šyhw*, the father of Elyashib, from 'Arad (*WSS* 70, 71), and biblical יאשיהו/יאושיהו respectively. The root is *'wš*, 'give', known in Ugaritic and South Arabian; in Hebrew it is documented solely in personal names (*WSS*:477). The *plene* writing of *'wš'* seems to be unattested hitherto (spelled *'š'*, the name occurs repeatedly in the Samaria ostraca), but compare *plene y'wš* in Lachish Letter 2:6 (Torczyner 1938; see further *WSS*:478).

The word-name *ḥgb* (Seal 4), 'grasshopper', is found in Ezra 2:46, in Lachish Letter 1:3 (Torczyner 1938), and on three unprovenanced bullae (*WSS* 489–491), two of them belonging to the same man. See also Naveh 2001:204–205 regarding *ḥgb*, this time probably as a nickname, in unprovenanced Hebrew graffiti attributed to Khirbat al-Qom or its vicinity.

Both *yd'yhw* (Seal 3) and *ntnyhw* (Seal 1) are common Hebrew names in the First Temple period (see *WSS*:502, 517).

The names on Seal 2, one beginning with *'ayin* or *ṭet* and the other with *yod*, cannot be guessed. If the first letter of the upper name is *ṭet*, the owner's name would probably have been composed with *ṭb*, 'good'.

The Motifs

Seal 1.— The pomegranate garland in the top register, as well as the layout of the seal, have a parallel from Duncan Mackenzie's excavations at Bet Shemesh (Sass 2008). As a border motif, the pomegranate garland is known from an

unprovenanced seal (*WSS* 165), purchased in Jerusalem in the 1880s, and differently on four unprovenanced bullae (*WSS* 629A–D), all presumed genuine.[4]

The dot and vertical line in the bottom register are possibly intended, together with the middle horizontal of the *yod* in *y'š*, to represent an Egyptian *nfr* sign.

Seal 3.— The zigzag line in the field divider, for which we found no exact parallels on inscribed seals, is similar to the ladder or rope pattern (e.g., *WSS* 467, a bulla from the City of David).

Seal 4.— Numerous aspects of the figure, (e.g., barefoot and wearing a short kilt, no helmet, armour or shield), suggest that it must have had a light auxiliary archer in the Assyrian army as its prototype (Yadin 1963:419). Moreover, as he aims high, the archer's image was probably inspired by scenes of the storming of a city (more below).

The standing archer is depicted here for the first time on a seal with a Hebrew inscription and, to our knowledge, for the first time also among the Levantine stamp seals of Iron Age II. In addition, the layout—longitudinal, with a single motif down the center and a horizontal legend on one side—is hitherto unknown among seals with West Semitic inscriptions, although a remote resemblance to the layout may be recognized in the *śrh'r* bullae (below). The quality of the carving is nearly unrivalled in Judah and Israel; a possible match for the finesse, though not the style, can be seen in the 'prancing horse' impressions on *lmlk* jars (Barkay 1992).

The flat carving of the body, summary rendering of the face, depression for the left shoulder (in figures facing left), and musculature of the limbs, occur together in a subgroup of the 'linear style' on Assyrian cylinder seals (cf. Keel and Uehlinger 1996:24, Fig. 13). These are customarily dated to the ninth–eighth centuries whereas our seal belongs to the late eighth or seventh century. The flat carving of the body is also typical of provincial stamp seals from the western territories of the Assyrian empire in the eighth and seventh centuries (e.g. Porada 1948:97, No. 790; Buchanan and Moorey 1988: No. 13, the latter from el-Mina). However, the limbs in those seals are depicted by simple incisions; exact, contemporary Levantine parallels for the musculature of our archer remain to be found.

Turning to the general picture, the *ḥgb* seal joins other glyptic finds that together form a well-defined group among the Assyrianizing seals from the 'Assyrian century' (c. 730–630 BCE) that have been uncovered in Israel. This group, inspired by military and ceremonial themes, can be divided into several categories, some of which are described below.

Soldier Leading Captive: This category is represented by four fired clay dockets (*WSS* 400, 401, 810, 1065), which depict a soldier leading a naked captive. One of the dockets (*WSS* 1065) is from the Ashdod excavations, whereas the other three are of unknown provenance. It is noteworthy that *WSS* 401 (bought in Samaria in 1927)[5] shares with our seal the absence of a ground-line and the figures somewhat awkwardly positioned on the curved edge of the seal. The real-life, martial subject-matter is well known in monumental Assyrian art, where it appears as part of a narrative display (e.g., Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner 1998: Pl. 70); as far as we know, it does not figure in Assyrian glyptic.

King and High Official: This category is depicted on two unprovenanced *śrh'r* or "Governor of the City" bullae (*WSS* 402A, 402B).[6] The scene of two men facing each other, the taller one carrying a bow and arrows, is known from both monumental and miniature Assyrian art (Ornan 1997:242–246).

The above-mentioned themes have a common source of influence: they are inspired by scenes and motifs embedded in the narrative display of Assyrian palace reliefs, focusing on military or ceremonial representations in which

the king appears as the central figure. Such themes are not very common in Neo-Assyrian glyptic art, which traditionally favor religious-magical subject matter (Ornan 2005b:7; Mayer-Opificius 2006:55). However, examples of their occurrence are to be found, e.g., on a cylinder seal from Khorsabad (Delaporte 1920: Pl. 57:2) and a sealing from Nineveh (Herbordt 1992:95–96, Pls. 1:8, 22:5).

Archer: The figure shown on the seal of *ḥgb* fits very well, then, into the above-mentioned categories, and at the same time, introduces a new one: the archer.

This leads to the question of the source of inspiration for the motif of a lone Assyrian-like archer on a Hebrew seal. As the high-aiming soldier appears often in Assyrian wall reliefs, singly or as one of a pair (e.g., Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner 1998: Pls. 27, 64, 71, 184, 269–275, 324, 332, 359, 375), it is tempting to seek the prototype of the *ḥgb* figure in Assyrian town-storming scenes. Indeed, Judahite and Israelite dignitaries in tribute-bearing delegations to the empire's capitals,[7] and perhaps also officers serving the empire (see n. 13), could have been exposed to Assyrian palatial art. In this context, it is of interest to note another contemporary image of an archer—albeit not drawing his bow—that figures among other scenes and motifs on Pithos B from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Beck 1982:10, 40–41). The 'Ajrud archer, together with other motifs from the site, such as the storming of a city on a wall painting (Beck 1982:49; Keel and Uehlinger 1998:215), also belongs to the realistic, military subject-matter familiar from monumental Assyrian art.[8]

However, even if Assyrian monumental art was the ultimate source, it would not have necessarily provided the direct prototype to the seal cutter. The owner might have ordered his seal while away from Jerusalem and Judah, in one of the imperial capitals. On the other hand, the Assyrian inspiration may have been transmitted through a small portable mediator, such as a bronze bowl or cylinder seal.[9] Certain bronze bowls, usually assigned to Phoenician workmanship, are decorated with narrative displays of military attacks on walled cities, conveying Assyrian influence (Markoe 1985:51, 53). Considering as well the variety of archers—some of them Assyrian-looking—engaged in either battle or hunting (Markoe 1985:242, 248, 278, 292, 296, 304, 306, 320–321), such bowls could have served as a source for the *ḥgb* seal (cf. Keel and Uehlinger 1998:215). Alternatively, as archers in various postures also appear on locally found Assyrian or Assyrianizing cylinder seals (e.g., Macalister 1912, II:346, No. 34; III: Pl. 214:24), the inspiration may have derived from other glyptic objects. This conjecture, however, cannot be confirmed, for thus far none of our examples have supplied a really close match.

SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF THE SEAL OF *ḤGB*

The seal was subjected to a series of laboratory examinations.[10] The purpose of the study was twofold: (1) to examine the authenticity of this extraordinary find, and (2) to determine the kind of stone from which it is made, and its possible origin in the vicinity of Judah.

Method

The examinations focused on the stone, the engraving, and the outer crust, namely the patina covering the stone, with special emphasis on the incised surface. Since the history of the seal from the moment of discovery on is known to us, it was assumed that no traces of modern materials or machinery should exist on the surface, as the seal was never cleaned nor treated by any tool except the touch of human hands. Therefore, the authenticity verification was based first and foremost on the inspection of the surface, grooves and scratches under an increasing order of microscopy, starting with a stereomicroscope, through the metallographic microscope, on to the Environmental Scanning Electron Microscope (ESEM). Mineral phases in the stone and the sediment coating it

were defined by using the energy-dispersive spectrometer (EDS) of the ESEM. The analyses consisted of the following stages:

A. Surface examination of the incised area, as well as the sides of the seal, was carried out under a stereomicroscope (Zeiss Stemi-2000C), with magnifications ranging between ×20 and ×100. This was done in order to locate use and wear signs, rock-coatings and other secondary materials, and isolated sediments that were attached to the seal from the environment where it was deposited.
B. The seal was placed on a small tray and its surfaces were examined under a metallographic microscope (Wild M-20) at ×40 to ×400 magnifications using brightfield and darkfield illuminations.
C. The seal was subjected to microstructural and semi-quantitative elemental analyses by analytical Quanta ESEM equipped with EDS.[11] This instrument allows for the examination of non-conducting, contaminated and even hydrated samples without significant sample preparation, hence the complete seal could be examined without any need of coating or extraction of samples. The seal was secured to a carrying stab, enabling the *in situ* examination of each detail in the secondary electrons (SE) and backscattered electrons (BSE) modes with the semi-quantitative determination of their elemental composition by the EDS system.

Results

Surface Examination.— The microscopic examinations of the incised surface of the seal revealed no evidence of rock coating except for some marl that adhered to the grooves and filled the perforation along the long axis of the seal. Under the metallographic microscope, the marl is seen as whitish accumulation of calcite dotted with clay (Fig. 8). ESEM-EDS analysis revealed almost pure calcium carbonate.

When cleaned by a soft brush with distilled water, the marl could easily be removed, exposing the incised grooves that make the sealing. Under the metallographic microscope at ×100 to ×200 magnifications, the grooves had the same appearance as the surfaces around them, with no fresh scratches. ESEM examination of the grooves, made at back-scattered electrons (BSE) mode at higher magnifications (>×1000), indicated that no traces of metal or other materials were found within the grooves. The inspection under the metallographic microscope also indicated that the edges of the incisions were weathered around their sloping into the grooves, most likely due to attrition that occurred through time over the entire sealing surface. No sharp scratches were detected, even at the micro scale, in or around the grooves (Fig. 8).

The Base Rock.— ESEM analysis of the rock revealed that it was composed of different microcrystalline mineral phases embedded in a cryptocrystalline matrix. The coarser bodies, reaching a few tens of microns in size, are either platy or rhombohedral (Fig. 9). The platy bodies are presumably remnants of foraminifers (zooplankton). This is supported by the surface examination under the metallographic microscope, which revealed foraminifers within the rock (Fig. 10). EDS analysis of the rock indicated carbonate fluorapatite and calcite as the main components of the rock (Fig. 11), hence it is identified as phosphorite.

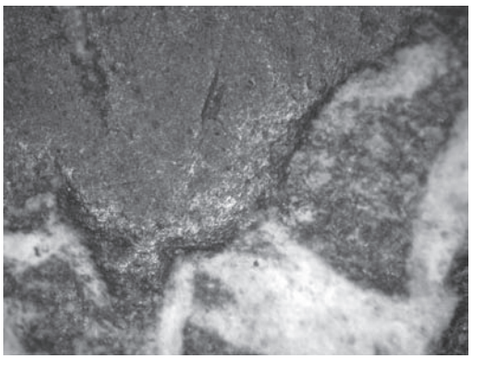


Fig. 8. Detail of the seal engraving under the metallographic microscope, exhibiting homogenous attrition of the seal's surface, crevice edges and inner part. Field width: about 3 mm.

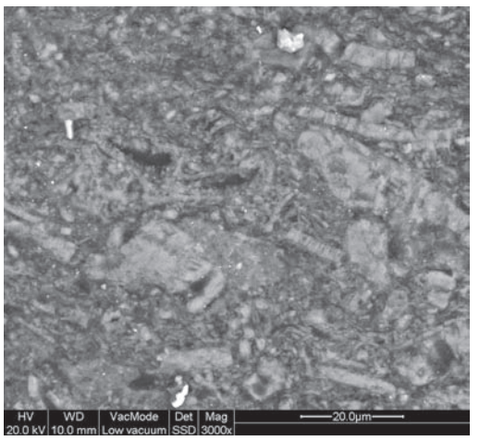


Fig. 9. ESEM view of the rock surface.

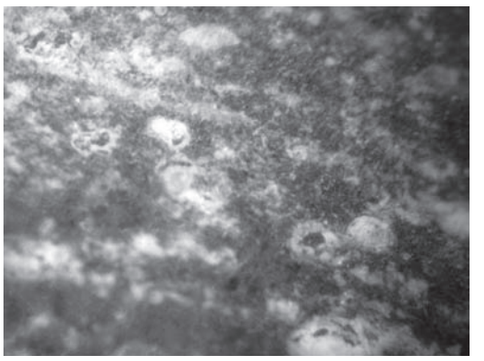


Fig. 10. The rock surface under the metallographic microscope, revealing the foraminifers within the rock. Field width: about 1 mm.

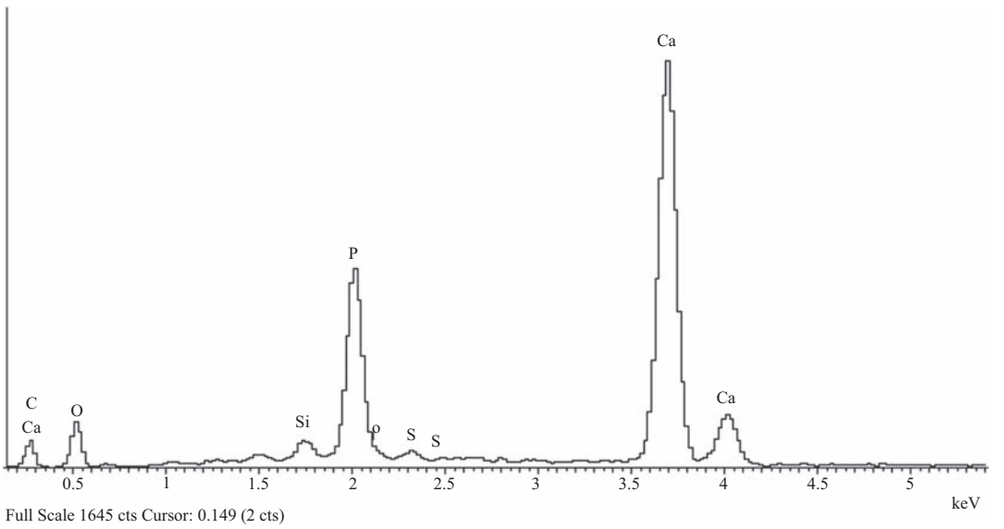


Fig. 11. ESEM-EDS spectrum of the rock surface, indicating phosphorite.

This rock type results from the accumulation of organisms and microorganisms that incorporate phosphate minerals such as apatite on the sea bed. The phosphate deposits of Israel date to the Late Cretaceous–Early Eocene (90–45 m.y. B.P.), forming part of a belt, which extends from Turkey to Morocco. A number of exploitable wide-scale phosphate deposits are located along this belt, including the deposits of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. In Israel, phosphorite is exposed in the Negev and the Judean Desert. Equivalent beds outcrop in Jordan.

Conclusions of the Scientific Examination

The examination of the seal's surface under optical microscopes and the ESEM revealed no traces of metals or other modern materials. The incisions were found to be weathered similarly

to the surfaces around them, with no indication of modern reworking of the stone even at the micro scale. Hence, the analyses give no indication of any modern treatment of the stone or the materials coating it. As far as the methods of analysis can tell us, the seal may be regarded ancient beyond any reasonable doubt.

The base rock of the seal is identified as phosphorite, a rock type occurring in the Negev, the Judean Desert and the Jordanian plateau. Hence, the raw material is not exotic to Judah and neighboring environments. Black pebbles of this rock may be found within the Santonian-Campanian phosphorites of these areas and one of them could have been selected for the creation of the seal.

Summary and Conclusions

Of the four seals found in the Iron II building, Seals 2 and 4 are dated to the seventh century by the archaeological context, while Seals 1 and 3 can only be placed in an eighth–seventh century range, since they may be part of the upslope debris. All four can be attributed to the eighth–seventh century (apparently not *early* eighth) by the script, and Seal 4, to the 'Assyrian century' (approximately 730–630 BCE), by the archer motif.

All owners' names are preceded by a possessive *lamed*. One seal bears the owner's name only, and three display the patronymic, too (one of them fragmentary[12]), in one of them preceded by *bn*. Both intact patronymics are composed with *'wš*, but the notion of a family connection that may come to mind is obviously unverifiable. All five names are attested previously; only the *plene* writing of *'wš'* is new, the occurrences of the name documented hitherto being spelled *'š'*.

The special interest of the new glyptic assemblage from the Western Wall Plaza excavations lies in its combination of 'classical' inscribed Hebrew seals with a figurative inscribed seal, heavily inspired by Assyrian imagery. The finding of two or more of these seals in the building could indicate that they were used concurrently by people dwelling or serving there. Among them, as implied by the theme of the seal of *ḥgb*, were probably military men. It may be postulated that, having his own seal, *ḥgb* was a person of status, and that, because of the image selected for his seal, he held the rank of a commander of archers.

Admittedly, when compared with similar images on Assyrian wall reliefs, the figure on *ḥgb*'s seal appears to show an ordinary archer, rather than an officer. This seeming inconsistency could be the result of the indirect and complex transmission from an Assyrian wall relief via an intermediate artifact to the Hebrew seal, during which the original, specific meaning of the motif was lost. Instead, a generic image of an Assyrian archer, regardless of rank, could have represented a provincial military commander, in our case from seventh-century Judah.

That Judah had her own military force also under Assyrian hegemony—as had other vassal kingdoms—is documented in contemporary Assyrian sources. Among them is the reference in the 'Azekah letter' to Hezekiah's annexation of Philistine territory (Cogan 2003), echoed also in II Kings 18:7–8. There is no reason to assume that the force was not put back in place following Sennacherib's campaign to the region in 701 and Judah's resubmission to Assyrian suzerainty.[13]

The adoption of Assyrian imagery in Judah at the end of the eighth century and during the seventh century, under Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh, should not surprise us; it is further attested, for example, in the choice of the winged disc on the *lmlk* seal impressions, probably appropriating the emblem of the god Ashur to represent Yahweh (Ornan 2005a: 231–234).

Turning once more to the excavation: the investigated area is located on the northeastern slope of the Western Hill (Upper City), above the Tyropoeon Valley, and in all probability within the line of the fortifications identified as Hezekiah's Broad Wall (see Fig. 1). The excavation revealed that the lower slopes, too,

of the hill were settled toward the end of the Iron Age. The pottery dates the construction and use of the building to the seventh century. The end would normally have been attributed to the Babylonian destruction in 586 BCE, but the lack of *in situ* assemblages should perhaps favor the option of an earlier abandonment. The rich pottery finds, and in particular the inscribed seals, indicate that the occupants of the building belonged to an upper class, and may imply that some of these persons held a high rank in the kingdom of Judah. The borrowing of Assyrian motifs in Judah, as exemplified in our case by the archer on *ḥgb*'s seal, indeed fits the strong ties (e.g., Dalley 2004) of Tiglath-pileser and the Sargonid kings of Assyria with the vassal rulers of the Davidic dynasty of Jerusalem in the late eighth and seventh centuries.

NOTES

[1] The excavations, carried out on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, are directed by Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah and Alexander Onn, with the participation of Zvi Greenhut (Iron Age pottery analysis), Shua Kisilevitz and Brigitte Ouahnouna (area supervisors), and Larisa Shilov (wet-sieving). The plan is by surveyors Vadim Essman, Mark Kipnis and Mark Kunin and draftsperson Natalia Zak. The seals were found under Permit Nos. A-5002 and A-5432. The photographs in this article were taken by Clara Amit (Figs. 4a, 4b, 5b, 5c, 6a, 6b, 7a–c), Benjamin Sass (Figs. 4c, 5d, 6c, 7d), Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah (Figs. 2, 3, 5a) and Yuval Goren (Figs. 8–10).

[2] On archers in Assyrian reliefs shooting with their left hand, see Czichon 1992:51–53; also a cylinder seal from Khorsabad (Delaporte 1920: Pl. 57:2) and a sealing from Nineveh (Herbordt 1992:95–96, Pls. 1:8, 22:5).

[3] Our thanks to Yosef Garfinkel for this suggestion.

[4] On the abundance of pomegranates in forged inscribed seals, see Sass 1993:242 and Sass, forthcoming. Moreover, I [Sass] have since come to regard as forgeries numerous other seals that are still treated as genuine in Sass 1993. The forthcoming paper also addresses the authenticity of *WSS* 629.

[5] The early acquisition date of *WSS* 401 argues for its authenticity, as does the fact that the first provenanced parallel was excavated decades later.

[6] Of the two, at least *WSS* 402B can be argued to be authentic, as it was acquired around 1968, a time when the flood of forged Hebrew seals has just begun, but when the forgers were still turning out much poorer products (such as *WSS* 56, 230, 242, 368). Furthermore, still unpublished glyptic finds from Jerusalem suggest that Assyrianizing motifs had a wider distribution in the local glyptic repertoire than previously recognized, broadening the context of the *śrh ʿr* bullae.

[7] For foreign delegations visiting Assyria mentioned as recipients of wine allocations in texts from Nimrud—among them people from Judah—from the time of Tiglath-pileser or Sargon, see Dalley and Postgate 1984:246–247, No. 135.

[8] As regards chronology, following Lemaire 1984, the site has usually been dated to Jeroboam II in the second quarter of the eighth century; however, Singer-Avitz (2006) prefers the very end of the eighth century. According to the higher dating Kuntillet ʿAjrud belongs to the pre-Tiglath-pileser era; the lower alternative places the site in the period when Assyria ruled the southern Levant. The ʿAjrud themes and related ones, although attested sporadically before in the southern Levant, became more common with the arrival of the Assyrians on the scene around 730 BCE.

[9] That decorated bronze bowls were not unknown at the time in Israel is shown by a fragmentary example found at Megiddo (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 115:2; Markoe 1985:213–214, 338).

[10] The study was made (by Goren) in the Laboratory for Comparative Microarchaeology of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, at the request of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

[11] This part of the study was performed in the Wolfson Center for Nanotechnology in the Tel Aviv University. The ESEM examinations were performed at the Wolfson Applied Materials Research Centre of

the Tel Aviv University, with the kind support of a grant on behalf of the Horowitz Foundation and the Interdisciplinary Center for the Conservation and Study of Historical Heritage in Israel (ESHMOR). We would like to thank Dr. Zehava Barkai from the Wolfson Applied Materials Research Centre for her collaboration.

[12]For fragmentary Seal 2, a title or appellation is alternatively possible, though less common in general.

[13]See also, according to one understanding of a letter from Nimrud, the participation of Judahites in an Assyrian campaign to Urartu under Sargon II around 715 BCE (ND 2608, Dalley 2004:338; see however, the reservations of Saggs 2001:125–128). There was also a Judahite military involvement in Assur under Ashurbanipal c. 666 BCE (*ANET*:294; Cogan and Tadmor 1988:265).

REFERENCES

ANET: J.B. Pritchard. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* Princeton 1950.

Barkay G. 1992. The Prancing Horse: An Official Seal Impression from Judah of the 8th Century B.C.E. *Tel Aviv* 19:124–129.

Barnett R.D., Bleibtreu E. and Turner G. 1998. *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh.* London.

Beck P. 1982. The Drawings from Ḥorvat Teiman (Kuntillet ʻAjrud). *Tel Aviv* 9:3–68.

Buchanan B. and Moorey P.R.S. 1988. *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum* III*: The Iron Age Stamp Seals.* Oxford.

Cogan M. 2003. Sennacherib. The "Azekah" Inscription (2.119D). In W.W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr. eds. *The Context of Scripture* II: *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World.* Leiden–Boston. Pp. 304–305.

Cogan M. and Tadmor H. 1988. *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Garden City, NY.

Czichon R.M. 1992. *Die Gestaltungsprinzipien der neuassyrischen Flachbildkunst und ihre Entwicklung vom 9. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* Munich–Vienna.

Dalley S. 2004. Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh. *JSOT* 28:387–401.

Dalley S. and Postgate J.N. 1984. *The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser* (Cuneiform Tablets from Nimrud III). Oxford.

Delaporte L. 1920. *Catalogue des cylindres, cachets et pierres gravées de style oriental, Musée du Louvre* I: *fouilles et missions.* Paris.

Herbordt S. 1992. *Neuassyrische Glyptik des 8.–7. Jh. v. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Siegelungen auf Tafeln und Tonverschlüssen* (State Archives of Assyria Studies 1). Helsinki.

Keel O. and Uehlinger Ch. 1996. *Altorientalische Miniaturkunst.* Fribourg–Göttingen.

Keel O. and Uehlinger Ch. 1998. *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel.* Minneapolis.

Lamon R.S. and Shipton G.M. 1939. *Megiddo* I: *Seasons of 1925–34, Strata I–IV* (OIP 42). Chicago.

Lemaire A. 1984. Date et origine des inscriptions hébraïques et phéniciennes de Kuntillet ʻAjrud. *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 1:131–143.

Macalister R.A.S. 1912. *The Excavations of Gezer 1902–1905 and 1907–1909* I–III. London.

Madhloom T.A. 1970. *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art.* London.

Markoe G.E. 1985. *Phoenician Bronze Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean.* Berkeley.

Mayer-Opificius R. 2006. War and Warfare on Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East. In P. Taylor ed. *The Iconography of Cylinder Seals* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 9). London–Turin. Pp. 51–61.

Naveh J. 2000. Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions. In D.T. Ariel ed. *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985 Directed by Yigal Shiloh* VI: *Inscriptions* (Qedem 41). Jerusalem. Pp. 1–14.

Naveh J. 2001. Hebrew Graffiti from the First Temple Period. *IEJ* 51:194–207.

Ornan T. 1997. *Mesopotamian Influence on the Glyptic of Israel and Jordan in the First Millennium B.C.* Ph.D. diss. Tel Aviv University. Tel Aviv (Hebrew).

Ornan T. 2005a. A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disc in First-Millennium Near Eastern Imagery. In C.E. Suter and Ch. Uehlinger eds. *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Minor Art of the 1st Millennium BCE* (OBO 210). Fribourg–Göttingen. Pp. 207–241.

Ornan T. 2005b. *The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (OBO 213). Fribourg–Göttingen.

Porada E. 1948. *Corpus of Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections* I: *The Pierpont Morgan Library.* Washington.

Reich R. and Sass B. 2006. Three Hebrew Seals from the Iron Age Tombs at Mamilla, Jerusalem. In Y. Amit, E. Ben Zvi, I. Finkelstein and O. Lipschits eds. *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman.* Winona Lake. Pp. 313–320.

Reich R. and Shukron E. 2008. A Fragmentary Palaeo-Hebrew Inscription from the City of David, Jerusalem. *IEJ* 58:48–50.

Saggs H.W.F. 2001. *The Nimrud Letters, 1952.* London(?).

Sass B. 1993. The Pre-Exilic Hebrew Seals: Iconism vs. Aniconism. In B. Sass and Ch. Uehlinger eds. *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals* (OBO 125). Fribourg–Göttingen. Pp. 194–256.

Sass B. 2008. A Hebrew Seal from Bet Shemesh and Another of Unknown Provenance in the Israel Antiquities Authority Collection. *'Atiqot* 59:1–4.

Sass B. Forthcoming. A Seal with a West Semitic Inscription and Pomegranate Frieze from 'En Tut and an Excursus on Related Forgeries.

Singer-Avitz L. 2006. The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. *Tel Aviv* 33:196–228.

Torczyner H. 1938. *Lachish* I *(Tell ed Duweir): The Lachish Letters.* London–New York–Chicago.

Weksler-Bdolah S., Onn A., Ouahnouna B. and Avissar M. 2007. The Eastern Cardo of Roman Jerusalem and Its Later Phases in Light of the Excavations in the Western Wall Plaza. In J. Patrich and D. Amit eds. *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region: Collected Papers* [I]. Jerusalem (Hebrew). Pp. 75–84.

Weksler-Bdolah S., Greenhut Z., Onn A., Kisilevitz S. and Ouahnouna B. 2008. An Impressive Building of the Late Iron Age in the Western Wall Plaza. In D. Amit and G. Stiebel eds. *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region: Collected Papers* II. Jerusalem (Hebrew). Pp. 35–43.

WSS: N. Avigad and B. Sass. *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals.* Jerusalem 1997.

Yadin Y. 1963. *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study.* Jerusalem–Ramat Gan.