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## THE TERRITORIAL EXTENT AND DEMOGRAPHY OF YEHUD/JUDEA IN THE PERSIAN AND EARLY HELLENISTIC PERIODS\*

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### SUMMARY

The territorial extent of Persian-period Yehud and Hellenistic Judea and estimates of their population are major issues in current research<sup>1</sup>, with far-reaching implications for dating the composition of several biblical works<sup>2</sup>. Recent research on the Yehud seal impressions<sup>3</sup> and my own work on two geographical lists in the Book of Nehemiah<sup>4</sup> raise new questions and call for a fresh treatment of both issues.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance C.E. CARTER, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (Sheffield 1999); O. LIPSCHITS, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake 2005).

<sup>2</sup> For example W. SCHNIEDEWIND, "Jerusalem, the Late Judaeen Monarchy and the Composition of the Biblical Texts", in A.G. Vaughn and A.E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in the Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (Atlanta 2003) 375-394; idem, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge 2004) 165-190.

<sup>3</sup> D. VANDERHOOF and O. LIPSCHITS, "A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions", *Tel Aviv* 34 (2007) 12-37.

<sup>4</sup> I. FINKELSTEIN, "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah", *JSOT* 32 (2008) 501-520; idem, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah", *PEQ* 140 (2008) 1-10.



## SOMMAIRE

L'extension territoriale, à la période perse de Yehud et de la Judée hellénistique, de même que l'estimation de leurs populations, sont des questions brûlantes dans la recherche actuelle. Cela a des fortes implications pour la datation de la composition de certains livres bibliques. De récentes recherches sur les sceaux de Yehud et mes propres travaux sur deux listes géographiques du Livre de Néhémie soulèvent de nouvelles questions et appellent à une reprise de la problématique.

## YEHUD IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

While the borders of the province of Yehud have seemingly been reconstructed according to two pieces of information: the geographical lists in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, first and foremost among them the list of the builders of Jerusalem's city-wall in Nehemiah, and the distribution of the Persian-period Yehud seal impressions<sup>5</sup>, in reality, the main consideration has always been the biblical text. The distribution of the Yehud seal impressions covers only part of the area described in Nehemiah 3, but this has not been thoroughly considered, mainly because scholars have not questioned the Persian-period date of the geographical material in Nehemiah.

Most geographical lists in Ezra and Nehemiah are fragmentary only; Nehemiah 3 gives a relatively comprehensive picture, mentioning the division of the territory ruled from Jerusalem into several districts (*pelekh*) and half districts (half *pelekh*). Five places are listed as headquarters in this administrative system: Jerusalem, Beth-haccherem, Mizpah, Beth-zur and Keilah. Several scholars have suggested adding districts in the east (Jericho) and northwest (Gezer)<sup>6</sup>. I agree with Lipschits that the province described in the list was divided into five units – those specifically referred to in the text<sup>7</sup>. Accordingly, this province extended from Beth-zur in the south to the area of Mizpah in the north (including the areas around these two sites), and from the Judean desert in the east to Keilah in the west. The latter is the only extension into the Shephelah.

<sup>5</sup> Types 1-12 in Vanderhooft and Lipschits, "A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions"; for summary of the different opinions see Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 75-90; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, pp. 154-184.

<sup>6</sup> See summaries of the different opinions in E. STERN, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538-332 B.C.* (Warminster 1982) 247-249; Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 79-80; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, pp. 168-174.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*





Even so, the list in Nehemiah 3 can hardly serve as the basis for reconstructing the borders of Yehud in the *Persian period*:

1. Elsewhere I argued that the description of the building of the city-wall in Nehemiah 3 does not fit what we know about the archaeology of Jerusalem in the Persian period<sup>8</sup>. While Nehemiah 3 refers to the big city, probably including the southwestern hill (60 hectares, with walls running a length of 3.5 kms<sup>9</sup>), that was fortified by a major wall with many towers and gates, Persian-period Jerusalem was an *unfortified* village which extended over a very limited area of 2-2.5 hectares – in the central part of the City of David. It seems that the description in Nehemiah 3 – which does not belong to the Nehemiah Memoir<sup>10</sup> and which was probably inserted into the text of Nehemiah<sup>11</sup> – if not utopian, may represent the reality of the construction of the First Wall by the Hasmoneans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC<sup>12</sup>.

2. The archaeology of Beth-zur, mentioned as the headquarters of half a district (Neh. 3: 16), poses another problem. Funk, Paul and Nancy Lapp and Carter argued that the site was very sparsely, in fact, insignificantly inhabited in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods<sup>13</sup>. Funk noted that the “interpretation of the Persian-Hellenistic remains at Beth-zur is dependent in large measure on the extant literary references...”<sup>14</sup>, meaning that it was written according to one’s understanding of the text rather than the archaeological data. Based on a single locus (!), Stern adhered to the notion of significant activity at the site in

<sup>8</sup> Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian Period”.

<sup>9</sup> D. USSISHKIN, “The Borders and *De Facto* Size of Jerusalem in the Persian Period”, in O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake 2006) 147-166.

<sup>10</sup> For example C.C. TORREY, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago 1910) 225; H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Waco 1985) 200; J. BLENKINSOPP, *Ezra/Nehemiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia 1988) 231.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, C.C. TORREY, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah* (Giessen 1896) 37-38; idem, *Ezra Studies*, p. 249; S. MOWINCKEL, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia* (Oslo 1964) 109-116.

<sup>12</sup> Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian Period”. D. BÖHLER, *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras A und Esra-Nehemia. Zwei Konzeptionen der Wiederherstellung Israels* (Fribourg 1997) 382-397 explicitly put the rebuilding of Jerusalem story in Nehemiah on Hasmonaean background.

<sup>13</sup> R.W. FUNK, “Beth-zur”, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land I* (Jerusalem 1993) 261; P. LAPP and N. LAPP, “Iron II—Hellenistic Pottery Groups”, in O.R. Sellers a.o. (eds.), *The 1957 Excavation at Beth-zur (AASOR 38)* (Cambridge 1968) 70; P. LAPP, “The Excavation of Field II”, *ibid*: 29; Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> R.W. FUNK, “The History of Beth-zur with Reference to its Defenses”, in O.R. Sellers a.o. (eds.), *The 1957 Excavation at Beth-zur* p. 9.



the Persian period<sup>15</sup>. Reich argued in the same vein according to an architectural analysis<sup>16</sup>. The published material from the excavations<sup>17</sup> includes only a limited number of finds – sherds, vessels and coins – that can safely be dated to the Persian period<sup>18</sup>, while most forms typical of the Persian-period repertoire are missing altogether. Hence, though archaeology may have revealed traces of some Persian-period activity at the site, it is clear that it was an important place only in the late Iron II and more so in the late Hellenistic period.

3. Gibeon, which is also mentioned in this chapter (Neh. 3: 7), did not yield unambiguous Persian-period finds either. Without delving into the debate over the dating of the Gibeon winery and inscriptions – late monarchic or 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup> – the *mwsh* seal impressions and wedge-shaped and reed-impressed sherds found at the site attest to a certain activity in the Babylonian or Babylonian/early Persian period<sup>20</sup>. Yet, typical Persian-period pottery and Yehud seal impressions were not found<sup>21</sup>. Late Hellenistic pottery and coins are attested. According to Pritchard, there is “only scant evidence of occupation from the end of the 6th century until the beginning of the 1st century BC” at Gibeon<sup>22</sup>. Still, in an attempt to provide evidence for the Gibeon of Nehemiah 3: 7 he argued that “scattered and sporadic settlements” did exist there during the Persian and Hellenistic periods<sup>23</sup>. Stern rightly interpreted the Gibeon finds as evidence for only 6<sup>th</sup> century and possibly early Persian-period activity at the site<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> E. STERN, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible Vol. II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732-332 B.C.E.)* (New York 2001) 437-438; see also idem, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible*, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> R. REICH, “The Beth-zur Citadel II – A Persian Residency?”, *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992) 113-123.

<sup>17</sup> O.R. SELLERS, *The Citadel of Beth-Zur* (Philadelphia 1933); O.R. Sellers, a.o. (eds.), *The 1957 Excavation at Beth-zur*.

<sup>18</sup> Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, p. 437.

<sup>19</sup> Summaries in Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible*, pp. 32-33; idem, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, p. 433; LIPSCHITS, “The History of the Benjaminte Region under Babylonian Rule”, *Zion* 64 (1999) 287-291 (Hebrew).

<sup>20</sup> J.B. PRITCHARD, *Winery, Defenses and Soundings at Gibeon* (Philadelphia 1964) Figs. 32: 7, 48: 17.

<sup>21</sup> For the latter see Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, p. 180.

<sup>22</sup> J.B. PRITCHARD, “Gibeon”, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* 2 (Jerusalem 1993) 513.

<sup>23</sup> J.B. PRITCHARD, *Gibeon, Where the Sun Stood Still, The Discovery of the Biblical City* (Princeton 1962) 163.

<sup>24</sup> Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible*, pp. 32-33; idem, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, p. 433; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, pp. 243-245 – 6<sup>th</sup> century.



4. Last but not least, the distribution of the Persian period Yehud seal impressions<sup>25</sup> does not fit the territory described in Nehemiah 3<sup>26</sup>. In the highlands, these seal impressions are concentrated in Jerusalem and its surroundings, including Ramat Rahel, with only a few (six items) found in the highlands to the north of Jerusalem. No seal impression of this type was found south of Ramat Rahel. In the east, seal impressions of these types were found at Jericho and En-Gedi (six items) – a sound reason for the inclusion of this area within the borders of Yehud. In the west they were found at Gezer and Tel Harasim in the western Shephelah (four items altogether) – places clearly outside the borders of Yehud until the expansion of the Hasmonean state in the days of Jonathan and Simeon (below); none was found in the many sites of the upper Shephelah.

Considering the problem of dating the reality behind Nehemiah 3, and with no extra-biblical textual data for the Persian period, one can (should?) try to reconstruct the borders of Yehud *only* according to the distribution of the seal impressions and the fragmentary textual data from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC (below)<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, Yehud seems to have included mainly the area of Jerusalem, between Ramat Rahel and the City of David. It could have extended a bit further to the south, but Beth-zur seems to have been outside of Yehud<sup>28</sup>. In the north, the dearth of seal impressions from the area of Mizpah and Nebi Samuel (six items, which make 5.5% of the total of this type, compared to 32 items, which make 11% of the later Types 13-14 in the work of Vanderhooft and Lipschits<sup>29</sup>) raises the question whether this area was included in Yehud. The List of Returnees, which mentions places in this area, should probably be dated to the Hellenistic period<sup>30</sup>. In the east,

<sup>25</sup> Groups 1-12 in Vanderhooft and Lipschits, "A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions".

<sup>26</sup> Throughout this article, when describing the distribution of the different types of the Yehud seal impressions, I refer to the main concentrations. A single seal impression means nothing, as demonstrated by the impressions found in Babylon and Kadesh-barnea; for the latter see Vanderhooft and Lipschits, *ibid.*, pp. 21 and 27 respectively.

<sup>27</sup> The genealogies of Judah and Benjamin in 1 Chronicles cannot help reconstructing the "territoriality" (replacing "territory" – a post-modern fad) of Yehud (J.W. Wright, "Remapping Yehud: The Borders of Yehud and the Genealogies of Chronicles", in O. Lipschits and M. Oeming [eds.], *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* [Winona Lake 2006] 67-89), because they may represent post-Persian-period realities.

<sup>28</sup> Contra Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>29</sup> Vanderhooft and Lipschits, "A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions".

<sup>30</sup> Finkelstein, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees".



there was a possible extension to Jericho and En-Gedi. As for the west, in the time of the Zenon Papyri of the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, Mareshah and Adoraim belonged to Idumea. The area of Lod and Gezer (which were Israelite rather than Judahite towns in the Iron II), and Ekron in the western Shephelah were annexed to Judea only in the days of Jonathan and Simeon, in the 140s BC. I therefore tend to agree with Carter that Persian-period Yehud did not extend to the Shephelah<sup>31</sup>.

Yehud was “ruled” from a small Temple village in Jerusalem, which had a limited population of a few hundred people<sup>32</sup>. Still, its status as the capital of the province is clear from its mention in the Bagohi papyrus from Elephantine and seemingly also from the high level of silver in the Yehud coins, which seems to be related to their role in the Temple economy<sup>33</sup>.

Based on interpretation of the literary sources, the population of Persian-period Yehud had been estimated to have numbered up to 150,000 souls<sup>34</sup>. More reasonable, archaeologically-based studies, have estimated the population of the province to have been between 20,000 and 30,000 people<sup>35</sup>. Yet, the latter numbers, too, seem to be somewhat inflated:

1. The density coefficient of 250 inhabitants per one built-up hectare used by Carter and Lipschits is too high for the sparsely settled highlands villages of the Persian period. A coefficient of 200 inhabitants per one built-up hectare seems to be the maximal possible figure<sup>36</sup>.

2. The population of Jerusalem was less than half of the 1250-1500 advocated by Carter and 1,500 or even 3,000 estimated by Lipschits<sup>37</sup>. It numbered no more than a few hundred people<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 91-98.

<sup>32</sup> Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian Period”.

<sup>33</sup> Y. RONEN, “Some Observations on the Coinage of Yehud”, *Israel Numismatic Journal* 15 (2003-2006) 29-30; O. TAL, “Coin Denominations and Weight Standards in Fourth Century BCE Southern Palestine”, *Israel Numismatic Research* (in press).

<sup>34</sup> J. WEINBERG, *The Citizen-Temple Community* (Sheffield 1992) 132.

<sup>35</sup> Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 195-205; O. LIPSCHITS, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.”, in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the New-Babylonian Period*, (Winona Lake 2003) 364 respectively.

<sup>36</sup> I. FINKELSTEIN, “Ethno-Historical Background: Land Use and Demography in Recent Generations”, in I. Finkelstein, Z. Lederman and S. Bunimovitz, *Highlands of Many Cultures, the Southern Samaria Survey* (Tel Aviv 1997) 121-124.

<sup>37</sup> Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, p. 288; O. LIPSCHITS, “Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E.”, in O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake 2006) 32. For the higher number see O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, p. 271.

<sup>38</sup> Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian Period”.

3. Carter and Lipschits included in their calculations areas north of Mizpah and south of Beth-zur, and Lipschits added parts of the Shephelah.

I have now checked this issue afresh. My estimate is based on the archaeological data assembled by Lipschits<sup>39</sup>, yet limiting it to the area described above: from south of Ramat Rahel to Mizpah and from the Dead Sea to the border between the highlands and the Shephelah. I divided the sites according to categories<sup>40</sup>:

Small sites – between 0.1 and 0.3 hectare, with an average of 0.2 hectare;  
medium sites – between 0.4 and 1 hectare, with an average of 0.7 hectare;  
and large sites – between 1.1 and 3 hectares, with an average of 2 hectares.

**Table 1:** Number of sites and total built-up area in Persian-period Yehud

	Small sites	Medium sites	Large sites
North of Jerusalem	25	10	4
Area of Jerusalem	17	9	2
Judah south of Jerusalem	30	13	5
Jordan Valley	2	-	1
<i>Total</i>	<b>74</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Total built-up area in hectares</i>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>24</b>

The results in Table 1 add to a total built-up area of ca. 61 hectares. Deploying a density coefficient of 200 inhabitants per one built-up hectare, the estimate for the entire province of Yehud in the Persian period, including Jerusalem, would be ca. 12,000 people (about half of the numbers proposed by Carter and Lipschits)<sup>41</sup> – comparable to the estimate of the population of Jerusalem alone in the late Iron II and the late Hellenistic period. This comes to about 10% of the population of the entire kingdom of Judah (including the densely-populated Shephelah) in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC and ca. 15% of the population of the highlands parts of late 8<sup>th</sup> century Judah<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> O. LIPSCHITS, *The 'Yehud' Province under Babylonian Rule (586-539 B.C.E.): Historic Reality and Historiographic Conceptions* (Ph.D. thesis, Tel Aviv 1997) 226-318 (Hebrew).

<sup>40</sup> For an explanation of this method see I. FINKELSTEIN, "Methods of the Field Survey and Data Recording", in I. Finkelstein, Z. Lederman and S. Bunimovitz, *Highlands of Many Cultures, the Southern Samaria Survey* (Tel Aviv 1997) 20-22.

<sup>41</sup> Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 195-205; Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah", p. 364.

<sup>42</sup> M. BROSHI and I. FINKELSTEIN, "The Population of Palestine in Iron Age II", *BASOR* 287 (1992) 47-60.





These demographic estimates – for both Judah in general (above) and Jerusalem<sup>43</sup> have far-reaching implications on the historical research of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. They work against scholars who tend to belittle the scope of the catastrophe which befell Judah in 586 BC<sup>44</sup>, and at the same time contradict the notion of massive waves of returnees to Yehud<sup>45</sup>; they seem to lessen the importance of the local population of Yehud (relative to the deportees in Babylonia) in the production of Exilic and post-Exilic biblical texts and in shaping the nature of early post-exilic Judaism<sup>46</sup>; and they challenge the notion<sup>47</sup> that much of the historical material in the Bible was written in Persian period Yehud<sup>48</sup>.

#### THE EARLY HELLENISTIC PERIOD (UNTIL THE 160s BC)

Direct textual information for the Ptolemaic period is meager: the Zenon Papyri reveal that Mareshah in the Shephelah and Adoraim southwest of Hebron belonged to Idumea.

Turning to archaeology, the main concentrations of the Yehud seal impressions of Types 13-15, which seem to belong to the late-4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries<sup>49</sup>, are found in Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel, Jericho and En-Gedi, Mizpah and Nebi Samuel. Their distribution north of Jerusalem is especially noteworthy; in this area Impressions 13-14 grow from ca. 5.5% of the total in the early group (Types 1-12, of the Persian period), to 11% in the period under discussion. This may indicate an expansion of the province, or at least of the Jewish population, to the north, to include the highlands around Mizpah<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Finkelstein, "Jerusalem in the Persian Period".

<sup>44</sup> For instance, H.M. BARSTAD, *The Myth of the Empty Land* (Oslo 1996); idem, "After the 'Myth of the Empty Land': Major Challenges in the Study of Neo-Babylonian Judah", in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake 2003) 3-20; T. RÖMER, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History* (London 2005) 110; for different views on this theme see L.L. GRABBE, *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology*, (Sheffield 1998); for overviews see R. ALBERTZ, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Atlanta 2003); Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*.

<sup>45</sup> See also Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah", p. 365.

<sup>46</sup> Contra, e.g., Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*.

<sup>47</sup> For example, P. DAVIES, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield 1992).

<sup>48</sup> See also Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*; idem, "Jerusalem, the Late Judean Monarchy".

<sup>49</sup> Vanderhooft and Lipschits "A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions".

<sup>50</sup> For the theory that this happened following the Samaritan revolt against Alexander the Great see M. STERN, *The Documents on the History of the Hasmonaean Revolt* (Tel Aviv 1965) 110 (Hebrew); A. KASHER, "Some Suggestions and Comments Concerning Alexander Macedon's Campaign in Palestine", *Beit Miqra* 20 (1975) 187-208





The borders of Judea in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century can be drawn according to several sources: the location of the battles between Judas Maccabeus and the Seleucids, the location of the fortresses built by Bacchides after the death of Judas, and other clues in 1 Maccabees (for the distribution of the *yrslm* and later types of Yehud seal impressions see below).

The importance of the area to the north and northwest of Jerusalem as commanding the main approach to the city, and possibly as the frontier of expansion of Judea, is indicated by the fact that five of the eight battles of Judas Maccabeus took place here, three of them (Beth-horon, Adasa and Kafar Salama) along the Beth-horon-Gibeon road. It is reasonable to assume that Judas Maccabeus encountered the Seleucid forces on the borders of Judea or close to them. The two battles in the south – at Beth-zur and Beth Zacharia (slightly to the north of Beth-zur) should probably indicate the southern boundary of Judea. 1 Maccabees seems to point out that Beth-zur switched hands more than once during the wars<sup>51</sup>, which means that it was located on the southern borders of Judea.

Locating the places fortified by Bacchides “in Judea” (1 Macc. 9: 50-52) is also essential for drawing its borders in the 160s BC. The sites mentioned in the list are: Jericho, Emmaus, Beth-horon, Bethel, Thamnatha, Pharathon, Tephon, Beth-zur, Gazara and the Akra in Jerusalem. The location of most of these sites is self-evident. The difficult places to identify are Thamnatha, Pharathon and Tephon.

Thamnatha and Pharathon were identified by Abel as two different locations<sup>52</sup>: Thamnatha=biblical Timnath-heres (Kh. Tibne in south-western Samaria)<sup>53</sup> and Pharathon=biblical Pirathon = the village of Far<sup>c</sup>ata west of Shechem)<sup>54</sup>. This proposal is difficult to accept as it locates both places outside of Judea even according to a maximalist point of view<sup>55</sup>. I therefore agree with Avi-Yonah and Roll, who identify

(Hebrew); against this idea see, e.g., A. ALT, “Zur Geschichte der Grenze zwischen Judäa und Samaria”, *PJb* (1935) 94-97.

<sup>51</sup> Beth-zur had been fortified by Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc. 4: 61), held by Lysias (1 Macc. 6: 7), fortified by Bacchides (1 Macc. 9: 52) besieged by Simeon (1 Macc. 11: 65) and fortified by him (1 Macc. 14: 33).

<sup>52</sup> F.-M. ABEL, *Les livres des Maccabées* (Paris 1949) 172.

<sup>53</sup> Also Z. KALLAI, *The Northern Boundaries of Judah* (Jerusalem 1960) 96 (Hebrew); I. SHATZMAN, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod from Hellenistic to Roman Frameworks* (Tübingen 1991) 42.

<sup>54</sup> Also, E.A. KNAUF, “Pirathon – Ferata”, *BN* 51 (1990) 19-24.

<sup>55</sup> M. AVI-YONAH, *The Holy Land from the Persian to the Arab Conquests (536 B.C. to A.D. 640) A Historical Geography* (Grand Rapids 1977) 53. For the same reason



Thamnatha with another Timna – probably Kh. Tibna southwest of Jerusalem, on a ridge sloping down into the Elah Valley<sup>56</sup>. The problem with this identification is that an initial survey of the site revealed late Iron II (but not Hellenistic?) sherds<sup>57</sup>.

Safrai and Na'aman located Pharathon in the village of Farkha near Nahal Shiloh<sup>58</sup> and Galil identified it with Kh. el-Fire west of Hebron<sup>59</sup>. These sites are all outside the boundaries of Judea. Avi-Yonah sought Pharathon in Wadi Fara northeast of Jerusalem<sup>60</sup>, but there is no actual site that can be proposed for this identification. Therefore, the location of Pharathon remains a riddle.

Tephon was identified with Tapuah south of Shechem<sup>61</sup>, the southern Tapuah, west of Hebron<sup>62</sup>, Beit Nattif<sup>63</sup>, Tekoa<sup>64</sup>, and Kh. Bad-Faluh north of Tekoa<sup>65</sup>. The first identification should be dismissed, as it puts the fortress far from Judea. Of the Judean places the two latter seem preferable.

Plotting these places (at least those securely identified) on a map one gets a system which surrounds the core area of Judea: Jericho, Bethel and Beth-horon in the north, Gezer and Emmaus in the northwest, Timna near the Elah Valley in the west, and Beth-zur and Tephos/Tekoa in the south.

– keeping the sites “in Judea” – I would argue against I. Roll, “Bacchides’ Fortifications and the Arteries of Traffic to Jerusalem in the Hellenistic Period”, *Eretz-Israel* 25 (1996) 509-514 (Hebrew) and accept the identification of Gazara with Gezer. I find it difficult to agree to the idea that the term “in Judea” is anachronistic – F.-M. ABEL, “Topographie des campagnes Machabéennes”, *Revue biblique* 34 (1925) 202-208; J.A. GOLDSTEIN, *I. Maccabees* (Garden City 1976) 386.

<sup>56</sup> Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, p. 53; Roll, *ibid*.

<sup>57</sup> A. MAZAR, “The Excavations of Khirbet Abu et-Twein and the System of Iron Age Fortresses in Judah”, *Eretz-Israel* 15 (1981) 246 (Hebrew). G. GALIL, “Pirathon, Parathon and Timnatha”, *ZDPV* 109 (1993) 49-53 suggested locating Thamnatha in Kh. et-Tawil. But if one does not look for the preservation of the name any Hellenistic site is possible.

<sup>58</sup> Z. SAFRAI, *Borders and Government in the Land of Israel in the Period of the Mishna and the Talmud* (Tel Aviv 1980) 61-62 (Hebrew); N. NA'AMAN, “Pirathon and Ophrah”, *BN* 50 (1989) 11-16.

<sup>59</sup> Galil, “Pirathon, Parathon and Timnatha”.

<sup>60</sup> Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>61</sup> Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 173.

<sup>62</sup> A. KAHANA, *Hasfarim Hahitziim II* (Tel Aviv 1960) 142, n. 50 (Hebrew).

<sup>63</sup> C. MOELLER, and G. SCHMITT, *Siedlungen Palästinas nach Flavius Josephus* (Wiesbaden 1976) 36-37; Galil, “Pirathon, Parathon and Timnatha”.

<sup>64</sup> Avi Yonah, *The Holy Land*, p. 54 – the name appears as such in one of the MSS of Josephus.

<sup>65</sup> Roll, “Bacchides’ Fortifications”, p. 513.



The Book of Maccabees also tells us that in the west, Adulam was probably in the territory of Judea (2 Macc. 12: 38), while Gezer belonged to Ashdod until it was conquered by Simeon. Ekron and the area of Lod were annexed to Judea only in the time of Jonathan (below).

According to these sources Judea stretches from the area of Beth-zur, or just north of it, to Mizpah and from the Judean desert to the eastern Shephelah. This means that relative to Yehud of the Persian period, Judea of the early Hellenistic period expanded in two directions: in the west to the upper Shephelah and in the north to the area of Mizpah. The population also grew significantly.

In order to estimate the population of Judea at that time, I compared the situation in the Persian period to that in the Hellenistic period in two areas, for which the data are comprehensive and comparable – the highlands to the north and south of Jerusalem<sup>66</sup>. I also included the built-up area of Jerusalem. I used the same method of estimating the size of the sites according to categories (see above) and added a category for very large sites (over 3 built-up hectares) – five altogether. The results are summarized in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Number of sites and total built-up area in the highlands in the Persian and Hellenistic periods

	Persian	Hellenistic
North of Jerusalem		
<i>Sites</i>	39	106
<i>Built-up area (hectares)</i>	20	110
Judah south of Jerusalem		
<i>Sites</i>	48	96
<i>Built-up area (hectares)</i>	25	62
Jerusalem		
<i>Built-up area (hectares)</i>	2.5	60
TOTAL		
<i>Sites</i>	88	203
<i>Built-up area (hectares)</i>	47.5	232

Extrapolating these figures for the entire area (of Yehud), against the 61 built-up hectares in the Persian period, one gets 298 built-up hectares

<sup>66</sup> According to I. FINKELSTEIN and Y. MAGEN, *Archaeological Survey of the Hill Country of Benjamin*, (Jerusalem 1993); A. OPHER, *The Highland of Judah during the Biblical Period* (Ph.D. thesis, Tel Aviv 1993 (Hebrew) respectively.



in the Hellenistic period. To this one should add the Upper Shephelah (not included in the estimate for the Persian period). Dagan reported 254 sites and a total built-up area of 285 hectares for the entire Shephelah in the Hellenistic period<sup>67</sup>. Calculating about a quarter of the latter number – ca. 70 hectares – for the eastern strip of the Shephelah seems reasonable, as sites in the more hilly part of this region are somewhat smaller than those located in the more fertile lower Shephelah. This brings us to ca. 370 hectares for entire area of Judea.

Yet, in the surveys the “Hellenistic period” also covers the late-Hellenistic period (the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC). In order to reach a reasonable number for the 160s BC I took the mean of the growth from the Persian to the late Hellenistic period in the more limited area of Yehud/Judea – 180 hectares – and added 30 hectares for the Shephelah, altogether 210 hectares, which translate into a population estimate of ca. 42,000 people – about 10% (!) of the number proposed by Avi-Yonah and Bar-Kochva<sup>68</sup>.

Using a 10-15% figure for the force that could have been drafted for military service from the entire population in classical times<sup>69</sup> one reaches ca. 5,000 men. To this number one should add Jews from outside Judea who may have joined the forces of Judas Maccabeus, e.g., from the three toparchies to its north – possibly ca. 1,500 men<sup>70</sup>. All in all these numbers show that Judas Maccabeus could have recruited, for short periods of time, a maximum of ca. 6,000-7,000 men to his army. Needless to say, an error of 10% or even 20% will not change these numbers significantly.

<sup>67</sup> Y. DAGAN, “Results of the Survey: Settlement Patterns in the Lachish Region”, in D. Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973-1994)* V (Tel Aviv 2004) 2685.

<sup>68</sup> M. AVI-YONAH, “The Hasmonean Revolt and Judah Maccabee’s War against the Syrians”, in A. Shalit (ed.), *The World History of the Jewish People Vol. 6: The Hellenistic Age* (New Brunswick 1972): 163; B. BAR-KOCHVA, *Judas Maccabeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge 1989) 57. More recently Horsley estimated the population of Judea in the early Hasmonean period at 100-200,000 people: R.A. HORSLEY, “The Expansion of Hasmonean Rule in Idumea and Galilee: Toward a Historical Sociology”, in P.R. Davies and J.M. Halligan (eds.), *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture* (JSOT Supplement Series 340) (Sheffield 2002) 134.

<sup>69</sup> Bar-Kochva, *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>70</sup> My estimate for the population of the highlands areas of the three toparchies (according to my own survey – I. Finkelstein, Z. Lederman and S. Bunimovitz, *Highlands of Many Cultures, the Southern Samaria Survey* [Tel Aviv 1997]) is ca. 15,000. To that one needs to add the population of the toparchy of Lod in the plain – probably a few thousand. Ten-15% of this number makes ca. 3,000, but of course, not all the population in these toparchies was Jewish. I would therefore estimate no more than half of this figure.



This estimate fits most of the numbers given for the Jewish force in 1 and 2 Maccabees<sup>71</sup>. There were 6,000 men at the beginning of the war (2 Macc. 8: 1); a maximum of 10,000 in the battle of Beth-zur (1 Macc. 4: 29); and 3,000 in the battles of Emmaus (1 Macc. 4: 6), Adasa (1 Macc. 7: 40) and Elasa; in the latter a smaller number of 800 took part in the actual fighting (1 Macc. 9: 5-6). At the same time, the figures derived from archaeology challenge numbers given by historians of the period. Based on the mention of 11,000 men in the Jewish expeditions to the Gilead and Galilee (1 Macc. 5:20), and assuming that Judas Maccabeus left a similar number of men to defend Judea, Avi-Yonah estimated the overall Jewish force to number 22,000 men<sup>72</sup>. Bar-Kochva and Shatzman accepted this figure<sup>73</sup>.

#### THE EARLY PHASES OF HASMONEAN EXPANSION

In the 140s, the Hasmonean state started expanding to the north and west. The three toparchies to the north of Judea – Lod, Ephraim (Apheraema) and Ramathaim (1 Macc. 11: 34) and the area of Ekron (1 Macc. 10: 89) were handed over to Judea in the days of Jonathan<sup>74</sup>, who, in addition, seems to have annexed the Jewish Peraea in Transjordan<sup>75</sup>. Gezer and Joppa were then taken by Simeon (1 Macc. 13: 43, 48; 14: 5<sup>76</sup>). The conquest of Joppa was probably the most important at this stage, as it gave Judea an outlet to the sea. Judea now stretched from Beth-zur in the south to Nahal Shiloh in the north; and from the Judean Desert and the Peraea in the east to beyond Ekron and Gezer in the west and to Joppa in the northwest.

The population of the traditional territory of Judea, including the three toparchies, can be estimated at almost 60,000 (see above). To that one should add the western Shephelah (210 built-up hectares in the

<sup>71</sup> See summary table in Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans*, pp. 25-26, disregarding the possibility that the authors played down the Hasmonean force and the Bible-related nature of some of the numbers in 1 and 2 Maccabees (Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabeus*, p. 47; I. Shatzman, "The Hasmonean Army", in D. Amit and H. Eshel (eds.), *The Hasmonean Period* (Jerusalem 1996) 33 (Hebrew).

<sup>72</sup> Avi-Yonah, "The Hasmonean Revolt", p. 167.

<sup>73</sup> Bar-Kochva *Judas Maccabeus*, p. 50; Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans*, p. 27.

<sup>74</sup> For example, Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, pp. 47, 55-57; J.J. SCHWARTZ, *Lod (Lydda), Israel from its Origins through the Byzantine Period, 5600 B.C.E.-640 C.E.* (BAR International Series 571), (Oxford 1991) 50-51.

<sup>75</sup> Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup> Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, pp. 58-59.



Hellenistic period according to Dagan<sup>77</sup>, about half of this figure – ca. 100 hectares – for the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), the area of Joppa and the Peraea, which may bring the total number of people in Judea in the days of Simeon to over 100,000. It is clear, therefore, that in a short period of time in the 140s Judea expanded dramatically both in territory and in population. The population ruled from Jerusalem was similar now to that of the kingdom of Judah in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This figure (and the outlet to the sea) demonstrates the economic and military opportunities that opened to the Hasmoneans in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, opportunities which were exploited to continue the territorial expansion of the Hasmonean state.

It is difficult to establish whether the later types of Yehud seal impressions<sup>78</sup> belong to this phase in the history of Judea (140s) or to the end of the earlier phase – the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, until the 160s BC). The following arguments should be taken into consideration:

1. There is no question that the Paleo-Hebrew Yehud seal impressions and the *yrslm* seal impressions date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, first and foremost because of their distribution in the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, which was not inhabited between the early 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC<sup>79</sup>. But their relatively modest number there, compared to their number in the City of David<sup>80</sup> seems to indicate that they went out of use in the early days of the southwestern quarter; otherwise their number in the southwestern hill would be expected to be much higher.

2. No seal impression of these types was found at Bethel in the north and Beth-zur in the south. The same holds true for Lod and the entire area of the three toparchies and for Joppe. Only one *yrslm* seal impression is known from the Shephelah (found at Azekah).

It seems, then, that Types 16 and 17 and the *yrslm* seal impressions date to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, before the great expansion of

<sup>77</sup> Dagan, “Results of the Survey”, p. 2685.

<sup>78</sup> Types 16 and 17 in Vanderhooft and Lipschits “A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions”.

<sup>79</sup> R. REICH, “Local Seal Impressions of the Hellenistic Period”, in H. Geva, *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem II* (Jerusalem 2003) 256-262.

<sup>80</sup> Twenty-seven in the southwestern hill compared to 59 in the City of David for Types 16 and 17 – Vanderhooft and Lipschits “A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions”; 10 to 22 respectively for the *yrslm* seal impressions – Reich “Local Seal Impressions of the Hellenistic Period” and D.T. ARIEL, and Y. SHOHAM, “Locally Stamped Handles and Associated Body Fragments of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods”, in D.T. Ariel (ed.), *Excavations at the City of David 1978-1985 Vol. VI: Inscriptions (Qedem 41)* (Jerusalem 2000) 137-171 respectively.



Judea. Their relatively strong appearance at Gezer (five Yehud items and two *yrslm* impressions), which was annexed to Judea in the days of Simeon, may be explained as evidence for its strong commercial links to Judea.

#### BACK TO NEHEMIAH 3 AND THE LIST OF RETURNEES

In two previous articles I dealt with two geographical lists in the Bible, traditionally interpreted as reflecting Persian-period realities – the list of the builders of the Jerusalem city-wall in Nehemiah 3 and the List of Returnees in Ezra 2: 1-67 and Nehemiah 7: 6-68. Based on the archaeological finds from Jerusalem and from well-identified sites which appear in the List of Returnees, I raised the possibility that both reflect Hellenistic, more specifically Hasmonean, realities<sup>81</sup>.

The list of returnees includes places in the highlands to the north of Jerusalem, as far north as Bethel, plus the Lod, Hadid and Ono niche in the northwest. The appearance of the latter sites is another reason, apart from archaeology, to date the list to the Hasmonean period. If this is the case, the list should be dated to the period immediately after the annexation of the three toparchies to Judea in 145<sup>82</sup>.

Nehemiah 3 is a more complicated case. It mentions the districts of Jerusalem and Beth-haccherem (most probably Ramat Rahel<sup>83</sup>), Mizpah in the north, Beth-zur in the south and Keilah in the upper Shephelah, in the southwest. If it indeed reflects realities of the Hellenistic period, it may be meaningful that the list does not mention a district in the Gezer/Lod area, which implies that it predates the annexation of these cities to Judea in the 140s BC. The fact that the list does not mention a district of Jericho may correspond to the distribution of the Yehud seal impressions: Jericho and En-Gedi produced a significant number of impression of the Persian period (altogether six impressions of Types 2, 4, 6 and 10 in the work of Vanderhooft and Lipschits) and of Types 13-15 which probably date to the early Hellenistic period (23 items alto-

<sup>81</sup> Finkelstein, "Jerusalem in the Persian Period"; idem, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees".

<sup>82</sup> From the text point of view see J.L. WRIGHT, "A New Model for the Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah", in O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers and R. Albertz (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake 2007) 347. Wright argues that the list "appears to respond to apocalyptic notions that most likely do not predate the Hellenistic period".

<sup>83</sup> Y. AHARONI, *The Land of the Bible, A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia 1979) 418.





gether)<sup>84</sup>. Yet, the two sites did not yield even a single Paleo-Hebrew seal impression of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century – Types 16-17 of the Yehud impressions and *yrslm* seal impressions<sup>85</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION

The geographical material in the Book of Nehemiah traditionally used to delineate the borders of Yehud seems to date to the Hellenistic period. With no textual evidence, the boundaries of Yehud can be reconstructed only according to the distribution of the Yehud seal impressions. It seems that Yehud stretched around Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel, with a possible extension further north and to Jericho and En-Gedi in the east. It did not include territory in the Shephelah. The population of Yehud can be estimated at ca. 12,000 people – even smaller than the limited numbers which have recently been proposed.

Judea of the early Hellenistic period, including the early days of the Hasmoneans, was still limited in territory, though somewhat larger than Persian-period Yehud. It extended from Beth-zur in the south to the area of Mizpah in the north, and probably included some territory in the upper, eastern Shephelah. Its population grew dramatically – it is estimated to have numbered ca. 40,000 people. This estimate validates the figures given to the forces of Judas Maccabeus in 1 Maccabees, but is significantly smaller than past estimates for both the population of Judea and the over-all force of the Hasmoneans in the 160s BC.

All this changed in the 140s, with the sudden expansion of Judea to the north, east, west and northwest. Its population almost doubled in a few years, reached a number close to that of Judah in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and gave it the strength needed for further conquests and economic growth in late-Hasmonean days.

<sup>84</sup> Vanderhooff and Lipschits, “A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions”.

<sup>85</sup> A certain problem is the mention of Beth-zur in the list. Beth-zur did not produce any Yehud seal impressions. In order to date the background of Nehemiah 3 just before the expansion of Judea in the 140s, one needs to argue that this is a coincidence.