Zeitschrift

des

Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

A Private Stamped Seal Handle from
Ṭell Bornāṭ/Tẹ̄l Burnā, Israel

By Itzhaq Shai, Amit Dagan, Simone Riehl, Andrea Orendi,
Joe Uziel and Matthew Suriano [*]

Introduction

Recent excavations of a large Iron Age II silo at the site of *Ṭell Bornāṭ/Tẹ̄l Burnā* yielded many finds from the 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E., the most interesting of which is an impressed jar-handle belonging to the class of 8th cent. B.C.E. private stamp seals. The sequence of names on the *Ṭell Bornāṭ/Tẹ̄l Burnā* seal – ʿzr followed by ḥgy – appears in two other seal impressions from Iron Age sites in the Shephelah, which makes this discovery significant for multiple reasons. The *Ṭell Bornāṭ/Tẹ̄l Burnā* seal is distinct from the others, yet if they belong to the same person, they raise questions regarding the use of multiple stamps by a single individual. Furthermore the existence of multiple seals draws to the forefront issues that involve their historical background along with the identity of their owner. Finally, the seal impression was discovered within a controlled excavation (despite its complicated stratigraphy). The 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. finds from the silo likely indicate that this feature went out of use consequent to the 7th cent. B.C.E., and was backfilled at that time. For this reason, it is important to carefully analyze the inscribed seal-impression against the background of 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. epigraphic remains, taking into consideration the growing corpus of private seal-impressions and related *lmlk* seals. Despite the mixed finds, the circumstance of this discovery in a controlled excavation (again, in spite of the complicated stratigraphy) allows for further in-depth analysis of the silo in which the jar-handle was discovered. This paper will first present the archaeological context in which the seal was found, followed by a discussion of the seal and the official to whom it belonged, reflecting on his position in the administrative setup of the Judean Shephelah in the late Iron Age.

The Site

Ṭell Bornāṭ/Tẹ̄l Burnā is located in the Judean Shephelah, in the heart of one of Israel's most intensively researched regions, along the northern banks of *Wādī el-Museijid/Naḥal Gūvrīn* (Fig. 1). Sites in its immediate vicinity include *Tell ed-Duwēr*/Lachish, *Tell Sandaḥanne/* Maresha, *Tell el-Ǧudēde/Tẹ̄l Godēd*, *Ḫirbet Zētā/Tẹ̄l Zayit*, with *Tell eṣ-Ṣāfī/*Gath and *Tell Zakarīye*/Azekah not too far off. A wide range of evidence, including Egyptian, Assyrian and
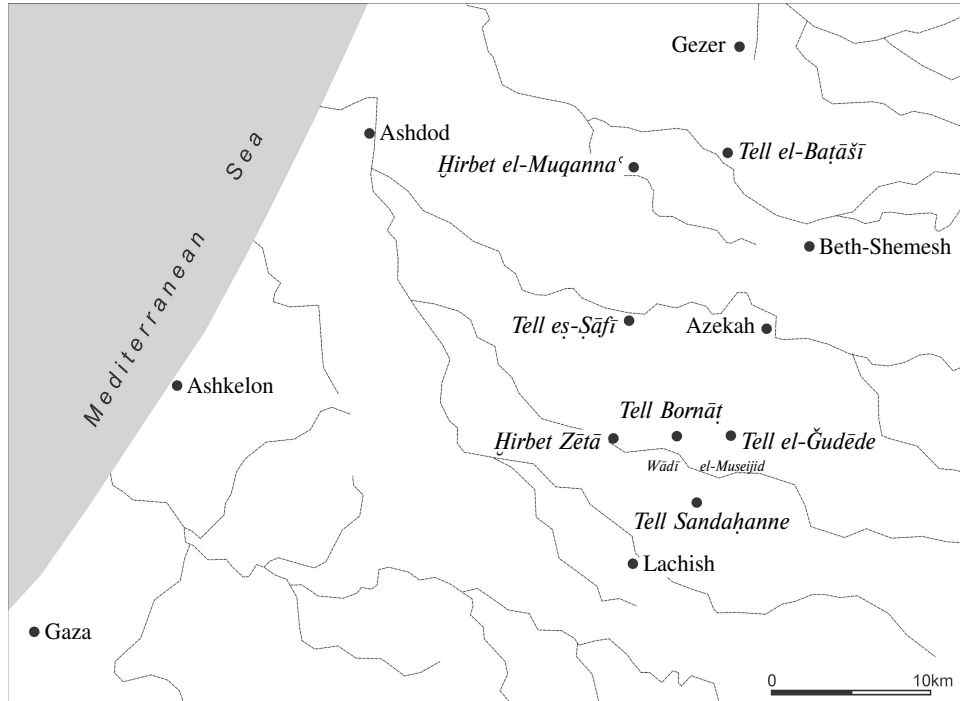
Fig. 1. Map showing the location of the site.

Babylonian texts, biblical passages, epigraphic and material cultural finds, attests to the importance of this region as a borderland in antiquity, particularly in the Iron Age, when Judeans and Philistines settled on opposite sides of the border. According to the high-resolution survey conducted at the site[1], it seems that the settlement on the mound was established in the Early Bronze Age II, and settled intensively in the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. The excavations on the summit have thus far revealed strata dating to the 9th, 8th, and 7th cent. B.C.E.[2], in addition to a Late Bronze Age stratum located on the plateau just west of the summit.

Archaeological Context

Three archaeological strata dating to the Iron Age II were defined on the summit of the tell, dating to the Iron Age IIA, IIB and IIC. These were overlaid by a poorly preserved Persian Period layer, which contained some reused Iron Age architecture. The Iron Age remains on the tell include a massive fortification system dating to the 9th and 8th cent. B.C.E.[3], as well as

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[1] Uziel / Shai 2010.

[2] Shai / Cassuto / Dagan / Uziel 2012.

[3] Shai / Cassuto / Dagan / Uziel 2012.

portions of other structures from this period. Pottery found on the 8th cent. B.C.E. floors includes wheel burnished pottery, Judean folded-rim bowls and *lmlk*-type jars. The Iron Age IIC remains uncovered at *Tell Bornāṭ / Tēl Burnā* consist of a series of silos and related architectural elements (Fig. 2). Six such silos, all lined with stone, cut into the earlier remains, and are spread over the summit. The silos yielded archaeobotanical remains recovered through flotation of the sediments. One particular silo, however, is structurally and chronologically distinct from the others. No architectural elements were uncovered relating to it. The silo is built of medium-sized field stones, with a diameter of almost 2.5 m and a depth of 1.25 m. Interestingly this silo was very rich in finds, including pottery vessels (such as a whole decanter and several other restorable vessels) alongside botanical remains (see below) and small finds. The assemblage includes pottery types that are well attested in the late 8th cent. B.C.E. side by side with forms that are typical of the 7th cent. B.C.E. (see in detail below). This is due to the nature of the sediment in the silo, which seems to have back-filled after it ceased to be in use at the end of the Iron Age, or even later during the building activity of the Persian Period. Therefore, the finds under discussion are of much interest, but their association with the specific seal in question is not confirmed. As a consequence, the dating of the seal as well as the other finds from the silo is based on typological reasoning, and not stratigraphical context. In total three stamped jar-handles were found in Silo 32101: one of the *lmlk* type, one of the *Rossette* type, and the private or official seal mentioned above (Taf. 13–14).

The Pottery Assemblage

The ceramic repertoire includes finds that can be described as typical of the 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E., with a wide range of types, including bowls, mortaria, cooking pots, storage jars, holemouths, jugs and juglets. Examination of the nature of the findings shows that most vessels have features that can be related to Judean sites, and some have coastal properties. Many of the types are typical of the entire chronological span, while others are more typical of a specific part of the period.

Among the late 8th cent. B.C.E. vessels one can note: the Judean folded rim bowl (Fig. 3:1–5)[4], which continues to appear in the 7th cent. B.C.E.[5]; a Jug with a long narrow ridged neck (Fig. 3:7)[6]; a black juglet (Fig. 3:8)[7]; and a *lmlk*-type storage jar (Fig. 3:10)[8].

Several vessels from the silo are typical to the 7th cent. B.C.E., including a carinated bowl with a shelf-rim ("Assyrian Like", Fig. 4:2)[9]; mortaria (Fig. 4:3–5)[10]; a decanter (Fig. 4:10–11)[11]; a coastal juglet (Fig. 4:12)[12]; and a lamp with a raised base (Fig. 4:13)[13].

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[4] For parallels see for example: MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, 39–40; ZIMHONI 2004, 1793–1794.

[5] *E. g.*, ZIMHONI 2004, fig 26.3:16–21.

[6] See ZIMHONI 2004, fig. 26.39:3.

[7] *E. g.*, MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, 127.

[8] *E. g.*, MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, pl. 16:4. For recent debate on the dating of stamped handles found on such jars, see LIPSCHITS / SERGI / KOCH 2010; USSISHKIN 2011.

[9] See STAGER / MASTER / SCHLOEN 2011, fig 5.14–5.16. For an in-depth discussion on the distribution and origin of such bowl see: GILBOA 1996; NAʾAMAN / THAREANI-SUSSELY 2006; SINGER-AVITZ 2007.

[10] MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, pl. 32:7. For a detailed discussion on this type and its origin, see: ZUKERMAN / BEN-SHLOMO 2011.

[11] MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, pl. 37:1; ZIMHONI 2004, fig. 26.51:2.

[12] MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, pl. 50:7.

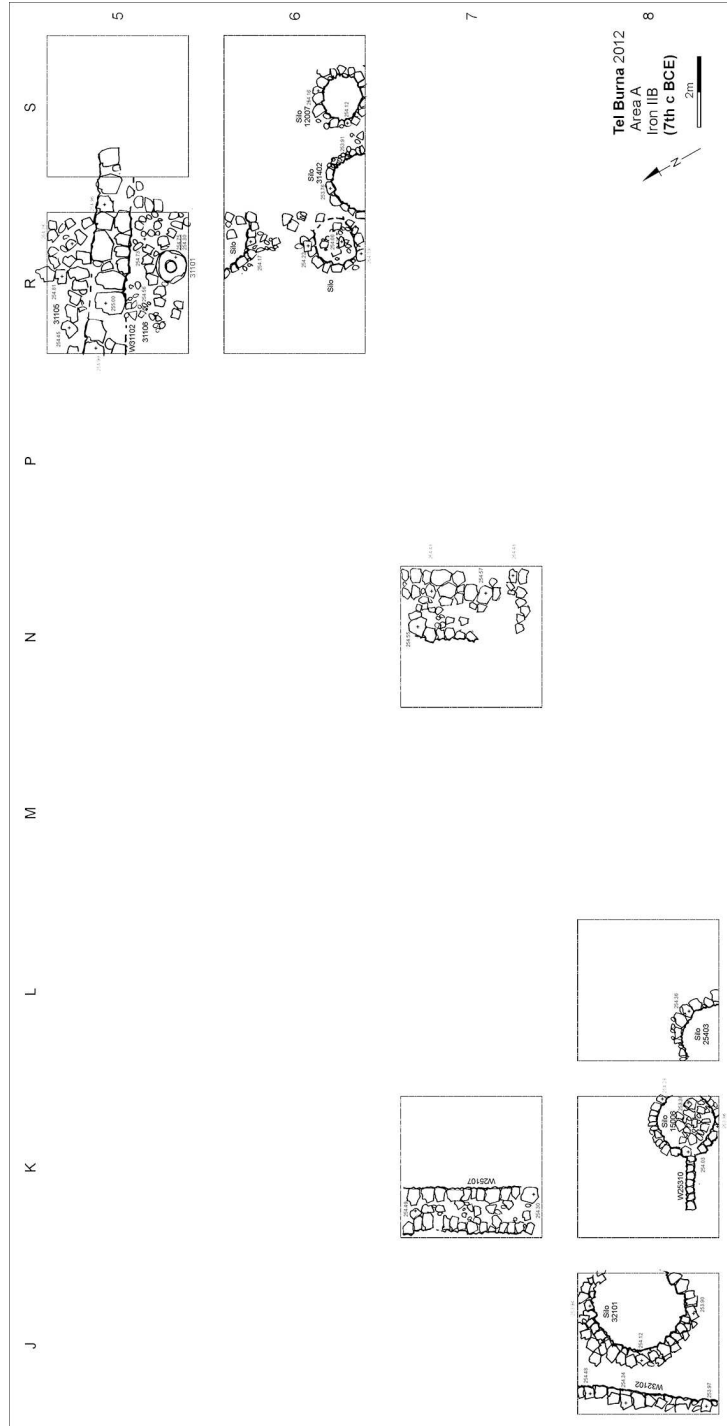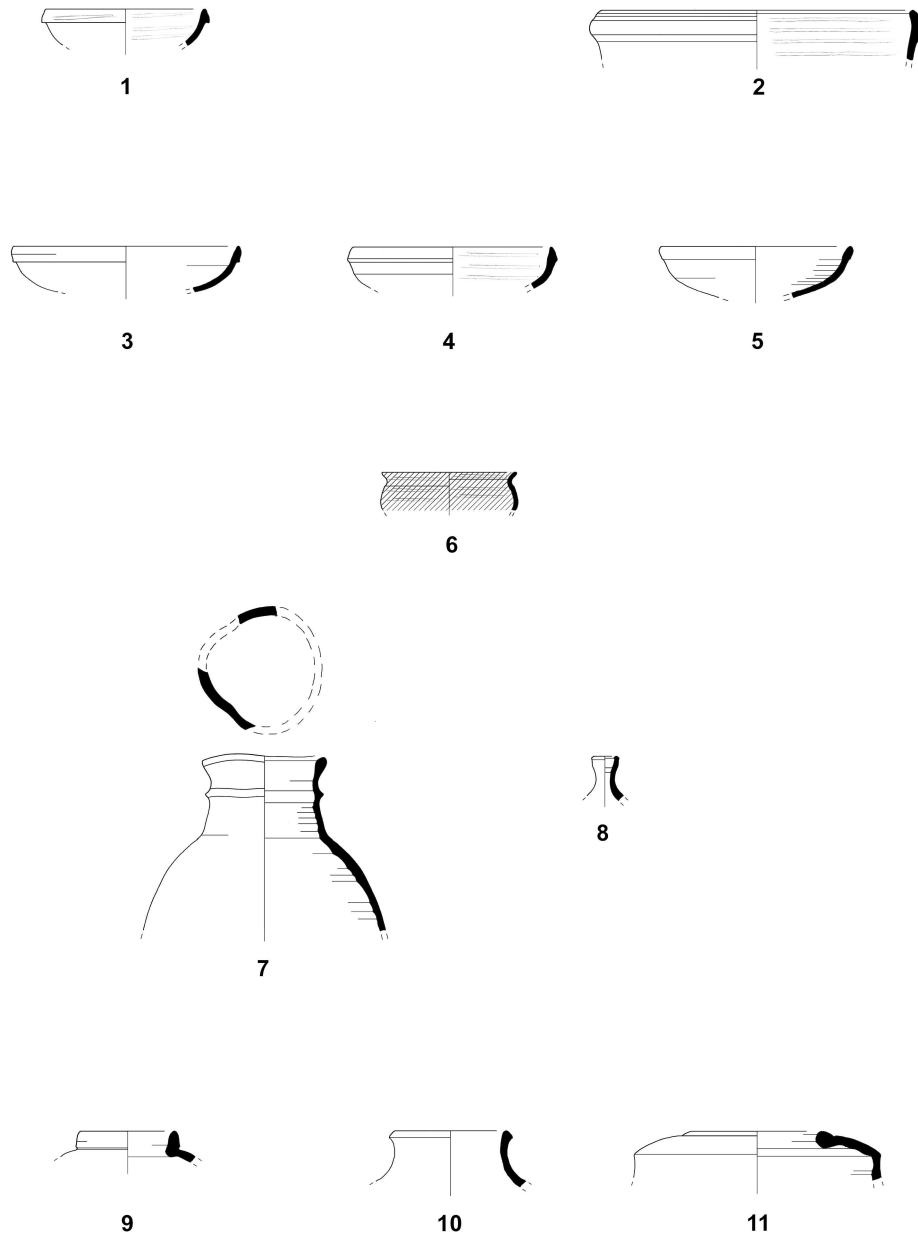[13] MAZAR / PANITZ-COHEN 2001, pl. 50:13–14; ZIMHONI 2004, fig. 26.54:17.

Fig. 2. Plan of the 7th cent. B.C.E. architecture remains.

Fig. 3.   Selected 8th cent. B.C.E. pottery from the silo.
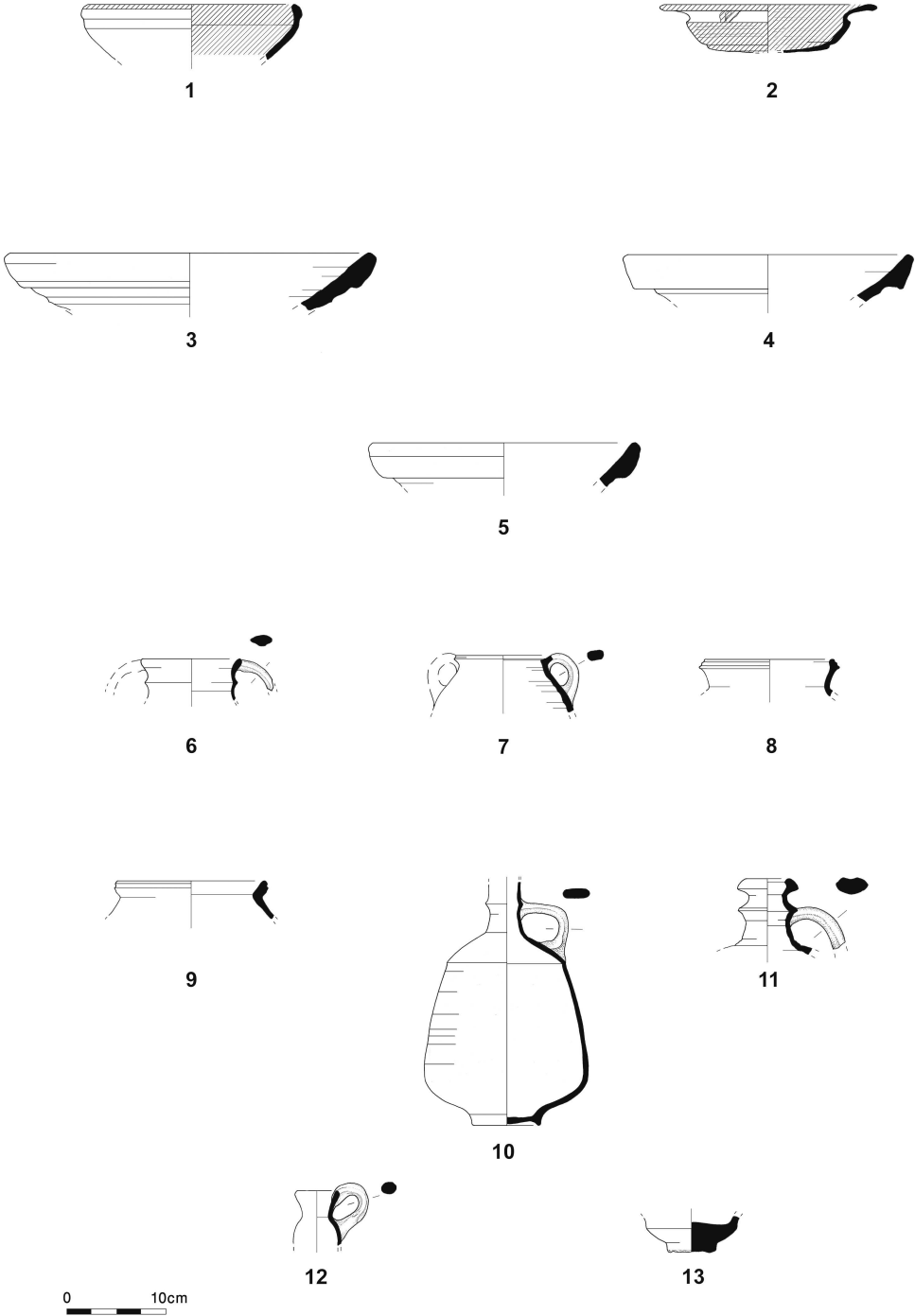
Fig. 4.   Selected 7th cent. B.C.E. pottery from the silo.

All in all, the pottery assemblage, comprised of both 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. types, indicates the stage of back-filling, with the latest pottery providing the date for the end of its use. The almost complete lack of whole and restorable vessels (save the decanter) supports the idea that these artifacts were re-deposited and not in their original context. It is possible that the decanter, which was found close to the base of the silo, is the only find in its original context – or possibly re-deposited very soon after it went out of use. If this is the case, the chronological assignment of the decanter to the 7th cent. B.C.E. helps date the silo to this period. Both the 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. finds closely parallel the assemblages from nearby Judean sites, such as *Tell ed-Duwēr*/Lachish, Levels III and II and *Tell el-Baṭāšī/Tēl Bāṭāš*, Stratum III and II.

The Botanical Remains in Silo 32101

Four samples of thirty liters each were floated and subsequently analyzed for archaeobotanical remains (see Table 1). With 16 different crop taxa and 32 wild plant taxa the assemblages are very rich and similar to each other in taxa composition. Fig seeds (*Ficus carica*) occur in the highest quantities, although the abundance of seeds within one fruit should be considered when comparing to other crop taxa. The second most abundant crop is barley (*Hordeum*

			BP 36	BP 20	BP 35	BP 21	BP 32
		Bucket no.	321 041	321 026	321 032	321 017	321 031
		Locus L	321 07	321 05	321 06	321 03	321 06
Crops	Apiaceae	*Coriandrum sativum*		1			
	Fabaceae	cf. *Pisum* sp.				1	
	Fabaceae	Fabaceae	1		1		4
	Fabaceae	*Lathyrus sativus/cicera*			2	1	
	Fabaceae	*Lathyrus/Vicia*		4	4	2	4
	Fabaceae	*Lens* sp.		1	2		
	Fabaceae	*Vicia* cf. *faba*		1			
	Fabaceae	*Vicia ervilia*		2			
	Linaceae	*Linum usitatissimum*	3	15	32	9	4
	Moraceae	*Ficus carica*	14	74	94	3	6
	Oleaceae	*Olea europaea*	4	1	2		2
	Poaceae	Cerealia	4	83	71	5	40
	Poaceae	*Hordeum* sp. (rachis internode)				1	
	Poaceae	*Hordeum vulgare*	1	21	14	7	26
	Poaceae	*Triticum aestivum/durum/ dicoccum*	6	26	9	1	15
	Vitaceae	*Vitis vinifera*	5	3	2	1	6

Table 1. Preliminary archaeobotanical data of some samples from Silo 32101.

			BP 36	BP 20	BP 35	BP 21	BP 32
		Bucket no.	321 041	321 026	321 032	321 017	321 031
		Locus L	321 07	321 05	321 06	321 03	321 06
Wild taxa	Apiaceae	*Apiaceae*	1	4	2		6
	Asteraceae	*Anthemis* sp.			4		2
	Asteraceae	*Asteracea*	1	9	5	2	10
	Asteraceae	*Centaurea* sp.	2				5
	Boraginaceae	*Lithospermum* sp.			1		
	Brassicaceae	*Brassicaceae*			2	4	8
	Brassicaceae	*Camelina* sp.		3			4
	Caryophyllaceae	*Caryophyllaceae*			4	7	2
	Caryophyllaceae	*Caryophyllaceae/Chenopodium* sp. (endosperm)	2	1		3	12
	Caryophyllaceae	cf. *Silene* sp.		1			
	Caryophyllaceae	*Vaccaria pyramidata*	2	17	10	11	18
	Chenopodiaceae	*Chenopodium* sp.		2	1		
	Convolvulaceae	cf. *Cuscuta* sp.	7	11	5	1	1
	Convolvulaceae	*Convolvulaceae*		1			
	Cyperaceae	*Scirpus* sp.		1			
	Euphorbiaceae	cf. *Euphorbia* sp.					2
	Fabaceae	*Astragalus* sp.					1
	Fabaceae	*Coronilla* sp.		1			
	Fabaceae	*Medicago* sp.	3	20	24	2	19
	Fabaceae	*Scorpiurus muricatus*		1		2	
	Geraniaceae	*Geranium* sp.				2	5
	Liliaceae	*Ornithogalum muscari*		11	26	2	5
	Malvaceae	*Malva* sp.	4	9	3		2
	Myrsinaceae	*Anagallis* sp.		2			5
	Poaceae	*Alopecurus* sp.			1		
	Poaceae	*Lolium* sp.	11	45	22	3	27
	Poaceae	*Phalaris* sp.	3	3	5	2	2
	Poaceae	*Poaceae*			2	6	2
	Ranunculaceae	cf. *Adonis* sp.					2
	Ranunculaceae	*Ranunculus arvensis*			5		5
	Rubiaceae	*Rubiaceae*				1	2
	Scrophulariaceae	*Scrophulariaceae*					2

Table 1 continued.

(*vulgare*), followed by linseed (*Linum usitatissimum*) and wheat grains (*Triticum aestivum/ durum/dicoccum*). The latter show characteristics of both free-threshing and emmer wheat

grains, but are most probably representing a tetraploid wheat form. Chaff remains have so far not been discovered and they are, except one rachis internode of barley. This indicates a storage context rather than remains of a refuse pit and suggests that crop-processing did not take place in the direct neighborhood of the silo.

Beside these crop taxa, grape seeds (*Vitis vinifera*), olive stones (*Olea europaea*) and pulse crops (lentil – *Lens culinaris*, grass pea – *Lathyrus sativus*/*cicera*, bitter vetch – *Vicia ervilia*, garden pea – *Pisum sativum* and broad bean – *Vicia faba*) have been found in decreasing numbers. Most of the wild plant taxa belong to the weed category. Most abundant amongst those are darnel (*Lolium*) sp. and soap-wort (*Vaccaria pyramidata*). A number of other species, such as tragant (*Astragalus*) sp. or star-of-Bethlehem/grape hyacinths (*Ornithogalum*/*Muscari*) are characteristic for vegetation degraded through grazing. All in all the botanical remains support the interpretation of this feature as a silo.

The Stamped Handle

The handle under discussion here, is on a common late 8th – early 7th cent. B.C.E. storage jar with two ridges. The jar (Fig. 5, Taf. 14) was stamped before firing with an oval seal on the upper part of the handle. The sealed impression contains two written lines and two parallel lines in between, as well as a frame line. On the upper register, there are 4 letters and 3 on the bottom. The upper letters are very easily read, while in the lower line, the three letters are clearly seen, although an additional sign may be visible on the left. None of the letters are attached to the parallel line or the frame.

The letters of the inscription can be clearly recognized and read as a preposition affixed to a personal name (first line) and patronymic (second line):

1. *lʿzr*   "Belonging to ʿĒzer . . ."
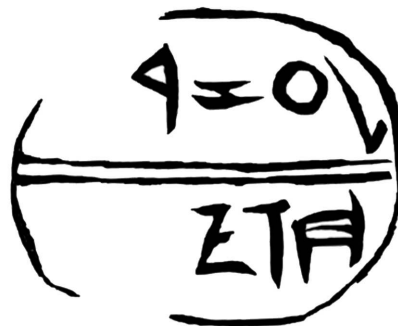2. *ḥgy*   "(son of) Ḥaggī."

Fig. 5. Drawing of the official sealed handle.

This set of names, *ʿĒzer* and *Ḥaggī*, appears on jar handles from two other sites in the Shephelah: *Tell Zakarīye*/Azekah and *Tell el-Ǧazarī*/Gezer[14]. While the first two (from *Tell el-Ǧazarī*/Gezer and *Tell Zakarīye*/Azekah) may be stamped with the same seal[15], the stamped handle from *Tell Bornāṭ*/*Tēl Burnā* is somewhat different[16], as noted in the following:

a. The handle form *Tell Bornāṭ*/*Tēl Burnā* has double line field divider, while the two other examples have a single line divider.
b. The *zayin* in the upper line of the *Tell Bornāṭ*/*Tēl Burnā* example is located in the middle, while in the others it is much higher.
c. The leg of the *rēš* in the *Tell Bornāṭ*/*Tēl Burnā* example is not as long as the field border.
d. The *yōd* in the lower field in the *Tell Bornāṭ*/*Tēl Burnā* handle does not reach its left end, while in the other two handles the letter clearly represents the last sign.

Onomastics

The name *ʿzr* occurs in both biblical literature and inscriptions, either on its own, or as an element in compound names[17]. The root meaning, "help", is easily combined with a divine name to create a statement that follows the basic pattern: "[the deity] helps/has helped". Several examples from Northwest Semitic inscriptions can be listed, such as the Aramaic name "Hadad helps", which appears in Hebrew (*Hădadʿāzer*) and Akkadian (*ᵈAdad-idri*). Other notable examples are observable in Phoenician: *ʾEšmunʿazōr* and *ʿAzarbaʿal*[18]. The Hebrew forms display a combination with either the common noun *ʾl* or *ʾlhym* (denoting the God of Israel) or the Tetragrammaton; *ʾĔlīʿezer*, *ʾĂzarʾēl*/*ʿAzrīʾēl* (cf. *ʿAdrīʾēl*), and *ʾĂzaryāhū*/*ʿĂzaryā*[19]. Additionally, as an onomastic element *ʿzr*, can be combined with kinship terms, such as *ʾĂḥīʿezer* ("my brother is help") and *ʾĂbīʿezer* ("my father is help"), which may reflect some form of ancestor veneration. Although the word occurs primarily in personal names, it is found in the toponym *ʾEben hāʿēzer* ("stone of help", see 1 Sam 7:12). Forms that lack a divine name can also include a verbal clause, such as *ʿzryqm* ("my help arose"). The

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[14] Bliss 1900, 13, Cut II:1; Bliss/Macalister 1902, 121; Macalister 1908, 281; 1912, 211; Avigad 1997, 254; Lipschits/Sergi/Koch 2010, 25, Type 30. Vaughn (1999, 98, table 4) refers to two examples: one from *Tell el-Ǧazarī*/Gezer and the other from *Tell el-Ǧudēde*/*Tēl Godēd*. As he does not refer to the publication, and we were unable to track down to such a handle from *Tell el-Ǧudēde*/*Tēl Godēd*, it seems that this is a mistake and should refer to *Tell Zakarīye*/Azekah instead of *Tell el-Ǧudēde*/*Tēl Godēd*. In addition, in Keel's corpus of seals (2013), he includes a stamped handle with these same names under the entry for *Tell eṣ-Ṣāfī*/Gath. He mentions the confusion created by the publication of this seal in an article, where it appears to suggest that the find is from that site. However, in the final publication (Bliss/Macalister 1902, Plate 28) the find appears with the letter "z" next to it confirming its origin in *Tell Zakarīye*/Azekah.

[15] And see also Lidzbarski 1902, 179; Diringer 1934, 120; Avigad 1997, 254.

[16] This is a well-documented phenomenon in the Private Seal Impressions (see for example two handles bearing the names *lspn*/*ʿzr* one from *Tell ed-Duwēr*/Lachish and one from *ʿĒn Šems*/Beth-Shemesh – Barkay/Vaughn 1996, 43–44). For a complete list of repeated names (yet not including *lʿzr*/*ḥgy*), see Vaughn 1999, 121, Table 6.

[17] Diringer 1934, 205–206.

[18] Examples from Moabite and Ammonite are listed by Avigad 1997.

[19] Köhler/Baumgartner (2001, 794, *sub voce*, *ʿAdrīʾēl*) also list the following forms from Egyptian Aramaic that incorporate the divine names Nusku and ʿAnat (*ʾatta*): *nśkʿdry* and *ʾtʿdry*.

Hebrew forms display two basic constructs with ʿ*zr*: 1. In the final position (*e.g.*, ʾ*lyʿzr*, "God helps"; cp. also ʾ*Ăbīʿezer*). 2. In the initial position, which might be rendered passively as "helped by God" and "helped by Yahweh".

Although the name in the *Tell Bornāṭ/Tēl Burnā* seal is simply ʿ*zr*, it may represent a hypocoristic form of one of the above Hebrew names [20]. The onomastic record contains several instances of the name ʿ*zr*. The most famous example is the name of the post-exilic Jewish leader ʿ*Ezrā*. As it is written in the Hebrew Bible, this name has either a final /-ʾ/, representing the Aramaic form of the name, or a shortened spelling of ʾ*Ăzarʾēl* [21]. In the LXX, the orthography of the name (Εσδρα) graphically represents the *\d* through the cluster /σδ/ (see also Εσδρικαμ for ʿ*zryqm* [1 Chr 9:44 and 2 Chr 28:7]). The assimilation of *\d > z*, which is full in Phoenician and Hebrew (ʿ*zr < ʿdr*), is only partial in Aramaic; although it is observable in the root ʿ*dr* [22]. This orthography is also evident in the name ʿ*Adrīʾēl* in the Book of Samuel (1 Sam 18:19 and 2 Sam 21:8), which is a variant of ʿ*Azrīʾēl* [23]. The person here is identified by his gentilic as someone from the Transjordan (ʾ*Ăbēl-məhōlā*), thus the name's spelling could represent a regional form or the influence of Aramaic [24]. The vocalization of the name differs in the Hebrew Bible, with the element ʿ*zr* serving as a perfect verbal form, or predicate noun [25]. The vocalization could reflect an infinitive form as well, for example the *qattūl* form ʿ*Azzūr* (also ʿ*Azur*) [26]. The most common vocalization is ʿ*Ēzer* (see, *e.g.*, Neh 3:19), with the variant ʿ*Āzer* (Neh 12:42), and the former is adopted in our transcription of the name.

The name ʿ*zr* occurs frequently in Hebrew inscriptions [27] and it is found also in compound forms. Aside from the parallels that come from *Tell el-Ǧazarī/*Gezer and *Tell Zakarīye/*Azekah, the name ʿ*zr* appears on several seals [28], for example it occurs on seal impressions from *Tell ed-Duwēr/*Lachish and ʿ*Ēn Šems/*Beth-Shemesh as a patronymic [29]. As a patronymic, "*Šəmaʿyā* son of ʿ*Ēzer*", is engraved on the rim of a stone bowl found at *Kuntillet ʿAğrūd* [30]. The name occurs once on an ostracon from *Ḥirbet el-Mšāš/Tēl Māśōś* [31], four times in the Arad inscriptions [32], and the form "Son of ʿ*Ēzer*" is listed on an ostracon from *Tell ed-Duwēr/*Lachish [33].

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[20] DIRINGER 1934, 205. AVIGAD (1986, 90) suggests either Eliezer or Azariah, though he does not explain any further why these two particular names.

[21] KÖHLER/BAUMGARTNER 2001, 812, *sub voce*, ʿ*Ezrā*.

[22] GARR 2004, 24–27.

[23] KÖHLER/BAUMGARTNER (2001, 794, *sub voce*, ʿ*Adrīʾēl*) suggest that the element is ʿ*dr* III, meaning "watered place".

[24] GARR (2004, 26) tentatively suggests that *\d* is graphically represented by *z* in Ammonite based on the inscriptionally attested personal names ʿ*rḥʿzr* and ʾ*lʿzr*.

[25] DIRINGER 1934, 205; following NOTH.

[26] The name could also reflect a nominative adjective pattern.

[27] AVIGAD 1986, 56; SHOHAM 2000, 38. See Appendix A, *sub voce*, ʿ*zr* in the Princeton volume (DOBBS-ALLSOPP/ROBERTS/SEOW/WHITAKER 2005).

[28] AVIGAD listed several in his main corpus (see AVIGAD 1997, 138 nos. 301–304); see also the references listed by SHOHAM (2000, 38, *sub voce*, B 13. G 11612).

[29] BARKAY/VAUGHN 1996, 42–44.

[30] See DOBBS-ALLSOPP/ROBERTS/SEOW/WHITAKER 2005, 232–233. The name is also reconstructed in an inscription on a clay horse figurine discovered during the Joint Expedition to Samaria, although the reading is uncertain (DOBBS-ALLSOPP/ROBERTS/SEOW/WHITAKER 2005, 392–393).

[31] See DOBBS-ALLSOPP/ROBERTS/SEOW/WHITAKER 2005, 303.

[32] AHARONI/NAVEH 1981, nos. 22–23, 51, and 58.

[33] Number 19; see DOBBS-ALLSOPP/ROBERTS/SEOW/WHITAKER 2005, 271–272.

The patronymic on the seal, *ḥgy*, is also known from biblical literature and inscriptions (though, exclusively seals). The name is most famous for the post-exilic prophet, and biblical book, *Ḥaggay*; however, the form as it occurs in biblical literature that is set in pre-exilic times, is *Ḥaggī* (see Gen 46:16 and Num 26:15) [34]. The name means "festal", possibly a hypocoristic form of "feast of Yahweh" = *Ḥaggīyā* (1 Chr 6:15) [35]. The name is found on several seals of unknown provenance [36]. Included among these is a scaraboid seal that reads: "Belonging to Benayahu steward of *Ḥaggī*" [37]. The name is found in two scaraboid seals discovered in early excavation work in Jerusalem. The first, "Belonging to *Ḥaggī* son of *Šebanyāhū*", was recovered by WARREN in 1867 during his work near the Temple Mount [38]. The second, "Belonging to *Ḥaggī* (son of) *Hōdūyāhū*", was found by KENYON in 1961 during her Ophel excavations [39].

Paleography

The letters are consistent with the standard forms seen in 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. Hebrew seal impressions. The first letter, *lāmed* has a sharp check-mark shape that is common in seals; in fact, this letter is not considered diagnostic during the 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. [40]. It is noteworthy, however, because of the letter's right-leaning slant, which is determined by the space available in the upper register. The second letter, *ʿayin*, has the standard circular-shape. The *ʿayin* of the *Tell Bornāṭ / Tēl Burnā* seal can be contrasted with the pointed-oval shape that is used in the *Tell el-Ǧazarī / Gezer* and *Tell Zakarīye / Azekah* seal, a form that develops at the end of the 8th cent. B.C.E. and continues into the 7th cent. B.C.E. The *zayin* of the *Tell Bornāṭ / Tēl Burnā* seal is small, with no associated tick-marks on the horizontals [41]. A difference between *zayin* of the two seals is in their position in line with the other letters. In the *Tell Bornāṭ / Tēl Burnā* seal, the letter sits at the base line, while the *Tell el-Ǧazarī / Gezer* and *Tell Zakarīye / Azekah* seal hangs at the ceiling line. The *rēš* of the *Tell Bornāṭ / Tēl Burnā* seal is medium length, although during the 8th – 7th cent. B.C.E. the height of the stem can vary in length. The first letter on the second register, *ḥēt*, has three horizontal lines, which contrasts with the two horizontals of the *Tell el-Ǧazarī / Gezer* and *Tell Zakarīye / Azekah* seal. Neither feature is diagnostic as both forms appear throughout the 8th and 7th cent. B.C.E. [42]. The *ḥēt* on

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[34] AVIGAD 1986, 55. The root appears in feminine form as well, *ḥaggīt* (see *e.g.*, 2 Sam 3:4), as the name of Adonijah's mother.

[35] DIRINGER 1934, 165; AVIGAD 1976, 297.

[36] For example it appears on a bulla from Jerusalem published by AVIGAD 1986, 54 – 55 no. 55; and 1997, 197, no. 492; reading "Haggi, son of Hoduyahu", as well as scaraboid seals see: 1997, 95 – 97, nos. 148 – 149, and 151. A scaraboid seal, apparently from *Nāblus* (Shechem) that was shown to Charles CLERMONT-GANNEAU in Jerusalem (1869), had been tentatively read by DIRINGER as *ḥgy* (1934, 164 – 165). The object, written vertically (and name only), is only known from CLERMONT-GANNEAU's drawing (see DIRINGER 1934, Tab. 19, fig. 20), and had been alternately reconstructed as *ḥgz* by AVIGAD (1997, 432, no. 1140).

[37] AVIGAD 1976, 296 – 298; 1997, 58, no. 24.

[38] DIRINGER 1934, 179 – 180, Tab. 19, fig. 20; and AVIGAD 1997, 96, no. 150.

[39] AVIGAD 1997, 95, no. 147.

[40] HERR 1998, 50.

[41] According to HERR 1998, 50, during the 8th cent. B.C.E. the *zayin* increases in length and displays slight variation in form (a small tick is sometimes visible on the right-side of the horizontal bars). During the 7th cent. B.C.E., the size of the letter occasionally decreases.

[42] HERR 1998, 50.

both seals is of regular size, rather than the short-standing form seen in the late 7th cent. B.C.E., and both have offset horizontals. The *gīmel* (the second letter), follows the standard form of the letter as seen elsewhere. The short upper-horizontal at the top of the *gīmel* extends slightly to the right (overlapping the letter's vertical stem), giving it the appearance of a pick or adze. This letter shape is also visible in the photograph of the *Tell el-Ǧazarī/*Gezer and *Tell Zakarīye/*Azekah seal[43], although BLISS drew the letter in a manner that obscures this feature. The final letter of the second register, *yōd*, is irregular, although its shape and form is clearly recognizable. The letter is slanted slightly to the right rather than the left; by contrast, note the regular form of the *yōd* on the *Tell el-Ǧazarī/*Gezer and *Tell Zakarīye/*Azekah seal. Furthermore, the height of the *Tell Bornāṭ/Tēl Burnā yōd* is almost the same as the corresponding *ḥēt*, and the middle horizontal is missing from the left side (the tick-mark on the right side might be accidental). The absence of a middle-horizontal on the left side of the *yōd*, however, could be the result of an incomplete impression. The fact that the writing stops at the mid-point of both registers, which leaves vacant spaces on the left side of the seal, suggests that the seal impression may have included iconography that accompanied the inscription. Accordingly, the left side of the seal was not fully applied, which resulted in the absence of anything on the left, including the left side features of the final *yōd*.

Discussion

The Judean royal storage jar tradition first appeared in the 9th cent. B.C.E.[44] and continued throughout the 8th – 7th cent. B.C.E. and also later in the Persian Period[45]. However, the use of private seals is well dated to the 8th cent. B.C.E.[46] and this phenomenon is correlated to the occurrence of *lmlk* seal impressions[47]. As noted by LIPSCHITS, SERGI and KOCH[48], this administrative system (contrary to the *lmlk* system) was much more common in the Shephelah, probably as part of the preparations for the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib (701 B.C.E.). Several studies have suggested that the owners of the seals were royal officials of the Kingdom of Judah[49]. USSISHKIN, on the other hand, has claimed that the seals were impressed by the potters in a central location, rather than locally by royal officials. Thus USSISHKIN concluded that while this phenomenon is not clear, it was probably connected to the production of the storage jars[50].

It is of much interest to highlight the existence of other impressed handles with a seal containing the same name. While one was found in a well-known Judean site, *Tell Zakarīye/*Azekah[51], the other one is from *Tell el-Ǧazarī/*Gezer. Of the 37 *lmlk* stamped handles

[43] AVIGAD 1997, 254.
[44] SHAI/MAEIR 2003.
[45] *E.g.*, LIPSCHITS/SERGI/KOCH 2010 and 2011; FINKELSTEIN 2012; LIPSCHITS 2012; but see also USSISHKIN 2011.
[46] See for example, BARKAY/VAUGHN 1996, 29; 2004, 2169; LIPSCHITS/SERGI/KOCH 2010, 5, 22–27; 2011: n. 2. VAUGHN (1999, 198–218) catalogued 267 private seals with 37 owners.
[47] *E.g.*, USSISHKIN 2004, 2142–2143, 2145.
[48] LIPSCHITS/SERGI/KOCH 2010, 26.
[49] *E.g.*, GARFINKEL 1985; VAUGHN 1999, 110–117; BARKAY/VAUGHN 2004.
[50] USSISHKIN 2004, 2146.
[51] BLISS/MACALISTER 1902, 121.

discovered at *Tell-Ǧazarī*/Gezer, 10 of them are belonging to the early type[52], which is consistent with the appearance of a private seal at the site[53].

The existence of multiple seals bearing the same name raises a basic question: do these seals belong to the same person? It is certainly possible that they were owned by different people, however the fact that these seals come from the same area (the Shephelah) and date to the same general time period (Iron Age IIB) suggests that they belong to a single person by the name of Ezer. If the assumption of single ownership is correct, it raises several historical questions regarding the particular owner of this seal and the general use of multiple seals by a single person. The existence of a single individual with multiple seals is a known phenomenon in Hebrew epigraphic sources[54], although it is relatively uncommon. Lemaire associates two unprovenanced seals "belonging to ʿUšnā" with a seal in the Yale Babylonian Collection, "belonging to ʿUšnā, the servant of ʾĀḥāz"[55]. According to Lemaire, the multiple seals can be explained historically, as ʿUšnā would have used one under Ahaz and the other under Hezekiah. Similarly, Lipschits points to different seals bearing the same name, discovered at *Tell ed-Duwēr*/Lachish (Level III) and *Ḥirbet Ṣāliḥ*/*Rāmat Rāḥēl*, and suggests that they reflect the practice of the same individual using different seals at multiple locations[56]. But the use of multiple seals by a single individual within a geographically restricted area is also known to occur. Three separate bullae discovered in the City of David apparently belonged to the same individual, *Ṭabšālōm* son of *Zeker*, where the patronymic is written variably as *Ben Zeker* and *Zeker* the Healer[57].

Furthermore, the explanation of regional usage for multiple seals would not help us explain the multiple seals of *ʿĒzer* son of *Ḥaggī*, as they all were found in the Shephelah. Finally, petrographic analysis of this jar type strongly suggests a single production center in the Shephelah region, and since the seal had to have been impressed before firing, it follows thus that the seal had to have been used in the production center. One reasonable suggestion is that *ʿĒzer* had to replace a damaged, or lost, seal at some point, which would explain his use of multiple seals. This, however, is only one explanation, and our hope is that further archaeological work might uncover new data regarding this problem. As noted by Vaughn[58], the fact that there are several names stamped by two seals supports the interpretation that the owners were not potters but officials. Curiously, the name Ezer occurs as a patronymic for a name that appears on different seals found at *ʿĒn Šems*/Beth-Shemesh and *Tell ed-Duwēr*/Lachish, which read "belonging to Ṣāpōn [son of] *ʿĒzer*"[59]. The occurrence of this name in multiple seals, and its reoccurrence as a patronymic on similar seals, may indicate that the figure held an important role within the kinship-based social network of Iron Age Judah. Additional evidence is necessary, however, before any further claims can be made regarding

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[52] Lipschits/Sergi/Koch 2011, 11–12, table 1, figure 1.

[53] See also Vaughn (1999, 149–150) who claimed that at the end of the 8th cent. B.C.E. Hezekiah took over this region in order to strengthen the western border of Judah.

[54] For example, Shoham (2000, 43) published a bulla from the City of David with the inscription "Belonging to Azariah son of Hilkiah" (B 17. G 11652), and he cites an unprovenanced seal published by Avigad that bears the same inscription though the seals are different.

[55] Lemaire 2004, 373. See Avigad 1997, 51 no. 5, and 81–82 nos. 99–100.

[56] Lipschits 2010, 128; see also 2011, 285.

[57] Shoham 2000, 34–36; B 4–6.

[58] Vaughn 1999, 121–122.

[59] Barkay/Vaughn 1996, 42–44. Additionally, the name "Ashyahu son of Ezer" is found on a seal of unknown provenance, as well as on Arad ostracon 51 (Avigad 1997, 81, no. 98).

the ʿ*Ēzer*, the individual whose name adorns these seals. Yet, the *Tell Bornāṭ/Tēl Burnā* seal offers additional data for studying the socio-political history of the region during the Iron Age II [60].

Acknowledgement

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[60] See also AHITUV's reading (2012, 15) of the *Ḥirbet Zētā/Tēl Zayit* abcedary who claimed that below the alphabetic list the writer added his name ʿ*zr*. If this reading is acceptable, it means that roots of this family in the Judean administration system may have begun as early as the 10th cent. B.C.E.

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Photo of the *lmlk* and rosette handles.

A Private Stamped Seal Handle from *Tell Bornāṭ/Tēl Burnā*, Israel (Seiten 121–137)

Photo of the official sealed handle.

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