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STUDIES OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM

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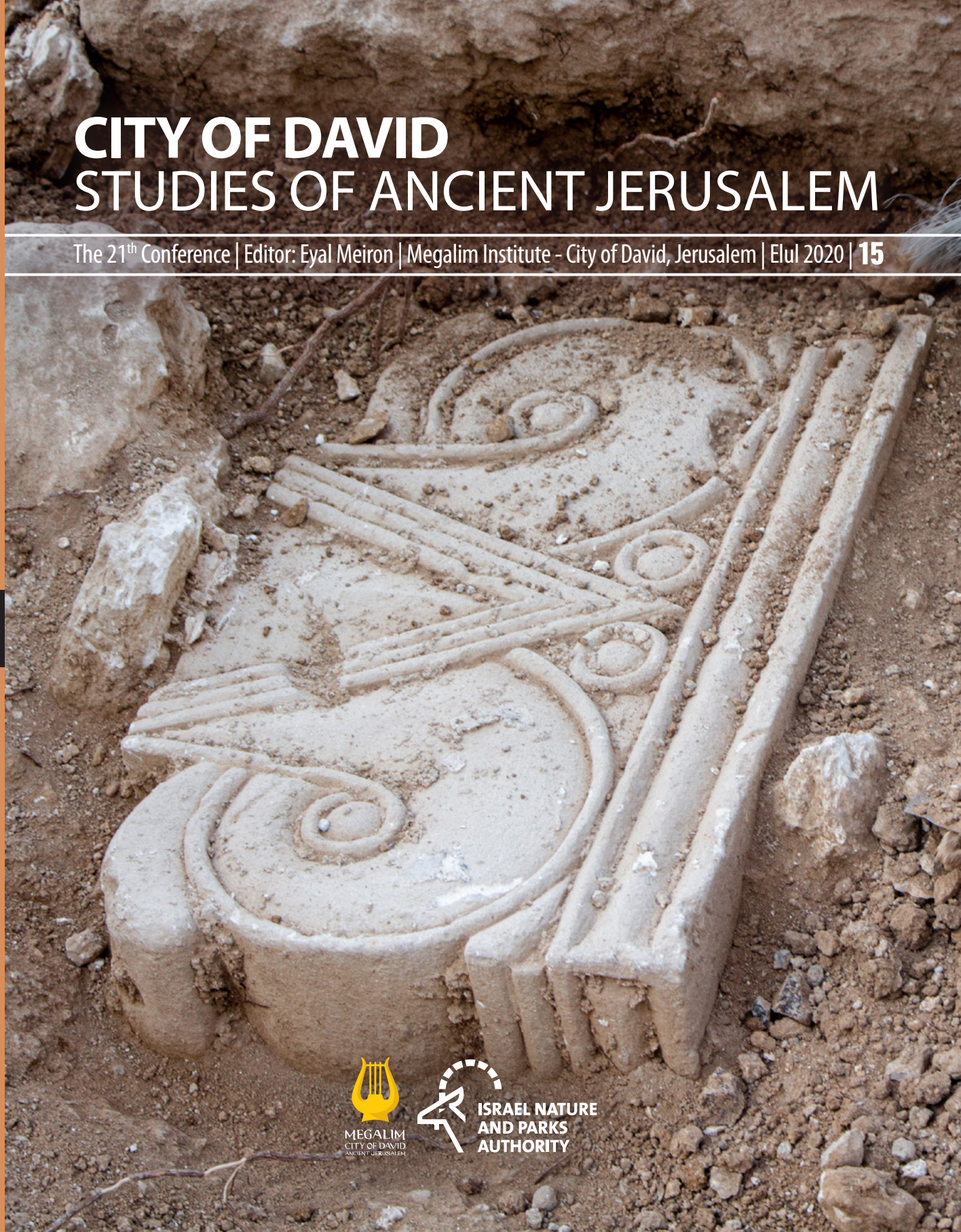

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CITY OF DAVID

STUDIES OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM

The 21st Annual Conference | Editor: Eyal Meiron

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Ancient Jerusalem Research Center | Israel Antiquities Authority

Introduction[1]

Two new bullae were unearthed in 2019 in Area U of the City of David: the bulla of Raphayahu son of Zephaniah (לרפאיהו בן צפניה) and the bulla of Meshullam (son of) Mikneiah (למשלם (בן) מקניהו).[2] Area U is situated on the eastern slope of the City of David above the Gihon spring and Warren's Shaft. The area has a long history of archaeological excavations, the first of which was conducted in 1867 by Charles Warren, that have unearthed a plethora of impressive discoveries, both large and small, that have altered our understanding of ancient Jerusalem and her long history. The latest expedition commenced in 2013 (see Chalaf and Uziel 2017).[3]

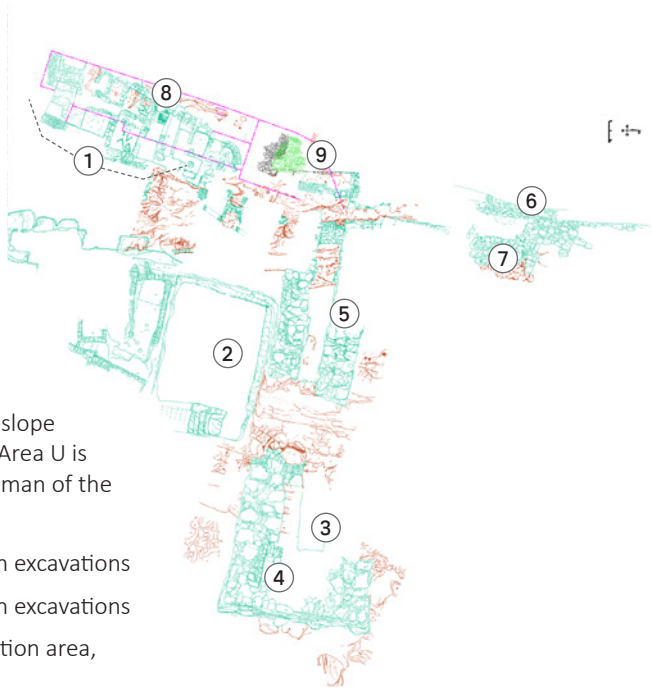

Fig.1. Plan of excavation areas on the eastern slope of the City of David around the Gihon Spring. Area U is highlighted. The plan was drawn by Vadim Essman of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

1. Rock-cut rooms
2. Rock-cut installation
3. Gihon Spring
4. Spring tower
5. Fortified passage
6. Wall 1, Kenyon excavations
7. Wall 3, Kenyon excavations
8. Area U excavation area, 2013-2018
9. Area U North excavation area, 2019-2020

1 We are grateful to Christopher Conlan and Joe Uziel for their comments and suggestions, and to Israel Antiquities Authority and Ir David Foundation for the opportunity to publish the bullae.

Abbreviations used in the article: PNA = Baker and Radner, *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*; CUSAS = Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judaean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*.

2 For a number of additional bullae unearthed in Area U see Mendel-Geberovich, Chalaf and Uziel (forthcoming).

3 The excavations are conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority and are sponsored by the Ir David Foundation. Since 2013 the work was supervised by Joe Uziel, Nahshon Szanton, Salome Dan-Goor and Moran Hagbi. The most recent excavations are supervised by Filip Vukosavović on behalf of the Ancient Jerusalem Research Center , Ortal Chalaf and Joe Uziel on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

The excavations unearthed layers from the Iron Age until the late Muslim period.

The discovery of the two new bullae coincided with the publication of the Judaean exilic family tree of Rapā-Yāma son of Samak-Yāma as found in cuneiform sources (Vukosavović 2019). Since the personal name Raphayahu רפאיהו is attested on one of the bullae as well as in cuneiform texts, we would like to offer a short study that combines Hebrew epigraphy with cuneiform sources.

Israelite and Judaean Exilic Communities

The Assyrian exiles of Israel in 732 BCE and 720 BCE and of Judah in 701 BCE, and the Babylonian exiles of Judah in 597 BCE, 587/6 BCE and 582 BCE created significant Israelite and Judaean exilic communities both in Upper (Assyria) and Lower (Babylon) Mesopotamia.[4]

However, until recently very little has been known about the exilic communities themselves, especially in regards to their location and socio-economic status. Only a few dozen of the exiled Israelites and Judaeans have been identified in a number of Neo-Assyrian (8th-7th centuries BCE) and Neo-Babylonian/Persian (6th-5th centuries BCE) documents including the Murašu archive (5th century BCE). Recent partial publication of the Āl-Yāhūdu archive (6th-5th centuries BCE) has greatly increased our knowledge of the Judaean exilic population in Babylon.

And yet, secondary cuneiform sources are very seldom employed by scholars in the majority of research carried out on Hebrew personal names found on hundreds of bullae, ostraca, stamp seals and other media. This article, then, is our attempt to bring the two fields closer together in the hope that this will allow for more comprehensive insights into the Hebrew prosopography and onomasticon.

Neo-Assyrian sources:

The most important prosopography resource that covers the Neo-Assyrian empire is *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* edited by Baker and Radner and published in six volumes. Another invaluable resource is by Ran Zadok, "Israelites and Judaeans in the Neo-Assyrian Documentation (732-602 BCE): An Overview of the Sources and a Socio-Historical Assessment".

4 For hiśtorical and archaeological overview of events see e.g. Cogan (1998) and Stern (2001).

Neo-Babylonian and Persian sources:

Two very important collections of cuneiform tablets from the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods are the Murašu and Āl-Yāhūdu archives.

The essential references for personal names in the Murašu archive are two works by Mordechai Coogan, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašu Documents,* and "More Yahwistic Names in the Murashu Documents", in addition to a work by Ran Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods According to Babylonian Sources*.

Half of the Āl-Yāhūdu archive was published in 2015 by Laurie Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judaean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*. Fortunately this volume contains a complete list of personal names for the entire archive.[5]

Jehoiachin, king of Judah, and a number of other Judaeans are attested in a number of ration lists excavated by Robert Koldewey in the city of Babylon between 1899-1917 which were published in 1939 by Ernst Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten".

Two additional works are worthy of note, both written by Ran Zadok: *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography*, and especially *The Earliest Diaspora. Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia*.

5 The second half of the archive is forthcoming and will be published by Cornelia Wunsch.

Bullae and cuneiform sources

1. Bulla, Raphayahu son of Zephaniah (לרפאיהו בן צפניה)

The bulla was discovered during the wet sifting of earth (L.19000 B.191253) that had accumulated in Canal XVIII made by Captain Montagu Parker during his excavations in the area between 1909-1911, hence, it was not in its original archaeological context.[6] The bulla is dated to Iron IIB period.

Raphayahu רפאיהו

The name Raphayahu is attested on another bulla (Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 626) and a scaraboid seal (Reich and Shukron 2014: 358-359), both discovered in the City of David. For the abbreviated form of the name Rapha see Maeir and Eshel (2014: 77-78).

Raphayahu was a fairly popular personal name within exilic communities:

Fig.2. Bulla: Belonging to Raphayahu son of Zephaniah. Courtesy: Israel Antiquities Authority. Photo: Dafna Gazit

Fig. 3. Cuneiform tablet: Āl-Yāhūdu tablet no. 9, line 4 (highlighted) contains the personal name ra-pa-a-ma (Rapā-Yāma = Raphayahu). Courtesy: David Sofer Collection Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama

6 In-depth study of the bulla is in preparation. For Parker's excavations see Vincent (1911). Sifting was carried out at Emek Tzurim National Park.

In the Neo-Assyrian corpora there are three individuals named Rapâ-Yāu[7] in addition to three individuals with the same name, Rapā-Yāma[8], in the Neo-Babylonian/Persian corpora.

Zephaniah צפניה

The name Zephaniah is attested both in Hebrew epigraphic sources (see e.g. Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 530, 698) and in the Bible (e.g. Jeremiah 21: 1; Zephaniah 1: 1; Zechariah 6: 10).

However, the name is not attested in any of the available Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian/Persian cuneiform sources.

2. Bulla, Meshullam (son of) Mikneiah (למשלם (בן) מקניהו)

The bulla was discovered during wet sifting of earth collected from the floor of an Iron Age structure without a clear architectural plan (L.19008 B.191128).[9] The bulla is dated to Iron IIB period.

Fig.4. Bulla: Belonging to Meshullam (son of) Mikneiah.
Courtesy: City of David Archives.
Photo: Koby Harati

7 PNA 3/I pp. 1032-1033, see further Zadok (2002: 24; 2015: 171).

The name of Rapâ-Yāu, as well as other names from cuneiform sources offered in the article, are normalized (transcribed) versions of the names that reflect their Akkadian pronunciation; more often than not foreign personal names in cuneiform texts have multiple orthographies (see CUSAS pp. 14ff) which requires one normalized version in an article of this nature.

8 CUSAS 28 pp. 78, 288-289, 309.

For the difficult issue of theophoric element -Yāma (=Yh/Yw/Yhw) in Judaean names in Babylonian/Persian sources see e.g. Coogan (1973: 188-190; 1976: 52-53), Zadok (1976: 7-12) and Millard (2013: 845-846).

9 In-depth study of the bulla is in preparation.

Meshullam משלם

The name Meshullam is attested fairly often in Hebrew epigraphic sources (e.g.: Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 515, 679, 680; Aharoni 1981: no. 39; Ben-Ami and Tchekhanovets 2010: 70-71) and also in the Bible (e.g.: 2 Kings 22: 3; 1 Chronicles 3: 19; Nehemiah 3: 4).

The name is not attested in the Neo-Assyrian sources, but there are several attestations of **Mušallam**[10] in the Neo-Babylonian/Persian corpora.

Mikneiah מקניהו

A single individual called Mikneiah is attested in the Bible (1 Chronicles 15: 18, 21) and there is also a single attestation of the name in Hebrew epigraphic sources on Arad ostracon no. 60 (Aharoni 1981: no. 60).

While the name Mikneiah is not attested in the Neo-Assyrian sources, there is a single Judaean with the name **Maqin-Yāma**[11] in the Neo-Babylonian/Persian corpora.

10 CUSAS 28 pp. 67; Zadok (2002: 29, 30); Abraham (2005-2006: 216).

11 CUSAS 28 pp. 64-65, 278, 309.

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