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**ODED LIPSCHITS,
PERSIAN PERIOD FINDS FROM JERUSALEM: FACTS
AND INTERPRETATIONS**

PERSIAN PERIOD FINDS FROM JERUSALEM: FACTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, there has been a drastic decline in scholarly estimates of Jerusalem's population in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods. Ryle's population estimate of about 100,000 returnees from Babylon to Judah, and a similar number of population in Jerusalem and its neighboring towns and villages (1907: xxxii), was cut in half to the more acceptable estimates of the middle of the 20th century when Albright (1949: 87) wrote, "The total population of Judah was over 42,000 freeborn Jews, besides over 7,000 slaves and menials, approximately 50,000 in all, of whom between 10,000 and 15,000 may have lived in and around the capital". Many scholars accepted this estimate through the second half of that century (cf. Bright 1959: 376–377, 383; Mazar 1975: 200; Berquist 1995: 83, n. 43). Even Weinberg (1972; 1992: 42–43; 2000: 316), who had a very high estimate for the population of Judah (150,000), estimated the population of Jerusalem within that 'consensus' (3,044 men and 12,000 or 15,000 inhabitants).¹

During the 1970's changes started to effect demographic estimates in general and those of Jerusalem in particular. Population estimates of Jerusalem in the Persian and early Hellenistic period dropped to half or less than half of the previous numbers, especially when more archaeological material came to light, and it became clear that between the 5th and the 3rd centuries BCE the city was concentrated only in the Southeastern Hill (the so called 'City of

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¹ See, however, Blenkinsopp (1991: 40–44) and Carter's (1999: 279–299) critiques of Weinberg's estimates.

David²). Broshi (1977: 68, and table p. 71) estimated that the population in Persian period Jerusalem was approximately 4,800 inhabitants; Oeming (1987: 193–194) about 4,800–6,000 people or more; Avigad (1993: 720) “a few thousand” inhabitants; Levine (2002: 33) about 4,000–5,000 inhabitants; and, Blenkinsopp (1988: 320–327) and Grabbe (1998: 59) about 3,000.

These numbers continued to drop when the estimates were made with greater attention to the results of archaeological excavations and surveys. Based on the archaeological data, Carter (1994: 134–135; 1999: 148, 288; cf. Miller and Hayes 2006: 522–523) and Lipschits (2003: 330–331; 2005: 212; 2006: 32) estimated *ca.* 1,500 inhabitants in Jerusalem during the 5th century BCE,² while Geva's (2007b: 56–57) estimation of the population in Jerusalem was about 1,000 people.

Recently, two ‘ultra-minimalistic’ views have been proposed. On the one hand, Zwickel (2008: 216–217), mainly on the basis of the descriptions and lists in Nehemiah, estimated that the population of the city before the days of Nehemiah was about 200 people and afterwards about 400 or 600 people.³ Finkelstein (2008: 501–507), on the other hand, expressed a similar view, though rooted in the archaeological data. According to Finkelstein, only some parts of the Southeastern Hill of Jerusalem were populated in this period, leading him to conclude that the settled area consisted of c. 20–25 dunam. According to his calculations, the population in the city during Nehemiah's period was about 400 people, including women and children (i.e., about 100 men).

The purpose of this paper is to present the archaeological finds from the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods in Jerusalem, assess the scope of the built-up area of the city, and provide – on the basis of this archaeological data – an estimate of the city's population.

² Carter, based on textual evidence from Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, estimated Jerusalem's population before the time of Nehemiah was 625 to 750 inhabitants (1999: 200, and cf. Meyers and Meyers 1994: 282). Halligan (2002: 146) assumed on the basis of Carter's formula that at the beginning of the Persian Period there were 977 to 1080 inhabitants in Jerusalem. These estimates all follow those of Smith (1971: 141–144) and Weinberg (1992: 43; 2000: 308–309, 313–316), in their textual-historical reconstruction of the *synoikismos* policy of Nehemiah, parallel to the policies of Greek tyrants. Weinberg (2000: 308–309), hypothesized that before the *synoikismos* there were only 50–150 men in Jerusalem (200–600 people) and after it there were 3,044 men or more (about 12,000 or 15,000 people).

³ Zwickel based his estimations mainly on the descriptions and lists in the book of Nehemiah. Since this paper deals mainly with the archaeological finds from Jerusalem, I will not deal here with Zwickel arguments. On this subject see: Lipschits 2005: 154–174.

2. SOME METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods are a unique era in the history of Judah. From 586 to 167 BCE, Judah was a small province under the rule of great empires. According to both biblical and archaeological evidence, Jerusalem was destroyed and left deserted by the Babylonians for a period of nearly 50 years (Lipschits 2005: 210–218, with further literature). Biblical accounts assert that the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt at the beginning of the Persian Period, and that, during this period, the city once again became the center of the Judean cult. According to an account in Nehemiah, the fortifications of Jerusalem were rebuilt in the middle of the 5th century BCE. If this was actually the case, then as a result, Jerusalem became a *Bīrāh*, probably replacing Mizpah, which had served as the capital of the newly established province of Yehud for 141 years, from 586 BCE (Lipschits 2001), through the Neo-Babylonian period (Lemaire 2003: 292), until the time of Nehemiah (445 BCE, Blenkinsopp 1998: 42, n. 48; cf. Lemaire 1990: 39–40; 2003: 292). Unfortunately though, the available archaeological data for the Persian period that might corroborate this biblical evidence is minimal and, so generally, scholars have assumed that the city did not become a large and important urban and administrative center before the middle of the second century BCE.

The history of Jerusalem between 586 and 167 BCE is an “interlude” between two periods of greatness and political independence: the end of the first temple period on the one hand and the period of the Hasmoneans on the other (Lipschits, forthcoming). Before 586 and after 167 BCE Judah, and especially Jerusalem, were the focus of scribal literature that promoted the centrality of the city, its temple, and the leaders of the nation (be it the house of David or the Hasmonean family).⁴ Jerusalem and its ongoing expansion played an important role in this literature and, in some ways, developed as a result of it. In both periods, the built-up area of the city expanded, over a short time period, to the Western Hill of Jerusalem (the area of the modern day Jewish and Armenian Quarters and the so called Mount Zion) and was enclosed by strong fortifications. The Southeastern Hill (the ‘City of David’) was rebuilt and refortified as well. The borders of Judah, its army, and its administration also underwent dramatic changes, all of which make the late 8th and 7th centuries BCE as well as the second

⁴ The Biblical literature from the Persian and Early Hellenistic period was written during a period when Jerusalem was small and weak, and Judah was a small province under the rule of huge empires. The memories of Jerusalem and the temple from the period before the Babylonian destruction, side by side with the expectations and hopes that the city will renew its glorious days, were the main force behind the Biblical literature during this period.

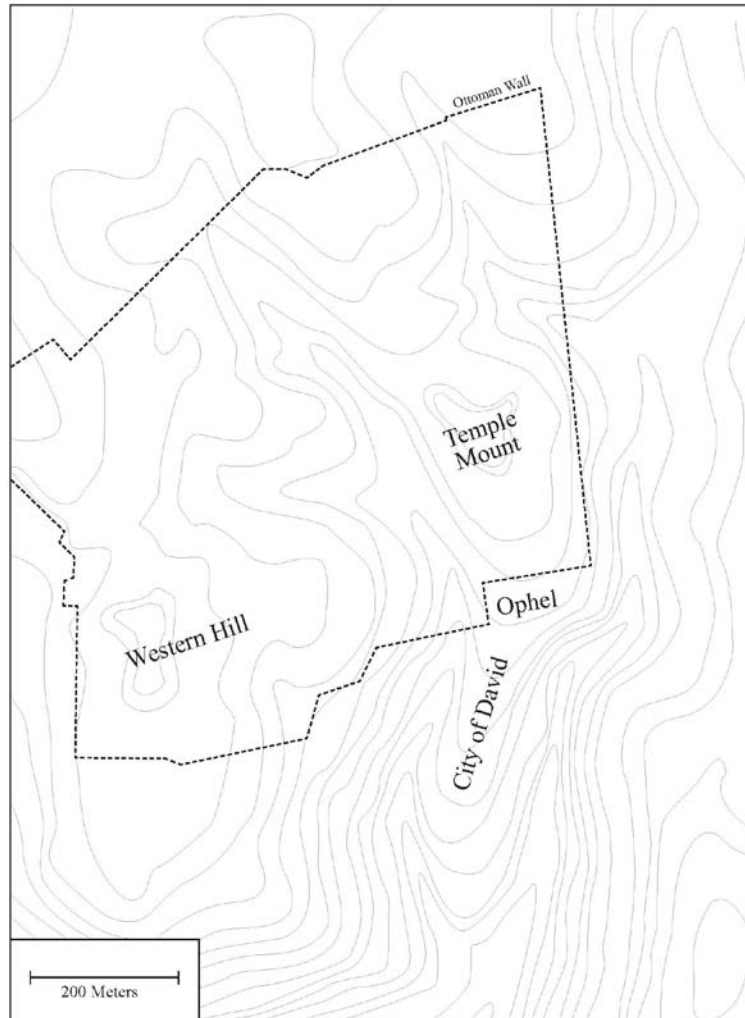
half of the 2nd century BCE well defined and easily recognizable periods in the historical and archaeological research of Judah.

In contrast to the rich and well recognized architectural remains from the late 8th to 7th and the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE, not many building remains from the intervening period, *i.e.*, the Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods, have been uncovered in Judah. This is the case even at sites where an abundance of pottery sherds, stamp impressions, figurines and other typical Persian period finds have been uncovered (Stern 2001: 424–427, 461–462). In other places, I have claimed that under the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rule there was a marked process of attenuation in urban life in Judah (and to a lesser degree also in Samaria, see Lipschits 2006: 26–30, with further literature). The administrative and urban centers that survived the catastrophes of those periods were small and weak compared with their 6th century or 2nd century BCE counterparts. However, this scarcity of building remains from the Persian period does not fully reflect the actual, admittedly poor, situation at that time. Rather, it is the outcome of incomplete archaeological data (Stern 2001: 461–462), especially in the case of Jerusalem.

Contrary to views that take the negative finds, especially in Jerusalem, as reflecting the actual situation in the city (“the negative is as important as the positive”, Finkelstein 2008: 505), I will suggest that the Persian and early Hellenistic period occupation levels were severely damaged by intensive building activities conducted in the late Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and even later periods. The situation in Jerusalem is not unique or exceptional, especially when dealing with hilltop sites where all structures – private and public – had to be based on the bedrock,⁵ but it is much more dramatic because of the scope and grandeur of the subsequent building efforts, as well as the frequent destruction of the site. The religious, cultic, and political status of Jerusalem likely motivated not only frequent political upheavals and destruction, but also a desire to remove previous political and religious structures, and to reshape the city. It seems to me that the main destructive force in Jerusalem was the efforts, along many different periods, to build new structures and the need to clear the debris from earlier periods. Additionally, the topographical nature of the Southeastern Hill, which is very steep and narrow at the top, requires that buildings, especially the more prominent ones, be built on bedrock. This may explain why the remains from the intervening 6th to 3rd centuries BCE were discovered mainly in ‘pockets’ between the late complexes, or in the dumps down in the valleys to the east and to the west of the

⁵ Even the late second temple private houses in the upper city of Jerusalem, which is not so steep as the City of David, were based on the bedrock, and their storerooms, cellars, ritual bathes, and water pits were all carved in the rock.

hill. When discussing the meaning of the archaeological remains dated to the Persian and early Hellenistic periods discovered in the city, one should be very careful about concluding that the city was empty or nearly empty throughout these periods. In this case, it is more difficult to assert that the absence of finds means that there was nothing there; explanations dealing with the negative finds must be taken seriously.



Topographic Map of Jerusalem

The above assumption is not merely a theoretical one. The Southeastern Hill (the 'city of David') was rebuilt and refortified in the Late Hellenistic, Roman, and later periods, undergoing particularly dramatic changes when huge public and private buildings were

built on top of the ridge. In most cases, like at other hilltop sites, the new buildings were based on the natural rock or on very strong existing structures (like the Middle Bronze and Iron Age II fortifications). These structures functioned just like the natural bedrock, especially in the Ophel region, along the eastern slope of the ridge, and in the area surrounding the Gihon Spring. The late builders, who wanted a strong foundation for large private and public structures, removed all the small and unstable remains from the periods between the late Iron Age and the Hasmonean period. Only in cases when there were remains from the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods that could have been combined in later building project, either because they changed the natural rock or they were leveling Iron Age structures that could have been incorporated in later building remains, the Persian period material was left in place. The same situation can be detected along the southern edge of the hill. All the pre-Hellenistic remains in the southern part of the City of David were removed and the area was cleaned to the bedrock in the Hellenistic Period.⁶

As a matter of fact, mapping the main structures from the late Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and later periods in the City of David creates a kind of a 'negative image' of the places where Persian and early Hellenistic periods sherds, stamp impressions, and other indicative artifacts can be found. The finds from these periods survived only between the later buildings, in fills, or along the slopes to the east and west of the ridge. This is the reason why, for example, the earliest remains in Shiloh's Area K, located on the ridge, about 100 m to the north of Area A are dated to the early Roman period, even though this area was excavated to bedrock. This area went through a large-scale clearing operation, which destroyed the earlier remains. Another example of the absence of Persian or early Hellenistic finds can be observed in Shiloh's Area A, on the southern top of the ridge. This area experienced dramatic changes during the Roman Period with the construction of part of the reservoirs (Birket el-Hamra) and the fortification of the mouth of the Central Valley, which formed part of the 'First Wall' of Jerusalem (Shiloh 1984: 5). Shiloh noticed the reuse of stones from earlier periods as part of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman building projects, and De Groot, Cohen and Caspi (1992) noticed that the Early Roman remains were discovered over Iron II remains. The same situation obtained in E. Mazar's excavations just above Area G (2006), where a building from the Late Hellenistic

⁶ Shiloh (1984: 17) assumed that it was part of the building of Aelia Capitolina, Barkay (2008a: 48; 2008b: 49–57) assumed that it was part of the destruction of the Seleucid Hakrah (141 BCE), and Reich claimed that it was part of the building of the Church near the Siloam Pool (oral communication).

and Early Roman periods was uncovered superimposed over remains of a large building dated to the Iron IIA.

The absence of finds from the Persian Period in the large area of the Ophel is also not surprising. The heavy destruction caused to this area by the Babylonians and the probable after effects of further collapse and crumbling processes—well indicated in Area G of Shiloh's excavations, just under the Ophel, at the northeastern side of the City of David, and the huge stone collapse and ruins as discovered in the excavations—made it very hard to develop future settlements. The slopes of the ridge were cleaned to bedrock in the Herodian, as well as in the Umayyad, period (Mazar 1986: 64). Especially in the Herodian period, the topography of the Ophel area was changed and large buildings and ritual baths were built, founded on and cut into the natural bedrock (Mazar 1986: 15–46, and esp. pp. 41–46). The best example of such a structure is the stairway leading to the Huldah Gates, which covered a very large area and was built solely on the bedrock. No building remains from the period before Herod's time were discovered in the Ophel area, with the exception of the so called 'Building A' ('the corner turret' or 'the extra tower') which was part of the Ophel's fortifications in the Iron Age II and provided a sturdy foundation for the later construction above it (Mazar and Mazar 1989: 8); Building C (the gate), which is a massive structure, composed of a stone plinth, foundation walls and earth fills, built in a place where the bedrock descends sharply, and which served as a base for later buildings and fortifications, especially in the Roman Period (idem: 13–28); and, some remains of Building D (idem: 29–48). All these structures were strong and massive enough to be treated by the architects of the Roman period as part of the bedrock, so that the buildings from the Roman period were built on the foundation they provided (see, for instance, idem: 25–26; 31–32; 36–37; 41–42). Besides these structures, only some architectural remains can be dated to the period between the Iron Age and the early Roman Period (see, for instance, W. 51, in Mazar and Mazar 1989: 33; 47). There are, however, many Iron Age pottery sherds, especially in the fills (together with Hellenistic and Roman pottery and other finds, see: Kenyon 1967a: 104; Mazar and Mazar 1989: 9–12; 46–47), in contrast with only a few sherds from the Persian period (and only one Yehud stamp impression, see: Mazar and Mazar 1989: XV–XVI).

One more methodological point should be raised in this connection. The Persian period in Jerusalem did not end suddenly with a violent destruction. One can assume that had this not been the case, we could have detected many more finds in the destruction level. However, when archaeologists are dealing with a period that ended in a long transition bridging the Persian and Hellenistic period (the 4th–3rd centuries BCE), and adding the nature of this calm end to the nature of the poor and small settlement throughout the 6th to 3rd centuries BCE, and the nature of the later periods (late Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine), characterized by huge

building projects founded on the bedrock, we have a reasonable explanation for the absence of Persian period building remains in Jerusalem without taking this absence as a proof for the actual situation in the city throughout this period.

The next sections will discuss the actual Persian period and early Hellenistic finds in Jerusalem in order to assess the scope of the settled area in the city during these periods, the size of the city, and the number of its inhabitants.

3. PERSIAN PERIOD FINDS IN JERUSALEM: THE FACTS

Few architectural finds discovered in Jerusalem attest to its existence as an urban center during the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods. Additionally, there are no traces of rich tombs around the city during this period,⁷ and no signs of rich material culture in or around the city. The main finds from Jerusalem that are clearly assigned to the Persian period are pottery sherds and other small finds (especially stamp impressions) typical of this period. I will first present the finds discovered on the Western Hill of Jerusalem (the modern day Jewish and Armenian Quarters and the area of Mount Zion) and then the finds discovered on the Southeastern Hill (the City of David). Persian Period Finds in the Western Hill. In the many excavations in the Western Hill of Jerusalem, only a few pottery sherds and other small finds from the Persian Period have been found, in most cases, in landfills from the Hellenistic and especially from the Roman Period and with no clear stratigraphic context (Stern 2001: 434–436).

Within the area of the Armenian Garden, several pottery sherds from the Persian Period and six *Yebud* stamp impressions were uncovered in the layers of silt that overlay the remnant of the Babylonian destruction (Kenyon 1967: 105–112; Tushingham 1967: 72; 1985: 38, 72, but see, for instance, the critique by Barkay 1985: 181). Gibson (1987) and Geva (2003a: 524–525) describe similar results. Broshi's excavations on Mt. Zion uncovered two *ybnw* stamp impressions and a small silver coin of the *ybnw* type, similar to that found by Negbi on the French Hill (Broshi 1972: 105; 1976: 82–83; Barkay, Tal and Fantalkin 2002: 66). In Bliss and Dickey's excavations at the southwestern part of Mt. Zion (1894–1897) one *Yebud* stamp impression was discovered (1898: Pl. 27: 47), and in the excavations conducted in the same place in 2007–2008, a Hellenistic 2nd century BCE fortification was discovered (part of it was already exposed in Bliss and Dickey's excavations), together with pottery and other finds from the late Iron Age and Hellenistic period.⁸ No Persian period finds were reported from Zelinger's excavations.

⁷ On the burial caves in Mamilla and Ketef Hinnom, see: Reich 1994; Barkay 1994, and see further below.

⁸ Zelinger, in IAA announcement to the media:

In the excavations conducted by Lux at the Church of the Redeemer at the northwest section of the Muristan, mixed pottery sherds were found in the landfill underneath the wall, which was dated to the late Roman Period. Among these sherds were many sherds from Iron Age II, and alongside these, a few pottery sherds from the Persian Period.⁹ Within the citadel (the Tower of David), a *yrslm* stamp impression, dated to the 2nd century BCE was discovered, together with one late *yebud* stamp impression dated to the same period. No earlier material was reported in this area (Amiran and Eitan 1970: 13, and cf. Avigad 1976: 25, n. 77). Avigad identified only a small number of seal impressions of the *yrslm* and *yebud* types in all of the extensive excavations of the Jewish Quarter and so concluded that the entire area was abandoned between the end of the Iron Age and the beginning of the Hellenistic period (1972: 95; 1983: 61–63). In a similar way, Geva summarized the finds dated to the Persian period that were discovered in the Jewish quarter during Avigad's excavations (1969–1982) (Geva 2000: 24; 2003a: 208; 2003b: 524).

One *yebud* stamp impression was found in the Western Wall of the Temple Mount excavations, under the floors of the Herodian Period (Mazar 1969, Pl. 46: 3). South of the Temple Mount, a few pottery sherds from the Persian period were found in Hellenistic period fills, together with two Attic sherds and one *yhw* stamp impression (Mazar 1972: 88; 1980: 49). Ben-Dov adds to these a clay figurine from the Persian period, and otherwise emphasized the nearly complete absence of finds from the Persian period (1982: 63–64).

In Barkay's description of the salvage excavations conducted by Kloner and Bahat on Ha-Gai Street (1985: 43), he notes that within the line of the wall, with its north-south orientation, pottery sherds were found from the Second Temple period, and at the foot of the wall, on the natural rock, some pottery sherds from the seventh century BCE were discovered, together with a large bowl dated to the Persian Period (*ibid.*).

The unavoidable conclusion from the above summary is that throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, the Western Hill was entirely abandoned, and the area was only resettled in the 2nd century BCE.¹⁰ There are no signs for burials in the Western

http://www.antiquities.org.il/article_item_ido.asp?sec_id=25&subj_id=240&id=1423.

⁹ Among these finds one should mention a rim of a hole-mouth jar with wedge-shaped impressions (Lux 1972: 191–195, and cf. Stern 1982: 133–136).

¹⁰ This is the common view among scholars, and see, for instance, Kenyon 1974: 188–255; Tsafirir 1977: 36; Avigad 1983: 61–63; Geva 1983; 1994; 2000a: 24; 2000b: 158; 2003a: 113–114; 2003b: 524–526; Geva and Reich 2000: 42; Geva and Avigad 2000b: 218; Shiloh 1984: 23; Tushingham 1985: 85; Broshi and Gibson 1994; Chen, Margalit and Pixner 1994; Sivan and Solar 1994; Finkelstijn 1999: 28*; De Groot and Ariel 2005:

Hill throughout the period that it was abandoned, probably because of the memories of the importance of this area, the marked remains of the houses and the Iron Age city wall, and probably the existence of some scattered houses and tilled pieces of land. Even if there are signs in three tombs from the rich late Iron Age burial field that surrounded the Western Hill to the north, west and south before the 586 BCE destruction, for continued use in the Persian period (Barkay 1994; Reich 1994), the reasonable interpretation is that it belonged to families that lived in Jerusalem before the destruction and in the area of Jerusalem or even in the City of David during the Persian period.

This fact stands in agreement with the finds of *yehud* stamp impressions, since according to the new typology developed by Vanderhooft and Lipschits (2007), no stamp impressions belonging to the early (late 6th and 5th century BCE) or middle types (4th and 3rd centuries BCE) were discovered in any of the excavated areas outside the limits of the City of David (Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007b: 108–112). All the stamp impressions discovered in the Western Hill belong to the two latest types (dated to the 2nd century BCE, maybe even to the middle or second half of this century), and some of them came from clear Hasmonean archaeological contexts, in some cases together with *yršlm* stamp impressions and other material dated to this period (Geva 2007a, with further literature; Lipschits and Vanderhooft, 2007b: 111–112).

Of the ten stamp impressions belonging to late types discovered in the Jewish Quarter excavations (Reich 2003a; Eshel 2006: 404), five were excavated in a well stratified context, dated to the second century BCE. One stamp impression was excavated in Area W and four more in Area C, all of them in loci consisting of homogenous earth fill of the second century BCE, and in an identical stratigraphic sequence: above eighth–sixth century BCE remains, and under remains of the first century BCE–first century CE (Geva 2007a). Other stamp impressions discovered on the Western Hill of Jerusalem came from post-Hellenistic stratigraphic contexts. Some were found in fills under buildings from the Herodian period,¹¹ and others in fills from later periods.

The 27 *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in various areas of the Western Hill represent more than 30% of the total finds of the late group of *yehud* stamp impressions discovered in Jerusalem (59

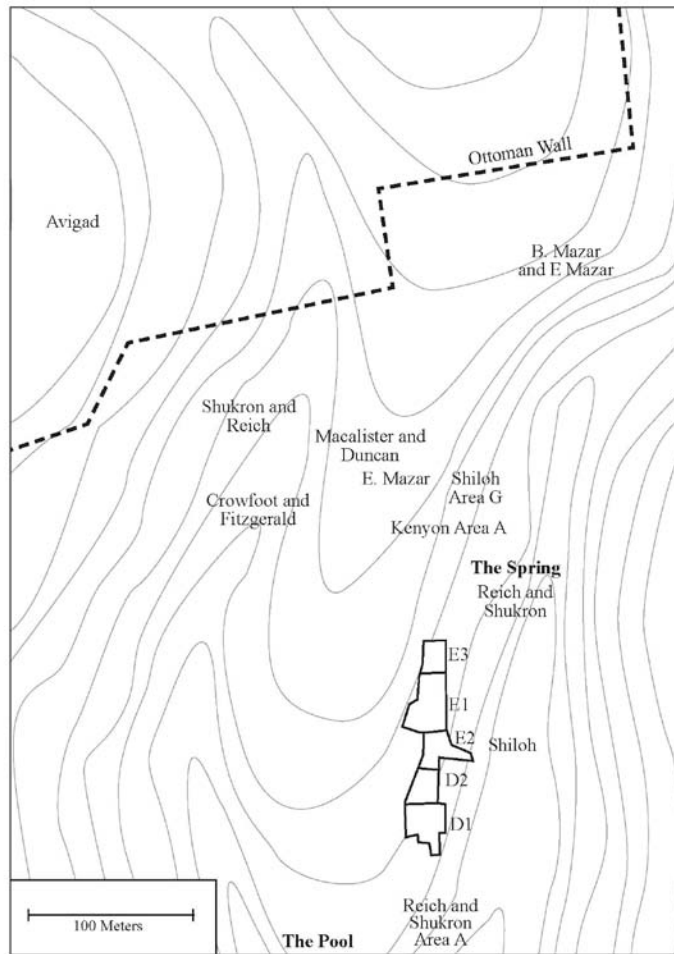
67–68; Lipschits 2005: 212–213; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007b: 108–112.

¹¹ See, for example, the six stamp impressions discovered in the Kenyon-Tushingham excavations in the Armenian Garden, all were excavated in a fill connected to the podium of Herod's palace, which includes a mixture of pottery from the First and Second Temple periods (Tushingham 1985: 37, Fig. 17: 18–23). Also in Amiran and Eitan's excavations in the Citadel, a stamp impression was discovered in the fill of the podium of Herod's palace (Amiran and Eitan 1970: 13).

more stamp impressions from the late group were discovered in the City of David). This proportion is much higher than the Rhodian stamp impressions, of which only 5% were discovered in the Western Hill, while most of the rest were discovered in the City of David (Ariel 1990; 2003). The difference in the proportion of the two types of stamp impressions discovered in the Western Hill and in the City of David probably does not point to different population groups in these areas before the destruction of the Hakra in 141 BCE by Simeon (I Mac. 13, 49–51), as assumed by Finkielsztejn (1999: 28*–31* with further literature, and see against this idea Ariel 1990: 25; 2000: 269, 276–280). Instead, this fact likely indicates that the settlement on the Western Hill did not start before the beginning of the second half of the 2nd century BCE (Geva 1985: 30; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007b: 112), a period in which there was a sharp decline in the importation of wine from Rhodes (Ariel 1990: 21–25; 2000: 267–269). We can also assume that the settlement process of the Western Hill during the 2nd century BCE was a much slower and gradual process than described by some scholars (see, for instance, Finkielsztejn 1999: 28*).

PERSIAN PERIOD FINDS IN THE CITY OF DAVID

Most of the excavated areas in the City of David since the 1960's, including Kenyon's Areas A, F, O, W, K, N (not to mention Areas B, D, E along the Eastern slopes of the Western Hill), Shiloh's Areas B, D, E and G, and Areas A and B excavated by Reich and Shukron, were outside the presumed narrow inhabited area of the Persian and Hellenistic periods that was limited to the upper part of the hill. This is probably the reason why most of the important finds from the Persian period in the City of David were discovered in Macalister and Duncan's excavations (1923–1925), just above and to the west of Area G of Shiloh's excavations, and E. Mazar's current excavations. Many pottery sherds from the Persian period were discovered, as well as 54 Yehud and 6 lion stamp impressions dated to the Persian period (Duncan 1931: 143). This is the largest number of Persian period stamp impressions discovered in one area in the City of David, and the most important Persian period concentration of finds. The location of this area at the center of the ridge of the Southeastern Hill, at the northern area of the City of David and just below the Ophel, attests to its administrative importance in the Persian Period. We may assume that these finds, probably part of a large fill that included Iron Age Pottery and other Iron Age finds, were purposely taken from the Ophel area no earlier than the middle of the Persian period as part of a construction project just below the Ophel, at the northern and highest part of the City of David.



Excavated Areas in the City of David

In Kenyon's square AXVIII, which was excavated to the north of the tower that had already been exposed by Macalister and Duncan (1926: 49–51) and dated by them to the Persian period, she observed that the tower was attached to an earlier wall, which was built of large stones on a rock scarp about 7–8 meters high. She dated the wall to the Persian period, assigned its construction to Nehemiah, and dated the tower to the Hasmonean fortification (Kenyon 1963: 15; 1974: 183–184, 191–192, Pl. 77; cf. *idem.* 1966: 83–84; 1967: 69).

In 2005, Eilat Mazar renewed the excavations in the same area, and identified this wall (her wall 20, and see Mazar 2007a: 49–60; 2007b: 17–21) as part of the northern Iron Age IIA fortification of what she called 'David's Palace'. The Hasmonean tower was attached to this wall, with no signs of Persian period building remains (*ibid.*: 64). In 2007, as part of the conservation project of the Hasmonean northern tower, Mazar excavated the fill under the tower, and discovered the same Persian period material previously exposed by Kenyon and Shiloh. According to Kenyon, this fill was connected to the tower that was built on the bedrock, and this is

why she attempted to date it to the Persian period. Franken, however, presented the drawing of the cut of Kenyon's Square XVIII and demonstrated that this fill was not connected to the wall, as Macalister and Duncan had earlier presumed. Eilat Mazar (2007a: 49–60; 2007b: 17–21; 2008b: 31–37) suggested dating the tower and the wall attached to it (wall 27) to the 5th century BCE and identified it as a part of Nehemiah's wall, but the reasons for this decision and the question of the connection of this fill to the wall itself are not clear. Shiloh connected this tower to the 1st century BCE glacis that was already excavated by Kenyon. Its connection to Macalister's northern tower was well demonstrated (Shiloh 1984: 20–21, and figs. 27, 28; cf. the photo in Mazar 2007a: 64). This northern tower was not built on the bedrock and, consequently, it collapsed, making it possible for Eilat Mazar to excavate the fill under it. The fill contains finds only from the 6th–5th centuries BCE, which seems to indicate that it was part of the cleaning of the area above it (in the northern edge of the city of David, just under the Ophel), which in turn indicates that that area was populated in the Persian period. The date of the fill, where there are no indications for late Persian material (including *yehud* stamp impressions) may indicate that it was laid before the fill above it, discovered by Macalister and Duncan, but it is certainly not sufficient grounds to date the northern tower to the 5th century BCE or to identify it as part of Nehemiah's wall.

Some more Persian period finds, including one *yehud* stamp impression, were discovered, though not *in-situ*, in Crowfoot and Fitzgerald's excavations at the 'western gate' of the City of David (1927–1928).¹² Pottery sherds dated to the Persian period, as well as another stamp impression, were excavated by Reich and Shukron, just a few meters to the north, in the Givati parking place (even though they did not reach the Persian period Stratum when the excavation was stopped).¹³ These finds provide further evidence that the hill above this area (probably to its east and northeast) was occupied during the Persian period. This is another indication that the Ophel and the northern part of the City of David were settled during the Persian period.

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

¹² See: Crowfoot and Fitzgerald 1929: 67.

¹³ See: Shukron and Reich 2005: 8. The excavations in this area were renewed by the Israeli Antiquity Authority under the supervision of D. Ben-Ami and Y. Tchekhanovetz (from Reich and Shukron's excavations to the north), but no Persian period finds have been yet reported (2009).

Most of the Persian period pottery sherds and stamp impressions from the central and southern parts of the City of David were discovered in Kenyon's excavations along the eastern slope of the ridge, in Shiloh's Areas G, E, and D, and in the excavations of Reich and Shukron south of Shiloh's Area D.

In the publication of Shiloh's excavations at the City of David, three Strata were observed and dated to the period between the late 6th or early 5th and the 2nd century BCE: Stratum 9 was dated to the Persian period, Stratum 8 to the early Hellenistic period, and Stratum 7 to the 2nd century BCE (Hasmonean Period). Stratum 9, however, does not appear in all the excavated areas (Shiloh 1984: 4, Table 2). Finds attributed to this Stratum appeared in Area D1 (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59–62; De Groot 2001: 77), Area D2 (Shiloh 1984: 8–9),¹⁴ and in Area G (Shiloh 1984: 20).¹⁵ Shiloh's finds from the Persian Period were also partially represented in Area E1 (Shiloh 1984: 14; De Groot 2001: 77; 2004: 15), and included some chalk vessels (Cahill 1992: 191–198, fig. 14). Sherds dated to the Persian period were discovered in the fills in Area H, to the east of the Siloam Pool, on the eastern slopes of Mount Zion (De Groot and Michaeli 1992: 50–51; De Groot 2001: 78).¹⁶ Persian period sherds and seal impressions were discovered in Reich and Shukron's Areas A and B, above the Kidron Valley, ca. 200–250 m south of the Gihon Spring (Reich and Shukron 1998; 2007). The finds from these areas probably come from the settlement on the ridge above.

According to De Groot (2001: 77; 2004: 15, and cf. Cahill 1992: 191–198, fig. 14), the most significant finds from the Persian period were excavated in Area E, especially in four squares (N-M \ 1–20). In this area the excavators could differentiate between three different stages that they attributed to the Persian period Stratum 9. At the early stage (9c), there is evidence for the reuse of a large Iron Age building that was destroyed along with the rest of the city in 586 BCE (and cf. De Groot 2001: 77–78). De Groot and Ariel have suggested dating this early Persian period stage to the end of the 6th and first half of the 5th century BCE (De Groot 2001: 78; 2004: 15), *i.e.*, to the 'pre-Nehemiah' phase of the described 'return' of the exiles. A sloping level of quarrying refuse (composed of limestone chips with very little interspersed earth or pottery) was ascribed to the second stage (9b). The refuse covers the large house

¹⁴ The finds assigned to Stratum 9 at Area D2 include a Lycian coin dated to 500–440 BCE (Ariel 1990: C1) and an ostrakon (Naveh 2000: IN 16).

¹⁵ In this area Kenyon also discovered Persian Period finds (dated by her to the 5th-3rd centuries BCE) in the fill adjacent to the Northern tower, and this is the reason why she assigned this wall to Nehemiah's fortifications. See, however, the critique of De Groot 2001: 78.

¹⁶ De Groot's assumed that the finds from the Persian period are a proof that the Siloam pool was fortified during the Persian Period.

of the previous stage. The same level of quarrying refuse appeared also in Area D1, 500 m to the south, and was dated to Stratum 9 (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59, and cf. Shiloh 1984: 7; De Groot 2001: 78). In some cases the levels of these chips were separated by thin layers of earth, without any coherent pattern. The quarrying activities above the eastern slope were documented in the excavations by Bliss and Dickie (1898), Weil (1920) and in Area K of the City of David excavations (Ariel and Magness 1992). It should be emphasized that the existence of such levels of quarrying refuse is an indication that the areas where it was discovered were outside the limits of the city (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59), but it also indicates that immediately above this area significant construction activity was undertaken. De Groot and Ariel have suggested dating this second phase to the reconstruction of the city undertaken by Nehemiah in the middle of the 5th century BCE (De Groot 2001: 78; 2004: 15; 2005: 82). The fact that signs of this phase were discovered in a few other parts of the eastern slope (in all of them there is reuse in the Roman period) may support the assumption that it is a part of quarrying works conducted along the upper part of the eastern slope of the ridge. The Persian period date, the location of the works, and the long line along the eastern slope of the ridge, are all indications of the “missing” wall of the Persian period. It can be assumed that the heavy destruction of the city in 586 BCE and its later aftermath, forced the late 6th and 5th century BCE settlers to move the wall to the upper part of the ridge, where there was a need for preparation-quarrying activity.

A few terrace walls and some floors with ovens were attributed to the third stage (9C) of the Persian period. De Groot and Ariel have suggested this phase reflects activities at the margins of the city, outside the limits of the fortified walls. It seems, however, that the use of the quarries on the upper part of the ridge of the City of David continued over a long period of time, as at least one of the limestone chip layers belongs to Stratum 7 (Ariel, Hirschfeld and Savir 2000: 59).

These Persian period finds may be combined with the observations of Ariel and Shoham (2000: 138) and Reich and Shukron (2007: 64) that most of the *yehud* stamp impressions from Shiloh’s excavations originated in Areas B, D, and E. Of the eight stamp impressions discovered by Reich and Shukron on the eastern slope of the City of David, five originated in Area A, located in the Kidron Valley, some 200–250 m south of the Gihon spring, two in Area B, at the mid-slope of the hill, above Area A, and next to Shiloh’s Areas B and D1. Only one *Yehud* stamp impression was retrieved in the areas excavated around the Gihon spring, where vast amounts of late Second Temple debris were excavated above a huge fill containing late Iron Age II pottery. The fact that no Persian period sherds were discovered in this area and no *Yehud* stamp impressions, was interpreted by them as an indication that the Persian and early Hellenistic settlement was restricted to the top of the

ridge, to the south of Area G (cf. Finkelstein 2008: 506). The problem with this assumption is that this area is outside the narrow ridge on the hill. On the ridge itself, above the Gihon spring and Area G of Shiloh's excavations, there were many more *yehud* stamp impressions that were excavated by Macalister and Duncan (1926: 49–51; cf. Cook 1925). The significance of the distribution of the Persian period finds in this area is that, as in the Byzantine period, the Gihon Spring was not in use since the water flowed in Hezekiah's tunnel to the southern part of the City of David, and the spring itself was far below the limits of the city (Reich and Shukron 2004). The finds in Area G and its surroundings, as well as the finds in Shiloh's Areas E1, E2, E3, D1, B, and all the way south to Area A are indications for a poor, but extant settlement along the narrow ridge of the City of David.

According to Shiloh (1984: 4, Table 2; De Groot 2004: 67–69) Stratum 8 is fully represented only in Area E2 (cf. p. 10). This Stratum is also partially represented in Areas E1 (cf. pp. 14–15) and E3 (cf. pp. 10–11),¹⁷ and scarcely represented in Areas D1 (cf. pp. 7–8) and D2 (cf. pp. 8–9). In this case, too, the finds that can safely be attributed to this Stratum are meager, and mainly consist of three *columbaria* (De Groot 2004: 67–68; 2005: 84, with further details) and a structure (in Area E1) that yielded a rich corpus of pottery dating to the 3rd century BCE, the only assemblage of a pre-Hasmonean phase in the City of David (Shiloh 1984: 15). The excavators did not find *yehud* stamp impressions of the late types, dated to the 2nd century BCE, in either of these strata (Stratum 9 and 8). Most of the late types were discovered in Stratum 7 (Ariel and Shoham 2000, Table 1, and see also Reich 2003a: 258–259 and Tables 7.1–7.2). A cemetery assigned to this Stratum and dated to the first half of the 2nd century BCE was exposed to the east of the City Wall, on the slopes of the central part of the hill (De Groot 2004: 68–69).

PERSIAN PERIOD FINDS IN JERUSALEM: POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

The meager finds from the Persian and early Hellenistic periods can only be interpreted as evidence of a meager settlement in the City of David between the late Iron Age and the Hasmonean period (early 6th to 2nd centuries BCE). This is an observation shared by all scholars dealing with Persian period finds in Jerusalem (Kenyon 1963: 15; Carter 1999: 285; Eshel 2000: 341; Lipschits 2003: 330–331; 2005: 212; 2006: 32; Lipschits and Vanderhoof 2007;

¹⁷ See also the finds of some vessels made of hard stone discovered in this area (Cahill 1992: 191–198, fig. 14). Reich (2003b: 264–265), however, while publishing the same type of vessels discovered in the Jewish Quarter Excavations, clearly demonstrated that its date is the late 2nd or early 1st century BCE.

Schniedewind 2003; 2004: 165–178; Grabbe 2004: 25; Geva 2007b: 56–57; Finkelstein 2008: 501–504).

Finkelstein (2008) interpreted the finds from Persian period Jerusalem as evidence that the city was very small during this period. In light of the observations of Ariel and Shoham (2000: 138) and Reich and Shukron (2007: 64), he claimed that throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods activity on the Temple Mount was minimal, the northern as well as the southern parts of the ridge of the City of David were uninhabited, and the settlement was confined to the central part of the ridge, between Shiloh's Area G in the north and Areas D and E in the south. On this basis, he reconstructed a settlement of ca. 20–25 dunams, with a population of 400–500 people. This is the lowest archaeological estimate of the population of Jerusalem during the Persian and early Hellenistic period, far less than the estimates of Carter (1999: 288) and Lipschits (2005: 271; 2006: 32;), of about 60 dunams and 1,250–1,500 people (based on a coefficient of 20–25 people per one built-up dunam), or the view of Geva of a settled area of 60 dunams, but with an even lower coefficient of people per one built-up dunam, and an estimate of about 1,000 people (Geva 2007b: 56–57).

The reason for the ultra-minimalistic view set forth by Finkelstein (2008: 506–507) stems from both the very limited area he reconstructs as the maximal size of the Persian and Early Hellenistic settlement in Jerusalem (c. 240 meters from North to South and 120 meters from East to West, that is, about 20–25 dunam) and his low coefficient of 20 people per one built-up dunam.¹⁸ In arriving at his interpretation of the total settled area, Finkelstein seems to have misunderstood Reich and Shukron's data on the one hand, and on the other hand, did not take into account the full significance of Shiloh's finds, those of Reich and Shukron, as well as those of Macalister and Duncan in their excavations above Shiloh's Area G.

Reich and Shukron (2007: 64) included their Area A, located along the Kidron Road, some 200–250 meters south of the spring, under the southeastern edge of the City of David, in their observation of the area where Yehud stamp impressions were discovered along the eastern slopes of the City of David. They assumed that

¹⁸ In this estimation Finkelstein is far from being in accord with the actual finds as presented above and as will be summarized below, and this is aside from the miscalculation of the numbers he is giving. In fact, c. 240 meters from North to South and 120 meters from East to West should give an area of 28.8 dunams and not 20–25 dunams. This area should be populated with nearly 600 people according to his low coefficient of 20 people per one built-up dunam and not 400–500 people as he is stating. Using a coefficient of 25 people per one built-up dunam (and cf. the review of Geva 2007b: 51) will give a number of 720 people living in Jerusalem, and this is before one deals with Finkelstein's estimation of the settled area in the City of David.

the five stamp impressions discovered in this area originated from houses that were located somewhat higher up on the southern part of the hill, concluding that “in the Persian period, settlement on the Southeastern Hill was confined to the southern part of the hill only” (p. 64). There is a distance of about 300 meters between Reich and Shukron’s Areas A in the south and Shilo’s Area G in the north, with 10 more Yehud stamp impressions and a lot more Persian and Early Hellenistic material discovered in Shilo’s Areas D and E. The only area where Persian and Early Hellenistic material was not discovered was, as emphasized by Reich and Shukron, the area of the Gihon spring (and see the explanation for it above). All in all, The Persian and Early Hellenistic finds were discovered in a much broader area than that reconstructed by Finkelstein, in almost all of the excavated areas along and under the eastern slopes of the City of David.

SYNTHESIS:

The archeological data from the different excavations conducted along the City of David ridge indicates that the settlement in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods concentrated on the upper part of the ridge, in a very narrow north to south strip, above the eastern line of the Iron Age fortification. The average width of this topographical line (from east to west) is not more than 80–100 meters. However, except for the area of the spring well below the inhabited area, Persian period finds were unearthed in all other excavated areas along the eastern side of the ridge, which means that about 350 meters of north to south settlement along this line can be reconstructed, with a settled area of about 28–30 dunams.

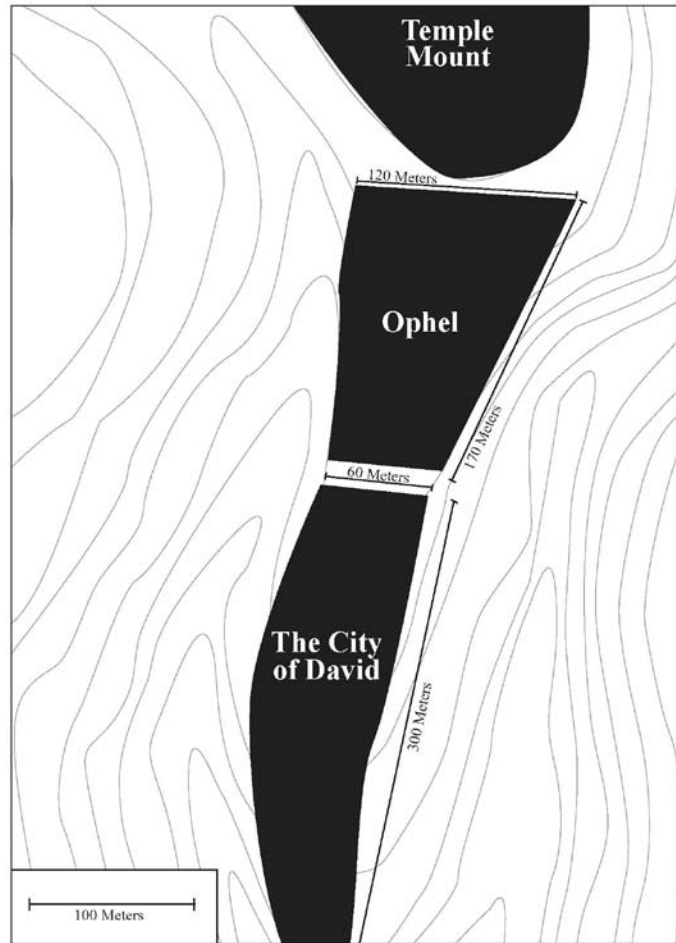
The area north of it, on the upper part of the City of David, just below the Ophel, contains a significant number of Persian period finds. The area which includes Shilo’s Area G, Eilat Mazar’s and Macalister and Duncan’s excavations is the richest with Persian period finds. The finds in this area were mostly discovered in earth fills that probably originated from the area above it, namely, the Ophel hill. They were laid there before the late Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The importance of the Ophel hill as the main built-up area in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods was never discussed in the archaeological and historical research. The reason was the scarcity of finds in this area, of about 20 dunams, between the ascension of the hill towards the Temple Mount and the northern part of the City of David. This is the only flat, easy-to-settle area in the city. Its proximity to the Temple Mount on the one hand and the easy option to fortify it (between the Kidron valley to the east, the Tyropoeon in the west, the Temple Mount to the north and the City of David to the south), made it the preferred option for settlement in the Persian period. In spite of the scarcity of finds in this area, the relative abundance of Persian finds along its southern slope, its proximity to the temple mount, its geographical characteristics and

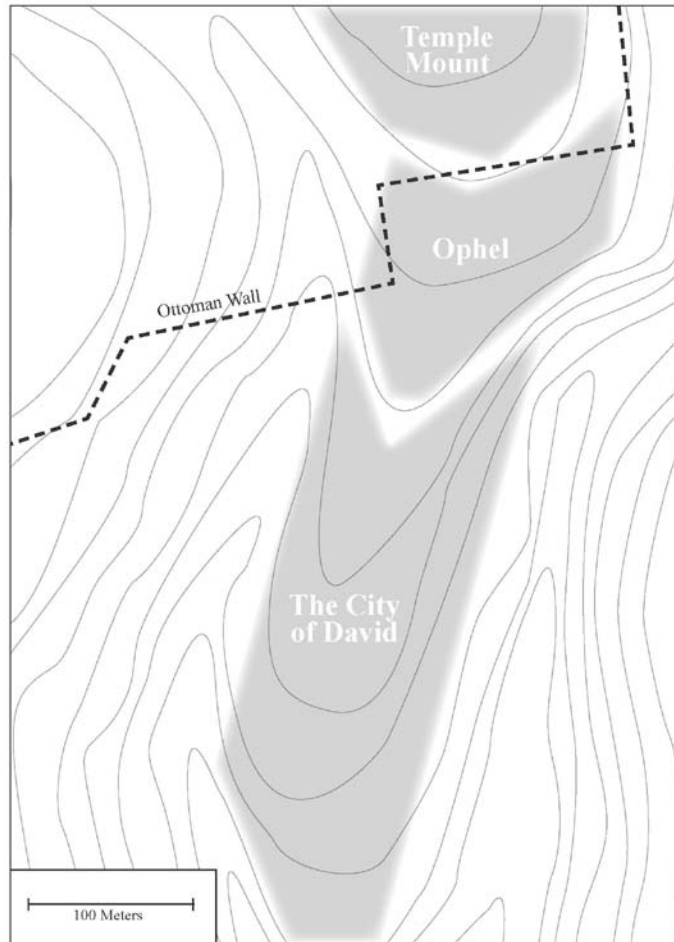
its importance in the Iron Age and post-Persian periods—all these facts indicate that this area should be considered part of the settled area of Jerusalem during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods. The absence of Persian period finds in the Ophel hill, and the attempts of scholars not to include this area as part of the city is an indication of the limitations of archaeological research, and for the need to reconsider, in some cases, the meaning of the absence of evidence.

The settled area of Jerusalem during the Persian period included the 28–30 dunams of the City of David plus the 20 dunams of the Ophel, which altogether amounts to about 50 dunams. Even if parts of the Ophel hill were built up with public buildings, and only part of it was settled with private houses, this area should be included in the settled area of Jerusalem during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods. Calculating the population of Jerusalem according to the lower coefficient of 20 people per one built-up dunam brings the population estimate to about 1000 people; and according to the higher coefficient of 25 people per one built-up dunam to about 1,250 people. This population estimate is very close to the accepted estimations in research in the last years – those of Carter (1999: 288) and Lipschits (2005: 271; 2006: 32;) – of about 60 dunams and 1,250–1,500 people respectively, or that of Geva (2007b: 56–57) of a settled area of 60 dunams and population estimate of about 1,000 people.

Jerusalem was no doubt a small city, but the ultra-minimalistic views expressed by Zwickel and Finkelstein should be rejected along with their implications for the study of the Biblical, archaeological and historical research of the Persian period.



Limits of the different Areas in Persian Period Jerusalem



Limits of the different Areas in Persian Period Jerusalem

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