Four Judean Bullae from the 2014 Season at Tel Lachish

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The article presents four decorated epigraphic bullae unearthed in the Level III destruction at Lachish during the 2014 season, focusing on the epigraphic, iconographic, and historical aspects of the seal impressions.

Keywords: Lachish; Iron Age IIB; West Semitic paleography; ancient Near Eastern iconography; grazing doe; Eliakim; Hezekiah

During the second season of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish (June–July 2014),[1] four decorated epigraphic bullae, two of them impressed by the same seal, were found in Area AA (**Fig. 1**) where

[1] The Fourth Expedition to Lachish is co-sponsored by The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University under the direction of Yosef Garfinkel, Michael G. Hasel, and Martin G. Klingbeil. Consortium institutions include The Adventist Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), Helderberg College (South Africa), Oakland University (USA), Universidad Adventista de Bolivia (Bolivia), Virginia Commonwealth University (USA), and Seoul Jangsin University (South Korea). The excavation work is in cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), the National Parks Authority, and the Israel Exploration Society, and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR). The team in 2014 consisted of 110 staff and volunteers from 18 different countries. The excavations were conducted under IAA license no. G-20-2014.

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a series of rooms belonging to a large Iron Age building were excavated.[2] The Iron Age building lies just to the north of the northeast corner of the outer courtyard's supporting wall of the Palace-Fort excavated by the British expedition led by James L. Starkey (Tufnell 1953) and the Tel Aviv University expedition led by David Ussishkin (2004). This specific location has significance based on the excavations in and around the "Solar Shrine" by Yohanan Aharoni (1975) in the 1960s.

The bullae were stored in a juglet found in a room (Square Oa26) located in the southwestern part of the Iron Age building (**Fig. 2**). The building suffered a massive destruction evidenced by roof collapse that covered and crushed dozens of vessels, including three *lmlk* jars with impressions, a four-handled Judean storage jar, bowls, lamps, and dipper juglets. Based on the *lmlk* jars and other ceramic types, the destruction of the building—specifically the destruction of Loci AA49 and AA52—were dated to the late 8th century B.C.E. (Level III), the destruction identified with Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. (Tufnell 1953: 315; Ussishkin 1977; Barkay and Vaughn 2004: 2169). The complete juglet, which was found within the threshold of a doorway in destruction debris of Locus AA52 (**Fig. 3**), was situated on its side, the rim and spout slightly tipped upward. After it was delineated and removed, its contents were carefully emptied. Bulla A (AA2175) was found inside the juglet during this process. After the removal and discovery of Bulla A, the sediment around the juglet area was carefully sifted by

[2] Area AA, Square Oa26 was excavated by Clemente Perez Garcia (supervisor) and volunteers from Southern Adventist University: Melissa Farrow, Erin Treitl, Daniella Hasel, Jonathan Klingbeil, and David Klingbeil.
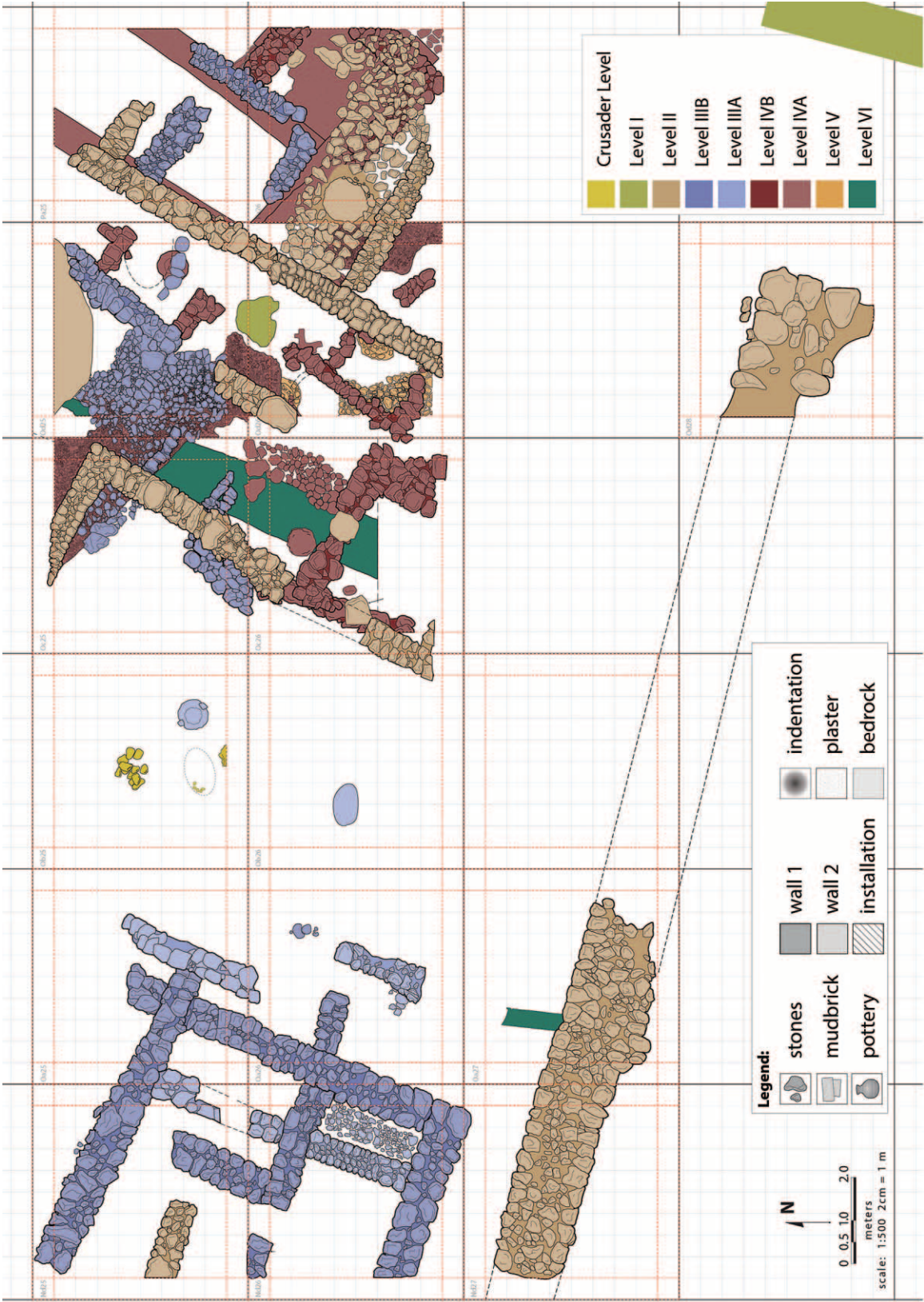
Fig. 1. Stratigraphic drawing of Area AA. (Drawing by G. Hasel and J. La Com; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)
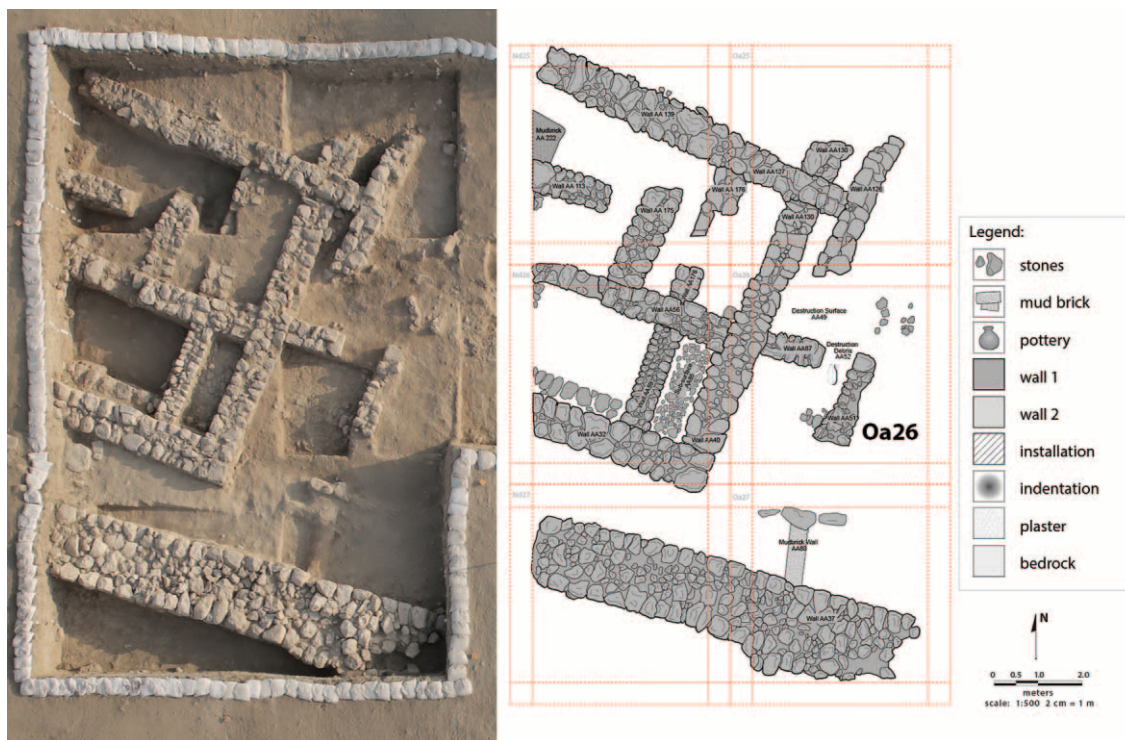
Fig. 2. Iron Age IIB (Level III) building where bullae were found. (Photo by E. Appollis; drawing by G. Hasel and J. La Com; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 3. Dipper juglet containing Bulla A in situ. (Photo by E. Appollis; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 4. Bulla A. (Photo by T. Rogovski; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 5. Line drawing of Bulla A. (Drawing by A. Yardeni; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

hand in order to see whether any further seal impressions had fallen out of the juglet, due to its in situ position. Bulla B (AA2176) and Bulla C (AA2177) were found during this process. Due to their excellent state of preservation, Bullae A and B were immediately read in the field and were recognized to have originated from the same seal. All the other area sediment from the floor/surface levels was systematically collected and sent for wet sifting to Jerusalem.[3] Bulla D (AA2102) was found during the wet-sifting process subsequent to the season and comes from Locus AA49, which is a contemporaneous destruction locus just to the north of doorway/threshold Locus AA52. Presumably, it, too, came from the fallen juglet. These are the first bullae unearthed in Lachish after the hoard of 17 bullae found by Aharoni, also in a dipper juglet, near the adjacent "Solar Shrine," in the summer of 1966 (Aharoni 1968: 164–68; 1975: pls. 20, 21).[4] Excavations at Lachish have traditionally provided numerous inscriptions—the most recent being an early alphabetic jar inscription (Sass et al. 2015)—and the newly discovered bullae provide a significant contribution to the growing corpus of epigraphic material from Lachish.

Catalog of Bullae

Description

*Bulla A (**Figs. 4, 5**):* Square Oa29, Locus AA52, Basket AA2175

*Bulla B (**Figs. 6, 7**):* Square: Oa29, Locus AA52, Basket AA2176

*Bulla C (**Figs. 8, 9**):* Square Oa29, Locus AA52, Basket AA2177

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[3] Wet sifting was contracted out by the expedition to The Temple Mount Sifting Project, Jerusalem, and was completed within a short time after the close of the season in July 2014.

[4] According to Aharoni (1975: 19–22), the hoard of 17 bullae was found inside a juglet in a storeroom assigned to Level II. Aharoni's Level II juglet was located about 39.9 m southeast of the Level III juglet with bullae found during the 2014 season.

*Bulla D (**Figs. 10, 11**):* Square Oa29, Locus AA49, Basket AA2102

Material

Light brown clay

Dimensions

Bulla A: length: 15 mm; width: 13 mm. Impression: length: 13 mm; width: 11 mm

Bulla B: length: 14 mm; width: 12 mm. Impression: length: 13 mm; width: 10 mm

Bulla C: length: 13 mm; width: 8 mm. Impression: length: 11 mm; width: 6 mm

Bulla D: length: 13 mm; width: 10 mm. Impression: length: 7 mm; width: 8 mm

Method of Manufacture

Bulla A: A chunk of clay attached to a rolled papyrus where the string tied it and the seal impressed the clay. The bulla was impressed perpendicular to the strings.

Bulla B: A chunk of clay attached to a rolled papyrus where the string tied it and the seal impressed the clay. The bulla was impressed perpendicular to the strings.

Bulla C: A chunk of clay attached to a rolled papyrus where the string tied it and the seal impressed the clay. Because of the fragmentary state of the bulla, it was not possible to determine which way, in relationship to the string, the bulla was impressed.

Bulla D: A chunk of clay attached to a rolled papyrus where the string tied it and the seal impressed the clay. Because of the fragmentary state of the bulla, it was not possible to determine which way, in relationship to the string, the bulla was impressed.
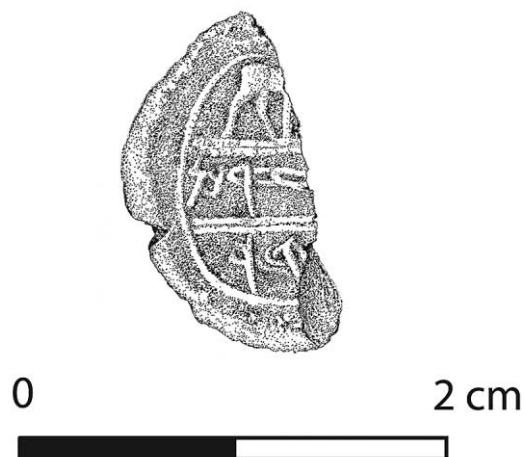
Fig. 6. Bulla B. (Photo by T. Rogovski; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 7. Line drawing of Bulla B. (Drawing by A. Yardeni; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 8. Bulla C. (Photo by T. Rogovski; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 9. Line drawing of Bulla C. (Drawing by A. Yardeni; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 10. Bulla D. (Photo by T. Rogovski; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)

Fig. 11. Line drawing of Bulla D. (Drawing by A. Yardeni; courtesy of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish)
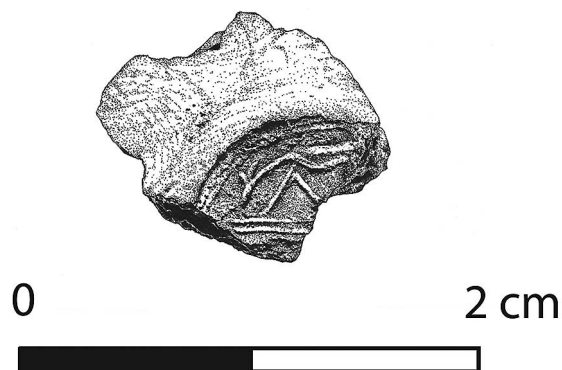
Workmanship

Bulla A: Impression: excellent; seal: excellent.

Bulla B: Impression: excellent; seal: excellent.

Bulla C: Impression: excellent; seal: excellent.

Bulla D: Impression: excellent; seal: excellent.

Technical Details

Bulla A: Seal impression on the face; string and papyrus impressions on the back.

Bulla B: Seal impression on the face; string and papyrus impressions on the back.

Bulla C: Seal impression on the face.

Bulla D: Seal impression on the face.

Preservation

Bulla A: Excellent.

Bulla B: Good. The border of the bulla is only partially preserved and there is a fingerprint on the left side of the impression, either from an uneven pressing of the seal into the clay or the pressing of the clay after the impression had been made (see Brandl 2000: 58).

Bulla C: Fragmentary. Only the left half has been preserved.

Bulla D: Fragmentary. Only the left top quarter has been preserved.

Seal Shape

All the seal impressions were made by convex scaraboids.

Typology

Judean glyptic seal.

Seal Design

Bullae A and B: The field is divided into three registers by two double lines and is surrounded by a double framing line with a dotted line in between. The top and bottom registers contain a Hebrew inscription, and the middle register is filled with an iconographic design.

Bulla C: The field is divided into three registers by two double lines and is surrounded by a single framing line. The top register is filled with an iconographic design, and the middle and bottom registers contain a partial Hebrew inscription.

Bulla D: The portion of the field preserved on this fragment is divided into two registers by a double line and surrounded by a double ladder-pattern frame or a double framing line with a dotted line in between. The proportions of the fragment indicate that the original field most probably consisted of three registers, of which only the top register, filled with an iconographic design, is preserved. This would follow the design layout of Bulla C, which is the most common design found on Judean seals from this period that show the same motif.[5]

In comparison to the hoard of bullae found by Aharoni nearby (Aharoni 1968: 164–68; 1975: pls. 20, 21), dated to the Level II destruction, the progressive development of Judean seals from a solely iconographic design, through an intermediate—that is, iconographic and epigraphic—and finally to an exclusively epigraphic one can be traced. The glyptic assemblage from Khirbet Qeiyafa (Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel 2014: 182),[6] a 10th-century B.C.E. Judean site in the Shephelah to the north of Lachish,[7] is exclusively iconographic in nature, whereas the 8th-century B.C.E. bullae from Lachish demonstrate an intermediate stage of glyptic development, bearing both an iconographic image and an inscription. The late 7th–early 6th-century B.C.E. context of the bullae excavated by Aharoni is exclusively epigraphic in character (cf. also Avigad and Sass 1997: 46).[8]

Inscription

Bullae A and B: The Hebrew inscription has two Hebrew names in two lines.[9]
1. *l'lyqm*   לאליקם
2. *yhwzrḥ*   יהוזרח

Bulla C: The Hebrew inscription is only preserved fragmentarily and has parts of two Hebrew names in two lines.
1. [*l.l'*]*zr bn*   [ל.לע]זר בן
2. [. . .]*gd/r*   ר/נד[. . .]

Bulla D: No inscription is preserved.

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[5] For comparative objects, both provenanced and unprovenanced, see below.

[6] The complete glyptic assemblage of Khirbet Qeiyafa is now published in Garfinkel, Ganor, and Hasel 2018.

[7] The current Lachish excavations are a continuation of a research design begun at Khirbet Qeiyafa. The directors of The Fourth Expedition to Lachish have documented their research objectives at the site in a recent article (Garfinkel, Hasel, and Klingbeil 2013).

[8] A new reading of the 17 bullae excavated by Aharoni has recently been provided in Mendel-Geberovich, Arie, and Maggen 2016.

[9] Our thanks go to Ada Yardeni who provided the drawings and verified the transcriptions of the epigraphic bullae.

Date and Paleography

Based on the archaeological context, all four bullae clearly date to the late 8th century B.C.E., Lachish Level III, which is identified with the 701 B.C.E. destruction by Sennacherib. Paleographically,[10] they are similar to the Siloam Tunnel Inscription (Guthe 1882; cf. also Naveh 1982: 69). From the six diagnostic letters that allow for a distinction between the late 8th- and late 7th-century B.C.E. dates suggested by Andrew Vaughn (*aleph, he, vav, nun, samek, qoph*), there are four (*aleph, he, vav,* and *qoph*) that occur on Bullae A and B, as well as one (*nun*) that occurs on Bulla C. Letters *aleph* and *vav* on Bullae A and B, as well as the *nun* on Bulla C, especially bear the characteristic 8th-century B.C.E. markers elaborated by Vaughn (1999: 47–56, 57–58; see also Faust and Eshel 2012: 65).

Personal Names

Bullae A and B

1. *ʾlyqm*: "may El establish" (Fowler 1988: 99), "God has risen [again]" (Jenni and Westermann 1997: 1420), "G. liess erstehen" (Koehler and Baumgartner 1995: 55; cf. Noth 1928: 200–201). The name is attested in different pre-exilic inscriptions from Jerusalem, Tel Haror Jar, Beth-Shemesh, Ramat Raḥel, Tell Beit Mirsim, and some of unknown provenance.[11] In the Hebrew Bible, the name occurs in 2 Kgs 18:18, 26, 37; 19:2; 23:34; 2 Chr 36:4; Neh 12:41; and Isa 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2. Especially 2 Kgs 18:18 is significant as it mentions "Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household" (ESV) of the royal palace during the time of Hezekiah.

2. *yhwzrḥ*: "YHWH has risen" (Fowler 1988: 102). The Hebrew verb *zrḥ* "to shine forth" refers to the rising of the sun (Koehler and Baumgartner 1995: 270). In the *Ancient Hebrew Inscription* corpus, the name is attested in inscriptions from Hebron, Tell Beit Mirsim, and some of unknown provenance.[12] There is no record of this name in the Hebrew Bible, although the verb *zrḥ* occurs ca. 20 times and as the proper name Zerah another 21 times (Noth 1928: 184), denoting various Israelites (e.g., the grandson of Esau in Gen 36:13), an Edomite (Gen 36:33), and also a Cushite (2 Chr 14:8–14). The inverted form, that is, with the theophoric element at the end, *zrḥyh* "Zerahiah," occurs in 1 Chr 5:32 [6:6]; 6:36; and Ezr 7:4; 8:4.

As there is no familial (*bn, bt, ʾšt,* etc.) or functional marker (*ʿbd, ʾšr ʿl hbyt, ngd, śr, mzkr, khn,* etc.) between the two names on the bullae, their relationship needs to be clarified. Seal legends without relational markers are usually patronymic, thus the legend should be read as "Eliakim, (son of) Yehozaraḥ."

In 1974, an unprovenanced bulla (**Fig. 12**), allegedly coming from the Hebron district, was acquired on the antiquities market by The Israel Museum for its Hebrew seals section (inventory no. 74.16.450). It was paleographically dated to the 8th century B.C.E. and based on the inscription more specifically to 727–698 B.C.E., the time of Hezekiah's reign: "The letters on the sealing which are easily discernible . . . resemble closely those in the Siloam inscription and agree very well with the suggested date. The initial *lamed* is also similar to that in the inscription of the Royal Steward from Jerusalem" (Hestrin and Dayagi 1974: 29).[13] The exclusively epigraphic bulla measures 12 × 9 mm, consists of four lines, and the letters are clearly distinguishable:

1. *lyhwzr*   ליהוזר
2. *ḥ bn ḥlq*   ח בן חלק
3. *[y]hw ʿbd ḥ*   [י]הו עבד ח
4. *zqyhw*   זקיהו

The legend of the seal impression was read as "(Belonging to) Yehozaraḥ, son of Ḥilqi[ya]hu, servant of Ḥizqiyahu."

At the time of publication, it was the first occurrence of King Hezekiah's name on a seal or seal impression, and although unprovenanced, the original publishers did not express any doubts about its authenticity: "The sealing of Yehozaraḥ a servant of King Hezekiah is the first absolutely dated Judean bulla and constitutes an interesting addition to the collection of Hebrew seals and seal impressions of the Israel Museum" (Hestrin and Dayagi 1974: 29). More recently, Lawrence Mykytiuk, in evaluating the probability of name identifications in Hebrew inscriptions, classifies the Yehozaraḥ Bulla as authentic based on a "consensus of expert opinion" (2004: 169).[14]

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[10] Avigad and Sass (1997: 18) and also Vaughn (1999: 60) underline the difficulties in establishing secure dates for seals or seal impressions solely on the basis of paleographic data; nevertheless, as the corpus of provenanced objects is growing, the testing and/or confirmation of earlier hypotheses continue.

[11] *AHI* nos. 48.001, 100.108, 100.242, 100.277, 100.436, 100.486, 100.829, 100.917, 101.113, 101.210, 101.268, 101.318, 101.396.

[12] *AHI* nos. 100.321, 100.618, 100.982, 101.182.

[13] For the inscription of the Royal Steward from Jerusalem, see Avigad 1953: 137–52.

[14] He assigns a "4)", which represents the halfway point in Mykytiuk's scale of the authenticity of an unprovenanced inscription (2004: 41–42). In a subsequent article and in response to a review and article by Christopher Rollston (2004; 2007), Mykytiuk (2009: 62–67) does not include the Yehozaraḥ Bulla in a list of objects that he either purges from his list of unprovenanced but authentic inscriptions or downgrades in terms of their probability of authenticity.
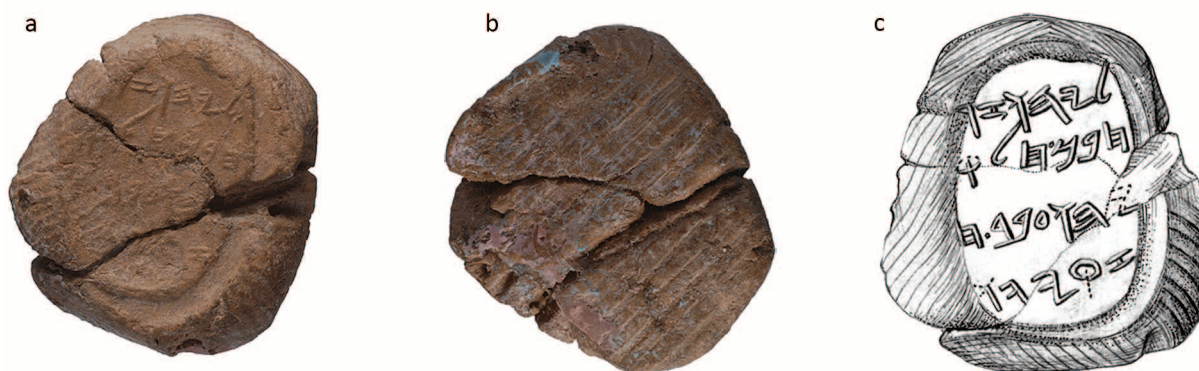
Fig. 12. Bulla of "Yehozaraḥ, son of Hilqiyahu, servant of Hizqiyahu" (12 × 9 mm): (a) front; (b) back; and (c) drawing of front. (Courtesy of The Israel Museum)

In the initial publication, Yehozaraḥ, hitherto unknown in the glyptic record, was tentatively identified as "a brother of Eliaqim son of Ḥilquiahu [*sic*], the Royal Steward of Hezekiah mentioned in 2 Kings 18:18 and Is. 36:3" (Hestrin and Dayagi 1974: 28–29). Subsequent publications reiterated this identification (Hestrin and Dayagi-Mendels 1979: 19, no. 4; Avigad and Sass 1997: 27, 172–73, no. 407), whereas Eliakim would have been serving as steward (*'šr ʿl hbyt*) and Yehozaraḥ as an official (*ʿbd*) in the court of Hezekiah. Both would have been sons of Hilkiah, a palace administrator during the time of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:18, 26, 37; Isa 22:20; 36:3). However, with the discovery of the Lachish Bullae A and B, this suggestion is no longer viable as both names are mentioned together on the same seal. To our knowledge, there is no single seal or seal impression from ancient Israel or Judah in existence, provenanced or unprovenanced, that establishes a fraternal relationship between the personal names occurring in its legend, and the filial relationship between the two names—Eliakim, son of Yehozaraḥ—needs to be presupposed. Consequently, a more probable explanation of the triangular relationship between the names on the Lachish bullae and the Yehozaraḥ Bulla would be that Eliakim would have been the son of Yehozaraḥ and the grandson of Hilkiah. The usage of *bn* in the Hebrew Bible would indeed allow for such an interpretation, and there are numerous cases that illustrate this relationship: "Sometimes *ben* by itself can also mean grandchildren, as in Gen. 31:28; 32:1 (31:55) (Laban and the children of Leah and Rachel); 2 S. 19:25(24) (Saul and Meribbaal); 2 K. 9:20 (Nimshi and Jehu; cf. 9:14); Ezr. 5:1 (Iddo and Zechariah; cf. Zec. 1:1); Neh. 12:23 (Eliashib and Johanan; cf. 12:10f.)" (Haag 1975: 150). Especially instructive is a comparison between Gen 46:12 and 1 Chr 4:1 where Hezron, together with Perez, Carmi, Hur, and

Shobal, is mentioned as a son of Judah, whereas in Gen 46:12 the sons of Judah are Perez and others, while Hezron is a son of Perez, making him a grandson of Judah.

Thus, it is possible that Bullae A and B from Lachish presented here stem from the personal seal of Eliakim the Royal Steward in the time of Hezekiah (according to 2 Kgs 18:18), son of Yehozaraḥ (not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible but on the bulla from The Israel Museum) and grandson of Hilkiah (also mentioned in 2 Kgs 18:18).

Bulla C

1. *lʿzr*: "belonging to Help" (Koehler and Baumgartner 1995: 767–68), hypocoristic for *ʿzryhw* "[Yahweh] has helped" (Fowler 1988: 106; Deutsch 2003: 418–19) or *ʿzrʾl* ["God has helped"], also *ʿzryʾl* ["God is my help"] (Noth 1928: 154); this root is used in several proper names (Noth 1928: 21, 90, 92, 110, 129–30, 154, 156, 175–76; Jenni and Westermann 1997: 1101) and is also attested in different pre-exilic inscriptions.[15] In the Hebrew Bible, it is used as Ezer in Neh 12:42 and in its non-abbreviated form as Azariah in 1 Kgs 4:2; 2 Kgs 15:6; and 2 Chr 26:17, 20; 28:12; 29:12; 31:10.

2. *gdr*: "stone wall" (Koehler and Baumgartner 1995: 173; Brown et al. 1979: 155). In the *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* corpus, it is attested on a bulla from The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection (Deutsch 2003: 247). In the Hebrew Bible, the name occurs in 1 Chr 4:4, 18; 8:31; 9:37 as the personal name of one of the sons of the father of Gibeon (cf. Noth 1928: 228) and is also used as a toponym in Jos 15:58 and 1 Chr 4:39, 12:7, denoting

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[15] *AHI* nos. 2.022, 2.023, 2.051, 2.058, 3.303, 8.012, 32.001, 100.047, 100.340, 100.355, 100.369, 100.370, 100.557, 100.635, 100.773, 100.813, 100.866, 100.871.

a Judean town north of Hebron. It is also the preferred reading (over *gdd*) of the frequently recurring term in the Gibeon jar handle inscriptions (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005: 167–69). It is likely that *gdr* on the jar handles indicates a personal name (Avigad 1959) as also attested in the Hebrew Bible.

Iconography

Bullae A and B

Two does or gazelles[16] are antithetically positioned, that is, facing each other, and are depicted in a striding position with their heads toward the ground and their tails curved in a downward position. The execution of the two animals is realistic, emphasizing the anatomic features of the caprid.

Bulla C

One gazelle facing to the right. Only part of the animal's body with the two hind legs and one of the front legs is preserved, but from the proportions of the animal as well as the similar realistic depiction as on Bullae A and B, it is apparent that there is only a single doe in the upper register.

Bulla D

One doe facing to the left with its head facing downward. The hind legs are missing due to the fragmentary preservation of the bulla. The execution of the doe, in contrast to the other three bullae, is much more schematic and in stick-figure fashion (cf., e.g., Deutsch 2003: figs. 61, 117, 138, 200; see esp. Brandl 2000: 65–67, fig. 12).

Numerous unprovenanced bullae with two facing does or just a single doe have been found, both in realistic and more stylized execution (e.g., Deutsch 2003: figs. 8, 9, 11, 23, 27, 61, 83, 90, 117, 132, 138, 195, 200, 207, 214, 215, 225, 261, 274, 311, 350, 360, 378, 411; Hestrin and Dayagi-Mendels 1979: 69–70, figs. 45, 46; Avigad and Sass 1997: figs. 144, 181, 263, 301, 649). The single animal is much more frequently attested than the antithetically arranged double cervidae, and it is inter-

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[16] The animal has been described generically as caprid (e.g., Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 184), doe (e.g., Deutsch 2003: 26), or gazelle (Avigad and Sass 1997: 45). As a matter of fact, the same seal impression that Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass have identified as "graceful gazelle" in the introduction of their work, is described later in the corpus as a "grazing doe" (1997: 238, fig. 649). One problematic aspect in identifying the animal with a doe is the extension of the presumable ears in some images that could be interpreted as horns, thus pointing to a gazelle. Tallay Ornan identifies them generically as belonging to the Bovidae and Cervidae families (2016: 279–80).

esting to note that of the few unprovenanced bullae that depict the double cervidae motif, two bear inscriptions connecting them to the reign of the Judean king Ahaz, father of Hezekiah (Deutsch 2003: figs. 8, 9). However, as they are unprovenanced and thus impossible to date with any certainty, any further conclusions are tentative except for pointing out the possibility that the grazing doe motif on Judean bullae is attested on epigraphic seals that are often in connection with names associated with the royal household (Deutsch 2003: 26–27, 32), and most are dated epigraphically to the late 8th or 7th century B.C.E.

Provenanced bullae or seals with the iconographic motif of the grazing doe are much less frequent, but aside from the four Lachish bullae presented here, there are six objects that have been unearthed over the last 15 years, possibly due to the more sophisticated sifting operations used in recent excavations. Four of the objects bearing the motif come from the City of David excavations.

1. Among the 53 bullae discovered in the Bullae Room located at the base of the Stepped Stone Structure in Area G, a bulla fragment was found with a schematic rendering of a grazing doe (the hind legs are not visible) in the top register, incised by the selective use of a drill (**Fig. 13**). According to Edith Porada (1948: 89–90), this corresponds to the Assyrian-Babylonian Late Drilled Style and should be dated to the 7th century B.C.E. The two epigraphic registers underneath are lost (Brandl 2000: 65–67, no. B49).

2. Near the Gihon Spring, east of the Spring Tower and the rock-cut pool, a bulla fragment was discovered in a private dwelling dated to the Iron Age II (**Fig. 14**). On the upper register in a horizontal seal layout is a cervid, possibly a gazelle, of which only the rear part has been preserved. The personal name in the middle register has been read *lyrḥ*[*mʾl*]. The modeling execution of the underlying seal is more realistic, and the dating of the object corresponds to the late 8th century/beginning of the 7th century B.C.E. (Reich and Shukron 2009: 360).

3. A bulla fragment from a large assemblage of 107 bullae, both epigraphic and anepigraphic, was recovered from a dump east of the Large Stone Structure during the 2007–2008 season of the City of David excavations. The inscription reads *lnʾhbt* "to the (female) beloved" and below it is the body of a grazing doe with its head missing (Mazar and Livyatan Ben-Arie 2015: 299, 336, 355, no. B59). Ornan identifies the animal on the basis of the short tail turned upward as a "young female roe deer" (2016: 282). The dating of this object is less secure because of its missing archaeological context (**Fig. 15**), but epigraphically it appears to be late 7th century/early 6th century B.C.E.
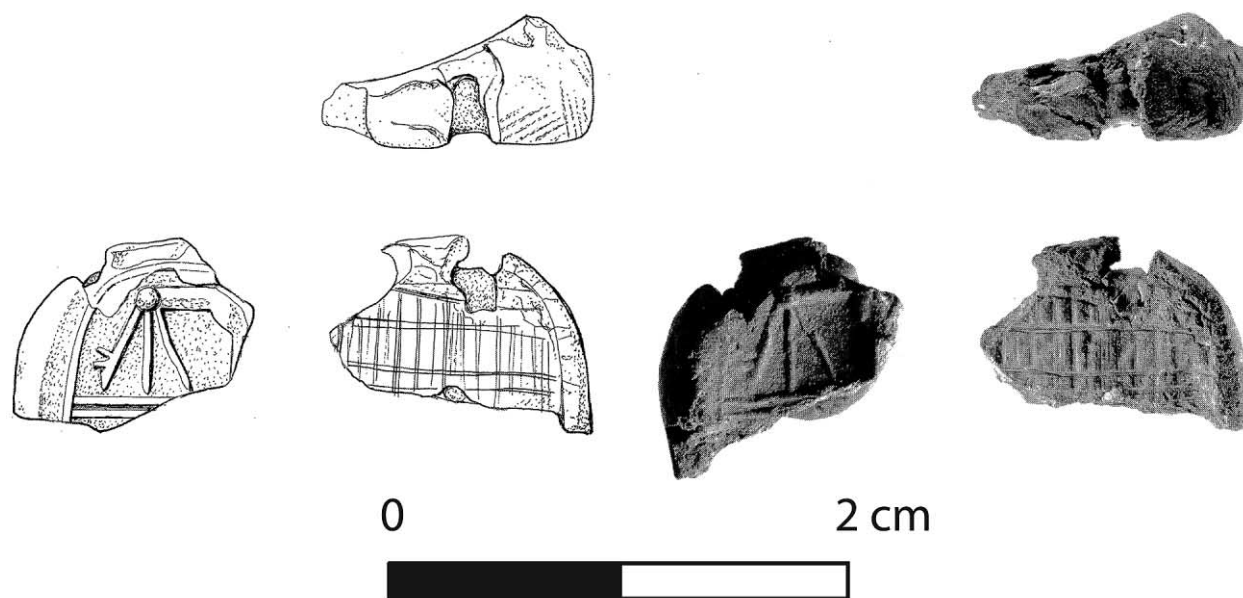
Fig. 13. Bulla fragment from the Bullae Room, City of David. (Courtesy of B. Brandl)

4. Originating from the same dump, another more fragmentary object (**Fig. 16**) depicts only the legs of the animal, but their position points to the grazing doe motif (Mazar and Livyatan Ben-Arie 2015: 337, no. B60).

5. A completely preserved bulla was found in 2008 at Tel ʿEton in a building destroyed during the Assyrian campaign at the end of the 8th century B.C.E. In terms of the workmanship and layout, it comes close to Bullae A and B from Lachish presented here (**Fig. 17**), although there is only one animal visible, facing to the right as on Bulla C from Lachish. The inscription reads *lšbnyhw smk* "belonging to Shebanyahu, (son of) Samak" (Faust 2011: 209, fig. 9; Faust and Eshel 2012: 65).

6. A dark limestone seal from Tel Hebron (Tell Rumeida), found in 2014, represents the only provenanced actual seal with the grazing doe motif (**Fig. 18**). It was excavated in the context of the Iron Age IIB fortifications and shows a horned animal with head lowered, facing—on the inverted drawing—to the left (Vainstub and Ben-Shlomo 2016: 156, fig. 5). The inscription reads *šptyhw smk* "belonging to Shepatyahu, (son of) Samak," mentioning the same patronym as on the bulla from Tel ʿEton.

Thus, the four Lachish bullae represent a further contribution to the growing corpus of provenanced examples of the grazing doe motif on Judean seals from the end of the 8th century B.C.E. Bullae A and B represent the first archaeologically dated occurrence of the antithetical

Fig. 14. Bulla fragment from the Gihon Spring, City of David. (Photo by V. Naikhin; courtesy of the Reich and Shukron Excavations in the City of David)

depiction of two grazing does and further attest to the importance of the motif in the official and royal iconographic repertoire of the late 8th century B.C.E. Ornan indicates that the motif was "well rooted in the local visual repertoire of Judah during the Iron IIB" and further underlines their importance by pointing to their quality and the use of advanced engraving techniques, suggesting that the underlying seals were made of semi-hard stones and "that the seals showing grazing or browsing does were luxurious glyptic items" (2016: 286).

The fourfold presence of the motif on bullae from three different administrative glyptic assemblages found in the City of David excavations attests to "its rank in

Fig. 15. Bulla fragment from Dump, City of David. (Courtesy of E. Mazar)

Fig. 16. Bulla fragment from Dump, City of David. (Courtesy of E. Mazar)

Fig. 17. Bulla from Tel ʿEton. (Photo by Z. Radovan; courtesy of the Tel ʿEton Archaeological Expedition)

Fig. 18. Seal from Tel Hebron (15 × 13 × 8 mm). (Courtesy of D. Vainstub)

the local hierarchy of visual icons" (Ornan 2016: 286). An even stronger case for the connection of the motif to royal administration can be made for the four bullae from Lachish as, up to now, it is the only iconographic motif represented on Judean glyptic finds from the Level III destruction layer at Lachish. This exclusivity requires further discussion of the iconographic meaning as well as the significance of the motif in Judah at the end of the 8th century B.C.E.

The doe motif has been interpreted as a grazing/ browsing (Ornan 2016: 285) or water-lapping animal (Keel 1997: 322). The water-lapping interpretation is supported by an ivory from Samaria (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 185, ill. 200a), which Ornan, however, interprets as grazing.[17] Ornan has convincingly demonstrated that "south Syria" (Damascus/Samaria) workshops show affinities to the ivories from Nimrud and Arslan-Tash. Nevertheless, an ivory plaque from Nimrud (9th–8th centuries B.C.E.) found in The Cleveland Museum of Art shows a water-lapping stag, where what Ornan identifies on the ivory from Samaria as a plant rather appears to be the tongue, lapping up water (**Fig. 19**).

Ornan considers the motif of the grazing doe as part of the long "tradition of the south Levantine pictorial imagery that uses some bovid and cervid species as metaphors for copulation and sexual virility, together with their implied aspects of fertility, abundance and love" (2016: 298). She arrives at that conclusion on the basis of a survey of the motif from the Neolithic to the Iron Age II (Ornan 2016: 293–96), including objects that show associations between caprids and female images (Neolithic; terra-cotta from ha-Bashan Street, Tel Aviv), a caprid next to a human copulation scene (Early Bronze Age III; seal impression from Khribet ez-Zeraqon, Jordan), worshippers kneeling in front of a horned animal (Middle Bronze Age; scaraboids),[18] pottery paintings that combine female genitals with caprids (Late Bronze Age; Lachish ewer), and depictions of suckling caprids, accompanied by scorpions (Iron Age I/II; stamp seals from Beth-Shemesh, Megiddo, etc.). Her conclusion is that the "Iron II representations are to be seen as pictorial signs referring to similar aspects" (Ornan 2016: 296). However, there is a considerable danger of importing all or, at least, multiple iconographic meanings from a variety of diachronic pictorial constellations into one specific

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[17] Ornan comments on the Samaria ivory: "An undulating band-like form representing a leaf, which stretches along the ground and ends in the mouth of the left-hand deer, confirms that the deer is grazing. Similar depictions (though with some differences) of undulating leaves terminating in the deer's mouth occur on Syrian ivory carvings from Arslan-Tash and Nimrud, having been taken there as booty from the major Syrian centers of ivory production" (2016: 287).

[18] Ornan mentions two unprovenanced scaraboids as examples, which, however, also depict a number of other iconographic elements in context with the grazing doe, and the worship posture of the human figure toward the caprid is by no means clear (2016: 295; cf. Schroer 2008: figs. 432, 433).

Fig. 19. Decorative plaque: Browsing or water-lapping stag, 900–800 B.C.E. Phoenician, from Nimrud, Iraq, 9th–8th century B.C.E. Ivory; overall: 4.50 × 8.90 cm (1 3/4 × 3 1/2 in). (Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art [inventory no. 1968.49])

appearance of the motif.[19] In the case of the grazing doe motif, this is uniquely characterized by: (a) the absence of any significant iconographic context;[20] (b) the animal's consistent grazing, browsing, or water-lapping posture; and (c) its geographically and chronologically limited distribution on Judean seals and seal impressions from the Iron Age IIB.[21]

In accounting for this specific context, Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger have interpreted the grazing doe on Judean glyptics as part of a group of religiously neutral animals, that is, animals "which had not been used as attribute animals for deities" (1998: 186), disassociating it from fertility connotations: "The great majority of the caprids depicted on stamp seals that are dated to Iron Age IIB give no indication that they were connected originally with a female deity" (1998: 185–86, ill. 200b–d). Thus, the motif approximates itself to imagery familiar from the Hebrew Bible (cf. Psalm 42:1) and communicates the intense longing for God's presence (cf. Keel 1997: 322), whereas the depicted animal would serve as a metaphor for the seal owner himself. Keel and Uehlinger have been criticized by Ornan for this final conclusion, arguing that "the representation of a human being by theriomorphic images is hardly recorded, to my knowledge, in the art of the ancient Near East" (Ornan 2016: 296). While this is correct, the contextual treatment of the grazing doe in Iron Age IIB as a religiously "neutral" animal bears some merit.

There is a further possibility that builds on both of the above observations. Often the iconography and epigraphy on seals are treated as unrelated elements, and while both elements might have been incised at different

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[19] This could be likened cautiously to what James Barr called the *illegitimate totality transfer* in the field of biblical semantics, which refers to the assumption that the sum of all meanings of a word at any given time apply to any usage of that word in a particular context (cf. Barr 1961: 218). Interestingly, there is growing recognition of the role of syntax and semantics in iconographic interpretation (cf. de Hulster, Strawn, and Bonfiglio 2015; and Klingbeil 2014)

[20] With maybe the exception of an *ankh* sign (see below) or some vegetation on a handful of unprovenanced bullae. An unprovenanced bulla from The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection demonstrates this. It depicts the two grazing does around an Egyptian *ankh* sign with the inscription "belonging to ʾElishamaʿ, (son of) *[. . .]kyhw*, servant of ʾAhaz" (Deutsch 2003: fig. 8).

[21] In comparing the occurrence of the motif between Israel and Judah, Ornan concludes "[t]he Israelite finds exhibit a more diverse repertoire, which includes deer, gazelles and ibexes, compared to their counterparts from Judah. Moreover, the Israelite representations are found on three types of artifacts made of three types of material (ivory, bone and jar drawings), while the Judahite depictions are recorded only on glyptic finds" (2016: 289).

stages of the seal production, there is an important interplay between both, as Uehlinger has suggested (1993: 257–88). The preference at the end of the 8th century B.C.E. for a distinctly Judean iconographic and religiously neutral motif in combination with the names of officials connected to the Judean royal administration could be interpreted as such an example, in this case, as an attempt to create a separate national identity apart from and in contradiction to Assyrian military domination.[22] It has been observed in the glyptic record that Judean iconography distanced itself from Mesopotamian influences (Avigad and Sass 1997: 45), and it is interesting to note that the four bullae discussed here—which originated from the same archaeological context at Lachish—all draw on identical iconographic imagery, that is, the grazing, browsing, or water-lapping doe. It stands to question if this persisting motif in the destruction layer of Level III at Lachish, as well as its recently increased presence in other administrative glyptic assemblages from Judah, is not an indicator for an intentional royal strategy to preserve a religious and political national identity under Assyrian dominance through a type of royal image branding.

Interestingly, the Hebrew Bible in Lam 1:6 also links the imagery of the grazing, browsing, or water-lapping horned animal to royal administrative terminology: "From the daughter of Zion all her majesty has departed. Her princes have become like deer that find no pasture; they fled without strength before the pursuer" (ESV). In this case, a male animal, *ʾayyāl* "roe deer" (*cervus capreolus*),[23] is metaphorically referenced in connection with *śar* "official, prince, leader"—both in the plural—and the downfall of Judah at the end of the 7th century B.C.E. creates the historical backdrop for the persisting combination of royal terminology and the motif of the grazing, browsing, or water-lapping horned animal into the Iron Age IIC in Judah.[24]

Summary

The four bullae excavated in Area AA during the 2014 season come from the same room and date to the Level III destruction of 701 B.C.E. They contribute uniquely to our understanding of the importance of the dwelling, built in proximity to the palace courtyard wall, and possibly indicate the socio-economic importance of its owner. The common iconography of the seal impressions demonstrates the significance of the imagery during the late 8th century B.C.E. The grazing, browsing, or water-lapping horned animal motif raises questions about its usage within the political and religious climate of this period, suggesting that the religiously neutral imagery was part of the royal administrative iconographic repertoire. This is corroborated by the growing number of provenanced objects from administrative contexts bearing the same motif. Finally, the names *ʾlyqm*, *yhwzrḥ*, and *ʿzr* reflect common pre-exilic Judahite, mostly theophoric, onomastica, all attested in the corpus of Hebrew inscriptions as well as in the Hebrew Bible. There remains the possibility that Bullae A and B connect the original seal owner with Eliakim, who was the royal steward during the reign of King Hezekiah, pending further stratified evidence.

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[22] Ian Douglas Wilson (2012: 259–78) makes an argument for national identity formation on the basis of a survey of Judean pillar figurines and their archaeological provenances as well as their place in household archaeology. While the veracity of his position with regard to the Judean pillar figurines might be open to criticism, his observations can be linked to the surprising and exclusive prevalence of the grazing, browsing, or water-lapping horned animal among the four bullae from Lachish (cf. also Byrne 2004).

[23] LXX and Vulgate read *ʾêlîm* "rams" instead of *ʾayyālîm* "deer" (MT) but the ensuing imagery of the hunt in the third bicola of the verse using *rdp* "hunt, pursue" underlines the punctuation of MT as the preferred one (Cross 1983: 139).

[24] Thanks goes to Professor Frevel for alerting us to the reference after the contents of this article were presented at the 2016 ASOR meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Frevel observes in his recent commentary on Lamentations: "Die Führungsschicht wird mit Hirschen . . . verglichen, was ohne Parallele in den alttestamentlichen Texten ist. In der Ikonographie aber gibt es Anzeichen, dass die paarhufigen Geweihträger mit der führenden Elite verknüpft sind. Vielfach findet sich der Hirsch als Siegelbild auf Namenssiegeln der späten Königszeit . . ., zuletzt gehäuft auf Siegeln aus Lachisch" (2017: 105–6).

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