

HERODIUM

Final Reports of the 1972–2010 Excavations

Directed by Ehud Netzer

Volume I

Herod's Tomb Precinct

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CHAPTER 14

THE HEBREW OR ARAMAIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE AREA OF THE TOMB AT HERODIUM

Esther Eshel*

The following are five short (between three and nine letters) and mostly incomplete inscriptions of various types. Some of them feature Jewish names, while others also give amounts of dry produce, designated in *qab* or *seah*, but the names of the actual products themselves are not included. Such designations are known from various collections of Aramaic ostraca from Idumea, dated to the Persian and Hellenistic periods, i.e., the collections published by Eph^{al} and Naveh (1996), Lemaire (1996, 2002), and lately those found in Mareshah, published by Eshel (2010). All of the preserved names are Jewish and include the theophoric element יה(ו) or the short ending י-.

Since the very little that remains provides us only with names and the noun בית, which, in addition to its Hebrew usage, can also be found in Aramaic in the construct form, בית X, there is no indication whether these inscriptions were written in Hebrew or in Aramaic. All of them were inscribed on sherds in black ink.

Inscription no. 1 can be dated between the first century BCE and the mid-first century CE, while the other four are probably to be dated to the first century CE. The latest one is no. 2, which might even post-date the Herodian period.

In addition, there are 12 alphabet letters serving as mason marks, found on some of the building stones of Herod's mausoleum, all appearing on the upper blocks of the cornice of the *tholos*.

Finally, two inscriptions, each consisting of three letters, are presented. They were engraved on large, hard limestone blocks which were incorporated in two of the mausoleum's terraced garden walls.

HEBREW OR ARAMAIC INSCRIBED POTTERY

1. L.A2583–10203/1 (Ill. 14.1)

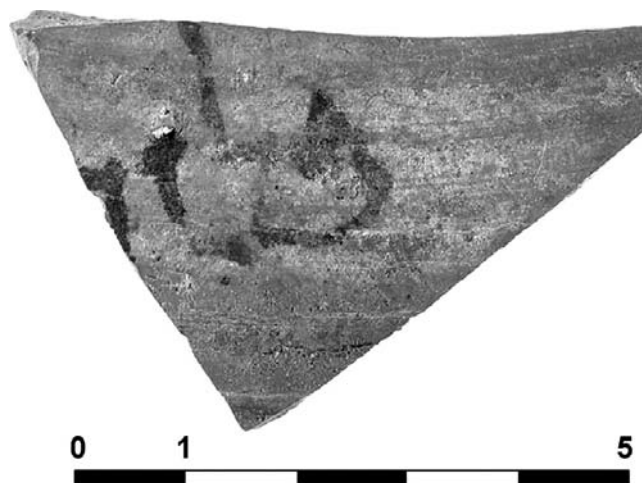
Description: Orange ribbed surface, orange and gray section; four letters written in black ink.

Measurements: Sherd: maximum height 4 cm, maximum width 6 cm; line length 2.5 cm; letter height 1.5–2.1 cm.

Reading

פליה]

Pelayah



Ill. 14.1. Inscription no. 1.

Script

- פ — a cursive form made with two strokes, pointed 'head,' long convex base, to be dated to the end of first century BCE–mid-first century CE (Yardeni 2000, B: 200–201, Type 2).
- ל — the uppermost part of the 'mast' has not survived, and thus there is no indication whether it included a 'hook' (Yardeni 2000, B: 190–191).
- י — the 'hook' type (Yardeni 2000, B: 186–187; Type 2c1).
- ה — only the corner of the right downstroke and the 'roof' have survived.

Date: mid-first century CE (before 71 CE).

This sherd was revealed in the refuse dump exposed between the ruins of the mausoleum and those of the late (monumental) stairway. This dump was created at the end of the First Jewish Revolt by the Roman army who took control of the Mountain Palace-Fortress and apparently cleaned up 'garbage' left there by the earlier occupants. Alternatively, but less likely, it might have been the result of earlier clean-up operations by the rebels themselves, near the end of the revolt.

Commentary

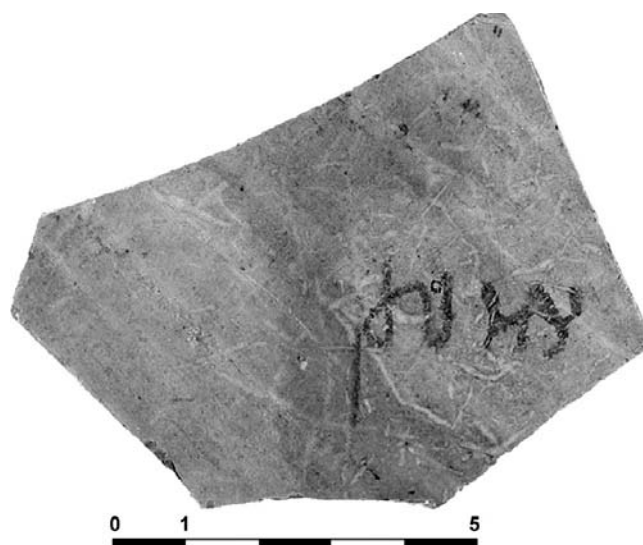
פליה — The name is mentioned once in the Bible, as one of King David's children (1 Chr. 3: 24). It is also found on the Hebrew seal no. 332 (Avigad and Sass 1997: 146). Later, it is known from ostrakon no. 584 found at Masada (Yadin and Naveh 1989: 57, Pl. 47).

According to Ilan (2002: 205), the name פילא is a variation of פליה which she explains as "one form of Aramization," that "seems to have been the obliteration of the theophoric element with the change of pronunciation, like חנניה and חנינא" (ibid.: 26).

2. L.A2583–10203/2 (Ill. 14.2)

Description: Light brown surface, gray section with white inclusions, darker brown interior; six letters written in black ink.

Measurements: Sherd: maximum height 8 cm, maximum width 10 cm; inscription length 3.2 cm, letter height 1 cm, final *nun* 2 cm.



Ill. 14.2 Inscription no. 2.

Reading

יהונתן

YHWNTN (Jonathan)

Script

The name יהונתן is written in cursive script. The letters יה are written as a ligature; the נ and ת also appear to be written as a ligature, although not as usually found at the end of the word, as described by Yardeni: "Among the most frequent ligatures of two or more letters appearing as part of a word, we note the following ones:.... *yhw* (mainly in the theophoric elements in names, like *Yhw¢nn*) ... *nt* (mainly at the end of the words, like *šbt, šnt*)"; see, e.g., the signature of יהוסף in the debt acknowledgment, Murabba^aat no. 18, line 10 (Milik 1961: 101, Pl. XXIX; Yardeni 2000, A: 16–17; B: 216).

ת — the cursive form with a big loop.

Date: This inscription should be dated to the first or second centuries CE.

This sherd was found in the same context as item no. 1 (see above).

Commentary

יהונתן — the biblical name יונתן (see, e.g., 1 Sam 13–14; Jer 40: 8; Ezr 8: 6) was also written as יהונתן (e.g., 1 Sam 19–20). יהונתן was a popular name in the Second Temple period, mainly in Hasmonean times (Ilan 2002: 144–150).

3. L.A2603–5244 (Ill. 14.3)

Description: Orange exterior, gray section, pinkish interior. Three letters written in black ink.

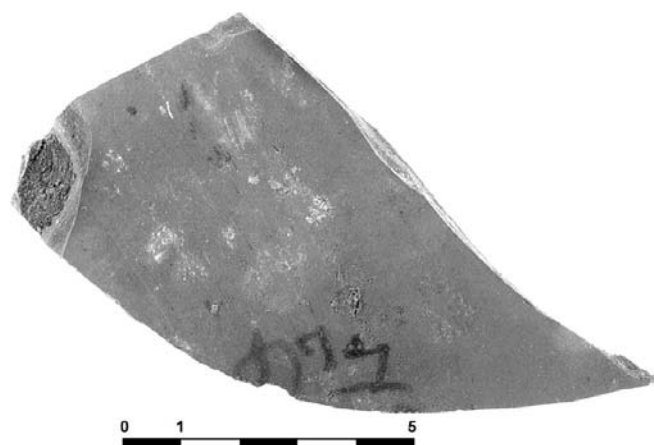
Measurements: Sherd: maximum height c. 6.5 cm, maximum width c. 11.5 cm; inscription length 2.5 cm, letter height 0.8–1.1 cm.

Reading

בית]

Translation

the house [of...]



Ill. 14.3. Inscription no. 3.

Script

ב — of the Herodian type, with the base stroke almost horizontal and extended beyond its meeting point with the downstroke, forming a ‘tail’ in the lower right corner; the serif is visible at the left end of the ‘roof’ (Yardeni 2000, B: 170–171), decorating the letter form in a triangular shape.

י — this letter was written in two or three strokes. First, the upper right stroke, which slants down to the right, and then the left stroke, which starts in almost the same place and goes to the left, being written more horizontally than the right stroke. At the left end, another short line, going to the right, was added. No parallel to this type of י was found. Another possible reading would be of a י, but it also does not have such a downstroke. Thus, on account of its small size and the fact that it is written in an upper form position, I prefer to read it as a י.

For an unusual shape of a י, see the name פדיה in inscription no. 17 (Cotton et al. 2010: 63–64).

ת — the cursive form with a big loop.

This sherd was found close to the bottom of the pool between the mausoleum and the late stairway, in a context predating or, alternatively, contemporaneous with, the building of this stairway, the estimated date of which is close to Herod's death.

Commentary

בית] — “The house [of...]” — of the next word, which probably was a proper name, nothing has survived.

4. L.A2562–5093 (Ill. 14.4)

Description: Amphora shoulder; pinkish-orange surface, gray section with large white inclusions. Interior similar to surface. Eight letters written in black ink.

Measurements: Inscription on shoulder of amphora above carination. Sherd: height c. 20 cm, width c. 30 cm; inscription length 6 cm (complete inscription), letter height 0.9–1.0 cm, *kof*: 2.4 cm, *yod*: 0.4 cm.

Reading

// כיתנה ק

Linen:¹ 2 *qabs*



Ill. 14.4. Inscription no. 4.

Script

כ — identical with a cursive ב, as described by

Yardeni: “In the Herodian period, the base stroke was drawn beyond the meeting point with the downstroke, and the letter-form became identical with the form of cursive Bet (type 2 in its later stages)” (Yardeni 2000, B:188–189; Type 2a2).

- י — a cursive short form with one stroke.
- ת — a cursive form with a very narrow loop that becomes visible only on close examination.
- נ — as described by Yardeni: “the serif is indicated by the cursive backward of the top of the letter. The base is concave...” (Yardeni 2000, B: 194–195, Type 3b2).
- ר — written with two strokes, neither of which is horizontal.
- ק — the Herodian type, which was written without lifting the hand; the ‘leg’ is very long (Yardeni 2000, B: 204–205; Type 2).
- // — two vertical lines, the second (3.1 cm) much longer than the first, as is usually the case with such numbers.

This amphora sherd was found some 30 m southeast of the tomb precinct in one of the fills of the artificial mound which can be dated close to Herod’s death.

Commentary

כיתנה — from כיתן, ‘flax, linen’ (Sokoloff 2002: 257); כיתנא is used in the Aramaic Targums for the Hebrew פשתה (Exod 9: 31; where *Targum Neofiti* reads כתנה).

5. L.A2532–5040 (Ill. 14.5)

Description: pink surface, gray section, numerous small white inclusions in section; remains of a ס followed by three vertical lines and the right side of another letter; written in black ink.

Measurements: Sherd: maximum height 3 cm, maximum width 4.7 cm; inscription length 2.5 cm; letter height 0.6–1 cm.

Reading

ס /// י

1 *seah* and 3 quarters [of ...]

or:

ס /// ק

3 *seah* (and) [...] *qab* [of ...]

Script:

ס — the letter is in the closed form, with a triangular shape; the top of the serif at the left end of the ‘roof’ meets the left downstroke, which crosses the ‘roof’ and forms a thick meeting point.

/// — three short vertical lines for the number 3.

י — of the following letter only a downstroke and the beginning of a horizontal line are left; it is probably the left side of a ר, but might also be read as the right side of a ק (see commentary).

This sherd was found in the same context as item no. 4 (see above).



Ill. 14.5. Inscription no. 5.

Commentary

This inscription resembles many ostraca found in Idumea, featuring amounts of dry produce, designated by *seah* (see introduction). Usually, after ס *seah*, the ק for *qab* appears, but the ‘leg’ of the ק usually goes from right to left. Thus we might read here ר, which stands for רבע, i.e., 1 3/4 *seah* of an unknown product; see // יהוסף בר שאול ר (Rahmani 1994:227–228 no. 730; Yardeni 2000, A: 236); see also Masada no. 590: “1 S[eah] (?)” (Nave and Yadin 1989: 58, Pl. 590). For a combination of *seah* and quarters, see ostrakon no. 19 found in Mareshah, dated to the Hellenistic period; reading of line 3: [...] /// ר / ס; “1 3/4 *seah* [of X?]” (Eshel 2010: 49). In what remains of our inscription, no number precedes the letter ס, but we assume it included 1 *seah*.

MASON MARKS IN THE FORM OF LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET

The following 12 inscriptions are alphabet letters, found on some of the ashlar of Herod's mausoleum, namely on the upper blocks of the cornice of the *tholos*. All these marks were incised on the resting surface of the stones, close to the technical band (3 cm wide) that runs along the decorated part. In two of the letters (ה and ש) diagonal bars were added, while after the letter כ another letter was possibly written, but in this context one might interpret it as a long bar.

Contemporaneous mason marks were found in Masada, unfortunately not *in situ*. Mason marks were identified on some 70 column drums, mainly letters written in Jewish script, as well as diagonal bars which were interpreted as numerals — up to 8. Most of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were included, aside from ו-ז, as explained by G. Foerster: "in order to prevent possible confusion with the vertical bars denoting numerals." The ו was completely omitted, but the ז was replaced by its paleo-Hebrew equivalent (Foerster 1995: 80). In his study of mason marks in Greek architecture, R. Martin (1965) collected parallels from Athens, Delphi, and other sites, explaining the use of the alphabet in order to help the builders place the drums in the correct location, while the vertical bars on each drum helped to ensure the correct assembly of the columns. Such bars were also found on the blocks of an architrave of the Athenian treasury of Delphi (Martin 1965: 226, Fig. 105). Other parallels of mason marks were found in the early Herodian palace at Jericho (Foerster 1995: 99). All major parallels of mason marks were collected by Foerster, who suggested that the closest parallels to those in Masada can be found in the Nabatean realm, especially in the theater at Petra and the Nabatean sanctuary at ʿAvdat, where Nabatean letters and "slashes" — long bars, sometimes set diagonally, were found (Foerster 1995: 98). The inscriptions from Petra include 12 alphabet letters, some followed by diagonal bars for the numbers 1–6, dated between 9 BCE and 40 CE. They were incised mainly on column drums, but also on bases, and three on pieces of entablature (Salmon 1965: 73–78, Pls. XLVII–XLIX). The ʿAvdat Sanctuary, dated to

the last decade of the first century BCE–beginning of the first century CE, features about 20 column drums bearing mason marks; not all of them were found *in situ*, as some were in secondary use (Negev 1965: Pls. 33–37). These marks either consist of one letter (א, ה, ב, נ and ו) with the numbers 1–4; or have two letters (ג, יא) with a number and the letters וד with or without a number. It is clear that the lowest drum was marked '1,' and the next '2,' the order of the columns being more difficult to prove, but they were probably placed in alphabetic order. Negev suggested that they were marked because they were brought from somewhere else, but this does not explain the two-letter marks.

As mentioned above, the most common mason marks were used for drums, but letters also mark blocks, *krepis*, and walls, e.g., in the Ionic temple near the theater of Pergamon (Foerster 1995: 98). Such is also the case with regard to the Ionic capital found in the synagogue of Masada, in which the letter ש was incised (Foerster 1995: 82, 95, fig. 158). A different group of marks with alphabet letters written in ink are the graffiti with Hebrew letter-markings on stone slabs, dated between the first century BCE and the first century CE. The editors explain the function of these letters as follows: "The letters were apparently used to guide proper placement of the slabs on the trough" (Cotton et al. 2010: 311–312; no. 289).

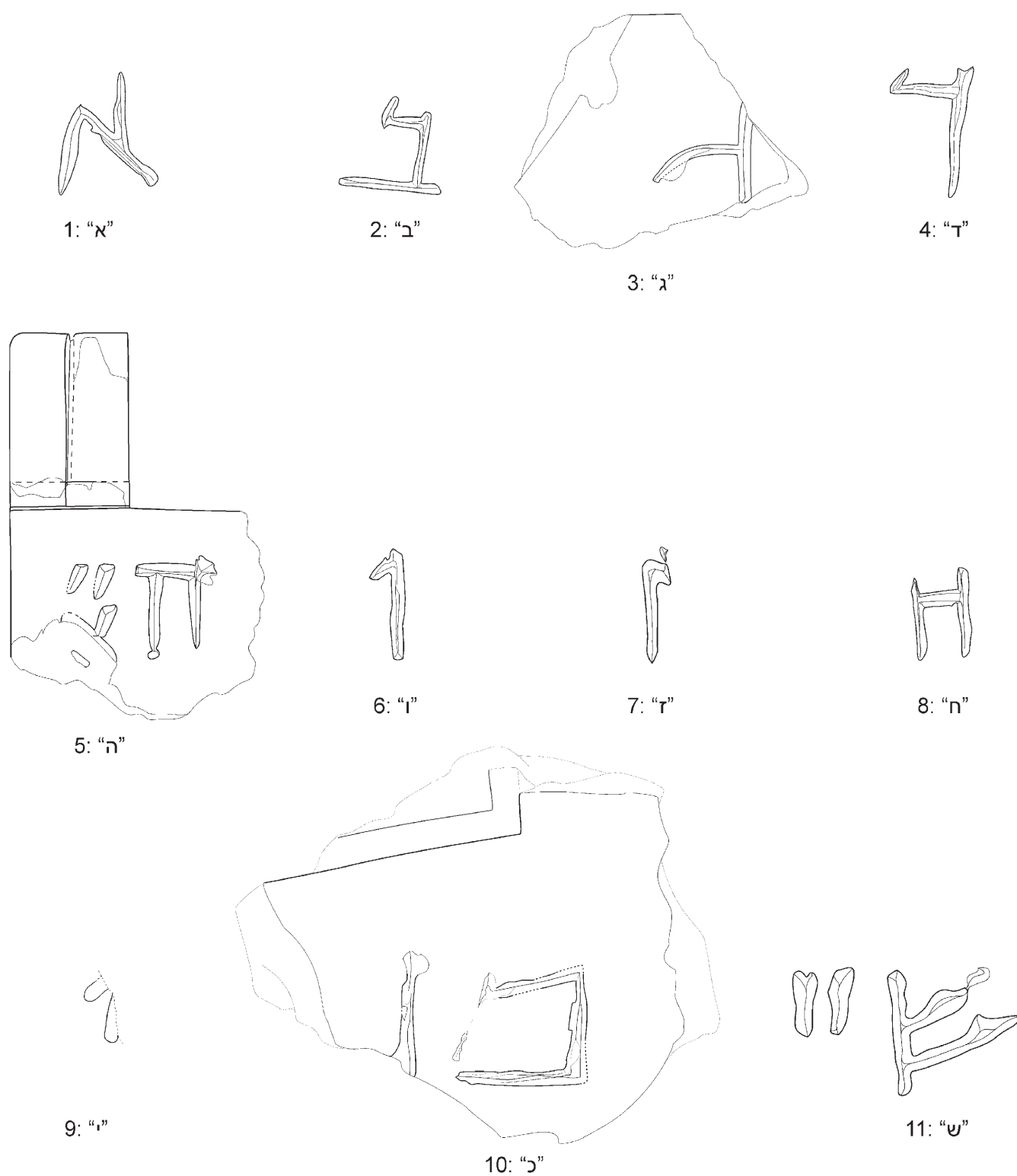
Thus, from what we have seen, the mason marks consisting of letters of the Hebrew alphabet, sometimes followed by numerals, found in Herodium are part of a well-known tradition in ancient times (for some examples, see Salmon 1965: 85–86, n. 1), which continued to be used in the first century CE, as is attested at various sites in the Land of Israel and Jordan. The most common use was for column drums, but, as at Herodium, where they were marked on the upper blocks of the cornice, Masada, and Petra, one can also find them on other elements of a building.

6. L.A2887–8058 (Ill. 14.6; Pl. 14.I: 1)

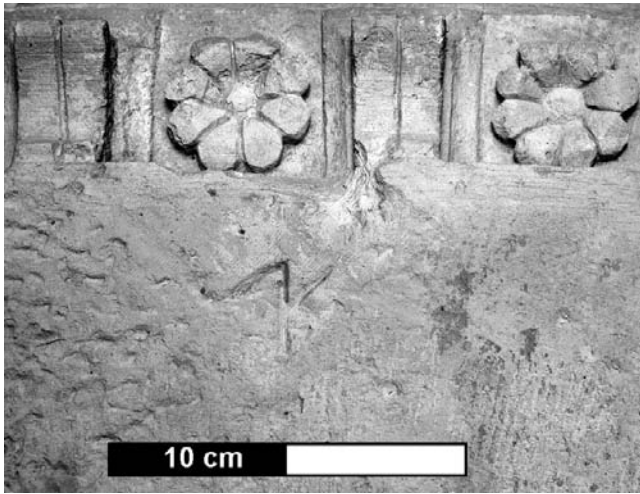
נ — the left stroke starts at the top of the middle stroke (Yardeni 2000, A: 168–169, Type 6).

Measurements: letter width 5.43 cm; letter height 6.6 cm.

CHAPTER 14: THE HEBREW OR ARAMAIC INSCRIPTIONS



Pl. 14.I. Mason marks from the *tholos*' corona.

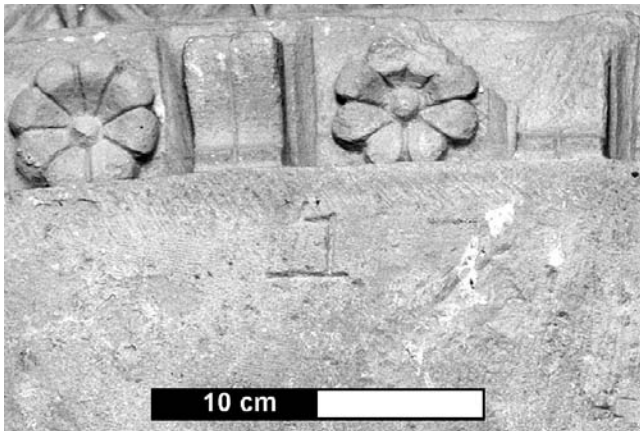


Ill. 14.6. Mason mark no. 6 reading ס.

7. L.A2887–8057 (Ill. 14.7; Pl. 14.I: 2)

ס — the serif is at the left end of the ‘roof,’ the downstroke crosses the ‘roof;’ the base stroke continues beyond the lower right corner, forming the characteristic ‘tail,’ a type which first appeared in the Herodian period (Yardeni 2000, A: 170–171; Type 2).

Measurements: letter width 5.5 cm; letter height 5.01 cm.



Ill. 14.7. Mason mark no. 7 reading ס.

8. L.A2883–8305 (Ill. 14.8; Pl. 14.I: 3)

ס — the right stroke, of which the ‘head’ is missing, is vertical and the left stroke stretches to the left, descending at the end (Yardeni 2000, A: 172–173; Type 2a).

Measurements: letter width 5.96 cm; letter height [6.24 cm].



Ill. 14.8. Mason mark no. 8 reading ס.

9. L.A2887–8059 (Ill. 14.9; Pl. 14.I: 4)

ס — a form resembling the numeral 4, with a short serif slanting down to the left, toward the left of the horizontal ‘roof;’ the downstroke is strong (Yardeni 2000, A: 174–175; Type 3a).

Measurements: letter width 4.55 cm; letter height 7 cm.

10. L.A2800–7480 (Ill. 14.10; Pl. 14.I: 5)

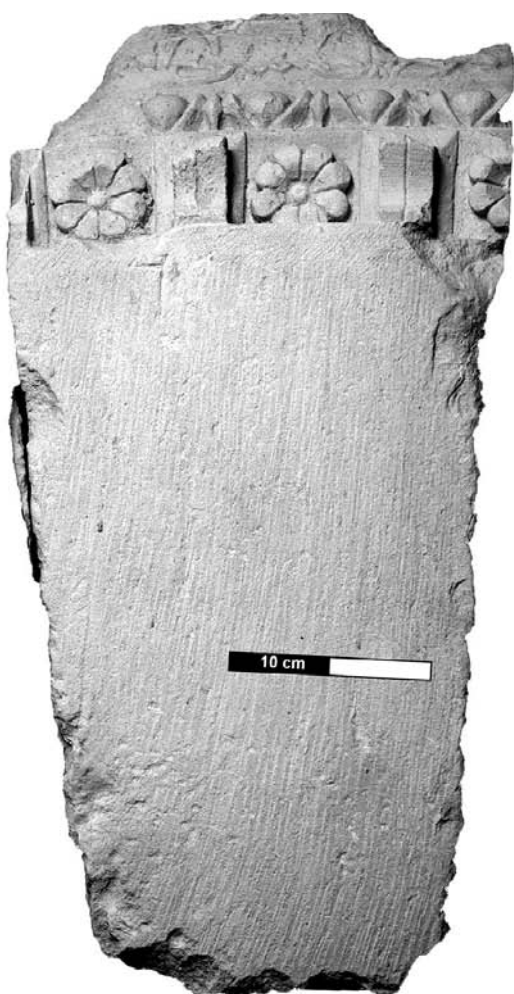
ס — horizontal ‘roof’ from which starts the left downstroke. The right stroke starts slightly above the meeting point with the ‘roof.’ After the letter there are three short diagonal bars descending to the left, two at the top and the third below the first one. As noted above, such short bars are known from drums, e.g., those found in Masada (see above).

Measurements: letter width 3.7 cm; letter height 5.23 cm; bars (group) length 2.54 cm; bars (group) height 4.02 cm.

11. L.A2808–8734 (Ill. 14.11; Pl. 14.I: 6)

ס — the ‘hook’ type made with two strokes, with a long vertical downstroke and a short left stroke (Yardeni 2000, A: 178–179; Type 1b).

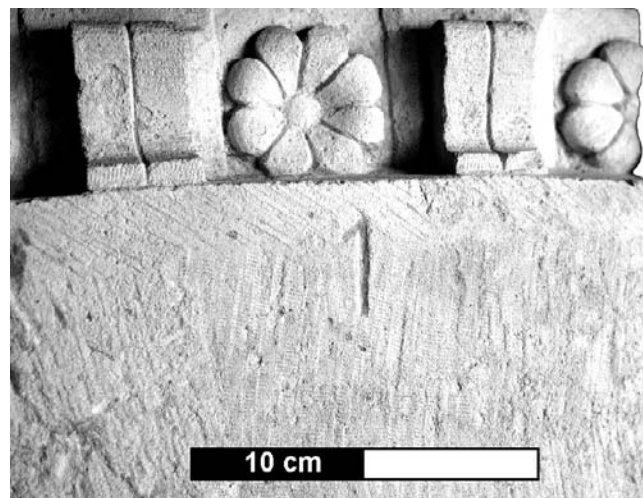
Measurements: letter width 1.91 cm; letter height 6.07 cm.



Ill. 14.10. Mason mark no. 10 reading ' ' ה.



Ill. 14.9. Mason mark no. 9 reading τ (top: entire cornice element; bottom: close-up).



Ill. 14.11. Mason mark no. 11 reading γ.

12. L.A2577–8717 (Ill. 14.12; Pl. 14.I: 7)

τ — a vertical downstroke with an additional short stroke at the top, slanting down to the right (Yardeni 2000, A: 180–181; Type 1c1).

Measurements: letter width 1.5 cm; letter height 6.15 cm.

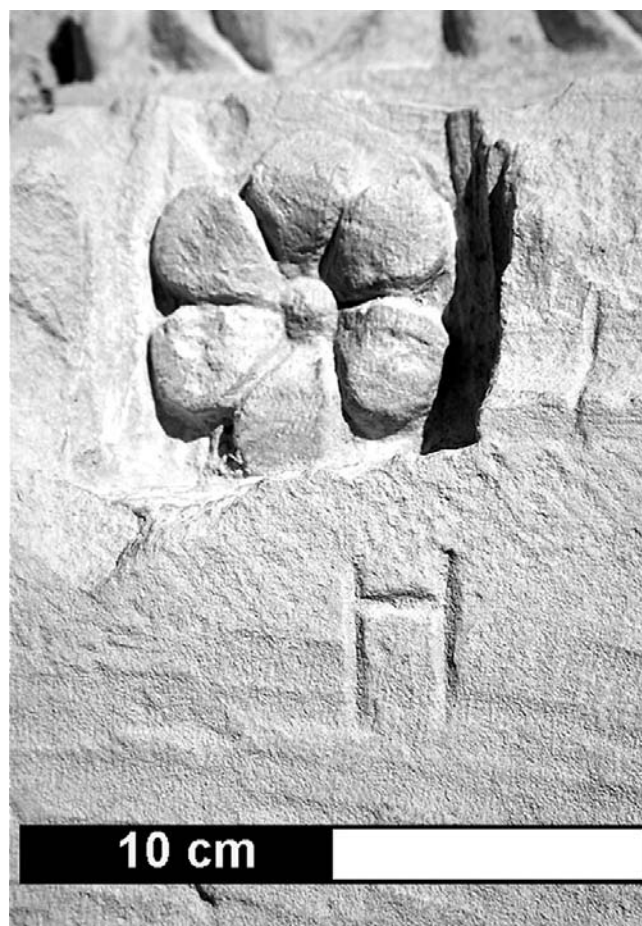
13. L.A2769–8739 (Ill. 14.13; Pl. 14.I: 8)

η — vertical right and left strokes, with a horizontal 'roof.'

Measurements: letter width 3.1 cm; letter height 4.97 cm.



Ill. 14.12. Mason mark no. 12 reading τ (left: entire cornice element; right: close-up).



Ill. 14.13. Mason mark no. 13 reading η .

14. L.A2599–8743 (Ill. 14.14; Pl. 14.I: 9)

γ — a short, probably 'hook' type, but the meeting point of the left and right lines is now missing.

Measurements: letter width 1.8 cm; letter height 3.63 cm.



Ill. 14.14. Mason mark no. 14 reading γ .

15. L.A2798–7534 (Ill. 14.15; Pl. 14.I: 10)

𐤊 — the ‘roof’ descends to the left, ending in a small rising serif. The base is horizontal. Following the letter one can see a vertical line, which might be another letter, but since we have only one incised letter in this Herodium group, it might not be a letter, but a ‘slash’ — a long bar, to be compared with those found in the theater at Petra (Salmon 1965: 73).

Measurements: letter width 7.03 cm; letter height 6.39 cm; ‘slash’ width 1.32 cm; ‘slash’ height 6.98 cm.



Ill. 14.15. Mason mark no. 15 reading 𐤊.

16. Origin unknown — Area of the Tomb (Ill. 14.16; Pl. 14.I: 11)

𐤌 — a form without ornamental additions, comprising all the basic strokes (Yardeni 2000, B: 190–191, Type 2a).

Measurements: letter width 2.5 cm; letter height 8 cm.

17. Lower Herodium — Netzer’s Archive (Ill. 14.17; Pl. 14.I: 12)

𐤍 — the left downstroke is straight, while the right ‘arm’ and the middle stroke are less so.



Ill. 14.16. Mason mark no. 16 reading 𐤌.



Ill. 14.17. Mason mark no. 17 reading 𐤍.

Following the 𐤍 there are two short bars descending to the right (cf. the letter 𐤎).

Measurements: letter width 6 cm; letter height 6.5 cm; bars (group) width 2.85 cm; bars (group) height 3.1 cm.

TWO HEBREW INSCRIPTIONS CARVED ON STONE BLOCKS

Two inscriptions, each consisting of three letters, were engraved on large, hard limestone blocks incorporated in the terrace walls of the garden surrounding the mausoleum. It seems probable that they were carved prior to the quarrying of the blocks, and that they were curtailed and damaged in the latter process, prior to their insertion in the terrace walls.

18. W1735b/1 (Ills. 14.18–19)

This inscription was found at the base of a stone incorporated in terrace wall W1735b. Since the location of the inscription on the block shows that it was not carved *in situ*, it seems reasonable to assume that the incision was carved before the blocks were quarried. It is therefore possible that the lower part of the inscription was curtailed in the process.

Measurements: inscription length 25.35 cm; letter height 8.25 cm.

Reading

ליום[

Script

ל — The ‘mast’ starts very low, parallel to the ‘hook’ of the י. The straight horizontal base is quite long, perpendicular to the ‘mast.’ The same type of low ל can be seen in the word שלום on the Jewish ossuary found in Givʿat Hamivtar, Jerusalem, dated between 20 BCE and 70 CE; one is written in the right, second row of ashlar from the top (Inscription A), and the other on the lid near the insertion edge (Inscription D; Rahmani 1994: 129–130, no. 217; see Discussion below).

The ‘leg’ is missing, probably due to the final carving of the stone (but see no. 19, below).

י — the ‘hook’ type.

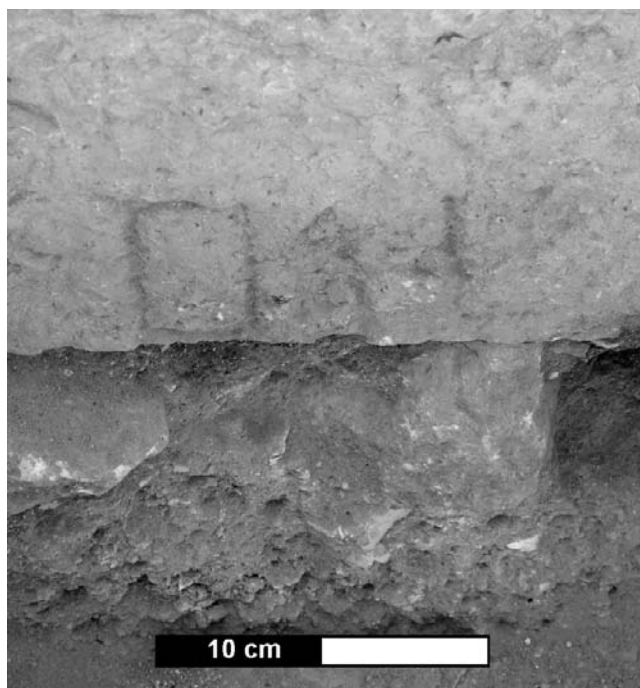
מ — a square final מ.

19. Wall W1750/1 (Ills. 14.20–21)

This inscription was found on the eastern side of a stone incorporated in terrace wall W1750 which runs east-west; it reads vertically. This might indicate that it was incised in the stone before the latter was



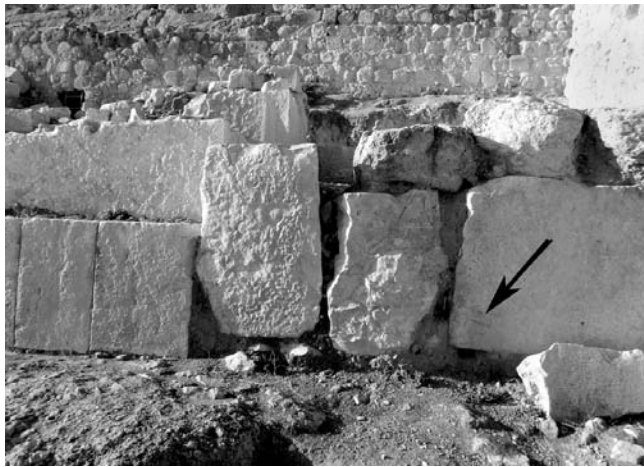
Ill. 14.18. Aerial photograph with location of the two terrace walls featuring an inscription (W1735b: Inscription no. 18; W1750: Inscription no. 19).



Ill. 14.19. Inscription no. 18 on wall W1735b.

incorporated in the wall. It is noteworthy that W1750 was partly dismantled and rebuilt, or, alternatively, repaired, during the First Jewish Revolt. As in the case of no. 18, here too the inscription is incomplete, and the carving of the drafted margins on all four sides of the stone’s face probably caused the damage.

Measurements: inscription length 19.9 cm; letter height 12.6–14.7 cm.



Ill. 14.20. Location of Inscription no. 19 on wall W1750.



Ill. 14.21. Inscription no. 19 on wall W1750.

Reading

ליום

Script

The script of this inscription differs from no. 18 above, having been executed in a less professional way, and the reading is unclear.

ל — The ‘mast’ starts very low, slightly lower than the ו. The straight horizontal base is quite short, perpendicular to the ‘mast.’ Some remains of the ‘leg’ are possibly visible, although very shallow, and perhaps misleading.

ו — similar to the ‘hook’ type, but the ‘hook’ is perpendicular to the downstroke.

מ — a square final מ.

Discussion

Inscriptions nos. 18 and 19 both read: ליום[...]. While the letters of the first inscription (no. 18) are clearer, written in the traditional way and shape, in the second inscription (no. 19) the letters are not well executed, and the reading is not clear. Nevertheless, the letter ל seems to be complete, as there are remains of a diagonal line descending to the left from the right side of the horizontal line. This line is incised less deeply than the other parts of the inscription and is thus barely visible.

The word ליום[...] could be reconstructed in different ways, and one might expect it to be preceded by other words. One option is to reconstruct it as the Hebrew word: שְׁלום, ‘peace’ (in Aramaic we would expect the form שלום), perhaps as part of a larger

inscription. The word שלום can be found in the following contexts:

- a. In dedicatory inscriptions, such as those found on the doorpost of a synagogue, in the formula: יהי שלום במקום הזה (Naveh 1978: 19; no. 1 from Kfar Barram); or: יהי שלום על המקום הזה (ibid.: 22–23, no. 3 from Alma); or in the popular formula: שלום על ישראל, written on synagogue mosaics, e.g., in Jericho (ibid.: 103, no. 68; see also 65, no. 38). Sometimes it was added to an Aramaic inscription, e.g., at the end of the Eshtamoa synagogue mosaic: שלום על ישראל אמן (ibid.: 115–116, no. 75), or just: שלום, at the end of the En Gedi mosaic inscription (ibid., 106–107, no. 70).
- b. שלום is also written on sarcophagi and funerary inscriptions; see, for example, the word שלום, “peace,” repeated six times on the inner ledge on three sides of a Jewish ossuary found in Giv’at Hamivtar, Jerusalem (Rahmani 1994:129–130, no. 217).³ The use of the word שלום at the end of Greek funerary inscriptions seems to have been quite popular in the Diaspora; see, for example, the inscriptions found in Rome, dated to the third century CE (Frey 1936: 199, no. 283; 250–251, no. 319; 362–363; no. 497); sometimes in the formula: שלום על ישראל (ibid.: 231, no. 293).
- c. שלום is also a female name, but a name here is less probable. Other possible reconstructions should not be excluded.

Of all these possibilities, the most reasonable one seems to be as part of a dedicatory inscription.

SUMMARY

The five inscriptions on pottery sherds discussed here include remains of short notes, and, as mentioned above, there is no indication whether they were written in Hebrew or Aramaic. Two of them are fully preserved, nos. 2 and 4 (יהונתן and כיתנה ק //). The other three are only partially preserved, and it is thus difficult to determine their exact function. With regard to what remains, we can say that it includes one complete name, יהונתן, and a partly preserved one, פליה. Both are Jewish names with the theophoric element 'יה(ו)', 'YH(W)'.

Although the sherd bearing the name יהונתן seems complete, it might have been broken. Also mentioned in no. 5 is one product, linen, and an amount of 1 3/4 *seah* (or: 3 *seah* and x *gab*) of an unknown (or now missing) dry product. The only complete inscription is no. 4.

If the יהונתן inscription is complete, it probably denotes the owner of the vessel on which it was written; or else it is an ostrakon used as a tag, defining the

ownership of some goods. The name פליה, if it is the complete inscription, might have served the same purpose.

In addition, there are 12 mason marks, ten with a single alphabet letter, and two with both alphabet letters and bars. The presence of these marks on cornice elements is quite unique, since most known marks, especially those including bars, were used for column drums.

The two inscriptions carved on stone blocks incorporated in terrace walls of the mausoleum's garden might be part of large inscriptions which have not survived, and from which we might tentatively reconstruct the Hebrew word: ש[לום], but other reconstructions should not be excluded. If the reconstruction שלום is accepted, it might be part of a dedicatory inscription.

Finally, according to the script, the date of these inscriptions is the Herodian period, between the end of the first century BCE and the mid-first century CE. No. 2 is perhaps exceptional in that its date might be post-Herodian.

NOTES

- * Bar Ilan University.
1. Thanks are due to Dr. Ada Yardeni who suggested the reading of כיתנה.
 2. It cannot refer to a woman named שלום since the ossuary contained the bones of a young man.

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