

1 Editors' Announcement

2 GIDEON HADAS: Hunting Traps around the Oasis of 'En Gedi

ABSTRACT: While surveying the 'En Gedi Oasis and surroundings, several ancient hunting traps were found; some are predator traps and one is a 'desert kite'. Predator traps, found in the Sinai Peninsula, the Negev and now in the Judean Desert, are generally referred to as 'leopard traps'. The leopard is the top predator in these regions that preyed on domestic flocks as well as the wild fauna. The traps found around 'En Gedi were built to protect the oasis from predator infiltration. The 'desert kite' is a hunting installation probably used to catch gazelles.

12 AREN M. MAEIR, ITZHAQ SHAI and LIORA KOLSKA HORWITZ: 'Like a Lion in Cover': A Cylinder Seal from Early Bronze Age III Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses a decorated ivory cylinder seal, from an EB III context at Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel. The seal, with its realistic depiction of a crouching lion, is noteworthy among the contemporary glyptic repertoire of the EB Levant due to the high level of the iconographic depiction. Suggested connections and the significance of this seal are discussed.

32 KATHLEEN BIRNEY and BRIAN R. DOAK: Funerary Iconography on an Infant Burial Jar from Ashkelon

ABSTRACT: The 2007 season of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon unearthed a remarkable intramural infant jar burial, bearing roughly incised images on both sides. While a number of intramural infant burials have been recovered from late twelfth--eleventh century levels at the site, this jar is the first burial to reveal anything about the funerary beliefs and rituals that might be associated with such practices. The iconography itself is unique within the Philistine milieu, as well as within the broader context of Syro-Palestinian funerary imagery, instead echoing Egyptian funerary motifs. After a brief discussion of the jar and its archaeological context we offer an interpretation of the burial jar's iconography and explore its possible relationship to Egyptian funerary ritual.

54 ANAT MENDEL: Who Wrote the Ahiqam Ostrakon from Horvat Uza?

ABSTRACT: Hitherto perceived as a letter containing a stationing-order for three men to go to Horvat 'Uza, the Ahiqam Ostrakon begins with a

fragmentary word and mentions the men as '(belonging) to Ahiqam'. Epistolographical and palaeographical considerations, however, show that it was never meant to be sent to anyone. The article demonstrates how the shape and content of an inscription may hint at the author's rank and function at the site, as well as at the possible meaning and function of the ostrakon. The new understanding of the ostrakon offers a contribution to the ongoing discussion about literacy in ancient Israel and an addition to the known uses of writing - that of military manpower management and administration.

68 KATHLEEN ABRAHAM: An Egibi Tablet in Jerusalem

ABSTRACT: The Egibi family archive from Babylon is, with its around 2,000 inscribed clay tablets, the largest of its kind among the private archives from first millennium BCE Babylonia. They were written between 606--486 BCE. Today the tablets are dispersed in museums around the world, the majority being housed at the British Museum in London and the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. The Israel Museum in Jerusalem holds one Egibi tablet in its collections. In the present article the tablet is published for the first time, and its place within the wider Egibi archive is discussed in full.

74 BOAZ ZISSU and YUVAL GOREN: The Ossuary of 'Miriam Daughter of Yeshua Son of Caiaphas, Priests [of] Ma'aziah from Beth 'Imri'

ABSTRACT: The Israel Antiquities Authority recently acquired a limestone decorated ossuary purportedly from a burial cave in the area of the 'Elah Valley. An inscription, incised on the front of the ossuary, reads: HHH מרים בר קיפא כהנמ מעזיה מבית אמרי hhh ('Miriam daughter of Yeshua son of Caiaphas, priests of Ma'aziah from Beth 'Imri'). The script is formal, of the style common in ossuary inscriptions in Jerusalem of the late Second Temple period. On palaeographic grounds, it should be dated to the late first century BCE or to the first century CE. The prime importance of the inscription lies in the reference to the ancestry of the deceased—the well known family of Caiaphas priests active in the first century CE. No less significant is the lineage of Caiaphas—from the priestly course of Ma'aziah (the last of the 24 priestly courses that served in the Temple in Jerusalem) which belonged to the House of 'Immēr/Amaryāh. This is the first reference to this course in epigraphic finds from the Second Temple period. The article discusses whether Beth 'Imri, the place of origin of the deceased, is a toponym or the name of a priestly family: House of 'AImmēr/Amaryāh, which might had been named after the House of 'AImmēr/Amaryāh, which settled there. The

relatively careless execution of the design suggests that this ossuary was produced in a Judaean workshop and can be dated to 70--135 CE, a dating supported by two pottery oil-lamps apparently found in the burial cave and typical of the period between the two Jewish revolts against Rome.

Since the ossuary in question was not found in a controlled excavation and due to its importance, it was subjected to scientific analyses in order to address the question of authenticity. The examinations focused on the patina coating the stone surface, with emphasis on the inscribed area. The patination of the stone, in and around the inscription, indicates a complex process that occurred over a prolonged sequence of time, which is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to replicate in laboratory conditions. It may be concluded, therefore, that the patina and the inscription should be considered authentic beyond any reasonable doubt.

96 YUVAL BARUCH, DANIT LEVI and RONNY REICH: The Tomb and Ossuary of Alexa Son of Shalom

ABSTRACT: This article presents a family tomb discovered in Jerusalem, of the common type provided with *kokhim* (burial niches) and ossuaries, typical of the late Second Temple period. It contains an undecorated ossuary bearing an inscription, in Aramaic and Hebrew: 'Alexa son of Shalom daughter of Alexa / Cursed (be whoever) will take me from my place'. Several features of this inscription are outstanding: the script, which seems to be the product of a professional scribe; the fact that the incised letters are filled with some blue pigment; the pedigree of the deceased, relating to his mother and further back to his grandfather; the style of the curse, which might point to a scribe whose occupation was the copying of texts employing a high level of the Hebrew language, such as in literary and liturgical texts.

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