

# Minting of coins in Jerusalem during the Persian and Hellenistic periods

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## Abstract

*Abstract: During the Persian and Hellenistic periods coins of different types were minted in Jerusalem. This assemblage allows us to explore, research and review their dating anew. The general political situation in the Southern Levant and particularly in the Judea-Yehud satrapy influenced the style and information provided on the coins. Local leaders continuously adapted their coinage to the current local political situation, the needs of the local population, and to blend with the range of circulating coins in the Southern Levant, especially "imitation Athenian" styles. These latter reflect Egyptian and Asia Minor coin types with images of satrap governors and local kings. In this article the author will present a fresh and detailed dating system in a context based on these changing historical realities and comparisons.*

The minting of Jewish coins began during the Persian period. The Persian period lasted between 538 BCE to 332 BCE under the rule of Persian kings. According to research, some researchers claim minting of Yehud coins and Samaritans coins in part during the Persian period began in 375 BCE and lasted until 332 BCE (Meshorer-Qedar), when in the first half of the fourth century, around 375 BCE, Yehud coins began minting in Jerusalem. The Tennes revolt occurred at this time and affected the nature of minting. In point of fact the oldest Jewish coins – the “Yehud” coins – were minted in Jerusalem around that time. It is the author’s opinion that the first minting of “Yehud” coins began around 400 BCE and was influenced by Egyptian revolts that gained independence and invaded the area as well as by the Tennes revolt.

The coins were made of almost pure silver and were comprised of at least 97.7% silver as opposed to 95.1% of the Philistian coins from Gaza. The tiny coins were minted in denomination of obol (about 0.5-0.6g), and sub denomination of half and quarter obols. No silver plated coins were minted in Jerusalem.

Coins with Persian sovereignty signs, such as the Persian king’s head or the title Governor-Peha, show that the Persians ruled the area during their minting. However, when the Persians were pushed out of the area by the Egyptian rebels between 400-360 BCE the Persian

Sovereignty signs do not appear on the coins. There are almost no known written sources on the goings on in Jerusalem during the period in which Yehud coins were minted. Previous occurrences can be read about in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Some information can be gleamed from Josephus' book "Jewish Antiquities". The coins constitute a firsthand confirmation on the existence of Judea Satrapy at the end of the Persian period.

There is some information regarding the Egyptian rebels who gained independence from the Persian rule for a period of 60 years (Morkholm 1974:3) and even succeeded in pushing the Persians out of Southern Levant and rule it. There is evidence to that in Archaeological findings discovered in Southern Levant. The fact that there was no presence of Persian rulers in Southern Levant is manifested in the nature of the coins minted in the area. The Tennes revolt against the Persians which occurred at a later stage, around 345 BCE, influenced the characteristics of the coins in the area. Because of the revolts against the Persians, countries in the region achieved improved autonomy in the beginning and independence at a later stage.

During the Persian period tiny silver coins were minted in obol denominations, which sub divided into half and quarter obols, except for a few irregular coins. The use of small denominations corresponded with the local needs, as complementary coins (for the gold Daric and silver Siglos coins). These denominations were influenced by coins minted in the adjacent areas to Judea, in Gaza, Samaria and Edom<sup>2</sup> and at the same time with the coins in Phoenicia, Tyre, Sidon, Arwad and Gebal-Byblos were higher denomination coins were used during the Persian period as well, among them the Drachm and tetradrachm. The coins were part imitation of the Athenian coin and other models. These coins were used in circulation during the Persian period for commerce and other transactions.

The "Yehud" inscribed coins that were minted in Judea, who were first minted in denominations parallel to those in other minting areas in Southern Levant and later according to an authority granted by the Persian sovereign, were often used for religious purposes at an exact weight of third/half a Shekel, as contribution to the Temple in Jerusalem. These coins were made of pure silver. From an examination of the "Yehud" coins it seems they were all comprised of pure silver. No silver plated coins were minted in Jerusalem.

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<sup>2</sup>Gitler and Tal 2007

The coins were given as donation to the Temple or as a means of change from higher denomination coins<sup>3</sup>. However, according to the numismatic findings in areas adjacent to Judea silver plated obols were discovered.

The earliest coins minted in Jerusalem were inscribed with Aramaic and the later ones in Paleo-Hebrew. A large portion of the "Yehud" coins were discovered in Jerusalem, the Province capital and the administrative center of the province as well as in its vicinity.

Although no tiny coins minting device was discovered in Jerusalem from the Persian and Ptolemaic periods, we assume that the fact that Jerusalem was an administrative center and housed the major institutions of the country as well as the Temple, the coins were minted there.

Regarding the issue of chronological silver minting in Jerusalem especially during the Persian period, some researchers claim that there were 2 sets of weights for "Yehud" coins from Jerusalem: the Shekel and the weight system was Greek. The weight of the silver coins from the rest of the countries in the region, during this period, was based on the local *Shekel* (Ronen 2003-2006, Ronen 1998, Tal 2006, Tal 2008, Gitler and Tal 2006). According to Ronen's article (Ronen 2009), among the types of "Yehud" coins, two types exist of Shekel denomination and Half a Gera meaning 0.255g, one with a falcon on the one side and the other the Persian kings head and the other with the falcon on the one side and no minting on the other. The author concurs with Ronen's opinion and connects these two coin types to Jerusalem minting after 360 BCE according to the model representing the Persian sovereignty.

In reference to the chronology minting of tiny coins from this period in the Ptolemaic Period was based on the Grecian weight system (Gitler and Lorber 2006).

"YHD" coins are often inscribed with winged models on one side of the coin. The models on the other side of the coins will be discussed later on.

The Hellenistic period began as a result of the conquest of Southern Levant by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, and a monetary change occurred in minting. The use of Athenian coins imitation ceased.

<sup>3</sup> it is the authors' opinion that the Jerusalem minter adopted during most of the Persian period the method of minting tiny silver coins in denominations of obol, half and quarter obols and not the Shekel system. From a review of a number of group type coins, including coins that were inscribed with a falcon on one side and the Persian king figure on the other it seems that there are standard deviations and often the gap between the weight of coins from the same group, show 26.6% The author does not support the basis of examining average weight according to type to determine minting method obol/Gera (Ronen 2009). The author believes that during the Persian period obol coins were often used for payment according to weight and not obol hence standard deviations did not interfere with making transactions.

The change of hands in authority did not bring about the removal of coins that were acceptable during the Persian period from circulation and tiny coins continued to be used as a payment method. In Akko tiny coins were minted like tetradrachm of Alexander the Great. Southern Levant and Judea was first ruled by the Ptolemaic dynasty starting with 301 BCE and for 100 years. The Ptolemy's allowed the minting authority in Judea to renew the minting of tiny silver coins and in Jerusalem they continued minting tiny obol and half obol coins in comparison to the obols minted in Jerusalem during the Persian period, which were inscribed with "YHD" in Aramaic and the later ones with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription of "YHD". During the days of Ptolemy II, the Egyptian sovereign continued minting tiny silver autonomous coins. These coins mainly carried the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "YHDH" meaning Judea and some the inscription "YHD", which appears to the left of the Ptolemaic eagle, as opposed to the "Yehud" coins, from the Persian Period, that the "YHD" inscription appears to the right of the owl. The coins from this period will be reviewed later. During the rule of Ptolemy II / III, minting was changed to minting alternate bronze coins.

In 200 BCE Antiochus III conquered Southern Levant and the Seleucid dynasty ruled Southern Levant until the Hasmoneans, who fought against them came to power. After a break in minting YHDH coins for 175 years, during the Hellenistic period, minting was renewed in Jerusalem by the Hasmonean rulers and during the time of Hyrcanus I, a new independent Jewish minting began in bronze coins only. The denominations of the Hasmonean coins concurred with Seleucid minting standards, when the Hasmonean ruler, received minting authority to mint bronze coins in predetermined Hellenistic / Seleucid denominations. This minting corresponded with the minting of the Hellenistic population from the neighboring regions. The Hasmonean rulers, starting with Hyrcanus I, achieved independence and minted independent bronze coins solely, in the same Seleucid form in various denominations. The Hasmonean minting will be discussed in the review until Alexander Jannaeus.

The author dates the "Yehud" coins into two groups of dates. The first group is dated between years 400 -360 BCE. These coins do not bear the marks of the Persian sovereign. The second group includes coins with the Persian kings' image and alternatively the title governor-Peha. The author claim that the period in which the Egyptian rebels from the 29th, 30th and 31<sup>st</sup> dynasty drove out the Persians out of Southern Levant they brought with them Athenian drachma imitation coins, that were used commonly in Egypt who was released from the Persian rule and turned independent. The Egyptians brought with them coins that bore the names of Egyptian leaders as well. The Athenian imitation coins, models adopted by the local countries, were therefore the most commonly used coins in circulation in Philistia, Judea and Edom at this time. In addition and at the same time, the author particularly refers to the Satrap revolt in Asia Minor, where leaders minted coins bearing their names and images. The author claims that these coins also arrived in Southern Levant and the leaders in the Samaria and Judea provinces, adopted these models on their coins and so their names and images appear on Samaritan and Judean coins.

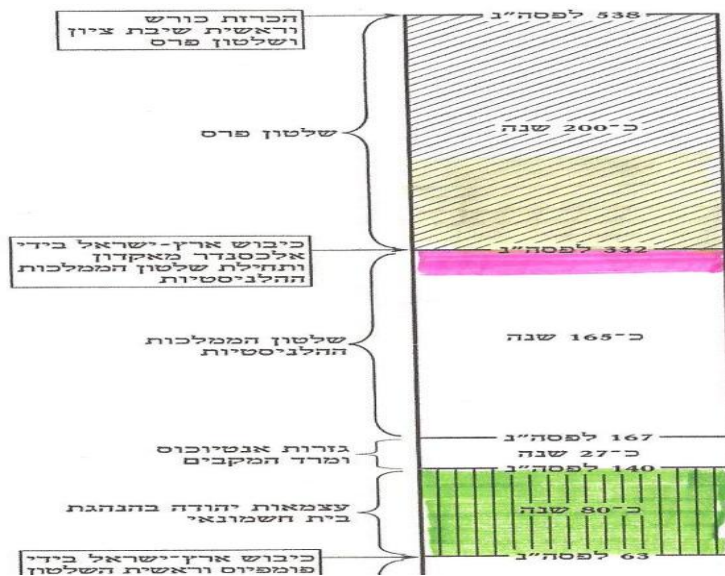
In 360 BCE the Persians re conquered Southern Levant. They discovered that large quantities of different types of coins that were adopted by local leaders, were used in circulation in comparison to the period before 400 BCE when no coins in the Judea province were minted. The Persians decided to demonstrate their presence as sovereigns and rulers over coins in the area through new coins and minted their rulers' images or the title governor-peha on various types of coins minted in Judea.

The article will review the following:

- minting of "Yehud" coins in Jerusalem during the Persian period.
- Minting of YHDDH / "YHD" coins during the Hellenistic period, during the rule of the Ptolemy.
- Minting of Hasmonean coins at the later stages of the Hellenistic period.

The reviewed periods on a time line:

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### The Persian period

In the first half of the Persian period until 400 BCE no coins were minted in Jerusalem. Later on after the Persians were removed from the area by Pharaoh Amyrtaeus in 400, and considering there was no Persian presence in the area, minting began in the Judea province of tiny silver coins in denominations of bol and sub denominations of half and quarter obol, in an Athenian imitation model. Later during that period other models were minted in a silver weight system in denominations of half a gera<sup>4</sup>. In the beginning of the Hellenistic period and especially during the time of Ptolemy II, coins in denominations of obol continued to be minted.

<sup>4</sup> Ronen 2009

A break then occurred for 175 years during the time of the Hasmonean minting began again in Jerusalem. This time with bronze coins.

### The Persian Empire map



Above is the Persian Empire map. Its borders were: on the north: Russia, on the west: Asia Minor, Greece and Egypt. On the south Saudi Arabia as well as Iraq and in the east – India.

The state of the provinces in Southern Levant during the Persian period



The borders of the Judea province: on the north it bordered with Samaria, on the Beit El. On the North West lay Sidon and its borders were Sidon on the north until today's Palmachim on the south Sidon province. On the west Judea bordered with Ashdod which included Gaza, Ascalon and Ashdod. On the south Judea bordered with the Edomite province around Beit Zur and Ein Gedi. On the east it bordered with the Dead Sea and Jordan.

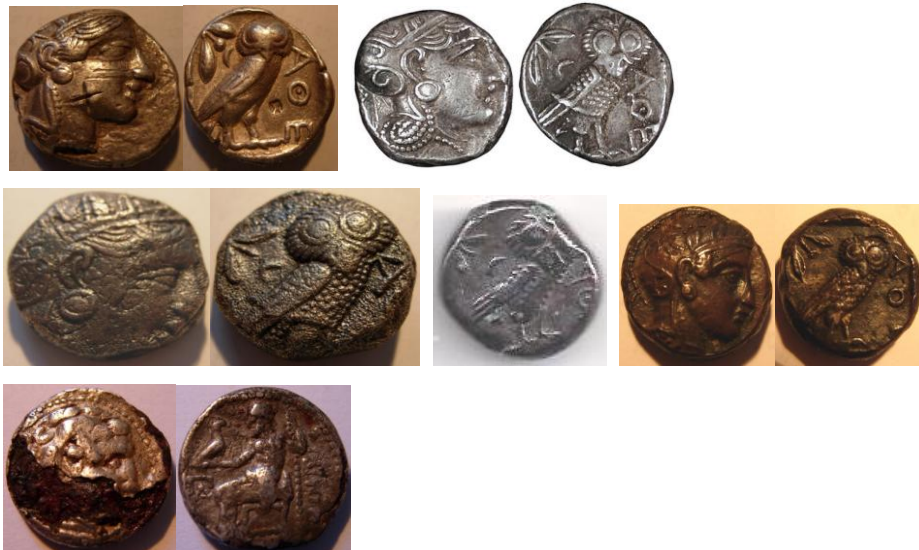
The coins that were commonly used in circulation at the time were: gold Daric, silver Siglos, Cilician coins, that were discovered in Tel El-Fochar



Gold Daric, silver Siglos

Other additional coins were used in circulation were: different denominations Athenian drachm. In the pictures below the first row from the left, tetradrachm with a countermark inscription X shaped along the owl, a minting attesting to the authenticity of the coin, in terms of its pure silver content. It seems that someone, suspiciously decided to test the content of the coin with chisel test cut because in silver coins such as the one on the right,

bronze silver plated coin were common, as we can see in the coin presented in the second row on the right. The tetradrachm coin on the second row on the left originated from the sea.



Additional coins that were used in circulation were Philistian coins, among them the Athenian imitation coins as well as others.

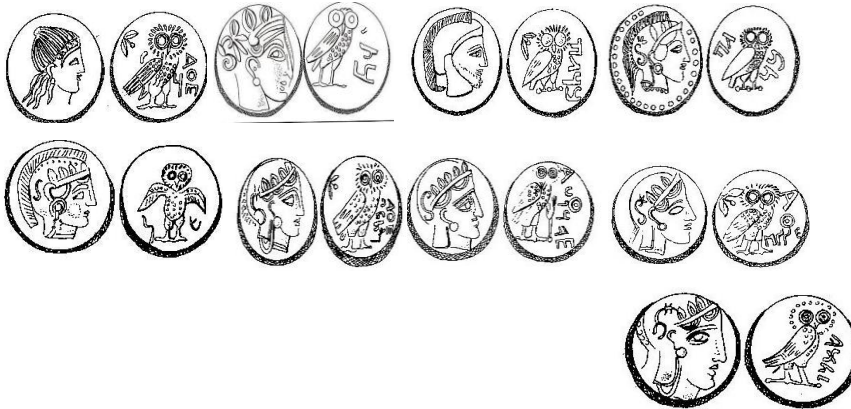


It must be noted that many of the Philistian coins were Athenian drachm imitation coins in denominations of obol, drachm and tetradrachm. Minting Athenian imitation coins was influenced by the presence of the Egyptian rebels in the area, which brought with them the coins that were commonly used in Egypt.

Other coins, that were common in Southern Levant, were the Sidonian coins. These are found particularly on the coastal area.



The Sidonian coins, who were mostly tiny, are characterized by the fact, on one side of the coin appears a Sidonian ship, which is the Sidonian autonomy symbol and on the other is a king fighting a lion. He often holds a sword in his hand. Other local coins that were used in Southern Levant at the time, are the Samaritan coins.



The Samaritan coins shown above, are part of the models for the Samaritan coins. The models shown here are Athenian drachma imitation models and bear the inscription of the Samaritan leaders: BD YH / BDYH / BT / D HNNYH / YDW' / 'BD'L as well as the inscription of the name of the Samaritan province : SN/ SMRY.



In Samaria a variety of additional coins were minted, some shown above.

Coins from the kingdom of Tyre showing the owl and the Egyptian staff were also used in circulation.



Other coins that were used in the region are the Edomite coins. These coins were mainly used by the people of Edom in the south of Southern Levant. These coins were Athenian drachm imitation coins. On the one side appears the inscription AΘE to the right of the owl and on the other appears a sort of dome instead of the goddess Athena.

We have almost no written sources pertaining to the situation and the goings on in the Judea province during the later stages of the Persian period and in Jerusalem where the "YHD" coins were minted especially. Regarding previous happenings in Judea we can learn from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra the writer came to "Yehud" in 458 BCE. Nehemiah the Governor-Peha in 445 BCE, went back to Babylon and came again in 432 BCE. Immigration of Jews to the Judea province was intended to strengthen loyalty by the local population to the Persian sovereignty, as well as ties with Persia, Considering the political instability of the region, west of the Judea province. This was also intended to prevent alignment of the local population with the Egyptians.

There is some information regarding the later stages of the period in Josephus' book "Jewish Antiquities" as well as relying on "YHD" coins which constitute first hand evidence that the Judea province existed particularly during the end of the Persian period.

The inscription appearing on the coins is "YHD", the official name of the Judea province. Other sources that mention the name of the Judea province are the written testimonies in the book of Ezra "Be it known unto the king that we went into the province of "Yehud", to the house of the great God" (Ezra 5, 8). "Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning "Yehud" and Jerusalem" (Ezra 7, 14).

Another source for the name of the "Yehud" province are the inscriptions of the handles of jugs and seals from this period as well as on tiny silver coins<sup>1</sup>.





Another source for the existence of the “Yehud” province, is the letter of Yedenia. Yedenia was a leader from the Jewish colony elephantine in south Egypt, that partly served as mercenaries of the Persian sovereigns. The letter was sent in 408 BCE to Yeohanan the High Priest in Jerusalem and Bagoas the governor of the Judea province which served after Nehemiah. In the letter the Jews of elephantine asked for assistance to rebuild the local Jewish temple which was destroyed by the Egyptian rebels in 411 BCE. The Jews did not approach the Persians which were at the time being pushed out of Egypt and had no influence or control in Egypt and Southern Levant. The answer they received was negative, but they did receive a positive reply from the leadership of the Samaritan province. The colony was later destroyed in 400 BCE, which is when the Egyptian rebels, led by Pharaoh Amyrtaeus in the 29th dynasty changed the political situation in Egypt to independence.



The letter of Yedenia

As for the political situation in Southern Levant and in particular Yehud, in the late stages of the Persian period, there is some information regarding the control of Southern Levant by the Egyptian rebels, after gaining independence from the Persian rule which last 60 years (Morkholm 1974:3). The rebels succeeded in removing the Persians from Southern Levant as well.

Some evidence exists to the presence of the rebels in archaeological findings, that were discovered in Southern Levant from this time. This fact of the rebels presence has implications on the nature of Athenian imitation style coins, that were minted at the same time in the region and Jerusalem, considering that Athenian imitation coins were common in Egypt and these coins were brought by the rebels during their invasion to Southern Levant . Some evidence that the Egyptians ruled in Gezer as well as Judea in the southern plateau, Jaffa and the coastal areas up to Akko and north to Sidon exists in which an inscription by Hakor (Achoris) was discovered in the Ashmon temple in the north of the city. In Gezer a seal impression and writing on stone was discovered bearing the name of Nepherites Νεφερίτης from the 29th dynasty which ruled during 399-393 BCE.



In khirbet Qeiyaf, Athenian imitation style coins from the Persian period were discovered. It must be noted that no coins<sup>5</sup> bearing the image of the Persian sovereign were discovered, however a coins with the image of Hezekiah with the Persian title governor was discovered. It is the author's opinion that the Athenian imitation style coins were minted and brought there, when the Persians were removed from there by the rebels and the coin with the title Hezekiah the Governor-Peha was used in circulation after 360 BCE when the Persian returned to rule the region.

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<sup>5</sup> photographs courtesy of Mr. Yoav Farhi



Egyptian revolts during the Persian period brought about the minting of coins without the Persian sovereign signs. After 360 BCE Hezekiah received the title of Persian Peha and the coin shown here, appeared in the site.

**Egyptian revolts during the Persian period which brought about the minting of coins without the Persian sovereign signs**

Years BCE	Action
465-424	Egyptian revolts
408-406	Independent Egypt
404	Amyrtaeus Ἀμυρταίος revolt
400-380	Egyptian invasion to Southern Levant. Pharaoh Amyrtaeus conquers the coastal areas and the plains from the Persians
380	Persian failure headed by Abrocomas Ἀβροκόμας to conquer Egypt
375	A second failure to conquer Egypt
362	Pharaoh Teos Tachos Τάχως invades Southern Levant with a large army and takes over the ports of Southern Levant and Syria
360	The Persian conquer the coastal cities and Phoenicia
352	Tennes revolt. The gathering of Phoenician cities and declaration of independence.
351	Artaxerxes Ἀρταξέρξης sieges Sidon. Tennes flees.
341	Artaxerxes conquers Egypt, is murdered and Darius completes the conquest.
334	Darius conquers Egypt and faces Alexander.

The table above includes the progression of revolts in Egypt, which bought about its independence and later on the Egyptian rule during the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29th and 30th dynasties over Southern Levant , beginning with the year 400 BCE, while pushing the Persians out of the area. The Persian attempted a few times, between the years 380, 375 BCE to conquer Egyptian strongholds, attempts which failed, until the year 360 BCE when the Persian re-conquered Southern Levant and Phoenicia. At a later stage the Persians re-conquered Egypt.

At the same time, according to Diodorus' source, Asia Minor was experiencing the Satrap Revolt during the years 366-360 BCE. The Satrap's, the local kings, minted independent coins bearing the inscription of their names and image. Coins from Asia Minor also arrived in

Southern Levant, influenced local minting and brought about the minting of coins with the names and images of local leaders, mainly in Samaria and partially in Judea.



On the right a Samaritan coin and on the left a Judean coin.

The issuers of “YHD” coins were not strict, at that time, with the Torah prohibition of “thou shall not make any graven image”. According to BRG they did not view the description on the coin as an offence against the prohibition, maybe because this was a commercial coin only (BARAG 1984).

### **Information regarding the rebellious pharaohs from Egypt**

Three dynasties of rebellious Egyptian pharaohs ruled during the fourth century. Amyrtaeus of the 28th dynasty, which freed the Egyptians from the Persians and invade Southern Levant in 400 BCE and drove out the Persians from the coastal areas, the plains and the mountain. Pharaoh Nephertitis – findings from Tel Gezer bear his inscription. Pharaoh Achoris also from the 29th dynasty – a stone stele bearing his name was discovered in Akko, as well as granite alter in the Ashmon temple in Sidon. Pharaoh Teos which held strong against a Persian invasion to Southern Levant in 362 BCE and assisted in the Satrap revolt in Asia Minor.

### **The 28th dynasty**

The 28th dynasty, had one Pharaoh – Amyrtaeus, Ἀμυρταῖος which rebelled against the Persian rulers and renewed Egyptian rule in the country. Amyrtaeus ruled between 398-404 BCE.

### **The 29th dynasty**

A dynasty whose rulers were of Egyptian descent, but relied heavily on the help of the Greek in their war against the Persians.



Baenre Nefaarud I Νεφερίτης – ruled between 393-398 BCE

Psammuthes Ψαμμύθης – 393 BCE

Achoris Ἀχώρ = 393-380 BCE



Nepherites II Νεφερίτης – 380 BCE

### **The 30th dynasty**

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- Known also as the last dynasty in Egypt. It was at this time that the Egyptians turned their backs to the Greeks and as a response the latter aligned themselves with the Persians against their war with Egyptians.

Nectanebo I Νεκτανεβώ – 380-362 BCE



Teos Τέως – 362-360 BCE

Nectanebo II Νεκτανεβώ – 360-343 BCE. Gave up his throne, as a consequence of the second Persian invasion.

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- abdicated the throne after the second Persian invasion.

### **Unusual coins minted in Jerusalem**

During the Persian period, most of the coins minted in Jerusalem were tiny silver coins in denominations of obol, which divided into sub denominations of half and quarter obol. Some unusual coins exist: an unusual coin kept at the British museum. On the one side appears a god wearing a Corinthian hat and on the other a winged chariot ridden by a god and the inscription above "YHD". The weight of the coin is 3.8g. Initially the inscription above was thought to be "YHW" But Prof. Sokenik 1934 corrected the interpretation from YHW to

"YHD". Mildenberg dated the coin to 360 BCE and ties it with the Arab-Philistian coins that were minted in Southern Levant .



Another unusual ancient coin from the Yehud province carries the image of a woman on the one side and on the other the inscription on the top half of the coin bearing the letter YHD, above lion lying on top of a bull. The coin has a mark of being checked by a chisel for its silver content. The weight of the coin 3.54g. The YHD inscription is in Aramaic and iconography is Philistian influenced. Gitler believes the coin was minted in the central mint in Phlistia, where several YHD coins were minted (Gitler 2011). It is possible that during the Persian period in Jerusalem, artists from Philistia were commissioned to design and mint the YHD coins.



There are two additional unusual coins from the Athenian imitation model: one weighs 2.72g and has the inscription "YHD" in Paleo-Hebrew up and down the coin, and the other weighs 2.7g with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "YHD" upside down. The coin was published in an article by R. Deutch.



The following is the types of a series of "YHD" Jerusalem minted coins in the Persian and Hellenistic "YHWD" and Hasmonean coins:

#### Persian period (tiny silver coins):

- \* Coins without the Persian sovereign signs
- \* Coins with private names of office bearers.

\* Coins with the sovereign signs (the head of the Persian king and the title Governor-Peha).

The Hellenistic period phase 1 (tiny silver coins):

\* Coins in Ptolemaic models.

The Hellenistic period phase 2 (bronze pruta):

\*Hasmonean coins.

YHD coins in the Persian period were mostly characterized as Athenian imitation coins, that were common in Egypt as well as Athenian imitation coins with the names of the Egyptian rulers. YHD coins show the inscription YHD in Aramaic or Paleo- Hebrew instead of the word AEO in Greek that appears on Grecian coins.

The Egyptian rebels that achieved independence in Egypt following their fight with the Persians continued their battle and conquered parts of Southern Levant while pushing the Persians out of the area and from Judea. The Egyptians brought with them Athenian imitation coins and these were used in circulation and influenced local leaders to mint Athenian imitation style coins of their own, on local coinage and on coins in the Judea province especially. The unique thing about the YHD coins is that most of them are Athenian imitation coins and most don't bear the marks of the Persian sovereign.

From findings of Athenian coins and Athenian imitation style coins, that were discovered in archaeological excavations in Southern Levant, it shows that during the fourth century, Athenian coins and Athenian imitation coins were the most commonly used in circulation in the area<sup>6</sup>.

**Egyptian "Athenian imitation" style coins**

Egyptian Athenian imitation coins were very common in Egypt in the late Persian period. Some of the coins included inscriptions with the names of rulers.

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<sup>6</sup> Gitler & Tal 2006:14,23-30

The following is an Egyptian imitation coin that was used in circulation in Southern Levant as well



Aramaic legend CHIVS to r. Sabakes, Satrap, ca.338-333 BCE



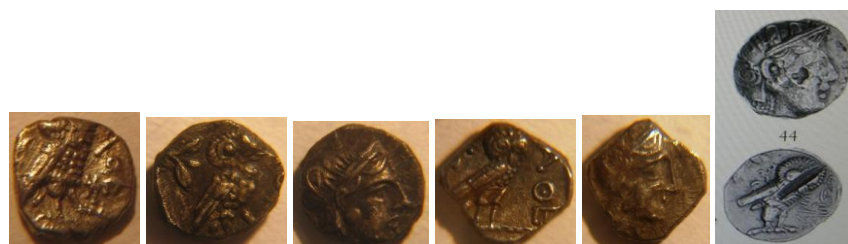
Another coin is an Egyptian tetradrachm by pharaoh Artaxerxes III Okhos from 343 BCE with the letters ZHK in Aramaic.



Athenian drachm imitation coins by pharaoh Teos (362-360 BCE)



The following are some examples of independent Egypt tetradrachm denomination coins that imitation Athenian coins, in comparison to coins minted in their regions in Southern Levant during the fourth century. Local provinces in Southern Levant that were influenced by the Egyptian involvement, also minted independent Athenian imitation coins when the Persians were pushed out of Southern Levant.





On the right (first row), an Egyptian Athenian imitation style tetradrachm. To its left two Philistian obols and on the left (first row) an obol bearing an owl and the symbol of the city of Gaza.

On the second row on the right an Athenian imitation Philistian drachm and on the left a couple of Athenian imitation obol from Samaria.

On the third row an Athenian imitation obol from the Yehud province. One side of the coin bears the goddess Athena and the other side is an Athenian imitation style bearing the owl. On its right the inscription YHD instead of the Greek inscription AΘE. To the left of the owl, appears a lily instead of an olive branch on Athenian coins and another YHD coin.

It must be noted that the most common series of YHD coins, were the models that imitated Athenian coins. On one side an owl and on the other side the goddess Athena. On the right side of the owl the Paleo- Hebrew inscription YHD which replaced the inscription AΘE that was on Athenian coins. To the left of the owl, appears the lily flower instead of the olive branch that appears on Athenian coins.



Other YHD obol series exist with the unusual inscription in Paleo-Hebrew from left to right.



In the Athenian imitation YHD coin, the Greek inscription ΑΘΕ, was replaced to YHD in Paleo-Hebrew and the olive leaves were replaced by the lily flower. Gradually the Yehud province minted alternative coins that included the motifs of the Athenian imitation series. The coin on the right, shows the motifs: a lily flower on the left, an owl and the name of the country YHD to the right of the owl. The lily flower turned from a secondary motif, on the coin to the right to the main motif in the new alternative coin, on the one side of the coin. On the other side of the new coin, the owl was replaced by a falcon and the inscription to the right of the owl was moved to the right of the falcon. And thus later that period, models of the new coins, which included models with the previous coins motifs were minted.



There are YHD obol coin series, without the inscription and only with the owl and lily flower.



After 360 BCE YHD Athenian imitation coins began to show models bearing the head of the Persian sovereign (Hendin 2010), with a crown (jagged crown), a symbol of Persian sovereignty. The Persians that were pushed out of Southern Levant by the Egyptian rebels returned to rule the region and decided to be use the entirety of coins operated by the minting authorities and used in circulation in the Yehud state, while minting the head of the Persian king, on a series of new Athenian imitation coins. The head was displayed on the coins instead of Athena's head, which appeared on the previous series.



Gradually new series of obol denomination coins were introduced into circulation bearing the model of the falcon, on one side of the coins. On the other side, appeared models with a horn, the lily flower, an ear and helmet. These obols do not show the mark of the Persian

sovereign, meaning the head of the Persian king, meaning these coins were minted until 360 BCE.



Some YHD coins bearing the falcon are of obol denomination with the inscription YHD on one side of the coin and the image of the Persian king on the other side with one of two types of crowns, the marks of the Persian sovereignty – the Persian king with a kidris (a Persian crown). These coins were minted after the renewal of the Persian rule in the region in 360 BCE as complementary to the coins that were in circulation.



Another series shows a man's head to the right. It is unknown, who the man is and the coin does not bear his name. It is likely, he was a leader who ruled the YHD state.



The next coins were used as coins and dated between the last coins minted in YHD in the late stages of the Persian period:

Obverse – the head of a lion to the right. Reverse – a falcon to the right. The inscription reads – YHDL



The historian Diodorus describes the Satraps revolt in Asia Minor, between 366-360 BCE. The leaders of the revolt were joined by leaders of Athens, Sparta, and Pharaoh Teos of Egypt, Syria and Phoenicia. The Satrap kings from Asia Minor minted in the first half of the fourth century, during the weaker time of the Persian rule, coins bearing their image and name.



The satrap coin from Mazaïos 361-334 BCE

Lion advancing left on ground, Aramaic legend MZDY (Mazday = Mazaïos)



Pharmabazos the satrap 379-374 BCE from Cilicia.

Some of the coins from Asia Minor arrived in Southern Levant and influenced local minting, among them local Athenian imitation Samarian coins bearing the names of Samarian leaders or the name of the state Samaria displayed as SMRY and SN – with the inscription

עבדאל 'BD'L / ידוע 'YDW / ד חנניה HNNYH / D / בת BT / בדיה / BDYH / בד יה YH

שן-SN and "שמרי" SMRY





A similar phenomenon occurred in the YHD state, where local minting authorities adopted coins with the names of state leaders. Initially a model coin bearing a legendary animal to the right and the other side not inscribed and no minting was adopted. Later they issued a series bearing the name "YHZQYH" (Yehezkiyah) without the Persian sovereign mark. Some attribute Yehezkiyah coins to the Hellenistic period, because of the Attic standard but it is noteworthy that most coins in the Persian period were minted in an Attic standard .



Later on minting authorities in Yehud, minted a coin bearing the head of a beardless man on its obverse and a winged animal with the head of a lion and the Paleo-Hebrew inscription YHZQKYH (Yehezkiya) on its reverse. This coin was minted before 360 BCE in the same style of the coins that were minted with the names and images of Asia Minor leaders and adopting Athenian imitation coins from Egypt with the names of leaders. The coin was minted before 360 BCE.



In 360 BCE the Persian conquered Southern Levant, including the Yehud province. The Persians decided to integrate themselves in local minting and minted coins bearing a legendary animal with horns on the one side of the coins and on the other an animal flying with the head of a bearded Persian king, the Persian sovereign marks. This coin constitutes a seal of approval by the Persians to the leadership of Yehezkiya over the province after 360 BCE.



In one of the YHD coin series, an unusual coin with two inscriptions appears: "YHWDA (yehuda)" and "YHD". The question is therefore, whether the Yehuda inscription in Paleo-Hebrew which appears to the right of the owl and to the left of the owl is a leader's first

name? According to the author, the name Yehuda to the right of the owl is the leaders' name. The name of the province YHD appears to the left of the owl. On the other side of the coin, appears a head. This is in the author's opinion the leaders image Yehuda.



The author found similarity to this minting in the Samaritan coins in which leaders' names appear to the right of the owl, some between the owl and the AΘE Greek inscription, such as the name "BD'L" עבדאל where the inscription appears to the right of the owl or alternatively the inscription "BDAL" on another coin.



Another series of YHD coins is coin type with the inscription "YWHNN HKEHN" (Yehohanan the priest). On the obverse of the coin, appears a man face on its reverse an owl to the right. The inscription by the owl is "Yehohanan " and "the Priest".



It is difficult to attribute the coin to the High Priest Yehohanan, who is mentioned in the letters of the Elephantine people from Egypt regarding the Jews request to renew building of the temple. It can be attributed to Yohanan II, that was born in 415 and was the father of "YDUA" Yadua II" who was also a High Priest.

Another series of coins, includes the motifs of a man's face on the one side of the coins and the inscription YHZQKYH HPHH (Yehezkiya the Satrap) "Yehezkiya the peha" alongside an owl. Some researchers claim that Yehezkiya, in the later stages of the Persian period reigned as the Judea governor-peha and during Ptolemy, held the post of High Priest. "After the

battle at Gaza, Ptolemy moved all of Syria and many people heard of Ptolemy's moderation and humanity...one of whom was Hezekiah the High Priest of the Jews, a man about sixty six years of age..." (Josephus. Against Apion 1, 22)

The Yehezkiya the peha coins were discovered in Tel Jamma – 10 KM south of Gaza where a large Persian fortress existed. This shows that the coins had a large distribution during the days of Artaxerxes III (Ochus) 359-338 BCE, The coin was also in circulation for a long period of time. Other coins by Yehezkiya were discovered in Hirbet Kiafa and Beit Zur.

The coin shows that Yehezkiya was appointed as peha over the Yehud province by the Persians, after their return to reign over the region. This appointment was published on some of these coins.



Coin groups with identical features	The obverse of the coin	The reverse of the coin	The Persian sovereign minting
A "Athenian imitation" * After 360 BCE	Athena The head of the Persian king	An owl An owl	Without the sovereigns mark * the head of the Persian king
B a falcon with its wings spread *After 360 BCE	A lily flower, horn, ear, helmet * The head of the Persian king	* a falcon with its wings spread	- Without the sovereign marks - Without the sovereign marks - With the sovereign marks
C first names C * Yehohanan the priest	A man face facing forward	* an owl + "Yehohanan"	No sovereign mark " " "
* Yehuda"	" " "	* yhd + "yehuda"	No sovereign mark
* "Yehezkiya"  *After 360 BCE	A young head * a legendary animal with horns	* a legendary animal with wings * the head of the Persian	- no sovereign mark  * the head of the Persian king

		king	
* Yehezkiya the peha	* a man's face facing forward	* an owl + "Yehezkiya"	The Persian title

According to the table above, the YHD coins are characterized by 3 main groups: one is a sort of Athenian imitation with a few changes. The inscription YHD appears instead of AΘE and the lily flower instead of the olive branch. These coins were minted until 360 BCE, while the province or YHD state was independent, and there was no Persian presence / sovereignty, as a result of the Egyptian rebellion. After 360 BCE the Persians returned to rule the region and particularly the Yehud province. The Persian integrated them into the minting circulation and minted the head of the Persian king wearing a Persian crown on the coin instead of Athena.

The second group is a falcon with its wings spread. Until 360 BCE the other side of this group bore the lily flower, an horn (*shofar*) or ear or an helmet. After 360 BCE the Persians included the Persian sovereignty mark – the head of the Persian king.

The third group is YHD coins with the first names of the YHD state leaders. According to the coins, the leaders until 360 BCE were Yehohanan the priest, Yehuda and Yehezkiya. After 360 BCE, the Persians included the head of the Persian king or the title Governor- peha on the new coins that were minted.

Coin models that were minted in YHD during 399-360 BCE

## דגמי מטבעות ביהד שטבעו בתקופה 399-360



Coins with the Persian sovereignty marks that were minted after 360 BCE

## מטבעות עם סמלי ריבון פרסי שנטבעו לאחר שנת 360



To summarize minting of coins during the Persian period, Until the Egyptians rebellions coins were not minted in Yehud. During the rebellions and the invasions of rebellious Egyptian armies to Southern Levant and pushing the Persians out of the region, local minting began.

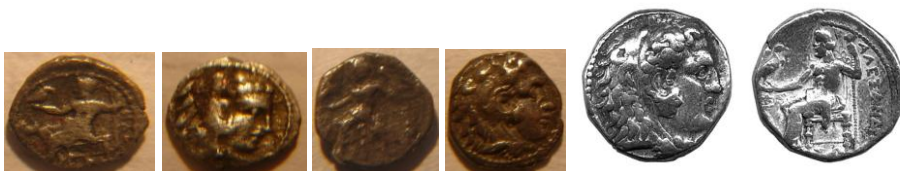
Initially the coins that were minted were Athenian imitation style coins with the lily flower motif and other coins. The minting with the sovereignty marks began in the later stages of the Persian period after 360 BCE to correspond with local minting.



### **Distribution of YHD coins**

The discernment of YHD coins, was within the borders of the YHD state. According to organized excavations, YHD coins were also discovered outside the province in Mt. Grizim, Hirbet Atari, Tel Jamma. It is known about an obol from Ascalon, that was discovered in an 8 coin hoard of YHD coins in Ramalla. This finding shows, that Philistian coins were in circulation both in the Yehud state and in other areas in Southern Levant.

With the conquest of Southern Levant by Alexander the Great, coins in denominations of obol and half obol were minted in Akko, in models by Alexander the Great, in denominations of tetradrachm and drachm and inscriptions in Greek. These coins were used in the region, along with the coins that remained in circulation.



Ptolemy I



### **Minting of YHD coins during the Hellenistic period**

The Ptolemaic dynasty first ruled in Egypt in 301 BCE and for a 100 years in Southern Levant and particularly the Yehud state. The Ptolemy allowed the minting authority in Yehud to renew minting of tiny silver coins.

In 200 BCE Antiochus III conquered Southern Levant and the Seleucid dynasty ruled Southern Levant until the Hasmonean's, who fought against them, came to power. The Hasmonean rulers, beginning with Hyrcanus I-Yehohanan achieved independence and minted only bronze coins.

Most tiny silver coins, carry the image of Ptolemy I and on the other side, the Ptolemaic eagle. Initially a few coins with images, which the author believes are of local Yehud leaders, appeared and later on, coins bearing Ptolemy I appeared. The coins below bears the head of a young man, who head faces to the right on its obverse. The reverse of the coin, shows an eagle and the Paleo-Hebrew inscription YHD. Some researchers claim that the minting was done during the time of Alexander the Great. According to the eagle it is likely to have been minted after 301, with the permission of Ptolemy II.



Another series of coins, includes a coin with the image of a man facing to the left. On its reverse the Ptolemy eagle and the Paleo-Hebrew inscription YHD to the left of the eagle. Since the minting is from the Ptolemaic period, it seems the image on the coin is the Ptolemaic rule commissioner or the High Priest from Jerusalem. The die of the coin appears is located to the left and is identical to the coin on the right without the minting on the other side of the coin. The silver content for the Ptolemaic coins on the Yehud state is 97.5% (Gitler 2011).



According to the inscriptions on the following Ptolemaic coins, it seems that during the minting of the Ptolemaic coins, for the most part, they continued minting the name of the state in Paleo-Hebrew YHDH and sometimes YHD.



Another series are tiny silver coins. The obverse of the coin shows a Ptolemaic crowned figure facing to the right and the reverse bears an eagle with its wings spread standing on a lightning.



The fifth series includes a coin with a Ptolemaic crown and on the reverse the image of Ptolemy's wife – Berenice I, facing to the right with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription YHD. Minting coins with the image of Berenice is attributed to Ptolemy II – Philadelphus 285-246 BCE, whose mother Berenice I appears in his minting alone. A large portion of these coins are in half obol denomination.



The sixth series includes coins bearing the image of Ptolemy I and Berenice and on the reverse images of Ptolemy II and his wife Arsinoe.



The seventh series shows the head of Ptolemy I on its obverse and an eagle with the inscription YHDL and the letters BA, which are a short for Basileus.



### **Hasmonean minting**

After a 175 years break in minting in Jerusalem, minting was renewed by the Hasmonean's. They minted in Jerusalem only bronze coins, bearing Hebrew inscriptions in Paleo- Hebrew. The Hasmonean minting authorities were gradually upgraded, when a short time after the beginning of minting autonomous coins, independent coins began to be produced.

The first among the Hasmonean's to mint, was Yehohanan Hyrcanus I (135-104 BCE). He first began to mint a joint coin with Antiochus VII. On one side of the coin, appears the royal Seleucid anchor and Antiochus VII titles, as well as the year of minting. The other side shows the Jewish lily flower, the symbol of Yohanan Hyrcanus I. His authorities appear on his coins produced in the years of his reign, among them the inscriptions "Yehohanan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews" and "Yohanan the High Priest and head of the Council of the Jews".



Hyrcanus I, aligned with Antiochus VII and joined his army in the fight against the Parthians. As a show of gratitude for the military aid, Antiochus VII allowed Hyrcanus to mint coins. What characterizes these coins is the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "Yehohanan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews" and above it, the Greek letter Alpha. It is the authors' opinion that this represents the first letter in Antiochus' name as a seal of approval. Some researchers claim that since the coins with the Alpha letter are relatively in better quality, it shows that the coins were minted in the first year of his minting. This series of coins can be called "priestly coins", since on the one side appears an inscription which includes the term "High Priest". On the other side of the coins, appear cornucopias with a pomegranate between them. The pomegranate is the mark of the High Priesthood, so both sides of the coin, contain priestly elements.



Later during that period, Antiochus VII was killed in battle with the Parthians and Hyrcanus in fact declared Judea independent, and so, in the next series of coins, Hyrcanus omitted the Alpha letter above the Paleo-Hebrew inscription and the inscription that appears is “Yehohanan the High Priest and head of the Council of the Jews”.



His son Judah Aristobulus I ruled in 104 BCE. Aristobulus minted coin in the model his father did with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription “Judah the High Priest and the Council of the Jews”. Judah was king and High Priest. The title king does not appear on his coins. He most likely did not have time to mint these coins.



With the death of Aristobulus, his brother Alexander Jannaeus came to power (76-103 BCE). Alexander served both as king and High Priest. Initially Alexander minted bi lingual coins in Paleo-Hebrew and Greek. On the one side the inscription “Yehonatan (Jonathan) the king” with the royal lily flower and on the other, a royal anchor within a hoop. Around it the Greek inscription “of king Alexander”. The lily flower and the Paleo-Hebrew inscription was intended for the Jewish population in Judea. The other side with the royal anchor, similar to the Seleucid royal anchor, was intended for the Greek population of the many Hellenistic cities, that were conquered in his quests. Later Alexander Jannaeus minted coins in a new series, bearing the star within a hoop with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription “Yehonatan the king”. Some claim that this is “a royal crown with a tieback. These coins can be referred to as “royal coins”.



Another series Jannaeus minted are the “priestly coins” in the same way his brother and father minted.



In 95 BCE a civil war broke out in Judea.

This war continued for 6 years until 89 BCE. According to Josephus, 50 thousand Judean residents were killed in this war (Ant. 13:376). Some called Demetrius III to intervene in Judea. Alexander Jannaeus used mercenaries against his opposition. Demetrius III invaded Judea and Alexander Jannaeus was forced to face him.

Jannaeus fell out with the Pharisees. They demanded the king cooperate with the Sanhedrin headed by Simeon Ben Shetach. The people’s representatives claimed the king was behaving as a Hellenistic king in a manner opposing his second important role – High Priest. Eventually Alexander Jannaeus came to the conclusion that the disagreement with Pharisees must be straightened out and unite the people against Demetrius III. The consequences appear on overstruck coins <sup>7</sup>.

The “royal” coins included an additional minting on dies, with the priesthood markings and “council of Jews” (Sanhedrin), along with the royal marks. These unique coins are characterized by showing the inscription “Yntn High Priest and the council of the Jews” and on the other side cornucopias with the pomegranate in them. Most coins were issued as overstruck minting above the original minting with the inscription “of king Yehonatan” with a lily flower or anchor and the Greek inscription “king Alexander”. A small portion of the

coins which show the inscription “Yntn the High Priest and the council of Jews”, are priestly coins, that bear cornucopias and a pomegranate in them, on the other side. The following are a few examples of the overstruck and “priestly coins” with the inscription “Yntn”.

First row on the right the inscription “Yntn” over a lily flower. The next coins a “Yntn” coin when one side of the coin bears the inscription Yntn and the other a couple of cornucopias. The following coin is similar in structure to the previous one. Second row the first coin is an overstruck coin. On one side it is the basic coins with the inscription “King Yehonatan” with a lily flower and above it a couple of cornucopia with a pomegranate within. The other side of the coin show the inscription “Yntn the High Priest and the council of Jews”, above the basic coin with the anchor and Greek inscription “of King Alexander”. The other coin in the second row is an overstruck coin where on one side is the inscription “Yntn...” on the anchor and on the other side a couple of cornucopias with a pomegranate over a lily flower.

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<sup>7</sup> As defined by Arie Kindler for additional minting on coins.



The process of minting coins on top of existing coins, during Alexander Jannaeus’ time, created a new type of coins. Minters did not bother erasing the original coins in comparison to Bar Kokhaba’s time, where the face of the coin was erased. Thus on Alexander Jannaeus’ coins can be seen symbols and inscriptions of the original coins in addition to new minting marks. The reason for this, lies in the settlement to end the battle between Alexander Jannaeus and his Pharisees adversaries.

According to overstruck coins, the minting authority worked to incorporate models of previous Hasmonean rulers on the coins in circulation in order to balance one of the issues in the struggle to favor the king’s role over the role of the High Priest. During the re-minting process, most of the coins were collected from circulations as well as those that were left in the minting authority and were minted again. The overstruck coin that is presented below

constitutes a new minting on a previous coin, by the Hasmonean, king Alexander Jannaeus. On one side of the coin appear cornucopias and a pomegranate within, the symbol of the High Priest, over the previous minting of a royal anchor with the Greek inscription " of king Alexander".



The other side of the coin shows the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "Yntn the High Priest and the council of Jews" over the previous minting of a royal lily flower with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "king Yehonatan".

The means of minting shows that the lily die over the overstruck coins, preceded the inscription "Yntn High Priest and the council of Jews".



To illustrate this minting this coin should be seen as having the royal and lily on it as the basis coins on which the cornucopia with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription was minted on.

להמחשת הטביעה זו יש לראות את המטבע עם העוגן  
והשושן, כמטבע הבסיס שעליו הוטבעה המטבע עם קרני  
השפע והכתובת בעברית עתיקה.



#### Order of appearance for Jannaeus' coins

##### 1. Royal coins

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##### 3. Priestly coins

\*\*\*\*\*

##### 2. Overstruck coins

\*\*\*\*\*

##### 4. Royal coins

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## סדר הופעת מטבעות ינאי

- 1. מטבעות מלכותיים
- 3. מטבעות "כהנים"



- 2. טביעת "הישבון"
- 4. מטבעות מלכותיים



As for the order of appearance, the royal coins were minted first. At a certain point in time during the end of the crisis with the Pharisees, overstruck coins were minted with dies that were incorporated with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "Yntn the High Priest and the council of Jews" over one side of the bi lingual royal coins, with the cornucopia and a pomegranate between them. On the other side of the coins, that were collected from circulation and the minting authority. At the same time, new coins with the inscription "Yntn the High Priest and the council of Jews" were minted. At a later stage a series of priestly coins were produced, with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "Yehonatan the High Priest and the council of Jews" and later when the battle was settled, Alexander Jannaeus produced bi lingual royal coins, which also corresponded with the needs of the Hellenistic population, which bore a star within a hoop and between its rays the inscription "Yehonatan the king" (Zlotnik 2011:6-9). Some researchers claim this model is the royal crown with a tie in the back.

To sum up, Alexander Jannaeus was the last of the rulers who minted in Judea during the Hellenistic period. His period seals an important Hasmonean minting period that influenced minting characteristics during early Roman times.

## **summary**

During the Persian period and until the Egyptian revolts, no coins were minted in Judea. Local minting began during the Egyptian rebellions and their invasions to Southern Levant while pushing the Persian out. Initially coins were minted in Jerusalem, in obol Athenian imitation style, coins such as the coins that the Egyptians brought with them to the area, while incorporating the lily flower motif instead of the olive sprays that appeared on the Athenian coins as well as changing the inscription from AΘE to YHD, first in Aramaic and later in Paleo-Hebrew. Later new types of coins were minted some incorporating motifs from the first YHD coins. The coins were produced from pure silver and no silver plated bronze coins were minted.

During the satrap revolt in Asia Minor, coins bearing the names and images of the satraps appeared in the region. These coins influenced a new type of YHD coins, that were issued in Judea. These new coins bore the names and images of current leaders.

In 360 BCE the Persians re-conquered Southern Levant and Judea. Since numerous types of coins were used in circulation, which were accepted by the population, the Persians decided to incorporate themselves into local minting and continue minting familiar types of coins in Jerusalem, while changing some of the local motifs to the Persian sovereignty marks, including the head of the Persian king or the title Governor-peha and minting YHD in Paleo-Hebrew and Aramaic alongside each other.

During the Hellenistic period, the tiny silver coins were in use in Judea. The minting authorities received permission from the Ptolemaic rulers to mint series of new types. Initially a number of types with the images of local leaders were minted, while later the minting was changed into a sort of Ptolemaic imitation, with the head of Ptolemy I on the one side of the coin and the Ptolemaic eagle on the other. The inscription "YHDH" or YHD in Paleo-Hebrew was moved to the left side of the new coins. During Ptolemy II or Ptolemy III minting of tiny silver coins stopped in Jerusalem and as an alternative bronze coins were minted and the Jerusalem minting authority was shut down.

After 175 years break, minting was renewed in Jerusalem during the Hasmonean period with bronze coins. The first of the minters was Hyrcanus I, followed by his son Aristobulus I and towards the end of the Hellenistic period Yehonatan Alexander Jannaeus. Alexander Jannaeus minted a lot of coin types, among them a special type of overstruck coins where on the basic minting of royal coins, appears an additional minting of priestly models. Alexander was the last Hasmonean ruler who minted coins during the Hellenistic period.

The author suggests, in this article dating of the coins, mentioned here. YHD coins are dated according to the political changes that occurred in the area considering the Egyptian rebellion in the fourth century in Southern Levant and later re conquering of the region by the Persians, Alexander the Great and his heirs, the Ptolemaic ruler, Seleucid and later the Hasmonean's.

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