

Plate II

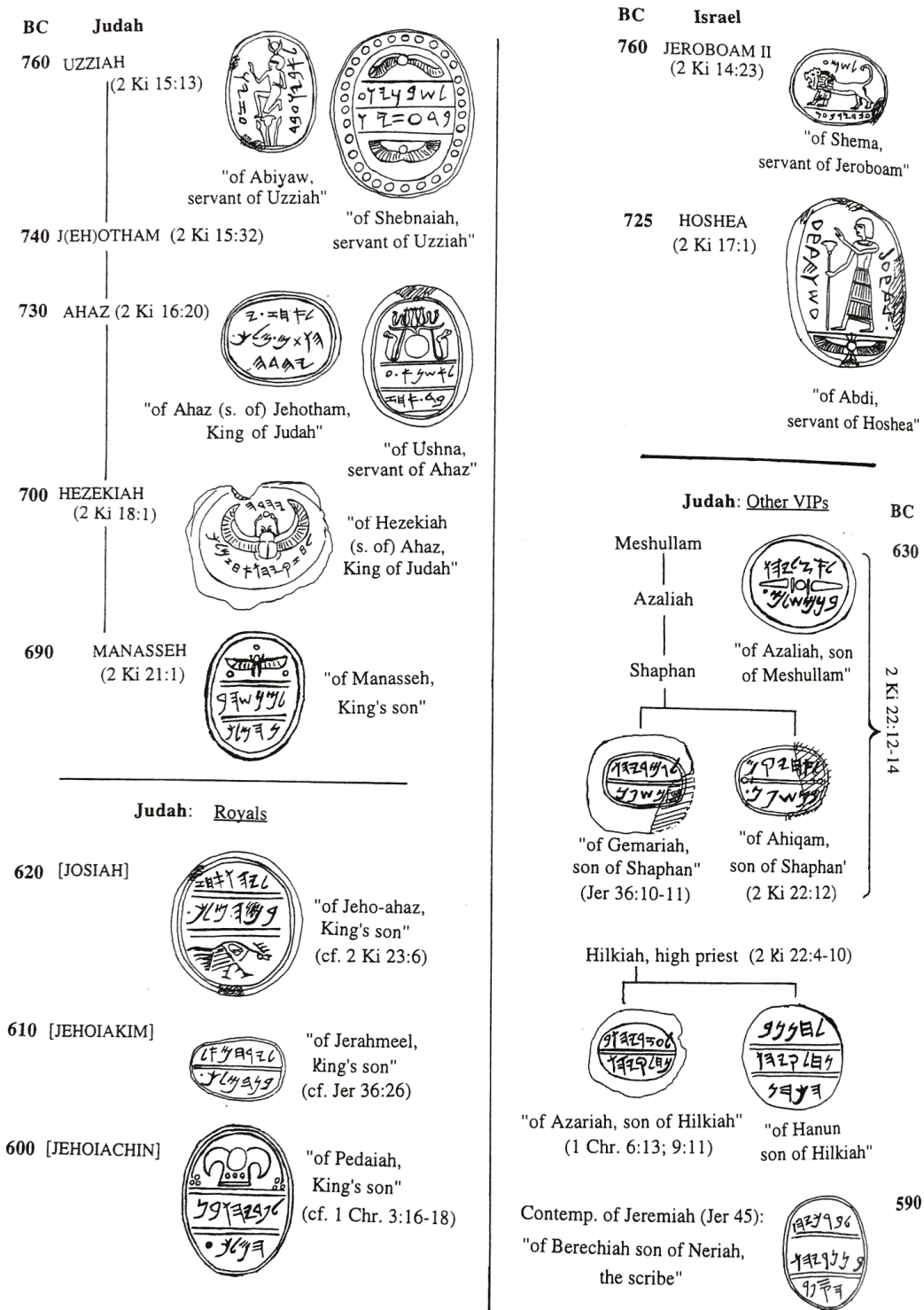


Figure 2

"Happy Families" - Signed and sealed

Hebrew seals & impressions ('bullae'), 8th-6th centuries BC

Khirbet el-Qom: Uriah Tomb Inscription

-Dates to the last quarter of the 8th Century (725-700)

-Text:

Uriah the rich had it written. Blessed was Uriah by YHWH and from his enemies by his (YHWH's) Asherah he has saved him. (Written) by Oniyahu ... for/by his Asherah ...

-2 Kings 18:4 “He [Hezekiah] removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).”

Siloam Tunnel Inscription

-Dated shortly before 701

-Text:

...the breaking through. And this was the manner of the breaking through: While [the stonecutters were wileding] the pickaxe, each toward his fellow, and when there were three cubits yet to be brok[en through], the voice of a man [was hea]rd calling to his fellow, for there was a fissure in the rock on the right and [on the left]. And at the time of the breaking through the stonecutters struck, each to meet his fellow, pickaxe against pickaxe. And then the waters flowed from the spring to the pool for 1200 cubits. And 100 cubits was the high point in the rock avoice the head of the stonecutters.

-2 Kings 20:20 “The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”

-2 Chr. 32:2-4, 30 “And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?"... This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.”

Royal Steward Inscription

-Dates to about 700, shortly after the Siloam Tunnel Inscription

-Text:

This [is the grave of Sheba]naiah, who was over the house (= royal steward). There is no silver or gold here, [on]ly [his bones] and the bones of his female slave with him. Cursed be the man who opens this (tomb)!

-Isaiah 22:15-19 “Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, ‘Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a dwelling for yourself in the rock? Behold, the LORD will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you and whirl you around and around, and throw you like a ball into a wide land. There you shall die, and there shall be your glorious chariots, you shame of your master's house. I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station.’”

Sennacherib’s Third Campaign: The Siege of Jerusalem

-This campaign took place in 701

-Text (translation by Jamie Novotny):

Moreover, (as for) Hezekiah of the land Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I surrounded (and) conquered forty-six of his fortified cities, fortresses, and small(er) settlements in their environs, which were without number, by having ramps trodden down and battering rams brought up, the assault of foot soldiers, sapping, breaching, and siege engines. I brought out of them 200,150 people, young (and) old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep and goats, which were without number, and I counted (them) as booty.

As for him (Hezekiah), I confined him inside the city Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I set up blockades against him and made him dread exiting his city gate. I detached from his land the cities of his that I had plundered and I gave (them) to Mitinti, the king of the city Ashdod, Padî, the king of the city Ekron, and Şilli-Bēl, the king of the city Gaza, and (thereby) made his land smaller. To the former tribute, their annual giving, I added the payment (of) gifts (in recognition) of my overlordship and imposed (it) upon them (text: “him”).

As for him, Hezekiah, fear of my lordly brilliance overwhelmed him and, after my (departure), he had the auxiliary forces and his elite troops whom he had brought inside to strengthen the city Jerusalem, his royal city, and who had provided support, along with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of ..., ivory beds, armchairs of ivory, elephant hide(s), elephant ivory, ebony, boxwood, every kind of valuable treasure, as well as his daughters, his palace women, male singers, (and) female singers brought into Nineveh, my capital city, and he sent a mounted messenger of his to me to deliver(this) payment and to do obeisance.

-2 Kings 18:13-18 “In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; withdraw from me. Whatever you

impose on me I will bear.” And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD and from the doorposts that Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rab-saris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Washer's Field. And when they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder.”

-2Kings 19:32-37 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: “He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.”

Yavneh Yam Inscription: A Worker's Judicial Plea

-Dates to the last decades of the 7th Century (630-600) during the reign of Josiah

-Text:

May my lord, the official, hear the case of his servant. As for your servant, your servant was harvesting at Hazar-Asam and your servant harvested and measured and stored according to schedule before stopping. Just as your servant measured the harvest and stored, according to schedule, Hoshaiiah son of Shobai came and took your servant's garment. When I had measured my harvest for some time he took your servant's garment. Now all my colleagues will testify for me— those who harvested with me in the heat of [the sun. All] my colleagues will testify for me. Truly I am innocent of gui[lt. but he unjustly took] my garment. Surely it is for the official to re[turn the garment] of your ser[vant. May you gra]nt him compass[sion and he]ar the [case of your] servant and not push him away...

-Ex 22:26 “If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.”