

“The Seleucid and Hasmonean Coins of Shiloh:
What They Do and Do Not Tell Us about the Occupation of Second Century BCE Shiloh”
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Geo-political factors make archaeological research difficult in the highlands of Israel (i.e., West Bank). While much progress has been made, the recovery and interpretation of the material culture is still lagging in comparison to other parts of the southern Levant. In many cases scholars are limited to textual evidence in constructing a history of the region. The Associates for Biblical Research, under the direction of Scott Stripling and the auspices of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, began excavation work at Shiloh in 2017. After two seasons one hundred eighty-one coins have been found. The coins may be useful for our understanding of life at Shiloh, but there are also difficulties in using them for stratigraphy. The aim of the paper is to offer suggestions about how the coins may or may not assist in augmenting the literary evidence of the Seleucids and Hasmoneans in the second-century BCE in and around Shiloh.

Recovery from the Babylonian invasion of Judah² and the repatriation of Jews into their former homeland under the Persians was long and difficult. While the process was much quicker on the Mediterranean coast, where cities and large villages were settled, in the central hills there was but one city (Jerusalem) and small farmsteads that dotted the region. In the highlands few villages can be identified, with settlement activity being at best fragmented and dispersed. Even during the reign of the Ptolemies throughout the third-century BCE, the central hills continued to be thinly populated.³

Outside of Jerusalem, the few third-century BCE settlements that have been identified are within a couple hours walk from the city. Four seasons of excavation at Bethel found just a few scattered third-century sherds and no buildings, even though it had been a small town during the Persian period.⁴ Between Jerusalem and Bethel was Qalandiyeh, a newly settled site in the third-century BCE. It was a fairly large establishment, devoted exclusively to the manufacture of wine.⁵ In the northern hills, the only sizeable third-century BCE settlements were Samaria⁶ and

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² The terms Judah and Judahite(s) are used here within the chronological context predating the third-century BCE; in the later context, the terms are Judea, Jewish and Jew(s).

³ Andrea M. Berlin, "Between Large Forces: Palestine in the Hellenistic Period," *BA* 60 (1997): 8-11; see also R. Harrison, "Hellenization in Syria-Palestine: The Case of Judea in the Third Century BCE," *BA* 57 (1994): 106-7.

⁴ J. Kelso, *The Excavation of Bethel (1934-1960)* (AASOR 39; Cambridge: ASOR, 1968).

⁵ Berlin, "Between Large Forces," 9.

⁶ A Macedonian garrison had been put in place in the late fourth century BCE and these soldiers might be the ones responsible for building at least three round towers (the technique is similar to a Hellenistic wall at Dor and is not native). Large scale excavations conducted at Samaria uncovered few third-century remains. See: G. Crowfoot, J. Crowfoot, and K. Kenyon, *Samaria-Sebaste: Reports of the Expedition in 1931-33 and of the British Expedition in 1935*. (3 vols; London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1957).

Shechem.⁷ Even though no early Hellenistic settlement of any size has been found in the northern central hills outside of those at Samaria, Shechem, and Mt. Gerizim, the area was not completely void of population. Surveys of the region have identified at least twelve hundred small stone field towers. Third-century BCE pottery has been found in and under the lower levels of several of these towers.⁸

The dawn of the second-century BCE brought another era of conflict to the region. The Seleucids took control of Palestine from the Ptolemies and then the native population of Jews under the Hasmoneans gradually took control from the Seleucids. Shiloh and its surrounding area, located in the border region of Judea and Samaria would have found itself in the middle of several of these conflicts. The goal of this paper is to offer suggestions about how coins may or may not assist in augmenting the literary evidence of the Seleucids and Hasmoneans in the second-century BCE in and around Shiloh.⁹

A Brief Review of Seleucid and Hasmonean Activity in the Highlands¹⁰

Around the year 200 BCE the Seleucid king Antiochus III *Megas* (223-187 BCE) took control of Palestine from the Ptolemies in the battle of Panion. Thirty-three years later, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and demanded that the Jewish population cease traditional religious practices. Antiochus IV likewise treated with contempt the sacred precincts at Mount Gerizim in Samaria.¹¹ In Jerusalem the demands of Antiochus IV led to an uprising and revolt by Judas Maccabeus in 167-164 BCE. The Samaritans, on the other hand, did not take up arms to fight alongside the Maccabees.

What has become known as the Maccabean Revolt began in the city of Modiin in 167 BCE. Shortly thereafter, a second clash occurred near Lebonah, just a few km to the west of Shiloh.¹² Here Judas defeated the Seleucid governor of Samaria, Apollonius (1 Macc 3:10-12). After this clash Judas' military activity is confined to Judah as recorded in 1 Maccabees 3-4.¹³

⁷ The third-century remains at Shechem are notable for the extent of both domestic and defensive constructions. For a succinct overview of the site in the third-century BCE see A. Berlin, "Between Large Forces," 10.

⁸ Shimon Dar and Shimon Applebaum, *Landscape and Pattern: An Archaeological Survey of Samaria 800 BCE-636 CE*. (BARIS 308; London: BAR, 1986).

⁹ Ilan Shachar published an article ("The Historical and Numismatic Significance of Alexander Jannaeus's Later Coinage as Found in Archaeological Excavations," *PEQ* 136 [2004]: 5-33), written as a summary of his MA Thesis, suggesting the ability to determine the occupational history of a site based upon the presence or absence of coins. A weakness of his method is that he does not appear to account for the coin finds in stratigraphic context. A coin container on this writer's dresser has coins minted over a fifty-year time span. This does not mean that someone has been living in the house throughout those fifty years.

¹⁰ For a detailed overview of Maccabean/Hasmonean history from 175-63 BCE see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)* (Revised and Edited by Geza Vermes & Fergus Millar; ed. Matthew Black; Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1973) 1:125-242. For a valuable overview of Seleucid and Maccabean history through the lens of numismatics see the work of David M. Jacobson, *Antioch and Jerusalem: The Seleucids and Maccabees in Coins* (London: Spink, 2015).

¹¹ 2 Macc 6:2; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.257-264.

¹² David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 134-35. Lebonah is mentioned in Judg 21:19.

¹³ For example, "They pursued them down the descent of Beth Horon ... then Judas and his brothers began to be feared..." (1 Macc 3:13-26); Judas camped south of Emmaus (1 Macc 3:38-4:25); they pursued them to Gazara, Azotus, and Jamnia (1 Macc 4:12).

What started as a struggle for religious liberty turned into a struggle for political independence from the Seleucids. Political independence was won in stages as the descendants of Judas Maccabeus gained control of more territory throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Judas' brother Jonathan (high priest from 160-142) continued the fighting and gained control of a narrow strip of area between Judea and Samaria, including the cities of Lydda, Modiin, Thamna, Isana. Shiloh and the immediate surrounding areas remained in Seleucid control.¹⁴

After the death of Jonathan, Judas' brother Simon became high priest (142-134 BCE; 1 Macc 14:25-43). Around the time that Simon became high priest the Jews were able to declare their independence from the Seleucids, who were being ruled by Demetrius II (145-138 BCE). Simon's military successes were limited to the coastal plain west of Judea.

When John Hyrcanus I became high priest (134-104 BCE), the then current king of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus VII Sidetes (138-129 BCE), invaded Palestine, in 134 BCE. After laying siege to Jerusalem, he left in 130 BCE to fight the Parthians in the East. With Antiochus occupied with the Parthians, Hyrcanus was able to take control of large areas of land. In addition to Idumea, the northern Negev, southern Transjordan region east of the Dead Sea, the most significant land grab was Samaria (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.254-58; 13.275-80; *War* 1.63-65) and the consequent destruction of the Samaritan Temple in 129 BCE¹⁵ and again around 107 BCE when the city itself fell.¹⁶

During the short reign of Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE) Galilee came under Hasmonean control. Finally, Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) gained control of the remaining territories east of the Jordan River (Gaulan, Gilead, and south of the Arnon River), the southern coastal plain, coastal plain from Sharon Plain to Mt. Carmel; as a result, the Hasmonean Jewish kingdom stretched from Pnias to Beer-Sheba, from the Mediterranean coast to the east bank of the Jordan (Transjordan).

Scope of Evidence

The Associates for Biblical Research, led by Scott Stripling, under the auspices of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, began excavation work at Shiloh in 2017. Excavation work is occurring on the north-northwest slope of the Tell and is designated as Field H1. This area connects the previous excavation work done by the Danish¹⁷ and Israel

¹⁴ 1 Macc 11:20-37; Josephus, *Ant.*, 13:120-28.

¹⁵ When Antiochus IV Epiphanes passed decrees against the Jews, he converted the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim into a pagan shrine in honor of Zeus Xenios or Hellenios (2 Macc. 5:23; 6:1; Jos., *Ant.*, 12:255-257.).

¹⁶ The city of Samaria fell to Hyrcanus by 107 BCE, but no massive destruction layer has been found (Avigad, "Samaria [City]," *NEAEHL* 4:1300-1310). This may have been the event that precipitated the formal break between the Jews and the Samaritans; a tension that had been growing since the early post-Exilic period. For a discussion of when the schism occurred between Jews and Samaritans see the helpful analysis by Anderson and Giles (*The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002], 27-34).

¹⁷ Marie-Louise Buhl and Svend Holm-Nielson. *Shiloh, The Pre-Hellenistic Remains: The Danish Excavations at Tell Sailun, Palestine, in 1926, 1929, 1932 and 1963* (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark and Aarhus University Press, 1969) and Fleming G. Anderson, *Shiloh II. The Danish Excavations at Tell Sailun, Palestine in 1926, 1929, 1932, and 1963: The Remains from the Hellenistic to the Mamluk Periods* (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1985).

Finkelstein.¹⁸ After two 4-week seasons, approximately four hundred square meters have been or are in process of being excavated. A third season of excavation is anticipated for May/June 2019.

Shiloh (Ar., Khirbet Seilun) is situated 2.5 km east of the Jerusalem-Nablus road, at the northern end of a fertile valley. The mound, about 7.5 acres, was naturally protected on the east and west but was vulnerable on the south and, to a certain extent, on the north. The location is 45 km north of Jerusalem and 32 km south of the city of Samaria. Shiloh was part of the kingdom of Israel during the divided monarchy; when the Assyrians arrived it was part of what they designated as Samaria and remained as such until Pompey or Herod, at which time one of them annexed large portions of Samaria and considered it Judea. After the death of Herod, Shiloh reverts back to being considered Samaritan. Essentially, since the time of the Assyrian kingdom, Shiloh has been considered Samaria¹⁹ and is situated in the southern most region of Samaria just north of Judea.

The broad occupational history of the entire site is fairly well established with remains from every historical period from Middle Bronze II to the Byzantine era and beyond. Specific to Field H1 there is evidence of occupational activity from the following time periods: Byzantine, Early Roman, Iron Age II, Iron Age I, Late Bronze, and Middle Bronze II.

Given the size of the site (7.5 acres) and ABR's limited excavation area (0.1 acres) the sample size of coins found is rather small. The published excavation report of the Danish does not provide any numismatic data. Nor does the published report of Finkelstein's excavations at Shiloh in the 1980s. Because of the limited scope of evidence any conclusions are quite preliminary and easily subject to reinterpretation upon further data.

Ptolemaic, Seleucid, and Hasmonean Coins Found at Shiloh²⁰

The earliest coins found in Field H1 at Shiloh come from the Ptolemies in the third-century BCE. There are three coins of Ptolemy I Soter (305/4-282 BCE) (**objects** 826, 883, 1106). One coin of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BCE) (**object** 1088) and one of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 BCE) (**object** 1111).

Following the Ptolemaic rule of the region, excavation has revealed several coins from the Seleucids in the second-century BCE. The most numerous are coins of Antiochus III (223-187 BCE), of which there are eight unambiguous coins coming from Field H1 (**objects** 17, 32, 381, 458, 882, 1016, 1105, 1110).²¹

¹⁸ Israel Finkelstein, Shelomoh Bunimovits, Zvi Lederman, and Baruch Brandl, eds. *Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site* (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology 10; Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1993).

¹⁹ According to Samaritan tradition Eli, "the insidious one," left Mt. Gerizim and settled in Shiloh, where "he gathered the children of Israel into a schismatical sect" (Samaritan *Book of Joshua*, ch. 43). For a valuable discussion of state and provincial boundaries see Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Rev and Enlarged Ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979).

²⁰ Most of the coins presented below were discovered due to a controlled use of a metal detector. I've chosen to only use coins where the legend is clear and allows a confident identification. Yoav Farhi (Ph.D. Hebrew University in Jerusalem) of Ben Gurion University of the Negev has made the preliminary reading of each coin. All photos of the coins were taken by Michael Luddeni, ABR staff photographer.

²¹ Minting authorities for royal coins under the Seleucids included: Ptolemaïs, Demetrias-by-the-Sea, Samaria, Jerusalem, Ascalon, and Gaza. Samaria appears to perhaps minted bronze coins under Antiochus IV and silver coins under Antiochus IX (cf. A. Houghton, "A Seleucid Mint at Samaria- Sebaste?," *The Celator* 14/7 [2000]: 22-5). Jerusalem perhaps minted bronze coins under Antiochus VII (cf. A. Houghton and A. Spaer, *Sylloge*



Object 17 (c. 220-208 BCE; 1.99 grams; 13 mm; Æ; mint: Susa) Antiochus III – Obv. Diademed, horned head of Antiochus III r. with youthful features and long sideburn, hair in bangs over forehead. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ on l., Nike advancing l., crowning royal name and holding palm branch, dotted border. (*SC*, I: 1217)



Object 32 (c. 198 BCE; 3.50 grams; 16-17 mm; Æ; mint: uncertain 61) Royal bronze issue: Apollo/horse – Obv. Laureate head of Apollo r. with short, straight hair, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ on l., horse trotting r., dotted border. (*SC*, I: 1094)



Object 381 (c. 211-210 BCE?; 1.75 grams; 11-12 mm; Æ; mint: Antioch) Antiochus III as Apollo/standing Apollo – Obv. Laureate head r. of Antiochus III as Apollo, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ on l., Apollo standing l., holding arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (*SC*, I: 1055)



Object 458 (c. 204-197 BCE?; 0.76 grams; 10-13 mm; Æ; mint: Antioch) Apollo/standing Apollo – Obv. Laureate head r. of Antiochus III as Apollo, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ on l., Apollo standing l., testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (*SC*, I: 1058-9)

Nummorum Graecorum, Israel I: The Arnold Spaer Collection of Seleucid Coins [London: Italo Vecchi, 1998], nos. 2133-50).

Object 1110 (c. 220-210 BCE; 3.55 grams; 12 mm; Æ) Apollo or Antiochus III as Apollo/Apoloo on omphalos – Obv. Laureate head of Apollo, with corkscrew curls or loose hair on back of neck, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., Apollo seated l. on omphalos, testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (SC, I: 1050.1)

Object 882 (c. 204-197 BCE; 1.20 grams; 10-11.5 mm; Æ; mint: Antioch) Apollo/standing Apollo – Obv. Laureate head Apollo r., with short hair, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., Apollo standing l., testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (SC, I:

Object 1016 (c. 204-197 BCE; 1.47 grams; 10.5 mm; Æ; mint: Antioch) Apollo/standing Apollo – Obv. Laureate head Apollo r., with short hair, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., Apollo standing l., testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (SC, I: 1059)

Object 1105 (c. 204-197 BCE; 1.08 grams; 10-11 mm; Æ; mint: Antioch) Apollo/standing Apollo – Obv. Laureate head Apollo r., with short hair, dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., Apollo standing l., testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow. (SC, I: 1059)

Three coins of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) have been found (**objects 376, 767, 848**).



Object 376 (168-164 BCE; 4.81 grams; 13.5-16 mm; Æ; mint: Samaria) Antiochus IV Epiphanes – Obv. Radiate, diademed head of Antiochus IV right. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., goddess seated on l. high-backed throne, holding Nike, bird standing l. at feet, dotted border; Chalkous (SC, II: 1489)

Object 767 (175-173/2 BCE; 1.56 grams; 13 mm; Æ; mint: Ptolemaïs) Apollo/Apollo on omphalos – Obv. Laureate head of Apollo r., dotted border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l., Apollo seated on l. on omphalos, testing arrow and resting hand on grounded bow, often compound. (SC, II: 1478)

Object 848 (173/2-168 BCE; 2.44 grams; 13.5-14 mm; Æ; mint: Ptolemaïs) Radiate Antiochus IV Epiphanes – Obv. Radiate, diademed head of Antiochus IV right, diadem ends falling straight behind, or one falling forward over shoulder, fillet border. Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l. (often abbreviated or blundered), veiled goddess standing facing, holding long scepter or torch, dotted border. (SC, II: 1479)

Two of the Antiochus IV coins predate the Maccabean Revolt (**objects** 767, 848). The date of the third coin (**object** 376) coincides with the inaugural years of the Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BC) under Judas. Many of the Antiochus IV coins that have been found in Israel perhaps originate with the Samaria mint, possibly the city of Samaria itself.²² Oren Tal has observed that the autonomous coins minted in Samaria and Jerusalem were in almost exclusive use of the cities or their region where minted and not outside them, thus they served to meet the needs of the local market only.²³

Three coins have been found that may be clearly attested to John Hyrcanus I (**objects** 179, 735, 959).



Object 179 (c. 129-104/3 BCE; 1.82 grams; 14-15 mm; Æ) John Hyrcanus I - Obv. Inscription in four or five lines, in wreath. The letters are crude and sometimes illegible. (Yehoḥanen the High Priest and the Council of the Jews). Rev. Double cornucopiae with pomegranate between horns; crude style; prutah (*TJC*, F)

Object 735 (c. 129-105/4 BCE; 2.67 grams; 13.5-14.5 mm; Æ) John Hyrcanus I - Obv. Inscription in four or five lines, in wreath. The letters are crude and sometimes illegible. (Yehoḥanen the High Priest and the Council of the Jews). Rev. Double cornucopiae with pomegranate between horns; crude style; prutah (*TJC*, E)

Object 959 (c. 129-104/3 BCE; 1.82 grams; 14-15 mm; Æ) John Hyrcanus I - Obv. Inscription in four or five lines, in wreath. The letters are schematic. The letter N is designated as a simple stroke: | (Yehoḥanen the High Priest and the Council of the Jews). Rev. Double cornucopiae with pomegranate between horns; schematic style; a Greek letter or a monogram is depicted in l. or r. field; prutah (*TJC*, D)

²² A. Houghton, C. Lorber, and O. Hoover, *Seleucid Coins, Part II: Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII* (New York and Lancaster: American Numismatic Society, 2008), 94-95. A small bronze coin may have been struck, at the order of the Seleucid authorities during the time of Antiochus IV, at the Jerusalem mint depicting a seated, enthroned deity; thus declaring a message of a new polis, the Hellenized Jerusalem, which would have added fuel for the conflict (D. Barag, "The Mint of Antiochus IV in Jerusalem: Numismatic Evidence on the Prelude to the Maccabean Revolt," *INJ* 14 [2002]: 59-77).

²³ Oren Tal, "Hellenistic Foundations' in Palestine," in *Judah between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400-200 BCE)*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits, vol. 75, Library of Second Temple Studies (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 249.

The number of coins found in Field H1 that are attributed to the minting efforts of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE) far surpasses that of any other Hasmonean ruler.²⁴ Three coins may clearly be identified as his; two date from anytime within his reign (**objects** 660, 1107) and the other two date late in his reign (**objects** 83, 87). There are twenty-seven coins that are attributed to him or a later successor (**objects** 3, 27, 33, 36, 84, 86, 145, 227, 232, 370, 373, 675).



Object 660 (104/3-80/79 BCE; 2.01 grams; 13.5-15.5 mm; Æ) Alexander Jannaeus - Obv. Inscription in straight line paleo-Hebrew script, in four or five lines, in wreath. (Yehonatan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews). Rev. Double cornucopiae with pomegranate in between the horns; prutah (*TJC*, Q)

Not pictured Object 1107 (104/3-80/79 BCE; 1.68 grams; 14-16mm; Æ) Alexander Jannaeus - Obv. Anchor surrounded by inscription: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. Double Struck. Rev. Eight-pointed star in diadem; between rays, paleo Hebrew inscription: (Yehonatan the King) (*TJC*, K)



Object 83 (80/79 BCE; 1.20 grams; 13-14 mm; Æ) Alexander Jannaeus - Obv. Anchor surrounded by a circle; around it, inscription: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ; flanking the anchor, date: L KE (year 25 = 78 BCE). Rev. Eight-pointed star surrounded by border of dots; around, Aramaic inscription: (The King Alexander year 25 = 78 BCE); light prutah (*TJC*, L)



Object 87 (80/79 BCE; 0.72 grams; 11.5-14 mm; Æ) Alexander Jannaeus - Obv. Anchor surrounded by a circle; around it, inscription: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ; flanking the anchor, date: L KE (year 25 = 78 BCE). Rev. Eight-pointed star surrounded by border of dots; around, Aramaic inscription: (The King Alexander year 25 = 78 BCE); light prutah (*TJC*, L)

²⁴ A. Berlin (“Between Large Forces,” 37) says that the “profuse appearance” of Alexander Jannaeus’ coins is an indicator of his economic interests.

Discussion of Occupational History and the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Coins²⁵

Five coins have been found at Shiloh in Field H1 that were minted during the time that the Ptolemies controlled the region. As mentioned above, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III took control of the region around 200 BCE. The scant find of coins that span eighty years (between 300-222 BCE) might suggest that the area was virtually uninhabited during the Persian and Early Hellenistic / Ptolemaic periods.²⁶ This conclusion is consistent with the lack of any architectural remains²⁷ and any significant ceramic remains from these periods as well. The few coins found may represent limited continued circulation of Ptolemaic coins during the time of the Seleucids.

All eight of the Antiochus III coins were found in stratigraphic contexts outside of the timeframe of their minting. Four of the eight coins were found in locus 1 of their respective archaeological squares. Locus 1 typically designates the surface layer of a square. In these same squares, at lower elevations, coins from all time periods of occupational activity are found. For example, in excavation square AG28 a fifth-century CE Roman coin (**object 231**)²⁸ is found 1.3 m lower than an Antiochus III coin (**object 17**) dated 220-210 BCE.



Object 231 (c. 400 CE; 0.62 grams; 12.5 mm; Æ; half-coin) Proclamation of Eudoxia (LRBC2: 2214)

One of the Antiochus III coins (**object 381**) was found in square AG28 inside a storage room built in the early Roman era. In the same room two other coins were found: one, a coin

²⁵ Largest database of Seleucid coins is found online at <http://numismatics.org/sco/>

²⁶ After Antiochus III defeated Ptolemy, Antiochus returned to Ptolemy the entirety of his newly won domains as a dowry (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.154). At Shechem, a hoard of thirty-five Ptolemaic silver tetradrachms found in a jug buried fifty cm below a house wall included issues from ca. 300 down to 193 BCE (A. Berlin, “Between Large Forces,” 10).

²⁷ Oren Tal has noted that in almost all the sites exposed in Palestine with Hellenistic remains, excavators are unable to securely differentiate between the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid strata. In fact, in all cases “each urban component found in the urban settlements of Hellenistic Palestine turns out to be an integral part of the environment, culture, and social and political background of the period discussed and those preceding it” (Oren Tal, “Palestine in Transition from Orientalism to Hellenism,” in *Bollettino Di Archeologia – On Line: Volume Speciale* [Proceedings of the XVII International Congress of Classical Archaeology, (Under Theme: G. Meetings of East and West; Session: 8. Hellenization and Romanization of the Land of Israel: New Archaeological Evidence)]; Rome, 2011), 28.

²⁸ Through the fourth-century CE prutot continued to circulate and they were useful pieces of small change, at a time and place that small change was not easy to find. To accommodate the market needs for small change in the late Roman and Byzantine era small bronze coins were chopped in halves and quarters (R. Leonard, “Cut Bronze Coins in the Ancient Near East,” in Proceedings of the XIth International Numismatic Congress (1991), (eds T. Hackens and G. M. Mourcharte; Acte: Louvain-la-Neuve, 2013): 363-70.

from Alexander Jannaeus or a later successor (**object 675**), the other from the First Jewish Revolt (**object 151**). Thus within one room, constructed sometime after 70 CE, there are numismatic remains that span three hundred years.

As for one of the Antiochus IV coin's (**object 376**) found in square AH29, it too was found in a context where other coins were found but are not chronologically compatible. In the same locus as the Antiochus IV coin are coins from Alexander Jannaeus (**object 373**), Aretas IV²⁹ (**object 368**), and Hadrian (**object 375**). The other two Antiochus IV coins were surface finds outside of ABR's immediate excavation area.



Object 368 (9 BCE – 40 CE; 2.33 grams; 14-15 mm; Æ) Aretas IV - Obv. Aretas IV standing to front as soldier, looking l., raising r. hand and supporting sword in scabbard with r.; in l. field, palm branch, on r.: \square . Rev. Queen (Shuqailat) standing l., veiled, raising r. hand with opened palm; in l. field, wreath and on r., in three-lines: η ι λ η (Shuqailat) (*CHL* 228, no.59)



Object 375 (117-138 CE; 2.48 grams; 13.5 mm; Æ) Hadrian - Obv. Bust of Hadrian r., laureate; IM TR HADRIANO CA A. Rev. Lion walking r., above, snake; below, CIFAC (*CHL* 26, nos. 32-33. Caesarea)

With twice as many Seleucid coins as Ptolemaic coins, were there people living in and around Shiloh during the time of the Seleucid occupation of the region? While the Seleucid coin finds do not fit into a second-century BCE stratigraphy, they might suggest some type of occupation. Somehow the coins got to Shiloh. Since southern Samaria saw frequent conflicts between the Seleucids/Samaritans and the Jews between 164-130 BCE perhaps soldiers dropped the coins. Or, perhaps there was a small settlement somewhere else on the Tell between 200-164 BCE that has not been identified yet. What might give some credence to the idea of a tiny settlement in Shiloh during the early second-century BCE is that the central hills became home to new agricultural settlements in this time period. At least six farmsteads were founded in

²⁹ Aretas IV Philopatris was the king of the Nabataeans from roughly 9 BCE to 40 CE. His daughter was married to, and divorced from, Herod Antipas. Herod then married his brother's wife, Herodias.

southern Samaria. The excavator of the sites used a label of “military farms.”³⁰ If the coins were not original to Shiloh from second-century BCE occupation, instead transplanted by future occupants, what is difficult to understand - would coins minted in the early second-century BCE remain in use by the general population three hundred years later? This is unlikely. Rappaport has suggested that Seleucid bronze went out of use in some areas as early as 130 BCE.³¹

Discussion of Occupational History and the Hasmonean Coins

What should one make of the Hasmonean coins that have been found in Field H1 at Shiloh? To begin to even think about a potential answer, a review of what is known from literary sources about the Hasmoneans and coins is valuable. After the initial decades of the Maccabean Revolt, during the time of Simon’s high priesthood (142-134 BCE), Antiochus VII Sidetes came to the Seleucid throne (138-129 BCE). 1 Maccabees 15:6 says that Antiochus gave Simon the right to mint coins. Yet no coins have been found anywhere in Israel that can be attributed to Simon. Anne Lykke suggests that the main reason for this is that Antiochus VII did not adhere to his initial promises, and after having established his position as the new Seleucid ruler he did not see the necessity to keep the support of the Jews and his alliance with them (1 Macc 15:27-35; Jos., *Ant.* 13.226). “The fact that Simon only ruled for approximately three years under Antiochus VII, during which time he had to consolidate his rule and fight against Antiochus, before he was insidiously killed in Jericho by his son-in-law Ptolemy (1 Macc 16:11-16; Jos., *Ant.* 13.228), would have left him only a brief span of time to develop and establish the minting of his own coinage.”³² Consequently, the first Hasmonean coins are minted by John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BCE), using the Hebrew name “Yehohanan.”³³

No coins from any minting authority have been found at Shiloh that were minted between the time of Antiochus IV to John Hyrcanus I, about thirty-five years. Does this suggest that there was little human activity in this area of the Tell? If this is the case it would be consistent with the conflict in the region between the Hasmoneans and the Seleucids or the Hasmoneans and the Samaritans. As noted above, during the time of Jonathan the region around Shiloh might have been in the conflict zone and not conducive to human settlement.³⁴ It is conceivable that any

³⁰ S. Applebaum, “The Settlement Pattern of Western Samaria from Hellenistic to Byzantine Times: A Historical Commentary” in *Landscape and Pattern: An Archaeological Survey of Samaria 800 BCE-636 CE*, (edited by S. Dar; BARIS 308; London: BAR, 1986), 260.

³¹ U. Rappaport, “The Emergence of Hasmonean Coinage,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976):176.

³² Anne Lykke, “The Use of Languages and Scripts in Ancient Jewish Coinage: An Aid in Defining the Role of the Jewish Temple Until Its Destruction in 70 CE,” in *Judaea and Rome in Coins 65 BCE – 135 CE: Papers Presented at the International Conference Hosted by Spink, 13th – 14th September 2010* (ed. by David Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos; London: Spink & Son, 2012), 35, n.66.

³³ Upon the establishment of a Jerusalem mint (c.132 BCE), the first coins issued there were probably the small bronze ones bearing the name of Antiochus VII. On one side is a lily (a symbol closely linked to Jerusalem), on the other side the Seleucid anchor. These coins are primarily found in and around Judea and they bear symbols only and no graven images. It appears then that they were designed to appeal to the Jewish population. The anchor/lily bronze issue of Jerusalem is a transitional coin between the Seleucids and the Hasmoneans issued by a Jerusalem mint that was later taken over by the Jews. See: O. D. Hoover, “The Seleucid Coinage of John Hyrcanus I: The Transformation of a Dynastic Symbol in Hellenistic Judaea,” *AJN* 2nd Series 15 (2003): 29-39; David Hendin, “Numismatic Expressions of Hasmonean Sovereignty,” *INJ* 16 (2007-2008): 83-84.

³⁴ Consider the destruction of Tirat Yehuda, a potential “military farm” in southern Samaria, evidenced by a massive conflagration deposit. Evidence points to the farm’s destruction in the first wave of Hasmonean expansion

population that might have been squatting on the site would abandon it during this time of conflict. The high priesthood of Simon failed to make any geographical advancement in the region of Shiloh and thus perhaps this continued to keep human activity to a minimum or non-existent. Then, with the military successes of John Hyrcanus I and the resultant peace that would naturally come to the region, would this result in new settlements appearing and could Shiloh be one of these?

In order to consider this hypothesis, there is other data that should to be taken into account. First, the Hasmonean coins are not found in stratigraphic contexts appropriate to the time period of their minting. Like the Seleucid coins discussed above, the Hasmonean coins are just as randomly scattered throughout the archaeological layers, most notable being in the same contexts as other first century CE coins. For example, in excavation square AC29, early first century BCE Alexander Jannaeus coins (**objects** 87, 145) are found above a Herod Agrippa I coin (**object** 11) and a first Jewish revolt coin (**object** 146). Given the mixing of coins, does this suggest that the Hasmonean coins are still in circulation in the first-century CE?³⁵



Object 11 (41/42 CE; 2.85 grams; 17 mm; Æ)
Agrippa I, Jerusalem mint - Obv. Canopy;
ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ. Rev. Three ears of
grain issuing from between two leaves; on l.
and r., date: L ζ (year 6 = 41/2 CE); prutah
(*TJC* 120)



Object 146 (67/8 CE; 3.07 grams; 17 mm; Æ)
2nd year Jewish Revolt - Obv. Amphora with
wide rim, fluted belly and two handles (year
two = 67 CE). Rev. Vine leaf with small branch
and tendril; paleo-Hebrew script (Freedom of
Zion); prutah (*TJC* 196-98)

under Jonathan and Simon (R. Hestrin and Z. Yeivin, "Oil from the Presses of Tirat-Yehuda." *BA* 40 [1977]:29-31). Bethel was also refortified and garrisoned in 160 BCE by Bacchides, general of Seleucid king Demetrius I (1 Macc 9:1).

³⁵ David Hendin ("Numismatic Expressions of Hasmonean Sovereignty," 76) raises an important consideration. Generally, people look to coins as a purely economic venture. But coins also indicate sovereignty and define an independent nation. Therefore, the communication and propaganda value of coins should not be underestimated. Scott Stripling, director of excavations for ABR at Shiloh, in private e-mail correspondence with the author on January 16, 2019 suggested, "I believe the Hasmonean coins which precede Roman occupation (before Pompey's arrival in 63 BC) are preferred by Jews and remain in circulation up to the Great Revolt... Like stone vessels, it may have been a form of passive resistance."

Second, the Hasmoneans struck all of their coins in bronze³⁶ and relied upon Tyre's mint for silver (interesting since Tyre's coins had anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery).³⁷ So far, no Tyrian silver coins have been found in Field H1 at Shiloh. This might point against any settlement activity; however, since silver is much more valuable than bronze and they were physically larger coins, it seems reasonable to conclude that people would not lose these coins easily; therefore, one should not draw any type of conclusions about the absence of second-century and first-century BCE silver coins in the archaeological record at Shiloh.

Third, it is debatable if the pottery assemblage supports a second-century BCE occupation. While there is late Hellenistic (LH) pottery found at the site, there are no clean strata of LH pottery, it is all mixed with other pottery (mainly early Romans [ER]). When considering the amount of diagnostic sherds that can be clearly dated to the LH or the ER period, the LH pottery makes up an average of 6.68% of the combined LH/ER pottery.³⁸

Square	# LH Diagnostics	# ER Diagnostics	% of LH to combined LH/ER
AC28	48	456	9.5%
AC29	15	148	9.2%
AD28	10	164	5.7%
AD29	36	529	6.3%
AE29	17	335	4.8%
AE30	11	32	25.6%
AF27	34	145	19%
AF28	16	182	8.1%
AF29	12	102	10.5%
AF30	10	211	4.5%
AG27	58	579	9%
AG28	31	327	8.7%
AG29	13	730	1.7%
AG30	17	596	2.7%
AH28	1	23	4.3%
AH29	17	358	4.5%
AH30	15	121	11%
Total	361	5,038	6.68%

Is this enough pottery to suggest an occupation during the LH period? If there was an occupation, it was not anything remarkable, especially when compared to the ER pottery remains. While it is a subjective determination, the amount of LH pottery seems to be too much

³⁶ Alexander Jannaeus had a few coins struck in lead (see *TJC*, M).

³⁷ While Tyre was a principle source of silver coins during the time of the Hasmoneans, there is archaeological evidence that Seleucid, Ptolemaic, and rarely Roman Republican coins were used as well. See the discussion in Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (2 vols.; New York, 1982), 1:57-59 on silver coin circulation during the Hasmonian period. Also of note, the Hasmoneans seem to have instituted the half-shekel tax that brought Tyre's image-bearing coins into the heart of the Jewish Temple (Eric M. Meyers and Mark A. Chancey, *Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* [ed. by John J. Collins; vol. 3; AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 46).

³⁸ The figures represent preliminary pottery reads that differentiated LH and ER diagnostic sherds during the 2017 and 2018 excavation seasons.

to argue for family heirlooms passed down³⁹ or for LH pottery to still be in use a century or two later. Thus, in my opinion perhaps there might have been a very small settlement that is late second-century or early first-century based upon the amount of LH pottery.

Fourth, Field H1 is on the slope of the N-NW side of Tell Shiloh. It is impossible to determine how much the stratigraphy of the area has been impacted by weather; particularly when it comes to small objects that can easily be washed out of place from where they fell thousands of years ago by heavy winter rains. For example, in excavation square AG30, in the 2018 dig season an unbroken Iron Age II oil lamp (**object 860**) was found in a Late Roman context. The surface locus of square AG30 also produced the oldest coin found at Shiloh, a coin of Ptolemy I (306-294 BCE) (**object 826**); in the same locus coins from the late fourth-century CE were found.

The evidence is not strong for Tell Shiloh to have been inhabited during the time of the Hasmoneans. There may be some circumstantial considerations that slightly tip the scales to at least a minimalist occupation.⁴⁰ But ultimately it is just conjecture. At this point one will have to rely upon other considerations than the numismatic evidence to determine what if any population lived at Shiloh in the second-century BCE.⁴¹

Conclusions

Coin production in Judah and Samaria began toward the end of the Persian period. The YHD (*yehud*) coins are primarily found within the borders of the Persian province of Judah and were minted under the Persian administration during the fourth-century BCE and continued to be produced under Ptolemaic rule to at least the middle of the third-century BCE.⁴² The latter is interesting given the highly centralized Ptolemaic monetary administration and coinage

³⁹ This argument could be made concerning the scant Persian and EH pottery found at the site – many of the excavation squares have stray Persian and EH pottery (e.g., in square AG30 in 2018 excavation season, out of a total of 1,155 diagnostic pieces, 2 Persian, 1 Attic, 3 early Hellenistic pieces were found).

⁴⁰ Oren Tal states, “The numerous archaeological surveys show, nevertheless, a distinct rise in the number of rural sites in the Hasmonean period in comparison with the preceding Hellenistic period. The Jewish population and the populace that were annexed to it were mainly agrarian and were engaged primarily in agricultural production and processing” (“Hellenism in Transition from Empire to Kingdom: Changes in the Material Culture of Hellenistic Palestine,” in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity* [eds Lee Levine and Daniel Schwartz; TSAJ 130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 61).

⁴¹ Is there any evidence of imported ceramics characteristic of the Ptolemaic or Seleucid period (e.g., mold-made vessels, Megarian bowls [found in Samaria (city)]; amphorae with Rhodian and other stamp impressions [found in Samaria (city)]; are there fewer imports signaling a growing demand for products made within Jewish contexts)? (see O. Tal, “Eretz-Israel during the Hellenistic Period: An Archaeological Perspective,” *Qadmoniot* 133 [2007]: 2-14). Is there any epigraphic evidence from Shiloh that reveals the writing system – J. Nahev (“Scripts and Inscriptions in Ancient Samaria,” *IEJ* 48 [1998]: 91-100) has concluded that the Jews and the Samaritans shared the same writing systems until the conquest of Samaria by John Hyrcanus I. They may have continued to have the same system for another century but when the final separation happened between the two, one of the two scripts was no longer used.

⁴² Anne Lykke, “The Use of Languages and Scripts in Ancient Jewish Coinage: An Aid in Defining the Role of the Jewish Temple Until Its Destruction in 70 CE,” in *Judaea and Rome in Coins 65 BCE – 135 CE: Papers Presented at the International Conference Hosted by Spink, 13th – 14th September 2010* (ed. by David Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos; London: Spink & Son, 2012), 27. See also, Dan Barag, “The Coinage of Yehud and the Ptolemies,” *INJ* 13 (1994-1999): 27-38; S. N. Gerson, “Fractional Coins of Judea and Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE,” *NEA* 64 (2001): 106-21; -----, “A Transitional Period Coin of Yehud. A Reflection of Three Cultures,” *Israel Numismatic Journal* 15 (2003-2006): 32-34.

monopoly.⁴³ Just as there are no YHD coins north of an imaginary line, south of Ramallah, Samarian coins were minted during this time and are found only north of this line.⁴⁴ For our purposes here, the main point is that coins were part of daily life in the late Persian and early Hellenistic age. Since no YHD coins, no Samarian coins, and only scant Ptolemaic coins have been found at Shiloh this perhaps points to the site being unoccupied by any notable settlement during these periods.

As for occupation during the Seleucid period, the evidence is thin, but not non-existent for a small settlement. Perhaps the greatest reason for being open to the idea of occupational activity at Shiloh is the numismatic evidence. Even though the Antiochus coins are out of stratigraphic context the fact that they are present at all should not be lightly dismissed. Would Jews and/or Samaritans continue to use Seleucid coins during the time of the Hasmoneans or during the time of the Romans? This seems doubtful.

How should one understand the presence of Hasmonean coins found at Shiloh? Does the lack of abundant LH pottery in a clean context with Hasmonean coins rule out occupational activity? Or, is there enough LH pottery, and when factors such as heavy winter rains (and its ability to transform a hillside) are considered, to allow the possibility of human activity at the site in the middle to late second-century BCE?

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⁴³ L. Mildeberg, "On Fractional Silver Issues in Palestine," *Trans* 20 (2000): 94. That Judah was allowed to mint coins may point to the importance of the Jewish temple as the financial center of the region.

⁴⁴ Ya'akov Meshorer and Shraga Qedar. *Samaritan Coinage*. Jerusalem: Israel Numismatic Society, 1999. For Judea and Samaria coins see also the work of Stephen N. Gerson, "Fractional Coins of Judea and Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE," *NEA* 64 (2001): 106-21. For a helpful overview of Samaritan coins see David Hendin, "Current Viewpoints on Ancient Jewish Coinage: A Bibliographic Essay," *CBR* 11 (2013): 254-56.

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