

Gabriel

Tell this Man the Meaning of his Vision (Daniel, 8:16)

Studies in Archaeology, Epigraphy, Iconography
and the Biblical World in Honor of Gabriel Barkay
On the Occasion of his 80th Birthday (22 June 2024)

Edited by
Robert Deutsch and André Lemaire

Manuscript editing: Pamela Meron

Tel-Aviv, Israel
Archaeological Center Publications
2024

CONTENTS

Robert Deutsch and André Lemaire	<i>Foreword</i>	IX
Zachi Dvira	<i>Gabriel Barkay - A Living Legend Archaeologist</i>	X
-----	<i>Bibliography of Gabriel Barkay</i>	XXII

PART I – BIBLICAL STUDIES

1:1 James Charlesworth	<i>Apocalyptic Expectations: Condemnations or Benedictions? What May We Learn from Perusing Archaeological Discoveries and Early Apocalypses?</i>	1
1:2 David Blumenthal	<i>Psalm 49: A Meditation on Death</i>	28
1:3 Aaron Demsky	<i>From Writing Exercise to Literary Masterpiece: Hebrew Epigraphy and Biblical Literature</i>	34
1:4 Jan Dušek	<i>Remembering the Covenant in Beer-Sheba: עולם in Genesis 21:33 and Some Epigraphic Evidence</i>	47
1:5 Baruch Halpern	<i>Josiah's Name for His Book of Torah. Stance Change in Biblical Citation.</i>	60
1:6 Yigal Levin	<i>The Growth of Pre-exilic Jerusalem According to the Book of Chronicles</i>	79
1:7 Meir Lubetski	<i>Tāḥmās: What are You?</i>	102
1:8 Steven M. Ortiz	<i>The Battle at Gob: An analysis of the Gezer-Gob Issue in 2 Samuel 21:18 and Chronicles 20:4</i>	119
1:9 Ronny Reich and Yuval Baruch	<i>A Note on 'Ten Holinesses' (Mishnah Kelim 1, 6-9) and the Herodian Temple Mount in Jerusalem</i>	131

PART II – EPIGRAPHY AND ICONOGRAPHY

2:1 Robert Deutsch, Andre Lemaire, Gabriel Barkay, Pieter Gert van der Veen and David Itzhak	<i>The Bulla of “Shema, Servant of Jeroboam” An Embarrassing Forgery</i>	136
2:2 Alexander Fantalkin and André Lemaire	<i>Two Persian Period Aramaic Inscriptions from Yavneh Yam</i>	150
2:3 Michael Langlois and André Lemaire	<i>A Palimpsest Palaeo-Hebrew Ostrakon Revisited</i>	158
2:4 André Lemaire	<i>Dual in Early Aramaic and Tel Dan Stele</i>	170
2:5 Alan Millard	<i>Scrolls – Little or Large</i>	185
2:6 Lawrence J. Mykytiuk	<i>Inscriptions that Confirm 16 Hebrew Kings: A Thumbnail History and Current Percentages</i>	191
2:7 Nadav Na’aman	<i>Hezekiah’s Years of Reign in Light of the Epigraphic Evidence</i>	216
2:8 Dennis Pardee	<i>The “Experts” of Ugarit: The Textual Evidence</i>	231
2:9 Robert Silverman and James Ford	<i>Early Epigraphic Evidence for the ‘Aleinu le-Shabeach Prayer</i>	333
2:10 Stefan Wimmer	<i>Whose Year 32</i>	342
2:11 Ran Zadok	<i>A Preliminary Prosopographical Evaluation of the Incantation Bowls</i>	351
2:12 Ziony Zevit	<i>Six Priests on a Pithos</i>	441
2:13 Irit Ziffer	<i>A South-East Arabian Bowl in a Private Collection</i>	464

PART III – ARCHAEOLOGY

3:1 Rami Arav	<i>Symbols of Authority and Power in Iron Age II Southern Levant; Bethsaida as a Case Study</i>	490
---------------	---	-----

3:2 Avraham Faust and Eyal Baruch	<i>The Northeastern Burial Field at Tel 'Eton</i>	502
3:3 Yosef Garfinkel,	<i>The Well in the Northeast Corner of Tel Lachish</i>	526
3:4 Alon Shavit	<i>Muslim Burial Practice in Light of the Findings of the Excavation at the Mamilla Cemetery in Jerusalem</i>	545
3:5 David Ussishkin	<i>On the Fortifications of Betar, Bar-Kochba's Last Stronghold</i>	571
3:6 Boaz Zissu	<i>A Rock-Cut Tomb at Iyyei Nahash in the Judean Shephelah</i>	583

A Palimpsest Palaeo-Hebrew Ostrakon Revisited

Michael Langlois and André Lemaire

In 2009, Shmuel Ahituv and Ada Yardeni published a palimpsest Palaeo-Hebrew ostrakon, with good photographs and drawings, trying to read both inscriptions—the later and the earlier—but despite what looked like a jumble,¹ their publication was an achievement. Now, however, with the help of new multispectral imaging techniques and digital enhancement, we are able to improve their first reading and interpretation of this unique artefact.

1. The Artefact

a. Physical Description and Dating

This unprovenanced ostrakon belongs to the David and Jemima Jeselsohn collection, where it bears the reference number JH433.² It was written on a pottery sherd from an Iron Age II jar, close to the base of the jar. The exterior is very pale brown (10YR7/3), the interior is brown (7.5YR5/2), and the ware is gray (5YR5/1).

The sherd itself measures 114×117×13-17 cm. It is written in black ink on both sides: first on the convex side, which is smooth, and then on the concave side, which is uneven. Both sides exhibit palimpsest traces - a phenomenon quite common on ostraca, including those from the Jeselsohn collection. The two layers were penned by different hands using a cursive Palaeo-Hebrew script from the late Kingdom of Judah. The ostrakon may be dated to the late seventh or early sixth century BCE.

b. Multispectral Imaging

Multispectral imaging consists of taking a series of photographs at various wavelengths within or outside the visible spectrum. Photons, which make up light as we know it, oscillate when they travel. When they hit a surface, the frequency of their oscillation has an impact on the way they are absorbed or reflected. This information is interpreted by the human brain in terms of colors: each frequency (or wavelength) corresponds to

¹ S. Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*. Jerusalem, Carta, 2008, p. 199-205; S. Ahituv and Ada Yardeni, "Silver, Pistachio and Wheat: Two Letters of the Seventh-Sixth Centuries BCE", in D. Sivan, D. Talshir and Ch. Cohen eds., Zaphenath-Paneah. *Linguistic Studies Presented to Elisha Qimron On the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Beer Sheva, Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2009, p. 15-28.(Hb); *idem*, "Silver, Pistachio and Wheat: Two Letters Dealing with Deliveries of Silver and Commodities on a Seventh-Sixth Centuries BCE Ostrakon", in J. Elayi and J.-M. Durand eds., *Bible and Orient : Mélanges André Lemaire I* (Transeuphratène 44), Pendé, Gabalda, 2014, p. 57-66, pl. V-VIII.

²We heartily thank David and Jemima Jeselsohn for allowing us to study this ostrakon.

a different color of the rainbow, from violet to red. The human eye thus perceives wavelengths between *ca.* 400 and 700 nanometers (a nanometer, abbreviated nm, is a billionth of a meter). A traditional color photograph captures all of these wavelengths at once, whereas multispectral imaging isolates specific wavelengths, thereby emphasizing the corresponding colors. Various elements may react differently, absorbing certain wavelengths while reflecting others. On ostraca it means that clay, varnish, deposits, and ink could be more visible on some photographs and less on others.

Multispectral images are usually produced in a dark room (or container), using a lamp that generates light at the desired wavelength. This method requires expensive equipment and is hardly portable. Another method consists of generating light at a broad range of wavelengths (for instance, sunlight) and then filtering out unwanted wavelengths when taking the photograph. A standard camera can then be used, with *ad hoc* lens and filters. This method has a number of issues, but it has the advantage of being portable.³

We used a modified Canon EOS 5D SR camera that captures all wavelengths from *ca.* 300 nm to 1000 nm. It thus produces a “full-spectrum” photograph that includes not only the visible spectrum (*i.e.* colors the human eye can see, between *ca.* 400 nm and 700 nm) but also wavelengths below 400 nm (which are called “ultraviolet”) and above 700 nm (which are called “infrared”). On top of this full-spectrum photograph, we used several filters to focus on specific wavelengths: 330 nm (ultraviolet); 470 nm (blue); 525 nm (green); 590 nm (orange); 630 nm (red); 660 nm (red); 695 nm (red); 740 nm (infrared); 785 nm (infrared); 830 nm (infrared); 880 nm (infrared); 940 nm (infrared). Finally, we used a filter that covers all wavelengths between 325 nm and 645 nm, which corresponds to the visible spectrum and thus produces a photograph that looks like what the human eye sees.

We thus obtained a series of 14 digital photographs of the same artefact, which we were then able to compare, combine, and enhance using several algorithms.

c. Digital Enhancement

The first stage of digital enhancement was done on each photograph individually. Images were calibrated in order to maximize the number of shades of gray being used, from black to white. Two images were rendered in colors: the full-spectrum photograph, which appears reddish due to the additional information produced by infrared light, and the visible-spectrum photograph. Images were further enhanced using standard tools such as tone, contrast, brightness, clarity etc.

³ Shira Faigenbaum et al., “Multispectral Images of Ostraca: Acquisition and Analysis,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 39, no. 12 (December 2012): 3581–90, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2012.06.013>.

Here are some of the resulting images:



Figure 1. Multispectral imaging of JH433 A (convex side) after digital enhancement. From left to right and from top to bottom: (a) 470 nm; (b) 590 nm; (c) visible spectrum; (d) full spectrum

Both layers of this palimpsest reacted to all wavelengths in the same way which suggests that the two scribes used similar black, carbon-based inks. Had they used two different colors, or even different chemicals to produce two different black inks, it would have been easier to separate the two layers. We thus had to try and maximize the tiniest differences in the way the two inks reacted to various wavelengths. We used the full-spectrum image, and special tools such as DStretch (which was initially developed

for faint rock art), combined with local (or contextual) enhancement tools. Here is one of the resulting images:

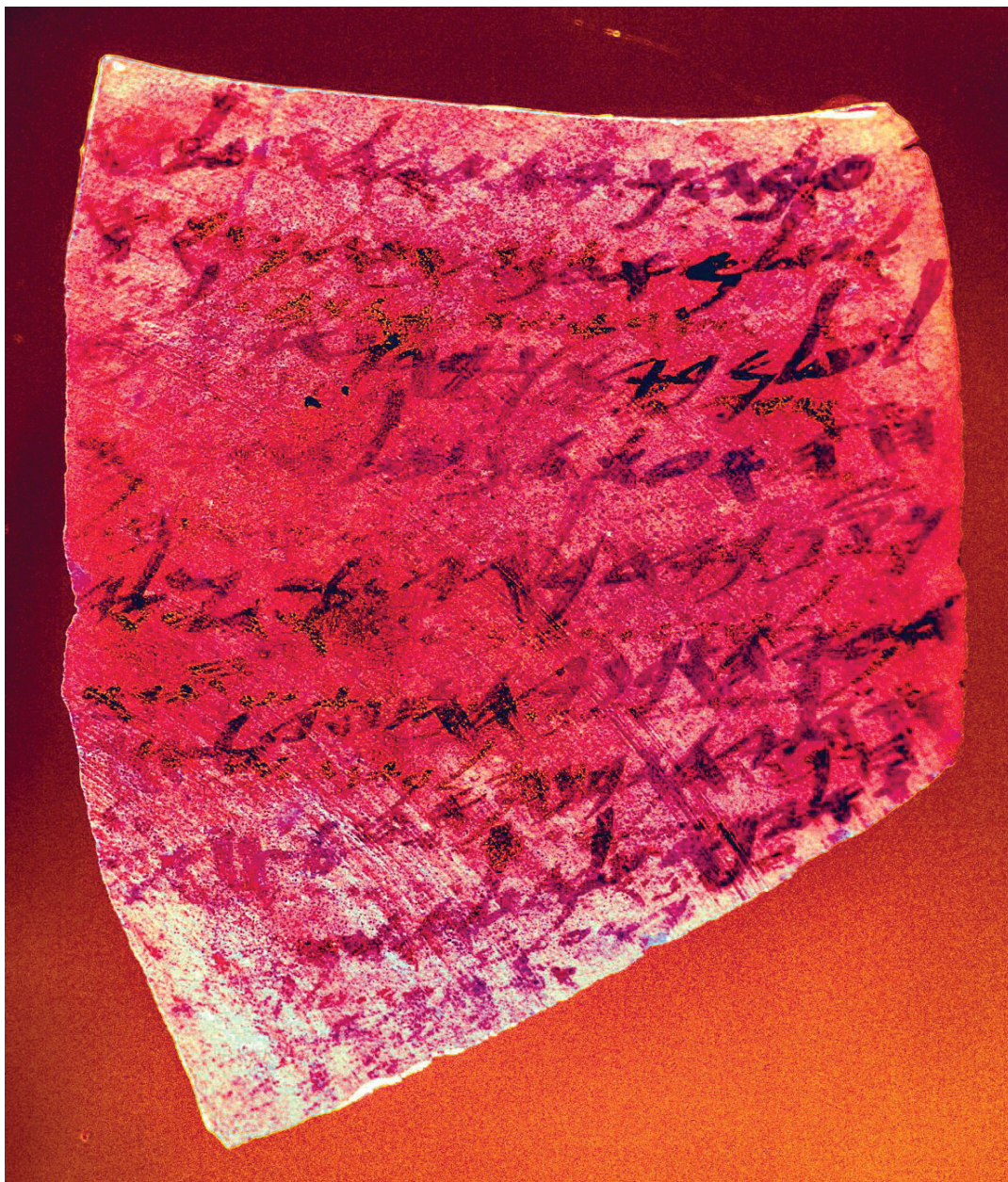


Figure 2. Multispectral imaging of JH 433 A (convex side), highlighting the underlayer of the palimpsest

On this image, the upper layer appears slightly more blueish, and the underlayer often features a red highlight, which is particularly helpful when the two layers overlap. As an example, let us look at the first line, where the H of YD'YHW on the upper layer is written on top of two letters, 'L, which are nonetheless distinguishable thanks to their

yellowish highlight. Using this and other images, we are now able to offer a new decipherment of this ostrakon.

2. Upper layer

Let us begin with the upper layer of this ostrakon, whose script is larger and better preserved than the underlayer.

a. Transcription

Recto (convex side)

1. 'BDK YD 'YHW ŠLḤ
2. LŠLM 'DNY NDBYHW W
3. LŠLM BYTK BRKTYK LY
4. HWH W'T HN ŠLḤTY H
5. KSP BYD BLGY × 6 LY
6. D'YHW BN YHWŠ' × III 8
7. WGDLYHW BN R'H × II 10 6
8. W'LZKR ŠLḤ LQḤT × I B
9. YD 'RYHW W

Verso (concave side)

1. 'ŠLḤK 'T MN YDY

b. Translation

Recto (convex side)

1. Your servant *Yeda 'yahu* sent
2. to greet my lord *Nedabyahu* and
3. to greet your house. I bless *you* to Y-
4. hwh. And now: Behold, I sent the
5. silver in the hand of/through *Bilgay*: 6 shekels. To *Ye-*
6. *da' yahu* son of *Yehoshua'*: 3 shekels, 8 (gerahs);
7. and (to) *Gedalyahu* son of *Ra'ah*: 2 shekels, 16 (gerahs).
8. And *Elzakar* sent to take *1 shekel* in
9. *the hand of/through Uriyahu*. And

Verso (convex side)

1. *I sent you now from my hand.*

c. Commentary

As stated by Aḥituv and Yardeni, “The major part of letter no. 2 is quite legible but line 8 and the beginning of line 9 have not been deciphered”.⁴ There are, however, several issues that must be addressed before these last two lines.

Line 4, in the middle of the line, Aḥituv and Yardeni read W‘TH NŠLḤ, “And now, we will send...”, but notice that the spelling W‘TH is problematic since “The usual spelling in the Hebrew letters is W‘T (without the *He* as mater lectionis representing a final ā).”⁵ They contemplate an alternative reading: “the *He* could have been part of the following word and we may read the sentence as a question: W‘T HNŠLḤ ’T HKSP (‘and now, should we send the silver?’.”⁶ Since there is no word divider, we argue that the H is indeed not affixed to W‘T but starts the following word, which must be read HN, “behold.” The same words, W‘T HN “and now behold,” occur in the same order on Arad ostracon 21:3—which is also a letter, and also features greetings to a house. The same words occur again, in that order, in several verses from the Hebrew Bible (Gen 12:19; Ex 3:9; Num 24:14; Deut 26:10; Josh 9:12, 25; 14:10; 1 Sam 12:2, 13; 24:21; 1 Kgs 1:18; 22:23; Jer 40:4; 2 Chr 18:22; 20:10).⁷

At the end of line 4, the *editio princeps* notes that the reading ’T after the verb ŠLḤ is uncertain. Indeed, we propose that the two letters be read TY and affixed to ŠLḤ, thus reading ŠLḤTY, “I sent.”

Line 5, towards the end of the line, the hieratic number after the symbol for the (royal) shekel is well drawn by Yardeni, but its value is “6” and not “8.”⁸ There is therefore no need to suppose that the number 8 should appear “in two different forms.”⁹

Line 6, at the end of line, the last number is “8,” with two parallel lines written above the number “3” due to a lack of space. No unit is mentioned, which is quite common: after the mention of shekels, the implicit subunit is the gerah. There are thus 3 shekels and 8 gerahs.

⁴ S. Aḥituv and A. Yardeni, *art. cit.*, 2014, p. 58.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁷ D. J. A. Clines ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew VI*, Sheffield, Phoenix Press, 2007, p. 638.

⁸ Cf. S. Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch. Die Zahl- und Sonderzeichen in der althebräischen Schrift* (ÄAT 75), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2008, p. 208.

⁹ S. Aḥituv – A. Yardeni, *art. cit.*, 2014, p. 63.

Line 7, at the end of line, the last number is “6” and not “8” as on line 5. There are thus 2 (royal) shekels and 16 gerahs. Aḥituv and Yardeni wondered why “the summation of the amount does not match”¹⁰ but, with our corrections, it does: Bilgay should give 3 shekels, 8 gerahs to Yeda‘ayahu and 2 shekels, 16 gerahs to Gedalyahu; since 1 royal shekel = 24 gerahs, the sum is 6 shekels, which is the amount sent by the author of the message at line 5.

Line 8, the *editio princeps* does not offer any decipherment for the last letters after LQHT. We propose to read the symbol for the royal shekel (as at the end of lines 5, 6, and 7), followed by the number “1” and an ‘*ayin* or *beth*, the latter being favored by the context.

Line 9, Aḥituv and Yardeni proposed to restore several letters and noted “(One or more lines missing)” after line 9. However, there is no indication that the ostrakon is broken and, as we will see, the verso seems to follow directly line 9.

Aḥituv and Yardeni ascribed all lines on the **verso** to the earlier inscription and simply noted that “the number of lines on the concave side is unclear and the text effaced beyond reconstruction.”¹¹ Yet, two scripts should be distinguished: a smaller hand penned 4 parallel lines, and a larger hand penned one line diagonally. This second script is reminiscent of the upper layer of the recto, where the last lines are written diagonally, going downwards, and without an apparent word divider.

The *editio princeps* proposed to read the traces of this line: ’B[] K[] [] M[]; no translation was offered. We agree on the first *alef*, the *kaf* and the *mem*; furthermore, we offer a decipherment for the entire line: ’ŠLḤK ’T MN YDY, “(and) I sent you now from my hand”. The verb ŠLḤ seems to be used here with the meaning “to send a message” (as in 1Kgs 21:11, for instance). As for the syntagm MN YD “from the hand,” it is commonly used to introduce the scribe who wrote an inscription.¹² Thus, this final sentence means that the sender, Yeda‘yahu, wrote himself this message (cp. Philem 19; Gal 6:11; 1 Co 16:21). This could explain the somewhat larger letters, the inclination of the bottom lines on the recto, and the absence of dots as word dividers.

d. Analysis

This message was written by Yeda‘yahu to his superior (cf. ’DNY) Nedabyahu and to his house. It was apparently sent together with 6 shekels through Bilgay. 3 shekels and 8 gerahs were destined to Yeda‘yahu son of Yehoshua‘, and 2 shekels 16 gerahs to

¹⁰ S. Aḥituv - A. Yardeni, *art. cit.*, 2014, p. 62.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

¹² See CIS II 198:9-10; 221:5; Jaussen and Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie I*, Paris, 1909, n° 5:3.

Gedalyahu son of Ra'ah. The sender also announced that Elzakar sent Uriyahu (to him) to take 1 shekel.

Based on this message, it appears that the sender, Yeda'yahu, is some kind of treasurer or accountant. He is directly accountable to his superior, Nedabyahu, while the other persons named here are some kind of servants: Yeda'yahu son of Yehoshua', Gedalyahu son of Ra'ah, and probably Elzakar, receive a sum of money (some kind of salary?), while Bilgay and Uryahu are trustworthy messengers. What was said about the Aramaic ostraca from Idumea seems true here also: "Clearly, a well-honed bureaucratic system was at work here."¹³

Finally, this message shows how important the circulation of silver was in Judah before the use of coins. Indeed, silver weights were commonly used as currency and, as such, may be viewed as the forerunners of coins.

3. Lower layer

The former inscription is very difficult to read; the verso, especially, is practically illegible. Yet, with the help of multispectral imaging and digital enhancement, we are now able to propose a tentative reading of the recto.

a. Transcription

Recto (convex side)

1. 'L.MTNYHW.W'L.YD 'YHW
2. W 'L--YHW.W'L NDBYHW
3. W 'L.HBR.YŠT.YHWH.LKM.ŠL
4. M.W'T.HṬ/ŠB N' LDDYHW.BN. '
5. Y/MNYHW. 'L-'L----N.W
6. 'MY/ZN.W'/HH----QRBN.WMŠ' KM.L
7. 'ŠLḤTM.WHBṬNM.WHḤṬ
8. M.L'.ŠLḤTM.W/H/BKY'/D/TYŠSY'.W
9. HRB.WH-L WB/RM/NY/K.L'YNY.Š'/BN--G/H/10
10. WH.WŠLḤT/W 'LY.HBṬN[M] WH
11. HṬM.W'L----W----

¹³ B. Porten and A. Yardeni, "Dating by Grouping in the Idumean Ostraca: Six Commodity Dossiers Dating to the Transition Years from Artaxerxes II to Artaxerxes III", in H. Geva and A. Paris eds., *Ephraim Stern Volume* (Erls 29), Jerusalem, 2009, p. 144*-183*, at 149*.

12. W'LH/H.L--Y/H/P.W/G/RLH
13. WHHTM.'L BN.'
14. W.ŠB'LY.
15. 'LKM.

Verso (concave side)

1. Y.'B---
2. M/N/KM/N/KH-----'LKM
3. WG/RYT-----KN-
4. HH-K/Š.H-----L.
5. 'HDW---L'-----

b. Tentative translation

Recto (convex side)

1. To *Mattanyahu* and to *Yeda* 'yahu
2. and to ...yahu and to *Nedabyahu*
3. and to *Heber*. May Yhwh set welfare/peace to you!
4. And now: *Please return to Dodiyahu son of 'I-*
5. *mmanuyahu to... And*
6. *food and... offering and your tribute/burden you did not*
7. *send, and the pistachios and the wheat*
8. *you did not send. And indeed a helper and*
9. *the great one and your son in the/my eyes ...*
10. *... and send me the pistachio[s] and the*
11. *wheat and ...*
12. *and he went up/upon him to... and to him*
13. *and the wheat upon a son or*
14. *an elder to me.*
15. Upon you

Verso (concave side)

1. ...
2. ... upon you
3. ...
4. ...
5. be united ...

c. Commentary

There seem to be five addressees. The reading of their names is uncertain, but the second name, YD'YHW, appears to be the same as that of the sender of the message on the upper layer (see above). Mattanyahu and Yeda'yahu are well-known anthroponyms in Ancient Hebrew. Nedabyahu, "Yhwh is generous," is also attested as the addressee of the upper layer. It is already known on Arad ostrakon 39:3 and on several bullae.¹⁴ The shorter form NDBYH is attested on a weight from Lachish and in 1 Chron 3:18. The name Heber, whose reading here is uncertain, is attested in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 46:17; Num 26:45; Judg 4,11.17.21; 5:24; 1 Chron 4:18; 7:31.32; 8:17).

Line 3, the greeting formula YŠT.YHWH.LKM.ŠLM is new but its reading is virtually certain on our new images. Ada Yardeni had already drawn some of these traces and LKM.ŠL was correctly identified by the *editio princeps*.

Line 4, the transition phrase W'T, "and now," was already deciphered by the *editio princeps*. The two words after this phrase are difficult to read: one could hesitate between HTB. 'L. and HŠB N' L.

This phrase is then followed by the personal name DDYHW, which may be compared to the uncertain reading of D/DYHW on a Hebrew seal (WSS 156) and to the corrected reading of DWDYHW in 2 Chron 20:37, instead of DWDWHW as in the Masoretic Text (see the Greek version).¹⁵

¹⁴ R. Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae. The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection*, Tel Aviv, Archaeological Center Publication, 2003, p. 413: n° 38, 164; idem, *Second Volume*, 2011, p. 295: n° 567, 590.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, Stuttgart, 1928, p. 149, 240.

Lines 4-5, the uncertain patronym 'MNYHW is already attested on several bullae.¹⁶ It may be compared to 'MNWYHW attested on a Hebrew seal (WSS 42) and several bullae,¹⁷ and to 'MNYH attested at Elephantine.¹⁸ The end of line 5 is unclear.

Line 6, at the beginning of the line, one could hesitate between 'YN, "there is not," and MZN, "food/provision." The reading of the second part of the line and the beginning of **line 7** is probably: WQRBN.WMŠ'KM.L'.ŠLḤTM., "and an offering and your tribute/burden you did not send." The last words, 'KM L' ŠLḤTM, were already proposed by the *editio princeps*.

Lines 7-8, the *editio princeps* read: WHBTN[M] WHḤTM LTŠLḤ ŠM, "And you [sing.] won't send there the pistachio and the wheat-grain," with the negative particle L' "joined to the following word, omitting the *Alef*."¹⁹ On the basis of our new images and decipherment, we believe that Aḥituv and Yardeni misread T for ' (whose traces can easily be confused). They also read Š instead of T. We read L'.ŠLḤTM., "you did not send," a phrase that was already attested on lines 6-7.

The second part of **line 8** is difficult to understand, even though the reading YŠSY' W seems quite clear. We propose to decipher it as WKY 'YŠ SY' W, "and indeed a helper and." The root SY' is well attested in Aramaic and in later Hebrew where it means "to aid, assist, help" (see also the noun SY' "aid, escort").²⁰ This meaning fits well the context of our inscription.

Line 9, two words are quite readable, HRB and L'YNY, but what's in between remains unclear. After L'YNY, the *editio princeps* proposes to read BN but it seems equally possible to interpret the traces of these two letters as a single *shin*. The following letters are unclear.

Line 10, the first two letters may be read WH rather than GH. The *editio princeps* then reads WŠLḤTK L[, but the traces are better deciphered as WŠLḤW 'LY, "and send to me," which is probably an imperative but could also be a qatal ("and they sent to me") or weqatal ("they will then send to me").

¹⁶ R. Deutsch, I, p. 421-422 : n°307a-b ; II, n° 647.

¹⁷ R. Deutsch, I, p. 421 : n°306 ; II, p. 297 : n° 625, 673.

¹⁸ Cf. W. Kornfeld, *Onomastica aramaica aus Ägypten*, Wien, 1978, p.67

¹⁹ S. Aḥituv – A. Yardeni, *Trans* 44, 2014, p. 65.

²⁰ J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions II*. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Erste Abteilung. Band 21, Leiden, Brill, 1995, p. 786. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903), 978, 984.

The second part of the line is very difficult to decipher, except for the final H, which was already read by the *editio princeps*. This H is preceded by a probable W. Before that, there are traces compatible with the reading HBṬN[M], “the pistachio[s].” This proposal is reinforced by the mention of HṬM at the beginning of **line 11**, so that we have the same phrase as in lines 7-8: HBṬNM WHṬM “the pistachios and the wheat.” This also means that there is nothing to restore before the H at the beginning of line 11 and that the lower part of the ostrakon is thus complete. Unfortunately, the traces of the rest of line 11 are unclear.

Line 12, W‘LH was already read by the *editio princeps*. It could mean “And he went up” or “And upon him.”

Line 13, we suggest the uncertain reading WHṬM ‘L BN ‘ “and the wheat upon a son or.”

Line 14, Š is the only letter whose decipherment is assured. We propose to read ŠB, from the root ŠYB, “to be grey-haired, old,” whose participle ŠB, “elder,” is attested in the Hebrew Bible (Job 15:10) and Ben Sira (*e.g.* Si 8:9) and would be here parallel to BN in line 13. The phrase can thus be read BN ‘W.ŠB ‘LY., “a son or an elder to me.”

Line 15, ‘LKM. “upon you,” is very probable.

The **verso** was probably penned by the same hand as the recto, with traces of five lines that are very poorly preserved.

Line 2, at the end of the line, seems to feature ‘LKM, “upon you,” which was already attested on line 15 of the recto.

Line 5, at the beginning of the line, the *editio princeps* read ‘H[-]W. Based on our new images, we propose to read ‘HDW, “be united.”

d. Analysis

Thanks to new imaging and computational techniques, we were able to improve the reading and interpretation of the lower layer. It appears to be a message sent to five addressees with a greeting formula that was unattested so far. The author seems to blame the addressees for not having sent pistachios and wheat, which were perhaps expected as a kind of offering (QRBN) or tax (MŠ‘). He thus orders them to send the pistachios and the wheat. The preposition ‘L, “upon,” which is used in the second part of the message, seems to emphasize the responsibility of the addressees.

Finally, were the two layers related? Maybe not. But the fact that Yeda‘yahu is mentioned on both layers is perhaps not a coincidence. Though there are several homonyms (as evidenced by the mention of two different Yeda‘yahus on the upper layer), it is possible that the same Yeda‘yahu, who received the ostrakon when it was inscribed with the lower layer only, reused it to write the upper layer. If so, it is not impossible that the lower layer was sent by Nedabyahu who, as their superior, did not need to introduce himself to his subordinates.