

Five Unrecorded 'Yehud' Silver Coins

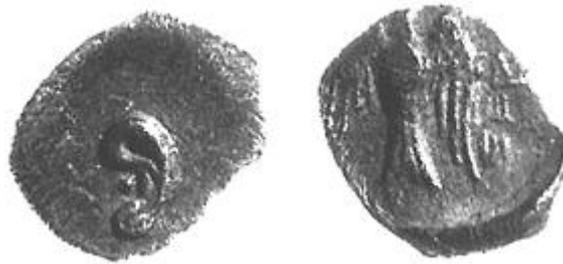
by Robert Deutsch

The silver coinage minted in the province of Judea under Persian rule and during the

Hellenistic period under the Ptolemies were first observed in 1931 with the discovery of a minute coin of 'Yehizqiyah the governor' at Beth-Zur.¹ This led Sukenik² to the correct identification of the famous drachm located in the British Museum since the late 18th century as a 'Yehud' coin.⁴ In 1979, Mildenberg cited 28 types and variants.⁴ We know today, however, that his Nos. 2 and 3 are the same variant, making a total of 27. In 1982, Meshorer enlarged the corpus to 39⁵, and in 1993 presented another six variants.⁶ In the same year, this author added six new unrecorded types.⁷

The five previously unrecorded "Yehud" silver coins presented below -- three hemiobols, a unique quarter drachm, and a half drachm -- enlarge the corpus to the impressive number of 56 types and variants.

Three Silver Hemiobols



AR; 6.2-7.8 mm.; 0.30g; Axis: 6 (Pl. 3:1-2). *Obv.*: Human left ear. *Rev.*: Falcon with spread wings, hovering, head to r. Retrograde Paleo-Hebrew legend (*yhd*). S. Moussaeiff collection.

This is the first time that an ear appears on a Jewish coin. It is difficult to understand the significance of this surprising iconography, but it may possibly be associated with the biblical verse, "Give ear to my prayer, O God" (Ps. 55:2), and other similar expressions (eg, Ps. 5:5; 86:6; 140:7, etc.).⁸

The falcon on the reverse is typologically similar (but not a die-link) to the falcons depicted on Persian period 'Yehud' coins.⁹ Therefore, the coin is dated to the third quarter of the fourth century, before the conquests of Alexander the Great in 333 BC.



AR; 6-7 mm.; 0.25 gr.; Axis: 5 (Pl. 3:3-4). *Obv.*: Head of Ptolemy I to l., diademed. *Rev.*: Eagle with spread wings standing l. Paleo-Hebrew legend from lower l. upwards: (*yhd*). Ch. Kaufman collection.

This is the first time that the head of Ptolemy I appears to left.



AR; 7-7.6 mm; 0.35 gr.; Axis: 1 (Pl. 3:5-6). *Obv.*: Jugate heads of Ptolemy I and Berenike I to r. *Rev.*: Jugate heads of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II to r. Paleo-Hebrew legend from upper r. downwards: {*yhd*}. S. Moussaeiff collection.

This is the first time that the four-headed type appears on a 'Yehud' coin. The issue imitates the four-headed Ptolemy III gold coins and, therefore, should be dated to his reign (246-221 BC).

A Silver Quarter Drachm



AR; 10-11 mm.; 0.80 gr.; Axis: 12 (P1. 3:7-8). *Obv.*: Head of Ptolemy I to r., diademed. *Rev.*: Eagle with spread wings standing l. Paleo-Hebrew legend from lower l. upwards: (*yhdh*). S. Moussaeiff collection.

A Silver Half Drachm



AR; 14.2-12.8 mm.; 1.65 gr.; Axis: 11 (P1. 3:9-10). *Obv.*: Head of Ptolemy I to r. *Rev.*: Eagle standing l. Paleo-Hebrew legend from lower l. upwards: (*yhdh*). P. Hassid collection.

This is the third published 'Yehud' half drachm minted under Ptolemy 11.¹⁰

Notes

- 1 O.R. Sellers and W.F. Albright: The First Campaign of Excavation at Beth-Zur, *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 43(1931), p.10; O.R. Sellers: *The Citadel of Beth-Zur*, Philadelphia, 1933, p.73 f., Pl. XIV:9.
- 2 E.L. Sukenik: Paralipomena Palaestinae. The Oldest Coins of Judaea, *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 14 (1934), pp. 178-184, Pls. I-III. While Sukenik wrote that the off flan inscription on the coin of *Yehirqiyah* or *Yehizqiyo* suggested to him the elements of the word *Yehud* (p.181), the correct reading, as we know now, is, in fact, *ha-pehah* ('the governor').
- 3 T. Combe: *Coin Catalogue*, London, 1814, Pl. XIII:12; G.F. Hill: *BMC, Palestine*, London, 1914, pp. LXXXVI-VIII, 181, No.29, Pl. XIX:29.
- 4 L. Mildenberg: Yehud: A Preliminary Study of the Provincial Coinage of Judaea, in O. Morkholm and N.M. Wagonner (eds.), *Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson, Wetteren*, 1979, pp. 183-196, Pls. 21-22.
- 5 Meshorer, *AJC* I, pp. 115-117, Pls. 1-3.
- 6 Idem: *AJC Addendum I, INJ* 11 (1990-91), published 1993, pp.104-106, 114-115, Pls. 17-18.
- 7 R. Deutsch: Six Unrecorded 'Yehud' Silver Coins, *INJ* 11 (1990-91), published 1993, pp. 4-6, Pl. 1.
- 8 Y. Meshorer: The Ear of Yahweh on a Yehud Coin, *Eretz-Israel* 25 (1996), pp.434-437 (Hebrew) (105* English summary); Idem: *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, Jerusalem, 1997, P1. 3:18 (Hebrew) (similar coin, inscription missing).
- 9 Meshorer, *AJC* p.116, Nos. 8, 8a, 9, 9a, 9b, P1. 2; Idem (above, n. 6), p.115, Nos. 8-9, P1. 18; Deutsch (above, n. 7), p.5, No.4, P1. 1:7-8.
- 10 See the two previously recorded 'Yehud' half drachms minted under Ptolemy II: Meshorer, *AJC* 1, 1-2. The reverse die of the coin presented above is identical to Meshorer, *AJC* 1, p.184, No.2, but the obverse die, depicting the portrait of Ptolemy I, is a new, unrecorded die.