2 Kings 24:10-16 — 597 B.C.E.

10 At that time, the troops of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem, and the city came under siege.

12 Thereupon King Jehoiachin of Judah, along with his mother, and his courtiers, commanders, and officers, surrendered to the king of Babylon.

14 He exiled all of Jerusalem: all the commanders and all the warriors – ten thousand exiles – as well as all the craftsmen and smiths; only the poorest people in the land were left.
This is the text of the letter which the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the priests, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community which I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit.

Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease.

And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper.
Isaiah 65:25
The wolf and the lamb will graze together,
And the lion, like the ox, will eat straw,
And the snake, dust will be his food;
They shall not hurt and they shall not destroy
in all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Isaiah 11:6-9
6 And the wolf will dwell with the sheep . . .
7 . . . and the lion, like the ox, will eat straw.
9 They shall not hurt and they shall not destroy
in all my holy mountain . . .

Jeremiah 29
5 Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat
their fruit.
6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take
wives for your sons, and give your daughters to
husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters.
Multiply there, do not decrease.
7 And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled
you and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its
prosperity you shall prosper.

The Murashu Archive
Nippur
(Southern Iraq)
c. 750 Tablets
written between 455-403 B.C.E.

University of Pennsylvania Museum
(Philadelphia)

The Murashu Archive
Nippur
(Southern Iraq)
c. 750 Tablets
written between 455-403 B.C.E.

Reigns of Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.E.)
and Darius II (423-405 B.C.E.)
Map of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire
538 – 333 B.C.E.

University of Pennsylvania (c. 1890)
University of Chicago (1961)

Nippur excavations

Sample Murashu Tablet
(Penn Museum B5304)
Akkadian text with Aramaic summary

Jewish Personal Names in the Murashu Archive

Aḥi-yama  Ḫanan-yama
Azzi-yama  Luše-yama
Banu-yama  Mattan-yama
Gadul-yama  Pada-yama
Gamar-yama  Tub-yama
Yaḥu-natan  Šama’on  Šabbatay

Jewish Personal Names in the Murashu Archive

Aḥi-yaw  Ḫanan-yaw
Azzi-yaw  Luše-yaw
Banu-yaw  Mattan-yaw
Gadul-yaw  Pada-yaw
Gamar-yaw  Tub-yaw
Yaḥu-natan  Šama’on  Šabbatay
Murashu Tablet X.65 (Penn Museum) mentions Yishrib-yaw son of Pilli-yaw as chief officer (šaknu) of the serfs of the royal treasury.

Yadi'-yaw, the son of Bana'-el; Yahu-natan, Šama'on and Aḫi-yaw, the sons of Yadi'-yaw; Satur, the son of Sabbatay; Baniya, the son of Amel-nana; Yigdal-yaw, the son of Nana-iddin; Abda, the son of Apla; Nattun, the son of Šillim; and all their partners in Bit-gira; spoke freely to Ellil-shun-iddin, the son of Murashu, as follows:

"Rent to us for three years the Mares Canal, from its inlet up to its outlet, and the tithed field which is on this canal, and the field which is to the left of the Milidu Canal, and the three marshes which are to the right of the Milidu Canal, except the field which drinks (its) waters from the Ellil Canal; and we will give you annually 700 kur of barley according to the standard measure of Ellil-shum-iddin, and, as an annual gift, 2 grazing bulls and 20 grazing rams."

Murashu Archive – a sample text (IX.45)

Bana'-el
Yadi'-yaw
Aḫi-yaw
Yahu-natan
Pada-yaw
Šama’on

Three generations of a Jewish family in Nippur, based on Murashu Archive IX.25 and IX.45.

Abda-yahu son of Barak-yahu, the summoner, received 5 shekels of silver from . . . with respect to Ahiqar, the governor, for the ilku-tax of Ahiqar.

Witnesses
Scribe
Date: 5 Elul, year 7 of Cyrus (532 B.C.E.)

First reference to:
Al-Yahuda
“city of the Judahites”
Sale of a calf from Ḫara’a daughter of Talimmu to Neri-yahu son of Abiqaqam
Yaḥu-azari son of Abdu-Yahu insures the calf
In Al-Yahuda “city of the Judahites”
Witnesses / Scribe
Date: 19 Tammuz, year 24 of Darius I (498 B.C.E.)

A new cuneiform archive
Tell Al Yahuda
Southern Iraq
103 Tablets
Private Collection of David Sofer (London)

A new cuneiform archive
Tell Al Yahuda
Southern Iraq
103 Tablets
Dated from 572 B.C.E. through 478 B.C.E.
More than half from the reign of Darius I (522-486)

Shlomo Moussaieff
(1925-2015)
• Born in Jerusalem
• Bukharan Jewish background
• Lived in London since 1963
• Jewelry business, selling to wealthy Arabs
• Private antiquities collection – 60,000 items
• Daughter Dorrit married to Ólafur Ragnar Grimsson
  (President of Iceland, 1996-2016)
Clay tablet dated to year 33 of Nebuchadnezzar II (= 572 BCE), the earliest known text documenting the Judean exile in Babylonia

In Simanu, Mu[...], son of Gidda, the messenger, the alphabetic scribe, [will provide] 60 [and] 40 [...] to Nergal-iddin and Nabu-zer-[ukin].

If in Simanu, he does not provide (it), he [will provide] two kor of barley [...] to Nergal-iddin and Nabu-zer-ukin.

Witnesses: Tab-šalam son of Aḫu-abi; Azar-yamason of Yaḫu-kullu; Aḫ-lumur son of Balassu, and the scribe Nabu-na'id son of Nabu-zer-iqīša.

(Written in) Al Yahuda, on the 20th day of Nisannu, 33rd year of Nebuchadnezzar (II), king of Babylon.
103 tablets from the Al Yahuda tablets (Sofer collection)
c. 75 Yahwistic names identifying c. 120 individuals
And all the people, young and old, and the officers of the soldiers arose, and they came to Egypt, because they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

The word which was to Jeremiah, for all the Judahites who were living in the land of Egypt, living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Noph, and in the land of Pathros, saying:

5 And Johanan the son of Kareah and all the officers of the soldiers took all the remnant of Judah, who had returned from all the nations to which they had been driven, to live in the land of Judah –

6 the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan; and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah.

7 And they came to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they came unto Tahpanhes.

8 And the word of the LORD was to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying:
Cambyses II incorporates Egypt into the Empire – 525 B.C.E.

Map of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire 538 – 333 B.C.E.

Elephantine Island (near Aswan)

Mausoleum of the Aga Khan III (1877 – 1957)

Elephantine Island (near Aswan)
The Jewish Temple at Elephantine

Southern end of Elephantine Island

Egyptian god Khnum (ram-headed creator god)

Khnum, accompanied by Heqet, forming a human on the potter’s wheel (Dendera)

Elephantine papyri

c. 200 Aramaic documents
dated to c. 450-410 B.C.E.
discovered 1893 – 1903

now housed in:
Cairo – Berlin – Brooklyn
Oxford – Florence – Padua

Marriage document of Ananiah and Tamut – 449 B.C.E.

Property Sale Document:
Sale of House by Bagazust and Ubil
to Ananiah
437 B.C.E.

חן ‘temple functionary’

Brooklyn Museum
47.218.89

Brooklyn Museum
47.218.95a-b
Ananiah gives Tamut (wife) and Yehoishema (d.) separate parts of the house 434 B.C.E. 404 B.C.E. Brooklyn Museum 47.218.91-92

Manumission document of Tamut and Yehoishema 427 B.C.E. Brooklyn Museum 47.218.90a-b

Receipt of a grain loan 402 B.C.E. Brooklyn Museum 47.218.93a-b

Charles Edwin Wilbour (1833 – 1896)
- Obtained eight papyrus rolls at Elephantine in 1893.
- Placed them in a large biscuit tin for storage.
- Placed the box in the bottom of his trunk.
- Died in Paris in 1896.

- 1947 – Theodora Wilbour, Charles’s daughter, found the trunk and donated its contents to the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Map of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire 538 – 333 B.C.E.

Jewish garrison at Elephantine
To my brothers,

Yedaniah and his colleagues of the Judahite garrison, (from) your brother Hananiah. May the gods seek the welfare of my brothers.

Now this year, the 5th year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsames, saying:

In the month of Nisan, let there be a Passover for the Judahite garrison. Now accordingly count fourteen days of the month Nisan and keep the Passover, and from the 15th day to the 21st day of Nisan are seven days of Unleavened Bread. Be clean and take heed. Do not work on the 15th day and on the 21st day. Also, drink no intoxicants; and anything in which there is leaven, do not eat, from the 15th day from sunset until the 21st day of Nisan, seven days, let it not be seen among you; do not bring it into your houses, but seal it up during those days.

Let this be done as King Darius commanded.

To my brethren, Yedaniah and his colleagues of the Judahite garrison, (from) your brother Hananiah.

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Passover Papyrus – 419 B.C.E.

1 To my brothers,
2 Yedaniah and his colleagues of the Judahite garrison, (from) your brother Hananiah. May the gods seek the welfare of my brothers.
3 Now this year, the 5th year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsames, saying:
4 In the month of Nisan, let there be a Passover for the Judahite garrison. Now accordingly count fourteen days of the month Nisan and keep the Passover, and from the 15th day to the 21st day of Nisan are seven days of Unleavened Bread. Be clean and take heed. Do not work on the 15th day and on the 21st day. Also, drink no intoxicants; and anything in which there is leaven, do not eat, from the 15th day from sunset until the 21st day of Nisan, seven days, let it not be seen among you; do not bring it into your houses, but seal it up during those days.
5 Let this be done as King Darius commanded.
6 To my brethren, Yedaniah and his colleagues of the Judahite garrison, (from) your brother Hananiah.

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Syncretism at Elephantine

(Oriental Museum P. 13485) (Cowley, no. 44)

1 Oa'[th of] Menahem bar Šallum bar Ho[daviah which] he swore to Mešullam bar Nathan by Y[HW] the [God], by the temple, and by 'Anat-yahu,
2 and [he spoke to him] saying: The she-ass which is in the possession of . . .
To our lord Bigvai, governor of Judaea, your servants Yedoniahand his colleagues, the priests, who are in Yeb the fortress. . . .

They came to the fortress of Yeb, with their weapons, they entered that temple, they destroyed it to the ground, and the pillars of stone which were there they broke. . . .

Already in the days of the kings of Egypt our father had built that temple in the fortress of Yeb, and when Cambyses came into Egypt, he found that temple built, and the temples of the gods of Egypt all [of them] they overthrew, but no one did any harm to that temple.

Let a letter be sent from you to them concerning the temple of the God YHW, to build it in the fortress of Yeb, as it was built before, and they shall offer the meal-offering and incense and sacrifice on the altar of the God YHW on your behalf, and we will pray for you at all times . . . all who are here, if they do so that that temple be rebuilt, and it shall be a merit to you before YHW the God of Heaven . . .

As to gold, about this we have sent and given instructions. . . .

Also the whole matter we have set forth in a letter in our name to Deliahand Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria.

On the 20th of Marheshvan, the 17th year of Darius the king.
Petition to the Governor of Judea
(Cowley, no. 30) 408 B.C.E.

Also the whole matter we have set forth in a letter in our name to Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria.

Sanballat, governor of Samaria, mentioned in the book of Nehemiah, c. 450 B.C.E., as an opponent of Nehemiah and his efforts to rebuild Jerusalem and reconstitute Jewish life there.