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Polygonal Finger Ring IMJ 2010.65.1062 (cat no. 11).
Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
by Vladimir Naikhin

New Samaritan Amuletic Rings and Pendants from The Israel Museum Collection

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The Amulets

The large group of Samaritan magical artifacts that is presented here for the first time came from two collections that were generously donated to the Israel Museum in recent years. The first, the “Dan Barag Collection,” part of the late Prof. Dan Barag’s bequest to the museum, is a large trove that was assembled in Israel and spans more than six decades of meticulous collection of local materials. Its principal focus is on coins and small artifacts dated to the Byzantine period with an emphasis on Christian related artifacts, but it also includes twenty-seven Samaritan amulets: twelve polygonal rings, twelve flat rings, two pendants, and a very small fragment of a plaque.¹ The second is the “David and Jeannie Hendin Collection,” which has been assembled in Israel over the past 40 years and consists primarily of small finds and weights and includes six Samaritan polygonal rings and four flat Samaritan rings.² Together, these two collections comprise a group of thirty-seven bronze Samaritan amuletic rings and pendants and represent a significant contribution

to our knowledge of Samaritan amulets in the Late Roman-Byzantine period, as they more than doubled the number of the hitherto known twenty-four Samaritan amulets.³

The previously studied Samaritan amulets together with those discussed herein – mostly rings with some pendants – make up a unique corpus of about sixty Samaritan amulets. They reflect a unique cultural expression of the Samaritan community in the Land of Israel during the Late Roman-Byzantine period, a time when Jews, Samaritans and Christians lived side by side, but developed very different kinds of amulets.

The engraving of Pentateuchal formulae on polygonal bronze rings is thought to be a uniquely Samaritan phenomenon.⁴ However, as some of these amulets were found in what were clearly non-Samaritan archaeological contexts,⁵ it seems that they were also used by others, who purchased them from Samaritan engravers after they became famous and wore them.⁶

The Inscriptions

As on other Samaritan amulets, most of the engraved texts on the group discussed here are based on the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch and cite a few words of a verse, usually the first or the last two words.⁷ The most frequently cited text is *אין כאל ישרון* (Deut. 33:26),⁸ a key phrase in the Samaritan liturgy to this day, as it is said in the daily prayers after Torah reading.

In some instances, the engraving does not depict words, but is rather a repetition of a single letter or a cluster of letters. The use of clusters of two or three letters that do not make up a complete word is also known from modern Samaritan amulets.⁹ The script of the inscriptions is in line with the script known from Samaritan amulets, mosaics, or stone dated to the Byzantine era. The very slow development of the Samaritan script and the miniscule size of the engraved letters do not allow us to offer a more exact dating.

As the amulets express invocations to God, the sacred name, the Tetragrammaton, is the term used most often. Whereas it was generally written in full, variants known from previously studied amulets such as *יהו* or *יהה* were also used in the collection under discussion. The alternative spellings of the name of God in Samaritan amulets are also very common in Jewish amulets from the same period, and they represent a mutual Jewish-Samaritan cultural phenomenon.¹⁰ However, unlike the Jewish amulets written in Hebrew square script, the Samaritan amulets present a paleographic difficulty in distinguishing between the normally spelled Tetragrammaton and variants such as *יהה* or *יהו*, as the letters *he* and *waw* in the miniscule and abbreviated Samaritan script of the rings are frequently very similarly or even identically executed by the engraver. It is also possible that the sequence of the letter *aleph* as on cat. no. 7, facets V–VI, is a substitute for the name of God as is sometimes seen on Jewish amulets. As expected in inscriptions on amulets, the script is not in mirror writing as it is on rings that serve as seals, but in a normal form for reading, except on cat. no. 18.


The polygonal rings have two rows of signs as is common in other published rings. The only exception is on facet VIII of cat. no. 3, where a single row of large letters was engraved. The surfaces of the rings were divided into flat facets and all the rings have eight facets, except for two, which have only seven. The different facets on a ring are not all identical but show different degrees of variation, and the transitions from one facet to another were not made with the same degree of sharpness. The average height of a ring face is about 3 mm, and the signs are generally about 1 mm high.

The inscriptions were meant to be read from one facet to another, row after row, each containing independent formulations such as *אל* / *יהה* or continuing one from the other, as in the sequence: *אל* / *אין* on one facet and *ישרון* on the next one. In one case (cat. no. 1, facets I–II) the text extends over two adjacent facets, so that the upper rows on both facets are to be read continuously followed by the lower rows.

Ten of the finger rings show significant wear as the result of erosion, and their partial decipherment was achieved through Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) conducted in the Israel Museum laboratories.¹¹

Abbreviated Letters and Pseudo-Letters

The inscriptions discussed here help us to identify some of the Samaritan ring engravers' particular practices, as these are not found in inscriptions performed on other materials. It seems that the extremely limited space, which made it very difficult to incise all the strokes of a letter that itself is about 1 mm high, led the artisans to develop several paleographic techniques by which to overcome this difficulty (see Table 1).

1. The omission of one or more strokes from a specific letter, so long as the remaining strokes are sufficient for the reader to recognize the letter or the simplification of the writing by a continuous tracing instead of the two strokes normally written separately. For example the letter *aleph* , which is very common in ring inscriptions, whose

descending left-right stroke turns sharply upward at the bottom, tracing the short oblique stroke, thus eliminating the protruding of the pivot at the base of the letter.

2. The complete replacement of a letter by one unique stroke. In this case, the abbreviated letter can be read only if the other letters are written out fully and can be recognized as a known word in a common phrase used on amulets. The best examples are the abbreviated *lamed* and *nun* in the most common formula אין כאל ישרון, for example, on cat. no. 11.

3. A different category is the use of Samaritan pseudo-letters, that is, signs that look somewhat like Samaritan letters and convey the sense of a Samaritan inscription. Some of these signs appear to be similar to specific letters, such as the **W** on cat. no. 5, which seems similar to a *shin* or a *yod* depending on the position of the reader, whereas other pseudo-letters are not at all similar to any specific letter.

These three techniques should be taken into account in any new attempt to decode undeciphered Samaritan inscriptions on polygonal rings that seem to be engraved using abbreviated letters.¹²


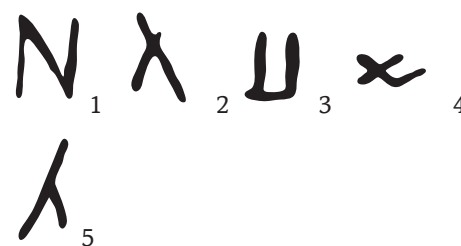









	Standard Samaritan in Byzantine period inscriptions	Letters abbreviated by the omission of strokes	Letters abbreviated by replacement with a simplified sign
א			
ב			
ג			
ד			
ה			

Table 1: Samples of simplified letters: (1), (5), (8), (13) Cat. no. 2, facet V; (2), (3), (10), (12) Cat. no. 7, facet VII; (4), (9), (11) Cat. no. 11, facet I; (6) Cat. no. 6, facet IV; (7) Cat. no. 11, facet IV.¹³

Conclusions

The thirty-seven Samaritan amulets discussed here more than double the number of those that have already been published, and together they constitute a corpus of evidence regarding a unique Samaritan cultural practice in the Late Roman–Byzantine period in the Land of Israel. Unlike the coexisting ethnicities Jews and Christians, the Samaritans developed special types of bronze amulets that featured abbreviated citations from the Pentateuch, which were supposed to protect the wearer of the amulet. Most of them were engraved on polygonal finger rings and others on ovular pendants. A recent metallurgical study of some of the pendants and polygonal rings found in archaeological sites¹⁴ determined that they were made using the lost-wax casting technique in a sophisticated way that required specialized craftsmen.¹⁵ The present increase in the corpus allows us to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon and learn about the Samaritan goldsmiths' methods, conventions, and traditions. It also adds to our knowledge of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, their spellings, and the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch in the Late Roman–Byzantine period.

Among the contributions that enrich our understanding of this unique aspect of the Samaritan culture, it should be noted that the clarification of the problematic reading of the formula יהוה קומה in other amulets in which the first word was read as עומה or עומה (cat. no. 16), the use of mirror letters (cat. nos. 12, 18, 32) and of a separation mark registered here for the first time in an inscription date to the Byzantine period (cat. no. 6).

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank Mr. Dudi Mevorach, senior curator of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine archaeology for permission to publish this corpus, and to Ms. Morag Wilhelm, assistant curator of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine archaeology for her patient help in handling the amulets. I would like to express a special thanks to Mr. Michael Maggen, head of the Paper Conservation Laboratory of the Israel Museum, for the RTI photos. I also want to thank Ms. Hadas Seri, conservator of the Israel Museum laboratories for her patient help, and Ms. Evelyn Grossberg for editing and improving the English.

Catalogue

All photos © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, cat. nos. 13–17, 31–34 by Laura Lachman; cat. nos. 1–3, 5–9, 19–26, 35–36 by Peter Lanyi; cat. nos. 10–12, 27–30 by Vladimir Naikhin; cat. nos. 4, 18, 37 by Ofrit Rosenberg. Additional photos, see [online supplement](#).

Table 2: Typographic Conventions

Sign	Description	Meaning
⋈	A dot above a letter	Text preserved partially
[⋈]	Text in brackets	Restored text
כ פ	A letter above another letter	Alternate readings
.	A dot on the line	Missing or uncertain letter
?⋈	A letter with a question mark	Uncertain reading
/	Solidus	Separation of rows

Inscriptions on Polygonal Finger Rings

1.

Dimensions: D 20 mm; H 4 mm

Description: This ring is well preserved and has eight relatively well-proportioned facets. The engraver showed a good proficiency of writing, incising clear and fully formed letters, except for one letter in facet II. All the formulae on the ring are well known.

Facets:

I–II)

“The Lord (is) the victorious”

The *het* lacks two strokes, which are normally executed in a single movement: the vertical left stroke bending abruptly rightward at the base, forming the lower horizontal stroke. The absence of these strokes gives the letter the general aspect of a *waw*, but its stance and the frequency of the יהוה נצח/נצחה formula in Samaritan amulets tilt the balance to its interpretation as an abbreviated *het*. The formula יהוה נצח/ה was also found on one polygonal ring from “Ain-Kushi (Kh. Kusiya)¹⁶ and two from the Nablus region,¹⁷ as well as on a pendant from the area of Damascus.¹⁸

II	I
יה	יה
הַה	נצ



In all of these examples, as here, the expression יהוה נצח/ה is followed by יהוה שמו/ה, which continues and completes it. The scholars who published the above-mentioned parallels correctly linked the phrase to the Samaritan version¹⁹ of Exodus 15:3 in The Song of the Sea: יהוה גיבור מלחמה יהוה שמו. The text on facets I–III is in fact the Aramaic translation of that verse. As Reeg²⁰ and Loewenstamm²¹ have asserted, the Hebrew word גיבור is translated into Aramaic in various different ways in Samaritan manuscripts. Sometimes they maintain the Hebrew term, and sometimes translate it as the active participle of the root *nṣḥ* in various spellings,²² and it is likely that the custom of reading the Torah in parallel with its Aramaic translation led to the appearance of the Aramaic version of the verse in the Samaritan liturgy²³ and in medieval Pentateuch manuscripts as a *tashqil*.²⁴ The final *he* of נצחה indicates the article. This interpretation is validated by an inscription engraved on a limestone plate that was found in a Samaritan synagogue at Emmaus²⁵ that renders the Hebrew version יהוה גיבור במלחמה יהוה שמו and then repeats the first part of the phrase in Aramaic יהוה נצחיו קרבה ["The Lord (is) the victorious of the war"]. A similar partial repetition by translation of the first part of the phrase appears on the pendant from Damascus: יהוה גיבור יהוה נצחה. יהוה שמו. Stadel has recently suggested that the Aramaic formula is the result of a conflation of Deuteronomy 10:17 and Exodus 15:3.²⁶

III) יהוה / שמה

“YHWH is His name” (Exod. 15:3)

The last letter is more likely a *he* than a *waw*. If so, it reflects the Aramaic possessive suffixed third-person pronoun *šēmēh*, indicating that this part of the verse has also been translated. Possibly, the inscriptions on one of the Nablus rings²⁷ and on the ring from “Ain-Kushi (Kh. Kusiya)”²⁸ should also be read as the Aramaic version שמה instead of the Hebrew שמו. The strong similarity and even the sameness in the way the engravers performed the letters *he* and *waw* in the miniscule script of the rings makes it very difficult to distinguish between the two.



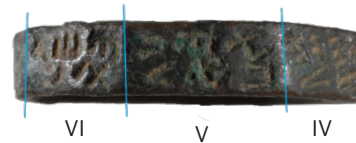
IV) יהוה / אל

“The Lord is God”

The expression יהוה אל paralleled on the rings from “Ain-Kushi (Kh. Kusiya)²⁹ and Nablus³⁰

is probably based on יהוה אלהיך in the First Commandment (Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:6), or on יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון (Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31), both of which are common in Samaritan liturgy,³¹ and are also known from an inscription in the Ḥuzn Ya‘qūb synagogue.³²

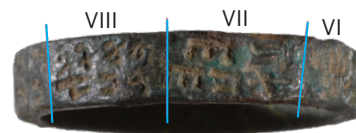
VI	V
ישר	אין
ון	כאל



V-VI)

“O Jeshurun, there is none like God” (Deut. 33:26)

The most common formula אין כאל ישרון is usually engraved in two columns as here, unlike the horizontally displayed text on facets I-II.



VII-VIII)

“For I the Lord am your healer” (Exod. 15:26)

The formula אני יהוה רפא (ך) is one of the most common on Samaritan amulets. The last word was executed without the final *kaf* owing to the limited space.

VIII	VII
יהוה	כי
רפא	אני

Accession no.: 2010.65.222

2.

Dimensions: D 20 mm; H 4 mm

Facets:

I) יהו / י..

The first *yod* of each row can be read with confidence. The remnants of the second and third letters in the upper row point to a reading of the Tetragrammaton executed without the last letter. The second and third letters in the lower row were written in a simplified manner, and the second is poorly preserved. The intended word may have been a repetition of the Tetragrammaton evoking Exodus 34:6 or a verb in the imperfect such as יהוה ימלך, as in the inscription in the synagogue of Sha'alvim, יהוה ימלך עולם ועד.³³



II) אין / כאל (II)

All the strokes of the letters are well preserved. The first two letters were fully executed, and the others were done using simplified forms that are known from other rings and amulets.³⁴ The text, taken from Deuteronomy 33:26, is one of the most common on Samaritan amulets, in this form or more in full אין כאל ישרון.



III) י[ה]ו / ש[מ]ו (III)

“Y[H]W(H) is His name” (Exod. 15:3)

This facet suffered serious damage to its central section and to the upper-right edge, where there was probably the upper stroke of the initial *yod*. As יהו(ה) שמו, taken from Exodus 15:3, is a very common formula on Samaritan rings and amulets and is the only one that is compatible with the remaining letters, this tentative reconstruction seems possible.



IV) יהו / שלי (IV)

The word שלי or any word beginning that way does not exist in Biblical Hebrew. The secondary root (*nšl* >) *šly* is known in Samaritan Aramaic and means “eradicate” or “uproot” used in the Aph’el stem, translating the Hebrew root *nšl* as in Deuteronomy 7:1, 22; 32:39.³⁵ We can tentatively see the present form as the Aramaic imperative second masculine spelled defectively without the opening *aleph* יהו(א) שלי “Lord, eradicate!”³⁶



V) אין / כאל (V)

In the first row, the *aleph* and the *nun* were executed in an abbreviated form. The *aleph* lacks the two short diagonal strokes on its upper right side, and the *nun* has only its lower angle. In the second row the *aleph* has a very peculiar form: the letter was rotated to the left so that its side strokes became vertical, a known phenomenon on Samaritan amulets, but an unexpected horizontal stroke was added at its base joining the verticalized strokes, giving the letter the general aspect of a *het*. Considering the weakening of the gutturals among Samaritans and their possible erroneous use as *matres lectionis* instead of *aleph*, we cannot completely rule out a reading of the letter as a *het*.³⁷ Nevertheless, the presence



of the oblique stroke joining the edges of the verticalized strokes tilts the balance to an interpretation of the letter as an irregular *aleph*.

VI) $\text{יהוה} / \text{יִי} \text{ א}?$ (fig. 1).

VII) $\text{יהוה} / \text{שלי}$ (fig. 2).

On the expression *יהוה שלי*, see facet IV above.

VIII) The letters here are too damaged or executed in such an abbreviated form that they do not lend themselves to a reliable reading. The first letter in the upper row is unparalleled in Samaritan writing and might be an abbreviated one. The following letter, which is “x” shaped, is probably a *waw*, as is the third one. The second letter in the lower row seems to be a *tav*.

Accession no.: 2010.65.224

3.

Dimension: D 20 mm

Facets:

VIII	VII	VI	V	IV	III	II	I
מין	וזה	...	ייו	אא.	אין	צן.	אתו
	ית.	...	יא?.	רצ?.	כאל	קא	א.

It is most probable that the engraver did not intend to incise any real words but that he simply copied letters – some of them fully and others abbreviated in order to convey the impression of a Samaritan amulet. The proposed reading of facet III is obviously based on the most common phrase *אין כאל ישרון*, although except for the *yod* and the *kaf*, the letters are much abbreviated. The writing of a single row of large



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



letters on facet VIII is exceptional: מין ("type") can also be *scriptio plena* of מן as "from" or "of."

Accession no.: 2010.65.295

4.

Dimensions: D 19 mm; H 4 mm

Facets:

I) יִשְׁ / יִצְיִ?

Only the opening letter of each row can be distinguished. In the upper row, the *yod* is well preserved but the second letter is very blurred. However, it seems that the general contour of a *tet* can be discerned. A less probable reading could be a *nun* with a rounded upper right angle as is sometimes seen on amulets.³⁸ The letter is certainly not a *he* or a *waw*, so the *yod* is not the beginning of the Tetragrammaton. The first letter of the second row can be a *pe* or even a *kaf*.

II) שִׁל / שִׁל

This facet is narrower than the others and has only two letters in each row, which might be an abbreviated form of יהוה שלי.

III) יִ / יִלְ (fig. 3).

The first two letters of the upper row are defective. The first letter in the lower row was possibly intended to be a *he* whose descending stroke could not be extended downward and was cut off at the level of the horizontal stroke.

IV) יִ / יִשְׁ (fig. 4).

The facet is narrower than the others and has only two letters in each row. The second sign in the upper row and the first in the lower row are pseudo-letters. It seems that the engraver performed a general imitation of another inscription.

V) The first letter in the upper row can be read as an *'ayin*, but the five signs on the facet are undoubtedly pseudo-letters.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



VI) .ש. / .ש

The reading of the first character in the upper row as a *shin* is very tentative, and it is not certain that it is a real letter. The first letter in the lower row can be tentatively read as a *kaf*, or, less likely, as a *pe*. The other signs are pseudo-letters.

VII) The remains of signs do not conform to any actual letter, and it seems that the engraver intended only pseudo-letters. Accession no.: 2010.65.296



5.

Dimensions: D 20 mm; H 4 mm

Description: This amulet is a well-preserved eight-faceted ring. The engraver did not incise real letters, but rather pseudo-letters to convey a general sense of Samaritan letters. The only sign that can be considered a real letter is the three-legged one that resembles a *yod* without the typical upward extension of the left leg, or an inversed *shin*. All the other signs are vague imitations meant to suggest a Samaritan inscription.

Accession no.: 2010.65.302



6.

Dimensions: D 23 mm; H 4 mm

Description: The ring holds eight relatively well-preserved inscribed facets. At the end of the inscription, on facet VI, the engraver incised an unprecedented small closing sign.

Facets:

I) יהוה / שמו

“YHWH is His name” (Exod. 15:3)

The last *he* of the Tetragrammaton is missing the lower short stroke that distinguishes it from a *waw*. The *shin* is not “w”-shaped but was written as a round-base trident.



II) יהוה / אחד

“The Lord is one” (Deut 6:4)

The *dalet* is abbreviated as a single angle reminiscent of the head of the letter.

III-IV)

IV	III
יהוה	כי
רפאך	אני

V-VI)

On facet V the *nun* and the *lamed* are abbreviated. On facet VI (fig. 5), in contrast to facet V, the *nun* was executed in full. At the end of the lower row, an unprecedented sign in the form of a small angle closes the line, which conveys a more balanced look. Given that the Samaritan reading, as well as the Jewish one,³⁹ separates the verse into two colons after the word *ישרון*,⁴⁰ it is possible that the engraver imitated a separation mark or a sort of angular exclamation mark with which he was familiar from manuscripts. Medieval Pentateuch manuscripts feature many punctuation marks that resemble such an angular sign, *šila*, *atmā'u*, and *bā'u*, all of which were used inconsistently.⁴¹ If my assumption is correct, the angular sign ◀ on our ring is the earliest known example of such a mark.

VII) גומה / יהוה

The first letter is performed by a single oblique stroke with a very small protuberance at its upper edge. The context of the other letters on the facet prioritizes its reading as a *gimel* with its left element considerably shortened, considering that it cannot possibly be read as the *qof* of the common formula. The head of the *mem* does not have the expected look of a “w.” It seems that after incising the first angle of the “w,” the engraver failed to execute the second one properly and settled for flattening it. Undoubtedly the common formula *קומה יהוה* “Rise up, O Lord!” (Num. 10:35)⁴² stands behind the inscription, and the spelling probably reflects a

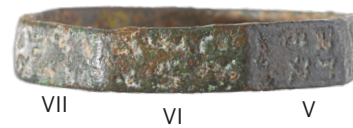


Fig. 5



dialectical shift /q/ > /g/, a shift hitherto not attested to in Samaritan sources.

VIII) יהוה / נצו

The first *he* of the Tetragrammaton is tiny and its top is damaged. It seems that נצו is an irregular spelling of נחה owing to the weakening of the guttural *het*.⁴³ Another possibility is that it is an abbreviated *het* that is missing two strokes, which makes it look like a *waw*.

Accession no.: 2010.65.309

7.

Dimensions: D 22 mm; H 4 mm

Facets:

I) / שמע...

The *shin* and the *‘ayin* are fully performed and all their strokes are preserved. The head of the *mem* was executed in an irregular way: the leg is not angular as is usual, but slants down into the second line. Such a *mem* leg is known from a marble inscription from Mount Nebo dated to the fourth–fifth century CE.⁴⁴ The vertical stroke of the first sign in the second row is not a continuation of the right vertical stroke of the *shin* above, as it might appear at first sight. This angular sign seems to be fully preserved and is identical to the last sign in the row. Most probably there was another identical sign in the now completely eroded center of the row. As שמע obviously refers to the emblematic proclamation יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד (Deut. 6:4), the word ישראל is expected in the second row, but the engraver opted to fill the row with signs. While the ending of the declaration, יהוה אחד, is well known on Samaritan amulets,⁴⁵ its opening appears here for the first time.

II–III) Both of these facets were filled with two rows of three identical signs, which were executed by three strokes reminiscent of the general shape of a *tav* or an *aleph*.



IV) ..ח? / א?ל?יך?

The only fully written letter that has all of its elements and is well preserved on this facet is the *yod* in the upper row. The first letter in the row could be an *aleph* whose right diagonal stroke was omitted, and the following letter might be a *lamed* whose two strokes do not meet at the correct angle. Considering that the letter at the beginning of the second row can be reconstructed as a *het* whose left vertical stroke was engraved separately from the horizontal ones, we can tentatively propose that the phrase behind the inscription is *אליך (וי)חנך* “upon thee (and) be gracious to thee” from the Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:25). If our supposition is right, the engraver copied the text omitting the two first letters of the second word and executed most of the letters in incomplete forms. Such an omission of letters is known from other Samaritan amulets in the Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv,⁴⁶ and from one from Nahariya.⁴⁷

A commemorative inscription containing the Priestly Blessing found in the Nablus synagogue is dated to the eighteenth century,⁴⁸ and a partial version of it appears on a Samaritan amulet dated most probably to the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The earliest documented use of the blessing on an amulet is on the two famous silver scrolls found at Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem.⁵⁰

V–VI) Most probably, sequences of three signs like those on facets II and III or two sequences of *alephs* were intended here though in principle the last letter in the first row and the second one in the second row could be interpreted as anomalous *tavs* owing to the shortness of the right diagonal stroke. The surviving strokes of the first letter of each line do not conform to the appearance of any letter, but they seem to be *alephs* with an omitted right diagonal stroke, which makes them very similar to the Jewish square script *aleph*. The same type of *aleph* was engraved on facet I of a very similar octagonal bronze ring from ‘En ha-Shofet, which features two rows of three *alephs*, exactly as in our ring. On the next facet, this letter begins the phrase *אין כאל*, thus removing any doubt concerning its identification as an *aleph*.⁵¹



V IV III



V IV



VII VI V

VII) אין / כאל

The three letters in the first row can be read with confidence. The *yod* was fully executed and all its strokes are visible. The *aleph* lacks its upper oblique stroke, which might have been damaged by the transition to facet VI. The *nun* was written in an abbreviated form as on other Samaritan amulets of the era.⁵² In the second row, only the *kaf* was written properly, but the following two letters, despite their poor execution, obviously represent the most common formula on Samaritan amulets: אין כאל (ישרון).

VIII) Surely two rows were engraved, very possibly ישרון continuing the line on the previous facet, but the remnants are too worn to offer a confident reading.

Accession no.: 2010.65.310

8.

Dimensions: D 19 mm; H 4 mm

Description: This ring has eight facets, which have two rows of signs in a relatively good state of preservation. On most of the facets – II, VI, VII, VIII, and most probably also IV and V – a *yod* was engraved at the head of the upper row and a semi-rectangular letter open on its left flank – probably a *kaf* – was incised at the head of the lower row. Following each of those initial letters, there is an abbreviated single letter on facets II, IV, V, and VIII and two abbreviated ones on facets VI and VII. Very possibly the engraver intended a general imitation of a typical formula beginning with the Tetragrammaton. Only the very abbreviated signs were engraved on facets I and III.

Accession no.: 2010.65.311



VII

VI



II

I

VIII

VII



IV

III

II



VII

VI

V

9.

Dimension: D 18 mm

Description: This ring has seven facets with two rows of three well-preserved signs. The shape of the signs is very similar to those on cat. no. 8, and it is likely that both rings were made by the same engraver. The same inscription was intended on six of the seven facets: in the upper row the letters Ψ can be safely discerned at the head of the row. The third sign is an abbreviated letter performed as a simple horizontal stroke on facets I and IV, as a very short horizontal stroke with two tiny legs on facets II and III, and as two parallel very short vertical strokes on facet VII, most probably another version of the aforementioned legs. The signs in the lower row seem to be the same as those in the lower rows of most of the facets of cat. no. 8, but performed a little more fully here. At the head of the row, a semi-rectangular letter open on its left flank is followed by an abbreviated letter performed by two separate curving strokes. The third sign is an abbreviated letter performed as a rectangle open at its base, the upper edge and the left flank having been executed as one simple stroke protruding from its upper-right edge. On facets II, IV and VI the sign is further abbreviated as a simple vertical stroke.

Facet V shows a different inscription: Ψ / Ψ . The third letter in the upper row was performed in an abbreviated fashion with a single horizontal stroke, exactly as the last sign in the upper row of the other facets. The first letter in the lower row was also written in an abbreviated form with a horizontal stroke with tiny protuberances going upward at the edges. Accession no.: 2010.65.312

**10.**

Dimension: D 17 mm

Description: This amulet is a well-preserved eight-faceted ring. The engraver did not incise real letters, but rather pseudo-letters, suggesting a general sense of Samaritan letters. Accession no.: 2010.65.876



11.

Dimension: D 22 mm

Description: This ring has eight facets at various degrees of preservation. Most of the signs on the ring are in fact abbreviated letters with *aleph* and *yod* generally being more fully performed. The abbreviated *nuns* are performed by a simple short and oblique stroke and the *lameds* by an oblique stroke descending leftward continuing in a very short tail. The engraver most probably rendered the formula אין כאל on each facet, a conclusion that can be drawn from the combination of the remaining letters on all the facets, except for facet II, on which the letters are too abbreviated and defective to offer a reliable reading. The peculiarity of writing the same words on all of a ring's facets appears here for the first time. The facets are of different widths: on the wider ones the letters were generally written out in full and on the narrower ones they were performed in a simplified way using only part of each stroke.

Facets:

I) $\text{אין} / \text{כאל}$

The *nun* is abbreviated. The roof and the spine of the *kaf* have survived in their entirety. The lower horizontal stroke is worn owing to its proximity to the edge of the ring, but can still be seen, if only tenuously. The *aleph* in the lower row was performed in a completely different way than the one in the upper row, and as it is missing its lower oblique upward stroke, it looks like a *waw*, but it is obvious that an *aleph* was intended. The *lamed* is abbreviated.

II) Owing to the narrowness of this facet, only very small strokes forming abbreviated letters were engraved.

III) $\text{אין} / \text{כאל}$

The *aleph* in the upper row can be reconstructed with confidence as the oblique stroke has survived in its entirety and those on its sides are still partially visible. The *nun* is abbreviated. The lower row is very damaged but remains of all the strokes of the *aleph* can be discerned.



IV) אין / כאל

Owing to the narrowness of the facet, only the *yod* and the *lamed* were engraved fully, and all the other letters were only partially performed or abbreviated. The *aleph* in the upper row is tiny, but has its main stroke descending rightward and remains of an oblique stroke on each of its sides. The *yod* and the *nun* are abbreviated. In the lower row, the *kaf* is missing its lower horizontal stroke and the *aleph* has only one rightward ascending stroke.

V) אין / כאל

In the upper row the *aleph* is tiny, with one rightward ascending stroke. The *nun* is abbreviated. The *kaf* was written fully with a leftward descending stroke that continues down the vertical right stroke and the horizontal lower one. The *aleph* in the lower row is “waw looking” as on facet IV. The *lamed* is abbreviated.

VI) אין / כאל

The *nun* is abbreviated. In the lower row, the *kaf* is tiny and worn and the two strokes of the *lamed* were engraved separately.

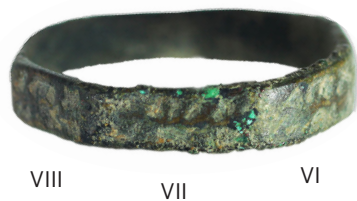
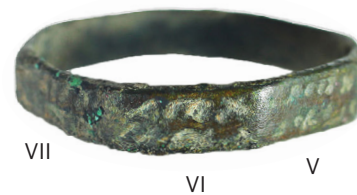
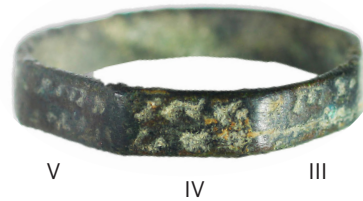
VII) אין / כאל

The *nun* is abbreviated. The *lamed* is a little worn.

VIII) אין / כאל

The *nun* is abbreviated. The *lamed* is rotated slightly to the left.

Accession no.: 2010.65.1062



12.

Dimension: D 20 mm

Description: The surface of the ring is divided into eight very disproportional facets, some of which are seriously worn and damaged. Nevertheless, few of the signs can be interpreted as real letters, and many of the well-preserved signs are obviously pseudo-letters. Presumably no real words were intended on this ring, but rather a general imitation of typical inscriptions on Samaritan rings.

Facets:

I) $\text{כ}^{\text{ז}}$ / $\text{ש}^{\text{י}}$

Despite the fact that the left part of the upper horizontal stroke of the *yod* is only faintly distinguishable owing to its tracing from left to right in an ascending movement, we can be confident about the reading. The *shin* is atypical as it was done with a single long curving stroke that formed the two external vertical strokes and a rounded base. The third sign is an abbreviated letter performed by a simple short horizontal stroke. The first letter in the lower row is most probably a *kaf* or, less likely, a *pe*. The third letter seems to be a mirror-written *lamed*.⁵³

II) $\text{י}^{\text{ח}}$ / $\text{ש}^{\text{ז}}$

This facet is much worn and there is no certainty that real letters were intended in it.

III) $\text{י}^{\text{ח}}$ / $\text{ש}^{\text{ז}}$

All the letters on the facet are very worn. In the upper row, the *he* is clear as remnants of all its strokes can be discerned, including the small upward protuberance of the central stroke. The following letter is very poorly preserved. Possibly, a *shin* made with two rounded bases was intended. Another possibility is a much tilted *het*. Only a few remnants of what seems to be a unique stroke of the third letter can be discerned. The first letter in the lower row, which has a closed rectangular form, is most probably a *qof*. The *aleph* and the *waw* following it are much damaged, so the identifications are tentative.



IV) [ה] / [ה]

The narrowness of this facet limited the engraving to two letters in each row. The *yod* in the upper row is irregular and the next letter is not fully executed. The second letter in the lower row might be a *he*.



V) ש / ז

The narrowness of the facet limited the engraving to two letters in each row. The visible traces of the first letter in the upper row could be of an unsuccessfully rendered *yod*. The following letter was performed by three semi-vertical strokes and is possibly a *yod* lacking its roof or an abbreviated *shin*. The first letter of the lower row is most probably a *kaf* or, less likely, a *pe*.

VI) All the relatively well-preserved signs of the facet are pseudo-letters. The last sign in the upper row has the general appearance of a *shin*, and the last sign in the lower row looks somewhat like a *waw*.

VII) י.. / יי

Although the first sign in the upper row can be read as a *shin* and the last one in the lower row as a *waw*, the other signs obviously lack any letter form, which leads to the conclusion that no real letters were intended.



VIII) ה. / ה

In the upper row, the signs have the general appearance of a *shin* and a *mem*. In the lower row, the first sign is most probably a pseudo-letter and the second can be read as a *he* or, less likely, as a *waw*.

Accession no.: 2010.65.1181

13.

Dimension: D 17 mm

Description: The eight disproportional facets of this ring are engraved with Samaritan pseudo-letters having a general similarity to those of cat. nos. 8 and 10.

Accession no.: 2017.17.57



14.

Dimensions: D 12 mm; H 5 mm

Description: This ring has ten facets, each decorated with a central circle surrounded by seven, eight, or nine dots distributed in a disproportional and non-meticulous way. As it does not have letters or pseudo-letters, its relevance to the corpus is not clear.

Accession no.: 2017.17.58

**15.**

Dimension: D 20 mm

Description: The eight facets of this ring were filled with two rows of signs imitating Samaritan letters. Some of them, as the last two in the lower row of facet I and the first and third in the upper row of facet III, look to be actual *yods*. Others, as all the signs in facet II, appear to be abbreviated *alephs* as those on facets V–VI of cat. no. 7 and on the ring from En ha-Shofet.⁵⁴

Accession no.: 2017.17.59

**16.**

Dimension: D 22 mm

Description: Although all the texts engraved on the ring are most probably among the most usual formulae on Samaritan rings, the worn character of the inscriptions and the inexpert hand of the engraver make their reading difficult.

Facets:

I) יהוה / אֱלֹהִים

The *yod* was engraved higher than at the expected level. The two *hes* of the Tetragrammaton are indistinguishable from the *waw*. However, Samaritan amulet engravers occasionally used alternative spellings of the Tetragrammaton,⁵⁵ and in light of the generally abbreviated character of the ring letters, it seems likely that a *he* lacking its right-lower stroke was intended here. Each of the four strokes of the *aleph* were engraved, but not correctly, so it appears as a broken letter.



The following letter has three strokes with the general look of an abbreviated *aleph*, but the surrounding context points to its interpretation as a very abbreviated *het*. The *dalet* is in its abbreviated version formed by the angle of the letter's head.⁵⁶

II) אִין / זא[ל]

The *yod*, the only fully performed letter, is followed by a single extra vertical stroke. The two *alephs* are performed in an abbreviated fashion by two oblique strokes descending rightward and one descending leftward, which connects them. The *nun* is very poorly preserved, as only its roof remains. The engraver performed the abbreviated *kaf* with only its upper part: the upper hook, the roof, and the beginning of the vertical spine.

III) Owing to the narrowness of the ring here, the engraver was limited to the lowest letters and incised them in an abbreviated form using unconnected tiny vertical or simple semi-rounded strokes. These traces are not sufficient for reading the expected *ישרון*, though it is very possible that this was the intended text.

IV) י[ה]וה / נצח

Despite the wear of the facet, its reading is trustworthy, as the first letter of the Tetragrammaton and the ending of *נצח* can be clearly discerned.

V) The remains of the traces in the facet are too poor to permit a reliable reading, except for a possible *aleph* in the lower row.

VI) אִין / כאל

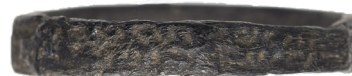
VII) ישר / ון



VII

VI

V



V

IV

III



VIII

VII

VI

VIII) קומה / יהוה

“Rise up, O Lord!” (Num. 10:35)

The invocation יהוה קומה and the entire text of Numbers 10:35 have an important place in Samaritan liturgy,⁵⁷ and it is often found on Samaritan amulets on pendants, known from nine published so far,⁵⁸ as well as from synagogue inscriptions in Beit el-Mā,⁵⁹ Huzn Ya‘qūb,⁶⁰ Yavne,⁶¹ and Kafr Qallil.⁶² A short version using just the first word קומה was also cast in a clay lamp from Netanya.⁶³ The *qof* is performed as a triangulated circle, which technically can be read as an *‘ayin*. That the abbreviated form of *qof* was used on most of these amulets and the considerable similarity between the *he* and the *waw* in this script have led some scholars to read them as עומה or עהמה,⁶⁴ and have engendered a discussion about these unattested words.⁶⁵ In light of the abbreviated characteristics of the script that the Samaritan engravers employed for the amulets discussed in this paper, I contend that all of these occurrences should be read as קומה.

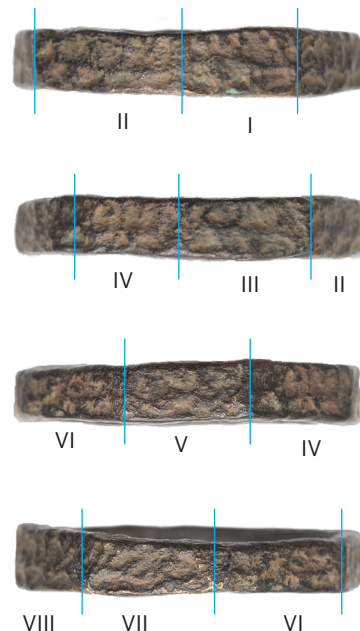
Accession no.: 2017.17.61

17.

Dimension: D 19 mm

Description: The narrowness of the ring forced the engraver to use an extremely tiny script, one that is less than 1 mm in height, and sometimes, especially on facets V and VI, only about 0.5 mm. Despite the miniscule script and the extent to which the ring has worn, it is possible to discern the intended standard formula generally used on Samaritan rings, even when in most of these cases the letters are too abbreviated to offer a trustworthy reading. One can come to this conclusion, for example, from facet I, where the most usual text, אין כאל, seems to be the one intended, but only the *aleph* in the upper row and the *kaf* and the *lamed* in the lower row can be clearly distinguished. However, on most facets the only one or two letters fully executed and preserved are not enough to offer a reconstruction of the intended text. That is true for the initial “∞”-shaped letter on facet VI, probably a *zayin* or a *het*, or the initial *aleph* and third *shin* in the upper row of facet VIII.

Accession no.: 2017.17.60



18.

Dimension: D 18 mm

Description: This ring was not molded in its final circular shape, but rather was bent without the edges being melted and just pressed together in a similar manner as was the case with the ring found in Apollonia-Arsuf.⁶⁶ Most of the engraved signs do not form letters in any reading direction. However, at least three of the signs have a perfect Samaritan letter shape if they are read “in mirrors”: the *he* on facet VII, the *waw* following it, and the *yod* on facet VI. Other signs seem to be unsuccessful attempts to engrave letters in mirror writing as the open-headed *bet* on facet VI. Unfortunately, the remaining signs do not allow for a definite reading of the text, but it is not inconceivable that the engraver intended to create an alphabetical sequence of letters and special letter combinations as was common on Jewish and Samaritan amulets. Engraving in mirror-written letters in the 1-mm-high rows of a bronze ring would have been difficult. Most possibly the engraver copied the letters from a text written in the normal way and inverted them directly stroke by stroke. In most cases this would have resulted in “letters” composed by a cluster of strokes that did not form a real letter in any reading direction. As these rings were not made for stamping, this one should be considered in the context of a well-known cultural and religious characteristic of the Late Roman-Byzantine period, which entailed unusual methods of writing and reading for magical purposes in prayers and on amulets. These techniques included the use of palindromes, reversing the order of the letters or the words, and mirror writing, which was known among Jews, Samaritans, and Christians. Mirror writing has been identified in Samaritan inscriptions on a clay lamp from the Beth Shean area, which carries a biblical quotation, and on another unprovenanced clay lamp with an abecedary, as well as in the aforementioned cases of mirror-written *lameds* within normally written texts. A similar method was employed on a Samaritan lamp found in Netanya,⁶⁷ where the word קומה was written clockwise חמוק. Although inscriptions on Samaritan clay lamps are thought to have been copied from or somehow connected to amulets,⁶⁸ the ring under discussion here is the first Samaritan amulet engraved in mirror-writing found to date.

Accession no.: 2017.17.62



Inscriptions on Flat Finger Rings

19.

Dimensions: W 17 mm; H 15 mm

Description: אין / כאיל / ישרון

The *scriptio plena* spelling of the word איל in the most common formula אין כאיל ישרון instead of the regular *scriptio defectiva* אל appears for the first time in amulets here and on cat. no. 28. The *scriptio plena* [איל] citing Exodus 15:11 is known from a Samaritan inscription found at Emmaus,⁶⁹ as well as from twelve Samaritan Bible manuscripts.⁷⁰ It also found its way into biblical quotations in prayers,⁷¹ and to a late amulet on parchment.⁷² As a *mater lectionis yod* in a middle position can represent the vowels /i/ or /e/,⁷³ the present spelling cannot be indicative of a special, different pronunciation of the word. Similar spellings appear in contemporaneous Jewish inscriptions, for example, מישאיל, טבית, קישת, אילול.⁷⁴

Accession no.: 2010.65.213



20.

Dimension: D 13 mm

Description: אין / כאל / ישרון

Accession no.: 2010.65.250



21.

Dimension: D 20 mm

Description: אין / כאל / ישרון

Accession no.: 2010.65.299



22.

Dimensions: W 13 mm; H 13 mm

Description: אין / כאל / ישרון

Accession no.: 2010.65.301



23.

Dimensions: W 21 mm; H 14 mm

Description: אין / (כ)אל ישרון

The omission of the *kaf* in this formula is very unusual. Some of the traces of the letters are very rounded rather than the expected straight lines and angles. The *lamed* was executed with a single winding stroke and the head of the *resh* merges with the stroke of the spine.

Accession no.: 2010.65.304

**24.**

Dimensions: W 22 mm; H 11 mm

Description: אין / כאל / ישרון

Accession no.: 2010.65.305

**25.**

Dimension: W 20 mm; H 13 mm

Descriptions: אין / כאל / ישרון

Accession no.: 2010.65.307

**26.**

Dimensions: D 20 mm; H 12 mm

Description: יהוה וואאך

Most probably an unsuccessful execution of the formula יהוה רפאך.

Accession no.: 2010.65.308

**27.**

Dimensions: W 17 mm; H 11 mm

Description: צנ? / יה. / ה.

In view of its stance and the roundness of its top, the first letter in the upper row is most probably a *tsadi* and not a *yod*. The last letter in the row has the general look of an abbreviated *nun*. In the central and lower rows, the middle



sign **U** is preserved in good condition but does not have the shape of any Samaritan letter. If it is no more than a decoration sign or a punctuation mark, it might be that the four letters of the Tetragrammaton should be read on the right and left edges of the rows, separated by this sign. It should be emphasized that this sign was inserted twice after the *yod* of the Tetragrammaton on a bronze amulet⁷⁵ and once on cat. no. 34.

Accession no.: 2010.65.990

28.

Dimensions: W 20 mm; H 15 mm

Description: אֵין / כֹּאֵיל / יִשְׁרוּן

On the spelling אֵיל, see cat. no. 19.

Accession no.: 2010.65.1156



29.

Dimensions: W 12 mm; H 10 mm

Description: The surface of this ring is so worn that only a *shin* can be discerned and some light strokes of other unidentifiable letters.

Accession no.: 2010.65.1280



30.

Dimensions: W 9 mm; H 6 mm

Description: Two rows of signs engraved within a rectangular framework give the general feeling of Samaritan *shins* or *yods*.

Accession no.: 2010.65.1282



31.

Dimension: D 13 mm

Description: אֵין כֹּאֵיל יִשְׁרוּן / שְׁחַבֵּעַ

“O Jeshurun, there is none like God” (Deut. 33:26). “Praised shall be!”

As the lower-right side of the ring’s edge is damaged and worn, the lower stroke of the *shin* is missing, but its three



upper strokes make for a sure reading. The lower angle of the *bet* is also partially erased; nevertheless the letter can be read with confidence. *ישתבח* is evidently a misspelling for *ישתבח* owing to the weakening of the gutturals among the Samaritans, which led to confusing them in both liturgical texts and epigraphic sources. Among those confusions, interchanges between *het* and *‘ayin* are well attested.⁷⁶ The call *ישתבח* “Praised shall be (God)!” is not a biblical quotation and was most probably taken from the liturgy, where it appears frequently, sometimes preceded by a consecutive *waw* especially at the end of prayers,⁷⁷ and especially heading prayers or hymns acting as a call to prayer, sometimes in such expressions as *ישתבח לעלם*,⁷⁸ or *ישתבח אלהים*,⁷⁹ in repetition *ישתבח ישתבח*,⁸⁰ or in series of two or three short expressions each beginning with *ישתבח*.⁸¹ It seems that this use as a common call to praise and glorify God in opening and closing prayers, which thus links them, gives the term a role as a key word that marks the beginning and the end of prayers. Good examples of this are sequences of prayers each ending in *וישתבח*, which signals the congregation to say the prayer that follows and thus engage in a chain of prayers; this is especially true of the call “*ויתמר ישתבח*” (“and shall be said praised shall be!”⁸²) at the end of a prayer, which calls for the congregation to proclaim the word *ישתבח* or to say a prayer beginning with those words.⁸³

Accession no.: 2017.17.53

32.

Dimensions: W 19 mm; H 11 mm

Description: אין / כאל / ישורון

“O Jeshurun, there is none like God” (Deut. 33:26).

The rounded surface of this ring is encircled by decorative points adjacent to the border, as is seen on coins from the Roman period onward, even though its use is known on Hebrew seals from as early as the Iron Age. Some of the well-preserved letters were engraved using abbreviated forms known from other Samaritan rings: the single-stroke *nun* in the upper row and the last letter in the third row. This abbreviated letter, a simple very short oblique stroke, could represent the final



nun of the word or, what seems more likely, an abbreviated *waw*. The semi-horizontal stroke under the first two letters in the lower row might be an abbreviated *nun*. The *lamed* in the second row was engraved in mirror mode. As a *lamed* in mirror writing within a normally written inscription has also been found in a Samaritan mosaic inscription from Apollonia-Arsuf,⁸⁴ and possibly also on facet I of cat. no. 12, it might be that they are not the results of errors, but an intended spelling like the word *דלי* in the mosaic in the Hammat Tiberias Jewish synagogue.⁸⁵

Accession no.: 2017.17.54

33.

Dimensions: D 9 mm; H 20 mm

Description: אין כאל ישראל

The letters of this well-preserved inscription were clearly engraved by an inexperienced hand, as they look a little clumsy and were made with very simple and non-styled strokes, which accords with the inferior standard of the ring itself. The letters *aleph* and *waw* are abbreviated.

Accession no.: 2017.17.55



34.

Dimensions: D 24 mm; H 16 mm

Description: The three rows of well-preserved signs on this ring do not make up a real inscription and seem to be the engraver's attempt to imitate Samaritan letters. The only signs that resemble real Samaritan letters are the two *yods* in the third position in the central row and in the second place in the lower row and the *he* at the end of the upper row. The first sign in the upper row is probably a combination of a *shin* up and a *qof* down that the engraver saw in his source and misinterpreted as a single letter. The sign **U** in the central row is the same as the sign on cat. no. 27.

Accession no.: 2017.17.56



Inscriptions on Pendants

35.

Dimensions: W 22 mm; H 30 mm

Description: שובה / יהוה / יהוה נ/צ]חה כ

The sentence שובה יהוה ("Return, O Lord"; Num. 10:36) also occurs on the ring found in 'Ain Kushi (Kh. Kusiya),⁸⁶ in an inscription in a Samaritan synagogue in Nablus,⁸⁷ and on a late amulet on parchment.⁸⁸ At the end of the third row, all the strokes of the *nun* can be discerned. The two otiose strokes attached to its right are probably the remains of an initial אל. Of the initial letter in the lower row only the upper-left rounded shoulder is visible, and it obviously should be reconstructed as a *tsadi*. The *kaf* at the end of the row is odd.

Accession no.: 2010.65.212



36.

Dimensions: W 26 mm; H 45 mm

Description: אין י.ת.יש / הלה/שתג?ע

The letters are rough and clumsy, and it is clear that they were engraved by an inexperienced hand.

Accession no.: 2010.65.216



Inscription on a Bronze Plaque

37.

Dimensions: W 26 mm; H 26 mm

Description: יה[יה] / נצ[ח]

These three very small fragments of a malleated bronze plaque may be from a piece of jewelry such as a bracelet. The beginnings of two rows of an inscription engraved within a circle made by points and surrounded by a bigger garlanded circle on one of the fragments have survived. The letters are nicely done and well stylized. In the upper row, the *yod* is fully preserved. In the lower row, following the initial *nun*, the remaining stroke, which curves and descends rightward on the border of the fracture in the plaque, matches the typical right edge of a *tsadi*. All these features point to the known formula יהוה נצח-ינצחה. A similarly engraved Samaritan inscription on a small sheet of bronze was found in Khirbet al-Ḥadra.⁸⁹

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Notes

- 1 Polygonal rings, cat. nos. 1–12; flat rings, cat. nos. 19–30; pendants, cat. nos. 35–36; plaque, cat. no. 37.
- 2 Polygonal rings, cat. nos. 13–18; flat rings, cat. nos. 31–34.
- 3 See an updated list of twenty ancient Samaritan amulets on rings and pendants with bibliographic references in Hamitovsky 2004, 156–158. See also Barag 2009, 317–318. To those should be added another two that we published recently: Vainstub 2019.
- 4 See Bohak 2008, 164–165.
- 5 See Pummer 1987.
- 6 See Pummer loc. cit. Pummer (p. 257) suggested that “at least some, but possibly all the Samaritan amulets from Roman-Byzantine times were worn by Jews and Christians but not by Samaritans.” Afterward (Pummer 2016, 114) he moderated his contention: “At least *some* amulets were made by them for non-Samaritans.” Nevertheless, some Christian oval amulets dated to the sixth century were found in Upper Galilee: see Barag 2009, 317.
- 7 See Naveh 1992, 183–184.
- 8 The phrase also appears in two synagogue inscriptions in Emmaus. See Reeg 1977, 607–608.
- 9 Pummer 1987, 252.
- 10 On this phenomenon in Jewish amulets, see Bohak 2008, 306.
- 11 We would like to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Michael Maggen, head of the Paper Conservation Laboratory of the Israel Museum, for his patience and outstanding professionalism.
- 12 The ring from ‘Ein haShofet (Reich 2002, 299, no. 13) and the two rings from Gelilot (Reich 1994; Reich 2002, 304–305, no. 20–21),
- 13 See a general list of letters in Purvis 1968, Table VI, and lists of letters on ring inscriptions in Testa 1973, Tav. II–III.
- 14 Ashkenazi 2015.
- 15 Op. cit. 241–242, 245.
- 16 Zertal 1979, 112–115.
- 17 Margain 1984; Margain 1989.
- 18 Sobernheim 1902, 72–90.
- 19 The Samaritan version differs from the Jewish version in one word: יהוה איש מלחמה.
- 20 See Reeg 1977, 606–608 with earlier bibliography.
- 21 See Loewenstamm 1978.
- 22 נצויע, נצויע, נצויע, נצויע.
- 23 Reeg 1977, 607.
- 24 See Crown 2001, 43–44.
- 25 See Reeg 1977, 606–608 with earlier bibliography. See also Margain 1989, 39, especially note 10.
- 26 Stadel 2014. He also suggests that amulets holding this phrase were worn by Samaritans in times of war during the Samaritan revolts against the Byzantines, a theory posited earlier by Kaplan regarding other Pentateuchal verses (Kaplan 1975, 159; Kaplan 1980, 197–198). Pummer (Pummer 1987, 257) objected to the theory.
- 27 See Margain 1984, 147.
- 28 See Zertal 1979, 114.
- 29 See Zertal 1979, 114.
- 30 Margain 1984; Reich 2002, no. 15.
- 31 See discussion in Reich 2002, 297.
- 32 See Reeg 1977, 647.
- 33 See Reeg 1977, 636–637.
- 34 See a discussion on abbreviated letters below.
- 35 See Tal 2000b, 899.
- 36 Such defective variant spellings omitting the opening *aleph* are known. See Macuch 1982, 161: קרב(א).
- 37 On the variations of *aleph*, *he*, *het*, and *‘ayin* as a consequence of the weakening of the gutturals, see Ben-Hayyim 2000, 38–43, and Tal 2013, 27–29. This situation led to interchanges between them in Aramaic Samaritan texts: Macuch 1982, 9–10; Tal 2013, 27, § 2.2.5.3.2, as well as in liturgy texts: Cowley 1909, vol. II, XXVI, XXXV, XXXIX, XLII, and in epigraphic sources: Reeg 1977, 576 (תזריע), 647 (תדשה), 672 (תנער, [ה]אלע).
- 38 For example, on the amulet from Nahariya (Reich 1985), and the amulet in the Eretz Israel Museum (Kaplan 1967).
- 39 The Masoretic punctuation marks the pause with an *atnah*.
- 40 Generally by an *āfsaq* mark in the form of a colon. See, e.g., Tsedaqa 1968. On the division signs in Samaritan medieval manuscripts, see Murtonen 1960, 5.

- 41 Kahle 1956, 172–179; Murtonen 1960, 4–7; Crown 2001, 79–82. The most detailed discussion on the Samaritan punctuation marks in medieval manuscripts can be found in Ben-Ḥayyim 1977, vol. 2, 3337–3373, vol. 5, 4–7 (§ 0.6–0.9), who translated and edited the twelfth-century grammarian Ibn Darta.
 - 42 See cat. no. 16, facet VIII.
 - 43 See cat. no. 1, facets I–II.
 - 44 Yonick 1967, fig. 13 in p. 191.
 - 45 See Reich 2002, amulets 1, 2 (in Greek), 4 (in Greek), 7, 15, 19, 18.
 - 46 Kaplan 1967, 160–116.
 - 47 See Reich 1985: אִין כֹּא (ל).
 - 48 Ben-Zvi 1976, 186.
 - 49 Schrire 1970; Schrire 1972.
 - 50 See Vainstub 2000, 291–295.
 - 51 Ilan 1982, 4; Reich 2002, 299.
 - 52 See a discussion on abbreviated letters below.
 - 53 See below cat. no. 32.
 - 54 See above cat. no. 7, facets V–VI.
 - 55 See above reference to the pages of the paragraph “The Inscriptions” at the beginning of the article.
 - 56 See above Table 1.
 - 57 See Reeg 1977, 565.
 - 58 Found in Tel Aviv (2) (Kaplan 1967; Kaplan 1975), in Tyre (Lozachmeur and Margain 1982), in Damascus (Sobernheim 1902, 72, 80), in Caesarea (Hamburger 1959), in Israel Museum collections (Farhi 2010), in the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem collections (Goodnick and Westenholz 2007, 73), and in Nahariya (Reich 1985).
 - 59 See Reeg 1977, 564. This inscription includes the entire verse.
 - 60 Op. cit. p. 646.
 - 61 Op. cit. p. 672.
 - 62 See Reeg 1977, 565, 611.
 - 63 Sussman 1986–1987, 133. See Naveh 1988, 38–39, pl. 8, with valuable comparison with the use of the invocation in Jewish magical texts.
 - 64 See Sobernheim 1902, 72, 80, Kaplan 1975, and Hamburger 1959.
 - 65 See Loewenstamm 1978. See Kaplan 1975, 158–159 with a summary of the various opinions.
 - 66 See Reich 1989, 270, facet 8.
 - 67 Sussman 1986–1987, 133.
 - 68 See Pummer 2016, 115 and Naveh 1988.
 - 69 See Strugnell 1967, 557 with an earlier bibliography.
 - 70 See Von Gall 1914–1918, vol. II, 146.
 - 71 For example, Cowley 1909, vol. I, 84 and 414: מִי כְמוֹךָ בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה.
 - 72 Gaster 1971, vol. III, 112: מִי כְמוֹךָ בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה.
 - 73 See Tal 2000a, especially pp. 1.30, 1.34–1.35.
 - 74 Naveh 1978, 16, inscription no 70.
 - 75 See the second amulet in Berger-Lober 2012, second and third rows.
 - 76 On the fluctuations of *aleph*, *he*, *het* and *‘ayin* as a consequence of the weakening of the gutturals, see Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, pp. 38–43; Tal 2013, pp. 27–29. This situation produced interchanges among them in Aramaic Samaritan texts: Macuch 1982, pp. 9–10; Tal 2013, p. 27, § 2.2.5.3.2, as well as in liturgy texts: Cowley 1909, vol. II, pp. XXVI, XXXV, XXXIX, XLII, and in epigraphic sources: Reeg 1977, pp. 576 (תְּנֵנָה, [ת]אַלֵּעַ) 672 (תְּנֵנָה, [ת]אַלֵּעַ) 647 (תְּנֵנָה, [ת]אַלֵּעַ). The confusion sometimes also caused interpolations between the letters in prayers ordered acrostically (Cowley 1909, vol. II, XLII, e.g. pp. 74, 76). See specific misspellings of *‘ayin* instead of *het* עוֹרֵךְ, נְצוּחָה (Cowley op. cit., XXVI, מעי, נעת, עביב, עכס, עכס, עביב, נעת, מעי, XXVI) (op. cit., XXXIX).
 - 77 At the head of a prayer, e.g., in op. cit. vol. I, p. 127, or closing the prayer: e.g., op. cit., p. 361.
 - 78 See Cowley 1909, vol. I, pp. 284, 361. See also וִישַׁתְּבַח at the head of a prayer in op. cit. vol. I, p. 127, or closing the prayer: op. cit., p. 361.
 - 79 Op. cit., vol. I, p. 161, in pp. 40 ff. לִית אֱלֹהִים לִית אֱלֹהִים אֶחָד: at the end of every prayer. See also with different expressions op. cit., vol. I, p. 414 (יִשְׁתַּבַּח הַנְּאֻדָּרִי בְּקֹדֶשׁ).
 - 80 For example. op. cit., vol. II., 757.
 - 81 Op. cit., vol. I., 361, vol. II, pp. 661, 723, 757.
 - 82 See Tal 2013, §4.1.1.2 on the volitive function of the imperfect in Samaritan Aramaic.
 - 83 For example, op. cit. vol. I., 361–362. See especially p. 361, the call “וִיתַמַּר יִשְׁתַּבַּח” followed by two prayers beginning with “יִשְׁתַּבַּח.”
 - 84 See Tal 2015. The *lamed* of the word פִּעַל was mirror-written.
 - 85 See Naveh 1988, 42–43.
 - 86 Zertal 1979, 112.
 - 87 The Ḥuzn Ya’qūb synagogue. See Reeg 1977, 644 ff. especially p. 646.
 - 88 Gaster 1971, vol. I, 459.
 - 89 See Tal and Taxel 2015, 170–172.

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