LATE IRON AGE JUDEAN COOKING POTS WITH IMPRESSED HANDLES: A NEW CLASS OF STAMPED IMPRESSIONS FROM THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

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Introduction

The excavations that were conducted at Khirbet Yattir by Hanan Eshel, Jodi Magness and Eli Shenhav revealed important finds dating to the Byzantine and Early Arab Periods, including, inter alia, remains of a large village with two churches, one of which had a unique, inscribed mosaic (see, e.g., Shenhav, Eshel and Magness 1999; Eshel, Magness and Shenhav 2000a; 2000b; 2001; Bordowicz 2007). In addition to these remains, a small amount of finds from other periods were uncovered as well, including a limited amount of late Iron Age material (see, e.g., Eshel, Magness and Shenhav 2000a: 156, figs. 2–3). Among the Iron Age ceramic assemblage a group of cooking pots with distinctive impressions on their handles were noted. As it turns out, similar impressions appear on cooking pots at several other sites in Iron Age Judah and surrounding areas.

This study, which is based in part on finds of an excavation that was co-directed by Hanan Eshel, and which deals with an interesting, and hitherto un-noticed phenomenon relating to late Iron Age, per-exilic Judah, can serve, we believe, as a fitting tribute to our honoree, an esteemed and beloved friend, colleague, and teacher.

Khirbet Yattir in the Iron Age

Khirbet Yattir is located on a rocky hill in the southern Judean hills about 12 km north-west of Arad (Fig. 1). While the toponym Yattir is mentioned in the Bible (e.g. Josh. 24:11; I Sam. 30:27) no architectural remains dating to the Iron Age were exposed during the excavations at the site.¹ Most of the Iron Age material was discovered in two caves,

¹ The excavations at Khirbet Yattir took place between the years 1995–1999 and were directed by Hanan Eshel, Jodi Magness and Eli Shenhav. We would like to thank
Fig. 1. Map of sites mentioned in the text with the distribution of the various types of impressed handles discussed.