Persian Period Jerusalem and Yehud: A Rejoinder

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ABSTRACT This is a rejoinder to several recently published articles which take issue with my views on Persian period Jerusalem and Yehud.

The article deals with methodological issues such as inconsistencies between archaeology and text and the meaning of negative evidence in archaeology. On the factual level, with the available data at hand, I see no reason to change my views: Persian period Jerusalem covered ca. 2-2.5 hectares, and both the description of the construction of the city-wall in Nehemiah 3 and the List of Returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah probably reflect late Hellenistic (Hasmonean) period realities.


The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures (JHS) is an internationally peer-reviewed, open-access journal established in 1996, to foster scholarly research on the Hebrew Bible, ancient Israel’s history, and cognate fields of study.
Persian period Jerusalem was a small settlement that covered an area of ca. 2–2.5 hectares, with a population of no more than a few hundred people. Over a century of archaeological investigation in Jerusalem has failed to reveal any trace of a city-wall that can be dated to the Persian period and identified as the wall of Nehemiah. The list of districts of Yehud in Nehemiah 3 “well fits the distribution of the Yehud seal impressions of the Persian period and does not fit the extent of Hasmonean rule at the time when the First Wall was built” (idem: 53). This statement is wrong. The overwhelming majority of Persian period Yehud impressions (Types 1–12 in Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007) are concentrated in Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings, including Ramat Rahel.