

Date 8th/9th Century BC

Jeroboam II inaugurated the longest reign of a king of Northern Israel in 788 BC. He ruled over a period of unparalleled prosperity, taking advantage of a lapse in strong Assyrian control of the Levant. Jeroboam's name is preserved on the Shema Seal ruling out Jeroboam I, a 10th c. king of Israel. The seal depicts a lion, realistically shown in full-throated roar with its tufted tail erect. Several other seals from the late Iron Age bear the title "עֶבֶד-מֶלֶךְ", "servant of the king," an indication that the "servant" in this context was a high-ranking official of the kings of Israel and Judah. Biblical evidence lends further credence to this hypothesis. For example, one of the royal officials listed in 2 Kings 22:12 is "the king's servant (עֶבֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ) Asaiah" (see also 1 Kings 1:47; 2 Kings 5:6; 25:8).

Shema Seal



The seal of Shema was an unpierced scaraboid of jasper measuring 37 by 27 by 17 mm; it portrays a roaring lion and contains the inscription ... "(belonging) to Shema, servant of Jeroboam."

Origin Megiddo Israel

Location Unknown

Language Paleo-Hebrew

Material Jasper

Contents Contains the inscription "(belonging) to Shema, servant of Jeroboam"

A number of Samaritan ostraca testify to prosperity during the time of Jeroboam, and provide information about the administration of the Northern Kingdom during this period.

Although now lost, the provenance and authenticity of the seal is largely agreed to be authentic. Unfortunately the Shema Seal was misplaced while en route to being delivered to the Istanbul Museum. All that is left is an impression cast in bronze prior to its shipment.