Sarcophagus of the Son of the High Priest.

A fragment of a large sarcophagus lid found in excavations north of Jerusalem on display for the first time in the Davidson Center in Jerusalem. The lid is engraved with an inscription in square script that is characteristic of the Second Temple period. The lid is meticulously fashioned and the carved inscription on it reads: "Ben HaCohen HaGadol" (son of the high priest).

Numerous high priests served in the temple during the latter part of the Second Temple period and there is no way of knowing which of the high priests the inscription refers to. However, it should probably be identified with one of the priests who officiated there between the years 30 and 70 CE. Among the high priests we know of from the end of the Second Temple period are Caiaphas known from the New Testament as the high priest who arrested Jesus and had him handed over to the Romans, Theophilus (Yedidiya) Ben Hanan, Simon Ben Boethus, Hanan Ben Hanan known from the great rebellion of the Jews against the Romans that brought about the destruction of the temple and the city, and others. The high priests of the Second Temple period were members of the upper and privileged classes of Jewish society. Excavations in the last 40 years in Jerusalem have revealed the extent of their wealth. The contrast between the difficult conditions of most of the population and the priesthood and royal families of Judea was one of the reasons for the rebellion and maybe even the main reason.

The excavations were conducted by the Unit of the Archaeological Staff Officer of the Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria, under the direction of Naftali Aizik and Benyamin Hareven, within the framework of the salvage excavations along the separation fence that were conducted with funding provided by the Ministry of Defense.