

Bus tokens that benefited the sick

Emergency small change tokens of Palestine and Israel

by Tony James

AMONGST its many exhibits, the Bank of Israel Museum in Jerusalem has a display panel devoted to non-government issues of currency entitled "Money substitutes on public transport." The labeling states that during the 1940s and 1950s, transportation companies issued chits or tokens for a wide range of purposes, from small change to purchases on board ship. Bus drivers gave change in the form of Magen David Adom (Jewish Red Cross) labels which if lost or destroyed by the passenger became a donation.

The concept was in line with the issue of other private chits and tokens during the Mandate period to overcome the lack of small change at that time. The shortage of coinage during the Second World War was a phenomenon that caused problems for many countries due to the increased cost of living, hoarding of both base and precious metals and the increased demand occasioned by visiting and occupying troops of all nations.

Interestingly, the effects of troops stationed in Palestine during WWII often include tickets kept as mementos of their time in that country. There were however, other coupons that came into use during the war period and these served to alleviate the shortage of coinage.

Palestine Mandate period 1942 -1948

At the beginning of the Second World War, prices started to increase in Palestine. By 1942 bus cooperatives saw the need for emergency paper chits and throughout the country emergency paper issues started to appear. While the tokens were predominantly made of paper and cardboard, there was one token struck in aluminium for 2 prutot. Issued by the Darom Yehudah-Tel Aviv in 1950, it has a steering wheel design over the outline of a leaf.

In the second edition of her book *The*

History of Modern Israel's Money 1917-1970, Sylvia Haffner gives a listing of small change tokens issued by transportation companies during this period, as do Albert Pick and Carl Siemsen in their catalogue of Emergency Money of WWII. This article is a combined listing with other details that I have researched. There is also an Israeli stamp catalogue that includes a listing of these coupons, and while I have seen a copy, frustratingly I have been unable to obtain it.

- Bath-Galim Cooperative, Ltd. Haifa, issued 1 and 2 Mils tokens in 1942. The cardboard coupons have the name of the company in Hebrew and English and details of the value in Hebrew, Arabic and English with the serial number on the back. The cooperative continued to issue tokens during the 1953 period of shortage of change, before merging to form the Hever Cooperative Society.

- * Carmel Station Bus Co. Ltd, Haifa. This company issued 1 and 2 Mils denomination tokens. It was one of the few Arab bus lines in Palestine under the British Mandate and was discontinued in 1948 after the State of Israel was declared. The tokens with the numerals and text in Arabic and English show the company with a picture of a sun rising from behind a hill.

- * Dan Bus Company – Tel Aviv 1953. The date of issue belies the origins of the Dan Bus Company. The company has its roots in 1908 with a carriage service from Jaffa to Petach Tikva under the approval of the Turkish governor of Jaffa. The fleet of buses grew with amalgamation of the Hamavir and Galei Aviv organisations in 1928 and a new headquarters in 1934. The Dan Cooperative was founded in 1945 when Hamavir and the Ihud-Regev Union combined to



Dan Bus Company Red star with shield filling centre of design. The front states it is good for travel in the services of Dan

form the present-day bus company that is centred in Tel Aviv and operates primarily in the north of Israel.

- * Darom Yehuda Ltd, Tel Aviv and vicinity. One of the companies (others being Shahar and Eshed) that merged in 1951 to create the Egged Company. This bus company serviced southern Israel and as previously mentioned issued an aluminium 2 prutot token dated 1950 in Hebrew. The second issue consisted of round cardboard tokens with a steering wheel superimposed on the outline of a leaf. The two denominations are tokens for 1 pruta and 2 prutot tokens have a centre hole and serial number on the back.



Darom Yehudah- Tel Aviv 1 Pruta in red 2 Prutot in blue



20 Mils- a souvenir by an Aussie digger complete with spelling error!



Hamaavir Coop 1942 1 Mil

* Hamaavir Cooperative Society Tel Aviv. This cooperative issued tokens under this name until 1950, even though it had joined with Ihud Regev Ltd to form the Dan Bus Company in 1945. The tokens were first issued on pink stock card and punched. However the holes punched were found to shorten the life of the token and the practice was discontinued. Both of these varieties are rare. Two denominations of 1 and 2 Mils are known and both feature a picture of a bus over a circle with the name of the cooperative in Hebrew and English. The denomination is in Arabic and English on each side of the coupon.

* Hamkasher Jerusalem – 1942. This bus line is now combined with the Egged Bus Company. Hamkasher issued tokens in both 1 and 2 Mils denominations, printed in both Hebrew and English on square card. The circular design states in Hebrew and English the name of the bus line as well as the city, Jerusalem. The 1 mil is in black print on white, green, beige, purple or pink card and the 2 mils is red print on white card. A later, second issue, made after 1948, has the design and words “Shield of Jerusalem” in Hebrew it was a 5 prutot denomination, with control numbers and below the design the text “In the Service of Hamkasher” in Hebrew.

The third issue by Hamkasher is the usual Magen David Adom of 1953 with a 5 prutot denomination. There are five different card stock colours and each type maintains the designation “In the Services of Hamkasher”, and the Star of David with “Magen David Adom Jerusalem” in Hebrew across the top. The back of each token has the serial number in English and the Hebrew text which states that “The value of a lost token shall be donated to Magen David Adom Jerusalem”.



Hamkasher – Jerusalem 2Mils



*Front and Back of 3 different stock card colours.
Hamkasher Magen David Adom – Jerusalem 3rd Issue 5 Prutot*

* Hever Cooperative Society, Ltd, Haifa, 1942. This Haifa-based company issued coupons for 1 & 2 Mils. The text is in Hebrew and English with the designation that the value is for either a 1 or 2 mils fare and the picture shows a bus and a signpost with Hever on it in Hebrew. A 10 Mils ticket with a similar design and the words ‘Keep for control’ is considered to be a bus ticket and not an emergency token, although it has been included for reference in Haffner’s catalogue.

* Ihud-Regev Ltd (Ichud) Bus Company Tel Aviv. Ihud and Regev joined to form the Ihud-Regev bus company before combining with the Hamaavir Cooperative Society in 1945 to form the Dan Bus Company. The present bus company serves the cities of Petach Tikvah, Ramat Gan and Tel Aviv. The two denominations of 2 and 3 Mils are in Hebrew and English, with several varieties for each denomination



*Ihud-Regev Ltd (Ichud) Bus Company
Tel Aviv. Red 3 mils. Blue 2 mils*

*Jaffa Bus Company, Jaffa. 1942. The Jaffa Bus Company Ltd was one of two Arab-owned bus lines during the period of issue of these small change tokens. The other Arab line was the Carmel Station Bus Company, Ltd. Haifa. The Jaffa coupons show a steering wheel with Arabic text above and the words Jaffa Bus Co Ltd. The value 2 Mils is to the left and at the bottom are the words “Ticket for two Mils fare” and Arabic script within an ornate border. This token is considered extremely

rare. The catalogue also shows a unique specimen of a 5 Mils Jaffa Bus Company token which has three lines of Arabic text with a handstamp. The back shows a notation in lower case Hebrew text.

* Mishmar Hamifratz Ltd, Haifa. This company was also a transportation company for building sand. The token has green-black print and the shield in red-brown. The front has text entirely in Hebrew, which says “Mishmar Hamifratz Ltd / Company Sand of the Sea” 2 Mils over the shield of the company and below “Travel Ticket for 2 MIL” with the numeral 2. The back says Mishmar Hamifratz Ltd / Fare Ticket for two Mils in English and has the serial number below.

* Mount Carmel & Ahuza Bus Service, Haifa. Today this is a taxi and sherut (multiple hire fixed route taxi) service in the Carmel and Ahuza areas of Haifa. The tokens in Hebrew and English state “Mt. Carmel & Ahuza Bus Service” and are “Good For 2 Mil” as a denomination. The serial number on the back is in English.

* Shahar, Haifa 1949. This issue is for a union of all transportation lines in Haifa during 1949. In 1951 the company merged with Egged as did the southern Drom Yehuda bus company. The first issue is a round cardboard token with a centre hole issued in 1 pruta, 2 prutot and 5 prutot denominations. The front in Hebrew text states Travel Ticket/ Shahar then the amount in English numerals and Hebrew abbreviation for prutot, Below the centre hole is the company seal with the name Shahar. The back has the serial number in English.

The second issue is printed on square or round card, still a circular design but without the centre hole. The design details and denominations are the same as the first issue.



Shahar- Haifa 1949 1 Mil first type with centre hole Second type without centre hole

Israel second period of issue 1953

A significantly bigger range of transportation companies issued small change tokens in the period around 1953, including the Magen David Adom “donation” issues. These emergency tokens for 5 prutot denominations featured a red Star of David similar to the American Red Cross. People began to ask why the bus companies should gain the profits from worn out and destroyed tokens. So it was decided that the accrued funds from the loss of the tokens should be donated to the Magen David Adom.

* Bath-Galim Cooperative Ltd, Haifa, continued to issue tokens its merger into the Hever Cooperative society.

* Beersheva City Transport – Magen David Adom issue. The first issue with a 5 prutot value has a Hebrew text on the front, and was withdrawn in 1953. The coupon has the inscription “If this token is not used, its value will be donated to Magen David Adom – Beersheva” below the red Star of David on both the front and the back of the token. The second issue, also for 5 prutot, has this inscription only on the back; the front has only the star and the numeral 5 on each side of the word prutot. A third



Eshed (Egged) Bus Company- Haifa Type 2 with Magen David Adom and logo

issue reads Magen David Adom on the front with Beersheva /5 Prutot and the usual donation clause and serial number on the back.

* The Cinema Association (Union branch of the Cinemas in Israel). This 5 prutot token is very similar to the others with the Magen David Adom with the addition of the Hebrew words “Good for fare in every cinema in Israel/Union branch of the Cinemas in Israel” in two lines on the front. Interestingly the cataloguers include this item in the listing for transportation company tokens since the tokens could also be used to pay bus fares!

* Dan Bus Company, Tel Aviv, as noted previously, issued tokens in prutot which would place them in the Israel period, even though the company was formed during the Palestine mandate era.

* Eshed Bus Company Haifa (named the Egged Bus ‘lit. Union’ Company, by the national poet Chaim Nachman Bialik) 1953 issues. This company was formed from the Shahar, Egged and Darom Yehuda Ltd bus lines. The first issue of tokens had the usual star with 5 prutot on each side and the Hebrew letters for E.S.D. standing for Egged, Shahar and Darom Yehudah and then “Good for travel in the services of Eshed” across the bottom of the coupon. The second issue has the logo of the company and the Hebrew letters ESD repeated across the top of the logo. The third type is without the red Star of David.

* Haifa Merchants, tokens. Haffner notes

that there is no denomination on this issue, used by all the merchants and tradesmen in Haifa. During the Mandate period the value was 5 Mils and after 1948 it became 5 prutot. There was just a red Star of David on the front and the back says in Hebrew – “If this token is not used, its value will be donated to Magen David Adom – Haifa.” The serial number is in English.

* Hamkasher Jerusalem. This bus company continued to operate in Jerusalem until 1967.

* Shekim (Army Stores) This organization issued emergency small change tokens in military canteens (shekim) during the Sinai campaign in 1956. The red star of Magen David Adom has the symbol of the Shekim, (Shin-Caph-Mem) in the centre and the text in Hebrew “Good towards purchase in Shekim Canteens” and on the back in Hebrew “If this token is not used, its value will be donated to Magen David Adom, Tel Aviv” below which is the serial number in English.

Buses in Israel today

The Lonely Planet travel guide lists several experiences that the visitor will experience while travelling in Israel today. One is feeling the butt of a rifle being pushed into one’s back while travelling on a crowded bus with some IDF soldiers using the bus system for independent travel to their unit or on leave. Some bus routes use armoured buses particularly where the route is close to or crosses into Palestinian areas of control. Other routes are classified as “Mehadrin” (gender segregated) and women are expected to sit at the back of the buses, an acknowledgment to the Haredi or ultraorthodox areas of population.

The Egged Israel Transport Cooperative Society operates the largest transit bus company in Israel and is second only to London Buses in the number of buses. Having over 3000 buses and 6227 workers servicing more than 1038 routes and nearly 4000 alternative routes all over Israel the company moves nearly a million passengers in 45,000 trips each day over 810,000 kms of roads. The smaller but other major carrier, the Dan Bus Company, also provides civilian and military transport centred primarily in the northern part of the country.

My personal experience of Israeli buses and coaches has been nothing but air-conditioned comfort and punctuality, surprising considering the vagaries of traffic congestion in the cities, none of which are my idea of relaxed driving. I did wonder if the idea of small change tokens being a donation to the equivalent of the Red Cross would not be without merit, even in these days of sufficient coinage.

References

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A modern Egged bus in Haifa