

Jerusalem and the Near Eastern Diaspora in the Early Imperial Period*

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1. Introduction

No-one who looks into the new *Corpus* of the inscriptions of Judaea/Palaestina, with (so far) two half-volumes on *Jerusalem*, and one on *Caesarea and the Middle Coast*, can fail to be amazed by the enormous effort which has gone, and is still going, into the work, and the very high level of the treatment of even the smallest inscribed fragments. In its multi-lingual coverage, and the vast numbers of photographs of inscriptions contained in it, this project is a milestone in the study of the Near East in the Greco-Roman period, and indeed in the epigraphy of the Ancient World.¹

But the reader must ask whether the immense efforts involved really have been, or will be, productive in terms of our understanding of social, cultural, religious and linguistic history. When everything, including minute or barely-legible scraps, has been collected and presented, what can we learn that is really new?

The question is legitimate, but the answer given here is unambiguously positive. Even while we await the remaining volumes of the *Corpus* — for instance vol. VI on Galilee and the North coast, including Beth-She‘arim and Scythopolis, a major Greek city with Jewish and Samaritan synagogues² — what we have already can allow us to see familiar periods of history, and familiar literary sources, in a new light.

This paper takes as its subject the funerary inscriptions, of which the vast majority are on ossuaries, from *Jerusalem Part One* (with some additions included in *Part Two*). The following discussion, focused on a specific category of material, should be read in

* I am very grateful for corrections, additions and constructive comments to Werner Eck, Jodi Magness, Jonathan Price, Guy Rogers, Tessa Rajak and Joan Taylor. In other circumstances I would of course have consulted Hannah Cotton. But on this occasion I can only express my deep appreciation of her inexhaustible energy, which defies the laws of nature by not being fuelled by any apparent intake of calories; of her vision, which has contributed so much to the documentary history of Judaea/Palaestina; and of the warmth of her friendship over many decades.

¹ H.M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae I. Jerusalem. Part One: 1-704*; Part Two: **705-1120**, Berlin and New York, 2010, 2012. See also vol. II. *Caesarea and the Middle Coast*, 2011. Numerals in bold indicate entries in *Jerusalem I* Parts One and Two. All dates are CE unless otherwise stated.

² Note now Ch. Ben David, ‘The Jewish Settlements in the Districts of Scythopolis, Hippos and Gadara’, *Aram* 23, 2011, 309-323.

the light of Alan Millard's illuminating survey, covering a wider period and a wider range of evidence, on reading and writing in Jesus' time.³

As regards Part One, the terminal date selected, namely 70, with the capture of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple, is perhaps open to question. Though Jerusalem was subjected to widespread and deliberate destruction in 70, we cannot be sure that Jewish settlement in the urban area did not revive to some extent over the next six decades; Werner Eck, however, justifiably asks whether a Jewish population would really have been re-established in the immediate vicinity of the camp of *X Fretensis* and (as we must suppose) its *canabae*. A similar view is presented in a major recent paper by Jonathan Price, responsible for the great majority of the entries in vol. I.1, who suggests an almost complete cessation of Jewish life there after 70.⁴ But it is possible that different conditions applied in the area around Jerusalem. Firstly, there is the papyrological evidence. The Judaeae/Palestinian section of the survey of papyri from the Roman Near East, published in 1995, certainly now requires revision and supplementation in view of extensive recent discoveries and reinterpretations.⁵ But the already quite substantial section on Judaea between the two revolts includes a significant group of Jewish documents (nos. 265-292), of which one (no. 291) is a re-marriage contract of 124, from Bethbassi in the toparchy of Herodion. More significant is the fact that no. 337 in the list (*DJD/P.Mur.*, no. 114), a Greek acknowledgement of debt, dated there to 171, has now been provisionally re-dated to the period between the revolts. This is indicated by the fact that the place of issue is given as 'Jerusalem' (Ἱεροσόλυμα[ι]), but the administrative district as 'Oreine', the toparchy to which Jerusalem belonged after the First Revolt. It is certainly significant that one of the parties is a soldier; unfortunately the name of the other is missing. Does 'Jerusalem' here refer to the still-living city — or to the *canabae*? At any rate, when Aelia Capitolina was founded, both city and toparchy were replaced, by the *colonia* and its *territorium*.⁶ We clearly must assume that the population both of Jerusalem and the surrounding area was drastically reduced as a result of the siege and capture in 70. But even if there were very little or no settlement, or re-settlement, by Jews in the city itself the papyri suggest that Jewish life continued in the surrounding area. We should thus not rule out the idea that some of the ossuaries recorded in *Jerusalem* Part One may have come from the six decades between the revolts. So the (possible) terminal date for them may be somewhat later than the title

³ A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, Sheffield, 2000; note esp. chap. 4, 'Writing in Herodian Palestine', and 5, 'A Polyglot Society'.

⁴ J.J. Price, 'The Jewish Population of Jerusalem from the First Century BCE to the Early Second Century CE: The Epigraphic Record', in M. Popović (ed.), *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Leiden-Boston, 2011, 399-417.

⁵ H.M. Cotton, W.E.H. Cockle and F.G.B. Millar, 'The Papyrology of the Roman Near East: a Survey', *JRS* 85, 1995, 214-235.

⁶ See H.M. Cotton and W. Eck, 'P. Murabba'at 114 und die Anwesenheit römischer Truppen in den Höhlen des Wadi Murabba'at nach dem Bar Kochba Aufstand', *ZPE* 138, 2002, 173-183; and H.M. Cotton, 'The Administrative Background to the New Settlement recently discovered near Giv'at Shaul, Ramallah-Shu'afat Road', in J. Patrich and D. Amit (eds.), *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region*, Jerusalem, 2007, 12*-18*, on the structure of toparchies in this period.

of the volume implies. It is also worth noting that recent archaeological studies indicate that it was only in the last decades of the first century BCE, or the beginning of the first century CE that ossuaries came into use.⁷ The period from which the several hundred inscribed ossuaries derive thus covers, at the maximum, something like a century and half, within which came the lifetimes of Jesus, Paul and Josephus, and the composition of the Gospels and Acts. The possibility that a few of them may derive from the drastically reduced Jewish population of Jerusalem between the revolts is further supported by the statement of Eusebius that all the bishops of Jerusalem up to the Bar Kochba war were of Jewish origin, with the first of gentile origin being consecrated after it, when the Jewish population of the area had been expelled, and Aelia Capitolina founded.⁸ There was therefore a Christian congregation, which included converted Jews, and some non-Christian Jewish population surely continued also. We should thus be open to the possibility that the ossuaries may reflect the last century and a half of Jewish Jerusalem, with the decisive break coming in the 130s.

These issues concerning the post 70 period are in any case marginal to the central theme of this paper, the evidence of the inscribed ossuaries themselves;⁹ but they do serve to reinforce the proposition that the material now available calls for a fundamental re-appraisal of social and economic history between the revolts.¹⁰

The importance of inscribed ossuaries lies in the fact that, as contemporary documents, they bring us so close to the life and death of individuals, and to the families to which they belonged. Moreover, they are not subject to the limitations which affect formally-carved public documents on the one hand, or legal documents on perishable materials on the other. Both of these broad categories of document have to be seen as texts which, while often vividly reflecting the history and values of individuals or groups, were not literally written or inscribed by the hands of those by whom, or for whom, they were generated, and which may have been composed either in a different language from that used in daily life by the individuals represented in them, or in a more

⁷ See A. Kloner and B. Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*, Leuven-Dudley, 2007, 119-120 (note that they also express scepticism as to the possibility that some ossuaries from Jerusalem date to after 70); J. Magness, *Stones and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, Grand Rapids-Cambridge, 2010, 145-180, esp. 151-155. Note also J. Magness, 'Why Ossuaries?', in S. White Crawford *et al.* (eds.), *Up to the Gates of Ekron: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin*, Jerusalem, 2007, 228-239, arguing that the emergence of ossuaries in the Augustan/Herodian period reflects upper-class adoption of Greco-Roman culture.

⁸ Euseb. *HE* IV.5.1-4; 6.4. On this issue, as well as in the continuing evidence for the practice of Judaism more widely in Judaea, see the forthcoming paper by Joan Taylor, 'Parting in Palestine', in H. Shanks (ed.), *How Judaism and Christianity became Two* (in press).

⁹ See the discussion in Kloner and Zissu (n. 7), 141-148.

¹⁰ See for example H.M. Cotton, 'Ein Geddi between the Two Revolts', *SCI* 20, 2001, 139-154. The interesting papers collected in D.R. Schwartz and Z. Weiss (eds.), *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History: On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, Leiden-Boston, 2012, take a wider view, and do not deal with the social history of Judaea between 70 and 132.

formal register of the same language. In short, while exhibiting the values or legal rules of the society concerned, they do so as documents designed for public display or official use.

The inscriptions on ossuaries thus belong in a very distinct category of evidence. Very few of those collected in the two volumes of the *Corpus* on Jerusalem are the work of professional stone-cutters. Instead, they are in general roughly incised on the side or lid of the ossuary, and are thus more like graffiti. Whether these incised words were literally the work of relatives of the deceased, or whether others (not necessarily Jewish) might have been employed to do this, clearly cannot be known. In any case the brevity and informality of these forms of identification of the dead derives from the private nature of the contexts envisaged for each, as one item among others placed in a family tomb, hence in a context which was not open to the public.

In the vast majority of cases this identification consists solely of a personal name, with frequently an indication of relationship to one or more members of the same family. It is in keeping with the private nature of the setting that there is very little evidence of the incorporation of details about the individual, or of any general sentiments which might have been thought appropriate to the commemoration of the dead.

There are some examples of more expansive funerary inscriptions in the assemblage of some 600 examples from (broadly) first-century Jerusalem (the great majority from ossuaries, but a few from the walls of tombs). One case (225) records in Aramaic that ‘Yosef the son of El’asa Artaka (?) brought the bones of ’mk’ his mother to Jerusalem’. Another is the well-known ossuary (98), in Greek and Aramaic, recording (as it seems) the sons of Nikanor the Alexandrian, who ‘made the gates’ (Nikanor’s Gate in the Temple). The bilingualism shown here will form a recurrent theme in this paper. A contrasting example (534), in a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew, names ‘Yehoḥana’ and then, in the next two lines, ‘Yehoḥana, daughter of Yehoḥanan, son of Theophilus, the High Priest’. This is one instance where the carefully-cut, square-Hebrew, lettering and formal lay-out might suggest the employment of a professional stone-cutter. The lay-out is as follows:

יהוחנה
יהוחנה ברת יהוחנן
בר תפלוס הכהן הגדל

Yehoḥana
Yehoḥana, daughter of Yehoḥanan
son of Theophilus the High Priest

As the editors note, this is an interesting case where the relationships (ברת and בר) are expressed in Aramaic, but the title in Hebrew: הכהן הגדל. In general, however, and particularly because a large proportion of the material consists simply of names, it is not possible to distinguish between these two languages. Might it be that this absence of a clear distinction was in fact characteristic of first-century Jerusalem society? That is to say, did the two function, at any rate as regards speech, as two variant forms, or registers, of what could seem, to outsiders at least, as the same language? Evidence from the New Testament will play a crucial part in what follows, so it will be relevant to bring in the description in Acts (21:37-22:31), first, of Paul’s dialogue with the tribune

(χιλίαρχος), and then of his speech to the people. The narrative in Acts can certainly not be taken unquestioningly as a factual record of what was done or said. But it can be read as (at least) a Christian historical novel, genuinely reflecting features of the society concerned. In this instance, the tribune, hearing Paul speak Greek, asks ‘You know Greek? So are you not the Egyptian who in recent days arose and led out into the desert four thousand men of the *sikarioi*?’ The question put into the tribune’s mouth does indeed reflect aspects of contemporary history as recorded by Josephus.¹¹ But it coalesces three different episodes which Josephus, in the *Jewish War* at least, relates in sequence: murders by the *sikarioi*; ‘interpreters and deceivers’ who led people out into the desert in the hope of receiving ‘signs of freedom’; and an Egyptian ‘magician and prophet’ who induced some 30,000 people to assemble on the Mount of Olives in the hope of then mounting an assault on the city. The tribune’s question therefore shows genuine knowledge of contemporary events on the part of the author of Acts: but we may ask whether it could have been uttered in those terms by a Roman tribune stationed in the city.

What then of the speech which Paul requests permission to make to the crowd? He addresses them (21:40) ‘in the Hebrew dialect’ (προσεφώνησε τῇ Ἑβραϊδί διαλέκτῳ). We will return later to the very significant theme of Paul’s bilingualism, and its relation to his personal history as represented in Acts. What is clear in this case is surely that ‘the Hebrew dialect’ means Aramaic, the most common language of everyday speech. It surely does so also in John’s Gospel (20:16) when Mary Magdalene addresses Jesus as ‘my lord’ (λέγει αὐτῷ Ἑβραϊστί Ῥαββουνι ὃ λέγεται Διδάσκαλε). I argued long ago that, irrespective of when it was written, or by whom, or from what theological standpoint, John’s Gospel is the one of the four which brings us closest to the society of Galilee, Judaea and Jerusalem. In this narrative, the adult Jesus makes five separate visits to Jerusalem (not just one, as in the Synoptics), for five successive festivals: 5:1, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, not named; 6:4, τὸ Πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, reflecting the Aramaic version of the term; 7:2, Sukkot/Tabernacles (ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἡ σκηνοπηγία); 10:22, τὰ Ἑγκαίνια, evidently Hanukah; and 11:55, the final Passover (τὸ Πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων). Furthermore, in John’s narrative (13-19) the Last Supper takes place on the evening before Passover, and the examination of Jesus in the *praetorium* during the morning before the evening on which Passover would begin — and hence Jews could not execute him.¹²

¹¹ Joseph. *BJ* II.12.3-5 (254-263), see *Ant.* XX.8.5-6 (164-172). The comparison between the narratives of Josephus and Acts raises the question of whether Acts, if taken to be later than *BJ*, offers a garbled or compressed version of Josephus. See S. Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, Peabody, 1992, esp. 211-213.

¹² F. Millar, ‘Reflections on the Trials of Jesus’, in P.R. Davies and R.T. White (eds.), *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History*, *JSOT*, Supp. 100, 1990, 355-381, reprinted in F. Millar, *The Greek World, the Jews and the East*, ed. by H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers, Chapel Hill, 2006, 139-163. Any such interpretations are of course acutely controversial. Note especially the forthcoming paper on the validity of the representation of Jewish customs and society in John’s Gospel by Jodi Magness, ‘Sweet Memory: Archaeological Evidence of Jesus Jerusalem’, in K. Galinsky (ed.), *Memory Perspectives in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity* (in preparation).

As regards the co-existence of languages in Jerusalem, it is John's Gospel alone which records that the inscription on the Cross was put up in three languages: Ἑβραϊστί, Ῥωμαϊστί, Ἑλληνιστί (19:21). In this instance, given the solemnity of the context, we should suppose that the *titulus* 'Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews' (19:19) will have been written in Hebrew; but Aramaic, as the language for normal communication, was perhaps what the author intended, if indeed he was conscious of the distinction.

It is precisely the notion of a possible blurring of the distinction between Aramaic and Hebrew which this initial diversion into the evidence from the New Testament is intended to suggest. We will return later to the New Testament, and particularly Acts, when discussing the nature of the links, and contrasts, between Jerusalem and the Diaspora. For the moment it will be sufficient to take it that, as the editors of the *Corpus* frequently do, it is legitimate to speak of 'Hebrew/Aramaic' in contrast to Greek.

2. Linguistic Co-existence in First-Century Jerusalem: Ossuaries

It was suggested earlier that the names roughly cut on ossuaries, and intended in most cases simply to identify the deceased, reflect ordinary language more closely than can formal inscriptions, set up in public as a matter of record. They cannot, however, be taken, clearly enough, as an accurate reflection of the speech-patterns of the population as a whole. The possession of a rock-cut family tomb, and the acquisition of stone ossuaries, whether elegantly carved or not, must be characteristic of the relatively well-off, though not necessarily of an "upper class" or "aristocracy", if indeed these terms are valid for the Jerusalem society of the time.

Allowing for that limitation, I do not see any systematic bias in the pattern of the evidence relating to those ossuaries (as it seems, about a third of all those that are known) which have inscriptions cut on them. The very fact that they derive from a range of either chance discoveries, or of controlled excavations (the latter necessarily confined to sites which were accessible for excavation), over a period of more than a century, should suggest that, as a sample, they are characterised by a high degree of randomness. They are, obviously, not numerous enough, in deriving from the population of a substantial city over several generations, to provide an adequate basis for serious statistical study. But, by the standards of the evidence which we can reasonably expect to have access to as regards any one city in the Ancient World, they represent an extensive and coherent body of material, whose characteristics must at least be seen as suggestive of the realities of social patterns. To be precise, there are 590 entries (18-607) in *Jerusalem Part One*, with 5 *addenda* (1088-1090 and 1119-1120) in *Jerusalem Part Two*. Between them, they offer very significant evidence for aspects of social and cultural history which are not pursued further here: for instance, for onomastics, made more complex and interesting in that Greek names may be written in Hebrew/Aramaic letters, and Hebrew/Aramaic ones in Greek;¹³ or for spelling, in either language; or for

¹³ For Jewish names we refer of course to T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity I-IV*, Tübingen, 2002-2011. For wider issues related to onomastics, see for example E. Matthews (ed.), *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastics*, Oxford, 2007; R.W.V. Catling

letter-forms, all the more significant as not being produced by professional stone-cutters; or for the light shed on pronunciation by the appearance of names written out in two different alphabets, one of which uses vowels.

What is offered here is something altogether less specialised, namely a broad assessment of the co-existence of languages, and the balance between languages, which this body of evidence from first-century Jerusalem suggests. Firstly, it confirms what has always been supposed by students of the period, namely the predominance of Hebrew/Aramaic. On my count, which does not claim to be precise, of nearly 600 inscribed texts (the vast majority from ossuaries, but a few from the walls of tombs), some 338 are in Hebrew or Aramaic, or occasionally a mixture of the two; Jonathan Price (n. 4 above) is thus wholly correct to stress that this preponderance is a very distinctive feature of the record from Jerusalem, as opposed to other places in the Eastern Roman Empire. But, while the normal presumption is confirmed, it is surely confirmed much less strongly than might be expected. Remembering that these are essentially private texts relating to deceased relatives, placed in private contexts, we might have expected the predominance of Hebrew/Aramaic to be considerably greater.

The primary contrast must be with the inscriptions in Greek (leaving aside two in Latin, **40** and **570**). On my count there are 190 which are solely in Greek. Some of these may be accounted for as recording proselytes (for example **181** and **551**). But there is also one proselyte (**190**) who is recorded briefly in defective Hebrew (שלם הגירת). A couple of other proselytes, as we will see below, are recorded in a combination of Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic, and as coming from cities outside Judaea; while another inscription (**238**), possibly from a fragment of an ossuary, records in Hebrew ‘Maria, the Delian(?) proselyte’ (מריה הגירת הדילסת). We cannot of course exclude the possibility that some of those recorded in Greek were gentile visitors or residents who were not proselytes.

It is clear that, on the available evidence, neither the presence of Jews who have come to Jerusalem from outside Judaea nor that of gentile proselytes offers a sufficient explanation for the fact that those inscriptions which are in Greek amount to more than half as many as those in Hebrew/Aramaic. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that we find in a familiar passage in Acts (6:1) that in the early Christian community, entirely composed of Jewish converts, there was a ‘muttering’ of the *Hellenistai* against the *Hebraioi*. The reference can only be to language, or preferred language. The seven chosen to look after the interests of the widows of the *Hellenistai* in the *diakonia* all had Greek names — and the last of them was ‘Nikolaos, an Antiochene proselyte’ (6:5). It is perhaps worth dwelling for a moment on the remarkable life-story which is briefly revealed here (and which could surely form the basis for a historical novel): origin in Antioch, migration to Jerusalem, whether before or after conversion (and circumcision); and then conversion to belief in Jesus as the Christ. The author of Acts, however, whether or not we choose to see him as a historical novelist in his own right, clearly intended to represent the other six as Jews who were not proselytes, and were identified as *Hellenistai*. That balance, a preponderance of ‘Hebrews’, but a large minority of

and F. Marchand (eds.), *Onomatologos: Studies in Greek Personal Names presented to Elaine Matthews*, Oxford, 2010. For linguistic co-existence see also Millard (n. 3).

Hellēnistai, is exactly what the figures for the language of funerary inscriptions, would lead one to expect.

That is not the complete picture, however, for the divisions reflected in Acts 6 are not characteristic of all of the funerary inscriptions. For 46 out of 600, that is approximately one in twelve, show a combination of Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic. We have already encountered one well-known example (98), Nikanor the Alexandrian. As Jonathan Price suggests, the combination of languages here can be attributed more confidently to the fact of his death and burial in Jerusalem than to his own linguistic usage. If he had died in Alexandria, his epitaph would surely have been in Greek alone. Immigration to Jerusalem is certainly a significant feature of our evidence, both inscriptional and literary, but the nature of the links between Jerusalem and the Diaspora is a complex question, which will be considered later. For the moment, it will be relevant to note that the dual-language inscriptions, that of Nikanor or his sons apart, confine themselves to naming the deceased or the deceased and the father. In short, they have the limited function of identification. No propositions about the deceased, or in relation to them, are put forward. But, if anything, that makes it more significant that there was a minority among the wealthier inhabitants of Jerusalem who, or whose families, resorted to identification in both Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic even in a private context where no element of public representation was involved.

Looking at these figures, such as they are (338 in Hebrew/Aramaic, 190 in Greek, 46 bilingual), we could set them out in a different way: of nearly 600 known funerary inscriptions, the best part of 400 contain at least some Hebrew/Aramaic, and the best part of some 250 contain at least some Greek. Of course these proportions can be dismissed as involving totals which are in themselves too small to deserve anything resembling statistical analysis, and which derive from the accidents of discovery, whether in regular excavations or not. But to dismiss them as not even *suggesting* broad patterns in the language-use on the part of the wealthier inhabitants of Jerusalem would be perverse. So we must try to examine what the implications of the material are.

What these documents clearly suggest is that, at least as regards the relatively well-off and relatively educated (or at any rate those who cut their sepulchral inscriptions after death), in first-century Jerusalem Greek was not just the language of gentile outsiders or of the Roman administration, but had an established place, alongside Hebrew/Aramaic, as a language of ordinary life. So, for the circles in which Josephus grew up, Greek, at some level, was familiar, and was not a foreign language. No doubt much linguistic and literary expertise had to be acquired before he could write a total of thirty books in Greek in Rome between the 70s and the 90s. But his mission to Rome in the first half of the 60s, when he was not yet thirty, must imply that he already possessed some fluency in spoken Greek.¹⁴ The basis of his capacity in Greek will thus have been acquired in Jerusalem, where the language will have been an established feature of his social environment. Of course the ossuary-inscriptions collected here, mainly very brief, and mainly cut in an informal style, are not enough to demonstrate fluency in either Greek or Hebrew/Aramaic, or still less to count as evidence for high-level literacy. None the less, they reveal patterns in the choice of language which are surprising.

¹⁴ Joseph. *Vita* 3 (13-16).

Of course Jerusalem was one thing, and the whole province of Judaea, from Idumaea to Galilee, another, and we await the future volumes of the *Corpus* to give some indications of what the characteristic linguistic patterns were, in different areas and at successive periods. But it is clear that it was common for the Jewish inhabitants of small towns and villages to go up to Jerusalem for the festivals. For instance Josephus records that when Cestius Gallus and his forces arrived at Lydda in the autumn of 66, he ‘found the city deserted, for the whole population had gone up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles’.¹⁵ Moreover, as indicated above, if the story of Jesus’ preaching as portrayed by John’s Gospel is veridical (as I firmly believe), then he made five successive visits for the Festivals over a period of less than two years. Many Jews, going up to Jerusalem from within Judaea and Galilee, will in any case have come from predominantly Greek cities like Scythopolis, mentioned below, or Caesarea. But even those from Jewish villages or small towns will have encountered there a world where Greek was current.

In the Jewish villages of Galilee and neighbouring areas the linguistic pattern will surely have been somewhat different, and it has often been noted that the Gospels never represent Jesus as actually entering any cities in that area, such as Tiberias, or Caesarea Philippi, or Tyre, as opposed to travelling through their territories. But there must have been a significant degree of linguistic co-existence in Galilee also. If there had been no interplay as between Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic there, how could the vivid narratives of local village life, which we find set out in Greek in the Gospels, ever have come into existence? I will not press the irresponsible suggestion with which I once shocked Hannah Cotton, that Jesus may actually have preached in Greek. But it should be noted that a careful survey by P. van der Horst, conducted before any of the *Corpus* had been published, argues for an even more marked presence of Greek there than I do here.¹⁶ We should assume that even in the villages of Galilee there will have been some familiarity with Greek. Even in these Jewish villages, let alone the literate and cosmopolitan society of Jerusalem, we have to reckon with the profound long-term effects of Alexander’s conquests.

But what of Jewish visitors to Jerusalem from further afield, including those whose bones may have been brought there after death, and above all those from the other regions of the Near East, where the predominance of Semitic languages, mainly dialects of Aramaic, as the normal vehicles of communication, is demonstrable for some areas, such as Nabataea or Palmyra, and rather too confidently presumed for the rest?¹⁷ If we

¹⁵ Joseph. *BJ* II.9.1 (515).

¹⁶ P.W. van der Horst, ‘Greek in Jewish Palestine in Light of Jewish Epigraphy’, in J.J. Collins and G.E. Sterling (eds.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, Notre Dame, 2001, 154-174. Note also the striking table of the languages (Greek, Latin, Hebrew/Aramaic, Nabataean and Samaritan) attested on inscriptions from Judaea/Palaestina provided by W. Eck, *Rom und Judaea: Fünf Vorträge zur römischen Herrschaft in Palaestina*, Tübingen, 2007, 168-169. Greek is clearly predominant.

¹⁷ For an unmatched introduction to the Aramaic documentation from different regions see the masterly survey, presentation of material and analysis by J.F. Healey, *Aramaic Inscriptions and Documents of the Roman Period*, Oxford, 2009.

look at the funerary inscriptions from Jerusalem along with other evidence, what patterns emerge?

3. Visitors and Immigrants from the Near Eastern Diaspora

The attraction of gentiles to Judaism is clearly reflected, first, in a number of funerary inscriptions which label individuals as proselytes, without giving an indication of where they came from. Two are written in Hebrew (**190** and **238**), both referred to above. Two others are in Greek. One (**181**) names Diogenes, son of Zenas, as a προσήλυτος. The other (**551**, inscribed in formal style — but of dubious authenticity) refers to a son, Ioudas(?) whose name is given in the genitive, and a father, Laganion, without making clear which of them had undergone conversion. But, as we saw in the case of Nikolaos, the Antiochene proselyte who then converted to belief in Christ, there was a natural tendency to identify the place of origin of proselytes, as of Jews from other places, whether in Judaea or outside it. Before exploring that theme, we may note that, in another link with the New Testament, Mark's Gospel (15:21) records how the soldiers leading Jesus to execution 'conscript (ἀγγαρεύουσιν) a passer-by, one Simon the Cyrenaican, 'who was on his way back from the field, the father of Alexander and Rufus, so that he should carry his cross'. If this detail is veridical, it reveals an immigrant (with two sons, one of which has a Greek name, and the other a Latin one) who is settled and engaged in agriculture or pasturage. 'Cyreneans' also appear in the list of immigrants from various areas who either have their own synagogue (or more than one?) in Jerusalem, or share with others from different areas of the Diaspora (Acts 6:9). It is no surprise, therefore, to find among the ossuaries a Greek inscription naming Gaius son of Artemon from Berenice (**20**), and another recording Philon the Cyrenean (**170**).

From the Near East itself, we see a number of cases of immigrants from named cities who have been buried in Jerusalem, and it is noticeable that these show a clear tendency both to be relatively explicit about the deceased and to use a combination of Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic. We may start with a group of three inscriptions (**410-412**) from the same rock-cut tomb, naming people from Scythopolis. We know from Josephus that in the first century, this major Greek city, lying within the province of Judaea, had a large Jewish minority, who in 66 first joined their Greek fellow-citizens in opposing the forces of the revolt, but were then rounded up by them and slaughtered.¹⁸ The three ossuary-inscriptions from the tomb show a complex mixture of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic, with the city being identified by both its Greek and its Semitic name. The first of these (**410**) exhibits a perfect balance of the two languages: אַמִּיָּא אַמִּיָּא אַמִּיָּא / אַמִּיָּא אַמִּיָּא אַמִּיָּא. In the second (**411**) the person buried is identified in both Greek and Hebrew, but then two lines in Aramaic record that the deceased had been buried by his father:

(a)	ΑΝΤΙΝ ΣΚΥΘΟΠΟΛΕΙΤΗΣ
(b)	חנין
	הבשני

¹⁸ Joseph. *BJ* II.18.3-4 (466-476); *Vita* 6 (26).

יהוסף בר חנין בשניה
אבה קבר בריה

- (a) Anin the Scythopolitan
(b) Ḥanin from Beth She'an. Yehosef son of Ḥanin from Beth She'an,
his father, buried his son

In the third (412) a bilingual inscription on an ossuary records Papias in Greek followed by the same name transliterated in Hebrew, with **הבשני** added. A second inscription repeats this, but adds in Greek 'Papias and Salom(e), Scythopolitans'.

A similar, but less complex, combination appears in an ossuary inscription (174) where the name 'Ioudan, a proselyte from Tyre', written in Greek, is accompanied by the name 'Shapira', apparently his wife, written in Hebrew/Aramaic. Much more, however, is revealed by the inscriptions (304; 308-309) of Ariston from Apamea and his two daughters, found in one of the three Akeldama burial-caves in the Kidron Valley. Though various cities in the Greek world were called 'Apamea', the major city on the Orontes in Syria is clearly the most likely one. Josephus records, that when there were major outbreaks of violence against the Jews at the beginning of the revolt, the four places where the Jewish communities were protected were Antioch, Sidon, Apamea and Gerasa.¹⁹ In the first inscription the name of Ariston appears in Greek, with underneath it on the next line ארסטון אפמייה/א, and then, below that, 'Yehuda the proselyte' (הגיר) in Hebrew. This seems to be a different person, rather than a Hebrew name taken by Ariston himself on conversion, for he appears as 'Ariston' in the ossuary inscriptions of his two daughters, Shalom (308) and Selampsin/Shelamzion (309); in both cases the names are written in both Greek and Hebrew.

If there were doubts as to which Apamea is referred to here, they are surely settled by the truly remarkable Aramaic ossuary-inscription (1119), which is included as an *addendum* in Part Two. This was one of three ossuaries which come from a private collection, and are claimed to have been found in a cave in the village of Silwan; they were published by André Lemaire, with an excellent discussion, in 2003.²⁰ Remarkably, the editors of the *Corpus* can record no further discussion of it in the interval, perhaps because of the diversion of attention to the inscription (531), alleged to come from the same cave, of 'Ya'akov, son of Yosef, brother of Yeshu'a' — James the brother of Jesus? But even if the latter inscription is genuine, as is highly uncertain, its interest depends on what is already known, rather than adding to our knowledge. The two inscriptions in 1119 are much more revealing, and give almost, but not quite, the same information about the deceased, in two lines of Aramaic in each case; for text (a) adds 'son of Išḥak' to the name of Ḥanana. In both cases the meaning seems to require that אמה in the first line is a personal name, while the same word in the second line means 'mother'. It can also be taken that the second possessive, in line 2 in each version, is redundant: the meaning will be not 'and of the mother', but 'and (who was) the mother'. The two versions follow, with the translation given under 1119, with minor variations:

¹⁹ Joseph. *BJ* II.18.5 (479-480).

²⁰ A. Lemaire, 'Trois inscriptions araméennes sur ossuaire et leur intérêt', *CRAI* 2003, 301-319.

- (a) ארנה דאמה ברת שמאיל כהנה חזנה דכנשתה דאפמא
ודאמה דחננה בר אשחק כהנה חזנה דכנשתה דתרמ
- (b) ארנה דאמה ברת שמאל כהנה חזנה דכנשתה דאפמא
ודאמה דחננה כהנה חזנה דכנשתה דתרמר
- (a) The ossuary of 'Ima, daughter of Shmu'el the priest, the ḥazzan of the synagogue of Apamea, and (of) the mother of Ḥanana, son of Iṣḥak the priest, the ḥazzan of the synagogue of Tadmor (Palmyra).
- (b) The ossuary of 'Ima, daughter of Shmu'el the priest, the ḥazzan of the synagogue of Apamea, and (of) the mother of Ḥanana the priest, the ḥazzan of the synagogue of Tadmor (Palmyra).

We may take first the implications for our knowledge of each of the two Jewish communities, of Apamea and then Palmyra, before examining those for relations between the two cities (or at least between their Jewish inhabitants).

As for Apamea, we find here further evidence for the use by Jews from there of Hebrew or Aramaic, both of them written in the standard square Hebrew letters. But here, as we do not find elsewhere, there are several elements of a Jewish-Aramaic religious vocabulary. The ossuary itself is an ארנה, while 'Ima's father is both a *cohen* (כהנה) and the *hazzan* (חזנה) of the synagogue (כנשתה) of Apamea (אפמא). Both words are written with *he* as a terminal vowel, where *aleph* would be more normal in Jewish Aramaic (or *olaph* in Syriac). But this immediately takes us forward to the uniformly Greek inscriptions of the year 392 from the mosaic floor of the synagogue in Apamea.²¹ For one of the sections of the mosaic (Syr 58) is recorded as having been laid ἐπὶ Νεμῖα ἀζζάνα καὶ τοῦ διάκονος — 'in the time of Nehemiah the hazzan and (?) deacon'. The term here retains its final vowel — it is not quite clear whether *diakonos* is intended as an explanation of the office held by Nehemiah, or (less probably) indicates a different office.²² At any rate, if it is correct to date the inscription **1119**, like the other known Jewish ossuary inscriptions from Jerusalem, to the period between the later first century BCE and the earlier second century CE, then this is the earliest attested use of the term, which does not appear in the Bible in either its Hebrew or its Aramaic form, or in the texts from Qumran, or elsewhere in Jewish inscriptions from the Second Temple period. A comparable pattern of use is visible in the case of כנשתה, meaning 'synagogue' (both terms having the same root meaning of 'gathering'), which is hardly found before Late Antiquity, when it is attested in the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud, and also appears in inscriptions from both Jewish and Samaritan synagogues.²³ In the *Scroll of Fasting*, from the end of the Second Temple period, the word is attested, but meaning

²¹ See D. Noy and H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Iudaicae Orientis (InsIudOr)* III, Tübingen, 2004, 84-113 (Syr 53-Syr 71).

²² See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.11: ἀζανιῶν τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖ διακόνων ἐρμηνευομένων (indicating that the two terms have the same reference).

²³ See Lemaire's discussion (n. 20 above), and compare J.A. Fitzmyer and D.J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts (Second Century B.C.-Second Century A.D.)*, Rome, 1978; K. Beyer, *Die Aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, Göttingen, 1983; *Ergänzungsband*, 1994; M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Judaean Aramaic*, Ramat-Gan, 2003, 57.

‘assembly’ or ‘court’ (כְּנֶשֶׁתָּא עַל דִּינָא).²⁴ From this period the two Greek terms, προσευχή and συναγωγή, are of course familiar, not least (in the case of the latter) as used in Jerusalem.²⁵ Furthermore, one of the Jewish inscriptions from Berenice (Benghazi) in Libya, dating to 55, shows the term συναγωγή being used to refer both to the assembly of the Jews there and to the building which was their place of worship.²⁶ The appearance of these two post-biblical Aramaic terms, *ḥznh dknšth*, in combination, at this early date is thus a major novelty; and, like the inscriptions recording Ariston the Apamean and his two daughters, it has implications for language-use among Jews in Apamea, in contrast to their gentile neighbours. Aramaic may of course have been common among them also, and the hypothesis that it was cannot be disproved. But there is no epigraphic or manuscript evidence for non-Jewish use of any Semitic language in Apamea or its territory before Syriac appears there in the sixth century.²⁷

Before we turn to Palmyra, it should be noted that at Dura-Europos, where again the normal language of the gentile population was Greek, the third-century inscriptions from the synagogue show a combination of Greek and Jewish Aramaic.²⁸

A very different pattern is found in Palmyra, both as regards language-use among gentiles, and as regards Jews there, and their contacts with the land of Israel. Palmyrene inscriptions, from the 40s BCE to the 270s CE, show a systematic co-existence of Greek with a Semitic language, in this case with the Palmyrene dialect of Aramaic, with its distinctive letter-forms.²⁹ For the early centuries, before the rise of Syriac in Late Antiquity, such a pattern of co-existence is unique — except for the funerary inscriptions from Jerusalem. Moreover, we have from Palmyra a Jewish epitaph recording the construction by Zēnobios/Zebadiah and Samouēlos/Shmouel of a tomb for their father, Levi son of Jacob son of Samuel. The date is Seleucid year 523, so 212, and the text is bilingual, with the Aramaic being inscribed in Palmyrene lettering.³⁰ It is perhaps worth noting that, if their father, Levi, were (hypothetically) aged fifty at death,

²⁴ For the text see Beyer, (n. 23), 354-360, para. X.

²⁵ For example Acts 6:9, and the well-known inscription of the *archisunagōgos*, Theodotos son of Vettēnos, re-edited in *Jerusalem Part One*, no. 9 (see further below).

²⁶ *SEG XVII*, 1977, no. 823; G. Lüderitz, *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika*, Wiesbaden, 1983, no. 72. See L.M. White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture I. Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Valley Forge, 1990, 298, no. 63b.

²⁷ For surveys of the geographical and chronological spread of the use of Syriac in inscriptions or for copying manuscripts see F. Millar, ‘The Syriac Acts of the Second Council of Ephesos (449)’, in R. Price and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Council of Chalcedon in Context*, Liverpool, 2009, 45-67, on pp. 51-54; S. Brock, ‘Edessene Syriac Inscriptions in Late Antique Syria’, in H.M. Cotton, R.G. Hoyland, J.J. Price and D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, Cambridge, 2009, 289-302.

²⁸ All the epigraphic material from the synagogue is collected in *InsJudOr III*, 133-176 (Syr 81-110).

²⁹ See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East (31 BC - AD 337)*, Cambridge – London, 1993, 319-336, and above all Healey (n. 17), 144-222.

³⁰ *InsJudOr III*, 76-79 (Syr 49). Another Samouēlos appears in Syr 50.

and if there was a twenty-five year generation gap, the great-grandfather, Samuel, will have been born a century or so earlier, in the period between the revolts. The fact that the Palmyrene script is distinctive (as well as notably hard to read), is very relevant, because of the Palmyrene inscriptions found in the Jewish necropolis of Beth She‘arim in southern Galilee. These include not only two epitaphs in Greek of individuals identified as Palmyrene, but also a group of six Aramaic tomb-inscriptions written in Palmyrene script. More significant still, there is a Hebrew inscription, ‘This is the tomb of Rabbi Isaac son of Mokim (BR MQYM). Sh(a)lom’, found along with a number of Greek inscriptions recording both him and (as it seems) members of his family.³¹ The Rabbi’s name is Palmyrene, normally ‘Mokimos’ in Greek. The archaeology, and dating, of all the material from Beth She‘arim will no doubt have to be re-considered before the inclusion of the inscriptions in the *Corpus*.³² But, unless the established dating proves to be seriously misleading, these inscriptions showing links with Palmyra will belong to not later than the third century. In Palmyra itself, inscriptions in Palmyrene are not, so far at least, attested after about 280.

As regards first-century Jerusalem, it is noteworthy that there are six ossuary inscriptions in Palmyrene script, making a small, but quite significant, sub-group of the total. These are, in numerical order as they appear in the *Corpus*, **79** (*InsludOr* III, App. 1, no. 10); **421** (a revised and expanded version of *InsludOr* III, App. 1, no. 8); **430**; **439** (*InsludOr* III, App. 1, no. 9); **1119**; and **1120** (a child’s ossuary, claimed to have come from the same cave as **1119**). The fact that there is a visible Palmyrene-Jewish ‘presence’ in both first-century Jerusalem and third-century Beth She‘arim is very significant.

If we look at Palmyra and Apamea together, as they appear in **1119**, the office ‘hazzan of the synagogue’, is attributed to both cities. The male persons concerned are *cohanim*, and the woman who is named here, ‘Ima, is the daughter of the one at Apamea, and the mother of the one at Palmyra. She seems to come from Apamea, and the ‘Išhak the priest’ mentioned in one of the two versions of the text, but not the other, presumably was (or had been) her husband. There is nothing to indicate whether he came from Apamea or Palmyra, or how the son came to take up his office at Palmyra.

From this one item of evidence we get the initial impression that the Jewish communities of the two cities were linked in ways which do not seem characteristic of their gentile neighbours. For, though Apamea and Palmyra were less than 200 km apart, and their territories seem to have bordered on each other, the available evidence represents them as having strikingly diverse cultures: the one a major Greek city

³¹ For these inscriptions see *InsludOr* III, App. 1, nos. 1-7 (pp. 227-231).

³² For the historical interpretation of the presence of Diaspora Jews in the burials there see T. Rajak, ‘The Rabbinic Dead and the Diaspora Dead at Beth She‘arim’, in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture* I, Tübingen, 1998, 349-366, reprinted in Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2001, 479-499. For the latest study of the necropolis and its dating, see Z. Weiss, ‘Burial Practices in Beth She‘arim and the Question of Dating the Patriarchal Necropolis’, in Z. Weiss, O. Irshai, J. Magness and S. Schwartz (eds.), *Follow the Wise*. *Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine*, Winona Lake, 2010, 207-231.

founded in the early Hellenistic period; the other a Greek/Aramaic community which emerged as such only in the second half of the first century BCE, and was marked by a distinctive social structure and economy, and by a distinctive art and architecture, and pattern of religious observance, as well as by the consistent bilingualism of its inscriptions.³³ Overall, our evidence suggests that the culture of Apamea and that of Palmyra had little or nothing in common. But, if that was the case in general, it seems not to have been true of the two Jewish communities, which shared communal institutions, evidently enjoyed family connections, and used Aramaic in conjunction with Greek.

4. Conclusion

This paper, which in content is wholly parasitic on the immense labours of the editors of the *Corpus* (both in the volumes themselves and in separate articles), and on the very high standard of recording, illustration and comment which they have achieved, can claim only to offer a few suggestions which might lead us to see the relations between the Near Eastern Diaspora and Jerusalem in a somewhat different light. Firstly, the evidence of some 600 funerary inscriptions, on tombs and above all on individual ossuaries, suggests that, among the upper strata at least, Jerusalem society was to a significant extent bilingual as between Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek. So the visitors or long-term immigrants, including proselytes, who are attested by both the inscriptions and literary sources, encountered a Jewish society which, although marked by the fundamental features of the Temple and the role of the priesthood, was less unlike a Diaspora community than we might have supposed. The well-known Greek inscription of the *archisynagōgos* Theodotos (9) surely suggests just this. The synagogue which he records having built was designed ‘for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the Commandments’ (εἰς ἀνάγνωσιν νόμου καὶ εἰς διδασχὴν ἐντολῶν). The ‘synagoga’ Judaism practised here will perhaps not have seemed alien, whether in communal structure, language or patterns of worship, to Jewish visitors from elsewhere in the Greek world. So, for instance, according to Acts 13:14-15, when Paul and Barnabas arrived at Antioch in Pisidia, they attended the synagogue on the Sabbath, and ‘after the reading of the Law and the Prophets’ the *archisynagōgoi* invited them to speak (μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν ἀπέστειλαν οἱ ἀρχισυνάγωγοι πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγοντες...).

Conversely, the limited evidence which we have suggests that Jewish communities, settled in the context of Greek cities, whether within Judaea (like Scythopolis) or outside it (like Apamea), might both be bilingual and maintain active contacts with Jerusalem, as might also that of the one city in Syria, Palmyra, whose non-Jewish epigraphy is systematically bilingual. The communities of both Apamea and Palmyra could use Aramaic in speaking of their synagogues and synagogue officials. So, might Diaspora Jews, visiting Jerusalem or settling there, in fact have contributed to the bilingualism of the city?

³³ See esp. T. Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, Stuttgart, 2002.

These hints, of course based on a limited range of evidence, might allow us to reconsider the implications of the life and career of the best-known Jewish visitor to first-century Jerusalem, Paul, as represented in Acts and in his letters. The novelistic character of the narrative in Acts has to be taken into account, and all the more so because the information which it offers on Paul's earlier life is all contained in speeches delivered by himself (or attributed to him by the author). As we have seen, he is represented as being fluent in both Greek and Aramaic. It is in the speech which he delivers to the crowd in Aramaic (Ἑβραϊστί) that he is reported (in Greek) as claiming to have been born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but 'brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel' (Acts 22:3). Later, before the Sanhedrin, he says 'I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees' (23:6), and repeats this in his speech before Festus and King Agrippa (26:4-5). 'Son of Pharisees' might perhaps be understood as 'pupil of Pharisee teachers'. But is it possible that a devout youth coming from what was evidently a well-placed Jewish family in Tarsus, already in possession of the Roman citizenship, might initially have learned his Pharisaism there? That is the implication of the most specific claim which he makes about himself in his letters. This comes in Philippians 3:5: 'Circumcised on the eighth day, from the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a *Hebraios* from *Hebraioi*, according to the Law a Pharisee'. Might not 'Hebraios', as opposed to 'Israel' (as also in Second Corinthians 11:22), mean 'speaker of Hebrew/Aramaic'? Taking these claims together, is it not possible that a youth who subsequently went to study in Jerusalem had already learned in his Diaspora community at least the elements of both Hebrew/Aramaic and of Pharisaism? And if that is how we should understand what is said of himself by Paul, should we not be open to the possibility that the Hebrew Bible was studied, and perhaps the elements of Pharisaic or other beliefs acquired, within other Diaspora communities in the Near East — or even in the wider Greek world? Such are some of the possibilities which are opened up for us by the funerary inscriptions of Jerusalem.

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