

New Greek Papyri from a Cave in the Vicinity of Ein Gedi.¹

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The two papyri presented in this article are in extremely poor shape. Nonetheless, considering the fact that the Judaean Desert papyrological sites have hitherto produced limited quantities of this precious material,² every scrap of papyrus bearing any legible script should be studied.

In November 2002, while performing an archaeological survey in the eastern part of the Judaean desert with the purpose of discovering refuge caves of Jewish runaways in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba War, archaeologist Prof. Hanan Eshel and his staff investigated a cave at Har Yishai, part of the mountain chain overlooking the site of Ein Gedi and facing the western shore of the Dead Sea (see figs. 1 and 2).³ The cave, situated about ten meters above a terrace, half way down from the top of a cliff, can only be accessed by a rope ladder (see fig. 3). Its entrance, which is rather large — about 2.5 square meters — is visible from a great distance. The land at the base of the cliff below the cave was probably cultivated in ancient times, as can be seen from the agricultural terraces, one of which is located directly below the mouth of the cave⁴ (fig. 4). While excavating this cave,⁵ Prof. Eshel unearthed two poorly preserved Greek papyri kept

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- ¹ I would like to express my thanks to Prof. H. Eshel, of the Department of the Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology (Bar Ilan University) who invited me to read and publish the papyri discussed in this paper. I am grateful to Mr. R. Porat, coordinator of the survey on behalf of the Bar Ilan University (see *infra*), who made his pictures of the area available to me, along with other important material. Thanks are also due to archaeologist Dr. A. Frumkin. I am especially grateful to Prof. H.M. Cotton, whom Prof. Eshel first consulted regarding these papyri. Prof. Cotton suggested that I edit the papyri and then offered me significant help. I owe many thanks to R.S. Bagnall, A.K. Worp, F.A.J. Hoogendijk and R. Kraft, all of whom assisted me with the reading of the papyri and made valuable remarks. Finally, I am grateful to the Jerusalem Center for the Study of Jewish History in the Light of Epigraphy of Bar Ilan University, as well as to Mrs. M. Rasovski of the Israel Museum, and to the librarians of the Achva Academic College. All remaining errors are solely mine.
 - ² H.M. Cotton, W.E.H. Cockle and F.G.B. Millar, 'The Papyrology of the Roman Near East: A Survey', *JRS* 85 (1995), 214-35 report that the entire Near East has yielded about 610 documents written on papyrus, leather, parchment, wooden tablets and ostraca. This list can be augmented by a group of papyri either unpublished or unknown ten years ago (see n. 9 *infra*). All in all, these papyri are a mere fraction, in comparison with the abundance of material found in Egypt in the course of the past two and a half centuries.
 - ³ The dimensions of the cave and its location are quite different from the other known, excavated caves in Judaean Desert sites in which inhabitants of Ein Gedi found refuge; see Eshel *et al.* (2004), 100 (next note).
 - ⁴ For a more detailed description of the cave and its findings, see H. Eshel, R. Porat, A. Frumkin, 'Findings from the Period of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt in Four Caves between Wadi Murba'at and Ein-Gedi', *Researches of Judaea and Samaria* 13 (2004), 90-101 (Hebrew).
 - ⁵ The excavation was conducted during the month of November 2002. See Eshel *et al.* (n. 4), 92.

inside a torn leather purse, together with twenty-one fragments, mostly tiny, bearing some writing. A large number of blank scraps of papyrus were also collected from the same site. In addition to the papyri, the excavation produced eleven Bar Kokhba coins, eight of which were stored in the very same leather purse. Further archaeological findings included numerous arrowheads and arrow reeds; stone, clay, and glass vessels; parts of rope baskets; and some textiles.⁶

It seems likely that the papyri were written in the ancient village of Ein Gedi, for the name is apparently mentioned in both documents (see the commentary below on Papyrus No. 1, line 5 and Papyrus No. 2, line 11). This village was situated some six miles north of the modern settlement of Ein Gedi, at approximately the midpoint of the western shore of the Dead Sea.⁷ Archaeologists assume, correctly, that the people who inhabited this cave, albeit briefly, were residents of Ein Gedi who participated in the Bar Kokhba War and were later either captured or killed by Roman soldiers.⁸ They certainly did not live to retrieve their belongings, and the absence of skeletons suggests that the dead were buried by their brethren. It is also worth noting that the cave was not visited by robbers, perhaps because of its proximity to the modern settlement of Ein Gedi.

Documents (papyri and others) discovered in Judaeen Desert sites and other settlements in Judaea, covering a period of about a hundred years (from mid-first century to 136 CE),⁹ show that a multilingual populace resided along the shores of the Dead Sea and in the province of Arabia (which was the kingdom of Nabataea until 106 CE).¹⁰ These documents, some three hundred in number,¹¹ were written mostly in Jewish Aramaic and Greek, although other languages — Hebrew, Nabataean, and Latin — are found as well. Most of the Greek texts involve Jews: the majority were written by, to, or for Jews. These documents reveal that Jews did not use the Greek language solely for conducting business transactions with Gentiles (or among themselves) or for legal proceedings, in accordance with the demands of the authorities. The Jews corresponded

⁶ See Eshel (n. 4), 94-100, esp. 94 (on the papyri) and 102 (photographs of the coins).

⁷ For this village see B. Mazar, T. Dothan and I. Dunayevsky, *En-Gedi First and Second Seasons of Excavations 1961-1962*, (*Atiqot* 5), Jerusalem 1966; D. Barag in: L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam (eds.) *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* Oxford 2000, 238-40; H.M. Cotton, 'Ein Gedi between the Two Revolts', *SCI* 20 (2001), 139-54.

⁸ See Eshel *et al.* (n. 4), 100-101.

⁹ See the texts listed in Cotton *et al.*, (n. 2), 223-33 and the further documents in *Discoveries in the Judaeen Desert* (=DJD) XXVII (Oxford 1997) and XXXVIII (Oxford 2000); Y. Yadin, J.C. Greenfield, A. Yardeni and B. Levine (eds.), *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters II. Hebrew Aramaic and Nabataean Documents*, Jerusalem 2002 (= *P.Yadin* II). Although in the latest printed edition (2001) of the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets* the Cave of Letters papyri are referred to as *P.Babatha*, in the updated online edition of the checklist [<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>], these papyri are now known as *P.Yadin*. For complete references, see H.M. Cotton, 'Documentary Texts from the Judaeen Desert: A Matter of Nomenclature', *SCI* 20 (2001), 113-119.

¹⁰ See Cotton *et al.*, (n. 2), 215.

¹¹ Cotton (n. 9), 119. This figure does not include the documents found in Masada, for which see Cotton *et al.* (n. 2), 226-27.

with their own compatriots about their own affairs in Greek¹² — a phenomenon well worth stressing.

Moreover, it is important to point out that the papyri discussed in this paper will add two texts to the corpora of Greek documents recording the use of the Greek language by Jews. The fact that Jews used Greek as well as their national language, Hebrew, to compose legal and other documents, clearly demonstrates that they were an integral component of a larger society, namely that of the Roman Near East, in which Greek was one of the formal languages recognized by the Roman authorities.

Papyrus No. 1
10.5x9.4 cm; Plate no. 1
Israel Museum Picture

Ein Gedi (?)
ca. 90 — 130 CE
no. 18275

A Land or Property Transaction (?)/ A Loan

This light brown papyrus has three of its sides torn. Only the right margin, about 1 cm, is preserved. The extant part of the papyrus sheet is composed of four vertical strips, clearly distinguished along the lines of folding. The left strip was torn off in the process of opening, and was reunited with the main body at the Israel Museum laboratory later on. Worms produced lacunae all over this papyrus sheet, particularly where the vertical folds ran. The greatest damage suffered by the text is between the first and the second strips at left, where a large lacuna is visible. The text was written along the fibers.¹³ The ink has flaked off in places, rendering large parts of the writing illegible. In addition, the right halves of lines 1-3 are written in the interlinear spaces. The following two points might account for that: (a) the papyrus sheet was of low quality, and (b) the upper right part was twisted, resulting in a disfigured text. Nonetheless, the extant parts of the text show an elegant second century hand, partly ligatured and quite difficult to read. There is a relatively irregular empty space of about 1.8 cm between lines 8 and 9, unex-

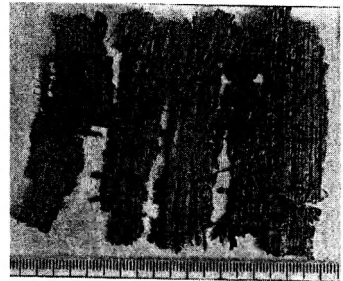


Plate 1

¹² It is apparent from the documents referred to in n. 9 supra that Semitic people, Jews and Nabateans, used Greek. They probably lived side by side in the same settlements, conducted business, borrowed and loaned money to one another, served as sureties, witnesses and guardians, and, in general, probably lived on friendly terms together. The picture that emerges from these texts is that of a multilingual society. For a discussion of the use of Greek by Jews in their legal documents in the course of this period, see H.M. Cotton, 'The Languages of the Legal and Administrative Documents from the Judaeian Desert', *ZPE* 125 (1999), 227-31.

¹³ Simple documents from the Judaeian Desert were written along the fibers; see e.g. *P. Hever* 12-13 and *P. Yadin* II 52 and 59. Double documents, however, were written against the fibers of the papyrus sheet. For a recent discussion of double documents, see H.M. Cotton, "'Diplomatics' or External Aspects of the Legal Documents from the Judaeian Desert: Prolegomena", in C. Hezser (ed.), *Rabbinic Law in its Roman and Near Eastern Context*, Tübingen 2003, 52-59.

plained as yet. Except for some inexplicable strokes of ink (on which see below), the other side is blank.

Papyrus No. 1 is probably the lower part of a document which dealt, presumably, with a transaction or a loan of sorts, or possibly the return of something related to landed property (see lines 6 and 9). Judaeian Desert contracts and other business transactions tended, in some cases, to be rather long.¹⁴ Consequently, judging by the fragmentary phrase ὁ προγεγρα[μμέν]ος (line 4), regularly written close to the end of such documents, the extant papyrus might have been no more than a fraction of the entire original text.¹⁵ The illegible marks of ink visible on the other side of this papyrus sheet are difficult to account for.

From the legible parts of Papyrus No. 1 it may be inferred that the document dealt with the ownership of land (line 6) and/or some kind of a loan to be returned (lines 7 and 10). The symbols at line 9 might indicate that the property at issue here was land. Was the loan to be paid from the property (as the text at line 6 might imply), or was the property, the land in this case, the surety safeguarding the payment of the debt in question, as in *P.Hever* 66? Several people are referred to in Papyrus No. 1. The sons of ...καίος (line 3), Ἀλεξαῖος Κατια (line 4) and Ἰκίδορος (line 10). If a connection among lines 4-6 could be established, Alexaios might have been a resident of Ein Gedi (commentary on line 5), and he was probably the owner of the property under discussion here (line 6). He may have acted as the creditor, while the sons of ...kaius may have been the debtors (line 10), if a loan was actually granted. Alternatively, the two sides could have been the parties to a land or property transaction of some sort.

Our two papyri, along with the other findings from the Bar Kokhba period in this cave, apparently belonged to the people who found refuge there.¹⁶ Consequently, Papyrus No.1 would best be dated to the last decade of the first or the early decades of the second century CE.¹⁷

1 Traces

2]...[±3]..[±3]...ϕοι[±3]ρωι

3]...[±3]καιου υἱῶν κ....πνι

4].. ὁ προγεγρα[μμέν]ος Ἀλεξαῖος Κατια ...οι

¹⁴ See e.g. *P.Hever* 64 — A Deed of Gift (49 lines); *P.Yadin* I 17 — Deposit (43 lines); I 20 — Concession of Rights (45 lines).

¹⁵ For examples of such phrases occurring at the final sections of business documents see *P.Yadin* I 11.30 (A Loan on Hypothec), 15.11 (Deposition — the end of the inner text) and 29 (the outer text); 19. 20-21 (Deed of Gift).

¹⁶ See Eshel *et al.* (n. 4), 101.

¹⁷ Babatha carried with her papers only from the period 94-132 CE; see N. Lewis (ed.), *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri*, Jerusalem, 1989 (= *P.Yadin* I), 29. Was it because she did not consider earlier documents important enough to be useful in the future, or simply that she did not have any more documents to preserve? If the Babatha archive, the largest archive among the Judaeian desert papyri, could serve as an example to determine the dates of our papyri, than Papyrus No. 1 might be set within the period of three to four decades preceding the outbreak of the Bar-Kokhba War. Alternatively, Papyrus No. 1 might have been drawn up during the war, as other Judaeian desert documents were.

- 5]ορ ...ων[±2] αὐτὸ ...αδ.. ὀφ.[±2]οτε ..
 6].οφελεν' ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μο(υ)
 7].εδιαν. κλατ.[±2 κ]αὶ ἀπόδοσο ὡς
 8 πρόκειται ...][±6]..θηω...c χρημ(Traces of ±10 letters)
 (1.8 cm vacant)
 9 ±2].. (ἄρουραι) [±3]τ.σ.. ε(¾? ἄρουραι?) πλ[±2].τιου
 10 ±2] ... εὶ [±4 καὶ] Ἰσιδωρος ὀφείλουσι ἔμοί.

 7 1. ἀποδώσω 9 Pap. 7 δ

Translation (partial)

- 3] of the sons of ...kaios ...
 4]... I, the aforementioned, Alexaios Satia ...
 5]... it ...
 6]... of (the property) belonging to me
 7]... and I will give as
 8 stated above ...] ...
 9]... arouras(?) ... 5¾ (?) arouras(?) ...
 10]... if ... and Isidoros owe me.

4 ὁ προγεγρα[μμέν]ορ: The first strip of the papyrus at left is crumpled (Plate no. 1). If it could be straightened, the lacuna in the middle of this word might be wide enough to include the four lost characters. This phrase (a personal name + ὁ προγεγραμμένος) was also written in reverse order (ὁ προγεγραμμένος followed by the name). See *P.Hever* 64 a.12; b.39-40; 69 a.14.

'Αλεξαῖορ Σατια: The only other Alexaios documented to date in Judaeen desert documents is the son of Seimaios in *P.Se'elim* 4 c.3 (DJD XXXVIII, 223).¹⁸ Could the two documents have dealt with the same person, even though they were discovered in different caves?¹⁹ For Σατια see *P.Murabba'at* 94 a.6 (DJD II); *P.Hever* 8 a.2(?), a nickname. See also Ilan, *Lexicon* (n. 18), 414, נ"טז.

5 ...αδ.: One is tempted to read [Εν]γαδῶν at this point, although the free space following the delta is too small for the two nearly missing characters: ων.²⁰ The site where the papyrus was found and the fact that it belonged to refugees from Ein Gedi, would lend such a suggestion some circumstantial support.

6].οφελεν: A form of ὀφείλω might be suggested here.

¹⁸ For this method of citation see Cotton (n. 9) 117 and the table on 119. For 'Αλεξαῖορ see T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity, Part I: Palestine 300 BCE-200 CE* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 91), Tübingen, 2002, 258.

¹⁹ The above suggestion takes into consideration Cotton's remarks on the date and place of the writing of the Se'elim documents; see *DJD* XXXVIII, 182.

²⁰ For other versions of the name of this village see Lewis (n. 17), 20.

ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μο(υ): See *P. Hever* 64.7, 25 and 65.10, 12. For the whole phrase see e.g. *P. Yadin* I 18.63-64 (ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ).

8 χρῆμ...: Is a form of *χρηματίζω* possible here?

9 ε (Ϛ ἄρουραι): The symbol standing for *aroura* is attested here for the first time in Judaeen Desert papyri. For this symbol, see A. Blanchard, *Sigles et abréviations dans les papyrus documentaires grecs: recherches de paléographie* (London 1974), 39-40. Here the symbol can be seen twice, more clearly right before the large lacuna, and less so in the interlinear space above the number 5¼. As for the symbol Ϛ indicating ¾, see *BGU* I, 352. In all, the text might be referring to a field of about 5¼ ἄρουραι (about 15,800 square meters). In comparison to the agricultural ground available and cultivated in ancient times in the vicinity of Ein Gedi, such a field would be larger than usual. In that case, the text might be dealing with several fields, and line 9 would record the overall area of all these fields.²¹

10] Ἰείδωρος: not in Ilan, *Lexicon* (n. 18). Greek and Egyptian theophoric names such as Ἰείων, Διογένης, Διούσιος, Δημήτριος are extant in Judaeen desert papyri and are included by Ilan (s.vv.). Ἰείδωρος should not have been an exception.

Papyrus No. 2
8.5x8 cm; Plate no. 2
Israel Museum

Ein Gedi (?)
ca. 90 — 130 CE
Picture no. 18274

A Document of Unknown Character

The dark brown papyrus is the largest extant fraction of the original sheet augmented by 21 tiny fragments, which cannot as yet be joined with the main part. The papyrus is broken on all four sides, leaving the lower part far wider than the upper. There are lacunas almost everywhere. The manuscript apparently suffered considerable damage, and it is impossible to determine the amount of text lost. The ink has flaked off in some places at lines 3, 4, 6, and 8, with more damage to the text. Some stains at the lower part make it virtually impossible to read that section. The text runs across the fibers.²² The extant writing shows a nice second century hand with very few ligatures. The few strokes on the upper left part of the reverse side of the papyrus do not offer any meaningful reading. Otherwise, the back side is blank.

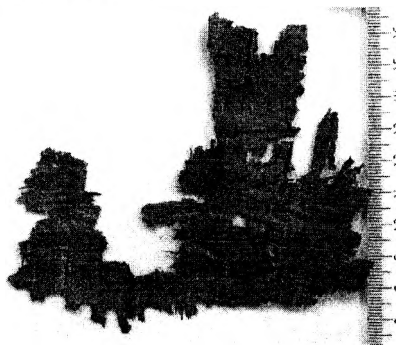


Plate 2

²¹ Prof. H. Eshel (in an e-mail dated 18 January 2005) and Dr. G. Hadas, a resident of the modern Ein Gedi (in an oral communication on 1 February 2005) tend to concur with this explanation.

²² Writing across the fibers seems to have been common to the papyri of the Seiyâl Collection;

Though characterized above as 'A Document of Unknown Character', Papyrus No. 2 shows some features of a private letter. If it is indeed a private letter, it would be the third such document in Greek among the Judaean desert papyri.²³ π]ερί ὑμῶν at line 4 might support this supposition. A somewhat similar phrase (πρὸς ὑμᾶς) is used in *P. Yadin* II 59, 4-5, one of the other two private letters of the Judaean Desert papyri. Four names can probably be reconstructed from this text: Ἐλεάζαρος (twice; lines 1, 3), Ἀνανίας (line 2), possibly a theophoric name at line 8 (...θεου; cf. e.g. Δωρόθεος, or Δοσίθεος), and the name completed as Ἰού[δακ at line 1, a section formed from the three joined fragments j+k+l. The persons behind these names have not been identified as yet, but they add further support to the idea of a private letter. Yet, since most of the names are only possible restorations, the interpretation suggested here is speculative, to a certain extent. At the moment, this is the best I can offer. At any rate, if we are indeed dealing with a private letter, the addressee might have been a resident of Ein Gedi. In any case, relying on line 5, the document seems to deal with an acquisition of some sort.

All the twenty-one inscribed fragments (see Plate no. 3) were probably integral parts of Papyrus No. 2.²⁴ The task of identification was performed mainly on the basis of the parallel networks of fibers, the color of the fragments and the papyrus, the ink, and the matching of several letters. Since the original papyrus sheet on which the document was written was quite damaged, the fragments could not be safely joined with the main part of the text. Only a few words and several single letters survived, among them a fraction of the name Ἰούδακ. Beyond that, the contribution of the fragments to the understanding of the document is not, as yet, significant. As a result, only seven of the whole group of fragments bearing some meaningful text will be transcribed here. The remaining fourteen fragments are photographed in Plate no. 3.

Papyrus No. 2 was unearthed at the same locus as Papyrus No. 1. Both were kept in the torn leather purse, along with some of the coins (see above, n. 6). It is similarly undated, and the argumentation regarding the provenance and date of Papyrus No. 1 can be applied here to Papyrus No. 2 as well.

- 1 Ἐλε]αζάρ[ου νό]υ Ἐ[
- 2 Ἀν]ανίας α.[
- 3 Ἐλεα]ζάρου .[
- 4 π]ερί ὑμῶν .[
- 5]ν κτᾶςθ[αι
- 6].ε.. καὶ κατ[α[
- 7]παι καὶ ανακ.π.[
- 8].. θεου [±2]..[
- 9]ιζι ετι.[
- 10] illegible traces
- 11]. (2.8 cm vacant) Ἐ]νγαδά ουδέν...[

see DJD XXVII 66, 238.

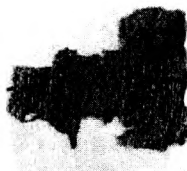
²³ In addition to *P. Yadin* II 52 and 59, republished now by Cotton in Yadin *et al.* (n. 9 supra), 351-66.

²⁴ Mrs. M. Rasovsky, director of the chemical laboratory at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem and Prof. H. Eshel are of the same opinion.

Fragments

a 3.1x2.9 cm

- 1] δεκα[
- 2]ν ἐξεε.[
- 3]α.δαιχ.[



a

f+g 4x2 cm

- 1 ±4]. κυ .[±3]ων[
- 2 ±2]λ.[
- 3]. τούτων σοι[



f+g

h 1.9x1.5 cm

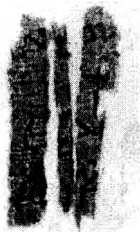
- 1].[
- 2]β.[



h

j+k+l 1.5x3.2 cm

- 1]ν ῥού[δαε
- 2]ω.ζ.ρ[
- 3]ε.δ.[
- 4] οὐκ [



j+k+l

Translation of the main part

... of Eleazar? son of ... Hanania? ... of Eleazar? ... as concerns you ... to be acquired
 ... of ...theos ... Ein Gedi (?) ... nothing ...

5 κτᾶσθ[αι Middle infinitive of the present of κτάομαι — to be acquired.

6 Following the epsilon a gamma may be resolved.

7 The pi at the end of the line might be a tau.

Fragments

a.2 ἐξέε. [Probably a form of ἐξείμι, for which see *P.Hever* 66.7: ἐξέχτω.

h.2 B. [If the number 2000 is meant, its purpose is undisclosed.

Figures

Figure 1

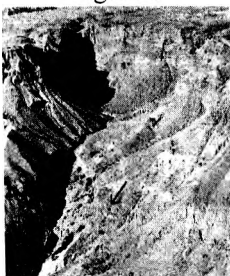


Figure 2

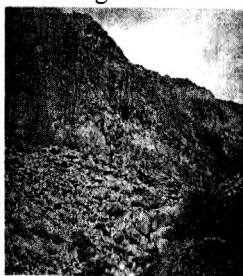


Figure 3



Figure 4



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