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(Director)

HASMONEAN AND HERODIAN PALACES AT JERICHO

Final Reports of the 1973–1987 Excavations

Volume V: The Finds from Jericho and Cypros

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ABBREVIATIONS

Measurements and Dimensions

H	height
W	weight
L	length
RD	rim diameter
BD	base diameter
PH	preserved height
PW	preserved width
PL	preserved length

Bibliography

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>ABSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
Bar International Series	British Archaeological Reports (International Series)
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
<i>JGS</i>	<i>Journal of Glass Studies</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>NEAEHL</i>	E. Stern (ed.), <i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , Jerusalem
<i>PEFQSt</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

CHAPTER 14
THE HEBREW AND ARAMAIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM
THE HASMONEAN AND HERODIAN PALACES AT
JERICHO AND CYPROS¹

Esther Eshel

INTRODUCTION

The single inscription found at Jericho, in the Hasmonean Palace, consists of four lines written by an unskilled scribe that do not form a comprehensive text and can probably be defined as a scribal exercise. The three inscriptions from Cypros are fragmentary and incomplete. Only Inscription No. 4 from Cypros (Fig. 14.4) was clearly written in Aramaic, while the others are uncertain.

INSCRIPTION FROM JERICHO

No. 1. JR AA17-809 (Fig. 14.1)

This inscription was discovered in the main

Hasmonean palace structure, the Buried Palace, in a trench excavated west of the northwestern corner of Tower AA1 (Netzer 2001:29–31, Plan 11:9/42). The inscription was written in black ink on a sherd of a storage jar, and was reconstructed from four



Fig. 14.1. Inscription 1 from Jericho

fragments. The inscription comprises four complete lines in the upper part of the ostrakon. The right and left margins are visible. As the first line appears near the upper edge of the ostrakon, and no upper margin is preserved, additional lines could have been written above it, and therefore the inscription may not be complete. In Lines 1, 3 and 4 the ink has been partially erased and smeared.

Line 1 includes the name El'azar (אלעזר). The rest of the line is poorly preserved, and does not yield a clear text. Line 2 comprises 15 letters that do not form a comprehensive text. Lines 3–4 are partial abecedaries, including some letters that appear in different forms (especially the א and ט), and may have been written by different scribes. As all the lines were written by unskilled scribes, the inscription may be defined as a scribal exercise. Based on the shape of some of the letters, e.g., a ט, and other cursive letters, such as a ק, the script can be dated to the late 1st or the 2nd centuries C.E.

Reading

אֵלְעִזָּרִי עֵקִי פִּלִּי 1
פִּתִּיקֵד ׀ אֵסֶפֶקֶטֶטֶדֶתִּי 2
אֵבְגֵדֶהוֹזֶחֶט 3
אֵבְגֵד 4

Line 1

This line begins with the name אלעזר, followed by two or three unclear letters, the last of which may be a ה, and after a small space are the letters ע, ק, and another unclear letter, then a ו or י. Following a clear פ and ל are one or two unclear letters.

א — “N” shaped, somewhat resembling the נ of Line 3, although the diagonal touches the down-strokes at their ends. The same type of א is found in Line 2 (cf. KhQOstraca 3, Line 3, in Eshel 2000:509, Pl. XXXIV).

פ — small and unclear.

ע — formed of two diagonals.

ק — a short, vertical, wavy serif that joins a horizontal “roof”. The right stroke is short and touches the “leg” (Yardeni 2000a:204–205, Types 3–4). This type is dated from the end of the 1st century B.C.E. to the mid-1st century C.E.

פ — with a straight base.

Line 2

As mentioned above, this line does not form a comprehensive text.

ת — a cursive form made without lifting the hand.

י — could also be read as ו.

ק — a very sharp vertical serif that joins a horizontal “roof”. The right stroke is short, and does not touch the “leg”. The straight “leg” seems to cross the “roof” (Yardeni 2000a:204–205, Type 3).

This type is dated from the end of the 1st century B.C.E. to the mid-1st century C.E.

ד — resembles the modern numeral 4 (Yardeni 2000a:174–175, Type 3a).

י — in its final form.

א — see Line 1.

ט — a round form, seemingly made without lifting the hand (Yardeni 2000a:196–197, Type 4b). The second example in this line was drawn slightly differently, with an emphasized loop in its left upper corner.

ו — an extreme cursive form, unusually sharp angles (cf. the ו of Line 3), made of three strokes without lifting the hand, typical of the Late Herodian period.

Lines 3–4

These lines seem to be fully preserved. Line 3 includes the first nine letters of the alphabet: ט–א, and Line 4 includes the first four: ד–א. Both lines are partially effaced, and the ink smeared.

א — the left stroke is quite long.

ד — the down-stroke is vertical.

ו — a vertical stroke.

ח — a cursive form.

ט — a cursive form (see Line 2), made of three strokes without lifting the hand from the top of the left down-stroke to the bottom of the right down-stroke.

Discussion

This inscription, apparently a scribal exercise, begins with the name El'azar, which may be the name of the scribe. El'azar is a biblical name (e.g., Exod. 6:23), and was also a Hasmonean name very

popular in the Second Temple period (Ilan 2002:7, 65–70).

Scribal exercises are well known from ancient times, occasionally comprising full or partial abecedaries, and letters sometimes appear more than once. Four similar abecedary inscriptions were written on Pithos B from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, dated ca. 800 B.C.E. (Ahituv, Eshel and Meshel 2012:102–103, Inscriptions 3.11–3.14, Figs. 5.45–46). Several abecedaries written in the Jewish script, dated between the 1st century B.C.E. and the 2nd century C.E., have been discovered in Israel. These include, for example, a scribal exercise on an ostrakon from Khirbet Qumran, dated prior to 31 B.C.E. In this case, the alphabet was not written in its regular order, and some letters were written more than once (Eshel 2000:509–512). Parts of alphabets, written on two parchment fragments, were discovered in a cave in Wadi Murabba'at, dated to the 1st century CE, and include letters written twice or three times (Milik 1961:91–92, Pls. XXVI–XXVII; Nos. 10B, 11). A late 1st-century-C.E. ostrakon bearing an alphabet written in similar Jewish script to the one discussed here, was discovered in Area E of the Jewish Quarter (Eshel 2006:301–302, IN 2). At Herodium, a round ostrakon dated to the end of the 1st century C.E. was discovered with two abecedaries written on one side and another on the other side (Testa 1972:77–81, No. 53). Remains of the beginning of another abecedary were found at Khirbet Qana, dated to the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century C.E. (Eshel and Edwards 2004).

Three texts written on parchment found at Qumran have been described as scribal exercises. Two of these fragments bear words and single letters written in various directions. One contains the remains of six words written in early Herodian script, identified by Yardeni as probably based on the text of Gen. 27:19–21 (4QExercitium Calami A, [=4Q234], Yardeni 2000b:185–186), another includes the name Menaḥem (מנחם) written three times, together with other groups of letters that do not yield entire words (4QExercitium Calami B, [=4Q360], Yardeni 2000c:297). The third text was first published by Allegro, who understood it as a medical document (4QTherapeia, Allegro 1979:235–240). Later, Naveh identified it as a scribal abecedary exercise (4QExercitium Calami C (4Q341), Naveh 1986;

2000: Pl. XVIII). It includes some nonsensical words, followed by a series of letters, some of which appear in alphabetical order. Lines 4–5 include a list of six personal names beginning with נ, and Lines 6–7 include a list of names in alphabetic order. This last inscription is the closest in content to the one discussed here, as it includes meaningless words, an alphabet and names. Additional scribal exercises have been found, among them two fragmentary ostraca at Masada (Yadin and Naveh 1989:61–62; Pl. 51, Nos. 608–609) and an ostrakon presumed to originate at Herodium (Puech 1980:118–126), containing an alphabet followed by six lines of names in alphabetic order. The two ostraca from Masada and that published by Puech all follow a fixed formula, including the same personal names from נ to ץ, while in the Qumran texts, only some of the names are parallel. This led Naveh to suggest that “the Masada ostraca were writing exercises of beginners who did not deviate from the prescribed formula, while the much more skilled scribe from Qumran permitted himself variations on the same theme” (Naveh 2000:291).

INSCRIPTIONS FROM CYPROS

No. 2. KY2-53 (Fig. 14.2)

This ostrakon was found in Room 2 (the tepidarium) on the Summit, where frescoes and a bathtub were uncovered (Netzer and Damati 2004:251–253, Ills. 288–291). It bears the remains of five or six letters written in black ink, of which only the first two are almost completely preserved and legible, while the rest are only partially preserved or faded.



Fig. 14.2. Inscription 2 from Cypros

NOTE

- 1 I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ada Yardeni, with whom I consulted regarding the readings of these inscriptions and various aspects of the script.

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