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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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with contributions by:

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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

Bibliography

NEAEHL

PL

AASOR Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research

ABSA Annual of the British School at Athens
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
BAR Biblical Archaeology Review

preserved length

Bar International Series British Archaeological Reports (International Series)

BASOR Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research

IAA Israel Antiquities Authority
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal

ESI Excavations and Surveys in Israel

JGS Journal of Glass Studies

JRA Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRS Journal of Roman Studies

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PEFQSt Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement

QDAP Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine

RB Revue Biblique

SCI Scripta Classica Israelica

ZDPV Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

E. Stern (ed.), The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy

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 ostracon. The right and left margins are visible. As the first line appears near the upper edge of the ostracon, 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 Elfazar (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 \aleph and υ), 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 υ , and other cursive letters, such as a τ , the script can be dated to the late 1^{st} or the 2^{nd} centuries C.E.

Reading

00 אלעזר 000 יעקסוֹ פלי 100 פֿתיקד אַספקסטׁדת 2 פתיקד אַספקסטֿדת 3 אבֹגדהווֹחט 4

Line 1

This line begins with the name אלעזר, followed by two or three unclear letters, the last of which may be a π , and after a small space are the letters ν , and another unclear letter, then a ν or ν . Following a clear ν and ν are one or two unclear letters.

- "N" shaped, somewhat resembling the n of Line
 3, although the diagonal touches the downstrokes at their ends. The same type of κ is found
 in Line 2 (cf. KhQOstraca 3, Line 3, in Eshel
 2000:509, Pl. XXXIV).
- 5 small and unclear.
- y formed of two diagonals.
- 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.
- 2 with a straight base.

Line 2

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

- n a cursive form made without lifting the hand.
- ; could also be read as 1.
- 7— 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.
- 7 resembles the modern numeral 4 (Yardeni 2000a:174–175, Type 3a).
- 7 in its final form.
- ℵ see Line 1.
- D 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.
- v an extreme cursive form, unusually sharp angles (cf. the v 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: א-א, and Line 4 includes the first four: א-ד. Both lines are partially effaced, and the ink smeared.

- $\dot{\lambda}$ the left stroke is quite long.
- 7 the down-stroke is vertical.
- 1 a vertical stroke.
- n a cursive form.
- v 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^cazar, which may be the name of the scribe. El^cazar 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 ostracon 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^cat, 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. ostracon 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 ostracon 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 Menahem (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 מ, 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 ostracon 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 \aleph to γ , 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 ostracon 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

Reading

]∞נ°∘נ

- ℵ a form made with three strokes; the middle stroke is almost vertical, the left stroke is short.
- 5 a short, concave "roof", a long, down-stroke that continues to a vertical base.
- b the reading of this letter is tentative, as only its lower part has survived, and it was placed too high in the line. Another tentative reading is n, which was also placed too high in the line. However, there are no remains of any left stroke. Finally, based on its placement, one might suggest reading it as a b, although no right stroke has survived either.
- j remains of a down-stroke can be seen, followed by a horizontal base, and thus it may be tentatively read as a j.

These are followed by what seem to be the remains of a broken-off letter, written with a darker and wider *ductus*, comprising a line going down from right to left. Based on the archaeological context, the script may be dated to the 1st century C.E. (see Chapter 5, this volume).

Discussion

If we read the third letter as a σ , we may tentatively reconstruct the name as Axander (אכסנדר), a variant of Alexander (אלכסנדר, Άλέξανδρος). This was the most popular Greek name among Jews (Ilan 2002:258-260; see also Cotton et al., 2010: 344-346, No. 324). If we read a ל, i.e., [...]אכל), it may be interpreted as the beginning of a Greek name, perhaps Acilius, a name mentioned in a bilingual Hebrew-Latin inscription found in a Jewish catacomb (Ilan 2008:451); see also the inscription of the governor Acilius Cleobulus, who honored the Emperor Probus (276-282 C.E.) with a statue (Ameling et al. 2011:218-219, No. 1270). Another possibility is Acholitus (ἀχόλιος), which, as noted by Ilan, is a name "considered Jewish because he is buried together with a certain Faustinus, which is a name Jews used in Italy, but it is certainly not exclusively Jewish" (Ilan 2008:232).

No. 3. KY15-30/4 (Fig. 14.3)

This inscription was found on the Summit, on an



Fig. 14.3. Inscription 3 from Cypros

earthen floor in Room 15, below a Herodian floor (Netzer and Damati 2004:241, Plan 33, Ill. 272). It includes the beginning of three lines written in black ink, with a very wide right margin. Most of the letters were written by an unskilled scribe.

Reading

1 מ∘תרׄ[2 עט[]∘∘ 3

Line 1

m—This letter is larger than the other letters. It is written with a large circle and a vertical downstroke that continues below the circle. This line seems to continue, with a small gap, through the v of the next line and onward. Following the n are the remains of an unclear letter, which begins with a stroke going down from left to right; from the starting point, another, shorter line goes down.

π — relatively clear.

i — a cursive form that may also be read as a 1 or even a long?.

Line 2

- y The regular form, which remained almost unchanged until the end of the Herodian period. Note the thick beginning of both the right, and especially the left stroke, where the scribe probably tried to add an extra stroke (see Yardeni 2000a:198-199, Type 3a).
- v a cursive form, written by an unskilled scribe; the left stroke crosses the diagonal, and the right stroke is vertical.

Line 3

Remains of a stroke going down, maybe of a 1 or a 1, followed by what may be a "roof" of a letter; perhaps a 2 can be read. To the right of this line there may have been a short, horizontal line.

Discussion

It is difficult to make sensible words of this poorly preserved inscription. One possible reconstruction of Line 2 is a word from the root איט, found in both Hebrew and Aramaic (for Aramaic, see Sokoloff 2002:402). This can be compared to an ossuary inscription found in a burial cave on the grounds of the Hebrew University, dated to the 1st century B.C.E.–1st century C.E., reading: איטור. The inscription was written inside the box, indicating that it had a practical purpose, so the word איטי was interpreted as the Hebrew verb meaning "wrapped, covered", that is, Ḥananiah's deceased body was wrapped or covered in a sheet or shroud (Ameling et al. 2010:112–113, No. 68; but see Ilan 2002:399, who interpreted it as a name).

Based on the cursive shape of the letter n, and especially that of the v, the inscription should be dated to the Herodian period. As the remains apparently have no meaning, this may also be a scribal exercise (see above, No. 1).

No. 4. KY365/1, surface (Fig. 14.4)



Fig. 14.4. Inscription 4 from Cypros

Reading

ן תריון

Translation

emmer, or kor; two [...]

- 7 a large final form, separate from the rest of the line.
- π the π is partly smeared with ink, and its left part is unclear.
- irregular base, and it is the work of an unskilled scribe. It may also be a 1.
- , a "hook" type, written without lifting the hand.
- 7 a final form with a long curved "leg", its serif, if there was one, can hardly be seen.

Discussion

All that remains of this text is one Aramaic word תרין (the masculine form of the number 2), written in Herodian script, preceded by the letter 7. This ostracon may be part of a docket referring to either emmer or *kor*.

In two Aramaic papyri from Egypt, dated to the end of the 5th century-beginning of the 4th century B.C.E. — one a fragmentary account of grain and oil (Porten and Yardeni 1993:236–238, C3.18), the other a disbursement of emmer and lentils (ibid.:250–253, C3.26) — the word emmer (cur) is abbreviated several times as \mathfrak{I} , e.g., \mathfrak{I} \mathfrak

לזרע בחקלא קרבתא ש כ 3 באחרתא כ 35

"For sowing in the field: immediately b(arley), k(ors), 3; later k(ors), 35" (Yardeni 2000a:120). In some cases, the \supset is written in the middle form, but sometimes in the final form, as in our ostracon (e.g., an ostracon from Tell el-Far^cah, see Naveh 1985:114–115, No. 1, Pl. XIX).

NOTE

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readings of these inscriptions and various aspects of the script.

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