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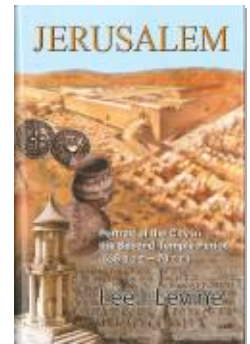
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Chapter 7

Jerusalem in the Greco-Roman Orbit: The Extent and Limitations of Cultural Fusion¹

We have already had occasion to note the profound impact of the Greco-Roman world on Herod's building projects in Jerusalem as well as the influence of Hellenistic culture on his court life. Herod's non-Jewish advisers (some of whom were accomplished savants in their own right), the use of Greek names in his family, and the Greek education he gave his sons are only a few examples of his deep commitment to Greco-Roman civilization. This was no less powerful a force in shaping his priorities than his loyalty to its political system, and both were undoubtedly interrelated.

There are many other indications of Jerusalem's acculturation to the surrounding Greco-Roman world and, taken together, these accommodations played a major role in shaping the city's life during the next hundred years.² Evidence of outside influence is apparent in the material (residential buildings of the Upper City, funerary remains), institutional (*sanhedrin*, *polis*), and cultural (language and religious pursuits) spheres; together they attest to Jerusalem's active participation in the larger Greco-Roman cultural world.³

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1. In this chapter, we shall address both the Herodian and the post-Herodian eras down to the destruction of the city in 70 C.E. While the adoption of Hellenistic models was already evident in the Hellenistic and Hasmonean eras, it is quite clear that Herodian rule provided this process with an additional and significant impetus. In many ways, this process continued down to the destruction, fueled later on by other forces as well (see below). For a general survey of this topic, see Avi-Yonah, "Jewish Art and Architecture," 250–263.
 2. On the phenomenon of acculturation and its complexities, see the discussions of Wachtel, "L'acculturation," 124–146, and Bee, *Patterns and Processes*, 94–119.
 3. What follows is to be balanced by the realization that many facets of Jerusalem society remained largely Jewish, intentionally or unintentionally avoiding emulation of Hellenistic mores. On some of the relatively unaffected components of Jewish society in late Second Temple Jerusalem, see below. Herod himself placed clear limitations on outside influences; with rare exception, he avoided figural art on his coins and public edifices (the main deviation being the eagle incident at the end of his life

The Jewish response to outside influence, as alluded to already on several occasions, was invariably complex—a mixture of adoption, adaptation, imitation, and rejection. Some Hellenistic models were introduced into Jerusalem with minimal adaptation, often involving only the removal of any traces of figural art. Thus, for example, the complaint by some Jerusalemites against Herod's theater lay in their opposition to images, and the protesters peacefully dispersed upon learning that none indeed existed there. Moreover, Jerusalem's residential quarters contained many examples of Hellenistic-Roman decorative models, to the exclusion of images.

The adaptation of Hellenistic cultural tools, such as language and forms of exegesis, is likewise in evidence, thus enabling the city's inhabitants to communicate within the wider Roman context (language) while enhancing their opportunity to plumb their literary and religious traditions (from biblical to oral) in greater depth (exegesis). Other forms and patterns were borrowed and subjected to similar adjustments (e.g., funerary customs and political institutions) so as to render them appropriate for a Jewish context. Examples of these processes are presented below, with an eye toward tracing the nature and extent of Hellenistic-Roman cultural penetration into Herodian and post-Herodian Jerusalem. Just as these influences reconfigured the city, so they were revamped to meet the needs and religious sensibilities of the local Jewish population.

Both Hellenistic and Roman culture affected Judaea at one and the same time. Examples of the former include the widespread use of Greek, the introduction of the theater and hippodrome, adoption of the *polis* model, funerary monuments, and a plethora of Greek architectural styles. The influence of the latter, Roman, world is reflected in the appearance of the amphitheater with its gladiatorial and animal spectacles;⁴ the Roman-type theaters, baths, basilica, and forums; as well as the widespread use of aqueducts, vaults, arches, concrete, ossuaries, and the *opus reticulatum* building style.

The influence of Roman material culture on the East is not unusual in and of itself. What is unique in the case of Herodian Jerusalem is its timing, fully a century or two earlier than elsewhere. That such influence is so abundant before the late first and second centuries C.E. can be accounted for only by Herod's intense commitment to integrate his kingdom into the Roman world and by his strong ties to

[*Ant.* 17.6, 2, 149–154]). There are no traces of human or animal images in any of his many palaces and fortresses (with the exception of animal-shaped fountains in his Jerusalem palace, as noted in *War* 5.4, 4, 181; see above), nor are there any traces of idolatry. The temples he built to glorify the emperor (e.g., in Sebaste and Caesarea) were intended for a gentile population. Moreover, Herod was equally strict when it came to intermarriage; when his sister Salome wished to marry Syllaeus the Nabataean, Herod insisted that the latter first convert to Judaism, i.e., become circumcised (*Ant.* 16.7, 6, 225). On the possible Nabataean influence on Jerusalem's architecture, see Barag, "New Developments," 38–47.

4. On these contexts as reflections of Roman values and identity, see Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 1–54.

Rome itself. In general, Romanization of the East was less far-reaching and disruptive than in the West. The East had already been Hellenized and thus there was little or no cultural vacuum on any level. As a result, Romanization proceeded at a much slower pace, always taking into account Eastern mores, e.g., the regnant Greek language and the indigenous religious sensibilities, as was the case with the Jews.

Indeed, much has been written on the dual influence of Hellenism and Romanization at this time. The relative impact of these two cultural streams on the Greek East has fascinated historians for generations and the debate continues up to the present.⁵ However, such a distinction is not always clear-cut, as the Romans themselves adopted Hellenistic culture and allowed it to flourish, as, for example, in the continued use of Greek throughout the East.⁶ The Greek cities of the East, for their part, were not adverse to utilizing Roman material techniques and institutions.⁷ In Jerusalem, as elsewhere, we find—rather than a clash of cultures—a coexistence of Greek, Roman, and local elements. Furthermore, each of these components was far from monolithic. There were many different forms of Romanization, and the same holds true for the Hellenistic as well as Jewish components.⁸ Herod used this mixture of styles, patterns, and institutions to reconfigure Jerusalem as an invigorated Jewish political and religious center integrally related to the Hellenistic East and the *pax Romana*. Local traditions and cosmopolitan practices coalesced to give the city a distinct Jewish character and a marked universal dimension.⁹

The Temple

As noted in Chapter 6, Herod used a well-known Hellenistic model when constructing the Temple Mount. *Temene* with artificial platforms, porticoes, basilicas, and temples are known from North Africa, Syria, and Asia Minor; this type of com-

5. See, e.g., the studies of Levick, *Roman Colonies*, and Woolf, “Becoming Roman,” 116–143, and “Beyond Romans and Natives,” 339–350, and the bibliographies in each.

6. The complexity of acculturation is likewise evident in the fact that Rome itself was “colonized” by foreign influences—at first by Greek culture, then by Eastern cults, and finally by the imposition of the Syrian Baal into the city by the emperor Elagabalus in the third century.

7. The literature on this topic is of epic dimensions. See, for example, Dodge, “Architectural Impact,” 108–120; Woolf, “Becoming Roman,” 116–143; Yegül, “Memory, Metaphor, and Meaning,” 133–153; and the studies focusing on Greece and Asia Minor in Macready and Thompson, eds., *Roman Architecture in the Greek World*. On Herodian Judaea, see the contributions in Fittschen and Foerster, eds., *Judaea and the Greco-Roman World*.

8. In addition to the references in n. 7, see also Millar, “Greek City,” 232–260; and for a comparison with Gaul in the West, see Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 1–23, 238–246. On the Roman influence on Herod, see Geiger, “Herodes Philorhomaioi,” 75–88, and “Language, Culture, and Identity,” 237–239.

9. Ward-Perkins’ comment about Augustan Rome seems equally applicable to Herodian Jerusalem: “At no moment in the history of Roman architecture was the Roman genius for adopting, adapting, and taking creative possession of the traditions of others to play a larger part than in the Augustan Age” (*Roman Imperial Architecture*, 28).

plex, sometimes referred to as a *Caesareum*, is described by Philo and other Greco-Roman authors of this period.¹⁰

Other aspects of the Temple complex likewise reflected Hellenistic influence. Architectural components found in archaeological excavations around the Temple Mount conform to regnant Greek usage; the columns, capitals, basilica plan, lintels, and gates all follow Classical or Hellenistic models. The “service” rooms, or cells, in the Temple edifice, along with a connecting corridor (*mesibbah*), are elements found in other temples as well.¹¹ Indeed, there should be nothing particularly unusual about such borrowing. As mentioned, Jews never possessed an independent architectural tradition of their own, and their public structures repeatedly imitated models then in vogue in the wider contemporary world. It is well known that Solomon’s Temple was patterned after a typical Phoenician temple plan.¹²

The fact that Herod’s Temple Mount functioned as the city’s forum or agora, where a plethora of judicial, political, social, economic, and cultural activities took place, is also similar to other Greco-Roman *temene*. Moreover, there are a number of specific parallels between pagan temple areas and the Temple Mount. For instance, in many sacred pagan precincts a variety of objects were placed on the roof (disks, spikes, etc.) to keep birds away; the Jerusalem Temple also had a “raven-scarer” for the same purpose (Josephus describes them as sharp golden spikes).¹³ Furthermore, the Temple Mount was planned so that the main approaches to the sacred precincts were designated for one-way traffic, and this was frequently the case in pagan contexts as well.¹⁴ In Jerusalem, the access points to the Temple’s courts were via the two southern Huldah Gates; the Mishnah relates that the one on the right, i.e., the eastern gate, was used for entering, while the one on the left, the western gate, was for exiting,¹⁵ and archaeological finds seem to confirm this arrangement. As noted, a monumental thirty-step staircase was found in front of the western Huldah Gate and another, narrower, set of stairs came to light in front of its eastern gate. The latter gate was for entry and thus its stairs were not very wide, while the western gate, used for leaving at the end of an event or ceremony, required a much wider set of stairs (Fig. 68).

Certain religious customs and practices known to have been conducted in Greek and Roman temple precincts also appear in the Jerusalem Temple and pre-

10. See Ward-Perkins and Ballance, “Caesareum at Cyrene,” 137–194, and Adna, *Jerusalem Temple*, 32–50.

11. See Patrich, “*Messibbah*,” 226–229.

12. Isserlin, “Israelite Art,” 38–40.

13. *War* 5.5, 6, 224, and *M Middot* 4, 6. See Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 172–177.

14. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 166–167. On the organization of a stairway on the Temple Mount similar to stairways in pagan temples by introducing smaller, intermediate steps to facilitate ascent and descent, see Jacobson and Gibson, “Monumental Stairway,” 169.

15. *M Middot* 2, 2.



Figure 68. The Temple Mount viewed from the south, showing the two Huldah Gates and their accompanying staircases (Holyland Hotel model).

sumably were influenced by them. For instance, the weaving of temple-related fabrics by virgins was a known practice in non-Jewish sanctuaries as well as in the Jerusalem Temple.¹⁶ Moreover, the ceremony of bringing the first fruits (*bikkurim*) to Jerusalem involved a festive procession into the city with the decorated horns of animals, particularly oxen—a practice well known in pagan contexts as well:¹⁷

Those living near [Jerusalem] brought fresh figs and grapes, and those living far away brought dried figs and raisins. Before them went an ox, with its horns overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive-leaves on its head. The flute was playing before them (i.e., the procession) until they came near the city.¹⁸

Another example of parallels between the Jerusalem Temple and pagan temples is that of the postbiblical *Simhat Bet Hasho'evah* (the Water-Drawing Festival) held during the Sukkot holiday. These festivities, characterized by all-night merrymaking that lasted for several days, included singing and dancing, juggling and acrobatics; mass processions (often with torches) of people carrying an assort-

16. T *Sheqalim* 2, 6 (ed. Lieberman, 207), and Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 167–169. See also Ilan, *Mine and Yours*, 139–143.

17. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 144–146.

18. M *Bikkurim* 3, 3.



Figure 69. Architectural and artistic details from the Royal Stoa and Temple walls.

ment of items, including branches (willows); and water libations. Many of these elements have striking parallels in contemporary pagan holiday celebrations; clearly some sort of borrowing had taken place here.¹⁹

Thus even Jerusalem's most sacred edifice exhibited influences from the outside world. While this was most pronounced in its physical and material dimensions, it was nevertheless present in its ceremonies and customs as well. Even the particularistic practice in the Jerusalem Temple, such as the exclusion of the "other" (i.e., non-Jews) from the sacred precincts, was similar in many pagan settings. In Egypt, for example, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Bedouins, among others, were forbidden to enter certain temple precincts.

Residential Quarters

Not only was Herod attracted to the domestic material culture characteristic of the wider Hellenistic-Roman world when building his palaces, so, too, were the wealthy classes of Jerusalem. Excavations in the city's Jewish Quarter conducted after 1967 revealed remarkable evidence of the extent to which this stratum of Jerusalem society imported and adopted the regnant artistic styles and material goods from the surrounding world (Fig. 69). Many parallels have been drawn to Italian prototypes, especially the Second Style.²⁰ Among the remains most indicative of outside influence are monumental Corinthian and Ionic capitals; large bases and column drums; mosaic floors featuring geometric and floral designs, often with rosette patterns; frescoes resembling those found at Pompeii and featuring rectilinear, geometric, curvilinear, and floral (a garland motif with leaves, pomegranates, and apples) patterns; architectural designs (e.g., imitation

19. Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 145–148.

20. See, e.g., Laidlaw, "Tomb of Montefiore," 33–42.



Figure 70. *Terra sigillata* ware found in the Upper City.

windows); colored panels (including one depicting fluted Ionic columns and a schematic Doric frieze); imitation marble striations; and stucco moldings made to resemble ashlar blocks. Also found were a glass decanter with the Greek inscription “Ennion made it” (a reference to a famous glassmaker from Sidon), imported Western and Eastern *terra sigillata* (the former produced in Italy, the latter in the eastern Mediterranean), very fine (or thin-walled) ware exemplified by an exquisite painted bowl, Italian amphorae (wine jars inscribed with Latin “trademarks”) and other wine flasks, and perfume bottles (Fig. 70).²¹

It should also be noted that Herodian pottery remains from Jericho, from Herod’s desert fortresses, and from Jerusalem are strikingly different from their Hasmonean predecessors in the quantity and quality of imported wares. Whereas Hasmonean society had relied, for the most part, on local production, it seems that Herod and his upper classes preferred foreign-made ceramics. Thus the material evidence clearly indicates that the wealthy residential neighborhoods of the Upper City of Jerusalem were well ensconced in the wider Greco-Roman material culture (see below).

Funerary Remains

The tombs that dotted the Jerusalem landscape are invariably of Hellenistic design but without figural depictions. The *tholos* of Absalom’s tomb and the pyramid of Zechariah’s tomb are classic Hellenistic architectural components. To these should be added the Tomb of the Kings, associated with Helena of Adiabene, the suggested reconstruction of which also follows Hellenistic patterns.²² The smaller, less grandiose, tombs in the vicinity of Jerusalem likewise boast impressive façades (e.g., the so-called Sanhedrin tombs, Umm el-‘Amed, and the Eshkolot tomb) pat-

21. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 81–202. On the evidence from Herod’s Masada, see Cotton and Geiger, “Economic Importance,” 163–170.

22. See Kon, *Tombs of the Kings*, and Finegan, *Archeology of the New Testament*, 314–318.



Figure 71. The façade of the Sanhedrin tombs in northern Jerusalem.

terned after Hellenistic models (Fig. 71).²³ All of these sites use the Greco-Roman style of columns, capitals, friezes, cornices, and architraves; and similar monuments have been found in abundance in Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, and Asia Minor.²⁴ As noted, the widespread use of burial cavities (*kukhim* or *loculi*) in this period had its origins in Egypt and reached Judaea during the Hellenistic era.²⁵

The decorative motifs of these tombs, as well as those adorning the limestone sarcophagi discovered in some of them, include grapevines, clusters of grapes, rosettes, and a variety of geometric patterns and resemble motifs found elsewhere in the East and in Rome.²⁶ Focusing on the scroll ornamentation found on many Jerusalem sarcophagi (the Nazirite tomb on Mount Scopus, the Dominus Flevit necropolis on the Mount of Olives, the Tomb of the Kings, and Herod's tomb west of Mount Zion), Mathea-Förtsch²⁷ identifies several styles and motifs that already appear in first-century B.C.E. Italic art. She thus postulates that "the finds in Palestine are comparable in use, and due to this and to the chronological similarity, an influence of funerary architecture of late Republican and early Imperial Rome seems probable." Kloner²⁸ suggests that the amphora motif on ossuaries may well derive from Hellenistic models. On a broader scope, Foerster notes certain structural resemblances between Roman and Jerusalem sarcophagi (e.g., a recess and ledge, or "cushion," for the head); he further remarks that decorative motifs such as the rosette, garland with flowers and fruit, acanthus scroll, and wreath have

23. See *NEAEHL*, II:750–756.

24. Even some of the decorative elements, such as the rosette, may have their roots in the Greco-Hellenistic world; see Elderkin, "Architectural Details," 518–525.

25. See Peters and Thiersch, *Painted Tombs*, 81–85. Many of the above-noted components were also to be found at funerary sites in western Samaria and southern Judaea. See Magen, "Tombs," 28–37.

26. Avi-Yonah, *Art in Ancient Palestine*, 125–145.

27. Mathea-Förtsch, "Scroll Ornamentations," 177–196; quote from p. 179.

28. Kloner, "Amphorae with Decorative Motifs," 48–54.

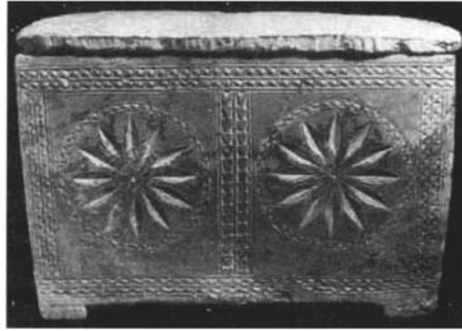


Figure 72. A decorated ossuary from Jerusalem.

their roots in Classical and Hellenistic funerary art. Nevertheless, in summarizing his findings, Foerster states, “[I]t may be said that the funerary art in Judea of the first half of the first century CE is firmly rooted in Hellenistic art and architecture, though some Roman connections can complement the picture.”²⁹

Our discussion here focuses on another type of funerary remains, one that first appeared under Herod and dominated the Jerusalem scene down to the city’s destruction. It is generally agreed that the most unusual—as well as the most ubiquitous—of burial finds from this period are ossuaries, small stone coffins that were used for secondary burials (Fig. 72). First, the corpse was placed in a *kokh* or on a shelf; about a year later, when the flesh had decayed, the bones were gathered and placed in an ossuary. Special burial customs were developed for this occasion, and a society for the gathering of bones was said to have existed in Jerusalem.³⁰ Secondary burial in ossuaries was unique to the Jerusalem region; it was practically unknown elsewhere in the Roman East and in other parts of Judaea as well. Introduced during the Herodian era, in the last third of the first century B.C.E. and peaking in the first century C.E., this custom began to disappear after the destruction of the Temple, leaving only scattered remains of ossuaries from the second to third centuries C.E.

This type of secondary burial cannot be associated with any one particular group or class in Jerusalem society, but appears to have been adopted by a broad spectrum of the city’s residents. Ossuaries were found in every part of the city’s necropolis, and in the elaborate as well as the simple burial caves. Well over two thousand ossuaries have been found to date, in contrast to less than a few dozen sarcophagi. About one third of the ossuaries were decorated, while most were plain, devoid of

29. Foerster, “Sarcophagus Production,” 295–310; quote from page 309.

30. *Tractate “Mourning” (Semahot)* 12, 5 (ed. Zlotnick, 81). It is not clear whether this association (*havurah*) served the city generally or only the local Pharisaic community. On secondary burial customs, see *Tractate “Mourning” (Semahot)* 12–14 (ed. Zlotnick, 158–169). On a number of Greek parallels to Jewish burial customs in general, see Zlotnick, *Tractate “Mourning,”* 17–27, and Lieberman, “Some Aspects of After-Life,” 495–530. See also the extensive, though somewhat outdated and idiosyncratic, discussion of Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, I:110–133.

any kind of ornamentation. The more lavishly decorated ones were usually embellished with geometric patterns, and less frequently with other depictions such as doors, a building façade, columns, goblets, or a tree. In not a few cases the name or names of the deceased were engraved on the ossuary, and in many instances the ossuary contained the bones of several individuals.

Given the popularity of ossuaries for secondary burial in Jerusalem, questions arise regarding the origin and significance of this custom. Two very different approaches have been suggested. One posits that ossuaries were essentially an internal, Pharisaic, development; their use in secondary burials evolved in response to the growing belief in the resurrection of the body and that a deceased person's fate was ultimately decided after twelve months, when the flesh decomposed and the bones were ready for final interment. Ancient sources—especially later rabbinic literature—attribute these two beliefs to the Pharisees and later to the rabbis, and it is thus posited that the practice attests to the dominant influence of the Pharisees in late Second Temple Jerusalem.³¹

This suggestion, however, is problematic on a number of counts. It would have us assume that all (or almost all) Jews during this period were Pharisees, or at least had accepted this central Pharisaic doctrine, an assumption that has generally been rejected by historians over the last generation.³² Moreover, this theory does not account for the dating of the appearance and disappearance of this custom: Why was it introduced only under Herod (one hundred years after the first appearance of the Pharisees!) and, more crucial, why did ossuaries disappear precisely at the time when Pharisaic (now rabbinic) influence was on the rise (i.e., following the destruction of the Temple). Moreover, if this practice is to be associated with the belief in individual resurrection and immortality, as is claimed, why do many ossuaries contain more than one set of bones?³³

An alternative explanation posits that the use of ossuaries originated in a non-Jewish context. The Romans used similar small stone boxes—along with urns—for their secondary burials; following cremation, the ashes were placed in these receptacles.³⁴ Although the use of such ossuaries in Jerusalem for secondary burials most certainly required some adaptation, viewing this Roman practice as the inspiration for the introduction of ossuaries into the city can best explain the timing of the burial custom. As noted, the practice first appeared in the Herodian

31. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs (1)," 171–177; 229–235; "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs (2)," 43–53; "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs (3)," 109–119; *Catalogue*, 53–59; and "Ossuaries and Ossilegium," 191–205.

32. See E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 380–412; Goodblatt, "Place of the Pharisees," 12–30; and see below.

33. See E. M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries*, 85–89; Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 248–253; and Regev, "Individualistic Meaning of Jewish Ossuaries," 39–49. See also Fine, "Why Bone Boxes?" 38–44.

34. Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 50. See also Lieberman, *TK*, V:1235.

era, when a range of Roman practices, mediated through Herod, had a significant impact on the city. The use of ossuaries is likewise attested for Ephesos in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. and reveals the influence of western artistic motifs.³⁵ This explanation regarding Jerusalem also accounts for the timing of this practice's disappearance. Once Jerusalem was destroyed, so, too, were the social and cultural contexts that had nurtured it, not to mention the stone industry that had sustained it. Moreover, in the course of the first and second centuries C.E., as Rome began moving from cremation to primary burials in sarcophagi, the Jews also eschewed ossuaries and adopted a single primary burial, as evidenced in the remains from the Bet She'arim necropolis in the Lower Galilee.³⁶

If the above line of argument is granted, then the introduction of ossuaries may be construed not as a statement of a particular set of Pharisaic religious beliefs but as a Roman practice that Jerusalem society borrowed and adapted. It may be assumed that this process commenced with the upper classes but soon filtered down into other social strata as well.³⁷ Adopting this pagan model required several adjustments: the depositing of bones and not of ashes, waiting about twelve months for the flesh to decompose before transferring the remains, and accompanying this act with a number of burial customs appropriated, *inter alia*, from the primary Jewish funerary setting. It is interesting to note that a number of ritual practices associated with Jewish secondary burial find parallels in Rome, including wrapping the ashes in a shroud, using perfumes and fragrances, preparing a meal, and creating special burial societies.³⁸ Thus, if our explanation regarding the origin of ossuaries is granted, it would provide further evidence for the influence of Roman practices on what was to become a very central Jewish funerary custom in late Second Temple Jerusalem.

Political Institutions

Besides the Herodian kingship, the Jerusalem political scene under Rome appears to have been significantly influenced by other Greco-Roman frameworks as well—namely, the *polis* form of city government and the Hellenistic *synedrion*. Although the implications of their presence in Jerusalem are notable, assuming their very existence requires some explanation.

35. See Cormack, "Funerary Monuments," 148.

36. *NEAEHL*, I:241–248. See also B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim*, and Avigad, *Beth She'arim*.

37. On the correlation between the use of ossuaries and the upper classes, with their high standard of living, see Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 248–269, esp. 262–269; as well as Fine, "Note on Ossuary Burial," 69–76.

38. Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 43–55. See Zlotnick, *Tractate "Mourning"*, 80–88, 158–169, and generally Lieberman, "Some Aspects of After-Life," 506–513.

A wide range of sources—rabbinic literature, Josephus, the New Testament, and the Roman historian Cassius Dio—allude in one way or another to the presence of *polis*-related political offices such as *archons* (rulers) and a *boule* (city council) in Jerusalem. Josephus also speaks of a *demos*, the citizens of the city. The single most telling source in this regard is an official letter from the emperor Claudius, quoted by Josephus, in which he addresses “the *archons, boule*, and *demos* of Jerusalem.”³⁹ Another Jerusalem institution associated with the *polis* is the “ten leading men” (*dekaprotai*),⁴⁰ and several sources note the existence of a *bouleuterion* (council building) in the city,⁴¹ together with members of a *boule*⁴² and a *boule* secretary.⁴³

A *polis*-like municipal structure was not, of course, new to Hellenistic-Roman Palestine. Most pagan cities were probably organized as *poleis* (Gaza, for example, as early as the second century B.C.E.),⁴⁴ as well as at least one Jewish city, Tiberias,⁴⁵ and quite likely Sepphoris as well. It is not clear when the *polis* system was introduced into Jerusalem; opinions range from the time of Herod to that of Agrippa I.⁴⁶

The scholarly consensus regarding the existence of a Jerusalem *polis* was challenged by Tcherikover,⁴⁷ who claims that each of the above-noted sources is flawed in one way or another and, if indeed any of these institutions existed, they were a far cry from the Greek *polis* model. He assumes that the authority of the Jerusalem *sanhedrin* was broad, incorporating many of the functions associated with the *polis*, and that its jurisdiction extended far beyond the Jerusalem city limits. Moreover, Tcherikover notes that there is no indication in any first-century source of an election, change of officials, or regular meetings of the *demos*, all of which were customary in a Greek *polis*. None of the educational institutions usually associated with a *polis*, such as the gymnasium or *ephebeum*, is ever referred to, nor does there seem to have been a distinction between the functions of the *boule* and the priesthood. Josephus, for his part, appears inconsistent in his use of terminology, thus raising serious doubts regarding his overall reliability in this regard. Tcherikover suggests that Josephus may have used the Greek terms solely for the benefit of his Greco-Roman readers and thus concluded that Jerusalem had traditional Jewish institutions (a *sanhedrin*, priesthood, etc.) dressed, at most, in a Hellenistic garb, i.e., bearing the labels of Greek institutions.

39. *Ant.* 20.1, 2, 11.

40. *Ibid.*, 20.8, 11, 194; see also *War* 5.13, 1, 532, where fifteen are noted.

41. *War* 6.6, 3, 354, and *Y Yoma* 1, 1, 38c.

42. *War* 2.17, 1, 405; *Y Ta'anit* 4, 5, 69a; *Mark* 15:43; and *Cassius Dio*, 66, 6, 2.

43. *War* 5.13, 1, 532.

44. *Ant.* 13.13, 3, 364.

45. *Life* 12, 64, and *War* 2.21, 9, 641.

46. See, e.g., Zucker, *Studien*, 76–79.

47. Tcherikover, “Was Jerusalem a ‘Polis’?” 61–78.

Despite this critique, the case for the existence of a Jerusalem *polis* cannot be easily disregarded. Not only does a wide variety of sources use specific terms that relate to a *polis*, but Claudius' letter cannot be dismissed as an error on the part of the emperor, as a Josephan misinterpretation, or as the latter's willful misrepresentation. Josephus' critics would have lambasted him for such a misrepresentation. Some of Tcherikover's assumptions concerning the existence of traditional Jewish institutions in the first century, which supposedly stood behind these Greek labels, are far from self-evident. We suggest that the *sanhedrin* at this time was most probably a very different institution from what has often been assumed, having nothing whatsoever in common with a *boule* or any other civic body (see below).

The most problematic link in Tcherikover's argument, however, lies in his methodology. Implicit in his analysis is an assumption that one measures the evidence for city government in the first century on the basis of what is known about the Classical Greek *polis*. The fact remains, however, that by the first century C.E. few, if any, *poleis* resembled the classic Greek model. Centuries of Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule, followed by Roman hegemony, had radically altered the status and functioning of Greek cities. Most prerogatives of the *polis* had been usurped by the Hellenistic kingdoms, and the Roman tendency to rely on trustworthy local oligarchies, *polis* related or not, had become a cardinal element in imperial policy. By the first century, in short, most *poleis* of the Roman East had evolved into something far different from their Greek prototypes, exhibiting an amalgamation of both Greek and Eastern institutions, with limited local autonomy and functioning in the context of the Roman provincial administration. Thus the Jerusalem *polis* was unlike the classic Greek model but probably would not have been all that unusual in the landscape of the Roman East. In Roman eyes—as per Claudius' letter—it seems to have resembled other contemporary Greek *poleis*.

The likelihood that Jerusalem had such an institution is a significant statement regarding the penetration of Greek models into the city.⁴⁸ Its introduction would signal a notable measure of civic Hellenization. One has only to remember the events of 175 B.C.E., when the High Priest Jason converted Jerusalem into a *polis*. As noted, there was no resistance or negative response to his move; nothing to this effect is recorded in 2 Maccabees, a source that, given its tendentiousness, probably would not have ignored such opposition. Chances are that such a change 150 or 200 years later, in Roman Jerusalem, likewise proceeded smoothly.

A second political institution in first-century Jerusalem was the *synedrion* (or *sanhedrin*). The vast literature dealing with this institution is due in part to its presumed importance and in part to the sharply contradictory descriptions

48. See also Alon, *Jews, Judaism*, 51–52, as well as McLaren, *Power and Politics*, 211–213.

it has received in various sources.⁴⁹ According to rabbinic literature, on the one hand, the *sanhedrin* was an independent, Pharisee-led body guided by Pharisaic halakhah that dealt with a wide range of political and religious issues. Greek sources (Josephus and the New Testament), on the other hand, describe the *sanhedrin* as a politically oriented ad hoc body controlled by a Herodian ruler or high priest and governed by a halakhah often quite different from that recorded in rabbinic literature. Its composition was much more diverse than that assumed in rabbinic literature and included Sadducees, Pharisees, and members of the Jerusalem aristocracy.

There have been many attempts to resolve this dilemma. Some scholars have been inclined to accept the testimony of one source and dismiss the other as untrustworthy, while most have assumed the historicity of each, at least in part. The latter approach, in turn, has given rise to a plethora of theories claiming that there were two institutions called *sanhedrin* (a political one following Josephus and the New Testament, and a religious one as per rabbinic literature), three (the above two as well as the Jerusalem *boule*), or one all-encompassing institution under the high priest, with a committee on religious affairs led by the Pharisees. According to this approach, each source describes a different facet of one complex reality. Finally, there are some scholars who assume that the conflicting sources refer to different time frames.

Faced with this array of theories, what can be said about the actual operation of the *sanhedrin* from the Second Temple period? When and in what contexts did it function, who headed it, what was its authority, and what was its composition? In other words, the actual activities of the *sanhedrin* are far more important in determining its place and status in society rather than general or theoretical statements describing its prerogatives.

Josephus mentions a *synedrion* on a number of occasions. Gabinius created five councils (*synedria*) when he divided Judaea in 57 B.C.E.;⁵⁰ Hyrcanus II convoked such a body in 46 B.C.E. to try Herod for Hezekiah's murder;⁵¹ and Herod summoned a *synedrion* to gain an official seal of approval for his plans to execute Hyrcanus II, his own sons Aristobulus and Alexander and, later, Antipater, as well as his brother Pherora's wife.⁵² Ananus, a Sadducean high priest, summoned a

49. *TDNT*, VII:860–867, and *ABD*, V:975–980. For a review of the literature through the 1950s, see Mantel, *Studies*, 54–101. The conclusions presented here were already anticipated by Bickerman, "On the Sanhedrin," 356–359, and subsequently adopted by Levine, "From the Beginning of Roman Rule," 200–202, and *Judaism and Hellenism*, 87–90; Efron, *Studies*, 287–318; and Goodblatt, *Monarchic Principle*, 103–130. See also the comments of M. Stern, *GLAJJ*, II: 376; Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 114–116; McLaren, *Power and Politics*, 213–217; and E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 472–490.

50. *Ant.* 14.5, 4, 90–91.

51. *Ibid.*, 14.2–5, 158–184.

52. *Ibid.*, 15.6, 2, 173; 16.11, 1, 357; 17.3, 1, 46; 5, 3, 93.

synedrion to try Jesus' brother James,⁵³ while Agrippa II convened a *synedrion* to deal with the levites' grievances.⁵⁴ In all these instances, the *synedrion* appears to have been a council of eminent figures summoned by the ruling power to deliberate specific cases.

Of no less importance to this discussion are the many occasions when the *synedrion* is *not* mentioned by Josephus. It never represents the people vis-à-vis Rome, neither in the rebellion of 4 B.C.E. nor later on, in the course of the many events that preceded the outbreak of hostilities in 66. Nowhere do we read of the *synedrion* functioning as an autonomous legislative-judicial body, nor is it ever mentioned in any of the crises concerning the various procurators. Moreover, it appears that the *synedrion* did not function under Agrippa I or in Agrippa II's dispute with the Temple authorities over the wall they built⁵⁵—an issue for which it would have been natural for such a body, had one existed, to have been convened, at least according to rabbinic claims concerning its prerogatives.

In the New Testament, the *synedrion* appears as an arm of the high priesthood as, for example, before Jesus' trial (Mark 14–15 and parallels); on other occasions, a *synedrion* was convoked to try James and Peter (Acts 5), Stephen (Acts 7), and Paul (Acts 22–23). The body mentioned in these cases, which dealt with matters of religious and political import, was convened by the ruling power and was composed of priests (mostly Sadducees), the aristocracy, and Pharisees. The *synedrion* does not appear as an independent, authority-wielding, body. Thus the weight of evidence from the more contemporary sources—Josephus and the New Testament—appears to point in the same direction.⁵⁶

Finally, an institution such as the one described by Josephus and the New Testament was well known in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. An advisory council, often referred to as a *synedrion* (similar to the Latin *concilium*), was often convened by a ruler to take counsel on a major issue at hand.⁵⁷ Thus it would appear that, with the development of a strong central monarchy in Judaea in the late Hasmonean and Herodian eras, the earlier *gerousia* had disappeared, only to be replaced by a *synedrion* that functioned in an advisory capacity under the direction, and by the discretion, of the ruling power.⁵⁸

53. *Ibid.*, 20.11, 1, 200.

54. *Ibid.*, 20.9, 6, 216.

55. *Ibid.*, 20.9, 6, 216–218.

56. Rabbinic literature, specifically Mishnah and Tosefta *Sanhedrin*, seems to reflect an idealized picture of an institution that, in fact, never existed in Second Temple Jerusalem. It is blatantly unhistorical in listing such issues as an idolatrous tribe, tribal courts, and an apostate city, all of which had long since disappeared from the Jewish scene.

57. See Millar, *Emperor*, 110–122, 234–238, 268–269.

58. See H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms*, 123–124.

Language

Four different languages could be heard in Jerusalem throughout the year: Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. They are all attested in epigraphical remains, and we know of literary works from Second Temple Jerusalem that are written in at least three of these tongues. Much of Jerusalem's population was probably familiar with, if not fluent in, the first two of them. Archaeological remains from Qumran and other parts of the Judaean Desert (those relating to Bar-Kokhba and Babatha), as well as several rabbinic traditions,⁵⁹ clearly indicate the complex linguistic situation in Palestine at the beginning of the second century C.E.⁶⁰

Latin

Latin was the least common of the four languages mentioned and was largely restricted to Roman soldiers and imperial officials. It was used only in certain places in the city and at certain times, as, for example, in the Antonia fortress on pilgrimage festivals, when large contingents of soldiers were present, and in the procurator's residence when he visited the city. There is always the possibility that some Jews from Rome, Italy, or the western provinces of the empire who visited Jerusalem on pilgrimage spoke Latin. However, their numbers were probably quite small, and even then many—if not most—of them were probably Greek speakers. Of the approximately six hundred Jewish catacomb inscriptions from Rome in the later empire, only 21 percent are in Latin, whereas 78 percent are in Greek. Other than the specifically mentioned populations, occasions, and settings, it seems safe to say that the use of Latin in Jerusalem was close to negligible.

Hebrew

Relative to Latin, Hebrew was more commonly used in the city, although it is impossible to gauge its extent. Other than funerary inscriptions, we have little evidence for its use, and even the inscriptions are only partially helpful. It is often difficult to distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic, as most inscriptions consist of names only. Moreover, even when we have a Hebrew inscription, it does not nec-

59. *Y Megillah* 1, 11, 71b, and *Sifrei Deuteronomy* 343.

60. Fitzmyer, "Languages of Palestine," 501–531 (= *Wandering Aramean*, 29–56). See also Grintz, "Hebrew," 32–47; Gundry, "Language Milieu," 404–408; Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?*; Treu, "Die Bedeutung des Griechischen," 123–144; Wacholder, *Eupolemus*, 259–306; Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic," 1007–1039; Mussies, "Greek," 1040–1064; Rajak, *Josephus*, 46–58, and "Location of Cultures," 1–14; Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek," 79, 114; Hengel, "Hellenization," 7–18; Schürer, *History*, II:20–28, 74–80; Rosén, *Hebrew at the Crossroads*, 5–39; Waldman, *Recent Study of Hebrew*, 79–135; Cotton et al., "Papyrology," 227–231; and Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 84–153.

essarily indicate that Hebrew was spoken, but only that it was used for identification in a funerary context. The reference to “Hebrews” in the early Jerusalem church in Acts 6:1 is likewise ambiguous; it is not clear whether the term refers to the language spoken or to the group’s Semitic–Palestinian origins. Furthermore, even if the word does refer to a language, it may be used generically and, in fact, refer to Aramaic, as is most often assumed.⁶¹

Only scattered traces of spoken Hebrew have surfaced in Jerusalem. The statements ascribed to pre-70 Pharisaic sages as preserved in later rabbinic literature are often in Hebrew, but these may well be, in all or in part, second-century C.E. tannaitic formulations. The first chapters of Mishnah *Avot* are a case in point. The few Aramaic statements found there, attributed to Hillel,⁶² are striking exceptions in this regard and may indeed highlight, if not prove, the rule, namely that Hebrew was used primarily in limited circles, such as the Pharisaic and Essene sects. Of more direct relevance are references in the New Testament and in Josephus’ writings to the speaking of “Hebrew” in Jerusalem, as, for example, when Paul addresses a crowd before being taken to the barracks and when Josephus speaks to the city’s inhabitants (Acts 21:40, 22:2).⁶³ If Paul’s remarks were indeed in Hebrew, this may be understood, at best, as a demonstration of his Jewish origins. However, in light of other evidence that seems to point to the predominance of Aramaic in the city (see below), most scholars have interpreted this word as designating a Semitic language, with the reference in fact being to Aramaic.

Other than a number of works written most probably in Jerusalem during the early Hellenistic–Hasmonean era, i.e., Ben Sira, Jubilees, Judith, Psalms of Solomon, and possibly several other books in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the most telling evidence for the use of Hebrew comes from outside Jerusalem. The written material found in the Judaean Desert, both from Qumran and that relating to the Bar-Kokhba era, attests to the use of Hebrew not only in a literary context but also, in the case of Bar-Kokhba, as a living tongue used in letters and documents. However, the relevance of this second-century evidence stemming from these revolutionaries to the question of languages spoken in Jerusalem almost a century earlier is unclear.

Mishnaic Hebrew has often been invoked as evidence of a spoken language, but even if this be granted, and it is by no means certain, any direct con-

61. See, e.g., Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 212, and Fiensy, “Composition of the Jerusalem Church,” 230–236. For a broader perspective on the use (and non-use) of Hebrew in antiquity, see S. Schwartz, “Language, Power and Identity,” 3–47.

62. *M Avot* 1, 13; 2, 6.

63. See also *War* 6.2, 1, 96.

nection with Jerusalem is tenuous. Mishnaic roots may have been in the Galilee or in rural Judea in this earlier period. In fact, it was rural Judea, in contrast to Jerusalem and the Galilee, that was the geographical context associated with a Hebrew clause in the *ketubah*, the marriage contract.⁶⁴ At least one document preserved in the Mishnah, purportedly describing a Second Temple situation—the *prozbol*, giving the court the right to collect debts during and after the sabbatical year—was in Hebrew.⁶⁵

Greek

We are on somewhat more secure ground in trying to assess the use of Greek in Jerusalem. The epigraphical evidence is clear in this regard. More than one third of the inscriptions found in and around the city are in Greek. Of the 233 inscriptions published by Rahmani,⁶⁶ 73 are in Greek only and another 14 are in Greek and either Aramaic or Hebrew, together about 37 percent. Thus we can safely set this figure as the minimum percentage of those inhabitants in the city who preferred Greek in this context. Undoubtedly, there were many others who used Greek regularly yet wished to have Hebrew names recorded in a funerary setting—much as is the case in the Diaspora today. Since most of these inscriptions were found on ossuaries and sarcophagi for the practical purpose of identification, it is likely that the families and relatives of the interred were most familiar with this language.⁶⁷

Diaspora Jews who had settled in Jerusalem may well have been responsible for some of these Greek inscriptions. The most salient example of a Diaspora Jewish family having taken up residence in Jerusalem is reflected in the monumental Theodotos inscription that records three generations of *archisynagogoi* (heads of a synagogue). This family appears to have come to Jerusalem from Rome and established a synagogue there. Such an institutionalized Diaspora

64. M *Ketubot* 4, 12.

65. M *Shevi'it* 10, 4.

66. Rahmani, *Catalogue*, 12–13.

67. Although, at first glance, epigraphical statistics appear to constitute hard data, they are nevertheless problematic when used as a basis for generalizations regarding the languages spoken in a given society. The issue, of course, is just how representative such evidence is. What percentage of the population had inscriptions made (referred to by MacMullen as “the epigraphic habit,” in his “Epigraphic Habit,” 233–246) and what percentage of these inscriptions has been discovered? Obviously, there is no way of ascertaining these numbers. No less important are those strata not represented in these data or at least woefully underrepresented.

Nevertheless, epigraphical evidence should not be summarily dismissed, as it provides a significant quantity of data (over 250 inscriptions from Second Temple Jerusalem alone), and these inscriptions come from all parts of the Jerusalem necropolis as well as from simple and elaborate tombs. This spread, it would seem, should provide a sample of important strata within the city, at least regarding the middle and upper classes.

presence in Jerusalem is likewise reflected in Acts 6 which, in addition to identifying one wing of the nascent Jerusalem church as Hellenists (i.e., Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora), refers, as noted above, to a series of Diaspora synagogues in the city, serving Jews from Alexandria, Cyrene, Asia, and Cilicia, as well as freedmen (perhaps from Rome).⁶⁸

However, most of the Greek funerary inscriptions noted probably originated in Jerusalem's native middle and upper classes. We have no way of knowing if, and to what extent, the lower classes knew Greek. Other than a smattering of isolated terms, this seems doubtful, as reflected in the Roman tribune's question to Paul: "Do you know Greek?" (Acts 21:37). Having just rescued Paul from a threatening crowd, this official may well have regarded him as a local rabble-rouser.

The fact that many Jerusalemites had some command of Greek may be indicated by Josephus in an intriguing, though somewhat enigmatic, passage in which he takes pride in his Jewish learning, adding that to know Greek was so common among his fellow Jews that it was of no particular significance:

For my compatriots admit that in our Jewish learning I far excel them. I have also labored strenuously to partake of the realm of Greek prose and poetry, after having gained a knowledge of Greek grammar, although the habitual use of my native tongue has prevented my attaining precision in the pronunciation. For our people do not favor those persons who have mastered the speech of many nations, or who adorn their style with smoothness of diction, because they consider that not only is such skill common to ordinary freemen but that even slaves who so choose may acquire it. But they give credit for wisdom to those alone who have an exact knowledge of the law and who are capable of interpreting the meaning of Holy Scriptures.⁶⁹

Other than Josephus himself, however, the only other Jew in first-century Judaea who wrote in Greek was Justus of Tiberias, who composed two histories in that language.⁷⁰ Mention should be made of a rabbinic tradition that notes a halakhic controversy between Sadducees and Pharisees (presumably in Jerusalem) wherein the works of Homer were invoked as an example of not defiling the hands.⁷¹

To account fully for the Greek spoken in Jerusalem, one must also consider the thousands of visitors who spent time in the city during pilgrimage festivals and on other occasions. Of those coming from abroad, except those from Mesopotamia and Babylonia, the overwhelming majority's mother tongue was

68. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 52–58.

69. *Ant.* 20.12, 1, 263–264.

70. Schürer, *History*, I:34–37.

71. *M Yadaim* 4, 6.

assuredly Greek. Some 70 percent of the entire corpus of Jewish inscriptions from the Greco-Roman and Byzantine periods, in both the Diaspora and Palestine, are in Greek. Even within the Temple precincts, certain chests set aside for donations were marked with Greek letters.⁷² Moreover, the number of non-Jews who frequented the city and Temple—and who assuredly spoke either Greek or Latin—was not negligible, as is attested by the Greek and Latin inscriptions placed on the parapet (*soreg*) surrounding the Temple's sacred precinct designed to prevent gentiles from entering.⁷³

While it is difficult to assess what percentage of the population spoke Greek, or even understood it, the presence of Greek in Jerusalem appears to have been far more widespread than either Latin or Hebrew. The fact that some rabbis sought to ban the teaching of Greek in the early second century and, in contrast, that some were active in facilitating a Greek translation of the Bible by one Aquilas, are further indications of its widespread use.⁷⁴

Aramaic

There can be little question that the most ubiquitous language of first-century Jerusalem was Aramaic. Evidence for its extensive use comes from a number of sources. In the first place, many funerary inscriptions are in Aramaic, including one attesting to the reburial of King Uzziah's bones in the later Second Temple period.⁷⁵ As noted, Greek references to "Hebrew" by Josephus⁷⁶ and in the New Testament (Acts 21:40, 22:2) may well refer to Aramaic; but the use of Aramaic phrases by the populace at large, reflected either in the name of a place (Gabath Saul)⁷⁷ or in phrases ascribed to Jesus (*Talita kumi*, Mark 5:41; *lama shabaktani*, Matt. 27:46), is striking testimony to the widespread use of Aramaic at the time.

Three types of evidence may well be considered decisive in according Aramaic primacy among the languages used in the city. The first is the almost certain use of Aramaic translations of the Scriptures in this period—in synagogue settings, at the very least.⁷⁸ This custom is well known from rabbinic literature of the second century C.E., but it clearly existed beforehand as well. It should be noted parenthetically that Greek translations of biblical books, as well as a kind of expanded Aramaic midrash of the text known as the Genesis Apocryphon, have been

72. M *Sheqalim* 3, 2.

73. *War* 5.5, 2, 193–194.

74. M *Sotah* 9, 14, and Y *Megillah* 1, 11, 71c.

75. See Kutscher, "Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions," 349–350.

76. *War* 6.2, 1, 96–97.

77. *Ibid.*, 5.2, 1, 51.

78. Kutscher, "Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions," 147–151.

discovered at Qumran. Rabbinic tradition as well speaks of an Aramaic translation of Job that was found on the Temple Mount in the time of R. Gamaliel the Elder (ca. 30–50 C.E.) and of another that came to the attention of R. Gamaliel II in Tiberias (ca. 100 C.E.).⁷⁹ The fact that such translations existed and may well have played a role in the synagogue liturgy of the time indicates the degree to which the populace at large did not understand Hebrew and thus required a translation.

A second indication of Aramaic's predominance in the city at this time can be found in the literary works written in this language. The last part of the book of Daniel was composed in Aramaic in 165 B.C.E. and thus serves as a case in point from the middle second century. As noted above, a number of apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books were presumably composed or translated into Aramaic during the Hasmonean era; 1 Enoch, Tobit, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs seem to fit this category. Moreover, some of Alexander Jannaeus' coins—those with dates—bear Aramaic inscriptions: "King Alexander, Year 25." From the first century C.E., we have a list of holidays during which mourning was prohibited, with a brief indication of their origin; this list, written in Aramaic, became known as *Megillat Ta'anit*.

Last, but far from least, is a series of public and private documents in Aramaic relating specifically to Second Temple Jerusalem. Aramaic versions of the marriage contract (*ketubah*), with at least one explicitly associated with Jerusalem, are quoted in the Mishnah.⁸⁰ Moreover, letters sent by R. Gamaliel the Elder from the Temple Mount area to Jews throughout Palestine and the eastern Diaspora regarding tithes and the intercalation of the year were likewise written in Aramaic.⁸¹

Among the many ancillary considerations pointing to the prominence of Aramaic in first-century Jerusalem is the well-documented reality of the third century C.E. on, when Aramaic reigned supreme in the Galilee—in synagogue inscriptions, the Yerushalmi, early midrashim, and, of course, in the continually evolving targumic literature. It can be assumed with some confidence that the prominence of Aramaic in the later empire was but a continuation from earlier centuries.

One further caveat should be noted. There is no question that many Jerusalemites were familiar (in different degrees) with a number of languages.⁸² This

79. T *Shabbat* 13, 2 (ed. Lieberman, 57).

80. M *Ketubot* 4, 7–12.

81. T *Sanhedrin* 2, 6 (ed. Zuckerman, 416). Evidence from the Judaean Desert documents further confirms the widespread use of Aramaic in daily life (loan deeds, marriage contracts, inheritance issues, debts, etc.). See Benoit et al., *Les grottes de Murabba'at*, 67–205, and Fitzmyer and Harrington, *Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, nos. 40–64.

82. The polyglot dimension of Palestinian society, even after 70, is vividly reflected in a document dealing with an inheritance dispute from the Judaean Desert; the Greek text is followed by the signatures of seven witnesses: four signed in Aramaic, one in Greek, and two in Nabataean (Lewis, *Documents from the Bar-Kokhba Period*, no. 20).

would have been necessary for accommodating the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and others who visited the city each year. Some Hebrew was undoubtedly known by many, especially from ritual and ceremonial contexts. We find Hebrew and Aramaic as well as Greek and Aramaic side by side on ossuaries, and the mixture of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic names is widespread.⁸³

In summary, the two prominent languages of first-century Jerusalem were by far Aramaic and Greek. Thus, except for Hebrew (which appears to have been limited to highly defined circles), the languages of Jerusalem were those common to peoples throughout the East generally. Just as Greek could have easily been used throughout the empire, and even beyond its borders, so, too, written Aramaic could have served as a bond between a Buddhist emperor, a Parthian dynast, and a Jewish high priest in Jerusalem. Throughout the Roman East, these two languages were the most important channels of communication from the time of Alexander until the Arab conquest.

Pharisaic Exegesis

According to the third-century C.E. Tosefta, Hillel (fl. toward the end of the first century B.C.E.) introduced seven hermeneutical rules into Pharisaic circles.⁸⁴ These rules were identical to those in vogue in Hellenistic rhetorical circles for interpreting Classical Greek literature and included inferences *a minori ad maius*, inferences by analogy, and so on. Hillel rendered into Hebrew terms that had already been in use for generations among the Greeks. What are we to make of this parallel between Greek and Jewish intellectual circles or, to put the question differently, what was the extent of borrowing in this case?

In the middle twentieth century, Daube⁸⁵ and Lieberman⁸⁶ addressed this issue and reached very different conclusions. The issue was not whether the rabbis borrowed the terms themselves, which they patently did, but whether they also appropriated the actual hermeneutical methodology associated with the terms. Lieberman acknowledges that the terminology itself was borrowed, but no more than this. Daube assumes that the rules themselves, and not just the terminology, were first introduced into rabbinic circles under the influence of Greek models. Moreover, he proposes a possible tie between Hillel and Alexandria, citing a tradition in which Hillel deals with a halakhic issue

83. See Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 132–153.

84. For a more skeptical approach to the question of attributing these rules to Hellenistic influence, see Towner, “Hermeneutical Systems,” 101–135.

85. Daube, “Rabbinic Methods,” 239–264, and “Alexandrian Methods,” 27–44.

86. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 47–82.

involving Alexandrians.⁸⁷ This, however, would not necessarily account for Hillel's adoption of the sophisticated hermeneutics employed by contemporary Alexandrian rhetors. Daube instead uses a later Babylonian tradition, claiming that Hillel's predecessors and teachers, Shemaya and Avtalion, were converts from Alexandria⁸⁸ and that they provided the conduit through which such Hellenistic practice reached Jerusalem and, in particular, Pharisaic circles.⁸⁹

Lieberman, in denying that the rabbis were beholden to the Greeks for the method itself, asserts that it is impossible to imagine any serious midrashic activity that did not employ such methods. He further holds that such activity had been going on throughout the Second Temple period:

The early Jewish interpreters of Scripture did not have to embark for Alexandria in order to learn there the rudimentary methods of linguistic research. To make them travel to Egypt for this purpose would mean to do a cruel injustice to the intelligence and acumen of the Palestinian sages. Although they were not philologists in the modern sense of the word, they nevertheless often adopted sound philological methods.⁹⁰

Despite Lieberman's disclaimer, the prior existence of such methods is precisely the issue at hand. Was this type of hermeneutical activity practiced within Pharisaic (or any other Jewish) circles before the first century B.C.E.? In fact, there is no indication of this in any earlier source, either biblical or post-biblical. Nor do we encounter any indirect evidence. There is no exegesis that might be best explained by assuming the existence of such hermeneutical rules. Later biblical books have some material that appears to be based on a midrashic interpretation of earlier sources, as do a number of books from the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Qumran scrolls. However, in none of these instances have traces of these particular rules been detected.⁹¹ Thus Lieberman's assertion that midrashic methods similar to those of the Greeks were to be found among Second Temple exegetes remains an assumption only. Whatever midrashic activity took place among the early Pharisees was probably intuitive and strictly ad hoc, with no self-conscious theoretical underpinnings as the later herme-

87. T *Ketubot* 4, 9 (ed. Lieberman, 68).

88. B *Gittin* 57b, and B *Yoma* 71b.

89. This last point is a weak link in Daube's argument. By accounting for the way in which such ideas were transferred to Jewish society, Daube would certainly help close the circle and strengthen his argument. However, he has not done this; the above-mentioned Babylonian traditions are too distant chronologically from the events they purport to describe and too nonhistorical in nature to be of any value here. If these two sages were, in fact, responsible for such a transmission, why, then, are they not so credited by later rabbinic tradition? And why only Hillel?

90. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 53. Compare also Weiss Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara*, 9–37.

91. See Fraade, "Interpretive Authority," 66–67.

neutical rules provided.⁹²

It is, therefore, possible that this revolutionary stage in the development of midrash among Pharisees began to develop significantly and dramatically only in Hillel's time and only with the aid of well-defined Greek hermeneutical rules; these not only widened the parameters of such inquiry but also, by their very crystallization, enabled others to function in a similar fashion. If this is granted, then, given the subsequent development of Pharisaic midrash in the schools of Hillel and Shammai, Hillel himself may have appropriated both the methodology and terminology heretofore unknown among Jews. In fact, at one point in his argument, Lieberman himself seems to hedge about the possibility of a more substantial Hellenistic influence:

Hillel the Elder and the Rabbis of the following generations used to interpret not only the Torah but also secular legal documents. Most likely general standards for the interpretation of legal texts were in vogue which dated back to high antiquity. But it was the Greeks who systematized, defined and gave definite form to the shapeless mass of interpretations. . . . Literary problems were solved in a similar way in the schools of Alexandria and those of Palestine. The methods of the rhetors and their discussions had at least a stimulating effect on serious treatment of legal texts.⁹³

Defining the Limits of Acculturation

Tertullian once asked, "*Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?*" ("What has Athens in common with Jerusalem?"). On the basis of our examination of the city, its practices, composition, and institutions at the end of the Second Temple period, we would have to answer: A great deal! Jerusalem was affected by Hellenistic and Roman culture as was Athens. Hellenism was clearly in evidence throughout the city by the first century C.E. The question now is whether we can be more specific and pinpoint certain areas of city life or certain elements of the population that were particularly affected. The answer, I believe, can be guard-

92. See Kugel and Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, 27–102; Fishbane, "Use, Authority and Interpretation," 339–377; Dimant, "Use and Interpretation," 379–419; and Fraenkel, *Darhei Haaggadah*, 464–480.

93. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 62, 67–68. Towner, "Hermeneutical Systems," 109, who adopts a position quite similar to that of Lieberman, also makes allowance for some sort of common awareness: "It seems highly probable that the learned rabbinical interpreters of Hebrew Scripture were at least aware that explicit interpretive methods similar to their own were in use among those intellectuals of the Greek-speaking world who studied Homer and the classics in the hope of extrapolating from them lessons for their own time." See also Alexander, "Quid Athenis?" 101–124. Compare, however, the reservations of Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 31–38, on this as well as other issues related to Greco-Roman culture and the sages.

edly affirmative. Let us begin from the most solid evidence at our disposal and then turn to the less certain data.

There can be little question that the upper classes of the city's population were appreciably Hellenized. Their residential quarter in the Upper City, the impressive funerary monuments, and the widespread use of Greek (including Greek names) all point in this direction. Moreover, the presence of a theater in the city offered them exposure to cultural performances enjoyed by their counterparts in other parts of the empire.

On an official level, a number of institutions functioning in the city reflected general Roman provincial usage. The presence of a *polis*-type government, with its *boule/bouleuterion* and *sanhedrin*, operating in Jerusalem as elsewhere in the empire, provided the city with a Hellenistic stamp that existed side by side with the Temple and priesthood. The physical and functional prominence of the Temple Mount basilica, not to speak of the Herodian *temenos* generally, constituted yet another link with civic institutions of other cities.

To the above we may add the many other public buildings in the city, as noted in Chapter 5, that were patterned after Hellenistic models and likewise lent a cosmopolitan aura to Jerusalem. In this regard, we can mention the Antonia, Herod's palace, the three towers adjacent to it, and probably the Hasmonean palace, Xystus, and archive building (on the latter two, see below). The city's entertainment institutions—the hippodrome and amphitheater, as well as the theater—were also part of Jerusalem's landscape.

The last-mentioned institutions lead us to inquire about the impact of Hellenism on yet another component of city life—the middle and lower classes, which constituted the bulk of Jerusalem's population. Here, admittedly, the evidence is meager. We may assume that several of the entertainment institutions (i.e., the hippodrome and amphitheater) catered to more popular tastes. The use of Hellenistic and Roman funerary customs was widespread among the city's entire population, and not just the wealthy. This last assumption is based on the fact that funerary remains were discovered around the entire city, with a special concentration in the north and south. These tombs, ranging from the more elaborate, ostentatious monuments to the very simply hewn cave arrangements, appear to represent a wide spectrum of socioeconomic groups. A similar range is also evident with respect to the contents of these tombs and the ornateness of their ossuaries and sarcophagi. Finally, as the overwhelming majority of Second Temple inscriptions comes from this funerary setting, the epigraphical evidence may well be representative of a large portion of society and not only of the wealthy class. There is little more that we can say about these social strata in this regard. Given their generally recognized disinclination for cosmopolitan fashion, either for ideological, nostalgic, or economic reasons, we must be careful not to

posit what the evidence clearly does not sustain.

We should take note of the distinction between conscious and subconscious borrowing.⁹⁴ Obviously, there is a difference between deliberately adopting a foreign mannerism or custom, or at least being conscious of this action after the fact, and merely internalizing a practice prevalent in one's surroundings that may have stemmed at some point in the past from non-Jewish origins. However important such a distinction may be in regard to measuring conscious acculturation, whether on the individual or societal level, the bottom line in describing social and cultural orientation is what, in fact, the daily practice was and what resemblance it bore to other parts of the empire. In measuring the urban dimensions of this interplay—from material culture, to institutions, languages, and diverse social and religious practices—the impact of Hellenism on Jerusalem was significant. Indeed, Jerusalem had a great deal in common with its pagan neighbors of the first century.

The influence of Hellenism on Jerusalem has thus proved to be rich. Having focused on this aspect of Jerusalem's cultural life, we have been able to assess the extent to which these influences were absorbed into the local Jewish setting. Nevertheless, there were also many instances when such influences were ignored, radically altered, or entirely rejected because they were found to be either unsuitable or offensive to Jewish religious sensibilities. Moreover, we know of instances in which strong Hellenistic proclivities existed side by side with distinctly Jewish behavior. The hippodrome seems to have been located not far from the Temple, and most homes of the wealthy contained Hellenistic–Roman decorations alongside their ritual baths. Even Herod, for whom such influences were welcome, was careful to avoid any figural representations in his palaces and public buildings (within Jewish Judaea), and he also demanded circumcision before allowing female members of his family to marry non-Jews. All these factors were at play in the city at one and the same time and in a variety of areas. Thus, it is important to underscore the need for a comprehensive, balanced picture of the cultural currents in Jerusalem to fully appreciate the totality of this phenomenon.⁹⁵

How does one account for this rather significant influence? The influences that we described earlier stemmed to a large extent from the fact that Jerusalem was part of the Roman Empire and that Herod actively encouraged and facilitated such integration. While the *pax Romana* created the circumstances that

94. See Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 16–32.

95. For a similar instance in southern Italy and North Africa, where Greek and Roman influences were fused with local culture and traditions in a variety of ways, see Lomas, "Urban Elites," 107–120, and Bénabou, "Résistance et romanisation," 367–375.

enabled a flow of ideas and norms in all parts of the empire, Herod clearly accelerated the process. But there was another important ingredient in this process—Diaspora Jewry. Jewish communities throughout the Roman world were immersed in Greco-Roman culture and, as we have seen, kept in close touch with Jerusalem. The frequent visits by Diaspora Jews to the city on the holidays, and especially the existence of many Diaspora communities there on a permanent basis, contributed mightily to its absorption of outside influences.

Nevertheless, Jerusalem remained in many respects a uniquely Jewish city in the early Roman period—in its population, calendar, holidays, forms of religious worship, historical memories, etc. Walking through its streets in the late Second Temple period, a visitor would in all probability be struck by the absence of idols, statues, and figural art that distinguished Jerusalem from every other non-Jewish urban center in the empire. Moreover, the number and variety of ritual baths were unique to the city and attest to the marked emphasis on ritual purity among many of its inhabitants, some on a regular basis (such as the priests) and others complying with the need to be in a state of ritual purity before entering the Temple's holy precincts. The extensive use of stone tables and eating utensils within the city likewise attests to punctilious Jewish observance of ritual purity, certainly by the priests but probably by others as well. The fact that rabbinic tradition mentions a dramatic increase in the Red Heifer sacrifice (for purifying corpse impurity) may be a further indication of a greater concern with purity issues at this time.⁹⁶

Jerusalem occupied a most unusual position within Jewish Palestine. On the one hand, it was the most Jewish of all its cities, given the presence of the Temple, the priesthood, and the leadership of almost all sects and religious groups, not to mention the many religious observances associated with this city in particular. On the other, Jerusalem was also the most Hellenized of Jewish cities, in terms of its population, languages, institutions, and general cultural ambience. Jerusalem's Janus-type posture made it truly remarkable, for Jewish society in particular and within the larger Roman world in general.

96. *M Parah* 3, 5.

