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The Jewish Inscriptions from Israel as Presented in SEG: Ashdod, INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE LAND OF ISRAEL

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THE JEWISH INSCRIPTIONS *FROM* PALESTINE *AS PRESENTED IN* SEG

SOME EXPLANATIONS:

*CAT. I: Jewish
CAT. II: may or may not be Jewish
*Publications are given in chronological order.
*Dates are only given when others have done so or when there are decisive positive arguments to provide one with certainty.
*Throughout the commentaries you'll find cross-references to other inscriptions we edited. In the future they can perhaps be linked to each other on the Internet, but for now the question is what we should do with them.

ABBREVIATIONS:

AASORJ: Annual of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem
AE: l'Année Épigraphique
AEHL: A. Negev & Sh. Gibson (edd.), *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 2001^2, New York: Continuum
AJA: American Journal of Archaeology
Ameling: *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis. Band II: Kleinasien*, 2004, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck
Ancient Synagogues Revealed: L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 1981, Jerusalem: the Israel Exploration Society
ANRW: Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
AO: Archiv für Orientforschung
BA: Biblical Archaeologist
BE: Bulletin Epigraphique
BS: Beth She'arim (verder bibliografie volgt later)
CIJ: Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum
CPJ: Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum
EBAF: École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem
Hüttenmeister, F. & Reeg, G., (1977), *Die antiken Synagogen*: Hüttenmeister, F. & Reeg, G., (1977), *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel*. 2 vols, Wiesbaden: Reichert
HA: Hadashot Archeologiyot
Horbury-Noy: Horbury, W. & Noy, D., *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With an index of the Jewish inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica*, 1992, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
IEJ: Israel Exploration Journal
IES: Israel Exploration Society
IGRR: Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas pertinentes
Ilan: Ilan, T., *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I: Palestine 330 BCE-200 CE*, 2002, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen
JPOS: Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
JQR: Jewish Quarterly Review

JRS: Journal of Roman Studies
JSJ: Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
Lehmann-Holum: Lehmann, C.M. & Holum, K.G., *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima: Excavation Reports. No. V, The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, The American School of Oriental research, Boston, 2000
Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*: Lifshitz, B., *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives.* Cahiers de la RB, no. 7, 1967, Paris: J. Gabalda
MNDPV: Mitteilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
Muraoka, *Lexicon*: T. Muraoka, A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Louvain: Peeters, 2002
OGIS: Orientis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae
PalEQ: Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PEFQS: Palestinian Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement
Ph. Woch.: Philogische Wochenschrift
QDAP: Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RB: Révue Biblique
RE: Pauly-Wissowa's Realenzyklopädie
REG: Révue des Etudes Grecques
REJ: Révue des Etudes Juives
Rosén, *Sprachsituation*: H.B. Rosén, "Die Sprachsituation im römischen Palästina". In: *Die Sprachen im Römischen Reich der Kaiserzeit*, edd. G. Neumann & J. Untermann. Rheinland-Verlag GMBH: Köln, 1980, pp.215-39
SCI: Studia Classica Israelitica
SEG: Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
ZDPV: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZNTW: Zeitschrift von Neu-Testamentischen Wissenschaften
ZPE: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigrafik

TRANSSCRIPTION:
α: a
β: b
γ: g
δ: d
ε: e
ζ: z
η: è
θ: th (capital: TH)
ι: i
κ: k
λ: l
μ: m
ν: n
ξ: x
ο: o
π: p
ρ: r

σ: s
τ: t
υ: u
φ: f
χ: ch (capital: CH)
ψ: ps (capital PS)
ω: oo (capital OO)
spiritus asper: h

ASHDOD

A good historical survey of Ashdod can be found in M. Dothan & D. N. Freedman, ʻAtiqot 8 (1967), 8-13, M. Avi-Yonah, *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* I, sv Ashdod, and L. Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel*, Jerusalem, 1987, 21-22 [in Hebrew]. We will briefly consider those elements of Dothan and Freedman and Roth-Gerson's survey, which tell us something about the Jewish community of Ashdod. According to a passage in 2 Chronicles (26:6), the Philistine city was taken by king Uzziah of Judah (ca. 785-733 BCE), but as the authors of the survey observe, the reliability of that statement is generally questioned. We do know that Ashdod was taken by the Assyrians (ca. 712/11) [Recently an Assyrian fortress from the 8th BCE has been discovered, including Assyrian bath tubs**:** https://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/ane/2004-June/014071.html] and that in a later period hostilities towards the Judeans of Jerusalem continued to exist. In Neh. 4:1(7)-2(8) Ashdod is explicitly mentioned as Israel's western neighbor and although some Judeans married Ashdodites, it seems impossible to speak of a Judean community in Ashdod (Neh. 13:23-4). This only changes after the Persian period under the Maccabees. After Judas and later Jonathan capturing and destroying the city and its temple to Dagon (1 Macc. 10:83-84), Simon is reported to have settled Jews there (1 Macc. 14:34). Since that time a Jewish community has lived in Ashdod, perhaps continuously up to the late Ancient period. It is unlikely that Pompey the Great's restoration of the city to its former inhabitants (Jos. *BJ* 1.56) caused this community to cease to exist: Herod the Great gained possession of the city during his reign (cf. references in Dothan & Freedman), and during the first Jewish Revolt Vespasian apparently deemed it necessary to conquer Ashdod once more (Jos. *BJ* 4.130). The fate of the Jewish community of Ashdod after the revolt is rather unclear (cf. our comments on SEG 26.1665); probably it is a story of decline. The finding of the great synagogue screen (cf. below CIJ 961 (SEG 8.146)), however, attests to the continuing existence of a Jewish population at the beginning of the Arab period.

Except the synagogue screen, two more inscriptions fit into the historical framework sketched above, and contribute to our understanding of that history.

CIJ 961; SEG 8.146; CAT. I

Ashdod (Azotus); marble plaque (synagogue screen?); fifth century CE [Hachlili, *The Menorah*, 304: sixth century]

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Kohl, H. & Watzinger, C., *Antike Synagogen in Galilea*, 1916, Leipzig, 160, 260, fig. 291
Klein, S., *Jüdisch-Paläst. Corpus Inscriptionum*, 1920, 85, No. 15

-, Yedioth 2 (1925), 44-5, No. 29
Cohn-Wiener, *Die jüdische Kunst*, 1929, Berlin, 90
Sukenik, E.L., JPOS 15 (1935), 151-2, fig. 20
-, *The Ancient Synagogue of El-Hammeh*, 1935, Jerusalem, 61
Avi-Yonah, M., Louis M. Rabinowitz Fund Bulletin 3 (1960), 69, pl. XIV 4 (cf. SEG 20.473)
Lifshitz, B., ZDPV 79 (1963), 93-4, No. 4 (cf. SEG 20.473)
Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, 54-5, No. 69
Hüttenmeister, F. & Reeg, G., (1977), *Die antiken Synagogen*, 19-21 (with *Nachtrag* on p. 523)
L. Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel*, Jerusalem, 1987, 19-20 [Hebrew]
NEAEHL and R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Handbuch der Orientalistik 7th series 1.2, Leiden: Brill, 1988, 187-91 about remains of chancel screens in synagogues from Ancient Israel
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
Underneath the inscription a menorah, shofar and lulaf are engraved. At the right side of it *shalom* is inscribed. Roth-Gerson elaborately discusses the use of the menorah, in- and outside synagogues. The descriptions by R. Hachlili, *The Menorah, The Ancient Seven-Armed Candelabrum: Origin, Form and Significance*, JSJSup 68, Leiden: Brill, 2001, show that the form of the menorah on the chancel screen from Ashdod (IS 5.1 in Hachlili's catalogue, p. 304) is rather similar to that of an engraved menorah on a tombstone from Ashdod (*CIJ* 961, in Hachlili's catalogue IS 10.27, p. 323).[1]
Avi-Yonah found another part of the inscription in the National Gallery in Oslo, so we now know that the supplement in CIJ is wrong. The inscription attests to the Jewish population of Ashdod in Late Antiquity. The reading and translation by Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs* is to be preferred, as it renders *eulogian* grammatically correct (in contrast with Sukenik); furthermore Lifshitz provides a fitting interpretation of the *mnèsthè*-formula. Cf. however Hüttenmeister & Reeg for a different interpretation of *è(s)*: they suggest it is either the article *hè* which has been incorrectly conjugated, or that it may be that *ke è(s)* should be read as *kai eis*, where the iota has been substituted by the etha.
The word *eulogia* appears here, if we follow Lifshitz's reading, in the combination *eis eulogian*, 'pour la bénédiction', as Lifshitz's translation runs. So what we have here is quite a different nuance of this word, which, in the formula *eulogia* (*pasin*), has long been associated with an exclusively Jewish provenance. An overview of the several nuances of the word can be found in Park, J. S., *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 135-43. He concludes that it may be used to address the living, but also, as is the case in the present instance, to the dead and may then have to be understood as a kind of post-mortem blessing.
The view that the formula is exclusively Jewish has been promoted by Louis Robert in Hellenica XI-XII, 1960, p. 394; he stated that it was 'un salut purement juif'. This

[1] Incidentally, the reference in Hachlili, *The Menorah*, p. 83, to a simply engraved menorah on a tombstone from Ashdod (IS 10.32) is a mistake, IS 10.32 in the catalogue rightly refers to a tombstone from the Golan (p. 324).

conclusion is often repeated in publications on inscriptions in which the word occurs, so it is all the more important to realize that there are some objections to be made.
First of all, the word *eulogia* occurs in pagan contexts as well. Robert realized this, but he supposed the pagan instances were influenced by Jewish thought. This assumption is being disputed by H. W. Pleket 'Religious History as the History of Mentality' in: H. S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship*, Leiden: Brill, 1981, 152-92, on pp. 183-9, which consists of an overview of the several usages of the word and the formulas in which it occurs. There are indeed cases in which Robert's claim is very hard to maintain. In a dedication to Apollo, edited by Petzl, G., 'Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 22 (1994), 52-3, No. 43, the word occurs in the formula *anethèka eulogian*, '[ich habe] die Lobpreisung geweiht' (transl.: Petzl). Here *eulogia* seems to stand for the praising of the god and metonymically for the marble stele as well. Petzl has also many instances of the verb *eulogeoo* (cf. index). Incidentally, if we accept Petzl's proposal to read *eis eulogian penftheis* in his No. 118, pp. 137-8, 'send out to praise him (Apollo Larmenos)' we have something very close to the formula in our present inscription.
It should also be noted, on the other hand, that the meaning of the word in Petzl's inscriptions is perhaps rather different from the use as a 'blessing' formula we usually find in other Jewish inscriptions, *e.g.* SEG 20.472 a, b from Huldah, SEG 26.1021 from Ramat-Aviv and SEG 20.453 h from Tiberias, all included in this corpus. The difference between pagan and Jewish usages was also noted by Ameling in his comments to his No. 13, p. 68, where he writes:

> 'Heidnische Ausnahmen, die es durchaus gibt, betreffen meist den Preis Gottes … Das Herabrufen des Segens (Gottes) [in the formula *eulogia pasin*] auf eine Gruppe, … scheint aber eine typisch jüdische Formel zu sein – ob nun in einer Grabschrift oder am Eingang einer Synagoge' (with more references).

With this statement he seems to solve the problem by and large.
There is, however, still the need to explain this particular Jewish usage of the word. It may perhaps be explained by the assumption that the word is a translation of the Hebrew root *brkh*. So Kittel, G. (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, II, s.v. *eulogeoo*, and Muraoka, T., *Lexicon* s.v. *eulogia*, Park, *o.c.*, 135 and Pleket, *o.c.*, 186. Kittel, on pp. 759ff., offers many examples of *eulogia* and *eulogeoo* in the New Testament, which are derived from Jewish (Septuagint) usages.
This raises questions concerning the Christian usage of the formula in inscriptions. The authors mentioned above haven't paid attention to the problem. Leah di Segni, in her article on the *heis theos* formula (SCI 13 (1994), 93-115), however, did. In her comments on an inscription from Ascalon (her No. 32, pp. 104-5: *Heis theos ho boèthoon eulogia pasein* – hers is the first edition), she mentions that, for some reason, '[t]he Christian adoption of the term *eulogia* doesn't seem to apply here.' Unfortunately, among the many references she gives, there seems to be none dealing with this supposed Christian usage. Therefore we would like to draw attention to two articles by L. Y. Rahmani:

1. 'A *Eulogia* Stamp from the Gaza Region', IES 20 (1970), 105-8, in which the author treats a stamp with a picture of Mary and the Child. It is inscribed *Eulogia tès despoin[ès hèmoon theoto]kou Marias*.

2. ‘Two Early Christian Ampullae’ IES 16 (1966), 71-4; here Rahmani describes the custom of giving pilgrims little ampullae that were filled with oil, water or another substance connected with the holy site the pilgrims just had visited; this substance was in itself considered to be an *eulogia* ‘blessing’. The second of the ampullae discussed in the article (No. 2, p. 74) contains the inscription *(tou) Hagiou Mèna eulog(ia)*, ‘Blessing of St. Menas’. As a matter of coincidence, it was found in the dunes near modern Ashdod.

The inscription from Ascalon is considered an amulet by Di Segni, which is either Jewish, Samaritan or pagan. Di Segni considers the pagan option the most likely, as the formula *eulogia pasin* ‘appears here in an apotropaic sense quite alien to the usual Jewish-Samaritan usage.’ This ‘apotropaic sense’ is not as evident to us as it is to Di Segni, but it is clear that she doesn’t consider the formula *eulogia pasin* to be exclusively Jewish, as Ameling still does.
All in all this is rather a complicated matter, from which we should conclude that the mere occurrence of the word *eulogia* or the verb *eulogeoo* in an inscription does not in itself constitute a decisive criterium for Jewishness. With the formula *eulogia pasin* we are on more solid ground, although even here we may not jump to conclusions. The usage of the word in the present inscription is an example of *eulogia* with a nuance that seems to lie somewhere in between the ‘normal’ Jewish and pagan usages. For the Jewish provenance of the inscription, this has, of course, no consequences.

SEG 26.1665; CAT. II
Ashdod (Azotus); lead weight; 30 BCE – 4 BCE (Kushnir-Stein) *or* 69-70 AD (Lifshitz)
BIBLIOGRAPHY:
Lifshitz, B., Euphrosyne 6 (1974), 34, No.2
Robert, L. & Robert, J., BE 1976, No. 43
Meimaris, Y.E., *Chronological Systems in Roman-Byzantine Palestine and Arabia. The Evidence of the dated Greek Inscriptions*. Athens, 1992, 363-4, No. 49
Kushnir-Stein, A., ZPE 105 (1995), 81-88, pl. X.b-c
AE 1995, No. 1578
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
Lifshitz’s reading of the inscription (᾽Αγορανο[μ]ο[ῦ]/ντ[ος] ῾Ηρῳ/δου ἔ[τ]ους / β’ Οὐησπαση/αν(ου) Καίσ(αρος)) has been reproduced by Robert and Meimaris, but Kushnir-Stein has proposed an entirely different reading:

Βασιλε[ύ]ο/ντ[ο]ς ῾Ηρῳ/δου Εὐσε/βοῦς καὶ Φ/ιλοκαίσ(αρος)

If we follow Lifshitz’s reading, we are dealing with a certain Herodes and it is because of that name that we include the inscription in our CAT. II. *Agoranomein* means “being *aedilis*” (cf. LSJ s.v.). Lifshitz rightly reminds us that the fact that the weight was found in Ashdod does not necessarily mean it originated from that city. The same holds for practically all mobile objects as vessels and the like.
In AEHL s.v. ‘Ashdod (Tel)’, 56, it is stated that de city of Ashdod was probably destroyed in 67 CE following the First Revolt, but if this inscription did originate in Ashdod, it may show, in Lifshitz’s interpretation, that the city still had local officials

following a Roman system. We may then have to conclude that the destruction was only partial.
However, Kushnir-Stein has cast strong doubts on Lifshitz's reading. He supposes that the Herod in the inscription is Herod the Great. His translation runs: 'In the time of King Herod, Pious and Friend of Caesar'. The huge difference between his reading and that of Lifshitz is due to the fact that the inscription is hardly legible. The photograph included by Kushnir-Stein isn't helpful at all (though we find AE commenting: "La photographie confirme pleinement la nouvelle lecture") and the two different drawings in his article – one from the original excavation report (Fig. 1) and the other by Gascou himself (Fig. 2) – show how careful one must be when relying on drawings.
Although much remains uncertain, Kushnir-Stein's interpretation of the inscription seems to fit the historical context better.
For a comparable, stone weight from Herod's reign, cf. Meshorer, Y., *IEJ* 20 (1970), 97-8; it runs (with Meshorer's reconstruction of the text):

ΛΒ ΒΑΣ[ΙΛΕΩΣ] ΗΡ[ΩΔΟΥ] ΕΥ[ΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ?] ΦΙΛΟΚ[ΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ] / ΑΓΟΡ[ΑΝΟΜΟΥ] ΜΝΑ ΤΡ[ΙΑ]
"Year 32 of King Herod, the Benefactor, Loyal to Caesar. Inspector of Markets. Three Minas"

In this inscription the word Φιλοκαίσαρος appears as well. We think that with the present inscription we should not hesitate to change Meshorer's ΕΥ[ΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ], about which he had some doubts himself into Εὐσεβοῦς.

SEG 37.1470; CAT. I
Ashdod (Azotus); lead weight; fifth century CE (?)
BIBLIOGRAPHY:
Kaplan, J., IEJ 37 (1987), 51-3
Hachlili, *The Menorah*, 110 and 345 (listed as IS 16.22)
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
The Jewish symbols, a menorah flanked by a shofar and a lulaf, ensure the Jewish provenance of the object. The inscription on the reverse, which consists of two letters only, is a bit of a mystery. Kaplan thinks the object is a weight (he refers to other similar bronze plaques which had this function) and then supposes that it may have been a weight of one *mina*. He reads M(N)A, which is supported by Hachlili.
If the object is a weight indeed, its imagery provides a marked contrast with the cornucopiae usually found on weights, as Kaplan notices. Apparently the maker and / or user of the object consciously showed himself as a Jew in public space as the market place, where, one would suppose, many ethnic and religious groups came together.
Kaplan's dates the object on the basis of the design of the decoration, which is partly analogous to the decoration of the synagogue chancel screen from Ashdod from the fifth-sixth century CE, on which cf. our comments on CIJ 961 (SEG 8.146). Both designs have a menorah in the center and a shofar and a lulaf as ritual objects linked to it. The type of both menorahs with a horizontal crossbar matches Hachlili's type IV, which is dated in the fourth-seventh century CE (R. Hachlili, *The Menorah*, p. 165).

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