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0521418704 - Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: with an Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica

William Horbury and David Noy

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This book collects all known Jewish inscriptions from Egypt between the third century BC and the sixth century AD. The material derives from the database of the Cambridge Divinity Faculty Jewish Inscriptions Project. The entry on each inscription provides text, translation, bibliography and commentary. Inscriptions not found in earlier collections have been included, and full indexing has been supplied. Photographs of many inscriptions are provided. The material, which includes the earliest surviving *proseuche* dedications and most of the known ancient Jewish epitaphs in verse, forms a vivid primary source for Jewish history and religion.

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JEWISH INSCRIPTIONS OF
GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT

With an index of the Jewish
inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica

WILLIAM HORBURY and DAVID NOY



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Cambridge University Press

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Victoria 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press, 1992

First published 1992

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Horbury, William

Jewish inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt, with an index of the
Jewish inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica / William Horbury and
David Noy.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 41870 4 (hardback)

1. Inscriptions, Hebrew – Egypt. 2. Inscriptions, Jewish – Egypt.
3. Jews – Egypt – Antiquities. 4. Inscriptions, Jewish – Egypt –
Indexes. 5. Jews – Egypt – Antiquities – Indexes. 6. Inscriptions
Jewish – Cyrenaica – Indexes. 7. Jews – Cyrenaica – Antiquities –
Indexes. I. Noy, David. II. Title.

PJ5034.8.E3H67 1992

492.4'11 – dc20

92-9233

CIP

ISBN 0 521 41870 4 (hardback)

Transferred to digital printing 2004

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PREFACE

The collection of inscriptions below is based above all on the Egyptian section of *CIJ* (mainly the work of J.-B. Frey and G. Kittel, but published in 1952 after both had died), and the revised and supplemented texts, translations and comments published by D.M. Lewis in *CPJ* iii (1964); but each inscription has been reconsidered and sixteen new entries have been added (as well as the inscriptions in Appendices 2 and 3).

Much bibliographical and other information in *CIJ* was designedly not repeated in *CPJ*, and both works together, supplemented by other publications, have been needed for the study of the inscriptions. For each inscription, therefore, we have aimed to bring together in brief the principal information, a reconsidered text and translation, and a revised and updated bibliography. The text follows a named publication, apart from three cases where our reading comes from a new photograph, but other editorial work is noted, and restorations and translations sometimes vary from those adopted in *CIJ* or *CPJ*. An opinion is expressed in cases where an inscription seems doubtfully Jewish.

Each entry gives information in the following order: (i) Place of origin, so far as known, probable dating, and class of inscription; (ii) Museum or other location, as last recorded; (iii) Authority for the text; (iv) Text and translation, with notes of other important publications in which there are readings or conjectural restorations differing from our text; (v) chronologically ordered bibliography (a) of publications reproducing the whole inscription, with or without discussion, and (b) of other publications; (vi) Comment on points of interest or difficulty; (vii) Description of the stone where possible, with notes on letter forms: the style of *alpha*, *epsilon*, *sigma* and *omega*, the most variable letters, is always noted, and other letters are noted if they differ significantly from standard forms.

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The order of the inscriptions differs from that adopted in *CIJ* and *CPJ* in following a rather more systematic geographical arrangement, starting at Alexandria and moving southwards. Inscriptions of uncertain provenance are at the end, followed by Appendix 1 of those inscriptions included in *CIJ* or *CPJ* for which the classification 'Jewish' seems unjustified, Appendix 2 of inscriptions from outside Egypt referring to Egyptian Jews, and Appendix 3 of Egyptian pagan inscriptions containing apparently Jewish names. Appendices 2 and 3 do not include a full bibliography or critical text. The line-breaks of the inscriptions are marked, and the use of brackets follows that of *CPJ* (i.e. the 'Leiden' system). The common symbol L is represented in texts by (ἔτους) or (ἔτων), as appropriate.

We hope that the Index will go some way to meet an obvious need. For Jewish personal names and places of habitation, the student can refer to the work of D. Rokeah in *CPJ* iii (1964), but no other indexing is readily available. Computerization of the material has helped us to offer many further categories. Only those inscriptions which we consider to be Jewish (nos.1-134, 141-153) have been indexed, and the non-Jewish parts of Jewish inscriptions (the titles and family relationships of the Ptolemies) are also excluded from the Index, although references to the monarchs themselves are included under the heading 'Rulers'. For Appendix 3 (nos.154-6), there are entries only in sections I and II.a of the Index. We have included for comparative purposes new indexes to the Jewish inscriptions of Cyrenaica published by G. Lüderitz and J.M. Reynolds in *CJZC*, arranged in the same form as the Egyptian indexes.

The criteria which we have used to identify inscriptions as Jewish are:

- i) The presence of names which can be regarded as used primarily by Jews.
- ii) The use of Jewish divine titles, formulae, the description Ἰουδαῖος and mainly Jewish terminology like προσευχή and ἀρχισυνάγωγος.

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iii) The use of Hebrew.

iv) Provenance from the predominantly Jewish site of Tell el-Yehoudieh (Leontopolis) - see Introduction, below.

On these grounds we have included several inscriptions whose Jewishness we acknowledge is quite doubtful (especially nos. 18, 20, 124-5), but excluded six which were accepted by *CIJ* or *CPJ* (Appendix 1). References to some inscriptions which do not satisfy these criteria but where Jewishness is a possibility are given in the commentaries on the most closely comparable inscriptions which we have included; the names from such inscriptions are indexed in sections II-IV in the form '11 (notes)'.

The limitation of the work to the Graeco-Roman period has meant that one group of apparently Jewish inscriptions has not been included: nine largely fragmentary tombstones from Edfu (later Apollinopolis Magna) which have been tentatively dated on palaeographic grounds to the 4th century B.C. (W. Kornfeld, 'Jüdisch-aramäische Grabinschriften aus Edfu'). This is the first Jewish community in Egypt which is known to have produced inscriptions; none have been discovered relating to the 5th century B.C. military settlement at Elephantine.

The authors divided the entries of the inscriptions as follows. Dr Horbury prepared entries 1-9, 13-17, 19-25, 27-40, 114, 125, 127-9, 135: inscriptions from (or originally attributed to) Alexandria and the Delta; metrical inscriptions. Dr Noy prepared entries 10-12, 18, 26, 41-113, 115-124, 126, 130-4, 136-156: prose inscriptions from Tell el-Yehoudieh and Demerdash; material from the Fayum and further south; various inscriptions not entered in *CIJ* or *CPJ*; the appendices. Parts (i) and (iii) of the Introduction were prepared by Dr Horbury, part (ii) by Dr Noy. Each author has read and commented on the other's work.

The publication derives from the computer database of the Cambridge Divinity Faculty Jewish Inscriptions Project, funded by the British Academy. A database was built up initially by the expertise and enthusiasm of Dr Helen Elsom

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(Research Assistant, January-March 1989) and Dr D.R. de Lacey (Senior Research Associate). The material available on line was substantially augmented by Mr J.N.B. Carleton Paget (Research Assistant, April-September 1989), who also checked, corrected and supplemented the bibliographical data. Dr de Lacey has constantly made himself available for consultation and action on computing questions, and kindly read the final draft of the whole work. The Hebrew and Greek fonts used in this book are to his design, based on SuperHebrew and Adobe Symbol respectively. Miss J.M. Reynolds, a Director of the Project, has most generously responded to questions, and has commented on the work. Dr G.I. Davies, also a Director, has taken responsibility for financial administration as well as responding to questions. Dr D.J. Thompson read the whole work and offered advice on many inscriptions. Dr M.N.A. Bockmuehl kindly commented on the final draft. Dr T. Rajak and Dr N.R.M. de Lange and his seminar group made suggestions about a number of entries. We have not seen a book which is likely to touch many of the entries, P.W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish epitaphs* (announced as to appear in November, 1991). The authors are solely responsible for what is offered below, but are glad of this opportunity to express their warm gratitude to their colleagues and to the British Academy.

It remains to present in the Introduction some information applicable to various groups of inscriptions.

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(i) ALEXANDRIAN NECROPOLEIS

A number of inscriptions are from the eastern necropolis of Alexandria, excavated since 1870 east of the ancient promontory of Lochias at Chatby (see nos.1–2 below), El-Ibrahimiya (nos.3–8), Hadra (9–10) and Mustafa Pasha (11–12). Strabo mentions a western suburb of Alexandria called Necropolis, but not these eastern cemeteries; the Ptolemaic eastern suburb of Eleusis lay inland from them, south-east of Hadra, on the canal to Canopus (Strabo, *Geog.* xvii 1, 10 and 16). Ibrahimiya lies east of Chatby on the coast, with the ridge of Hadra stretching inland behind them; Mustafa Pasha is on the coast further east (see the map at the end of this volume, and the description in P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vol.i, pp.31-3, 200).

All these areas, as their use for burials and the measurement of the city given by Strabo and Josephus suggest, will have been outside the eastern walls of the ancient city (Fraser, i, pp.12-13 and ii, pp.26-7 n.64, discussing Strabo, *Geog.* xvii 1, 8 and Josephus, *B.J.* ii 386). They therefore adjoined that eastern district of the city itself which in the first century A.D. was identified by Apion and Josephus as a long-established Jewish quarter. Apion had mocked Jewish settlement in Alexandria on a harbourless shore, but Josephus replied that Alexander himself had granted this excellent residential neighbourhood, which was near to the royal palaces (Josephus, *Ap.* ii 33-4; cf. Josephus *B.J.* ii 487-8 [right of residence granted by Alexander, special quarter by the Diadochi]). The harbour was to the west of the palaces, which were at the base of the promontory of Lochias (Strabo, *Geog.* xvii 1, 9), and the Jews must therefore have lived on the coast east of Lochias. In the disturbances under Flaccus in A.D.38 Jews were driven from their dwellings in all parts of the city into a small portion of one quarter – probably that regarded by Apion and Josephus as the established Jewish

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quarter – and overflowed on to beaches, rubbish-heaps and tombs – that is, the necropolis of Chatby (Philo, *Flacc.* 56, as interpreted by T.D. Néroutsos, *L'ancienne Alexandrie* (1888), p.34 and Fraser, ii, p.102 n.236, p.110 n.271).

Jewish graves have been identified in Chatby, immediately adjoining the ancient Jewish quarter. In 1875 T.D. Néroutsos described a hypogaeum from the eastern necropolis with Jewish graves, and published from it the inscriptions 1–2, below; its location was later given more precisely as Chatby by E. Breccia. (See T.D. Néroutsos, 'Mémoire sur les fouilles récentes', pp.228-9, reproduced in *L'ancienne Alexandrie*, pp.82-3; E. Breccia, 'La necropoli dell'Ibrahimieh', p.40, n.2.) Finds included glass phials, many earthenware lamps decorated with Jewish symbols (seven-branched candlestick, grape-cluster, palm-branches or palm-tree) and decorated ossuaries comparable with those found in Jerusalem. Further ossuaries were found in Jewish tombs excavated by G. Botti at Chatby in 1892. (See Néroutsos, 'Mémoire sur les fouilles récentes', pp.229-30 = *L'ancienne Alexandrie*, p.83; C. Clermont-Ganneau, 'Ossuaire juif provenant d'Alexandrie', pp.302-5; G. Botti, *Notice des monuments* (1893), p.39 (on Room E, Case A); id., 'Études topographiques dans la nécropole de Gabbari', p.44.) An important group of Greek burials at Chatby was described by E. Breccia, *La necropoli di Sciatbi* (1912).

The numerous burials at El-Ibrahimiya and Hadra belong in large part to the period from about 250 B.C. to the earlier second century B.C. Cinerary urns include a dated group of vases, mainly from the reigns of Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-222) and Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-205), and the pottery finds and the palaeography of the inscriptions indicate the later third and earlier second centuries (see Fraser, i, p.33; ii, pp.104-5, nn.248-51). The Ptolemaic burials at Mustafa Pasha are probably of a slightly later date (Fraser, ii, p.106, n.255). Post-Ptolemaic burials are found above the Ptolemaic ones in a number of places (Fraser, ii, p.105, n.250).

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Hypogaeum burials predominate in El-Ibrahimiya, Hadra and Mustafa Pasha. Loculi in the hypogaea are closed by false-doors, stuccoed and painted with inscriptions and representations of doors, and sometimes also with figurative decoration (not found in the Jewish examples entered below). The funerary inscriptions from these sites entered below are accordingly painted, usually in red.

The Hellenistic development of loculi tombs at Alexandria and in Palestine is sketched, with special reference to the painted hypogaea of Mareshah and the tomb of Jason in Jerusalem, by M.C. Halpern-Zylberstein in *CHJ* ii (1989), pp.17-23. Jewish use of loculi tombs at Alexandria and Leontopolis (see section ii, below) is connected with Jewish loculi burials in Jerusalem and Jericho, in the context of non-Jewish loculi burials in Egypt and elsewhere, by Hachlili and Killebrew, 'Funerary customs', pp.110-112.

Jews are among the non-Greeks, including Syrians, buried in the eastern necropolis, but without the degree of segregation which would allow the description 'Jewish cemetery' (see no.3, below). The content of the inscriptions is therefore the main guide to their identification as Jewish. Some are in Semitic characters, and in one of these (no.3) two Hebrew names are clearly legible.

In ancient times the sites were used for rubbish as well as burials, and habitation probably encroached on them (Philo, *Flacc.* 56, cited above, and Fraser, i, p.32). Mounds of pottery and rubbish were prominent on the surface in the nineteenth century (Néroutsos, *Alexandrie*, p.34; Breccia, *Sciatbi*, p.ix; Fraser, i, p.9; ii, p.22, n.38). For a description of the layer of rubbish above the Ibrahimiya tombs, see E. Breccia, 'La necropoli dell'Ibrahimieh', pp.36, 69-71. Finds in sites best known as cemeteries accordingly include non-funerary inscriptions, such as the fragment of the dedication of a *proseuche* found in rubbish at Hadra (no.9).

The Ptolemaic and Roman cemetery site of Gabbary, corresponding to part of the ancient western suburb of

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Necropolis, is similarly represented here by a *proseuche* dedication (no.13). Again, Kom el-Shukafa, south-west of the ancient Serapeum, is best known for tombs of the Roman period, but is represented (no.14) by a fragment of a probably non-funerary inscription. For these sites, see the map at the end of this volume, and Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* ii, pp.81-3, 107-8, nn.186 & 261-2).

(ii) TELL EL-YEHOUDIEH AND DEMERDASH

Tell el-Yehoudieh is situated about 35 km. north of Cairo, and corresponds to the Ptolemaic and Roman settlement of Leontopolis, where Ptolemy VI Philometor (reigned 180-145 B.C.) allowed Onias to build a Jewish temple. The temple remained in operation until closed on Vespasian's orders in A.D.73/4. It is possible that a Jewish community existed at the site before the foundation and after the closure of the temple. The literary evidence about the site is discussed by M. Delcor, 'Le temple d'Onias en Égypte', pp.188-205 and R. Hayward, 'The Jewish temple at Leontopolis: a reconsideration', pp.429-43. The archaeological history is summarised by E. Bernand, 'Au Dieu très haut', pp.107-11. The Leontopolis where Onias settled was not the same as a larger city of the same name further north, corresponding to modern Tell el-Moqdam. An example of the possible confusion is the inscription *SB* i 3941, which F. Preisigke attributed to Tell el-Yehoudieh but the original publication by C.C. Edgar (*ASAE* 11 (1910/11), p.1) shows came from Tell el-Moqdam.

European archaeologists began to investigate Tell el-Yehoudieh seriously in 1870, by which time the site had already suffered much depredation. The cemeteries were studied principally by E. Naville in 1887. He discovered many of the epitaphs which are presented here; most of the others were not found by systematic excavation but acquired from villagers living near the site. Inscriptions 29–105 were either

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found in excavations at Tell el-Yehoudieh or plausibly attributed to the site.

The identity of Tell el-Yehoudieh with Onias' settlement at Leontopolis was established conclusively by Naville and by W.M. Flinders Petrie (*Hyksos and Israelite cities* (1906), pp.2, 20-24), although the latter's claim to have discovered the temple has not been widely accepted (Hayward, p.431; R. de Vaux's 'Post scriptum' to Delcor's article, pp.204-5): R. du Mesnil du Buisson ('Le temple d'Onias et le camp Hyksôs à Tell el Yahoudiyé', p.64) described the remains as 'le misérable edifice de M. Petrie'. In what he thought were the temple foundations, Petrie found an ostrakon with demotic writing, probably from the time of Ptolemy VI Philometor or earlier, listing suppliers of bricks including someone named *Abrm*, indicated to be a foreigner (pp.26-7, pl. XXIV & XXVII). He also opened some more tombs, and noted their similarity to rock-tombs at Alexandria; the standard plan, of a number of body-length niches radiating from an entrance at the foot of a stairway, is shown in his pl.XII (similar arrangements have been found for non-Jewish burials at Alexandria: A. Adriani, *Annuaire du Musée Greco-Romain* ii (1935-9) pp.87-90 and iii (1940-5) pp.12-16). He found a bowl, jugs, a bronze lock-plate and ornaments from a box (pl.XXVII), but mentioned no further inscriptions.

Another attempt to open tombs on the site was made by the Egyptian Antiquities Service in 1919, but those opened were found to be full of water (C.C. Edgar, 'Tomb-stones from Tell-el-Yahoudieh', p.216). Further epitaphs were found during a brief excavation in 1929 (R. du Mesnil du Buisson, 'Compte rendu sommaire d'une mission à Tell el Yahoudiyée', p.157), but only one was published (no.97, below). Another excavation took place for fifteen days in January 1951 (S. Adam, 'Recent discoveries in the eastern Delta', pp.308-14), during which more tombs were opened in the South Cemetery and some skeletons discovered, but no further inscriptions.

The vast majority of the epitaphs at Tell el-Yehoudieh were inscribed on rectangular stelae, usually within a narrow

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frame surmounted by a pediment. Over 50% of the preserved names in the epitaphs are distinctively Jewish: Biblical names (sometimes in a graecized form), theophoric names like Dositheos (see no.71) and 'Sabbath' names like Sabbataios (see no.58). Among the others are many names like Eirene and Agathokles which were much used by Jews without being distinctively Jewish. It is clear that the same family could include one member with a Jewish name and another with an Egyptian or Greek name (see Index II.d), and that the phraseology used in the epitaphs at the site was broadly similar to that used elsewhere in Egypt. It is therefore impossible to identify a non-Jewish element in the Leontopolis population on the basis of names or vocabulary; neither are there any indications of different burial customs. The community may not have been exclusively Jewish, but there are no reliable grounds for identifying any non-Jewish minority which may have been buried at the site.

All the surviving inscriptions are in Greek, but an early investigator of the site, Prof. Lanzoni, claimed to have found a Hebrew inscription on part of a column; this was lost when a boat overturned in the Nile, and no copy had been made (T. Hayter Lewis, 'Tel-el-Yahoudeh (The Mound of the Jew)'; S. de Ricci, *CRAI* (1908), p.797). Another supposedly Hebrew inscription is described, with a facsimile, by G.J. Chester, 'A journey to the biblical sites in Lower Egypt, etc.', *PEFQS* (1880), pp.136-8; it was found by Prof. Sayce, and was described as a fragment of stone which had been covered with stucco, bearing the letters *heth* and *ayin* in old Hebrew characters with a pattern below them.

Inscriptions 106–114, included in the Tell el-Yehoudieh section of *CIJ*, were actually found at Demerdash, probably a suburb of ancient Heliopolis, and are more likely to indicate the existence of a separate Jewish settlement there than to have been moved from Tell el-Yehoudieh (see C.C. Edgar, 'A group of inscriptions from Demerdash', pp.32-3; V.A. Tcherikover, *The Jews in Egypt*, p.24). In Jewish scripture and tradition, Heliopolis was the home of Joseph's Egyptian

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wife (the mother of Ephraim and Manasseh) and father-in-law (Gen. xli 45, 50; xlvii 20; *Joseph and Asenath* i-iii); Joseph settled his own father and brothers there (Artapanus, frag.2, 23.3; Josephus, *Ant.* ii 188); and it was one of the three cities which the children of Israel were later compelled to (re-)build (Exod. i 11, LXX). In part of the textual tradition of Is. xix 18 (including 1Q Isa^a) Heliopolis is one of the five Egyptian cities where the Lord of hosts will be worshipped. Biblical oracles against Heliopolis (Jer. xlvi (LXX l) 13, Ezek. xxx 17) are balanced by partly hostile Heliopolitan observations on Jewish history (related by Artapanus, frag.3, 27.8 & 35). According to Manetho, followed by Apion, both quoted by Josephus (*Ap.* i 238, 250 and ii 10-11, respectively), Moses was a Heliopolitan priest who had gone over to the Jews. The place called 'Jews' Camp' where Mithridates and Antipater together fought in aid of Caesar (their march is ambiguously described by Josephus, *B.J.* i 191 = *Ant.* xiv 133) is located with fair probability on the eastern side of the Nile, not far from Heliopolis (A. Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, pp.121-2, adding an identification of the 'Camp' with the Egyptian Babylon [see no.145, below]; the 'Camp' is put to the west of the Delta by Schürer and his revisers, *History* iii.i (1986), pp.48-9). At the beginning of the Roman period Strabo found the ancient city of Heliopolis on its mound deserted, but the cult of its temple of the sun and the bull Mnevis continuing, and he saw temple personnel there (*Geog.* xvii 1, 27 & 29). The Demerdash finds show continued or renewed residence of Jews on the outskirts of the old city in the later Ptolemaic or early Roman period. Christian legend (as in the Arabic Infancy Gospel, xxiv) makes the holy family on their journey pause at Matarieh, also near the old city; and this tradition too is in harmony with the indications of Jewish residence in the neighbourhood, as noted by Edgar, 'Demerdash', p.33.

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(iii) THE METRICAL INSCRIPTIONS

The Leontopolis and Demerdash metrical inscriptions (29–40, 114, below) form the largest known group of Jewish metrical epitaphs. To these must be added two further epitaphs of Egyptian Jews, 23, from Schedia (not in *CIJ* or *CPJ*, but treated as Jewish by E. Bernand), and 141 (Appendix 1), probably Jewish as well as Egyptian, from Rome. Surviving metrical epitaphs of Jews from communities outside Egypt are relatively few: in Greek, two from Beth She'arim (Schwabe & Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, ii, nos. 127, 183) and one of two lines from Larissa in Thessaly (*CIJ* 701), and in Latin, the hexameter epitaph of Regina, from Rome (*CIJ* 476).

In the relevant Leontopolis and Demerdash entries below, the translations owe much to the felicitous renderings by D.M. Lewis in *CPJ*, but the English given has been freshly considered in each case. The commentary by E. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* (1969), has been gratefully used, especially for information on the stones and for the author's scrutiny of readings and publications. In the comments here special attention has been given to the verses as *Jewish* inscriptions.

These funerary epigrams were accepted by Jewish patrons; there is usually nothing to show whether they are of Jewish or non-Jewish authorship, but they stand in the Greek literary tradition, which as a whole was admired and shared by Egyptian Jews. It is true that much Jewish verse in Greek from this period is not in the classical quantitative metres. Greek lines resembling the stressed Hebrew verse of the biblical tradition are the norm in the Greek versions of poetical passages in the Pentateuch, and of the Psalms and other poetical books, notably the translation of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), produced for circulation in Egypt probably about 132 B.C. They also appear in work probably originally written in Greek, such as the later chapters of the Wisdom of Solomon. The acceptability of this non-quantitative Greek

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verse was probably aided by the loss in speech of the quantitative distinction between long and short vowels, a change which had taken place by the end of the Ptolemaic period, as unusual prosody in some of the metrical inscriptions attests. On the other hand it was Jewish practice (later followed by Christians) to describe biblical verse as if it were written in quantitative metre, partly perhaps to rebut any charge of barbarity (Philo, *V. Contempl.* 80; Josephus, *A.J.* ii 346 (Moses), iv 303 (Moses), vii 305 (David)). Further, Jews themselves also wrote according to the classical poetic norms; Greek Jewish verse current in Ptolemaic Egypt includes work in the quantitative metres, notably the hexameters of Sib. iii and the iambics of Ezekiel Tragicus. Philo was therefore probably typical of more educated Jews in his high regard for Homer, Hesiod and the tragedians. The metrical inscriptions fill a gap in knowledge of Jewish appreciation of Greek poetry, for they show that Jews also shared the current esteem for (and possibly shared the practice of) the tradition of epigrammatic verse.

Epigram flourished notably in early Ptolemaic Egypt, but under the later Ptolemies it is more fully represented on stone than in literature, and best represented by funerary epigrams (Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, i, 617). The Jewish metrical epitaphs therefore fit the pattern of attestation of Egyptian epigram in general. Despite the shortage of literary witness, the epigram as literature will have continued to attract interest in Egypt, as papyri confirm; a copy of verse made in the Memphis Serapeum by the detainee Ptolemaeus about 160 B.C. includes two epigrams of Poseidippus (Fraser, *ibid.*, ii, n.129; D.J. Thompson, *Memphis*, pp.260-1), and *P.Oxy.* 662 is an anthology of epigrams copied in the first century A.D., including one by Leonidas of Tarentum echoed in 38, below (Gow & Page, *Hellenistic epigrams*, ii, p.73; Zuntz, *JSS* 10, p.292). At this later period the court poet Leonides of Alexandria was a leader in the Roman vogue for epigram of ingenuity and polish, but this verse-form will no doubt also have continued to attract a public 'in the middle and humbler walks of life' (as urged by Gow & Page, *Philip*, i,

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p.xxxv). The variety of style and finish in the non-Jewish funerary epigrams of Egypt might correspondingly suggest differences of education as well as taste within the ranks of those who could afford this more elaborate form of epitaph.

The epigrams accepted by Jewish patrons in Egypt vary in style and finish as widely as those commemorating non-Jews. Almost all the surviving Jewish metrical epitaphs are in elegiac distichs, the most popular metre for funerary epigrams in general, but in 141 (Appendix 1) the first of two epigrams which form the epitaph is in iambs, giving a combination of metres which is also found elsewhere. At a very much lower level of composition, 37 and 40 consist of metrical tags which have not been shaped into verse proper. These, though short, are to some extent comparable with a series of somewhat longer non-Jewish epitaphs of the Roman period, which may contain no more than one or two fully metrical lines within an assemblage of tags (E. Bernand, *IM*, nos.13, 57, 81, 100); outside Egypt the Jewish epitaph Beth She'arim 183 is of this type.

The fully metrical Jewish epitaphs range from poems with much of the polish of literary epigram (Zuntz, *JSS* 10, pp.292-3 puts 38 and 31 in first and second place, respectively) to verse which can only be heard as such when account is taken of the phonetic changes of the Hellenistic period, and of the likelihood that elision was often used in speech but not represented in writing (Gignac, *Grammar*, i, pp.315, 319). Examples towards this end of the range are 29 and 34-6, broadly comparable within Egypt with the non-Jewish metrical epitaphs of Heraclitus and Telesion from the Ptolemaic period, or Politta from the imperial period (E. Bernand, *IM*, nos.12, 36 and 96). These more awkward compositions among the fully metrical Jewish epitaphs are not, however, so very far removed from metrical norms as is the late non-Jewish funerary epigram of Serapias, whose name seems simply to be inserted *extra metrum* (E. Bernand, *ibid.*, no.52). Jewish metrical epitaphs from Egypt, therefore, with all their variety, seem not to differ significantly in form

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and execution from their non-Jewish counterparts.

The verse of the Jewish epitaphs, then, is unlikely for the most part to have grated on the passers-by who answered their requests for notice. Only one or two excel as compositions (Zuntz, as cited above), especially when viewed against the background of *literary* epigram; but most come much closer to the standards of the literary tradition than do the tag-epitaphs of the Roman period noted above, and when they are set in this context of the body of *inscribed* epigrams, it can be affirmed that 'they are not without considerable technical accomplishment' (D.M. Lewis in *CPJ* iii, p.145). Moreover, they are often adorned and dignified by lively detail and feeling. To take examples from the middle range, four lines suffice to relate how Arsinoe lost her mother as a child, to be arrayed as a bride by her own flowering prime, and how, married to Phabeis, she died bearing her first-born (no.33); and the reiterated call to mourn the hapless Jesus is harshly impressive (no.34). The pieces accepted by Jewish patrons well deserve attention as funerary poems.

They have in fact been scrutinized mainly for signs of Jewish assimilation to or distinction from Greek religion and custom. Such inquiry is justified because, whether the epitaphs are of Jewish or non-Jewish authorship, they were accepted by Jewish patrons (see no.38, below). To summarize positions reached in the comments below, the epitaphs are unlikely to attest cremation (no.32); their mythological allusions reflect literary convention, but the hold of the myths on Jewish imagination should not be underestimated, particularly as they converge with the Jewish scriptures at a central point, the personification of Hades (no.31); and their passages on the afterlife belong to an area in which opinion among Jews and Greeks largely overlapped, and was similarly divided within each national tradition (no.38). Thus the many allusions in the epitaphs to a shadowy and mournful Hades have ample antecedent in the scriptures, and the relatively rare traces of future hopes have non-Jewish as well as Jewish analogies; distinctively biblical language expressing hope

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appears only in the epitaph of Rachelis (no.36). On the whole the epitaphs suggest the continuing acceptability among Jews in Egypt of what may broadly be called Sadducaic views on these matters; the verses often recall attitudes expressed in the Wisdom tradition, especially in the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and (with a little variation) Ecclesiasticus, in their Greek as well as Hebrew form, and the hope of immortality found in the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo is much less strongly represented. The range of views expressed, therefore, can properly be located within the Jewish as well as the Greek inheritance; there is no reason to see the metrical epitaphs as reflecting a distortion of Jewish tradition.