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The Relationship between *Ossuary* Burial and the Belief in Resurrection
during the Late Second Temple Period Judaism

by

Dina Teitelbaum

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master's of Arts in
Classics and Religion.

Carleton University, Canada

May 1997

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OSSUARY BURIAL AND THE BELIEF IN THE
RESURRECTION DURING THE LATE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD JUDAISM**

submitted by Dina Teitelbaum, B.Ped.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Stephen G. Wilson, Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Religion

Carleton University

6 May 1997
date

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5J7

50 1942-1992

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Abstract

An analysis is undertaken of the *ossuary* phenomenon in Late Second Temple period Judaism. Burial practices and material culture are described in terms of archaeological discoveries and rabbinical literature. This is followed by a summary of the socio-historical development of Jewish beliefs in afterlife, focusing on resurrection. For this purpose biblical, deuterocanonical, historical and other contemporary literature of the period is examined by means of textual criticism. An attempt is made to correlate *ossuary* decoration or *ossuary* burials to the belief in afterlife or resurrection respectively. However, a direct link could not be established. Instead, the present study argues that it was a wealthy segment of Jewish society that opted for secondary burial into an *ossuary*. Its means allowed it to indulge in the luxury of the ultimate in individual safe-keeping of its remains, thus identifiably guaranteeing memorialization by succeeding generations of visitors to the tomb.

Preface

My first encounter with *ossuaries* in Israel in 1967, made me wonder about the phenomenon and on impulse I decided that there must be a connection between the belief in the resurrection and these fascinating bone-boxes. Years later, when I became involved in archaeology, I discovered, that in fact, such a correlation had been proposed by some scholars which others vehemently denied. Intrigued by the controversy, I resolved to undertake a study of all the issues concerned with the aim of reaching a definitive conclusion, if possible! This is my justification for the present inquiry.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dear husband Heshel and to my precious children, Tamara, Devorah, Esther and Avraham for their love and understanding while this research was carried out. A special heartfelt appreciation goes to Ingrid M. Haase, my friend and librarian, who encouraged and supported me in my endeavour. I am very grateful to Professor Stephen Wilson for his supervision and patience and to the Department of Religion for making this work possible.

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Acronyms

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AJAA	Hachlili, <u>Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Second Temple Period</u>
ANAS	Annals of the New York Academy of Science
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
Ant	Josephus, <u>Antiquities</u>
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
Atiqot	Atiqot. Journal of the Israel Department of Antiquities, Jerusalem
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BibOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis, Leiden
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui, Leiden
EAEHL	Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land
EH	Encyclopaedia Hebraica (Hebrew)
EI	Eretz-Israel (Hebrew with English summaries)
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem
ER	Encyclopedia of Religion
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
ET	Etudes Biblique, Paris
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HST	Harvard Theological Studies
HTR	Harvard Theological Review, Cambridge, Mass.
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual, Cincinnati

IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IES	Israel Exploration Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JDO	Figueras, <u>Jewish Decorated Ossuaries</u>
JFC	Hachlili, "Jewish Funerary Customs During the Second Temple Period"
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JJPES	Journal of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies, London
JORR	Meyers, <u>Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth</u>
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies, Manchester
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
NEAEHL	The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land
NRT	Nouvelle Revue Théologique, Paris
PEFQS	Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Journal
QDAP	Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RAC	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum
RB	Revue Biblique
RCat	Rahmani (ed.) <u>A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel</u>
RGG	Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RQ	Revue de Qumran
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers

SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology, London/Naperville, Ill
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
Vita	Josephus, <u>The Life</u>
VT	Vetus Testamentum
War	Josephus, <u>The Jewish War</u>
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZMRW	Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft, Berlin

Abbreviations of Orders and Tractates in the Talmud and Related Literature

b.	Babylonian Talmud, (Talmud Bavli)
j.	Palestinian Talmud, (Talmud Yerushalmi)
m.	Mishna
BB	Bava Bathra
Hag	Hagigah
MQ	Mo'ed Qatan
Ohol	Oholot
Pes	Pesahim
San	Sanhedrin

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Introduction

The excavation of several thousand Jewish *ossuaries* in Israel, dating mainly to the Late Second Temple period, has been exciting, for they constitute important material data in illuminating the Judaism of Hellenistic-Roman times. Scholars have studied the physical features of these bone-boxes and have tried to explain their provenance, their seemingly sudden appearance and disappearance, and they have begun to investigate the burial procedure which these *ossuaries* presuppose.¹

According to one conjecture, mortuary and funerary rites reflect the belief of humanity concerning death and the hereafter.² Usually, people are truly conservative in their burial customs. If any changes occur in these practices then questions will be raised, such as: when did these changes occur? What caused these changes? What evidence do we have regarding these changes? Accordingly, if a change in burial practices has been established, the underlying belief must be studied anew on the assumption that a modification or a shift of concepts has also occurred within the belief system. These Jewish *ossuaries* seem, for some scholars, to be a manifestation of such a change during the Hellenistic-Roman period. Consequently, attention was drawn to the

¹ The *ossuaries* can be viewed in museums, such as the Rockefeller Museum, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and private collections, such as the one of Dominus Flevit.

² Robert Goldenberg, "Bound up in the Bond of Life: Death and Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition," in H. Obayashi (ed.), Death and Afterlife. Perspectives of World Religions (New York: Praeger, 1992) 97; Eric M. Meyers, Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth. Secondary Burials in Their Ancient Near Eastern Setting (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971) 2.

perceptions of the afterlife in Palestinian Judaism. Research, heretofore, had established, on grounds of literary sources, the emergence and development of two main concepts pertaining to the afterlife. One is the conception of the immortality of the soul and the other is of a bodily resurrection. Belief in individual resurrection had been accepted in Hellenistic Judaism, gained numerous adherents and was eventually declared a dogma by the rabbis. Therefore, some scholars advocate a close connection between the currently accepted practice of bone-gathering into *ossuaries* and the nascent concept of the resurrection.

In order to examine a possible link between the two, this research focuses on two areas: one, the examination of the burial practices in Palestine by means of the material culture provided by archaeology and by texts. Two, the understanding of the theological notion of an afterlife from Biblical times to the Greco-Roman period as illustrated in the Hebrew Bible, in Intertestamental literature and by Jewish and Non-Jewish writers. The focal point shall be the individual bodily resurrection and the ensuing question of whether it had already been a commonplace notion at the turn of the era. The intention of the present author is not to prove that the *ossuaries* or their ornamentation prove a belief in the resurrection but to explore the controversy which has been brewing around this point, and consequently, in the third part of the thesis, the status of current discussion is presented and reviewed. The methods to be used in this study are the ones of archaeology, of history and of sociology, as well as those of textual criticism.

Part One

The Practice of Secondary Burial during the Late Second Temple Period

1.1 Introduction

Part One of this thesis presents the phenomenon of *ossuary* burial during the Late Second Temple period in Palestine. The first section tries to acquaint the reader with the affiliated practice of *ossilegium*, within its setting of Jewish funerary custom, by introducing him/her to the necessary definitions of the topic discussed. Subsequently the study is devoted to the general description of the *ossuary*, its provenance and its function.

1.1 Definition of *Ossuary* and *Ossilegium*

Ossuary (Latin: *ossuarium* from *os*: bone) defines a special container used for the intentional collection of human bones, usually linked to highly formalized burial rites. *Ossuaries* served as final depositories for human skeletal remains after an initial period of temporary interment during which the flesh of the body decayed. *Ossuary*, in the archaeology of Israel, refers to a specific type of receptacle utilized during two widely separated archaeological periods: 1. the Chalcolithic (c. 4500-3200 BCE) and 2. the Herodian (c. 30 BCE-70 CE), when the use of small chest-shaped stone bone boxes had become a characteristic mode of burial.³ The significant point at issue is the reintroduction, after an extended interval, of the individual bone receptacle in the Late Second Temple Period.

³ Neil Asher Silberman, "Ossuary: A Box for Bones," *BAR* 17/3 (1991) 73-74.

Ossuaries presuppose the practice of *ossilegium*: bone gathering. The skeletal remains are deliberately collected after the primary inhumation and reinterred, most frequently into some kind of a receptacle, hence the term **secondary burial**. This practice stands in contrast to a **primary burial**, when the deceased is laid to rest without the intention of any subsequent collecting of bones.

1.2 Terminology

In a multilingual society, it is not surprising to find everyday words from diverse languages. During the Hellenistic-Roman era in Palestine, a number of terms for *ossuary*, in the then current languages (Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek) were employed. An analysis of the terminology associated with *ossuaries* may trace the possible influence of other cultures on Jewish burial practices.⁴

1.2.1 Semitic Terms

The term חלתה (*halta* or חלת *halt*), with its specific meaning as bone container, is recorded on several ossuaries, such as: מרת שמעון חלתה, "the *ossuary*

⁴ JORR, 49-70: "Terminology of Ossuaries and Secondary Burials".

of Miriam, daughter of Shim'on"⁵, or ם ן ל ן , "the *ossuary* of Salome."⁶ Again, *halta* is evidenced in the *Qorban* (offering) inscription⁷: "All that a man may find to his profit in this ossuary (ן ל ן) (is) an offering to God from him who is within it." The dating of these terms, at least as early as the Herodian period, is argued on linguistic and paleographic grounds⁸ and on the dating of the tomb.⁹ These inscriptions are significant in proving an original Semitic term for *ossuary*.

In Jewish epigraphy the familiar term ן ל ן : *aron*¹⁰ is recorded for the first time on a *sarcophagus* in Beth She'arim (second to fourth century CE) with the function as a bone container in secondary burials. "This is the sarcophagus (ן ל ן) of the three sons of Rabbi...."¹¹ ן ל ן is preserved in this spelling in Tosephta Sanhedrin 9.8.

⁵ Levi Y. Rahmani (ed.), A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), RCat, #502.

⁶ RCat, #226, see p. 62 n.228; ן ל ן also on #461, see p. 63 n.239.

⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorban Inscription from Jebel Hallet et-Turi and Mark 7:11 / Matt 15:5," JBL 78 (1959) 62.

⁸ Fitzmyer, "Qorban", 61 n.2, gives the date 30 BCE.

⁹ Vassilios Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and near Givat ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem," IEJ 20/1-2 (1970) 32.

¹⁰ In the Hebrew Bible *aron* has three different meanings: coffin, container, and holy ark. *Aron* in the sense of "coffin" is used when Joseph's bones were transported from Egypt to Israel (Gen 50:26).

¹¹ Nahman Avigad, "Excavations at Beth She'arim, 1955: Preliminary Report," IEJ 7 (1957) 245. The term *aron* occurs on numerous *sarcophagi* with primary burials.

Elsewhere, variants (probably caused through scribal errors or metathesis) can be found, for example: אָרֹן יָן, ¹² יָרֹז יָן, ¹³ אָרֹז יָם, ¹⁴ יָרֹז יָם. It was also argued אָרֹז יָן to be the interpretive gloss¹⁵, as chests and coffins were made of cedar wood, אָרֹז. Archaeological evidence in Beth She'arim and rabbinic sources attest, when dealing with *ossilegium*, that the term *aron* is applied to both, a *sarcophagus* (coffin), or an *ossuary*.

It has been asserted¹⁶ that the term אָרֹן יָם (ystrvn) as well as its variant אָרֹן יָם (stn)¹⁷, are terms which have been used for ossuary, based on the following quotation in Semahot¹⁸:

Whoever finds bones in a tomb should place them in an arcosolium, so Rabbi Akiba. The Sages say: one should not move them from their place. If one found them in a kokh or אָרֹן יָם, he should not move them from their place.

Sem 13.6

¹² Sem 12.8 as read by Dov Zlotnick (ed.), The Tractate "Mourning" (Semahot). Regulations to Death, Burial, and Mourning (Yale Judaica Series, 17; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) 36 in the Hebrew section.

¹³ Sem 12.8 as read by Michael Higger, Semahot (New York: Bloch, 1931, Hebrew) 197.

¹⁴ Jerusalem Talmud to Moed Qatan 1.5.

¹⁵ Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim (Berlin: Choreb, 1926) 117.

¹⁶ JORR, 61.

¹⁷ This variation seems to be identical with $\delta\sigma\tau\omega\nu$, see p.

¹⁸ All Hebrew and English citations from the tractate Semahot are taken from Zlotnick, Mourning.

In this tractate another term, גֶּרֶן: *goren*, was identified as an *ossuary*.¹⁹ *Goren* appears about thirty-four times in the *Tanakh*²⁰ and usually carries the meaning of 'threshing floor'.²¹ Meyers' reference to the term's older Semitic meaning, to "pile up" or "gather"²², encourages the association with *ossilegium* into a receptacle. Zlotnick used the term in the specialized form of a funerary urn²³:

All funeral urns that are inherited [גֶּרֶן נִי הֵנַח לָרֶת] may be moved from place to place and transferred from family to family.

Sem 14.2

1.2.2 Greek Terms

Ὀστοφάγος (*ostophagos*) constitutes the earliest recorded Greek term applied to an *ossuary* in Palestine.²⁴ Paleographically the inscription was dated not earlier than

¹⁹ Higger, *Semahot*, 204.

²⁰ Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1981) 333.

²¹ *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (trans. with additions and corrections from the authors' Thesaurus and other works by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982) 180; Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament* (3d edn.; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 195: Ugaritic *gm*; Jewish-Aramaic (Galilaen) Syriac "Becken, Trog" which becomes "Sarkophag", and "Vertiefung im Fels zum Dreschen"; γόρνη is inscribed on a Syrian urn, Accadian *garanu* (loc. *gorna*): kleines Gefäß.

²² *JORR*, 63 n.68.

²³ Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 165 n.2; in fact, archaeologists have excavated urns and jars dating to the Second Temple Period in connection with secondary burials, see Moshe Stekelis, "A Jewish Tomb-Cave at Ramat Rahel," *JJPES* 3 (1934-35) 25-27.

²⁴ *RCat*, #85.

the Late Herodian period (ca. 30-50 CE). It seems logical that *ostophagos*, which literally means **bone-eater**²⁵, and apparently was patterned after the common word *sarcophagus* - **flesh-eater**, was the *terminus technicus* during this era.²⁶ This claim has been refuted²⁷ because of the term's rarity and its absence from standard Greek lexicons.²⁸ Yet, it may be argued that *ostophagus* was in use as a vernacular word.

Another Greek term for *ossuary*, *σορός* (*soros*) has been identified.²⁹ The Septuagint translates with this term the Hebrew word *aron* in Genesis 50:26.³⁰ Since *aron* acquired a dual function, as a sarcophagus for the deceased in a primary burial or as a container for the bones of the deceased in a secondary burial, apparently, *soros* had acquired a dual meaning too.³¹ Important archaeological evidence for the term *soros* is

²⁵ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Supplement, 1968 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1940) 1263: *ὀστοφαγέω*: eat bones.

²⁶ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Tomb in the Kedron Valley," PEFQS (1937) 130; Michael Avi-Yonah, "Ossuary" EH X (1955) 799-801, Hebrew.

²⁷ JORR, 49.

²⁸ Liddell and Scott, Greek, 1263, note that the associated terms attested to in Hellenistic Greek sources are *ὀστοθήκη*: bone receptacle (third century BCE) and *ὀστοθήχιον* (second-first century BCE).

²⁹ Zlotnick, Mourning, 160, n.8; Saul Lieberman, Tosephta Kifshutah (5 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955-62, Hebrew) V (1962) 1235.

³⁰ In Late Antiquity *aron* was translated with the Greek term *γλωσσόκομον* (*glossokomon*).

³¹ Liddell and Scott, Greek, 1621, describes *σορός* as a vessel used for holding human remains, a "cinerary urn"; see Luke 7:14 where *σοροῦ* is translated as bier.

provided by the inscription on an *ossuary* from Jericho.³² *Soros* may qualify as a conventional Greek term during Herodian times.

The term γλωσσοκομον (*glossokomon*), a variant from γλωσσοκομειον, was not attested to before the end of the second century CE.³³ Thus, *glossokomon* is a later term than *ostophagos* and *soros* in describing a container for secondary burials, i.e. *ossuary*. Its original meaning was case.³⁴ In the New Testament, *glossokomon* defines only chest, coffer or money-box³⁵ and never implies the particular meaning of *ossuary*.³⁶ *Glossokomon* in the Aramaic transliteration ܡܕܢܐܝܐ (*gloskoma*)³⁷ occurs

³² RCat, # 789.

³³ Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 107 n.2.

³⁴ Liddell and Scott, *Greek*, 353.

³⁵ William Arndt and Felix Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 161; see Jn 12:6.

³⁶ The reason for this may be twofold: one, the absence of a narrative in the Scriptures mentioning bone containers, means that there was no necessity to use the term *glossokomon* in this manner; two, the term *glossokomon* had yet to acquire its particular meaning of *ossuary*. It has also been argued that *ossuaries* were not used by Christians, however see Bagatti's argument for archaeological evidence for Hebrew-Christian *ossuary* burials, p. 129.

³⁷ Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (2 vols.; Berlin: S. Calvary, 1898) II: 175-6; JORR, 53, refers to the Syriac ܡܕܢܐܝܐ: relic chest, *ossuary*.

only in late Jewish epigraphy³⁸ and in Rabbinical sources.³⁹ There, it denotes both, either *ossuary* or coffin. גלסקומא (*gluskma*) is the present-day Hebrew term for *ossuary*.

Finally, one more Greek term, ὀστόν (*oston*), will be advanced for our analysis. In the course of the discussion of the word ὀστῶν in an inscription from Beth She'arim⁴⁰ (plural genitive of ὀστόν), it has been suggested that *oston* is the **terminus technicus** for *ossuary*. However, in the light of the term ὀστᾶ τῶν on an ossuary (late Herodian era) in the Nicanor inscription⁴¹ this seems debatable. An interesting proposal has been advanced: the original term might actually have been *ostaton* and *oston* is accounted for as a haplology.⁴² Neither is recorded in the lexicons, but again it may be argued that

³⁸ Moshe Schwabe and Baruch Lifshitz, Beth She'arim. Report on the Excavations during 1936 - 1940 (3 vols.; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press on behalf of the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1973-1976) II: The Greek Inscriptions - inscription # 78 is inscribed on the wall of an *arcosolium* referring to a secondary burial and is dated to the Amoraic period.

³⁹ M. Ohol 9.15. This mishna, see Mishnayoth VI: Order Taharoth (1955) 246, gives two terms: גלסקומא : *glaskos* which should be גלסקומא : *glskom(a)* for a case and קמטרא : *kamtra* for a chest or box. *Gloskoma* occurs also in the third-century CE Tannaitic tractate Semahot where it denotes either "casket" (Sem 3.2) or *ossuary* (Sem 12.9); see Zlotnick, Mourning, 5, 82; in Sem 12.9 גלסקומא is found, probably on grounds of scribal error, with ד instead of ג thus, דלסקומא : *dloskoma*.

⁴⁰ Schwabe and Lifshitz, Beth Sche'arim, 117-8, translate inscription #131 with *ossuary*, vessel.

⁴¹ Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister, "Further Observations on the Ossuary of Nicanor the Alexandrian," PEFOS (1905) 256, translates ὀστᾶ τῶν tentatively as: "bones of..."; Nahman Avigad, "Jewish Rock-cut Tombs in Jerusalem and the Judean Hill-Country," EI 8 (1967a) 124-5, Hebrew.

⁴² JORR, 51.

they were vernacular words. Clermont-Ganneau⁴³ emphasized the affinity of the proposed *ostatōn* to אֶסְטוֹן of the Limyra inscription which has been dated to the Persian era, fifth to fourth centuries BCE, designating a sepulchre. The word אֶסְטוֹן, taken as a Persian loanword⁴⁴, seems to be a cognate of *astodan*, the Persian *ossuary*.⁴⁵

An analysis of the terms connected with *ossuary* does not provide any unequivocal *terminus technicus* but shows that Semitic, as well as Greek terms, have been used. Because of the absence of first century literary evidence and the few (only two) inscribed examples on *ossuaries*, the use of a vernacular term cannot be established. Due to the pervading multi-cultural milieu it seems that different terms, originating in different languages, at different times, were being used for an item of mundane purpose.

2. Survey of Jewish Burial Customs in Palestine

An important methodological postulate is that when interpreting archaeological or cultural phenomena a broad context is not to be neglected. Therefore, the Jewish *ossuaries* are not to be studied solely within the context of Hellenistic-Roman society in Palestine and abroad, as was done previously, but also against the background of burial

⁴³ Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "The 'Gate of Nicanor' in the Temple of Jerusalem," *PEFOS* (1903) 31.

⁴⁴ Franz Rosenthal, *Die aramäische Forschung* (Leiden: Brill, 1939) 25.

⁴⁵ This has been pointed out by Meyers, *JORR*, 52.

rites which are chronologically remote⁴⁶ to the Palestinian Judaism of the Second Temple period. Only then, may this new phenomenon be evaluated correctly.

Archaeology has provided *de facto* evidence of secondary burial practices within Judaism well into the Talmudic period, in terms of the layout of tombs and the discovery of *ossuaries* in a number of them. Caves, either natural or, more commonly, hewn into the rock⁴⁷, had been utilized for a long time for entombment. The architectural evolution of ancient rock-cut tombs may be traced during the time of the Second Temple period. For interpretative purposes our survey of the burial customs will consist of three stages: a report of the First Temple period (Iron Age II) burials from the eighth to the sixth century BCE; second, an outline of Second Temple period conventions; and third, a perusal of the Jewish necropolis in Beth She'arim, dated between the second and the fourth century CE.

2.1 Burials of the First Temple Period

The typical Israelite rock-cut tombs of the pre-exilic period⁴⁸ exhibit the following layout: a passage leading to a main chamber, additional side rooms when the

⁴⁶ see Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead. (JSOTSup 123; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); also JORR, 3-11.

⁴⁷ Gen 50:5 - "In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me."

⁴⁸ David Ussishkin, The Village of Silwan. The Necropolis From the Period of the Judean Kingdom (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1993); Hershel Shanks, "The Tombs of Silwan," BAR 20/3 (1994) 38-51.

need for more space arose.⁴⁹ Well-carved benches lined the walls and sometimes rectangular troughs were cut into the walls parallel to the sides of the chamber.⁵⁰ Often a headrest was carved either onto the benches or directly into the floor. The shrouded corpse was laid out on a bench (or floor) accompanied by funerary gifts such as jewelry, vessels and lamps. Each tomb was the property of one family⁵¹ and contained the remains of its members. In an extended family this frequently amounted to a great number of individuals. When the tomb had reached full occupancy, the previous burials were pushed aside or relocated in order to make room for additional burials. The skeletal remains were never removed from a family tomb. The bones, as well as the grave goods, were transferred either into a special recess, a pit, or a depository beneath the floor of the tomb-chamber, or, eventually, into a separate chamber. All of these can be designated charnels. The repository was an integral part of the Israelite family

⁴⁹ The most elaborate First Temple period burial caves known to us in Judah were discovered at St. Etienne's. One complex with eight side rooms covers about 10,000 sq. ft.; see these characteristic features in Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," BAR 12/2 (1986) 22-39.

⁵⁰ These hewn *sarcophagi* were a feature in some special First Temple period tombs of the upper classes. The corpses were placed there for primary burial; a chamber with three such troughs exists in Cave complex 1 in St. Etienne. Barkay and Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs", 33, propose that the original, important owners of the tomb were buried in this chamber.

⁵¹ Gen 49:29 - "Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field ...that Abraham bought...for a burial site"; Judg 2:9 - "and was buried on his own property."

tomb.⁵² This concept of collective retention of the skeletal remains of former burials continued to the end of the Hasmonean period.⁵³

The recurrent Biblical idiom for death and burial: "to lie down" (*skb*) with one's ancestors" or to be gathered" (*nsp*) to one's kin⁵⁴, are expressive of the realia: the dead are gathered (or reburied⁵⁵) to their ancestors in the family tomb. Moreover, the sweeping of desiccated remains into a communal depository illustrates this idiom of gathering (uniting) very well.⁵⁶

⁵² Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ossuaries and *Ossilegium* (Bone-Gathering) in the Late Second Temple Period," in Hillel Geva (ed.), Ancient Jerusalem Revealed (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 191.

⁵³ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part Four," BA 45 (1982) 118.

⁵⁴ Gen 25:8, 35:29, 49:29; Num 31:2; Deut 32:50; Judg 2:10; 1 Kgs 14:31, 15:24, 2 Kgs 8:24, 13:13, 22:20; 1 Chron 17:11; there is a detailed analysis pertaining to these texts in Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial, 110.

⁵⁵ Reburial of the bones of Saul and Jonathan by David in the family tomb of Kish (2Sam 21:13; 1Chr 10:12; also 1Sam 31:11-13); Jacob longs to be reburied in the family tomb (Gen 47:29-30); Simon reburied the bones of his brother Jonathan in Modi'in, the city of his ancestors (1Macc 13:25).

⁵⁶ But 1Kgs 2:10 - "So David slept with his fathers" seems contradictory, since his fathers were buried in the rural homeland.

2.2 Burials in the Second Temple Period

Archaeologists based their research pertaining to Second Temple period funerary customs mainly on the findings in cemeteries in Jerusalem⁵⁷ (fig.1), Jericho⁵⁸, En Gedi⁵⁹ and Qumran.⁶⁰ They observed major modifications in tomb architecture and burial technique. Evidence for primary and secondary burial has been found in diverse contexts. The most remarkable observation is the use of an individual receptacle for the dead, the long coffin (*sarcophagus*) and the short version (*ossuary*).

⁵⁷ Hillel Geva and Nahman Avigad, "Jerusalem: Tombs," NEAEHL II (1993) 747-757. The necropolises, from the Second Temple period, surrounding Jerusalem are concentrated to the north, east and south of the city. From surveys and excavations more than eight hundred tombs are known to exist within a radius of 5 km. around the city limits. The tombs do not display a central plan, but they were hewn into the rocky banks of the valleys and slopes of the hills encircling the city. Cemeteries were located outside the town limits (m.BB 2.9). At the end of the Second Temple period, the few tombs situated within the walls of Jerusalem had presumably been cleared before the city walls were extended.

⁵⁸ Rachel Hachlili and Ann Killebrew, "Jewish Funerary Customs during the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis," PEQ 115 (1983b) 109-132. The necropolis at Jericho was hewn into the hillside flanking the Jordan River. About 50 tombs have been excavated, approximately another 75 tombs were surveyed.

⁵⁹ En-Gedi in the Judaeen Desert near the Dead Sea is an important site which broadened our knowledge of burials; see Gideon Hadas, "Abstract: Nine Tombs of the Second Temple Period at 'En Gedi", Atiqot 24 (1994) 1-8.

⁶⁰ The cemetery, close to the ancient ruins of Khirbet Qumran, is situated on a terrace overlooking Wadi Qumran. The necropolis consists of about 1200 individual graves of which 61 were excavated.

2.2.1 Burials in Tombs

2.2.1.1 Tombs and Their Layout

The most common type of Second Temple period tomb⁶¹ is the *loculi* tomb (fig.2). It incorporates a main chamber and vaulted burial niches, called *loculi*, which branch off from the walls.⁶² Often, cut into the floor, there is a central depression⁶³ whose edges form benches on each side of the tomb. The entrance to the burial chamber, less than a meter high, can be sealed, either with a square slab set in a depressed frame, or with a circular "rolling stone"⁶⁴ that moves in a fixed track cut between two rock walls. The earliest local appearance of the *loculi* type tomb was in third/second century BCE Maresha and about 150 BCE in Jerusalem.⁶⁵ The majority of these tombs seem to have been cut in the first century BCE and, with exceptions, were used up to and beyond the destruction of the city in 70 CE until Jews were forbidden access to Jerusalem by Hadrian in 138 CE.

⁶¹ For a description of tombs and their layout see JFC, 109-115; Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part Three," *BA* 45 (1981c) 43-53.

⁶² The number of *loculi* in each tomb could range from one to a dozen. Each measured about 2 m. in length by 0.5 m. in width by slightly more than 0.5 m. in height.

⁶³ Each measured about 1.3 to 1.6 m in length, 1 m. in width and 30 cm to 1 m in depth.

⁶⁴ Matt 27:60, 28:2; Mk 15:46, 16:3-4; Lk 24:2; Jn 20:1.

⁶⁵ Eliezer D. Oren and Uriel Rappaport, "The Necropolis of Maresha - Beth Govrin," *IEJ* 34 (1984) 150; some scholars favour the opinion that the mode of burial in *loculi* originated in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

A second tomb plan, the *arcosolia* type⁶⁶, was introduced slightly later than the *loculi* type and is found in about a hundred Jerusalem tombs⁶⁷, often in those which belonged to richer families. Eventually *arcosolia* became the prevalent type of burial from the third century CE on.⁶⁸ An *arcosolium* (fig.3) is a bench-like aperture with an arched ceiling hewn into the burial chamber's walls.⁶⁹ An *arcosolium* may also be carved in the shape of a trough, thus forming a kind of *sarcophagus* covered by a slab.

Occasionally tombs do not display any installations for interments, such as niches. They consist of burial chambers only in which the interior walls are faced with finely dressed stones, ashlar.⁷⁰ They served as depositories for *ossuaries*⁷¹, for *sarcophagi*⁷², or for both.⁷³

⁶⁶ For a description see Rachel Hachlili, Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel (Leiden: Brill, 1988) 92; also Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, "Akeldama. Resting place of the Rich and Famous," BAR 20/6 (1994) 36-46; idem., "Architecture, Burial Customs and Chronology," in Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut (eds.), The Akeldama Tombs (IAA Reports #1); Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996) 12.

⁶⁷ Geva, "Tombs", 749.

⁶⁸ Geva, "Tombs", 753, notes that about twenty *arcosolia* tombs were cleared at Dominus Flevit which supposedly date to the third century CE. They are numerous in Beth Shearim.

⁶⁹ Its standard length is about 2 m. and its height from the floor is 1 m.

⁷⁰ see in Geva, "Tombs", 753-4, the illustration of chamber II in the Nazirite tomb.

⁷¹ Nahman Avigad, "A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," IEJ 12/1 (1962) 1-12.

⁷² Herod's family Tomb; see Geva, "Tombs", 752.

⁷³ Nahman Avigad, "The Burial Vault of a Nazirite Family on Mount Scopus," IEJ 21 (1971) 185-200.

The "typical" tomb is generally quite plain in its design, but a few dozen, belonging to the wealthy, are finished in an elaborate manner. They display richly ornamented façades, adorned with carved floral decorations in Eastern Greek or Egyptian style and outer courts (fig.4).⁷⁴

In addition, some extraordinary tombs discovered in Jerusalem and Jericho have been classified as **monumental tombs**.⁷⁵ This tomb category, typically features a memorial or *nephesh* in the shape of a pyramid or tholus, standing beside or above the tomb itself (fig.5). The monumental tombs are always lavishly ornamented with Doric and Ionic capitals and friezes, floral motifs, acanthis leaves and fruit. The wall painting (vine trellis and birds) in the Goliath Tomb (fig.6)⁷⁶ and the graffiti drawings (ship) in Jason's Tomb⁷⁷ are considered unique in Jewish funerary art. Obviously, monumental tombs belonged to prominent, affluent families.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Geva, "Tombs", 751-756 features the Cave of Umm el-'Amed, the Frieze Tomb, and the Sanhedrin Tombs as examples.

⁷⁵ AJAA, 107-110; Geva, "Jerusalem," 749-752; examples in the Kidron Valley: the Tomb of Zachariah (late first century CE), the Bene Hezir Tomb (Hasmonean period, early first century), the Absalom Tomb (1st century CE), and the Cave of Jehoshaphat; in other locations in Jerusalem: the Tombs of the Kings (Tomb of Queen Helene of Adiabene, 50 CE), Jason's Tomb (early 1st century BCE), and the Tomb of the Family of Herod; in Jericho: The Goliath Tomb; see Rachel Hachlili, "The Goliath Family in Jericho: Funerary Inscriptions from a First Century A.D. Jewish Monumental Tomb," BASOR 235 (1979) 31-66.

⁷⁶ JFC, 113-114, where Hachlili points to similar decorative frescos in Herodian villas and furthermore refers to Graeco-Roman tomb paintings.

⁷⁷ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb", IEJ 17 (1967) 61-100.

⁷⁸ Simon, one of the famous Maccabean sons, built an elaborate monument over the tomb of his father (1Macc 13:27-30).

2.2.1.2 Primary and Secondary Burial in Tombs

Approximately at the same time when the *loculi* type tomb was adopted by Jews, the individual receptacle was introduced.⁷⁹ It is generally assumed that originally, the burial niches were designed and used for primary (permanent) inhumation in wooden coffins: each *loculus*, in Hebrew קֶבֶד (*kokh*), was to hold one 2 meter long coffin.⁸⁰ Although this may be true⁸¹, archaeology could not present a corresponding number of coffins for each *loculus* in all burial complexes. For instance, the Late Hellenistic tombs in Jerusalem (late second/beginning of the first century BCE)⁸² completely lacked receptacles. There, the *loculi* had been used for primary burials but were freed from the skeletal remains, which were transferred into an adjacent communal charnel.⁸³ In those *loculi* tombs where in fact burials in coffins had taken place, the absence of wooden coffins may be due to poor conservation in damp climate for 2000 years. On the other

⁷⁹ For a description of the different burial types see JFC, 115-124.

⁸⁰ The coffins were fabricated from sycamore, cypress, cedar, pine, and jujube wood; see Hadas, "En-Gedi", 5.

⁸¹ Coffin burials in Jericho support this opinion. According to the excavators, who base the dating on the finds of coins, inscriptions, pottery and stratigraphy of the necropolis, primary burials in coffins precede secondary burials and they are dated from the mid-first century BCE to c.10 CE. Secondary burials, with and without *ossuaries*, date from c.10 CE to 68 CE - JFC, 110, 124.

⁸² Examples are the already mentioned Jason's tomb, Tomb II in Giv'at ha-Mivtar (see p.5 n.9), a tomb at French Hill (Amos Kloner, "A Tomb of the Second Temple Period at French Hill", *IEJ* 30 [1980] 99-108), and a tomb at Wadi Yazul (Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs."

⁸³ Rahmani, "Tombs. III", 45, notes that Hellenistic tombs, which continued to be employed into the Herodian period, testify to secondary burial into *ossuaries* or into the *loculi* during their late stage of usage.

hand, a considerable number of coffins in En-Gedi's Hellenistic tombs are deposited, sometimes stacked on top of each other, in tomb chambers which completely lack *loculi*.⁸⁴ It may be safely stated, though, that the *kokh*, in general, served as the place for receiving a corpse.⁸⁵

The *loculi* type tomb plan was extensively employed also in conjunction with *ossuary* burial. Temporary interment of the dead took place in the *kokh* before *ossilegium*. In many cases, following the bone-collecting, it was used for depositing the *ossuary*. Frequently several *ossuaries* were placed on top of or next to each other within these niches (fig.7). Archaeologists have provided evidence that the *loculi* often served as depositories for piles of bones without any container (fig.8). In that case, the *kokh* itself constituted the *ossuary*. Since secondary burials predominate in the rock-hewn tombs, some scholars even deny a connection between *loculi* and permanent primary interment and want to associate the *kokh* only with *ossuary* burial.⁸⁶ Following this line

⁸⁴ Only Tomb 4 features two *loculi*, each containing one coffin and one *ossuary*; see Hadas, "En-Gedi", 2.

⁸⁵ Oren, "Maresha," 151; Geva, "Jerusalem," 748-749.

⁸⁶ They based their opinion on linguistic and inscriptional data, i.e., Yehezkel Kutscher, "Kwk and its Cognates," *EI* 8 (1967) 279 (Hebrew); Lieberman, *Toseftah* V (1962) 1235 nn. 22-23, argues that the primary interment, according to Rabbinic literature, took place in a *mahamara*, a *nibrekheth* or a *b'kia* (see p.30 n.115) and does not use the word *kokh*. It is conceded that we do not know the exact meaning of those words. Eleazar L. Sukenik, "Verschlussstein mit Inschrift aus einer Grabhöhle bei Jerusalem," *ZDPV* 55 (1932) 124-128, assumes that the inscription on a *loculus* slab which read "Our parents: Never to be opened", refers to secondary burials. Hachlili, JFC, 110, argued: "If the loculi tomb had been designed for 70 cm. long ossuaries there would be no reason to dig a 2 m. long *kokh*." Nevertheless, it may be countered that the length of 2 m. would still be required for the primary interment before the secondary burial. Meyers, *JORR*, 69, blames these incompatible opinions on the early excavators

of thought Figueras links the new *loculi* tomb plan to secondary burial and claims "that individual, or quasi-individual, secondary burials, either in ossuaries or not, influenced the reshaping and architectural evolution of the Jewish tomb of the period in question."⁸⁷

Other distinct attributes of the Second Temple period tombs can be validated. An important feature was the central depression in the burial chamber. Several purposes have been deduced, for instance that it functioned as a charnel.⁸⁸ The objective however, may have been to provide standing room for the mourners.⁸⁹ According to still another view the pit served as the place where the corpse was laid out for decomposition before the bones were collected for the final burial. As a testimony to this last function we see that benches run along the walls of the tomb chambers in many instances. In the course of time they were used for depositing of *ossuaries*. An early feature in several tombs was a small vault or pit hewn ad hoc that seemed to continue the function of the bone-storage under the benches of the First Temple period; they contained mixed bones of several bodies.⁹⁰ Sometimes small niches were hewn into the wall or branched off the *loculi*. They have received the collected bones of individual

who "took so little care in reporting skeletal remains or in relating the inscriptions themselves to the actual tomb contents."

⁸⁷ Pau Figueras, Decorated Jewish Ossuaries (DMOA 5, Leiden: Brill, 1983) 9.

⁸⁸ This has been inferred layers of bones were found in the pit, for example in the French Hill Tomb in its late Hellenistic use; see Patrica Smith and Joseph Zias, "Skeletal Remains from the Late Hellenistic French Hill Tomb," IEJ 30/3-4 (1980) 109-115.

⁸⁹ JFC, 110; Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar", 30.

⁹⁰ Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar", 19.

secondary burials and thus may perhaps be seen as a transitional feature between the charnel chamber and the later ossuaries.⁹¹

In the **arcosolia tomb** the corpse was laid onto the bench or into the trough. The burial troughs were employed for primary burials, prior to the collection of the bones and their deposition in *ossuaries*. Sometimes, after *ossilegium*, the bones were redeposited into the trough. During later stages, in Bet Shearim, the *arcosolia* were then used for permanent primary burials.

Occasionally tombs feature a rectangular cavity, cut into the floor, the **pit grave**.⁹² This denotes the simplest burial installation for an individual, primary inhumation.

The discussion of the Second Temple period tombs may be concluded with the observation that the layout of the common *loculi* tomb provides the possibility of continuing the tradition of a family tomb.⁹³ At the same time an individual burial in the *kokh*, in the *arcosolia* or in the pit, with or without receptacles, is ensured.

⁹¹ JDO, 8; see Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar", 18,

⁹² The burial complex of Dominus Flevit features thirty-eight pit tombs; see Geva, "Tombs", 753.

⁹³ Amos Kloner, "A Burial-Cave of the Second Temple period at Giv'at Hamivtar," in Yigael Yadin (ed.), Jerusalem Revealed. Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1975) 69, refers to Dr. Patrica Smith of the Hebrew University-Hadassa Medical School who provided the proof of the relationship of interred individuals in a family tomb. It has been asserted, as pointed out by Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb", 95, that the concept of "family tomb" assured the individual of him/herself being taken care at the time of his/her death. As in life, the individual felt that he/she "remained provided for in the afterlife" by family; see later p.

2.2.1.3 Burial Procedure

The Jews subjected to primary burials were wrapped in shrouds⁹⁴ and mats with spices⁹⁵ and laid either into the coffin or onto the floor. Based on the archaeological data in Jericho, the manner of burial was as follows:⁹⁶

All the bodies were extended, face upwards, in the coffin, usually with the head to one side and hands close to the side of the body. Most coffins contain one individual... There are several occurrences where one or two bodies have been added to a coffin... Orientation of the bodies in the *kokh* and tomb does not seem to be significant as the heads face various directions.

The bodies were prepared for **secondary burial** by being temporarily interred in order to allow the flesh to decay. Then the bones were deposited in the *ossuary* in the following order:

Long bones lengthwise at the bottom with the bones of the arms and hands on one side and those of the legs and feet on the other side. The remaining bones of the body were placed on top of them and the skull was placed on top of all the bones at one end.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Avigail Sheffer, "Abstract: Textiles from Tomb 2 at 'En Gedi," *Atiqot* 24 (1994) 9, analyzed two kinds of fabric, fine and coarse, and alludes to Jn 11:44: "The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth"; see Jn 20:5-7; Sem 12.10 mentions the binding in shrouds.

⁹⁵ Mk 16.1; Lk 23.56; Jn 19.39-40.

⁹⁶ AJAA, 93.

⁹⁷ AJAA, 97.

Most coffins contained **grave goods** which were the personal belongings of the dead, such as beads or sandals, or objects of daily use. Once the coffins were deposited in the *loculi*, storage jars were placed outside the tomb entrance.

Grave goods discovered with *ossuary* burials include unguentaria, bowls, cooking pots, glass vessels and lamps. Small juglets and bottles were apparently used for funerary spices and the lamps may have been placed there to provide light for the visitor. *Ossuaries* did not contain personal objects of the individual, but were usually placed close by or in the pit. In a few rare cases coins were discovered, as for example in a secondary burial in Jericho. A controversy has arisen over whether or not the placing of coins in the skull can be considered a common Jewish burial custom from the Second Temple period. Hachlili concluded, on grounds of the rare cases where coins were found in the mouths or over the eyes, that the claim for a common practice among Jews cannot be substantiated.⁹⁸

2.2.2 Primary Burials in Individual Graves

Qumran, a much debated necropolis with about 1200 primary interments⁹⁹, and

⁹⁸ Rahel Hachlili and Ann Killebrew, "Was the **COIN-on-EYE** Custom a Jewish Burial Practice in the Second Temple Period?" *BA* 46 (1983) 152.

⁹⁹ Solomon H. Steckoll, "Marginal notes on the Qumran Excavations," *RQ* 25/7 (1969) 37-38: considering the natural topography, the author asserts that only one cemetery existed, in distinction from Roland de Vaux, "Fouilles de Khirbet Qumran. Rapport préliminaire sur les 3e, 4e et 5e campagnes," *RB* 63 (1956) 533-577, 569-72, who differentiated between two cemeteries, a "grand cimetière" and "les deux cimetières secondaires." De Vaux's opinion has been followed by most scholars: Zdzislaw Jan Kapera, "Some Remarks on the Qumran Cemetery," in Michael O. Wise (ed.), Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site. Present Realities

the small sites in En el-Ghuweir and Hiam el-Sagha¹⁰⁰ in the Judean Desert exhibit graves distinct from the tombs discussed above. Individual graves are arranged in ordered rows and are marked by oval-shaped heaps of stones. Broken storage jars were found placed on top of or beside the graves. A common feature is the hitherto unknown convention of the north-south orientation of the graves.¹⁰¹

The basic tomb¹⁰² layout (fig.9) consists of a rectangular shaft dug into the ground to a depth of between 1.20 m. and 2m. At the bottom, usually along the eastern wall, a cavity was cut horizontally to accommodate the corpse. This cavity was often closed with flat stones or mudbricks. The dead lay supine with the head oriented to the south and the face turned towards the east.¹⁰³ Generally, each excavated tomb contained one body except for the few burials of mothers with young children. At

and Future Prospects (ANAS, 722; New York, N.Y.: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994) 97-113; Rahel Hachlili, "Burial Practices at Qumran," RQ 62/16 (1993) 247-264.

¹⁰⁰ Pessah Bar-Adon, "Another Settlement of the Judean Desert Sect at 'En el-Ghuweir on the Shores of the Dead Sea," BASOR 227 (1977) 2-25, excavated 17 interments. In close vicinity and less than 20km. south of Qumran similar graves were identified in Hiam el-Sagha by Bar-Adon. Two of the twenty tombs were studied by Hanan Eshel and Zvi Greenhut, "Hiam El-Sagha, a Cemetery of the Qumran Type, Judean Desert," RB 100 (1993) 252-259.

¹⁰¹ Kapera, "The Qumran Cemetery," 106: "Both the unusual orientation of the tombs and the position of the corpses seem to reflect a group of people following their own religious rule, unusual for Palestine." But see Norman Golb, Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls? The Search for the Secret of Qumran (New York: Scribner, 1995) 16, 31-35. Less regularity in orientation has been observed in the outskirts of the cemetery: Hachlili, "Qumran," 250.

¹⁰² A grave may generally be termed "tomb".

¹⁰³ As in Jericho and En-Gedi, reports Hachlili, JFC, 126, there is evidence of shrouds and mats (at En el-Ghuweir) and idem., "Qumran", 250, remnants of coffins in two of the graves (at Qumran).

Qumran, in the organized area of the cemetery only males were interred, while women and children (with grave goods) were buried in the extended area. It is important to assert the completely individual mode of burial¹⁰⁴ in the shaft tomb, free from the confinement of a family tomb. Relationships between the graves have been denied.¹⁰⁵

2.3 Burials in Late Antiquity

The last burial place relevant to our survey of Jewish funerary customs in Palestine is the one at Beth She'arim.¹⁰⁶ Carved into the southern foot hills of Lower Galilee, this immense necropolis served as the principal burial ground from the second to the fourth century CE. The number of graves which date from the Herodian period to the second century is small. Since the revered Patriarch Judah I¹⁰⁷, his family and his followers were buried at this site, Beth She'arim became a magnet for Jews of importance in Palestine and in the entire Diaspora of the Middle East, whose bodies were

¹⁰⁴ There are no signs of identification of the individual.

¹⁰⁵ Hachlili, "Qumran", 253. However, the excavation of a more substantial number of graves than the small number of 61 may provide a better assessment.

¹⁰⁶ Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Mazar, "Beth She'arim", EAEHL I (1975) 229-247; esp. "Excavation of the Necropolis," 234-244.

¹⁰⁷ Also called "Judah the Prince" or simply "Rabbi". Juda I (135-219 CE) was a prominent Tanna and redactor of the Mishna; see Alfred J. Kolatch, Who's Who in the Talmud (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981) 152-153.

brought to be buried near the Rabbi.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the necropolis expanded tremendously in the third century and featured twenty-seven catacombs by the time of their destruction in the year 352 CE. Burials ceased completely during the Byzantine period.

The catacombs impress with their frontal courtyards and portals which had been constructed as stone doors imitating wooden doors. As a matter of fact, the artistic expertise within, as well as outside, the catacombs has been as much a cause for admiration as well as for bafflement. The motifs, frequently so obviously Pagan in their content¹⁰⁹, has confounded the student who believes in the aniconic theory of all Jewish art. These crypts of Beth She'arim, just before their devastation, display considerable vitality and they are a testimony to the synergism of Greek art with Jewish tradition.

The entrances opened onto several hewn burial halls.¹¹⁰ Some of these consist of several rooms. The graves in the halls are mostly of the *loculi* or *arcosolia* type. Within the labyrinth of the underground caves a full range of funerary practices is depicted: *loculi* with or without *ossuaries*, *arcosolia* which received the corpse or a receptacle, pit graves dug into the floor, charnels, and decorated marble or clay

¹⁰⁸ According to Isaiah Gafni, "Reinterment in the Land of Israel: Notes on the Origin and Development of the Custom," Jerusalem Cathedra 1 (1981) 104, Jews did not practice this custom of reinterment in the Land of Israel until the third century CE. Reinterment in the Land of Israel was the exception to the general injunction in Jewish law against transferring the remains of the dead.

¹⁰⁹ For illustrations, such as Leda and the Swan and the Roman Eagle, see Avigad and Mazar, "Beth She'arim", 242-245.

¹¹⁰ Catacomb 11 consisted of sixteen halls containing four hundred burial places, see Avigad and Mazar, "Beth She'arim", 235.

sarcophagi standing in the corridors. The tombs were family tombs as well as public tombs. In the course of time burials had become a commercial enterprise, directed by the public Burial Society, which sold the places for interment.¹¹¹ Numerous inscriptions, mainly Greek, indicate that the interred were important people such as rabbis, officers, craftsmen, merchants and scribes.¹¹² Epitaphs record the tomb owners in order to identify the graves to visitors.

With the help of archaeology it has been demonstrated that in some significant ways the burials of the Second Temple period deviated from earlier mores as well as from later funerary conventions. During the First Temple period the bones of the deceased were piled indiscriminately onto previous skeletal remains. At the turn of the Common Era the human remains of an individual were kept separate. Two different forms of burials were customary in Palestine: 1. primary burial and 2. secondary burial. For **primary Burial** the dead was interred either in a wooden coffin (which was deposited in a rock-cut family tomb or in an individually dug grave in the ground) or, the corpse was placed directly onto the tomb floor or into a shaft tomb, wrapped in a shroud. For **Secondary Burial** the skeletal remains were collected and piled into heaps in different locations in a tomb or, importantly, in *ossuaries* (occasionally in wooden coffins or *sarcophagi*). During Late Antiquity a shift in burial customs occurred again: the practice of *ossilegium* and *ossuary* burial died out. Permanent primary interment in

¹¹¹ AJAA, 103.

¹¹² Avigad and Mazar, "Beth She'arim," 234.

tomb installations and in a variety of receptacles remained the prevalent type of inhumation.¹¹³

3. Literary Sources pertaining to Secondary Burials

3.1 Rabbinical Writings

Rabbinic texts substantiate the modern archaeological data.¹¹⁴ They complement our knowledge of Jewish funerary rites by describing the ritual and the religious significance of secondary burial up to the time of the Mishna, which may coincide with the practice of *ossilegium* as it has been actually observed before and for some time after the destruction of the Second Temple. The non-canonical tractate Semahot especially, provides detailed information concerning the practice of bone-gathering, in Hebrew ליקוט עצמות : *likut atzamoth*.

This is what societies used to do in Jerusalem: some went to a mourner's house others to a wedding feast; some to a circumcision, others to an ossilegium.

Sem 12.5

As this text intimates, there existed certain priorities in connection with these occasions. Although ranking last, *ossilegium* could be numbered among the major events

¹¹³ The only accepted form of interment in orthodox Judaism today is primary burial in a very plain wooden coffin for everyone, rich or poor.

¹¹⁴ The historian Josephus does not mention *ossilegium*; Byron R. McCane, "'Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead': Secondary Burial and Matt 8:21-22," *HTR* 83 (1990) 31-43, sees a possible reference to secondary burial in Matthew and Luke.

in a person's life. It is so important that one is temporarily exempted from the compliance with all the precepts of the Torah when doing so:

A person engaged in *ossilegium* or in guarding the bones is exempt from reciting the *S(h)ema*, from the *Tefillah*, from *tefillin*, and from all the commandments written in the Torah. Should he wish to exact more of himself, he may not do so, because of the honour due to the bones of the dead.

Sem 13.1

The following passage, considered the *locus classicus* for the detailed description of secondary burial, indicates the eminent family responsibility, transmitted from generation to generation.

Rabbi Eleazar bar Zadok said: "Thus spoke father at the time of his death: 'My son, bury me first in a fosse [*b'kia*]. In the course of time, collect my bones and put them in an ossuary [*dloskema*]; but do not gather them with thy own hands'. And thus did I attend him: Johanan entered, collected the bones, and spread a sheet over them. I then came in, rent my clothes for them, and sprinkled dried herbs over them. Just as he attended his father, so I attended him.

Sem 12.9

Some important rulings and customs with regards to secondary burials are provided in this text:

1. A temporary, primary inhumation in a *b'kia*¹¹⁵ precedes the final burial.

¹¹⁵ Variants: *mahamara*, *nibrekheth*, translated with: fosse, pit, ditch, also arcosolia.

2. The bone-gathering is done "in the course of time", meaning when the flesh has completely disintegrated.¹¹⁶ Any interference with the natural process of decomposition, or a premature bone-gathering, was explicitly forbidden. The decomposition of the flesh was estimated to be completed within a twelve month period, though external conditions surely influenced the process. People may have hastened the permanent burial for a variety of reasons.¹¹⁷ This must have been a genuine concern to the rabbis of those times if this issue had to be addressed on several occasions. This facet has been deliberately emphasized in different places of the same tractate:

The bones of a corpse should not be taken apart, nor the tendons severed, unless the bones had fallen apart of themselves and the tendons of themselves had been severed.

Sem 12.6

Rabbi Akiba says: "The bones may not be gathered until the flesh has wasted away; once it has, the features are no longer recognizable in the skeleton."

Sem 12.7

3. The obligation of initiating the ceremonial of *ossilegium* lay with the next of kin, usually the son, who also had a certain role to perform within the ritual itself.

¹¹⁶ This is also mentioned in m.San 6.5: "When the flesh had decayed away they collected the bones and buried them in their place." All Hebrew and English citations from the Mishna are taken from Mishnayoth.

¹¹⁷ In some cases, anthropological studies on the skeletal remains in *ossuaries* do in fact testify that the bones had not fallen apart before they were collected for permanent burial; see Nathan Haas, "Anthropological Observations on the Skeletal Remains from Giv'at ha-Mivtar", IEJ 20/1-2 (1970) 38-39.

4. The act of collecting the bones of one's parents was to be done preferably not by the offspring himself but by someone else¹¹⁸, since the deed was considered to be too heart-rending, even though the features were no longer recognizable. This was ruled by Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri.

A person may collect the bones of all dead except those of his father and his mother.

Sem 12.7

5. The rulings observed during the rite of the *ossilegium* were usually as exacting as those conformed to at the time of death. If the clothes had been rent for a person at the time of his death then they were to be rent again at the time of the *ossilegium* (Sem 12.3). This ritual as well as the following custom were the prerogative of the son.

6. Dried herbs were sprinkled afterwards on top of the collected bones. Apparently, people used different spices and ointments, for example myrrh and aloes.¹¹⁹ The next citation leads to the conjecture that eventually only dried herbs were permitted:

¹¹⁸ The Midrash, The Midrash Rabbah I: 820, reports about a "professional" bone-collector R. Simeon bar Abba who said: "There was a certain man in Sepphoris ... who gathered up bones. When he saw black ones he would say: These are of a person who drank water. When they were red, he would say: These are of a person who drank wine; when they were white, he would say: These are of a person who drank hot beverages."

¹¹⁹ Bunches of withered flowers were found in *ossuaries* among bones - Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar", 38-40. Spices and embalment may have been an act of deference to the deceased, and for improving the smell; see Zlotnick, Mourning, 161 n.9.

"The bones may be sprinkled with wine and oil." So Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Simeon ben Nannas says: "Oil, but not wine, because wine evaporates." "Neither wine nor oil", say the Sages, "because these only invite worms, but dried herbs may be put on them."

Sem 12.9

7. *Ossilegium* had to be performed in such a way that the bones of one individual remained separate from other peoples. It was permissible that *ossilegium* of more than one corpse at the same time could take place, but special care had to be taken and certain directives complied with, because of the prohibition to place corpses or bones of different individuals in close proximity to each other.¹²⁰

The *ossilegium* of two corpses may take place at the same time, as long as the bones of the one are put at one end of a sheet and those of the other at the other end of the sheet. So Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri. Rabbi Akiba says: "In the course of time, the sheet will waste away; in the course of time, the bones will intermingle. Let them rather be gathered and placed in *ossuaries* [ב י ר ז י].".

Sem 12.8

Frequently archaeologists found multiple burials in *ossuaries*, usually recognizably separate piles. This text also confirms that *ossilegium* was practiced concurrently with and without an *ossuary*.

Ossilegium caused a change of status. It rendered the mourner ritually impure, because he came in contact with the skeletal remains.¹²¹ The state of impurity was

¹²⁰ Eventually it was ruled by Rabbi Judah: "Whomsoever a person may sleep with, when he is living, he may be buried with when he is dead." (Sem 13.8)

¹²¹ Num 19:16.

very undesirable, contagious, and caused severe restrictions.¹²² Nevertheless, it was a good deed to bury or rebury the dead in spite of the subsequent defilement. Regulations connected to secondary burial were sometimes less severe than those which applied at the time of death, as expressed in the next citation of the Mishna.

And he who assembles the bones [of his parent], has a ritual bath and may eat the sacrifices.

m.Pes 8.8

The ritual of *ossilegium* was concluded close to sundown and with that the mourning obligations had come to an end.¹²³

In the case of *ossilegium*, mourning must be observed for only one day. As a consequence, the bones are gathered only near nightfall. If while gathering them all that day, night falls, a man is released from the obligation of mourning on the very next day.

Sem 12.4

With time¹²⁴, theological expectations were built around the rite of *ossilegium*. During the first couple of centuries of the Common Era, the religiously observant person seems to have envisioned not just death as a means of obtaining atonement of sins, but also decomposition of the flesh as corresponding to the purification of the soul. The

¹²² For example, the Temple Mount could not be entered under penalty of death; partaking of the Hallowed food was forbidden (see Sem 6.1).

¹²³ For Jews the next "day" begins with nightfall.

¹²⁴ See the discussion on this issue on p. 144.

literary reference relates to the expiation of the sins of executed criminals who were buried in their ancestral tombs only after their flesh had decayed.¹²⁵

Rabbi Adda ben Ahaba objected: "But should you think that having been [shamefully] buried, he attains forgiveness, they should observe mourning rites! - The decay of the flesh too is necessary. This also follows from what he [the Tanna] teaches: 'When the flesh was completely decomposed, the bones were gathered and buried in their proper place.'

b.San 47b

As conveyed in the following passages, this way of atonement applies for all deceased, based on the view that every mortal is a sinner. The bereaved were offered consolation by believing that their ancestors had achieved atonement and satisfied a (positive) judgement. This was cause for great joy, according to Rabbi Meir:

A man may collect the bones of his father or his mother because this is a joyful duty to him.

m.MQ 1.5

Repeating this *mishna* with the statement of R. Meir, the Jerusalem Talmud to Moed Qatan 1.5 continues:

¹²⁵ Based on m.San 6.5, the connection to criminals is as late as the third century CE.

At first they would collect the bones and bury them in mounds¹²⁶ [במרהם ונת]. When the flesh had putrefied, they would collect the bones and bury them in cedar chests¹²⁷ [בזימ]. On that day the mourner would engage in the rite of mourning. The next day he would rejoice, saying that his ancestors would free him from judgment.

3.2 Epitaphs

Inscriptions, like literature, are of inestimable value to many fields of research when trying to interpret material evidence. Jewish epitaphs have been declared "testimonies to Jewish living."¹²⁸ For this study several inscriptions on tomb walls and on *ossuaries* provide information on Jewish society during the Greco-Roman period. Inscriptions mentioning a date, a historical person or events, help to date¹²⁹ the burials and the *ossuaries*.

The "Abba" Tomb, named after the "benefactor" in an inscription, unusual in its form, content and script, which was incised on a smoothed surface above the opening to a *loculus* in the tomb, has been dated to the Late Second Temple period. The content

¹²⁶ Variant translation: fosse.

¹²⁷ Variant translation: *ossuary*.

¹²⁸ F.M. Aber, "Epitaphs: Testimonies to Jewish Living," *Judaism* 6 (1957) 311.

¹²⁹ Pieter W. van der Horst, Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An introductory survey of a millennium of Jewish funerary epigraphy (300 BCE-700 CE) (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1991) 18-20.

of the epitaph, as well as the paleographic analysis¹³⁰, give additional insights into the funeral practices of the period. The seven-line Aramaic inscription, in Paleo-Hebrew characters, reads:

I, Abba, son of the priest
 Eleaz(ar), son of Aaron the high (priest), I
 Abba, the oppressed and the persec/
 uted, who was born in Jerusalem,
 and went to exile into Babylonia and
 brought (back to Jerusalem) Mattathi(ah)
 son of Jud(ah), and buried him in the
 cave, which I acquired by the writ.

The identity of Abba or that of Mattathiah cannot be established. Abba, a priest, must have felt compelled to comply with the injunction "to bury the dead" for someone not his close kin.¹³¹ The benefactor would not bury a non-family member in his own family tomb, nor could he buy a used tomb, therefore he bought a new cave for Mattathiah.¹³²

¹³⁰ Joseph Nave, "An Aramaic Tomb Inscription Written in Paleo-Hebrew Script," *IEJ* 23/1 (1973) 82-91. The epitaph is written in the old Hebrew script, which was in use during First Temple times and had declined in usage during the Second Temple period to be replaced by the Aramaic script. The archaic writing, though, was still utilized by the Hasmonean kings and the leaders of the two Revolts against Rome (coins) and in some fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls. An interesting conjecture may be made when the use of this archaic script is brought into relationship to one of the groups from this time; see also Golb's argument on this matter, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 353.

¹³¹ Lev 21:1-3.

¹³² Sem 14.2: "A tomb may not be transferred from family to family"; Lk 23:53 "... and laid it (the body of Jesus) in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid"; also Jn 19:20.

4. Ossuaries in Palestine

4.1 The Appearance of the *Ossuary* in Palestine

The Dating of the Ossuaries According to Different Scholarly Opinions

Vincent	200 - 150 BCE ¹³³
Goodenough	around 150 BCE ¹³⁴
Avigad	100 BCE ¹³⁵
Avi-Yonah	100 BCE ¹³⁶
Sukenik	First century ¹³⁷
Kahane	40 BCE ¹³⁸
Meyers	50 BCE ¹³⁹
Cross	Late first century BCE ¹⁴⁰
Rahmani	20-15 BCE ¹⁴¹ in Jerusalem

¹³³ L.H. Vincent, "Sur la date des ossuaires juifs," *RB* 43 (1934) 567, gives the date as 200 BCE - 200 CE, taking Lidzbarski's early date into account.

¹³⁴ Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (13 vols.; New York: Bollingen, 1953-69) I (1953) 114, 115.

¹³⁵ Nahman Avigad, "The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Days of the Second Temple," in Michael Avi-Yonah (ed.), *Sepher Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1956, Hebrew) 320.

¹³⁶ Avi-Yona, "Ossuary", 800.

¹³⁷ Eleazar L. Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems um Christi Geburt* (Jerusalem: Azriel Press, 1931) 3.

¹³⁸ B. Ravani and P. Kahane, "Rock-Cut Tombs at Huqoq: Notes on the Finds," *Atiqot* 3(1961) 132.

¹³⁹ *JORR*, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Cited by Meyers in *JORR*, 43 n.127.

Since the beginning of this century archaeologists and scholars have advanced very different dates for the appearance of Jewish limestone *ossuaries*, as the above table illustrates. Nowadays many discredit the early dates and tend to accept Rahmani's dating¹⁴² and his claim that the *ossuaries* "were introduced in Jerusalem ca. 20-15 BCE." Meyers strongly rebutted this statement on the grounds of paleography and ceramic evidence.¹⁴³

Meyers' position is supported by reports from burial sites containing *ossuaries* which are dated by the excavators considerably earlier than 20 BCE, for instance those in En-Gedi¹⁴⁴ or Modi'in.¹⁴⁵ However, these interpretations of the archaeological

¹⁴¹ RCat, 21. Rahmani's previous publications stated earlier dates, "Jewish Rock-cut Tombs in Jerusalem," Atiqot 3 (1961), 116: "We arrive at a date in the thirties of the 1st cent. B.C.E. for the first collection of bones into *ossuaries*"; idem., "Review of E.M. Meyers: *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth, Secondary Burials in their Near Eastern Setting*," IEJ 23 (1973) 126, proposes the years 40-30 BCE; idem., "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part One," BA 44 (1981) 175, suggests 30/20 BCE.

¹⁴² Previously the archaeologist Kloner opted for an earlier date, see RCat, 21 n.5.

¹⁴³ JORR, 42.

¹⁴⁴ In Hadas' view, "En Gedi", 7, *ossilegium* into stone *ossuaries* may be moved up to the early first century. He claimed that the various modes of burial in the Hellenistic tombs do not depict chronological differences. Primary burials in coffins were found to have been placed in such a way that they blocked access to the *ossuaries* in both *loculi*.

¹⁴⁵ Steven Feldman, "The Case of the Missing Maccabee," BAR 22/2 (1996) 12-14, describes the tomb complex in Modi'in. Each cave consists of a number of *loculi* which contained a total of 22 *ossuaries* and the remains of an estimated 30-35 burials of an extended family. Coins dating to the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) were found outside the caves. They match the find of the other typical artifacts from the Late Second Temple period.

data are tenuous¹⁴⁶ and do not provide proof to move up the introductory date for stone *ossuaries* to the early first century BCE.

The establishment of a precise *terminus a quo* for the Jewish limestone *ossuary* is very difficult for a variety of reasons. Many family tombs had been in use before the individual receptacle became a mode of burial and the *ossuary* therefore cannot be directly dated by them. However, there are burial sites without *ossuaries* which had ceased to be used in late Hellenistic or early Herodian times and which show evidence for burials into communal charnels. They suggest a *terminus a quo* for the use of *ossuaries*, but they alone cannot be the criteria for dating since various burial practices were employed concurrently during the same era.

Important for dating *ossuaries* are those inscriptions and artifacts such as coins and the frequently accompanying pottery that are discovered in a clear context. As paleography and ceramic analysis provide the external controls for dating, it is crucial that both disciplines be executed carefully. It has been noted by Meyers that the former

¹⁴⁶ Modi'in: The find of three coins outside the tombs cannot definitely be connected to the *ossuary* burials inside. En-Gedi: Hadas bases his claim for an earlier use of *ossuaries* on the observation of obstructed access to the *ossuaries* by primary coffin burials (which are early). It is correct to state that if item A blocks item B, item B is to be dated contemporaneously or even earlier. However, this is only true if no later rearranging of the receptacles had taken place in order to accommodate in an optimal way as many burials as possible within the tomb. In Tomb 4 the original cut and stone-lined *loculi* were extended by a small recess, and in each niche a long coffin and an *ossuary* were placed, see Hadas, "En-Gedi", plan 4 on p.20 in the Hebrew section. Since there is no proof that the receptacles, as discovered *in situ* now, were placed there in Hasmonean times, Rahmani's proposed dating to the Herodian period still holds. Rahmani in a personal communiqué on March 21, 1997, maintains his dates. He is not convinced that Hadas' argument is valid because the tombs probably were reentered and rearranged in antiquity. He bases his assertion on numerous excavations.

tendency in archaeology not to dig stratigraphically nor to separate pottery into definable *loci*, "has hindered the process which could have greatly refined the ceramic typology of Hellenistic-Roman times."¹⁴⁷ Moreover, in spite of having been carefully excavated, ceramic evidence is often insufficient for providing a precise date "since so many individual forms have no fixed *termini ante quem*."¹⁴⁸ On these grounds Meyers rejects Rahmani's proposed dating of the limestone *ossuaries* which is based on a large number of "Herodian" lamps and their varied styles. However, if we are left with reservations about this dating method, then we have to also take into consideration that the results of more recent excavations have clearly refined the differentiation between Hellenistic and Herodian types of pottery. Rahmani testifies with confidence that "no Jewish ossuaries have been found in tombs which contain exclusively Hellenistic pottery",¹⁴⁹ and therefore deduces that the introduction of *ossuaries* has to be dated to the Herodian period. In the absence of newer, contradictory data, this conclusion carries conviction.

The second external control for dating is provided by paleography. Weaknesses in this discipline have frustrated a precise dating at the present time.¹⁵⁰ Further study

¹⁴⁷ JORR, 41.

¹⁴⁸ Meyers, JORR, 41, refers to the so-called "Herodian" lamps which have been recorded by Paul W. Lapp, Palestinian Ceramic Chronology, 200 BC.- A.D.70 (New Haven: ASOR, 1961) 193, as being as early as 75 BCE. However, according to Rahmani, "Review Meyers", 125, this fragment had been intrusive.

¹⁴⁹ Rahmani, "Review Meyers", 125.

¹⁵⁰ See for instance Nahman Avigad, "Aramaic Inscriptions in the Tomb of Jason," IEJ 17 (1967) 108. He defends a date of 100 BCE based on a paleographic study of an inscribed ossuary lid from Bethpage (late first century BCE); see Meyers' reply, JORR, 43-44, and his proposal of "a date of 50-0 B.C." for Jason's inscription; but see Rahmani's critique on Meyers' epigraphic analysis in "Meyers Review", 125.

is deemed necessary to scrutinize the manifold styles of cursive and semicursive script from Hellenistic-Roman times.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, allowing for reservations about present paleographic techniques, the appearance of *ossuaries* points to King Herod's reign. Yet, *ossuaries* without epigraphic testimony may well have been used before the inscribed objects. The evidence for material culture that can be ascribed to the Herodian period is merely proof that by that time the Jewish *ossuaries* had become numerous.

In summary the evidence currently tends to favour Rahmani's dating that *ossuaries* were introduced during the Herodian period; however, we cannot rule out an earlier origin. Rahmani's view will be seen to be consistent with our general conclusion in Part Three.

4.2 Geographical Distribution and Chronology

The geographical distribution of the *ossuaries* demonstrates that they were not confined to Herodian Jerusalem, but that they were used at various sites in Palestine.

Jerusalem has been considered to be the place where individual bone boxes were first introduced, but this has yet to be proven. The fact that the largest body of *ossuaries* has been discovered in a major urban center, such as Jerusalem, is not surprising. Undoubtedly, Jerusalem's skilled artisans were the avant garde in craftsmanship, and their products had been distributed from their workshops to other places.¹⁵² It could be

¹⁵¹ JORR, 42.

¹⁵² Rahmani, RCat, 21, argues that after the custom of *ossilegium* had developed there, which took at least one generation, did it spread to other population centers, for example, Jericho in ca.10 CE.

argued, that since the custom of *ossilegium* had already been practised, Jerusalem, as the spiritual and cultural metropolis of the country, might well have been where *ossuaries* originated as a new mode of burial among certain classes. From there, the cosmopolitan influence of the Greco-Roman world reached Jericho and rural settlements.

The provenance and chronology of the *ossuaries* must be viewed in light of the political situation in Judaea. After Archelaus, ethnarch of Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea had been removed from power in 6 CE, the Jewish state lost its autonomy, and Judaea became a Roman province under the procurators. During the first Jewish Revolt Jericho including its industrial and workshop areas was destroyed (in 68 CE). After a span of only three generations, *ossuary* burials in the necropolis of Jericho came to an end.¹⁵³

The war and the destruction of Jerusalem in the summer of 70 CE was a tragedy. The subsequent depopulation resulted in fewer burials and therefore in a diminishing number of *ossuaries* in the city's necropolises. Some evidence for tombs burials and *ossuaries* after this date is provided by the finds within the area of present day Dominus Flevit.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ JFC, 125.

¹⁵⁴ P.B. Bagatti and Jozef Taddeuz Milik, Gli Scavi del'Dominus Flevit". (Monte Oliveto - Gerusalemme) (Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 13; 2vols.; Jerusalem: Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1958-1964) Parte I: La Necropoli del Periodo Romano; Rahmani, RCat, Table 1, gives 70 CE as the year that *ossuaries* ceased to be used in Jerusalem.

An increase of burial sites in the rest of the country could be expected due to the temporary increase¹⁵⁵ in the population outside the city's boundaries. For that reason the distribution of *ossuaries* in the Galilee, in the region between Gezer and Jaffa, in the Hebron district, as well as in the foothills and in Southern Judaea, was ostensibly connected to the fall of Jerusalem. A substantial contingent of *ossuaries* is dated to the period 70-135 CE when the Jewish population was still sufficiently large to require a supply of *ossuaries* for burials.¹⁵⁶ A clear absence of *ossuary* burials in Jerusalem can be observed only after 135 CE.¹⁵⁷ "The inaccessability of Jerusalem after the founding of Aelia Capitolina thus made other places in Palestine likely centers for reburial."¹⁵⁸ Among the decimated population in the Wake of the Bar Kokhba Revolt there are still indications of *ossuary* burials in some places.¹⁵⁹ A small collection of *ossuaries* may be dated to the late second to mid-third century CE when they finally disappear.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ This increase was due to the fleeing Jerusalemites who settled elsewhere in the country, but whose descendants were decimated by the Roman armies in the Second Revolt.

¹⁵⁶ RCat, 23; the second group of *ossuaries* in Table 1.

¹⁵⁷ RCat, Table 1.

¹⁵⁸ JORR, 38-39.

¹⁵⁹ RCat, 23; the third group of *ossuaries* in Table 1.

¹⁶⁰ Rahmani, "Ossuaries", 204. Yohanan Aharoni has published an *ossuary* from the vicinity of Jerusalem, Excavations at Ramat Rahel - Seasons 1961 and 1962 (Roma: Centro di Studi Semitici, Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente-Università, 1964) 80-82, which seems to be one of the last recorded finds dating to the third century CE.

There are no expectations that substantial numbers of *ossuaries* might still be discovered which could be dated to a later time. Meyers has suggested¹⁶¹, although on the basis of some seriously disturbed remains, that the practice of *ossilegium* continued into the fourth century CE. Kloner¹⁶² as well as Gophna and Sussman¹⁶³ also argue for the early fourth century date, by reason of glass vessels found in one of the tombs which contained *ossuaries*. Rahmani refutes these conclusions:

This proves merely that the tomb was used up to this period. There seems to be no evidence for any *terminus ad quem* for secondary burial in *ossuaries* at this site or elsewhere in the region.¹⁶⁴

Ossuaries were in use from as early as the first century BCE and as late as about the mid-third century CE. The disappearance of the *ossuaries* was the result of abolishing a burial custom - secondary burial - somewhere between the second and fourth century CE, in favour of primary burial, which from then on became the only accepted burial practice. To the present day, no verifiable explanation has been advanced for relinquishing *ossilegium* and the use of the individual bone container.

¹⁶¹ Eric Meyers et al., "Ancient Synagogue Excavations at Khirbet Shema', Upper Galilee, Israel 1970-72," (*AASOR* 42; Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1976) 142.

¹⁶² Amos Kloner, "The Cemetery at Horvat Thala," *EI* 17 (1984) 326, Hebrew.

¹⁶³ Ram Gophna and Varda Sussman, "A Jewish Burial Cave of the Roman Period at the Foot of Tel Halif," *Atiqot* 7 (1974) 69-76.

¹⁶⁴ *RCat*, 24.

4.3 General Description of the *Ossuary*

Ossuaries are a product of craftsmanship rather than being works of Fine Art. Nonetheless, they are relevant to the history of art because of their profusion. By that very abundance they are perfect examples of how the attributes of major art have been absorbed and steadfastly preserved on a popular level.

... three elements - Eastern tradition, Western influences and local religious regulations - form the artistic frame of *ossuary* composition and style in *ossuary* decoration.¹⁶⁵

The specific purpose of the *ossuary* (it had to have the form of a covered chest), as well as the available raw material, dictated the expression of these elements.

At this point a review of the physical features of *ossuaries* and their craftsmanship is given, followed by an account of their ornamentation and their inscriptions. Finally, the question of their peculiarity and their originality will be considered.

4.3.1 Material

Ossuaries were primarily constructed from **stone**. Stonecutters were employed to carve out the rectangular box from a block of stone. Almost exclusively, they used the local white calcareous nari stone which is so abundant in the Jerusalem region. This soft limestone permitted easy cutting and carving. Less frequently, varieties of the hard pinkish, greyish-white limestone were utilised and rarely the heavy porous type which was usually quarried for building blocks.

¹⁶⁵ JDO, 24.

The *ossuaries* highlighted in this study are the ones fashioned from limestone. Those made from other materials should also be mentioned because their extent may help in the dating of the *ossuaries*.

Wooden *ossuaries*, similar to the limestone samples, have not been discovered.¹⁶⁶ Debate among scholars centered on whether there had been a prototypical wooden *ossuary*.¹⁶⁷ In fact, archaeologists have recently found evidence for wooden *ossuaries* in En-Gedi. The one preserved example is a plain pine chest (with grooves to guide the lid) which does not represent a chip-carved "prototype".¹⁶⁸ However, the possibility of a wooden prototype which was imitated in stone cannot be disproven. Occasionally clay was used to fashion *ossuaries*. A small number of reddish-brown clay *ossuaries* were found in the Galilee and in the Judaen foothills, but only one in Jerusalem. Those *ossuaries* were dated from the late first century to the late second and to first half of the third century CE.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Occasionally wooden coffins were reused for secondary burials, see Nahman Avigad, "Expedition A - Nahal David," *IEJ* 12/3-4 (1962) 182-3; Hadas, "En-Gedi", 7. Similarly, lead coffins found near En-Gedi and at Beth Shearim, were sometimes reused as *ossuaries*, see Goodenough, *Symbols I* (1953) 112 and Avigad, *Beth Shearim*, 217.

¹⁶⁷ It has been suggested on grounds of three details. First: Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs", 124, recovered nails which could be attributed to a disintegrated wooden *ossuary*. Second: The chip carve technique of stone *ossuaries* is thought to simulate a presupposed wooden *ossuary* fashioned in the same manner as the wood carvings characteristic of European folk-art. But Rahmani, *RCat*, 4, refutes this conjecture with the argument that there is no evidence of chip carving in wood before the Byzantine period in Israel. Yet, Hadas' publication, "En-Gedi", 4, shows a rosette decoration on Coffin 11 in Tomb 5. Third: Linguistic arguments - as already mentioned - may suggest that the term *arazin* was derived from the word cedar wood.

¹⁶⁸ Hadas, "En-Gedi", 2,3.

¹⁶⁹ Rahmani, "Ossuaries," 196; *JDO*, 25 n.9.

4.3.2 Forms

The *ossuaries* here described are rectangular boxes, covered with a lid. They may or may not have four low feet. The externals of the *ossuaries* are very similar to each other though the lids come in different forms: gabled, vaulted or flat (fig. 10a,b,c). Usually the lid rests on the upper edges of the chest or on an inner ledge cut into the rim. A different technique was used when manufacturing the flat lids - the rim of one of the chest's narrow sides was cut down to enable the lid to be slid into place along grooves cut into the three remaining edges of the chest (fig. 10d). Another technique was to affix the lid to the rim of the chest on one side by means of iron nails, rivets or ropes. Many lids show depressions cut into the narrow sides, which seem to be finger grips needed for more easy handling. All this special care was apparently applied to the lids in order to avoid an easy unwanted opening of the *ossuary*.

It has been suggested that the *ossuaries* are copies of household chests, used throughout the whole ancient Mediterranean world, whose size could be adapted to the function they now served.¹⁷⁰ The one group of *ossuaries*, which does not fit the prototype of a household chest, is the one covered by a gable lid. This has often degenerated to a mere ridge with a corner - or central - *acroteria* (fig. 10e). These *ossuaries* are dated to the third century CE and seem to have taken the sarcophagi of that period as their model.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ RCat, 5; see the terms for *ossuaries* which originally denoted a "chest".

¹⁷¹ RCat, 6 n.13, #'s 553, 681, 690.

4.3.3 Dimensions

The length of most *ossuaries* was determined by the bones of the corpse, the width by the pelvis, the height by the skull and the total number of bones which were to be placed in the receptacle.¹⁷² Therefore, the size can vary considerably depending on the dimensions of the skeletal remains. Very young infants were seldom accorded their own *ossuary*.¹⁷³ An *ossuary* for a little child could be as small as 29.5 cm. length x 16 cm. width x 20 cm. height. An adult's box varied from 42-65 cm. in length by 23-28 cm. in width by 30-39 cm. in height. In the case of multiple burials the chests had larger dimensions: 62-89 cm. in length by 27-31 cm. in width by 32-41 cm. in height. The measurements of numerous chests decrease toward their base.¹⁷⁴ The walls are usually ca. 3 cm. thick. Hard limestone chests are 7-8 cm. thick and even more massive at their bases.

4.3.4 Craftmanship

The most available resource, limestone, determined the two different trends in craftsmanship and the variant techniques which the artisans employed. Genuine masonry skills were required for the hard limestone *ossuary*.¹⁷⁵ The stonemasons and artisans utilised mallet, chisel and measuring instruments in effecting the **high relief** technique.

¹⁷² RCat, #776.

¹⁷³ RCat, #'s 49, 803; more examples in Bagatti and Milik, Dominus Flevit, Plate 6, figs. 11 and 12.

¹⁷⁴ RCat, #609, #793, #826.

¹⁷⁵ RCat, #'s 60, 153, 154, 294, 308, 408, 893; see fig. 3 bottom right.

Many *ossuaries* feature a comb-dressed surface.¹⁷⁶ As a rule, rosettes, wreaths, leaves, fruits and concentric circles or flat discs are the ornaments protruding from the polished surface, very similar to the ornamental elements on buildings, tomb façades and local *sarcophagi* of the same material.¹⁷⁷

The soft limestone was uniquely suitable for thin-lined incisions and the technique called "chip carving".¹⁷⁸ These kind of *ossuaries* make up the overwhelming contingent of all ornamented receptacles.

Occasionally some free-hand designs were done. In a few instances red, red-brown or ochre paint was applied to the *ossuaries*, either as the first or the last stage of the decorating process. Only in two cases have traces of painted objects been recorded.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ RCat, #13, #14.

¹⁷⁷ Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, "Akeldama. Potter's Field or High Priest's Tomb?" BAR 20/6 (1994) 32-33, feature a mammoth rosette which decorates the carved domed ceiling of the main chamber of the triple-gated tomb at Akeldama. Thirty-two petals surround a small whorl rosette at center and stylized acanthus leaves fill the corners. The authors consider this rosette and a Doric frieze, with rosettes and grape bunches, copies of the decorative style on Herod's Temple mount. Examples of similar decorations on sarcophagi are the ones found in the Akeldama Burial cave #2, in the Nazarite Burial cave and in the Tomb of Herod's family.

¹⁷⁸ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Chip-Carving in Palestine," IEJ 38 (1988) 59-75 - a) the furrow cut, 2) the leaf cut, 3) the triangular cut, and 4) the zigzag cut. The craftsman sketched charcoal guidelines on the smoothed surface of the chest using a ruler or a string and a carving knife. The compass enabled him to circumscribe circles, curves and also to mark the exact distances and intersecting points of other elements in a symmetrical pattern. Carving tools included the carving knife or a chisel, a gouge and veining-tools.

¹⁷⁹ JDO, 29.

When looking at the production of *ossuaries* over a period of time, a difference in the quality of craftsmanship may be detected.¹⁸⁰ In the aftermath of 70 CE the number of skilled artisans in Jerusalem declined. The manufacture of hard limestone *ossuaries* and chip-carved specimens of soft limestone had come to an end. The samples of outstanding craftsmanship found in the vicinity of Jerusalem after 70 CE may have come from refugee artisans. A cheaper variety of incised soft limestone *ossuaries* were made thereafter. The high quality of finely incised embellishment had eventually declined to clumsily fashioned and crudely decorated bone-boxes after the year 135 CE.¹⁸¹ That clay was being used more extensively is also an indication of the deterioration of a skilful craft.¹⁸²

Around fifteen percent of the ornamented *ossuaries* show only partly finished components. The reason may be lack of time rather than sloppiness on the artist's side.

4.3.5 Ornamentation

Most *ossuaries* found are plain and uninscribed. Ornamentation has only recently been explored by Rahmani¹⁸³ and Figueras.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ RCat, 21-23.

¹⁸¹ RCat, #23.

¹⁸² RCat, #754 or fragments #'s 755, 756.

¹⁸³ RCat, 25-55.

¹⁸⁴ JDO, 27-77.

Decorated *ossuaries* have gained unique attention within the field of Jewish art. Also, they have stimulated the discussion regarding symbolism and representation within the disciplines of Fine Art and Theology.¹⁸⁵

Style and composition: Generally the decorations consist of incised designs in the polished surface of the chest and of the lid. In most cases, only the long side, the **face**, is decorated. Sometimes also the lateral faces, but rarely all sides, display adornment.

Symmetry and placing of motifs: The most common type of *ossuary* ornamentation is a schema consisting of a frame of zigzag lines or ornamental fringes (fig.11a). Generally this frame is subdivided into two panels or *metopes*, though there could be as many as five (fig.11b). Usually the *metope* is occupied by a six-petalled rosette. The *triglyphs* in this schema may be empty or they could contain additional marks or motifs (fig.11c). Occasionally motifs cover the entire side(s) of the chest, as well as the lid (fig. 11d). The appreciation of symmetry is discernible in the decorations of this category. Therefore, the occurrence of asymmetry (fig.11e) was considered with particular regard and was seen to "manifest a special intention".¹⁸⁶

Horror vacui: Some of the workshops show a strong tendency to fill all available space in the four corners of the *metopes*, inside the circles and in the *triglyphs*. This

¹⁸⁵ At this stage, only style and composition of the ornamentation are described; a possible interpretation will be discussed in Part Three of this study.

¹⁸⁶ JDQ, 31, n. 32.

might suggest the characteristic "horror" of empty spaces, the *horror vacui*, of Oriental art (fig. 11f).

Thematics: The repertoire of forms is quite numerous - about thirty-five forms were inventoried, but the themes are limited to plant, geometric and architectural motifs and some varia. The refusal to use human or animal figures is explained by Jewish religious convictions¹⁸⁷ and was complied with strictly during this period.¹⁸⁸

Originality of Forms: Of six-hundred samples, only fifteen have a parallel.¹⁸⁹ The artisans apparently did not produce assembly-line like works, but strove for originality. The motifs are similar to the ones appearing in other artifacts of the Second Temple period. Hachlili assumes that workshops probably had repertoires of patterns from which to select their designs.¹⁹⁰ Figueras asserts that the "Hellenistic taste of the region in that period" was inescapable in Jewish art, though uniquely adapted to the form required. Thus, he refutes Rahmani's view that "the form of the *ossuary* and its decoration do not show any direct foreign influence."¹⁹¹

Stylization: The art of the Palestinian *ossuaries* is mainly decorative rather than representative and therefore displays stylized elements. On the one hand, stylization may occur wherever artists lack the time or the skills to produce more realistic forms and this

¹⁸⁷ Ex 20:4; Deut 4:16-18, 5:8.

¹⁸⁸ Avni, "Akeldama", 41, claims that bucrania are depicted on a discovered hard lime-stone *ossuary* whose owners immigrated from the diaspora.

¹⁸⁹ JDO, 34.

¹⁹⁰ AJAA, 111.

¹⁹¹ JDO, 34.

art would in the end resemble graffito drawings. On the other hand, stylization, as an artistic technique, wants to present the object in its essential elements (fig.13c,e). Both forms are found on *ossuaries* and Figueras wants to trace the feature of stylization to the "Eastern taste for stylization and pattern-following." However, as a decorative art, "many of its stylistic forms can be found wherever purely ornamental, non-figurative, motifs are used."¹⁹²

4.3.6 Decorative Motifs

Among the **plant motifs**, the principal ornamental element is obviously the **rosette**, an *Allerweltsmotiv*.¹⁹³ It appears, in different forms and sizes, anywhere on the chest and the lid, but mainly on the front panel. Frequently rosettes fill the various metopes on the panel. They may form rows and fill the spaces between multipartite panels. They may flank central motifs which may consist of a bigger rosette itself. The rosette is compass-drawn and carved out or, in a more elaborate technique, hollowed out. The simple six-petalled rosette was the most common form.¹⁹⁴ A profusion of varieties - some more floral, some more geometrical - decorate the *ossuaries* (fig.12). The whirling wheel sometimes takes the place of the rosette (fig.12l).

¹⁹² JDO, 33.

¹⁹³ Carl Watzinger, Denkmäler Palästinas. Eine Einführung in die Archäologie des Heiligen Landes (2 vols.in 1 vol.; Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs, 1935) II: 74-76, 158-159.

¹⁹⁴ The rosette is easily sketched in by outlining a circle and using a compass to draw semicircles which intersect at the centre of the primary circle. Other numbers of petals or leaves were depicted within the frame of the circle, such as rosettes of three, four, five, seven, eight, nine, ten, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-one and twenty-four petals. The technique is described in RCat, 39-41.

Plants¹⁹⁵ in the form of trees, especially palm-trees (fig.13a,b,c), **leaves** (fig.13d) and **branches** (fig.13e) occur on *ossuary* lids or are frequently seen in the triglyphs. **Fruits of the Land** (fig.13f) and **flowers**, such as lilies (fig.13h,i), are represented. Seldom were acanthus leaves depicted (fig.13g). Sometimes a vine scroll motif, in a frame or frieze, with grape clusters, pomegranates, figs or olives, is chosen. Lotus and palmette appear side by side in a frame, or with other motifs. The palmette is preferred as a central (fig.11c) or as a corner motif. Ivy leaves are often used as an angle ornament (fig.15e). **Wreaths** (fig.3) usually adorn the narrow sides of the chest or the lid. They seem to be common among Diaspora Jews.¹⁹⁶

Among the **architectural motifs**¹⁹⁷ several façades or portals were represented (fig.14a-c), most of the time by a columned porch. The outer court and the gates, very similar to the original, may be depicted. A type of lattice gate, which has not survived in actuality, can be found delineated on an *ossuary*. Frequently, the *nephesh* was a chosen pattern, often in the form of an obelisk (fig.14d) or a column (fig.14e). The column, besides being part of the portico motif, stands on steps (fig.14f). The fluted columns have either Ionic, Doric or Corinthian capitals (fig.14g), or also various elements such as, rosettes, palmettes, lilies or discs. Ashlar walls (fig.14h), which were common in tomb façades and contemporaneous buildings, are depicted, either unadorned

¹⁹⁵ RCat, 42-44, 48-50.

¹⁹⁶ RCat, 41.

¹⁹⁷ RCat, 28-34, 45-46.

or overlaid with circles or rosettes. The steps on a column base, or the pyramid cap of a *nepesh*, may bear an ashlar motif.

From among the **geometric motifs**¹⁹⁸ the most common is the zigzag line, either singly or double (fig.15a), used as a frame or as a filler. The design, which resembles cursive script (fig.15b), became most prevalent on the finely incised *ossuaries*. Another favourite pattern for frames consists of interlaced semi-circles, often used as a frieze or to encircle rosettes. Patterns, such as a leaf, a leave-and-dart (fig.15c), a running dog¹⁹⁹, a fluted frieze composition (fig.15c), are employed as frames or on cornices. The disc motif (fig.15f), easily drawn with a compass, was used by itself either in a whole form or halved or quartered. It can be a space-filler in metope corners, or encircle a rosette. Discs can be utilized as frames, or they can form an all-over decoration (fig.11d).

Among the **varia motifs** the amphora is a favorite one (fig.16). It is assumed that amphorae surmounted some of Jerusalem's tomb monuments²⁰⁰, and an amphora set on a trumpet foot pictured on a *nepesh* may be an indication of such a trend.²⁰¹ Generally, it appears singly, adorned (16a) or combined with other motifs, more or less stylized (fig.16b,c), or overlaid with zigzags (fig.16d). The latter technique was also

¹⁹⁸ RCat, 36-39.

¹⁹⁹ RCat, #779.

²⁰⁰ RCat, 34.

²⁰¹ RCat, #325.

applied on the *menorah* motif (fig.16e), which was represented on *ossuaries* a few times.²⁰²

4.3.7 Inscriptions

A considerable number of *ossuaries* bear inscriptions. The ratio of inscribed specimens to the total of discovered *ossuaries* is best determined within a specific tomb group.²⁰³ In some cases none of the *ossuaries* are inscribed, in others up to 81 % yield inscriptions, so that no specific correlation can be discerned with regard to the quantity of *ossuaries* or the workmanship of the tomb. *Ossuaries* with inscriptions outside the Jerusalem region are rare²⁰⁴; the monumental tomb in Jericho and the burial caves in Modi'in are exceptions.

The reasons for inscribing and marking *ossuaries* may have been: making sure the lid fitted properly onto the the container; identifying the dead to the visitor; demonstrating the social standing of the deceased and his kinsfolk, for protection of the skeletal remains; and, finally, to console the bereaved.

²⁰² Levi Y. Rahmani, "Representations of the Menorah on Ossuaries," in Hillel Geva (ed.), Ancient Jerusalem Revealed (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 239-243.

²⁰³ Rahmani, RCat, 11. Of the 897 specimens mentioned in the catalogue about 233 are inscribed. However, this number does not reflect the original proportion since plain specimens were excluded from this catalogue or discarded by the excavators.

²⁰⁴ RCat, 11. Only eight specimens are included in the catalogue.

The Distribution of Inscribed *Ossuaries* according to Tomb Groups

Inscribed Ossuaries	Total Number of Ossuaries	Percentage	Location
0	13	0	Jerusalem ²⁰⁵ , Shmuel Hanavi(a)
1	24	0.5 %	Jerusalem ²⁰⁶ , Shmuel Hanavi(b)
7	38	18 %	Jerusalem ²⁰⁷ , Mt. Scopus(a)
43	123	35 %	Jerusalem ²⁰⁸ , Dominus Flevit
5	12	41 %	Jerusalem ²⁰⁹ , Caiphas Tomb
23	40	57 %	Jerusalem ²¹⁰ , Akeldama
9	11	81 %	Jerusalem ²¹¹ , Kidron Valley(a)
14	22	63 %	Jericho ²¹² , Goliath Tomb
0	19	0 %	Horvat Tilla (Kibbutz Lahav) ²¹³

²⁰⁵ RCat, 307.

²⁰⁶ RCat, 307.

²⁰⁷ RCat, 306.

²⁰⁸ Bagatti and Milik, Dominus Flevit, 100-109.

²⁰⁹ Zvi Greenhut, "Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family," BAR 18/5 (1992) 32.

²¹⁰ Ilan Tal, "The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions", Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut (eds.), The Akeldama Tombs (IAA Reports #1, Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996) 57.

²¹¹ RCat, 305.

²¹² Hachlili, "Goliath ", 22-32.

²¹³ Gophna, " Tel Halif," 69-76.

The engravings were incised, in the manner of graffito, horizontally, vertically, on a slant and even inverted, anywhere on the box or the lid and even on the rim when it served as an aid for aligning the lid with the container. A name could be repeatedly scratched on one piece, up to seven times.²¹⁴ The inscriptions appear clumsily spaced, haphazardly executed (fig.18d), inverted (fig.18f) and even contain spelling mistakes (fig.17g). This lack of skilful execution is surprising, especially on an otherwise magnificently ornamented *ossuary*, or on one indicating eminent rank, such as the *ossuary* belonging to Caiphas.²¹⁵ The reasons may have been the adverse circumstances under which the inscriber etched the epitaph: at the time of the burial, inside the tomb, or even after the receptacle had been placed into the narrow *loculus*, using a nail or a piece of charcoal.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ RCat, #'s 236, 383. That the repetition of the name may have been an expression of grief has been suggested by Schwabe and Lifshitz, Beth She'arim, II: 83.

²¹⁵ Ronny Reich, "Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes," BAR 18/5 (1992) 42.

²¹⁶ Reich, "Caiaphas", 42, and RCat, 11. The explanation, that inscribing the names was a new trend and hence the artisans were inexperienced is not convincing, considering the skillful, highly talented craftsmen. It seems that not misery of the buyer, nor sloppiness on part of the artisan, was to blame, but that the inscriptions had not been applied beforehand in the workshop. Some fine examples of script are #789 or those picked out in colour as #'s 32, 396 or 403 in RCat.

The Distribution of Jewish and Greek Inscriptions in Tomb Groups

Jewish	Greek	Bilingual	Location
2 12 6	7 1	1	Kidron Valley (a) Kidron Valley (d) Kidron Valley (f) ²¹⁷
4	5 2		Giv'at Hamivtar (a) Giv'at Hamivtar (g)
5	8 5	1 4	Akeldama ²¹⁸ , Cave 2 Cave 3
4	7	3	Jericho ²¹⁹ , Goliath Tomb

The languages displayed are Hebrew, Aramaic²²⁰, Greek and sometimes Latin. Some of the epitaphs are bilingual. In Jerusalem almost half of the inscriptions are in Greek.²²¹ This has led to the inference that for a great part of the Jewish population

²¹⁷ RCat, Table 2: Table of Tomb-Groups, 305.

²¹⁸ Ilan, "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions", 57.

²¹⁹ Hachlili, "Goliath", 32-35.

²²⁰ No preference of Hebrew versus Aramaic can be detected, for example: *ben* or *bar* (son), *bat* or *barat* (daughter).

²²¹ These calculations are based on RCat, Table of Tomb-Groups, 304-307. There are a total of 774 *ossuaries* recorded from Jerusalem, of which 52 bear Greek inscriptions, 107 Hebrew or Aramaic and 7 are bilingual: Greek and Semitic.

Greek was a familiar language. "We may assume that most Jewish Jerusalemites who saw the inscriptions *in situ* were able to read them."²²²

Usually epitaphs on *ossuaries* consist of the buried individual's name. In the *ossuary* collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority Jewish names constitute about half of all names. The majority of these occur in Jewish²²³ script (fig.17a) only, the rest are in Greek (fig.17b) or in both scripts (fig.17g). Two Jewish names are in Latin (fig.17d) and one in the Palmyrene²²⁴ script. The collection features only slightly fewer Greek names of which about half the number are written in Greek script (fig.17c) exclusively, five in Jewish script (fig.17f), the rest in both. One Nabataean name and seven Latin names are written in Greek characters (fig.17e), one also occurs in Jewish script. In a few cases we find ligatures in Jewish as well as in Greek script.²²⁵ Some

²²² Pieter W. van der Horst, "Jewish Funerary Inscriptions. Most are in Greek." BAR 18/5 (1992) 48; Baruch Lifshitz, "Jérusalem sous la domination romaine. Histoire de la ville depuis la conquête de Pompée jusqu'à Constantin (63 a.C.-325 p.C.)," ANRW II. Principat 8 (1977) 459: "La proportion des textes épigraphiques grecs par rapport à la quantité des inscriptions découvertes à Jérusalem témoigne de l'emploi de la langue grecque par une partie assez considérable de la population de la ville."

²²³ The term "Jewish" is applied here to differentiate this script from ancient Hebrew script. The alphabet derived from the Aramaic script and was employed during the Second Temple period for writing both Aramaic and Hebrew; compare Gabriel Barkay, "Another Palaeo-Hebrew Ossuary Inscription," IEJ 39 (1989) 201-203.

²²⁴ Two other names in Palmyrene script seem to be 'Arab'. Rahmani, RCat, 13, suggests that the choice of script may be determined by the geographic origin of the dead.

²²⁵ RCat, #57: *beth-resh* for b(a)r, #98: *tau-eta-rho*, #349: *tau-rho*.

inscriptions display an interesting feature: cursive letters are used together with lapidary forms.²²⁶

Presumably, the *ossuaries* feature the **personal names** of the buried individuals (fig.23a).²²⁷ Extremely popular female names were Shlomzion (fig.19h,j)²²⁸ and Mariah with its variations (fig.18d,g, 19e). Nearly half of all women carried either one of these two names. Very common in Jewish Palestinian circles also was Martha (fig.19i, 20a).²²⁹ Among the male names Joseph (fig.20a,c,e) and Simon (fig.19a,c, 20b,e,f, 21a) were the most favoured, followed by Yehuda (fig.19g, 20g), Lazarus, Yohanan = John (fig.d), Ananias, Yehoshua and Mattathias (fig.19e, 22a, 20f).²³⁰ Some *ossuaries* display double names, such as Sorra Aristobola (fig.18e) or Shimon Thaddaeus, or contracted forms such as Yeshu and Yeshu'a (fig.18b,d). All these names

²²⁶ Ilan, "Ossuary Inscriptions," 57.

²²⁷ An inscription published by Joseph Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20/1-2 (1970) 37, reads: "Ossuary of Shalom daughter of Sha'ul who failed to give birth. Peace daughter!" The anthropologist Haas, "Givat ha-Mivtar", 48, identified the remains as a young woman with her unborn child.

²²⁸ Tal Ilan, "Notes on the Distribution of Women's Names in Palestine in the Second Temple and Mishnaic Period," *JJS* 40/2 (1989) 191-192, 198-199; idem, "Ossuary Inscriptions", 70, maintains that Shelamzion (Shlomzion) is not the same name as Salome; but see fig.d (Salome) and fig.19j (Shlamzion) which are one and the same person.

²²⁹ Ilan, "Notes", 197.

²³⁰ *RCat*, 14, listed the names in the order of their frequency out of 147 names; according to Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 108, the male names occur in this order: Zacharia, Jesu, Eleazar, Menachem, Josef, John, Jehuda; the female names: Salome, Maria, Martha, Johanna.

are familiar to us from contemporary literature and documents.²³¹ Thus, inscribed *ossuaries* provide a significant supplement to the Jewish *onomasticon* of this epoch.

Approximately twenty-eight percent of men had one of only four names.²³² Therefore, the use of **nicknames** or **appellatives** (fig.18c) is understandable in order to distinguish among people with the same personal names²³³, such as the 'Elder' (fig.20e), the 'Mute'²³⁴, the 'Amputated'²³⁵, the 'Small'²³⁶, 'Oil Cake'²³⁷ 'Balsam' (fig.18h)²³⁸ and the 'grasshopper' (fig.17e). The name 'Goliath' in Jericho was adapted as a family name (fig.19d,j).²³⁹ **Family relationship** was a frequent datum in epitaphs, "... mother of" (fig. 19j), "... mother" (fig.19h), "... mother of..." (fig.19j), "... father" (fig.19g). The father's name was commonly used as a family name for a man or an unmarried woman: "... son of ..." (fig.19a), "... daughter of ..." (fig.19b,i), or the

²³¹ The books of the New Testament, the Mishna, Murabba'at documents from the Dead Sea and epitaphs in tombs, such as the above mentioned "Abba" inscription.

²³² Ilan Tal, Names of the Jews in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and the Mishna Periods. A Statistical Study (diss.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1984, Hebrew) 45.

²³³ Apparently Caiaphas was a nickname: Ant 18.95: "Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the High priesthood."

²³⁴ RCat, #117.

²³⁵ RCat, #62.

²³⁶ RCat, #'s 421, 552.

²³⁷ RCat, #198.

²³⁸ RCat, #461; 'Aloe' #114, 'Cinnamon' #803.

²³⁹ Hachlili, "Goliath", 52, found that in fact that some individuals were "exceptionally tall" (1.88m).

husband's name for a married woman: "... wife of..." (fig.19e, 22a). Sometimes the proper name of the deceased is left out and appears as "wife " (19c), "mother" (fig.19f). In multiple *ossuary* burials mention is made of husband and wife (fig.19e), mother and son²⁴⁰, mother and infants²⁴¹ and brothers (fig.20f, 21c).

Frequently mentioned was the deceased's **place of origin** (fig.20a)²⁴². On *ossuaries* from Jerusalem tombs, "Papias and Salomich(!) the Scythopolitans"²⁴³, "Simon of Ptolemais"²⁴⁴ are mentioned, and in Jericho, "Pelatya from Jerusalem".²⁴⁵

Occasionally reference is made to the deceased person's **profession** or **accomplishments**. There is "Simon, the Builder of the Sanctuary" (fig.20b)²⁴⁶, "Nicanor from Alexandria who made the [Temple]gates", "Yehosef son of Hananya the scribe" (fig.20c)²⁴⁷, "Mathia and Simon, masters of the tomb" (fig.20f). "Aza who

²⁴⁰ Bagatti, Dominus Flevit, 79. 8: "Shalom and her son".

²⁴¹ RCat, #'s 73, 800, 868.

²⁴² Hachlili emphasizes, AJAA, 103, that during the Herodian period inscriptions on *ossuaries* mentioning the dead person's place of origin, do not indicate a reinterment. The skeletal remains belonged to a local person who originally came from someplace else.

²⁴³ RCat, #139.

²⁴⁴ RCat, #99.

²⁴⁵ RCat, #777.

²⁴⁶ Vassilios Tzaferis, "The Burial of Simon the Temple Builder," in Yigael Yadin (ed.), Jerusalem Revealed. Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1975) 71-72.

²⁴⁷ Varda Sussman, "A Burial Cave on Mount Scopus," Atiqot 21 (1992) 89-96.

made it" (the *ossuary*) denotes an artisan.²⁴⁸ A physician²⁴⁹, a potter²⁵⁰ or a weaver²⁵¹ are also alluded to.

Names were sometimes distinguished by the **personal status** of the deceased or that of his/her kin. The mention of the priesthood within the family served to enhance the prestige of a descendant: "Yehohanah, granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus"²⁵² (fig.20d), "Menahem of the sons of Jachim - priest".²⁵³ Hanania who had been the son of the Nazir Jonathan²⁵⁴, Judah (fig.20g)²⁵⁵ and Salome²⁵⁶ had been proselytes, Theodotos who had been a freedman of Queen Agrippina (fig.20h)²⁵⁷, and Kynoros, (son) of Diodothos, *protopolites* (First Citizen)²⁵⁸, displayed their family pride in these inscriptions.

²⁴⁸ Ilan, "Ossuary Inscriptions", 60-61; see also: Bagatti, Dominus Flevit, 83.35.

²⁴⁹ RCat, #80.

²⁵⁰ Nave, "Ossuary Inscriptions", 35; RCat, #222.

²⁵¹ Bagatti, Dominus Flevit, 94.27.

²⁵² Dan Barag and David Flusser, "The Ossuary of Yehohanah granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus," IEJ 36 (1986) 39-44; F.M. Abel, "Tombeau et ossuaires juifs récemment découverts," (Chronique) RB 10 (1913) 268.

²⁵³ Bagatti and Milik, "Dominus flevit", 73, 89-92.

²⁵⁴ Avigad, "Vault", 197.

²⁵⁵ Ilan, "The Ossuary", 66.

²⁵⁶ Bagatti, Dominus Flevit, #'s 31, also 13, 21, 22.

²⁵⁷ Hachlili, "Goliath", 45, 62.

²⁵⁸ RCAT, # 282.

The age of the deceased is twice recorded in Greek. Greek letters representing the numbers are preceded by the sign L, standing for ἐτῶν, years (fig.21c).

About half of all *ossuaries* show **marks** (fig.21a)²⁵⁹ which could be direction marks, emblems, price tags (fig.21e) or protective marks. The identical direction marks whose purpose was to position the lid for the best fit on the chest, usually occur in pairs, one on the lid and the second one either on the rim, the narrow or the long side of the chest. Their most common forms are zigzags, crossed lines, stars or triangles, but also Greek or Jewish letters (figs.21d). One mark especially, the *chi-ro* mark, has aroused controversy. Bagatti and Milik regard it as Christogram, which has not generally been accepted.²⁶⁰ Alternatively, it may stand for the word *χαράσσω* in the sense of "sealed"²⁶¹ or a monogram.

Some marks seem to represent insignias of the family of the deceased and may occur as part of the ornamental design or also appear as independent elements.

²⁵⁹ *RCat*, 19-21.

²⁶⁰ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 6, 178; refuted by Nahman Avigad, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano.*" *IEJ* 11 (1961) 94; also Roland de Vaux, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano.*" *RB* 66 (1959) 300.

²⁶¹ Pasquale Colella, "Les abréviations $\chi\rho$ et (XP)," *RB* 80 (1973) 547-558.

Occasionally **formulae for protection**²⁶² of the skeletal remains (fig.22a) or **magic formulae** (fig.22b)²⁶³ are recorded.

Almost completely absent from local Jewish tombs²⁶⁴ and *ossuaries*, during this time period, are **consolatory** epitaphs (fig.23a).²⁶⁵ Disappointingly, in regard to this study, no epitaph on *ossuaries* refers to the belief in an afterlife or in the resurrection. Such expressions though have been found in abundance in Jewish burials from this time in Rome and in Egypt²⁶⁶ and later on in Beth She'arim, in the Galilee. On the contrary, two Jerusalem inscriptions give expression to very sobering musings, one of which reflects: "No one can go up [from the grave] (fig.21b)²⁶⁷, and the other beseeches the visitor to enjoy himself in this life by eating and drinking.²⁶⁸ The now

²⁶² RCat, #70: "do not open," (Hebrew); #259: "I adjure: let no one take away," (Greek); #142: "whoever moves it, breaks his vow," (Greek); #559: "whoever moves these (bones) away, may blindness strike him."

²⁶³ Hachlili, "Goliath", 62, attests to an abecedary in Greek script on a lid in Jericho; RCat, #787; RCat, 18 n.96, mentions three abecedaries from Beth She'arim.

²⁶⁴ One rare example is described by Nahman Avigad, "Jason's Tomb," IEJ 17/2 (1967) 101-111, and Pierre Benoit, "L'inscription grecque du tombeau de Jason," IEJ 17/2 (1967) 112-113.

²⁶⁵ See the inscription on p. 62 n.228 which ends: " *Shalom bar*". This has been read as "Peace, daughter!" However, it may be the repetition of her name, Shalom, rather than the word shalom, "peace". Another example might be the inscription n.272.

²⁶⁶ Van der Horst, Epitaphs, 112, 123.

²⁶⁷ Frank Moore Cross, "A Note on a Burial Inscription from Mount Scopus," IEJ 33 (1983) 245-246. See also the interpretation given by Joseph Nave, "An Aramaic Consolatory Burial Inscription," Atiqot 14 (1980) 55-59.

²⁶⁸ Baruch Lifshitz, "Notes d'épigraphie palestinienne," RB 73 (1966) 248-257, refers to several pagan parallels.

typical Jewish epitaphs שׁוֹנֵן נַפְשׁוֹ - "Rest of the soul"²⁶⁹, "peace" (*shalom*) and "hélas" (*khaval*), only became frequent at Beth Shearim and are rarely found inscribed on *ossuaries* (fig.23b).²⁷⁰

4.4 Types of *Ossuaries*

Concluding the general description of the *ossuaries* we might distinguish between several types.²⁷¹ Hachlili²⁷² advances the following three general types of *ossuary* ornamentation:

- a. Two symmetrical rosettes enclosed in a frame constitute the standard type of ossuary decoration. The variety of rosette styles is extensive, from simple, incised six-petalled rosettes ... to chip-carved ..., and to elaborately designed and executed rosettes The majority of the decorated ossuaries have depictions of two or more rosettes.
- b. Another group of ossuaries portrays the standard rosettes flanking a central motif consisting of various patterns, for instance a tomb facade ..., a column ... or an amphora
- c. The third group of ossuaries is rendered with a design which covers the entire front of the ossuary but lacks rosettes; for instance, the ossuary with an ashlar motif, with arches, columns and with other designs Occasionally several rosettes are incorporated into this general design

²⁶⁹ G.H. Dalman, "Inschriften aus Palästina," *ZDPV* 37 (1914) 135-136; 144-145.

²⁷⁰ *RCat*, 17-18.

²⁷¹ Figueras, *JDO*, 26, groups *ossuaries* into eight different categories.

²⁷² *AJAA*, 111.

5. Summary of Jewish *Ossilegium* during the Second Temple Period

It has been demonstrated by archaeological discoveries, backed by rabbinical texts, that the practice of *ossilegium* in its different forms was the main burial practice during the Second Temple period. Secondary burials took place in rock-cut tombs with or without receptacles. A considerable number of *ossuaries*, plain or elaborate, housed the skeletal remains of the deceased. Taking into account the architecture of the tombs, their contents and their distribution, we have concluded that this new mode of burial was adopted during the Herodian period. As it has been rightly pointed out, *ossilegium* "complicated rather than simplified the former way of interment"²⁷³. Reasons others than practical ones must have motivated this new burial custom. With the assumption that these practices reflect man's belief concerning death and the hereafter, Part Two will deal with the notion of afterlife during the period in question.

²⁷³ JDO, 9.

Part Two

The Development of the Notion of the Afterlife during the Second Temple Period

1. Introduction

1.1 Reasons for Fostering a Post-Mortem Theology

While exploring the notion of afterlife, we may wonder how it is possible for us to conceive of the hereafter. Braun declares the human being to be a *transzendenz-orientiertes Wesen*¹, a being, who has an intrinsic drive to transcend the human limitations of experience, in order to cope with the existential dilemma, death. The knowledge of a realm beyond this material world constitutes a relieving illusion, *eine entlastende Illusion*.²

The reasons which might have precipitated post-mortem theologies are briefly presented by considering the findings of existential analysis and of the history of religions.³

¹ Hans-Jürg Braun, Das Jenseits. Die Vorstellungen der Menschheit über das Leben nach dem Tod (Zürich/Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1996) 16-19.

² Braun, Jenseits, 18.

³ Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) esp., "Anxiety of fate and death", 42-45; Gion Condrau, "Todesfurcht und Todessehnsucht", in Ansgar Paus (ed.), Grenzerfahrung Tod (Graz: Styria, 1976) 216.

In philosophical anthropology death is postulated as an existential threat⁴ to humankind, because our ontic self-affirmation is threatened by "nonbeing", as articulated by Tillich. "Existentially everybody is aware of the complete loss of self which biological extinction implies."⁵ Thus, death generates a basic and inescapable condition of anxiety in human consciousness which is met in two ways: either in the denial of death, or in the affirmation of an afterlife, since to "deal with death is belief in a continuation of life after death."⁶ But since this anxiety cannot be eliminated existentially, until the actual occurrence of death, "there may be an ongoing dialectic between the anxiety of death and the blessedness of the afterlife."⁷

The history of religions corroborates the postulate of an existential anxiety of death. The consciousness that death is beyond our control, a source of pain, bafflement and moral paradox⁸ is dealt with in many religious traditions and has called forth various coping mechanisms. Post-mortem theologies provide transformative or therapeutic answers in their notions of immortality, resurrection and eternal life, for the individual

⁴ Antonio R. Gualtieri, The Vulture and the Bull. Religious Responses to Death (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984) 1 et passim.

⁵ Tillich, Courage, 42.

⁶ Tillich, Courage, 39.

⁷ Gualtieri, Vulture, 164.

⁸ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in Michael Banton (ed.), Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion ([London]: Tavistock Publications, 1966) 14; Lloyd R. Bailey, Biblical Perspectives on Death (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) 4, argues strongly that in the earlier part of the scriptures death is accepted as the natural process. Only when untimely or violent is death presented as distressful; but Gualtieri, Vulture, 75-76, refutes Bailey's statements and argues for initial and transformed interpretations of death.

as well as the collective. A historical study of theology will show, that theological concepts and the literature that contains them, evolve from concrete historical situations or circumstances with which people are confronted.⁹ The following issues foster notions of an afterlife:

- Death anxiety as experienced by each human being
- Historical situations perceived as dilemmas
- Bafflement, suffering and moral paradox
- The failure of traditional religious beliefs
- Contact with foreign cults.

1.2 Nomenclature

Some definitions of pivotal terms denoting or associated with the notion of "afterlife" will be discussed at this point.

1.2.1 Afterlife is defined as the fate of humans after death.¹⁰ The term fate encompasses various perceptions of the hereafter of the human being. Being a synonym for "post-mortem existence" it is a more general concept than "life after death" in the sense of "a life believed to follow after death", which is only one of several possibilities.

⁹ George W.E. Nickelsburg, Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism. (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 10.

¹⁰ Jonathan Smith (ed.), The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion (San Francisco: Harper, 1995) 31.

A denial of a "life" hereafter is possible by the thought of a total annihilation of the human being after death. However, fate cannot be denied since annihilation still implies fate. This fate may be blissful or dreary. No value judgment need be attached.

1.2.2 Resurrection from the Latin *re* (again) and *surgere* (to rise) is the notion that the dead shall rise, resurge or revive in bodily form, either individually or collectively. Although the form of the body may change, the personhood remains intact. The Greek term for resurrection is *ἀναστασις*.¹¹ The *Tanakh* uses the expression "to sleep" (*ysn*) to describe death.¹² Therefore, "to awaken from sleep", (*ἐγείρω*), to "stand up" (Hebrew: *kvm*, *amd*) is a way to denote revivication of the dead and often is synonymous with resurrection (second century BCE). Towards the end of the first century BCE resurrection is also alluded to as restoration, or transfiguration, or renewal of righteous people in a new world, also considered a transformation into angelic form, or the reunification of body and soul.¹³ Resurrection may even be a new creation *ex nihilo*.¹⁴

¹¹ Albrecht Oepke, "ἀνίστημι", *TDNT* I (1964) 368-371 ; idem. "ἐγείρω", *TDNT* II (1964) 333-339.

¹² Jer 51:39,57; Job 3:13, 14:12.

¹³ Helmer Ringgren, "Resurrection", *ER* XII: 344-350.

¹⁴ Smith, *Dictionary*, 925; William L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion. Eastern and Western Thought* (new and enl. ed.; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996) 651.

1.2.3 Revivication from the Latin *re* (again) and *vivicare* (vivify, make new life). Death is an ephemeral interruption of life. Ultimately the dead will live again here on earth (not in another realm). The Hebrew term for resurrection, תְּחִיַּיַת הַמֵּתִים (*tekhiyyat ha-metim*), literally signifies revivication. In later Rabbinic concept *tekhiyyat ha-metim* is essentially a reference to the future reunion of body and soul.¹⁵

1.2.4 Assumption from the Latin *ad* (to) and *sumere* (take).¹⁶ Hebrew: אָסַף, is understood as the taking up of body and soul by the Most High into heaven, without having to undergo natural death or immediately upon the death of the individual. Assumption is done to the person by the power of the Most High. Whereas **ascension**, Hebrew: אָסַף ; Greek: ἀναβαίνειν¹⁷, is an action which the individual effects by his own power defined as a human voyage to the upper realms, or the flight of the soul alone.¹⁸ **Ascent** bestows supernatural gifts on the privileged human being or changes his/her status. The ascending person often achieves equality with or even surpasses the angels.¹⁹

¹⁵ Harry Sysling, *Tehiyyat Ha-Metim* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996) 1-2.

¹⁶ Reese, *Dictionary*, 47.

¹⁷ James M. Robinson, "Ascension", *IDB* I: 245-247.

¹⁸ For our topic the tradition which emphasizes that the journey is made just after death is of relevance, not that which emphasizes a state of ecstasy or dream when the human being is alive.

¹⁹ Smith, *Dictionary*, 84; Martha Himmelfarb, "Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple." *SBLSP* 26 (1987) 212.

1.2.5 Immortality from the Latin *immortalis* (not mortal). Its Greek equivalent, *ἀθανασία*²⁰, denotes the condition of not being subject to death. It is a gift of eternal life granted by God to exceptional individuals in the face of the general lot of humanity, who must die. Immortality can mean eternal fame through perpetuated memory.²¹ Immortality is also claimed for the soul, which implies the separation of the soul from the body. Immortality of the soul means being in communion with God, which is so strong that it cannot be eradicated by the destructive force of death.²²

2. Israelite Perceptions of Post-Mortem Fate before 200 BCE

2.1 Hebraic Monistic Anthropology

There is an interdependency between ideas of an afterlife and anthropology. In order to understand post-mortem fate in the early passages of the *Tanakh*, they must be examined against the background of the ancient Hebraic view of the human being and his/her fate at death. Israelite anthropology is monistic.²³ The unity of human nature is expressed by the complementary and inseparable concept of body and life, never by

²⁰ Edmond Jacob, "Immortality", *IDB* II: 688 - 690.

²¹ Smith, *Dictionary*, 481.

²² Hiroshi Obayashi, "Death and Eternal Life in Christianity," in Hiroshi Obayashi (ed.), *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions* (New York: Praeger, 1962) 109-123.

²³ Gualtieri, *Vulture*, 76, uses the modern term "holistic" and gives Dahl's description as: "The unitive notion of human personality"; J. Robert Nelson, "On Life and Living: The Semitic insight," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 3/2 (1978) 133: "Life is not only holistic in the sense of being the integration of the whole person; it is also 'holy' because its deepest meaning consists of being in accord with the Creator's purpose."

the dualistic abstraction of body and soul.²⁴ The Semitic mind recognized that human life is psychosomatic. The philosophical definition of soul was not yet developed, and a soul independent of the body, as posited by Greek philosophy, was unknown in the Ancient Near East.²⁵ The human being was a psycho-physical being whose life was able to manifest itself by extension or concentration in all parts of the body.²⁶

Thus, in Hebraic monistic anthropology, man is a *nephesh*²⁷ *chaya*²⁸, "a living being" in its totality. Breath is a metonymical designation for life, consequently its cessation is the end of life. Moreover, breathing signifies the vital force in a *nephesh*, effected by the divine breath of life, *nishmat*²⁹ *chayim* (Gen 2:7). The Biblical man "se

²⁴ Jakob, Edmond, "ψυχη. B. The anthropology of the Old Testament," *TDNT* IX (1974) 631.

²⁵ Jacob, "Anthropology," 631; Kurt Schubert, "Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur früh rabbinischen Zeit," *BZ* 6/2 (1962) 183.

²⁶ Jakob, "Anthropology", 631.

²⁷ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (London: S. Bagster and Sons, [N.D.]) DLVII, defines the root *nfs* (נפש): to respire, take breath, refresh oneself, and the noun *nephesh* to signify breath, anything that breathes.

²⁸ Davidson, *Lexicon*, CCLVI: adj. *chaya* (חַיָּה): living, alive, vigorous, reviving, (*chai*): to live; the noun *chayim* (חַיִּים): life.

²⁹ Davidson, *Lexicon*, DLXVI: *neshama* (נֶשְׁמָה): breath, life, also, mind, spirit. Jacob, "Anthropology", 618, defines *neshama* as the breath which blows God into the man's nostrils or is the breath in man. *Nephesh* always includes *neshama*, the lack of *neshama* causes the departure of *nephesh*. Gen. 7:22 uses the term *nishmat-ruach chayim*. Davidson, *Lexicon*, DCLXXVIII: *ruach* (רוּחַ): air, breeze, wind, breath, mind, spirit. In passages with anthropological emphasis (Gen 2:7; 6:3, 17), *ruach* is the life-force with which God **makes alive**, not merely bestows life, and is immanent in a living creature. Jakob, "Anthropology", 629, says that *ruach* may be defined as the condition of *nephesh* and regulates its force. Without *nephesh* an individual dies, but without *ruach* a *nephesh* loses its authenticity.

perçoit comme une chair animée, non comme une âme incarnée". *Ruah* is not to be considered

... comme une forme constitutive, mais comme une force extérieure, à la fois respiration et inspiration, qu'on reçoit sans jamais la posséder. Nous sommes ici assez loin de l'anthropologie grecque.³⁰

The anthropological definition of man as *nephesh chaya* and similarly the definition of man as *zelem elohim* (Gen 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6), the *imago dei*, exhibit the theonomous aspects *chaya* and *elohim*.³¹

Nephesh is generally the term for an individual's total nature, not what he has but what he is³², the "self", "the personhood", the "ego." It is a synonym for the personal pronoun (Gen 27:25), for the individual as well as the collective life. In one aspect *nephesh* is always connected to a bodily form and often "best translated as 'person', comprised in corporeal reality."³³ Yet another aspect of *nephesh* expresses movement. Therefore, as Jacob³⁴ points out, "*nefesh* is as hard to define as it is to translate owing

³⁰ Julien Harvey, "La Résurrection de Jésus et la nôtre: revue de la recherche," Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 1/3 (1971) 153.

³¹ Jacob, "Anthropology", 620 n.57; 631: Breathing is the essence of a living being and as such, dependent on God's continued vital breath (Job 34:14; Ps 104:29). Nelson, "Life", 132, notes that the value of life is not intrinsic in itself but remains relative to the providential care of God.

³² Jakob, "Anthropology", 620; Nelson, "Life", 133, points out that the human being does not have *nēphēsh*, he is *nephesh*.

³³ Jacob, "Anthropology", 620.

³⁴ Jacob, "Anthropology", 618.

to its fluid and dynamic aspect."³⁵ It is never, in Semitic thought, an indestructible core of existence, in contradistinction to physical life.³⁶

Nephesh is the concrete form in which life manifests itself in the individual human being. If *nephesh* pours out, life ebbs away (Gen 35:18). Thus, in monistic anthropology, the departure of *nephesh*, the loss of essential personhood, is a metaphor for death which can be described as the weakest form of life.³⁷ The term *nephesh* for a person is still retained in his/her least vital state. Until the flesh has decayed and the features can no longer be distinguished, a *nephesh met*³⁸ denotes a lifeless corpse. The fate of the human being finally is a shadowy existence, a completely diminished existence³⁹ in *sheol* (Hebrew: שְׁאוֹל).

As has already been suggested, *nephesh* assumed a specific meaning in the context of burials. The *nephesh* refers to the rock-hewn memorial (pyramid) erected on or in front of the tomb. Frequently it was also incised on tomb walls or on *ossuaries*. This

³⁵ Jakob, "Anthropology", 624, notes that flesh, blood and bones render the material sub-stratum for the description of a person in its totality. Other body parts may extend their significance beyond their localised position in the body and are often regarded as the seat of life at a given moment when displaying their greatest vitality. Therefore, in Hebrew thought, the body has to be seen in its movement rather than the sum of the components which form the body.

³⁶ Nelson, "Life", 133.

³⁷ David Syme Russell, The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic. 200 BC-AD 100 (London: SCM Press, 1964) 353.

³⁸ Num 6:6; 19:13; simply *nephesh*: Lev 19: 28; 22:4, Num 5:2; 9:6, 10; Hag 2:13.

³⁹ In holistic anthropology the shadowy existence cannot be a corporeal residue (soul has departed) nor a disembodied mind/soul (body is decayed), as this idea preposes two separate entities.

artifact may have perpetuated the memory of the deceased by making his/her "personhood" present.

Life without bodily functions, without *Körperlichkeit*, is not possible in ancient Hebraic anthropology.⁴⁰ Therefore, any idea of an afterlife has to express the psychosomatic entity of human existence. Resurrection, in Semitic thought, is the revivication of the shadowy entity in the netherworld by returning the *nephesh*, the *Lebenskraft*.⁴¹ Thus the resurrected one again becomes a *nephesh chaya* in the world.

2.2 Persistence of the Human Being after Death

In contrast to Israel's neighbours perceptions⁴², the Hebrew Bible, the *Tanakh*, is relatively ambiguous on the destiny of the individual after death. There is no evidence of a blessed afterlife worth having. Furthermore, as Segal points out, an extended discussion of the notion of life after death had been deliberately avoided by later redactors of the Bible, "lest it define powers in opposition to God or areas whence his rule does not extend."⁴³

⁴⁰ Schubert, "Entwicklung," 177.

⁴¹ Schubert, "Entwicklung", 184.

⁴² Theodore H. Gaster, "Resurrection. The Raising of the Dead," *IDB* IV (1962) 40, postulates that contrary to what some scholars assert, there is no evidence of a formal doctrine of the resurrection in ancient Near Eastern sources which could have penetrated the Bible. However, certain specific ideas or terms in *Tanakh* which show a resemblance to images current in neighbouring literatures may have been incorporated either because they were already part and parcel of the Semitic linguistic good, or because they were generally found in world folklore; see Schubert, "Entwicklung", 182.

⁴³ Allan Segal, "Some Observations about Mysticism and the Spread of Notions of Life after Death in Hebrew Thought," *SBL 1996 Seminar Papers* 386.

2.2.1 Survival in *Sheol*

The *Tanakh* conveys the pragmatic idea that there is no infinite life. Every human being is mortal (Ps 89:49) and the body turns to dust (Gen 3:19). The most precious gift that man could receive from God is a long, happy and prosperous life in this world (Koh 9:2-6). Yet, the idea of man's immortality, inherent in God's original plan but lost through man's fault, is presented in Genesis 2 and 3 and reflects the refusal to accept death. To live an infinite life is the theme of earthly paradise, "the *votum immortalitatis* in which man partakes of the divine *ruah*."⁴⁴ This thought in man's consciousness vouchsafes to a man "afterlife", an indestructable persistence of the human being after death.

What then is the fate of the dead according to the *Tanakh*? The destiny of all the departed was their descent into the abode of the dead, *sheol*: "But you are brought down to *she'ol*, to the depth of the Pit." (Isa 14:15)⁴⁵ There, the dead, called *rephaim*⁴⁶ continue to abide as the mere shadow of their former earthly reality⁴⁷, but bereft of all

⁴⁴ Julien Ries, "Immortality", in Lawrence Sullivan (ed.), Death, Afterlife and the Soul (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989) 269.

⁴⁵ Theodore Lewis, "Dead, Abode of the," ABD II (1992) 101-105, suggests that *sheol* is a synonym of pit (Ps 30:10), darkness (Ps 88:13), destruction (Ps 88:12) and dust (associated with death, Job 7:21; 20:11; Isa 26:19). *Sheol* may denote also deadly danger, e.g. in connection with the depths and force of mighty waters (Jona 2:3).

⁴⁶ The Scriptures testify to two different, autonomous traditions with regards to *rephaim*: it can refer to the pre-historic ethnic population in the narratives (e.g. Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13) or the weak netherly shades we are concerned with.

⁴⁷ Schmidt, Dead, 269, notes that the term *rephaim* "functioned to designate humanity's postmortem, weakened existence". *Rephaim* are only able to whisper (Isa 8:19; 29:4) and cannot praise God (Ps 15: 16-18; 18:10; Isa 14:9, 26:14, 19; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Job 26:5).

qualities of personality. According to the three tiered conception of the antique world, *sheol*, the "netherworld", is to be found under the earth, and is a land of no return (Job 7:9, 14:7-12, 16:22). It is described as an awful place, gloomy and disarrayed (Ps 116:3; Job 10:21-22), where maggots are called 'mothers and sisters' (Job 17:13-14). *Sheol*, like a beast with parted jaws, swallows up the splendor of the mortals (Isa 5:14-15). It represents a fate for small and great alike (Job 3:19-20), forgotten from the rest of the world (Job 24:20) and distant from the God of the Living.⁴⁸ The message is that God is master over life and death (1Sam 2:6). It has been suggested that although the speculation about *sheol* in the Hebrew Scriptures remained quite vague, it does communicate a spiritualistic tendency in the belief in an afterlife.⁴⁹ The answer to death is not a blissful concept of afterlife, but a dreary survival as a shade. Notwithstanding, this is more than the idea of death as a complete annihilation of the human being with no vestige of ever having existed.

The assembly of the bones in the family grave may parallel the common abode for the dead: the *she'ol* as extension of grave⁵⁰, the entirety into which all graves are merged.⁵¹ Hence, with the "gathering to one's fathers" in the family tomb and into a communal depository, "the deceased gained a sort of corporate existence"⁵² which is

⁴⁸ Segal, "Observations", 387.

⁴⁹ Ries, "Immortality", 269.

⁵⁰ Ries, "Immortality", 269.

⁵¹ JORR, 14.

⁵² JORR, 14.

forfeited in case of non-burial or is disturbed when the tomb is opened. Improper burial and disrespectful treatment of the human remains involved injury to the shade whose replica it was.⁵³

2.2.2 Immortality Expressed by Burial Practices and Mortuary Cult

Diverse mortuary rites⁵⁴, which are performed in the ancestral tomb, presuppose a post-mortem existence⁵⁵, for instance, the practice of caring and feeding the related dead.⁵⁶ The custom was, from remotest times on throughout all the periods that are dealt with in this study, to bury the dead along with grave goods. Ceramic vessels connected to preparing, serving and storing food or liquids, as well as lamps for providing light, have been interpreted as supplying provisions for the use of the dead.⁵⁷ "The dead have not escaped all human frailty and so are perceived as in need of

⁵³ Russell, Apocalyptic, 354.

⁵⁴ For a descriptive glossary see Schmidt, Dead, 4-13.

⁵⁵ An exception is the rite of commemoration which consoles the relatives and at the same time serves to perpetuate the genealogical lines of descent for inheritance - Schmidt, Dead, 280 n.20.

⁵⁶ Through the practice of feeding the dead, the complete family partakes of the food which is offered to the ancestor, thus highlighting according to Schmidt, Dead, 275, firstly, the responsibility of the son as the next of kin in family matters and secondly, vividly perpetuating the memory of the deceased by his descendants.

⁵⁷ Rahmani, "Tombs. II", 230.

assistance, even sustenance."⁵⁸ If so, this would be indicative of belief in afterlife⁵⁹, reminiscent of *votum immortalitatis*.

This pitiable, powerless persistence of the human being, is congruous with the dismal shadowy existence of the *rephaim* in the netherworld, as portrayed in prophetic and wisdom literature. The **mortuary cult** performed for the benefit of the *rephaim* apparently "maintained the sufferableness of that existence and no more"⁶⁰ in such a dreary afterlife.

Mortuary rites expressive of veneration or worship of the dead (**death or ancestor cult**)⁶¹ and necromancy (**magical mortuary rites**)⁶² also presuppose an afterlife. Not only do these rites signify the belief in human persistence hereafter but, moreover, they ascribe to the dead supernatural powers which are beneficial for the living. There has been a debate about the occurrences of ancestor worship and divination in the Scriptures.

⁵⁸ Schmidt, Dead, 10.

⁵⁹ But Schmidt, Dead, 198: "The presence of grave goods does not necessarily indicate a correlative set of afterlife beliefs." The items might just be of such a personal character "that for that reason alone they were regarded as best buried with the dead." Similar argues Bloch-Smith, Burial Practices, 141: "Personal items were ... not requisite for continued survival."

⁶⁰ Schmidt, Dead, 280.

⁶¹ Schmidt, Dead, 9-10, 12 - this cult presupposes the belief of the deceased's influence on God to act on behalf of the living. As a sign of gratitude, the dead receives incentives from the living. Ancestors worship exhibits superior, divine powers of the deceased who participates actively in the affairs of the living. The dead requires the highest form of worship, such as sacrifices, in order to be appeased.

⁶² Schmidt, Dead, 12 - this is not a regular rite to retrieve information "but is only implemented as circumstances warrant (e.g. in times of crises)."

Challenging the *opinio communis*⁶³, Schmidt concludes convincingly in his study that ancestor cults did not exist in early Israelite and Judahite cultures.⁶⁴ The belief in the supernatural beneficent power of the dead, expressed in the ritual of necromancy in Mesopotamian divination, had not been adopted before the seventh century BCE, which saw the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. But the introduction of this concept of post-mortem existence had been "motivated in part by the combination of prolonged social crises, the failure of traditional religion, and intensive contact with other cultures."⁶⁵ As it was incompatible with their ideology, the Deuteronomistic and Priestly redactors subsequently condemned necromancy.

According to archaeological evidence, the mortuary remains demonstrate that the Judahite conception of the tomb and the fate of the deceased remained consistent throughout the Iron Age.⁶⁶

⁶³ It has been argued that ancestor cults had existed in early Israel but had been consciously suppressed by later biblical writers after the exile, since the divination of the dead is in discord with the canons of monotheism, see Segal, "Observations," 386 n.3.

⁶⁴ Schmidt, *Dead*, 276, 282.

⁶⁵ Schmidt, *Dead*, 275.

⁶⁶ Bloch-Smith, *Burial Practices*, 147; 151, maintains that there had been divination of the ancestors, the *elohei abiv*, which "continued as vital entities in Judahite religion and society as long as the kingdom existed"; but Schmidt, *Dead*, 282, interprets the absence of a change in Judahite burial practices as an indication "that no changes took place regarding the weak and marginal role of the dead."

2.2.3 Collective Immortality

Death anxiety caused by the individual's awareness of his/her eventual physical extinction is met by the consoling answer of communal immortality. Based on the understanding of *nephesh*, the anthropological term for each individual human being is also the term used collectively for the entire people of Israel. Totality may be viewed as individual, a "corporate personality"⁶⁷ (Jer 3:11). The individual lives forever in the group's reality and continuity, he/she is remembered (Sir 49:10) by a good name. Communal immortality is not limited to survival in peoples's memory, but is gained through offspring, "the biological mode of immortality."⁶⁸ However, this notion of immortality depends on the community's survival and it is jeopardized by historical calamities, such as war and deportations, which cause the destruction of the collectivity. In that case the idea of survival has to be modified and viewed as a future historical intervention by God who will restore the nation.⁶⁹

2.2.4. Revivication

Once a relationship between the eternal God and death had been asserted, the living God being master over life and death, there could be hope of a triumph over

⁶⁷ H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Hebrew Concept of Corporate Personality" in J. Hempel (ed.) Werden und Wesen des Alten Testamentes (ZAW Beiheft 66; 1936), 49-61.

⁶⁸ Robert Jay Lifton, Boundaries: Psychological Man in Revolution (New York, Vintage Books, 1970) 22.

⁶⁹ A corporate, not individual restoration is alluded to in Ezekiel's vision of the reconstitution of the dry bones (37:1-14).

death. "Death has been conquered" (Isa 24:21, 25:8, 27:1). Not even *sheol* confounds His might: "... if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there too" (Ps 139:8).⁷⁰ With time the notion of a possible return to life gained acceptance (Ps 116:1-8). When God is projected to assume his kingship over the whole earth, resurrection is identified with a new creation (Isa 26:19-29:19) and forms part of the triumph of God's reign (Ps 22:29-30). This idea, that God is also master of the netherworld, combined with eschatological expectations, is the important prerequisite for the development of the concept of resurrection in the Post-Exilic period.⁷¹

The notion of the resurrection has consistently been traced to early portions of the *Tanakh*⁷², for example, to Hos 6:2 ("He will revive us, ... he will raise us up, that we may live before Him"), to Ezek 37:5-6 ("I will cause breath (*ruach*) to enter you [the dry bones], and you shall live") and primarily to the Apocalypse of Isaiah 26:19 (c.300 BCE):

Oh, let Your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake and shout for joy,
You who dwell in the dust! For Your dew is like the dew on fresh
growth; You make the land of the shades come to life.

Some scholars though have alleged that - the very late book of Daniel aside - none of the evidence stands up to scrutiny. They assert that it is only metaphorical language that is used, employing Canaanite formulae influenced by Zoroastrianism, and that these

⁷⁰ Am 9:2; Jon 2:3; Job 26:6.

⁷¹ Schubert, "Entwicklung," 186-87.

⁷² Job 7:9, 14:14, 19:25-27, 33:19-26; Pss 17:15, 30:2-3, 56:13, 71:20, 116:8-9, 118:17-18, 143:11; Deut 32:39; 1Sam 2:6; 1Kgs 17:17-21; 2Kgs 4:18-37; Isa 26:19.

passages refer to healing and reviving at or shortly after death, to prolonged life, or to restoration of the nation.⁷³

Apparently, different concepts of "resurrection" cause disagreement among scholars.⁷⁴ An unambiguous concept of resurrection cannot be found in the *Tanakh*, though some ideas of an afterlife are definitely presaged.⁷⁵

3. The Development of Notion of the Afterlife

It is the *opinio communis* that the concept of resurrection did not evolve within Judaism until the Hellenistic period. Contrary to previous research, which had advocated

⁷³ Ringgren, "Resurrection," 345-346; Gaster, "Resurrection," 40, claims that Isa 26:19 is "purely hyperbolic" language for regeneration of the "dead" Israel; contra: Friedrich Mildener, "Auferstehung", *TRE* IV (1979) 444, for whom regenerating or resurrection are false alternatives. Both have to be linked together. He asserts: "Jes. 26 spricht von einer konkreten Auferstehung zu einem neuen Leben auf dieser Erde."

⁷⁴ If resurrection is defined as reunion of the two entities body and soul, then these passages do not qualify. But restoration and revivication are conceivable "resurrections" in the *Tanakh* because they are consistent with Hebrew holistic anthropology. Also consistent is **assumption** or **ascension**: God takes up Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1-12). This outlook, being with God, is illustrated in Pss 49:1-16; 73:24. Similarly, Job 19:26 stresses: "seeing" God.

⁷⁵ Louis Isaac Rabinovitch, "Afterlife," *EJ* II (1971) 337; for further literature on the subject see Aimo T. Nikolainen, *Der Auferstehungsglaube in der Bibel und ihrer Umwelt* (2 vols.; Helsinki: Druckerei-A.G. der finnischen Literaturgesellschaft, 1944); Hans C.C. Cavalliri, "Leben nach dem Tode im Spätjudentum und im frühen Christentum" I. Spätjudentum," (*ANRW* II. *Principat* 19.1) 240-345; Walter Baumgartner, "Der Auferstehungsglauben im Alten Orient," *ZMRW* (1933) 193-214; Edmund F. Suttcliffe, *The Old Testament and the Future Life* (2nd ed.; Westminster, Md: Newman Bookshop, 1947) 191-192; André-Marie Dubarle, "Belief in Immortality in the Old Testament and Judaism", in Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy, (eds.), *Immortality and Resurrection* (Herder and Herder, 1970) 34-45; Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament* (trans. by John Penney Smith; Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960).

only one, unequivocal Jewish belief in the resurrection⁷⁶, scholars nowadays are in agreement that at the turn of the era a wide spectrum of beliefs and various ideas about post-mortem fate were unfolding⁷⁷, including ambiguity about, or even outright denial of, any idea of afterlife. This phenomenon will be pursued from a social/religious/historical perspective.

3.1 The Background of Jewish Society

For more than two-hundred years, Hellenization had become a way of life in the Ancient Near East, including Palestine. Subjected to successive waves of Hellenization, Judaism, without ever completely forfeiting its own native Judaeans/Syrian culture⁷⁸, had been profoundly transformed during the latter part of the Second Temple period (175 BCE - 135 CE). An anthropology and eschatology had evolved⁷⁹ which transcended and elaborated the traditional Biblical understanding of God's redemptive/judgmental action.

⁷⁶ Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?" in Krister Stendahl (ed.), Immortality and Resurrection (New York, Macmillan, 1965) 20-25.

⁷⁷ Charles Kingsley Barrett, "Immortality and Resurrection," in Charles S. Duthie (ed.), Resurrection and Immortality: A Selection from the Drew Lectures on Immortality (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1979) 68-88; see also Nickelsburg, Resurrection.

⁷⁸ Elias Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees (New York: Schocken, 1962) 54-71; Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

⁷⁹ Rudolf Meyer, "Σαδδουκαῖος," TDNT VII (1971) 47.

3.1.1 The Seleucid Oppression and Persecution

Scholars maintain⁸⁰ that oppression and martyrdom of religious Jews under the Seleucid regime⁸¹ was ultimately instrumental in calling forth beliefs in an afterlife. Due to a restyling of policy under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (c. 168 BCE) with regard to Judea, the Seleucids provoked a religious/ nationalistic catastrophe and incited conflicts between the Hellenists and the *Hasidim*.⁸²

Traditional theodicy, explaining national distress as the product of sin, was incapable of consoling the pious victims of Antiochus' agents, for this time it was precisely the righteous who died, while apostates flourished.⁸³

3.1.2 Apocalyptic Orientation

The Pseudepigrapha give testimony of an emerging ideological orientation, called apocalyptic.⁸⁴ From this perspective the present world order is affected by chaos and

⁸⁰ E.g. Cavallin, "Leben", 244.

⁸¹ Sources which cover the events of Judaea are: 1Macc (years from 175 to 135 BCE), 2Macc (years 175 to 161 BCE), Dan 7-12 (written 166/165), War 1:31-1:53, Ant 12.237-13.228; Lester L. Grabbe, Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian (2 vols.; Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1992) I: 266.

⁸² The pious conservative element of the population according to 1Macc 2:42, 7:13.

⁸³ Michael Graetz, "Resurrection," EJ XIV (1971) 98.

⁸⁴ Richard A. Horsley, Jesus and the Spiral of Violence. Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 132, defines apocalypticism as "derived from the Greek term for the mode of revelation by which some of the Palestinian Jewish expectations of future salvation were received." Martin Rist, "Apocalypticism" IDB I (1962) 157, defines this thought as the dualistic, cosmic and eschatological belief in two opposing cosmic powers, God and Satan and in two distinct ages - the present, temporal evil age which will be overthrown soon by God and the future, eternal age when the righteous will be blessed forever.

doom. As Horsley claims⁸⁵, apocalyptic literature was written a) as an attempt to adjust the traditional "symbolic universe", b) to intensify concern for the survival of Israel and for the realization of God's plan in a situation of crisis, and c) as a stand of the righteous, faithful believers against the Jewish ruling group and the alien imperial regime. Although this kind of literature reaches further back than the Greek conquest⁸⁶, a flourishing apocalyptic *weltanschauung* became a major tradition in Judaism⁸⁷ as a response to historical calamity. It was against this background that two new elements in the apocalyptic "symbolic universe" were generated: **resurrection** and the dualism of divine/demonic forces.⁸⁸

3.1.3 Emphasis on the Individual

There is an additional significant factor in the development of the notions of life after death: a shifting from collective thinking to the prominence of the individual. Earlier Israelite collective thought, as expounded in the Torah⁸⁹, articulated collective retribution by God (Deut 28; Lev 26), as well as reward and blessing for the righteous

⁸⁵ Horsley, Jesus, 133.

⁸⁶ Grabbe, Judaism, I: 218.

⁸⁷ Grabbe, Judaism, II: 533, refers to Jews who saw their future not in apocalyptic terms but in terms of personal salvation of the soul.

⁸⁸ Horsley, Jesus, 135.

⁸⁹ Lev 26:3-4: "If you (plural) walk in My statutes and keep My commandments ...".

(Deut 4:40; Prov 3:2, 16; Ps 55:23)⁹⁰ and punishment and curses for the wicked (Ps 73) in this world. Then, with awareness of a deeper individual sensibility, the idea of an individual retribution (Jer 31:28-30; Ezek 18:38) surfaces.

The strengthening of religious individualism eventually gave individual shape to the expectation of a future age of blessedness.⁹¹ From an isolated individual's perspective, being stripped of the security of the larger social unit means that moral paradox or concrete historical situations of persecution pose a grave dilemma.⁹² Therefore, as soon as life's questions became intolerable, reflecting on Job's (21:7) protest: "Why do bad things happen to good people and bad people prosper?" the individual found it imperative to come up with a satisfactory answer for himself. The other world is the place where both the righteous and the wicked receive their just

⁹⁰ The suffering of a righteous is considered "discipline" for the purpose of healing and eventual prosperity (Job 5:17).

⁹¹ Emil Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D.135) (3 vols.; rev.ed. G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1973-87) II (1979) 494, 546-547; George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927-30) II (1927) 311-312.

⁹² Cavallin, "Leben", 244. Qohelet (3rd century BCE) in spite of self-conscious reflection, does not see any necessity to invoke the concept of afterlife. His motto: *carpe diem*. An explanation could be his affinity to the Stoic school of thought (3rd century BCE) which understands soul to be corporeal breath and subject to destruction, whereas the immortal soul is a Platonic concept. In the Hebrew Ben Sirach (180 BCE), another work belonging to the Wisdom literature, the inescapable fate of death is countered by the traditional Israelite thought of collective immortality. These approaches to life, "heroically" facing death without illusions, continue in Hebrew thought throughout the Second Temple period, principally among the Sadducees. Neither do the authors of the following books mention any resurrection or immortality of the soul: Tobit (225-175 BCE), Judith (135-105 BCE), Baruch (200-60 BCE), I Maccabees (after 104 BCE) and the Assumption Moses (earliest chapters from the second century BCE, latest 7-30 CE).

desserts. But the individual's hope for personal salvation can be fulfilled in the framework of the eschatological expectation of the nation's future messianic kingdom, namely by reawakening from dead in the eschaton. On the other hand, the Hellenized form of expectation, namely that the individual's immortal soul will pass into a heavenly existence after death, cannot be part of the prophetic hope for the nation's glory.⁹³ A solution was found in a universal kingdom of heaven (Baruch and Ezra).

Scholars are now in agreement "that a belief in a blessed future life was a fundamental postulate of the faith of the apocalypticist and an integral part of other, non-apocalyptic strains of early post-biblical Jewish theology."⁹⁴ Late Second Temple period Judaism might be characterized as religion of personal salvation which explains its attraction to other people such as the Romans.⁹⁵

3.1.4 Pluralism in First Century Judaism

From the Persian and the early Hellenistic periods documentation concerning internal religious controversy is sparse. This changes during the third and second centuries BCE when all of Judaism can be designated 'Hellenistic Judaism' due to its extended contact with the surrounding society of the day.⁹⁶ It is only the degree of Hellenization which distinguishes one individual from another. As it has been pointed

⁹³ Schürer, II: 546.

⁹⁴ Nickelsburg, Resurrection, 9.

⁹⁵ Grabbe, Judaism, II: 533; see the *ossuary* inscriptions "proselyt".

⁹⁶ Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) I:103-6.

out in the scholarly discussion about Hellenization, some aspects of Hellenistic culture were viewed by some Jews as merely irrelevant to Judaism, the religion. But others considered the same aspects to be seditious. Especially sensitive were issues where the religious sphere is infringed on by the Hellenistic culture.⁹⁷

It is very likely that the emergence of identifiable, voluntary associations, which struggled for control of Jewish society, disagreed over how Judaism was to be lived, and reacted to the activities of foreign rulers differently, is itself a Hellenistic phenomenon used by some Jews to combat Hellenism.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Grabbe, Judaism, I: 164-170.

⁹⁸ Anthony Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach (Wilmington, DA: Michael Glazier, 1988) 59-60.

3.2 The Origin of the Notion of Bodily Resurrection

3.2.1 The Non-Eschatological Martyrological Resurrection

One of the earliest references to a martyrological resurrection is found in 2 Maccabees. The author conveys this idea to the Diaspora.

Concept of Resurrection in 2 Maccabees (between 104 and 63 BCE)		
7:11	I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them and from Him I hope to get them back again.	
7:14	... and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by Him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life."	ἀναστήσεσθα ἀνάστασις
7:23	Therefore the Creator will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again ...	
7:29	Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers.	

Resurrection was the means to alleviate the anguish of an individual, who thus received the merited blessings which God had promised but which suffering and death had denied them as faithful martyrs. According to the author of Maccabees, resurrection is a reward only for the "pious" and therefore is denied to the executioner. This attitude is also displayed in 2 Macc 12:39-45. Other Jews who had been killed in the battlefield were not guaranteed martyrological resurrection because they had trespassed against the *Torah*. These sinners had first to obtain atonement through offerings and prayers before they could be granted the privilege.

A particular problem that inspires the notions of resurrection and ascension, is theodicy.⁹⁹ The young sons, cognizant of the promised reward for martyrdom, their resurrection, now have another reason for allowing themselves to be martyred. As they contemplate (2 Macc 7:6) the tenet expounded in the Torah that God watches over and has compassion on His servants, which their martyrdom seems to disprove, they can see resurrection as an explicit means of resolving this problem. Thus, the question of theodicy can be thought to precipitate the idea of the resurrection. Resurrection and ascension demonstrate God's continuing mercy in vindicating those who suffer martyrdom.

A further purpose of the concept of resurrection has been suggested by Segal. He points to the emphasis that is given to a resurrection that is bodily: the young bodies of the martyrs are destroyed by their persecutors and can no longer be enjoyed, but the pleasure of a bodily existence is given back to the faithful after having been raised through God's mercy. Thus, resurrection is a redress given to the Jews because of the oppression and persecution by foreign powers, an idea which continues to hold true under Roman rule and later historical events.

The mother of the martyrs also expands the contemporary notion of the resurrection. While encouraging her sons, she makes the momentous statement (2Macc 7:28) that God created the world from nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*. This reflects a broader understanding of resurrection than Ezekiel's dry bones that were made alive, Isaiah's corpses that rose from the dust, and the martyrs in Daniel who woke up for the

⁹⁹ Segal, "Observations", 391.

resurrection. By now it was a firm belief that God was able to resuscitate from the dust. Yet all of these stages implied a bodily residue.¹⁰⁰ Here, in Maccabees, it is claimed for the first time that God can through His will resurrect the martyrs *ex nihilo*, a creed analogous to the mother's declaration of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*.¹⁰¹

Characteristic of martyrological resurrection are¹⁰²: the martyr is raised, a) into heaven, b) soon after death, and c) individually. Immediately, vindication ('transcendental-heavenly vindication') and reward are granted to the martyr. Therefore, this type of resurrection it is defined as **non-eschatological resurrection**.

3.2.2 The Eschatological Martyrological Resurrection

In some texts the resurrection is postponed to the eschaton, the "end of days", "the day of the Lord". An eschatological resurrection will happen a) on earth, b) at the end of time, and c) a large number of people will rise collectively.¹⁰³ This kind of resurrection is said to be the outcome of disparate traditions and is linked to other eschatological expectations, such as:

¹⁰⁰ Segal, "Observations", 392.

¹⁰¹ This can be a appealing idea in theological belief in cases of a destroyed body in wars or cremation (e.g. Holocaust).

¹⁰² Joost Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia. A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 13, 145-147.

¹⁰³ Hollemann, Resurrection, 2.

- an intermediary, heavenly agent¹⁰⁴;
- a final judgment¹⁰⁵.

An example of eschatological resurrection comes in the book of Daniel, the masterpiece of Biblical apocalyptic literature, dated to c. 168 BCE. It is the first undoubted reference to resurrection in the *Tanakh*¹⁰⁶. It testifies that at least some intellectuals believed in a resurrection of the faithful as heavenly vindication for their martyrdom (Dan 12:2). The archangel Michael, an intermediary, comes in the time of anguish to deliver the righteous:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The quotation that "many" will be resurrected suggests that at this time a general resurrection was not expected. Faith demanded that the martyrs share in the restoration of the Jewish people by God, as expounded in Daniel's vision, expanding the message of Isa 26:19: the "dwellers in the dust" will literally rise. In Daniel the identity of the resurrected is modified. This early reference to resurrection is not confined to providing reward for the righteous as, in 2 Macc, but suggests resuscitation for the evil as well for

¹⁰⁴ Messiah (PsSol 17:21); Angel Michael (War Scroll); Son of Man (SibOr 5:108-110; 4Ezra 13:1-13, 25-26, 33-38, 51-52; 1En 37-71; 1Bar 39:7-40:4); Son of Man, collective, (Dan 7).

¹⁰⁵ By the first century CE the judgement scene became so important that in later apocryphal works it constituted a pre-existing concept in God's creation plan (4Ezra 7:70).

¹⁰⁶ Ringgren, "Resurrection", 346.

the purposes of giving them their well-deserved reward too, namely shame and eternal contempt. A special reward is granted to those *maskilim* who lead many to righteousness: they shall be like shining stars, luminous beings, like the angels.¹⁰⁷

The eschatological resurrection is a coping mechanism by the people of the Covenant in the face of foreign domination and evil powers who govern the world and challenge God's historical rule and covenantal care. The answer to these perceived dilemmas lies in projecting God's final victory and the vindication of his people into the future. Firmly believing in prophetic eschatology (Isa 43:19, 65:17, 66:22), which predicts a new creation, the believers are now convinced that the righteous will have a part in the New Age. The ultimate redemption - peace, justice, and righteousness in this world, about which the prophets spoke - will be witnessed by those living at the end of time.¹⁰⁸ In order for the dead to partake in this eschatological change or in the battle at the end of time, as described in some apocalyptic texts (e.g. The Warscroll, The Community Rule), resurrection is a pre-requisite.

3.2.3 The Notion of Resurrection in its Social Context

Bodily resurrection leads to eternal life, to immortality of the human being. Immortality is also gained through the concept of an immortal soul. Both doctrines which entered Judaism, bodily resurrection and immortality of the soul - seemingly

¹⁰⁷ Stars and angels are identified together, see Judg 5:20, Job 38:7.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Boyarin and Seymour Siegel, "Resurrection: Rabbinic Period," EJ XIV (1971) 99.

mutually exclusive - have often been explained as due to the divergent eschatologies of Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism.¹⁰⁹ However, we must caution against dividing the two concepts according to geographical regions.¹¹⁰ After all, Palestine, during this period, was also a part of the Hellenistic-Roman sphere and thus was under the influence of its culture. Therefore, the notion of an afterlife both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, was more complicated and diverse than has been hitherto recognized.¹¹¹ More responsive to social realities is the approach which ascribes the evidence of the distinct notions and their various combinations to distinct social classes, suggesting that they originate in disparate social contexts.

The idea of bodily resurrection was adopted by young men who sacrificed their lives and wanted the return of their physical body. Resurrection was the product of the disenfranchised classes of people who resisted foreign dominion.¹¹² By contrast, as we shall see, the notion of an immortal soul was introduced into Jewish life from the other end of the social spectrum.

¹⁰⁹ Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (2d. ed., rev. and enl.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) I: 207-8; Wilhelm Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter (HNT 21; Tübingen: Mohr, 1926) 432-437.

¹¹⁰ Cavallin, "Leben ", 240-345.

¹¹¹ Cavallin. "Leben", 243 n.5.

¹¹² Segal, "Observations", 393.

3.3 The Origin of the Notion of the Immortal Soul

3.3.1 The Notion of Immortal Soul in its Social Context

The Platonic idea of the immortal soul enters Judaism at first among social classes who felt comfortable with Greek culture and were involved in the contemporary intellectual currents of their day. Among those Jewish philosophical writers who adopt Platonic notions in Hebrew thought are Philo of Alexandria, and the Palestinian historian Josephus. They operate explicitly out of educated Greek notions of life after death with the necessary philosophical proofs and demonstrations.¹¹³

3.3.2 The Concept of Immortal Soul in Greek Anthropology

In Greek thought the soul, *psyche*¹¹⁴, is the essential core of the human being. Generally the indestructable, preexistent soul is superior to the body and gives value and immortality to the human self beyond the limits of physical existence. The soul ascends to divine perfection after its emancipation from the perishable body at the occurrence of death. The body is seen as only a temporary vehicle and in later thought *sarx* (body,

¹¹³ Oepke, "ἀνίστημι", TDNT I (1964) 370, notes that Philo does not perceive immortality as continuation of life but rather mystically as a liberation from particularity, as a new birth. Philo is an important Jewish philosopher but is not discussed in this paper. Gerald F. Downing, "The Resurrection of the Dead: Jesus and Philo," in Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds.), The Historical Jesus: A Sheffield Reader (The Biblical Seminar 331; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995) 167-175.

¹¹⁴ This paper cannot present a detailed analysis of the term *psyche*. Very different philosophical/psychological ideas of soul and immortality existed in the different philosophical schools, see Albert Dihle, "A. Ψυχή in the Greek World," TDNT IX (1974) 608-617, 609: "*Psyche* in the language of the Hellenistic-Roman period represents the totality of the functions of the soul and the mind."

flesh) as "matter" acquired a negative connotation. The body was termed a "prison" for the soul, which gained freedom after death and could join the cosmic soul. Thus, in Greek anthropology, the freed soul denoted the real existence after this earthly life.

3.3.3 Synthesis of Greek Anthropology and Hebrew Thought

3.3.3.1 Josephus' philosophical approach to immortality is portrayed when he presents the act of martyrdom which ended the first revolt against Rome. Eleazar ben Jair at Massada encourages his followers to commit suicide and continues with a discussion of the immortal soul. Death is the freeing of the imprisoned soul (War 7.344b). Life is actually the death of the soul, while the actual death means the return of the soul to a divine-like existence. Martyrdom which is rewarded by immortality of the soul is Josephus' Platonic idea presented to his readers, the Romans. Yet, the Zealots, religious political freedom fighters belonging to the underprivileged classes, whom Eleazar is ostensibly addressing, were probably more inclined to embrace the notion of a bodily resurrection.¹¹⁵

Josephus illustrates the idea of a blessed afterlife by recounting the historical incident of the two famous scholars and their students, who protested against Herod placing a golden eagle over the Temple gate for two reasons: one was their desire to defend the Torah, even if they risked their lives for it (Ant 17.152; War 1.650); another was their anticipation of a reward, which in *Antiquities* 17.152 is revered as "virtue (*arete*) acquired in death" and "winning of eternal fame and glory". However, in the

¹¹⁵ Cavallin, "Leben," 309; Segal, "Observations", 397.

parallel passage of War (1.650) there is an "expectation of resurrection"¹¹⁶ which Josephus elucidates in terms of Greek ideas of the soul's immortality, which is its intrinsic attribute, to which he adds: "... and an eternally abiding sense of felicity," - thus alluding to the Palestinian concept of an eternal reward gained through resurrection.

Probably the notion of resurrection was popular in the contemporary martyrological stories and the protesters familiar with them. The importance of resurrection lies in the certain hope that it offers that can be exploited as an answer to concrete historical situations. The notion of resurrection may serve as a means to protest.¹¹⁷

This concept is expounded by Josephus himself at Jotapata when he speaks out against his comrades' planned suicide. He talks "like a philosopher" to them about the dear companions soul and body, a debt given and taken back by God. The immortal soul is considered a divine part which took dwelling in our body which is created out of corruptible matter. The good souls reach a holy place in heaven and, at the end of days, they return to find a new home in virtuous bodies.¹¹⁸ But the soul of those that commit suicide are received in the darkest place in Hades as punishment.

¹¹⁶ Horsley, Jesus, 73.

¹¹⁷ Horsley, Jesus, 73.

¹¹⁸ Josephus, presumably, speaks about a transmigration into a new pure soul, as in War 2.163b on the Pharisees and Sadducees. For this concept see Diehle, $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, 611.

3.3.3.2 The terminology of the notion of the immortal soul was casually used, without philosophical reflection, by people such as the author of **Wisdom of Solomon** to describe the traditional Jewish notion of resurrection.¹¹⁹ Immortality of the soul "stresses the ideals of a more aged intellectual class - continuity of consciousness."¹²⁰ Young martyrs want the restoration of their bodies whereas the aged wise forego the pleasures of flesh for the sake of philosophical reflection. Individual, self-conscious reflection had emerged in Jewish literature since Qohelet. The social context of this kind of thought is linked to the upper classes in Judaea and in the diaspora. In these well educated circles¹²¹ it had become feasible to render the Bible into Greek, known as the Septuagint.

The theme of the martyrdom of Eleazar, the mother and her seven sons is treated in **4 Maccabees**¹²², a classic example of the interpretation of Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy. At the time of the composition of this document, "the fashion in which

¹¹⁹ This work was composed by an Alexandrian Jew during the first century BCE. The answer to death is not a physical return to life but immortality; *anastasis* is omitted in such earlier writings. Incorruptibility brings about closeness to God. Although this text glorifies the martyrs, it differs from the apocalyptic formula for compensation, and a judgment scene in the end of times is absent.

¹²⁰ Segal, "Observations", 393.

¹²¹ "Letter of Aristeas," in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (trans. by R.J.H. Shutt; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985) II:15-16 verse 43, gives the legendary account of how the Jewish Law was translated from Hebrew into Greek. The author of the letter is one of the translators and is acclaimed for his superior education.

¹²² This book is included in the Septuagint, composed by a Jew probably from the diaspora (Antioch), originally in Greek.

immortality will be sought will be in a synthesis of Greek and first temple Israelite thought."¹²³

Concept of Immortality in 4 Maccabees (63 BCE-70 CE)		
7:3	in no way did he turn the rudder of religion until he sailed into the haven of immortal victory.	ἀθανάτου
9:22	... but as though trans- formed by fire into immortality he nobly endured the rackings.	ἀφθαρσίαν
14:5	but all of them, as though running the course toward immortality , hasten to death by torture.	ἀθανασίας
14:6	... those holy youths as though moved by an immortal spirit of devotion, agreed to go to death for its sake.	ψυχῆς ἀθανάτου
16:13	... as though having a mind like adamant and giving rebirth for immortality to the whole number of her s	ἀθανασίαν
17:12	... The prize was immortality and endless life .	ἀφθαρσία
18:23	But the sons of Abraham with their victorious mother are gathered together into the chorus of the fathers, and have received pure and immortal souls from God...	αθανάτους

In 4Maccabees the martyrs immediately obtain immortality, and are received into heaven by the Patriarchs and by the living God. The immortality is of an astral nature. The "star-like" sons are "firmly set in heaven"¹²⁴, fire cleansing the martyrs from mortality. Obviously, this notion of life after death, where the soul will be in heaven,

¹²³ Segal, "Observations", 393.

¹²⁴ Stoics regarded the stars as living beings.

is guided by a mystical consciousness.¹²⁵ In 2 Maccabees as well as 4 Maccabees, martyrdom leads ultimately to immortality.¹²⁶ Whereas 2 Maccabees reflects the Palestinian (Persian) influence with its emphasis on bodily resurrection, 4 Maccabees echoes the Greek notion of the immortal soul, displaying Stoic ideas. Whereas 2 Maccabees describes vindication as a reward for the martyrs, 4 Maccabees views the martyrdoms as an atonement for the nation's sin and as purification of the land.

3.4 The Concept of "Soul" in Hellenistic Judaism

Some Hebrew works of Palestinian Judaism continue to use *nephesh* in its meaning of personhood, the ego, for example some of the Dead Sea Scrolls¹²⁷ and Rabbinical works. A great impact on the notion of afterlife in the Late Second Temple period was made by the introduction of the concept of "soul", which begins to surface in the literature of Hellenistic Judaism.¹²⁸ Apocryphal and pseudepigraphical

¹²⁵ There is abundant testimony in Jewish literature, especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls, of mystical imagery also familiar from the *merkaba* tradition, such as ecstatic "ascents to heaven", "marvellous chariots", "fiery vision of most holy spirits", "rivulets of fire", and the "seat of glory" (4Q405, 20ii 21 -22); see 4 Q504 = "The Words of the Heavenly Lights," in Geza Vermez, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English. Third Edition (London: Pinguin Books, 1987) 228.

¹²⁶ As Segal has pointed out, "Observations", 394, that if the idea of the immortal soul is used to describe the outcome of martyrdom, it does not relate organically to martyrdom in the same way as the concept of the bodily resurrection.

¹²⁷ Hodayot (1QH 2:7): God saves the *nephesh*; (1QH 15:10): "love God with whole *nephesh*"; Rule of Community (1QS 9:8): "*nephesh* rejoices"; Damascus Document (CD 11:16): "each living man"; (CD 1:20): enemies seek the *nephesh* of the righteous), Pesher Habakuk (1QpHab 9:11): *nephesh* is in need.

¹²⁸ In sections of 1En (third century BCE); Grabbe, Judaism, I: 219, attributes this development to "Greek origin or heavy Greek influence."

works and some passages in the Septuagint suggest the conceptual differentiation of body and soul. Eventually, due to translations from one language into another¹²⁹, which always add their own nuances¹³⁰, *nephesh* became the "immortal soul" which undergoes divine judgement after death. The conception of *sheol* as the abode of the shades remained up to the second century BCE (Sir 14:16; 17:22; 1 Bar 3:11; Tob 3:10; 13:2), but the shades had become disembodied, responsive souls or spirits in an interim state who could maintain communion with God. With this different anthropological outlook, not only did a measure of consciousness remain but personal survival was implied. *Nephesh* was transmuted into an independently existing soul; yet, in the notion of resurrection, it again requires a physical body to denote a full life. Only by incorporating this new element with its resulting theoretical differentiation between body and soul, *soma* and *psyche*¹³¹, can a variety of perceptions of afterlife develop at the turn of our era. It is to this development that subsequent notions of afterlife in Rabbinic

¹²⁹ Nelson, "Life", 133, states that some of the Hebrew terms are sufficiently similar to the Greek that it had seemed simple for Platonic constructions to be placed upon them: the Septuagint uses the term *psyche* "soul", to translate *nephesh* (as well as the closely related terms of *ruah*, *chayim* and *lev*). When *ruach* was rendered "spirit", the Greek term *pneuma* seemed appropriate. The transient *pneuma* is the vitalizing principle imbued temporarily in a body. However, there is no equivalent term for body in Biblical Hebrew, which also did not know of the entity "mind" (Greek: *nous*) in the trichotomous scheme.

¹³⁰ Isa 10:18, i.e., denotes the total human being by the double expression *nephesh/basar*. These words of the psychological vocabulary are very close in their meaning whereas the Greek translation *psyche/sarx* implies that the two are in juxtaposition.

¹³¹ For adherents of Greek anthropology, and especially the Gnostics who believed in the contamination of the body, the idea of bodily resurrection must have been absurd. Compare Paul in Athens (Acts 17:32).

Judaism and Christianity can be traced: resurrection as reunification of body and soul contingent on the idea of an immortal soul. The monistic concept supplied a framework for establishing the eschatological ideas of resurrection, the concept of soul guaranteed the continuity of the individual.¹³²

A second change in the idea of *sheol* is evident in apocalyptic writings: a moral distinction between the righteous and the wicked, the latter confined to *sheol*.¹³³ Some works speak of several compartments corresponding to the moral condition of the souls, souls: Paradise for the righteous and *Gehenna* (Hell) for the wicked.

A third modification with regards to *sheol* is that it was regarded as an intermediate state, awaiting resurrection and final judgment.

3.5 The Impact of the Notion of Immortal Soul on the Concept of Resurrection

The older perceptions hoped for a reanimation of the psychosomatic unit of the human being. In the transition from the second to the first century BCE, Jewish thought was influenced by Greek terminology. With increasing Hellenization Greek anthropology exerted its influence on Jewish anthropology. The concept of an indestructible entity, a soul which can separate in death from the material body, guarantees the continuity of identity. The amalgamation of the Greek-philosophical Soul/Body dualism within the

¹³² An image in connection with the notion of the afterlife is the storage compartments of the souls which are awaiting judgement. En 22 describes the three/four compartments for the temporary cache of the *pneumata ton*. This distribution already presupposes a judgement. Since the worst sinners will not even be awakened for the Last Judgement, a resurrection for lesser sinner is required and implicit.

¹³³ Some works express the possibility of changing souls by intercessory prayer.

Semitic notion that there cannot be complete life without *Körperlichkeit*¹³⁴, means that the soul has to be reunited finally with the body. The concept of an individual, bodily resurrection had matured by the end of the first century CE., and the reunion of body and soul, *resurrectio carnis*, became the familiar understanding of resurrection in later Judaism and Christianity. Forms of the doctrine which are discernible from the literature are:

- a) The essential self (or "soul") of an individual is awakened from the sleep of death shortly after the latter occurs, or after the dissolution of the body;
- b) The bodies of the dead will eventually be resuscitated, at the end of the present world;
- c) The righteous among the dead will be raised collectively, after a Last Judgement, either to a rarefied, eternal existence on some other plane, or to rebirth in a world which will succeed this one.

¹³⁴ Kurt Schubert, "Das Problem der Auferstehungshoffnung in den Qumrantexten und in der früh rabbinischen Literatur," WZKM 56 (1960) 166-167.

4. The Evidence of Notions of Afterlife in the Late Second Temple Period

4.1 Evidence in Second Temple Period Literature

4.1.1 Tables

Second Century BCE ¹³⁵			
	Date	Quotation	Text
1 Enoch composite work	pre-Maccabaen, c. 105-64BCE	1En: 1-36 1En: 51:4	resurrection of the spirit the risen ones shall be angels in heaven
	c. 105-104 BCE	1En: 91:10	righteous arise from sleep
	c. 105-104 BCE	1En: 92:3-4	righteous arise from sleep, walk in eternal light
	c. 105-104 BCE	1En: 104:6	companions of the host of heavens
Jubilees	168 - 152	Jub 23:27-31	joy of souls
Hodayoth	150-130	1QH 6:29b-30a 6:34 3:19 1QH 11,10-13	... all sons of truth wake up ... those in the dust ... resurrection rise from the dust

¹³⁵ For the dates see Emile Puech, "La croyance des Essénens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle?: histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien. (2 vols; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993) and James H. Charlesworth (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), and Hershel Shanks, "Carbon-14 Tests substantiate Scroll Dates," BAR 17/6 (1991) 72.

Assumption of Moses	2nd until 7-30 CE ¹³⁶	Assumpt. Moses 10:19	exaltation of Israel - I will raise you
Testament of the 12 Patriarchs	137-107 BCE aside from later Jewish-Christian redaction	Test.Sim. 6:7 Test.Zeb. 10:1-3 Test.Benj. 10:6,8 Test.Jud. 25:4 Test.Asher 6:5-6 Test.Levi 18:9-14	arise rise again raised up arise in joy, shall awake eternal life Patriarchs in paradise
Community rule	100BCE ¹³⁷ 11 BCE-78 CE	1 QS 4:7,12-14 1 QS 4:25 1 QS 8:19 1 QS 9:2	The righteous will see those days; when they had died already they will live again to see those days; an everlasting life for the righteous, the bad will perish forever in hell fire
1 Q SB	100 BCE	1Q Sb 4:24-6	in company of God and angels for everlasting life

¹³⁶ Chapter 6 was written as late as the time of Herod the Great. Chapters 8-9 are thought to have originated in the 2d century B.C.E.

¹³⁷ The first date, 100 BCE, was based on paleographic evidence, the second dating came from a carbon-14 testing. There is quite a discrepancy in this particular case. The testing offers a 68 percent probability that the range encompasses the correct age of the document. According to Emanuel Tov of Hebrew University, editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project: "Generally, the tests have supported dates previously determined by paleography."

First Century BCE.			
	Date	Quotation	Text
Damascus Document	50BCE	CD XIII:7 XIV:7,12 XV:8	faithful have eternal life righteous for 100 generations
Messianic Apocalypse	after 100 BCE ¹³⁸	4Q521:12	resurrect the dead
War Scroll	50 BCE	1QM 12:1-4 1QM 17:7	may imply resurrection ¹³⁹
Pesher Habakkuk	104-43 ¹⁴⁰	1QpHab 10:4	hope for resurrection
Wisdom of Solomon	50 BCE ¹⁴¹	WisSol 1-5	immortal soul
Psalms of Solomon	80-40BCE	PsSol 3:16 13:11	rise up to eternal life life of the righteous forever
Testament of Job	after 40 BCE	Test.Job 4:9	you shall wake up in the resurrection

¹³⁸ Michael O. Wise and James D. Tabor, "4Q521 and a Line-By-Line Analysis", BAR 18/6 (1992) 62.

¹³⁹ Yigal Yadin, The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (trans. by Batya and Chaim Rabin; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) 241-2.

¹⁴⁰ Carbon dating, see Abraham Rabinovitch, "Playing the Dating Game", Jerusalem Post International Edition (NO. 1798, Week ending April 22, 1995) 8b. Paleographic dating was 30-1 BCE.

¹⁴¹ Cavallin, "Leben", 285.

First Century C.E.			
	Date	Quotation	Text
4Ezra	end of century	4 Ezra 7:32 7:97	earth shall give up those who are asleep enjoy immortality
2Baruch	end of century compiled work	2 Bar 30:1 42:8 49-51	all who sleep ... will rise earth will give back the dead, the dead are living again transformation, like angels
Early Rabbinic as well as Early Christian teachings are being developed at this time			

4.1.2 The Notions of Afterlife in their Forms and Functions

Nickelsburg claimed¹⁴², after examining the Intertestamental literature, that the tenets of resurrection, immortality of the soul, and eternal life are displayed within the framework of three forms (with certain nuances of details).

Form One: The Story of the Righteous Man and the Isaianic Exaltation Tradition

Based on Isaiah 14 and 52-53, the early Apocalyptic texts expand the exaltation scene. The protagonist is not only exalted to a high worldly position, but then also exalted to a high status in the heavenly court. According to The Wisdom of Solomon, with its theology of immortality, the protagonist's (righteous man/Son of Man) death is, at the same time, his assumption to heaven.

¹⁴² Nickelsburg, "Resurrection", 170-176.

As the tradition develops, it de-emphasizes the motif of exaltation and alters it into the motifs of vindication/reward and condemnation/punishment. This shift is apparent in 2 Maccabees 7 and 9. In Daniel 12, where the motif of exaltation has been incorporated into the judgment scene, the righteous (*maskilim*) shine with heavenly splendor, presumably after they have ascended to heaven.

In 2 Baruch 51, and similarly in 4 Ezra 7, the exaltation scenes describe the Judgment, after which the righteous will ascend to heaven. The original glorious appearance of one standing high in authority changed into the receiving of new and glorious bodies. The righteous are transformed into the splendor of the stars. The tradition witnesses a development towards bodily resurrection which has different functions: vindication for martyrdom (2 Macc), or blessings for righteousness which had been denied in life (Enoch 94-104).

Form Two: The Judgement Scene

In the earliest Apocalyptic texts the judgment scene is the climax. It declares judgement on unjust processes which are in progress. They could be persecution, or social oppression within the religious community. In contrast with Daniel's exegesis of the Third Isaiah, the authors of Jubilees 23 and Enoch 94-104 conclude that, instead of a bodily resurrection, the tortured bodies will rest in the earth while their spirits will be assumed to heaven. The Assumption of Moses focuses mainly on the punishment of the wicked.

In some texts, such as The Testament of Judah 25 and The Testament of Benjamin 10, the judgment scene has become a technique to describe events at the end of time. Later the Universal Judgement became independent from the idea of vindication/ reward and condemnation/punishment and broadened into a universal fate at the end of days for all mankind. Resurrection became the *leitmotiv* and includes recompense for undeserved suffering in this life. Appropriate for the Testaments is, of course, the promise of resurrection to the Patriarchs so that they may witness the renewed Israel. Resurrection is necessitated for the already dead who have to be brought to judgement.

Form Three: The Two-Way Theology

The Two-way theology is derived from the covenantal theology of the Torah. Right and wrong behaviour lead to reward and punishment - meaning eternal life and eternal death. "Death" is not the physical demise of mankind, but it is the punishment for the wicked who do not walk in the way of righteousness. Already in this life, where the eschaton is imminent, the righteous walk the way which leads directly into eternal glory (1QS III:13-IV:26). Death will not terminate the eternal reward.

4.2 Evidence in Jewish Society

The notion of afterlife entered Jewish society in a myriad of ways and developed different combinations.¹⁴³ These underline the social fragmentation that started with the Greek triumph. Each first century group or movement took a position on the issues

¹⁴³ Segal, "Observations", 394.

of life after death. For this only secondary sources from antiquity are available. To date no unequivocal document stating a group's conviction on the issue of life after death has been found. The well-known party system within first century Judaea was the result of a combination of political and religious differences which separated the groups into so-called sects or parties.¹⁴⁴ Resurrection was one of the subjects that divided them. The main source on the social structure of Judaea in Late Second Temple period is Josephus.¹⁴⁵ He mentions three¹⁴⁶ groups, which he presents as philosophical schools, *haireses*¹⁴⁷: the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes to which also other antique sources refer.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ See Ed Parish Sanders, Judaism. Practice and Belief. 63 BCE - 66 CE (London: SCM Press, 1992), "Groups and Parties", 317-457.

¹⁴⁵ see Louis H. Feldman, Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984).

¹⁴⁶ Actually, he mentions a "fourth philosophy" in Ant 18.4.

¹⁴⁷ In War 2.119 and in Antiquities 18.11-12 Josephus tries to portray Judaism as a philosophy, the *hairesis* are sub-philosophies, presented analogous to the diverse Greek philosophical schools; see Steve Mason, Josephus and the New Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992) 68-69; also Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte. Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christusgemeinden in der mediterranen Welt (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1995) 139, who propose the term *Devianzgruppen*. (In my opinion, the English translation, deviant groups, does not fully portray the German term).

¹⁴⁸ The New Testament and rabbinic literature mention the Pharisees and Sadducees; Philo, Pliny the Elder and Hippolytus portray the Essenes.

4.2.1. The Sadducees

Sadducees¹⁴⁹ belonged mostly, though not exclusively, to the governing aristocratic circles of the country. Among them were members of the priestly aristocracy.¹⁵⁰ Apparently they were a movement within the higher social classes¹⁵¹, conservative in their outlook and therefore opposed to certain reforms.¹⁵² Their divergence from the Pharisees is evident in the portrayal of their rivalry for political power and for religious leadership. They led a privileged life and expect their reward in this world. They did not belief in fate, only in the results of their own deeds. They continued in the traditional view that death was the end of human existence and survival lay in collective immortality. Of course, this "philosophy" did not appeal anymore to many in the first century (War 2.164-5). Josephus comments on the stance that Sadducees and Pharisees profess vis-à-vis their position regarding life after death in War 2.163b:¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ T.W. Manson, "Sadducee and Pharisee - The Origin and Significance of the Names," BJRL 22 (1938) 144-159; Jean LeMoyné, Les Sadducéens (EB; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972).

¹⁵⁰ Ant 20.199, mentions the High priest Ananias; see their connection with high priests in Acts 5:17.

¹⁵¹ Ant 13.293, reports that John Hyrcanus split up with the Pharisees and supported the Sadducees.

¹⁵² Saldarini, Pharisees, 302.

¹⁵³ Mason, Josephus, 132-33, asserts that the Greek way to display a denial of a given principle is to put the group professing the ideal on middle ground and other groups at the ends of the spectrum. Josephus, War (c.75 CE.), places the Essenes in the middle by themselves and the Pharisees and Sadducees on opposite ends, whereas in Ant (c.93/94 CE.) the Pharisees take the middle position, the Essenes represent the fatalist wing and the Sadducees hold onto the ancient Jewish traditions.

Pharisees	Sadducees
Every soul is imperishable	No continuity of a soul
Only the soul of the good passes into another body ¹⁵⁴	Neither rewards nor punishment
The souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment	

His comparison in: Ant 13.5.9; 18.1.2

Pharisees	Sadducees
The soul survives death	The soul perishes along with the body
There are rewards and punishments under the earth	

This portrayal is paralleled in the gospels.¹⁵⁵ Jesus argues with the Sadducees over the existence of resurrection (Mark 12:26) in a way that shows the importance of

¹⁵⁴ Cavallin, "Leben", 306, assumes that the passage refers to bodily resurrection, but this view is refuted by Todd S. Beall, Josephus' Description of the Essenes. Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls (Cambridge University Press, 1988) 105, because Josephus is writing for a Gentile audience. Horsley, Jesus, 74, proposes reincarnation, and Segal, "Observations," 396, asserts that new incorruptible flesh is envisioned, similar to Enoch. It may be argued that this is a reference to the philosophical Greek notion of transmigration of the soul as mentioned in Josephus' speech at Jotapata.

¹⁵⁵ Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Acts 4:1-2; 5:17; 23:8-9; 24:21; Benedict T. Viviano and Justin Taylor, "Sadducees, Angels, and Resurrection (Acts 23:8-9)," JBL 3/3 (1992). 496-498.

the concept of resurrection in current varieties of Judaism.¹⁵⁶ In Jesus' view, as well as in that of the rabbis, the Sadducees are obtusely literal in interpreting the scripture.

4.2.2 The Pharisees

Pharisees¹⁵⁷ are presented as accurate interpreters of the Torah law in general and moreover, they advocate *nomina*, "legal enactments" (Vita, 191) as traditions from old which are not recorded in Moses' written Torah.¹⁵⁸ Their deviance from other groups is also visible in their strict emphasis on observing priestly purity laws beyond the realm of the Temple, even in family and daily life. The Pharisaic teaching includes free will and Divine Providence, and is open to the apocalyptic expectations of the times.¹⁵⁹ They were not only scholars but acted also as a political interest group throughout the

¹⁵⁶ Gerald J. Janzen, "Resurrection and Hermeneutics: On Exodus 3.6 in Mark 12.26," JSNT 23 (1985) 43-58.

¹⁵⁷ Louis Finkelstein, "The Pharisees: Their Origin and Their Philosophy," HTR 22 (1929) 223-231, argued that the Pharisees were originally an urban and the Sadducees a rural group. Legal and theological controversies supposedly arose from sociological and economic conflicts.

¹⁵⁸ Ant 13.297; 17.41; Mk 7:5; Mt 15:2; Pesher Nahum (4Q169), I:2, 7, II:2, 4, III:3, 6-7; Hodayoth (1QH) 2:15, mentions the *dorshe haHalakot*, the "Seekers of the Smooth Things," which supposedly refers to the Pharisees.

¹⁵⁹ Ellis Rivkin, The Hidden Revolution: An Historical Reconstruction of the Pharisees (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), analyses Rabbinic texts and argues that the Pharisaic belief in the world to come and in the bodily resurrection was a *Gegenkraft* against Hellenism; contrast Manson, "Sadducee," 156-159, who suggests that etymologically "Pharisees" derived from the word Persia and denote the innovators who spread the foreign Zoroastrian resurrection belief.

Second Temple period¹⁶⁰ which grew into the dominant force in the Synhedria, as suggested in Acts and Gospel of John. Saldarini maintains that on the whole, they did not control any of the hereditary ties to the positions of power, they rather functioned as rich and powerful patrons of the peasants within village society, though their lifestyle was not luxurious (Ant 18.12).¹⁶¹ With their influence¹⁶², their belief in an afterlife was able to gain many adherents.

4.2.2.1 Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel

In spite of the multiplicity of ideas regarding the eschaton within the various Pharisaic schools, the notion of the resurrection is a constant.¹⁶³ The first of the disputes recorded concerns the idea how man is created anew in the world to come. Beit Shammai postulates the reverse order from the creation of an embryo, using Ezek. 37:8

¹⁶⁰ Under Salome Alexandra's reign the Pharisees became *dioiketai* of all the land (War, 1.110; Ant, 13.409) Alexander Jannai persecuted the pharisees because they had involved the Seleucids in interior Jewish affairs and 800 were crucified (Ant 13.379). Herod respected them as an important group and, at the beginning of the Jewish revolt, the most noble among them, together with the priests and the leading citizens, tried to avoid the war (War 2.409.; Vita 20); Schürer claims, History II:394, that political questions were treated not from a secular but from a religious standpoint.

¹⁶¹ Saldarini, Pharisees, 178.

¹⁶² Vita 196 states the influence of Simon ben Gamliel, the Pharisee, on Ananias. Vita, 197, recounts a delegation consisting of four Pharisees, two *demotikoi*, but also two born into the priesthood. Josephus claims that the Pharisees controlled public life. In this context Mason understands Vita 10-12 and states, Josephus, 143, that Josephus deferred to the Pharisees for opportunistic political reasons rather than referred to a conversion to Pharisaic teaching.

¹⁶³ Jakob Neusner, The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70 (3 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) I: 301-340, points to the limitation of rabbinical sources which represent the Pharisees as learned rabbis and retroject later Judaism into the first century.

as their justification. Thus the process of the new creation starts with the bones and is completed with the addition of the skin. Beit Hillel, instead refers to Job 10:9 and declares that there will not be any change in the order in the world to come. A belief in the resurrection for both schools is assumed. Shammai speculates on an actual resurrection, whereas Hillel seems to interpret the resurrection as a new creation without any connection to the old body.¹⁶⁴

Later Rabbinical teachings exhibit a continuation of ideas from the latter part of the Second Temple period, for example, the perceptions of the afterlife in 4Ezra and 2Baruch.¹⁶⁵

An emphasis on the bodily resurrection is expressed in the parable in b.San. 91a-92b, where it is stated that a judgement of the spiritual soul could not be complete without the body. Although the soul is able to perceive the divine Godhead it is not a complete human being and needs its body. This development was counteracted by earlier Rabbis who insisted on the superiority of the soul. Subsequently mSan 90a teaches the only "dogma" ever formulated in the field of eschatology:

¹⁶⁴ Cavallin, "Leben," 311.

¹⁶⁵ Boyarin and Siegel, "Resurrection", 99-100, list the concept of retribution for the Jewish nation as a whole, as well as for the individual. Secondly, body and soul are a single indivisible entity, both essential and equal in the nature of a human being. Some sources see the resurrection as the last step in the eschaton, identical with the world to come. Other sources seem to allude to a resurrection which precedes the final redemption. The world to come may even precede the resurrection.

He who denies the resurrection of the dead, so he won't participate in the resurrection.¹⁶⁶

4.2.3 The Essenes¹⁶⁷

The "*Devianz*" of this association of about 4000 members¹⁶⁸ is expressive of its segregation from the mainstream of society and of its communal life.¹⁶⁹ The members of the main community lived as celibates, on the Western shore of the Dead Sea above En-Gedi.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, they also had cohesive communities in cities. Since the organization of the community was very much focused on a priestly structure, a priestly aristocratic origin of the group may be inferred, but their membership is drawn from all classes of society.¹⁷¹ Their principle occupation in agriculture¹⁷² might have

¹⁶⁶ All Israel will participate in the world to come, according to Rabbi Joshua ben Chananya, as well as all the righteous people from all nations, with the exception of those who deny that the resurrection can be proven from the Torah. The whole of later orthodox Judaism includes the hope of the resurrection as a necessary tenet of its faith as expressed in the second benediction of the daily Prayer of the *Shmone Esre*.

¹⁶⁷ In this study the Essenes are distinguished from the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls and therefore do not serve as a source for the description of this group. Whereas most scholars, e.g. Emile Puech, "La croyance", consider the Essenes and the Qumran sectarians to be one and the same.

¹⁶⁸ Ant, 18.20; Philo Judaeus, Every Good Man is free, 12.75 in The Works of Philo. Complete and Unabridged (new updated edn; trans. by C.D. Yonge; Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1993) 683.

¹⁶⁹ War 2.122-161; Philo, Man, 12-13; idem. Hypothetica, 11.1-18.

¹⁷⁰ War, 2.121; Hypothetica, 11.14; Josephus claims, War, 2.161-162, that one group existed in order to propagate.

¹⁷¹ War 2.567; 3.11, refer to John, a general during the revolt; Ant 15:373; 17.347, mention that Menachem and Simon interpret dreams, which seems to indicate an origin among the upper classes or retainer group; see Stegemann, Sozialgeschichte, 167.

developed due to their strict observance of the Sabbath and the maintenance of ritual purity, which ideals were rooted in their priestly orientation. They apparently did not bring sacrifices to the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁷³ They believed in complete predestination and reward and punishment in the afterlife for their deeds done in this world. Their belief in an immortal soul is described in Ant 18.8 as: *Αθανατίζουσι τας ψυχας*. There is no mention of bodily resurrection. Josephus mentions Essenes who sacrificed their lives because they were convinced that their souls would be restored to them. The soul pre-exists conception, then it is immured in the body until death releases it from its corporeal prison. The good souls proceed to a refreshing place, while evil souls are chastised. Wars 2.154-156: "Bodies are corruptible ... but ... souls are immortal" Josephus asserts twice that this doctrine is analogous to the Greek teaching of the immortality of the soul¹⁷⁴ and is appealing to those who hear about it.¹⁷⁵ Hippolytus, a Roman presbyter (170-236 CE) gives the following description:

The doctrine of the resurrection has also derived support among them, for they acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again, and that it will be immortal, in the same manner as the soul is already imperishable. They maintain that when the soul

¹⁷² Ant, 18.19; Philo, Hypothetica, 11.8.

¹⁷³ Josephus, Ant 18.19, claims that they performed their own sacrifices, whereas Philo, Man 75, denies all sacrifices besides those of their mind.

¹⁷⁴ Wars 2.154-156; Cavallin, "Leben," 274, cautions that Josephus might have presented Essene beliefs as too hellenized.

¹⁷⁵ Horsley, Jesus, 81, describes the Essenes as too isolated to influence the rest of society, since they were so focused on their own religious-political routine. However, members who lived in other places may have been able to convey their teachings.

has been separated from the body, it is now borne into one place which is... full of light and there it rests until judgement.¹⁷⁶

The mention of the bodily resurrection, which differs from Wars 2.155, is often explained as a Christianization.¹⁷⁷ Beall comments¹⁷⁸ that Hippolytus might actually be more correct with his declaration on the bodily resurrection than Josephus' report, which was coloured intentionally by Greek language and thought.

4.2.4 Scribes

The movements described above as well as another independent, non-priestly group, the Scribes¹⁷⁹, had their origins in the ferment precipitated during the Hellenistic period. According to Luke 20:39, the Scribes showed their approbation of the response Jesus gave the Sadducees as they challenged him in regard to the question of the resurrection. The Scribes agree with Jesus on the bodily resurrection, ignoring the other contemporary issue of the immortality of the soul.

¹⁷⁶ Hippolytus, Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies (2 vols.; trans. by F. Legge; New York: Macmillan, 1971) 9.27,1.

¹⁷⁷ Geza Vermes and Martin D. Goodman (eds.), The Essenes: According to the Classical Sources (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 62-63, do not accept this statement because according to the authors Hippolytus does not Christianize but rather tries to discredit the sect because he sees the Essenes as deviant Jews.

¹⁷⁸ Beall, Josephus' Description, 105 n.270.

¹⁷⁹ Elias Bickerman, "The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism," in Louis Finkelstein (ed.), The Jews (New York: Harper, 1949) 99-101; Saldarini, Pharisees, 241-242. In the New Testament they are usually mentioned in connection with the Pharisees, thus implying that they have no independent identity.

4.2.5 Revolutionaries and Prophetic-Charismatic Movements

Numerous charismatic groups and movements flourished at the turn of the era in Palestine.¹⁸⁰ This phenomenon may have constituted a protest against the political and socio-economic situation of the times. The movements consisted of non-violent prophetic associations, revolutionaries, social bandits, millenarian groups and the "Fourth Philosophy". They were members of the underprivileged classes from urban as well as non-urban centers. Their leaders were mainly drawn from the retainer class.¹⁸¹ Their religious outlook was frequently influenced by teachers, prophets, healers and preachers. Some leaders wandered through the countryside with a small numbers of followers preaching to the people, or at times they retreated to the desert, the place of eschatological revelations. Jesus and John the Baptist were such charismatic leaders. Among their followers one can discern those with strong eschatological persuasions, those who exhibited a strong mystical leaning, those who were already trying to live the eschaton, and then those who expected the final cosmic epiphany coupled with the bodily resurrection. Similar ideas are expressed by the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The expectation of a Messiah in a transitory kingdom, an earthly kingdom, is especially significant. On the other hand, there is an eschatological expectation of the universal resurrection at the end of days in which the Divine alone is active. From a fragment belonging to the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have unambiguous testimony that "raising the dead" was an important idea in that milieu which was permeated with Messianic

¹⁸⁰ Grabbe, *Judaism*, II: 465-533.

¹⁸¹ Stegemann, *Sozialgeschichte*, 148-154.

hope.¹⁸² Originally termed "On Resurrection", now known as: "Messianic Apocalypse", it reflects a clear belief in the resurrection of the dead through the mediation of the Messiah. He will heal the sick, **resurrect the dead** - ם'ן דג' ... and to the poor announce glad tidings.¹⁸³ Other Jewish texts proclaim that the resurrection is regarded as the exclusive action of the Divinity.¹⁸⁴ It is God who will reanimate the dead.

4.2.5.1 Jesus Followers and Early Christianity

The various ideas of a resurrection seem to have been of extreme importance to the followers of Jesus from the very beginning, as witnessed by the variety of resurrection stories in the gospels.¹⁸⁵ In these stories it can be seen that the resurrection is considered very real and bodily. The supreme tenet which bonded the group and also made it a "*Devianz Gruppe*" was their experience of Jesus, their leader, himself risen bodily from the dead. Paul, from the beginning tried to synthesize all three ideas, his

¹⁸² This passage shows a close linguistic parallel to the New Testament in regard to Jesus' Messianic identity (Matt. 11:4-5; Luke 7:22-23).

¹⁸³ Wise and Tabor, "4Q521," 62. The publication of this fragment refutes Geza Vermes statement The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (3d rev. and augm. edn; New York) 56, that the scrolls never clearly mention the idea of resurrection.

¹⁸⁴ The second benediction in a Jewish prayer - the *Shemone Esre* - antedates the destruction of the Temple and reads: "Blessed are you, God, who makes the dead alive."

¹⁸⁵ Lazarus, the young man Naim, the centurion's servant and the young girl.

personal conviction about Jesus' resurrection, the notion of the immortal soul and the eschatological resurrection of the body.¹⁸⁶

4.3 Evidence from Epitaphs

A number of epitaphs in Beth Shearim give clear evidence of a belief in the afterlife. For instance: "Good luck in your resurrection!"¹⁸⁷ and "May your soul cling to immortal life."¹⁸⁸ Astral immortality which was a popular notion in the pagan Greco-Roman culture also penetrated Jewish perceptions as substantiated by the inscription: "Don't be despondent, for nobody is immortal except One, He who ordered this to happen (and) who has placed us in the sphere of the planets".¹⁸⁹ According to this testimony the deceased become heavenly star-beings.

5. Was the Notion of the Bodily Resurrection Prevalent in First Century CE?

We have shown that by the end of the first century CE a wide spectrum of beliefs in life-after-death was unfolding. The notion of an individual, bodily resurrection emerged and was accepted in Hellenistic Judaism. It is important to consider whether this notion had already been commonplace before 70 CE.

¹⁸⁶ e.g. 1Cor 15; 2Cor 5.

¹⁸⁷ Avigad, "Beth She'arim", 247; also p. 239 - "wish for resurrection."

¹⁸⁸ BS II 130; also BS II 183; see Van der Horst, Epitaphs, 118-122.

¹⁸⁹ Cited by Van der Horst, Epitaphs, 124.

Josephus asserts¹⁹⁰ that **each** Jewish individual strongly believed in the resurrection. Acts 23: 6-10 suggests that the issue was still fiercely fought over.¹⁹¹ At the same token talmudic passages (jHag 77b) show, in the polemic against the "Minim" who deny a future world, that the rejection of the idea of resurrection is still ongoing. This shows that some rejected the notion of bodily resurrection. But they may have been a minority and the belief in resurrection, therefore may have been dominant.

Since the Pharisees had exercised influence in the Sanhedrin and among the population, it is plausible to suppose that they could easily have propagated their religious beliefs among a considerable number of middle class people and among the Amhaaretz.

Scholars have been very much divided in this regard. Kegel had gone so far as to declare that the 'late Jewish apocalyptic notion of resurrection' was part of the everyday world-view among Jews in the time of Jesus and Paul.¹⁹² Figueras has claimed that belief in individual resurrection had been accepted by most of the Jewish people of the period in question.¹⁹³ On the other end of the spectrum, Riley argues that in first century CE the notion of the immortal soul was the common view, as shown in Greco-

¹⁹⁰ Contra Apionem, 218, which was written at the end of the first century CE.

¹⁹¹ This passage may either reflect the situation in 50-60 CE about which the author is writing or in 90 CE when the text was probably written.

¹⁹² Günter Kegel, Auferstehung Jesu - Auferstehung der Toten. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1970) 25.

¹⁹³ JDO, 9.

Roman literature and as conveyed in the Book of Thomas.¹⁹⁴ Holleman maintains that the expectation of the eschatological resurrection was not the common Jewish view in the first century, though the concept was "distinctively Jewish."¹⁹⁵

It may safely be assumed that belief in bodily resurrection, variously nuanced, was a familiar concept in some groups and movements, because the Jewess Martha answers, when told that her brother will rise again: "**I know** that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (Jn 11:24).

¹⁹⁴ Gregory J. Riley, Resurrection Reconsidered. Thomas and John in Controversy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 176-79, argues that early Christianity had inherited a variety of conceptions of the afterlife of which the notion of the immortal soul was originally applied to Jesus' resurrection. Only later did the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh develop in defense of Jesus's humanity.

¹⁹⁵ Holleman, Resurrection, 37 n.5.

Part Three

Correlated Study of *Ossuary* Burial and the Notion of the Resurrection

Parts One and Two of this work have described the material culture of burial practices and the spectrum of ideas concerning the afterlife during First Century Judaism. In Part Three a possible link between *ossuary* burials and the belief in resurrection will be addressed. A short survey of the scholarly works addressing the occurrence of *ossuaries* will precede this analysis. This is followed by a critique of these scholars' views on the connections between *ossuary* phenomena and afterlife and resurrection. Finally, the present author's own reflections are presented.

1. Previous Research into the *Ossuary* Phenomenon

The first extensive study of the symbolic interpretation of *ossuary* decoration was Goodenough's voluminous work, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (1953-58).¹ There, the realistic (i.e. non-symbolic) interpretation of the ornamental motifs as previously published by the Israeli archaeologists Avi-Yonah and Sukenik was rebutted. Members of the Franciscan School in Jerusalem, Testa and Bagatti, continued the dispute by defending the symbolic interpretation and by postulating a Christian origin for all

¹ The following volumes specifically refer to Jewish *ossuaries*: I: The Archaeological Evidence from Palestine (1953) 59-139; III: Illustrations (1953) 105-231; IV: The Problem of Method. Symbols from Jewish Cult (1954b) 63-70, 110-112, 120; X: Summary and Conclusions (1965) 22-39, 64-77, 106.

*ossuaries*², as conveyed in Testa's dissertation, Il simbolismo dei giudeo-cristiani (1958). Their thesis was subsequently attacked by De Vaux of the École Biblique³ and by Avi-Yonah⁴, but otherwise ignored in general.⁵ For the most part Goodenough's pronouncements⁶ have been dismissed⁷ as speculative. Repeatedly throughout those years Rahmani called for a realistic interpretation, denying any symbolic meaning to the ornamentation.⁸ Meyers published an extensive study in 1971, Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth, which presented the practice of *ossilegium* in its Near Eastern

² Emile Testa, Il simbolismo dei giudeo-cristiani, (Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 14; Jerusalem, 1962) 466; Bagatti and Milik, Dominus Flevit, 179.

³ Roland de Vaux, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit', I: La necropoli del periodo romano*," RB 66 (1959) 299-301.

⁴ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Review of Bagatti, P.B. and J.T. Milik, Gli scavi del 'Dominus flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano. (Pubblicazioni dello studium biblicum franciscanum, n.13) Jerusalem, 1958," IEJ 11 (1961) 91-94.

⁵ For the obvious reason that *ossuaries* predate Christianity.

⁶ Goodenough recognized the frequency of a motif and deduced from this a symbolic use. Jewish art is exclusively Hellenistic and consequently cannot be decorative, because the borrowed pagan symbols are "living symbols" (IV:43). The value of the symbol lies in its 'emotional impact'(X:70) which Goodenough identifies by his own feelings (VII:220), contradicting the claim for universal character of the symbols (IV: 37 - 'lingua franca').

⁷ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Review of Goodenough E.R. Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, I-IV," IEJ 6 (1956) 194-199; Figueras, JDO, 80-81, regrets that Goodenough's work lacks criteria of typology, chronology, systematization of the motifs and the consideration of any materialistic aspects; Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part IV," BA 45 (1982) 116, regrets that Goodenough did not provide written evidence of tombs and *ossuaries*, nor literary sources pertaining to symbolic values; also RCat, 25-27.

⁸ RCat, 26.

setting. There, he stressed its diverse continuity throughout the centuries, hence contradicting Rahmani's claim for Jewish *ossilegium* as constituting a novelty. In his valuable monograph, Decorated Jewish Ossuaries, Figueras proceeded in 1983 to reconcile the position of the symbolists and the realists, basically accepting a possible symbolic interpretation of the ornamental motifs. The latest comprehensive work was published in 1994, The Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel, edited by Rahmani, which provides extensive resource material pertaining to the occurrence of *ossuaries*.

2. Analysis of Correlations between Ossuary Decoration and the Belief in an Afterlife

The ornamentation on the bone-containers has been symbolically interpreted as an indication of a belief in life after death.⁹ Ornamental motifs have to be seen, according to Goodenough: "... as symbols of hope of another life for those whose bones were in the boxes - symbols of hope, and perhaps direct aids to its fulfillment."¹⁰

⁹ W. Wirgin, "The Menorah as Symbol of After-Life," IEJ 14 (1964) 102-104, claimed that those who were buried in decorated *ossuaries* believed in immortality of the soul rather than in resurrection.

¹⁰ I: 133; X: 70-73.

2.1 The Symbolic Interpretation

Justification for a symbolic interpretation was found by underlining the fact that any decoration in the context¹¹ of funerary art relates to the hope of a post-mortem existence.¹² Second Temple Jewish eschatological literature uses allegorical terms such as the "gate to *Sheol*" and the "gate to Heaven"¹³, which may very well be reflected in the ornamentation on *ossuaries*.

This funerary context has mostly been neglected by symbolists who perceived various symbolic possibilities in each and every element of an ornamental motif.¹⁴ In reaction, a different approach to the significance of *ossuary* decoration resulted: the non-symbolic interpretation, which denied any underlying symbolism of the ornamental motifs.

¹¹ This means, *JDO*, 83, a bone container, placed in the "darkness of the tombs."

¹² Figueras, *JDO*, 83, takes it for granted that "if there is symbolism in *ossuary* decoration this symbolism must be related to the beliefs in afterlife."

¹³ *JDO*, 73-83. Figueras, *JDO*, 88-90, provides a listing of allegorical passages: the Gate of *Sheol* (Isa 38:10; Job 38:17; Ps 19:14; 107:18); Gates of *Sheol* (PsSol 16:1-3; 1QH III:16-18); Gates of Death (1QH VI:24); Gates of *Hades* (Apoc Elijah 3:18; 14:3-13). The author points also to the perception of the new abode of a heavenly, lightful place: The Gate of Heaven (1En 9:2, 104:2, Apoc Elijah 3:18; 14:3-13).

¹⁴ The common rosettes have been interpreted as: an Istar star, a symbol of the sun...the divine light, a wheel symbolizing reincarnation, stars symbolizing angels who were guarding the dead until the day of resurrection, or the eyes (soul) of the deceased. Mystical significance has been read even into the number of petals; the guiding marks of the artisans have been declared as symbols for the cross, see *RCat*, 25-27; *JDO*, 80.

2.2 The Non-Symbolic Interpretation

The fact that there are no written references to symbolism in contemporary literature has been observed and taken as justification for the non-symbolic approach.¹⁵ Even a realistic symbolic representation, such as the architectural motif symbolizing the Temple façade¹⁶, is untenable to Rahmani.¹⁷ He attempted to prove and still maintains that the *ossuary* decorations are only material imitations of sepulchral art to be found in the vicinity of Jerusalem of that time.¹⁸ In his opinion the entire embellishment merely signifies "the eternal home of the deceased, until his bodily resurrection from the bones contained therein."¹⁹

¹⁵ Rahmani, "Ancient, IV," 117; idem., "Review of Kanael B., Die Kunst der antiken Synagoge, IEJ 12 (1962) 74, acknowledges the possibility of a symbolic value of a motif, for instance the "Sacred Portal", at an earlier point in time, but its meaning might well have been lost by the time *ossuaries* were used; James Hall, Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art (New York: IconEditions, 1994) 157, describes the common rosette motif which originally personified Near-Eastern sun-gods, was a popular decorative motif in Mesopotamian art. Later its purpose was probably apotropaic; therefore, at the time of *ossuary* usage it seems farfetched to see an Ishtar star in the common rosette.

¹⁶ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Oriental Elements in the Art of Palestine in the Roman and Byzantine Periods, I." QDAP 10 (1944) 147.

¹⁷ Rahmani, "Ancient. IV," 117, acknowledges as exceptions the depiction of *menoroth* on two *ossuaries* as symbolic and explains this evidence in the context of ownership of the *ossuary* by a priestly family; see Asher Grossberg, "Behold the Temple. Is it Depicted on a Priestly Ossuary?" BAR 22/3 (1996) 46-51, 66.

¹⁸ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Jerusalem's Tomb Monuments on Jewish Ossuaries," IEJ 18 (1968) 220-225. RCat provides a list of parallels between tomb architecture and the architectural motifs on ossuaries. But these architectural motifs are found in other sumptuous buildings of this epoch. Hence Figueras, JDO, 79, comments: "Why should artisans of ossuaries imitate only those *imitations of buildings* - the few rich tombs in Jerusalem - and not the buildings themselves?"

¹⁹ Rahmani, "Review of Kanael", 74.

Surely craftsmanship was determined by the skills of the artisan, guided by decorative-aesthetic considerations and restricted by a certain price range. However, the artist's intention or the buyer's perception cannot be established and, accordingly, a symbolic interpretation of *ossuary* decoration cannot simply be denied.²⁰

2.3 Comprehensive Approach to the Question of Symbolism

Figueras' unbiased approach attempts a compromise between a non-symbolic interpretation and the extreme uses of symbolism, and has been appreciated as a possible and "sober corrective" to extreme opinions.²¹ He confers a twofold purpose on the ornamental motifs: decorative-aesthetic²², as well as symbolic but "only at times".²³ This is compatible with the observation that a certain artist, Azaria of Beirut, decorated an *ossuary*²⁴ intentionally with a bull's head, a symbol of afterlife. In agreement with Figueras, the importance of such decoration and its symbolism may be perceived

²⁰ Rahmani, RCat, 28, acknowledges that the purchaser's choice may have been based on a personal symbolic association, but the possible non-symbolic intention of the artist is ignored; see JDO, 22-23.

²¹ Eric Meyers, "Review: *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*, by Pau Figueras," BASOR 260 (1985) 82-83.

²² Figueras, JDO, 84, sees in the decoration the intention to create "a sense of beauty, harmony and peace, an intention which underlies some of the characteristic features of this art, such as symmetry."

²³ Figueras, JDO, 83, demonstrates that the depiction of a gate can simply denote a gate; yet, it may be in a symbolic way represented as either the Gate of Hades or the Gate of Heaven. There is hardly a symbolic value to a zig-zag line, but seeking significance of the use of a gate as a central motif, is surely justified.

²⁴ Avni, "Architecture", 34.

as a wish for peace for the dead and an additional proof of hope for an everlasting life and perhaps for the bodily resurrection.²⁵

The fact that the majority of the bone-boxes are undecorated, necessitates the study of the occurrence of *ossuaries* independently of any iconographic scheme. This departure has been taken by Meyers, who did not concern himself with the evaluation of the adornment, and emphasizes that "secondary burials themselves have a rather elaborate theology."²⁶ Similarly Rahmani refers to the ritual of *ossilegium* as the important act "which was linked neither to the receptacle nor to its form nor to its decoration."²⁷

3. Analysis of Correlations between *Ossuary Burial* and the Belief in Resurrection

Since the 1950's, Rahmani, the leading expert on *ossuaries*²⁸, has in numerous publications maintained that bone-gathering and the preservation of the skeletal remains within an especially designed *ossuary* was

²⁵ JDO, 84.

²⁶ JORR, 44.

²⁷ RCat, 28.

²⁸ Levi Yitzhaq Rahmani, the former chief curator of the Department of the Israel Antiquity, is a strong advocate of this assertion and his theory is cited by archaeologists more often lately. During the summer of 1996 the present author was able to discuss this issue with him.

novel at the time, was founded in the belief in individual, physical resurrection, which was then taking deep root in Pharisaic circles, being based, as has been noted, on concepts of the early Hasidim.²⁹

This statement contains several relevant issues which have to be addressed in order to reach a tentative conclusion in this study.

3.1 Is Jewish *Ossuary* Burial a Novelty?

A survey (based on archaeological finds and religious texts) of funerary customs among ancient civilizations in Palestine and abroad has shown diverse types of receptacles or space housing the body³⁰, as well as evidence for gathering bones or ashes into containers. Similarities with Jewish *ossilegium* have been stressed in the dispute about the novelty of the *ossuary* phenomenon.

The religious texts of the (pre-)Zoroastrian Iranians³¹, for example, describe *ossilegium* into a receptacle, *astodan*.³² It is therefore tempting to extrapolate to the

²⁹ Rahmani, "Ossuaries", 193; idem., "Shahin Hill", 105; idem., "Rock-Cut Tombs," 117; idem., "Jason's Tomb", 95; *RCat*, 53-54.

³⁰ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite*; *JORR*, 3-11, 15-36; *JDO*, 2-5; *RCat*, 56-59.

³¹ *Vendidad* 6:45-51; 8:10.

³² Pre-Zoroastrian Iranian receptacles, *astodans*, are mentioned in the *Vendidad* as containing the excarnated bones of the deceased (the exposed flesh had been stripped by birds and dogs) and placed in a secure place - *Vendidad* 6: 49-51; Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism I: The Early Period* (Leiden : Brill, 1975) 326-7; Mary Boyce and F. Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism III: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 82. This religious command is based on oral traditions which may date to Achaemenid times but was practiced only after the turn of the era.

origin of Jewish *ossilegium*.³³ Yet the established Zoroastrian rule, apparently and surprisingly, was not put into practice until well after the turn of the era³⁴, after the appearance of Jewish *ossuaries*. Rahmani's conclusion, that "any direct theological or practical influence may be excluded" carries, in the absence of evidence, conviction.³⁵

Contemporary funerary customs in the Roman Empire display primary inhumation and the fashionable cremation.³⁶ The disposal of bodies by cremation would not have appealed to Jews. However, the act of collecting bones and ashes into receptacles (urns, ash-chests or funerary altars) parallels the Jewish activity of bone-collecting into *ossuaries*.³⁷

The occurrence of various receptacles in other cultures, for instance, the Chalcolithic domi-forms³⁸, Persian *astodans*³⁹, Greek *larnakes*⁴⁰, bathtub coffins⁴¹,

³³ Scholars favor the opinion that the initial stimulus for a belief in the resurrection may have originated in Iranian tradition because of the major Jewish presence in post-586 BCE Persia; Meyers, *JORR*, 47, tentatively proposes Parthian influence as the origin of the individual receptacle.

³⁴ Boyce and Grenet, *History*, 82.

³⁵ *RCat*, 57; but see Meyers, *JORR*, 28-30, who cites Parthian evidence for secondary burials from Seleucia on the Tigris (Level III, 140 BCE -CE 43), often in slipper coffins or tubs. In this context he seems inclined to follow some scholars who accept the assumption that *astodans* had been used already from the early Parthian period onwards.

³⁶ J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) 39.

³⁷ In *RCat*, 58, Rahmani rejects the idea of copying Roman funerary customs. Apparently, Meyers, *JORR*, 32, recalls Rahmani suggesting such a motivation.

³⁸ B.A. Mastin, "Chalcolithic Ossuaries and Houses for the Dead," *PEQ* (1965) 153-160.

and even Roman ash-chests⁴², might undermine the uniqueness of the *ossuary*. But the original function of some of these receptacles seems to have been simply as a coffin or as a container for cremated human remains. Moreover, their occurrence is chronologically and geographically too far removed from the Jewish *ossuary* in Jerusalem to effect direct copying.⁴³ Similar shapes or decorations do not have to surprise us, as receptacles are based on household chests, and cross-cultural borrowing is evidenced

³⁹ Numerous *astodans* (clay *ossuaries*) have been discovered in Central Asia; however not a single one pre-dates 70 CE, but rather dates to the 2nd-3rd to mid-7th century CE, claims Roman Ghirshman, Iran: From the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Book, 1954) 332-333. According to other opinions they date to the 1st century CE.

⁴⁰ Emily Vermeule, Greece in the Bronze Age (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 210-214, observes that the larnax occurs as a clay or stone box, in the shape of a bathtub or chest and features four square legs; idem, "Painted Mycenaean Larnakes," JHS 85 (1965) 125, 148, dates the larnakes to the 13th-12th century BCE.

⁴¹ Bloch-Smith, Judahite, 36, 135, describes the bathtub coffins as one meter long vessels with one rounded and one squared end. They contained skulls, bones and ceramic vessels, have been put in simple graves, rock-cut tombs or court yards. They were introduced by Assyrians in the late eighth century BCE; J.P. Free, "The Sixth Season at Dothan," BASOR 156 (1959) 25, reports a bathtub coffin with two skulls and jumble of bones and describes it as "reburial from the period of Assyrian occupation (8-7th century B.C.)."

⁴² The shapes and decorations of cinerary urns do not parallel the *ossuaries*, except for one Etruscan urn from the fifth century BCE. Locally found clay vessels connected to the cremations of Roman legionaries in Jerusalem have been noted by Rahmani, RCat, 58, but they represent common pottery of the period.

⁴³ RCat 57.

without doubt.⁴⁴ In Palestine, secondary burial in individual receptacles can be substantiated only for the Chalcolithic period (millenia earlier), and the *ossuary* burial during the Greco-Roman epoch.⁴⁵

Examining the space housing the body, it has been observed that caves and tombs retain the human remains in accumulated burials in a variety of societies from different periods. The solution for accomodating additional interments was a secondary deposition of previous burials, either by just moving them aside or, intentionally out of sight, into charnels, i.e., special niches, pits or, during the Hellenistic period, separate chambers. This sweeping of the remains of previous interments onto an assemblage of previous burials has been incorrectly interpreted as *ossilegium*. This had been done, for instance, in excavations in Gezer⁴⁶, Atlit⁴⁷ or Tell Far'ah.⁴⁸ Obviously, this concept should

⁴⁴ Michael Avi-Yonah, Oriental Art in Roman Palestine (Studi Semitici 5. Roma: Università di Roma-Centro di Studi Semitici, 1961) 16-21, claims the Jewish *ossuary* ornamentation to be Parthian or Mesopotamian, brought back by Jews returning from the Babylonian Exile. It should be noted, though, that at the time when *ossuaries* were fashioned, the resurgence of Oriental ornamentation replaced Classical decoration in the Greek world and was familiar to artists; see Bernard Goldman, The Sacred Portal (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966) 106.

⁴⁵ Rahmani, "Review Meyers", 124, claims that the tub looks different from a typical *ossuary*; local Jewish bathtub *ossuaries* in RCat, #'s 374, 853.

⁴⁶ Meyers, JORR, 7, refers to Tomb 59 in Gezer (IA I) and sees "veneration" in the manner in which many bones are piled up in sherds, jugs, bowls and saucers; the excavator, on the other hand, had the impression of carelessness; but see R.A.S. Macalister, The Excavation of Gezer, 1902-5 and 1907-9 (London: PEF, 1912) I: 325: "The bones and pottery were piled up in complete disorder."

⁴⁷ Ephraim Stern, Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332 B.C. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982) 70-71, notes that Tomb 16 contains secondary burials (Greek mercenaries during the Persian period).

not be confused with the distinctive one of the Herodian period, namely, when the skeletal remains of the deceased were carefully and intentionally collected and deposited into a single receptacle which was, in numerous cases, identified by the name and the characteristics of the loved one. Only this latter convention should be called *likut azamot*⁴⁹; otherwise it will lead, as it in fact did, to disparate conclusions: whereas Figueras, following Meyers'⁵⁰ lead, refused to acknowledge that the Palestinian *ossuaries* demonstrate "a unique phenomenon in the history of human burial customs", others⁵¹, such as Kahane, stated:

there can be little doubt that the secondary burial of the bones in ossuaries and the *kokhim* - representing together the main type of Jewish burial in the Herodian period - are intimately interrelated features forming a coherent, though unique and surprising phase in the development of Jewish burial customs.⁵²

Not only is the visual impression of an indiscriminate assemblage in a charnel different from that of stored decorated bone containers in tombs, but the criterion for

⁴⁸ Meyers, *JORR*, 5-7, sees evidence for *ossilegium* in Tomb 924 (IA I - Sea Peoples) and describes the central depression as a "communal ossuary" and speaks of "bone-gathering practices of these Aegean peoples"; but see Rahmani's "Review Meyers" 123, quoting the excavator who had recorded an ancient robbery during which everything had been cleared off the benches and thrown into the central well, the supposedly "communal ossuary".

⁴⁹ Rahmani, "Ossilegium", 193.

⁵⁰ *JORR*, 33, 44, 85; esp. 8. Notwithstanding the acknowledgment of the dissimilarities with other traditions, Meyers argues for commonality with the Palestinian *ossuaries*; also *JDO*, 4.

⁵¹ Rahmani, *RCat*, 53, asserts that the previous practice cannot be a "precursor to Jewish ossilegium."

⁵² Kahane, "Huqoq", 132.

"novelty" in this analysis should be applied to the additional attitude of an intentional separation from previous burials. *Ossuary* burial therefore denotes a new, distinct phenomenon in the history of Jewish burial practices as well within the practices of other contemporaneous societies in Palestine.

3.2 The Chronological Correlation between Emerging Resurrection Belief and *Ossuary Burial*

The idea of individual bodily resurrection, which had taken root in the post-exilic period, is portrayed as an accepted expectation in 2 Maccabees and is manifest in numerous writings in the pre-and early Hasmonaen period. Taking into account that a modification of burial customs would, in all probability, take some time to evolve, the interval of 6 generations before the appearance of lime-stone bone boxes in about 20 BCE (Rahmani's calculation) seems to challenge any direct temporal correlation of the use of *ossuaries* and the nascent belief in resurrection. Recent archaeological discoveries in Modiin and En Gedi pointing to a date at the beginning of the first century BCE, support other claims for an earlier advent of *ossuaries*, and may allow for a temporal link.

3.3 *Ossilegium* and its Relation to Afterlife

Secondary burials from the Chalcolithic times have encouraged the conception that this ritual might contain underlying beliefs in an afterlife.⁵³ In comparing this earliest evidence of bone-gathering in Palestine, seemingly similar to the Jewish *ossilegium* of the Herodian period, Meyers sees the "belief in the intimate relation of the corpse with flesh to its skeletal remains"⁵⁴ as a common denominator.

3.3.1 The Significance of Bones

Literary evidence accords importance and honour to skeletal remains.⁵⁵ Archaeologists, in general, can testify to the care taken in the handling and depositing of skeletal remains as well as the order in which they were placed into an ossuary.

As has already been stated, a person invites *tumah met* when coming in contact with a grave, a corpse or bones. Jewish people, who otherwise carefully avoided any defilement, nevertheless kept the custom of relocating skeletal remains for millenia.⁵⁶ In the light of the obsession with purity during the Roman period the act of *ossilegium*, which required a conscious handling of bones, had to be significant.

⁵³ Ann Killebrew, archaeologist and lecturer at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in a personal communiqué during a fieldtrip, Fall 1991; Rahmani, "Tombs. II", 230.

⁵⁴ JORR, 3.

⁵⁵ 2Kgs 13:20; Isa 66:14; Sir 46:12; Sem 13.1: "honour due to the bones."

⁵⁶ For that reason, *ossilegium* has sometimes been considered a practice alien to Jewish religion.

In Biblical monistic thought, bones represent the material sub-stratum of the person in his/her totality (Ps 35:9).⁵⁷ In the conviction that totality may be concentrated in one part of the body, *pars pro toto*, the bones may be thought of as accommodating the *nephesh* since they are the part of the body which withstands decay the longest. Consequently, special importance is attached to the bones. They inspire hope of a restoration of life. Ezekiel's vision of the revivication of the dry bones expresses this expectation well.⁵⁸

It can be argued that, in explicating this imagery of the reviving bones, those who held an incipient belief in resurrection within Judaism perceived an important connection between resurrection and the skeletal remains. The school of Beit Shammai, towards the end of the Late Second Temple period, through exegesis of Ezekiel 37:8, did propose resurrection to be a new creation originating with the bones. Rabbinical writings continue to declare honour due to the bones (Sem 13.1), which are gathered and deposited and, it may be conjectured, await the future resurrection. However, the influence of belief in resurrection on the introduction of *ossuary* burials is hard to establish.

⁵⁷ Jacob, "The Anthropology of the Old Testament", 623-24.

⁵⁸ In this context one should point to the theme of resurrection in the Dura-Europos Synagogue. Inscriptions and scenes on panels relate directly to revivication of the dead, such as episodes from Elijah's life and Ezekiel's transportation to the Valley of the Dry Bones and his resurrection of the Dead, described by Edna Garte, "The Theme of Resurrection in the Dura-Europos Synagogue Paintings," *JQR* 64/65 (1973-75) 1-3.

3.3.2 The Significance of Decay

Eventually⁵⁹ the process of decomposition of the flesh was associated with the idea of the expiation of sins.⁶⁰ During the twelve month period during which the flesh is disintegrating in the tomb (bKid 31b), judgment is said to be conferred on the soul.⁶¹ When the process of decay is complete, the soul is cleansed. Thus, not only death but also reburial acquires the effect of atonement for the deceased (bShab 152b)⁶² The rite of *ossilegium* indicated to the relatives the completion of atonement and generated comfort and gladness. This means of expiation, as it has been theologically read into *ossilegium*, may have appealed to the most pious ones.⁶³ In light of this theological belief, Rabbi Akiba's stress on total excarnation of the bones is to be understood for its

⁵⁹ RCat, 54: "between the late-first century BCE and the early-third century CE, the pious seem to have shared the view that sin, which contaminated all mortals, could be expiated in this manner."

⁶⁰ Although this positive value of atonement is applicable equally well to primary permanent burial followed by the decay of flesh as well.

⁶¹ B.Rosh Hashanah 17a: "During the time when the flesh is wasting away, the soul of the wicked is burnt, and the wind scatters the ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous." Prayers and sin offerings (alms) by the descendants help to make atonement (2 Macc 12:43-45).

⁶² Figueras, JDO, 7, rightly points out that the mere act of bone-gathering by itself as a means of expiation is not explicitly pronounced. "We should rather see it as a religious act by which the deceased could be considered as having attained atonement."

⁶³ Rahmani, 'Rock-Cut Tombs', 117 n.7.

consequences: incomplete decay results in the forfeiture of atonement⁶⁴ and would jeopardize resurrection. On the other hand, it cannot be demonstrated that secondary burial acquired this theology, at least in an oral tradition, by the Second Century BCE when the belief in resurrection surfaced. Neither the inscriptions nor the decorations on the *ossuaries* provide evidence.

3.3 The Correlation between Atonement and Resurrection

A sinless state is a prerequisite to resurrection.⁶⁵ Therefore, it is quite logical to associate the concept of physical resurrection with the rite of *ossilegium*. That practice emphasized the bones bare of decomposed flesh, indicating that the deceased had finally achieved atonement and was primed for resurrection, the restoration of the physical body from the entire skeleton. Rahmani in this respect can rightly advance the thought that this ritual

was intended to reassure the survivors that their relatives 'rested from judgement', (were) cleansed from sin and (were) entitled to resurrection.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Byron R. McCane, "Bones of Contentment? Ossuaries and Reliquaries in Early Judaism and Christianity," *Second Century* 8 (1991) 241: "Both the judgement of the deceased and the grieving of the bereaved came to an end in the *ossuary*. Its conclusion was vividly symbolized when the bones were collected in an *ossuary* and sealed in a *loculus*."

⁶⁵ 2 Macc 12: 42-45; Josephus, *Ant* 18.14, pronounces that only by leading a virtuous life will the soul have the power to revive.

⁶⁶ *RCat*, 28.

Notwithstanding this, the same constraint as noted in the previous paragraph applies here: The validity of this statement may be claimed for the second/third century CE but cannot be demonstrated for the early Hasmonaean period.

3.4 Correlation between Resurrection Belief and the Receptacle

The deposition of one individual's skeletal remains, physically apart from other burials, supposedly expressed the readiness for individual, bodily resurrection. All varieties of secondary burial techniques can sustain this theological thought without the restriction of an *ossuary* burial. The independence of a receptacle from the theological connection between *ossilegium* and resurrection has been generally acknowledged by Rahmani, but at one point he nevertheless associates the appearance of the *ossuary* with anticipated resurrection: the individual is expecting his/her individual resurrection best in an *ossuary* which would provide the optimal solution for individual safe-keeping.⁶⁷ The promotion of an *ossuary* is consistent with a concern for individual conservation with regards to honour in that it prevents intermingling with other burials.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the claim that preservation for eventual resurrection motivated the use of *ossuaries* is difficult to prove. First, the evidence for frequent multiple reburials in the same *ossuary* has to be reconciled with the principle of "individual

⁶⁷ Rahmani, "Rock-cut Tombs," 117.

⁶⁸ Personal communication from L. Schiffmann who understands from this ruling that respect be accorded to the individual and to his skeletal remains.

preservation".⁶⁹ The argument that "close kin" falls within the definition of individual preservation cannot be valid because, after all, the piling of bones onto previous generations of an extended family would also fit that definition. Second, archaeologists discovered reburials of multiple skulls separated from the remaining skeletons which were arranged into neat little piles.⁷⁰ Third, a *loculus*, especially the small *loculi* which have been found under or near burial *loculi*, would function as a receptacle itself and qualify for an individual sealed place to await resurrection, without the additional cost of the limestone chests.

Consistent with his thesis that *ossuaries* were inaugurated by the resurrection belief, Rahmani⁷¹ explains their disappearance in the mid-third century CE noting that the need to preserve one's entire skeleton in an *ossuary* for resurrection had to be relinquished then because of the political situation in Palestine, specifically, the dispersion of the Jews after 135 CE and martyrdom, after which not all the bones were necessarily available.

⁶⁹ Rahmani, "Ossilegium", 195.

⁷⁰ Kathleen Kenyon, *Jericho II* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1965), 525 - Tomb K23; Stekelis M., 'A Jewish Tomb-cave at Ramat Rachel,' *JJPES* 3 (1934-1935) 25.

⁷¹ Rahmani, "Ancient Customs" IV, 118.

3.5 *Ossuaries* and the Pharisees

Certain parties in Jewish society, for example, Pharisees, have been associated with *ossuary* burials. The Pharisees represented the more adaptable element within society which had adopted the literal notion of resurrection. Continuing this reasoning, the Sadducees would be the least likely candidates to opt for *ossuary* burials.⁷² They have been associated with tombs containing the charnel houses which continued the earlier First Temple period practice of communal repositories, thus implying conservatism in their practices and beliefs. Jason's tomb, a luxurious sepulchre, is accepted as an example of a burial place belonging to members of this upper class in Hellenistic-Roman Judean society.

The assumption that *ossuaries* represent an exclusive Pharisaic style of burial must now be evaluated by looking at further details factoring in some population estimates for the times.

The Jewish population of Palestine at the turn of the era has been estimated to have been about 500,000⁷³, and that of Jerusalem approximately 80,000 inhabitants.⁷⁴ According to this calculation and the assumption that the Pharisees' numerical strength

⁷² Though Michael Avi-Yonah, *Oriental Art*, 25-27, argues that rich Sadducees opted for *ossuary* and *sarcophagi* burial.

⁷³ Magen Broshi, "The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period," *BASOR* 236 (1979) 7, cites McCown who estimated the total population to be one million, half of them to be Jews.

⁷⁴ Magen Broshi, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem," *BAR* 4/2 (1978) 12.

would have been about five percent of the total population⁷⁵, there must have been 25,000 Pharisees.⁷⁶ If each Pharisee professing a belief in bodily resurrection was then buried in an *ossuary*, assuming a mortality rate of 10 persons per 1000⁷⁷ per year, there should then have been an average of about 250 *ossuaries* produced each year. Archaeologists have unearthed only about 2000 receptacles⁷⁸ up to the present. If *ossuaries* were used by the Pharisees for about one hundred years (30BC-70CE) that would mean that only 20 burials occurred per year instead of 250. Even with some multiple burials (two individuals) in one receptacle the fact still remains that six times as many more *ossuaries* should be expected than have turned up so far. Taking into account that there were secondary burials without receptacles in the same tomb groups, the number of *ossuary* burials for Pharisees could again be reduced, but the correlation between the numbers of estimated members of the Pharisaic *haburot* and the observed boxes still does not match. This calculation does not even address the question of Pharisaic adherents among the general population.

⁷⁵ Russell, Method, 22, states that Sadducees and Essenes together made up 2% of the total population, ie. 10,000. If Josephus is correct and there were 4000 Essenes, then the result would be 6000 Sadducees: ie., 1.2 % of the total population in Palestine, with Essenes at 0.8%.

⁷⁶ Schürer, History, 389 n. 20, points to the position of the Pharisees as a highly influential group even though the Pharisaic party numbers only 6000 heads of families.

⁷⁷ Today's rate in Egypt according to The Canadian World Almanac & Book of Facts 1989 (Toronto: Global Press, 1988) 89.

⁷⁸ RCat, 22, Table 1, lists about 200 *ossuaries* outside Jerusalem dating later than 70CE. This was a negligible number and does not affect the estimate.

Thus mortality figures already beg the question of the proposal that the use of the *ossuary* was linked to the Pharisaic conviction of bodily resurrection. The exclusive use of *ossuaries* by Pharisees can be further challenged by the inscriptions found on some bone chests, for instance, "Yehohanah, granddaughter of Theophilus." She was of a member of the House of Anan, a Sadduceean High Priestly family⁷⁹. To assign this burial custom exclusively to one political-religious group seems to be an oversimplification and does not hold up to further scrutiny.

In trying to reflect on a possible motivation for the practice of bone-gathering into an *ossuary*, our subjective point of view guides the statements which may be proven wrong tomorrow when discoveries of new *ossuaries* with specific proofs might appear. This study allows the present author to rethink her hypothesis from 1967. I now think that it cannot be proven that previous burial customs adapted themselves to the convention of the single *ossuary* under the influence of the notion of resurrection.

4. Alternative Reasons for the Ossuary Phenomenon

Although individual aspects of the *ossuary* phenomenon can be explained in a self-consistent manner, the one-sidedness of these explanations causes the overall picture to suffer. The present author would like to balance the picture by blending a social component into it.

⁷⁹ Deduced from a genealogical study based on following articles: Lea Roth, "Anan Son of Anan," *EJ* 2 (1971) 919; Uriel Rappaport, "Theophilus," *EJ* 15 (1971) 1110-1111; *Ant* 20.197; *Wars* 2.563; 4.160; *Vita* 38, 39, 44, 60.

We must first take into account the fact that during the Roman period it was apparently only a small well-to-do segment of Jewish society in Jerusalem ⁸⁰ which opted for secondary burial into an *ossuary*. Its means allowed it to indulge in the luxury of the ultimate in individual safe-keeping of its remains, thus identifiably guaranteeing memorialization by succeeding generations of visitors to the tomb. This urge to express individuality complements the desire to emulate primary burial into *sarcophagi*, but adapted to the religious precept of *ossilegium*. It must not be forgotten that the wealthy always look towards the fashion-setting ruling class - in this case the Romans.

4.1 Evidence for a Small Group within Well-to-do Society

Ossuary burial did not replace all variations of former practices. Primary inhumation occurred among the upper social classes (elaborate *sarcophagi*) and among the less rich (wooden coffins or simply shrouds).⁸¹ *Loculi*, pits and charnel houses⁸² give evidence that skeletal remains continued to be transferred onto mats and deposited individually in little piles. Frequently the same tomb contains secondary burials with

⁸⁰ The great Hellenistic-Roman centres such as Alexandria and Carthage, where the notion of the immortal soul had been the prevalent component of the belief in afterlife, do not provide evidence for *ossuary* burials in the first century CE. The few occurrences of rustic *ossuaries* in Carthage, dating to the second century CE, probably originated with immigrants from Palestine, see Rahmani, "Review Meyers", 122-123.

⁸¹ Those who could not afford a tomb were buried directly into the ground.

⁸² The charnel houses decreased eventually, first in Jerusalem then in other parts of Palestine. In the Herodian period they were often used as depositories for *ossuaries*.

or without *ossuaries*, where the chronological relationships cannot clearly be established.⁸³ Further proof comes from the tractate Semahot (Sem 12.8) which indicates that both forms of *ossilegium* were employed contemporaneously. The distribution of 2000 *ossuaries* indicates the use by only a small percentage of the populace.

The fact that *ossuaries* are found in tombs, already indicates a certain standard of wealth. A rock-cut tomb was an expensive investment⁸⁴ and required considerable wealth for one to be able to afford it. The price of an *ossuary* was an additional expense.⁸⁵ It may be thought that the price of an *ossuary*, particularly a plain sample,

⁸³ Sometimes a slightly later dating for *ossuary* burials could be established; Meyers, *JORR*, 86, rightly states: "... it is difficult to imagine that a change-over to *ossilegium* into *ossuaries* from *ossilegium* into *kokhim* or pits signaled any change in beliefs at all."

⁸⁴ We calculate that the patriarch Abraham's cave which had cost 400 shekels would have taken more than 50 years of labour for an average person to purchase: According to the Hammurabi Codex, probably contemporaneous with Abraham (according to some opinions), the average yearly wage was six to eight shekels.

⁸⁵ "Price tags" on two *ossuaries*, *RCat*, #'s 696 and 730, show the amount of 2 *drachmas* 4 *obols* and 1 *drachma* 4 *obols*. In order to evaluate the cost of an *ossuary* it must be compared to the livelihood in the first to second century CE. Daniel Sperber, *Roman Palestine 200-400: Money and Prices* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1974) 101-125, states that an *obol* seems to be a low daily wage, but was enough to support a person. Rahmani, *RCat*, 7 n.8, observes that this estimate is consistent with the estimate that two-hundred *dinars* was the annual minimum wage, the daily minimum wage was 1/4 tetradrachm. So it took about two to three days to make an *ossuary* and required two to three days labour for a potential owner to pay for it. Conclusive data on artisans' wages was discovered on the lid of an *ossuary*. An inscribed list of twenty-three names of craftsmen indicates the amount of money paid to each one. The sums range from one *obol* to four *dinars* to three *sheqels* (= three *tetradrachms*), see Josef Tadeusz Milik, "Le couvercle de Bethpagé," in *Hommages à André Dupond-Sommer* (Paris: Adrien-Maison-neuve, 1971) 80. Obviously, the diverse amounts reflect the disparate workmanship evidenced in the craftsmanship of the various *ossuaries*.

would not exceed the means of a poor person. However, since even the least elaborate tomb complex was beyond the means of socially underprivileged classes the question of affordability of the limestone box is irrelevant. At least the owner of a tomb, although not necessarily all members of his family⁸⁶, must have had the pecuniary means which implied a certain status in society.⁸⁷ Sadducees and a number of Pharisees would both have had this status. They had the financial means, were close to the ruling class and seem to have been Hellenized. The inscriptions indicate that the owners of these limestone chests were members of the priesthood, those called *protopolites* ("First Citizen"), distinguished families, or were reputable professionals and artisans. The observation that proselytes or a freedman were buried in *ossuaries* does not disqualify this thesis. First, by marrying into a rich family they could gain this privilege. Second, proselytes and freedmen often had acquired riches and status. Especially in the latter Second Temple period there was a great influx of people into Jerusalem⁸⁸ from the Diaspora and from other centers in Palestine. The capital was the cultural centre as well as the cult centre, while building activity at the Temple attracted craftsmen, pilgrims and visitors. This is recorded in the literature as well as in *ossuary* inscriptions which mention Sepphoris, Scythopolis, Ptolomais, Alexandria⁸⁹, Apamea in Syria⁹⁰ as places of origin.

⁸⁶ Naturally, in an extended family there are poor relatives, or those of lower status, or those who got politically or criminally into trouble. Therefore, the evidence of a crucified man found in an *ossuary* need not contradict the argument for wealth and status.

⁸⁷ Often, anthropological examination of buried remains in tombs which indicate wealth show no indication of starvation.

⁸⁸ Avi-Yonah, "Jerusalem: Second Temple Period," *EJ* IX (1971) 1397.

⁸⁹ Nicanor of Alexandria is mentioned in the Talmud, b.Yoma 3:10.

Thus, this mode of burial was employed by representatives of the aristocracy, or of the socially higher or middle-classes who had acquired wealth. They were mainly concentrated in Jerusalem and, in fact, the majority of the pre- 70 CE *ossuaries* have been discovered in Jerusalem and the vicinity.⁹¹

4.2 Motivation: Expression of Individuality

The question immediately arises what would have motivated this segment of Jewish society to opt for *ossuary* burial? The answer appears to be the desire to express individuality and distinctiveness.⁹²

The innovation in tomb architecture and the individual shaft graves at Qumran doubtless indicate this wish.⁹³ The strengthening of the individual's self-consciousness was compatible with the trend for individual burial, in the manner of primary as well as secondary burial, and may explain the change in traditional funerary customs.

⁹⁰ The Eros and Ariston Family which shared the Akeldama tombs, see Avni, "Architecture", 34.

⁹¹ The few exceptions are Modi'in (priestly centre) and Jericho (extremely rich Goliath family) which were compatible with wealth and influence.

⁹² This wish might have caused an individual honourable interment into an *ossuary*. Nevertheless, this mode of burial may simultaneously be symbolically expressive of modified convictions of an afterlife.

⁹³ Although at the turn of the era a human is still considered a dyadic personality who perceives his/her psychological existence only in feedback from others, which is different from Geertz's description of a modern individual, see Clifford Geertz, " 'From the Native's point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding" in Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (eds.), Meaning and Anthropology (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977) 221-237.

Jews encountered individual burials by different ethnic groups during their Exile⁹⁴ and after their return to Palestine.⁹⁵ It is feasible to suppose that with the adoption of the Hellenistic *loculus* grave in the family tomb some people, at the same time, opted for the Greek custom of a coffin burial.⁹⁶ For reasons of poverty or simplicity (in the case of shaft graves in Qumran) a receptacle became dispensable. At the other end of the spectrum some Jews acquired an expensive *sarcophagus*. During the Herodian epoch, local prominent families were in close contact with Greco-Roman culture and tried to emulate the way of life of the ruling foreigners. Primary interment of Romans in *sarcophagi* is paralleled by affluent Jews in Jerusalem. For those who were used to reentering the tomb in the ancient venerated custom and relocating the skeletal remains onto an anonymous bone pile, collecting one individual's bones into its own pile was the first step towards the expression of individuality. *Ossuaries* were an even further intensification beyond this step. Ostensibly a receptacle guarantees ultimate safekeeping and the means to be remembered by kinsfolk. It affords individual identification, and exhibits pride in the status of the family which would be noticed by future visitors to the tomb. A further indication of the wish to perpetuate one's memory was the development of Jewish epigraphy in a funerary context, which became elaborate

⁹⁴ Stern, Material Culture, 85, records that in Babylon the bodies were placed either inside two halves of a jar, pottery chests, or in a build cist. Plain pit graves for simple burials were found throughout neighbouring countries and in Palestine.

⁹⁵ Stern, Material Culture, 68-92.

⁹⁶ For Greek coffins see Carl Watzinger, Griechische Holzsarkophage aus der Zeit Alexander des Grossen (Leipzig: J.H. Hinrichs, 1905).

in the next centuries. The action of collecting the bones and ashes after cremation (*ostologia*) by Romans may express the same motivation to be preserved individually and honourably and is compatible with *ossilegium* into an *ossuary* by Jews. It was only a matter of time before the entire Jewish population and not just the upper classes, mirroring the practice of other societies around them, opted for individual burial to accommodate their wish for individuality.

In presenting the present author's reflections on the *ossuary* phenomenon, there should be some closing remarks on its disappearance. The question remains, why was *ossilegium* superceded by primary inhumation which subsequently abolished the need for *ossuaries*? Rabbis who discussed the practice of *ossilegium* did not give any explanation for its cessation.

4.3 The Disappearance of *Ossuaries*

To suppose that the usage of the bone containers was discontinued on the grounds that skilled artisans fled or were killed during the War of 70 CE, or that the right stone material was not longer available, does not explain the cessation of the practice of *ossilegium*, since it can be practiced without an individual container, as it previously had been. Furthermore, there is evidence, only a century later, for the most beautiful craftsmanship in Bet Shearim on tombs and *sarcophagi*. Again, this was for wealthy and prominent families.

Some scholars have speculated that there seems to have been a cause-and-effect relationship between the Christian use of reliquaries, which looked like *ossuaries*, and

the discontinuation of the use of *ossuaries* by Jews.⁹⁷ In the sixth century *likut azamot* was seemingly abhorred by Palestinian Jews.

The author would like to connect the abandoning of the practice of *ossilegium* to the integral concept of purity/impurity. From late Hasmonaean times on⁹⁸ there is evidence of mass usage of ritual baths, *mikvaot*, in Jerusalem especially close to the Temple mount. Near the end of the Second Temple period, it seems, there was a great concern for purity by groups such as the Essenes (War 2.129, 132), the Pharisees (Ant 3.262) and by authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹⁹ According to Josephus (Ant 3.262) the failure to remove corpse impurity within seven days, for instance when living in a remote area or when not intending to enter the Temple, nevertheless required a sin offering.¹⁰⁰ Impurity could only be removed by "consecrated water", containing the ashes of the red heifer, which was sprinkled onto the defiled person during a ritual. The ritual was completed by an immersion in a *mikvah*.¹⁰¹ With the destruction of the

⁹⁷ André Grabar, "Recherches sur des sources Juives de l'art Palaeochrétien." Cahiers Archéologiques 14 (1964) 49-53; see McCane, "Ossuaries and Reliquaries," 235-246, who describes the use of the bone boxes by Christians which may have violated Jewish sensibilities. But for McCane the problem lies in the gap between the last *ossuary* (middle of the third century CE) and the evidence of reliquaries (only as late as the fifth century CE).

⁹⁸ Sanders, Judaism, 223. *Mikvaot* are evidenced in Gamla, Jericho, Qumran, Sepphoris, Massada, the Upper City in Jerusalem, and public baths south of the Temple Mount. Ronny Reich, "The Great Mikveh Debate," BAR 19/2 (1993), 52-53.

⁹⁹ Purity laws and purification in the Damascus Document (CD XII, 16-18, X, 10-13), the Temple Scroll (11QT 50-51:10) and the Community Rule, passim.

¹⁰⁰ see Sanders, Judaism, 217-218, for this non-biblical ruling.

¹⁰¹ Num 19; Arie Strikovsky, "Red Heifer: In the Talmud," EJ XIV (1971) 12; Sanders, Judaism, 223-230.

Temple in 70 CE new ashes could no longer be prepared. Yet, we do have evidence that caches of red heifer ash continued to be used to purge corpse impurity after 70 CE, in fact as late as the Amoraic period.¹⁰² It seems that the obsession with impurity disappeared in stages. By the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt it became clear that many of these laws could not be observed anymore. This was part of the Rabbinic reaction to the destruction. Eventually, the whole nation became *tamei met*, but since the notion of purity was so all-pervasive people still tried to avoid any further occasions for contracting this condition.

There lingered the stringency of avoiding impurity as well as the menstrual laws surviving until today. The same with priests who were understood to be required to avoid impurity even if already impure by reason of the general impure condition of Israel as a whole.¹⁰³

Therefore, any unnecessary deeds, such as handling bones in bone-gathering, would be avoided from now on. This seems a plausible explanation for the abolition of *ossilegium*, and subsequently of the *ossuary*. It was probably the Pharisees, in the first centuries CE, who gave the theological interpretation for secondary burial. Their followers, the Rabbis, eventually gained enough influence and could, again for theological reasons (impurity), authoritatively abolish *ossilegium* which had been a

¹⁰² Based on a discussion with Professor Shmuel Safrai during the summer of 1996. He is doing some research in this regard which will be published at some future date; Strikovsky, "Red Heifer", 12.

¹⁰³ Personal communication from Lawrence Schiffman, October 21, 1996.

distinct Jewish burial practice in the Late Second Temple period.¹⁰⁴ The permanent primary interment in a coffin then became the only accepted mode of burial in orthodox Judaism until today.

¹⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that also in the Roman empire a change in burial practices occurred. During Hadrian's reign cremation was superceded by inhumation which became the norm by the mid-third century CE and elaborate carved *sarcophagi* became the fashion, see Toynbee, Death, 40, who does not offer an explanation for this change.

Figure 1 **The Necropolis of Jerusalem**

Figure 2 Plan of a *Loculi* Tomb

Figure 3 Illustration of an *Arcosolium* above *Loculi*

Figure 4

Decorated Tomb Façade: Cave of Umm el-'Amed

Figure 5

Monumental Tombs in the Kidron Valley

Figure 6

Monumental Tomb in Jericho

The Goliath Tomb

Figure 7

Ossuary Burials in Loculi

Figure 8

Collected Secondary Bone Burial in Loculi Figure 9 *Single Shaft Tomb in Qumran*

Figure 10 **The Different Forms of the *Ossuary***

a) Gabled Lid

b) Vaulted Lid

c) Flat Lid

d) Inserted sliding Lid

e) Acroteria

Figure 11 *Ossuary Ornamentation*

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

Figure 12 **Ornamental Motifs - Rosettes**

Figure 13 Ornamental Motifs - Plants

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

g)

h)

i)

Figure 14 **Ornamental Motifs - Architectural**

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

g)

h)

Figure 15 **Ornamental Motifs - Geometric**

Figure 16 **Ornamental Motifs - Varia**

Figure 17 **Different Scripts**

a)

שפירה בת יהוחנן בן רבין

Shappira, daughter of
Yehoḥanan, son of Revikh(?)

b)

Μανᾶημος

Manahem

c)

ΚΑΙ ΕΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ

and of Iphigenia

d)

ΙΟΗΑΝΑ

e)

ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΤΡΩΞΑΛΛΙΚ

Julia Grasshopper

f)

דוסתא אבנא ואלא אבנא

Dostas, our father, and not to
be opened

g)

ΣΕΛΑΜΣΙΝ

Sealmsin; Shelamzion daughter (of) Ariston

Figure 18 Personal Names

a)

מריה Marya

b)

IECOYA יֵשׁוּעָ
Yeshuah; Jesus

c)

יהונתן Yehonatan

d)

ישוע Yeshua'

e)

Σόρρα/Ἀρριστοβόλα Sorra Arristobola

f)

שאול Sha'ul

g)

Μαριαμῆνου (ἡ) Μάρρα of Mariamene, who is (also called) Mara

h)

חלת בלזמא ossuary of Balzama

Figure 19 Family Relationships

a)

Shim'on, son of Alexa

b)

Judith, daughter of Nadav

c)

Shim'on/and (his) wife

d)

Σαλώμη γυνή Ἰωέζρου Γολιάθου/καὶ Ἰσμαήλος
υἱὸς καὶ Ἰωέζρος υἱὸς Salome, wife of Joezer, of
Goliath's, and Ismael (her) son and Joezer (her) son

e)

Maryam, wife of Matya

f)

mother (or Imma)

g)

Yehud, our father

h)

mother Shlamzion

i)

Martha, daughter of Hananya

j)

Shlamshion, (his) mother
of Yeho'ezer, of Goliath

Figure 20 Personal Attributes

a)

ברית חבת בת יחוס
בית יחוס מנחת

Marta, daughter of Yehosef, son of Ya'aqov, wife of Yehosef, from Hin

b)

סביון
בנין חבל

Simon, builder of the sanctuary.

c)

וחוס פברחניחוס

Yehosef, son of Hananya, the scribe

d)

יחוסנה

יחוסנה בת יחוסנה
בר תפלוס חכמן הגל

יהושנה/יהושנה בת יהושנה/יהושנה daughter of Yehohanan/son of Thophlos, the high priest

e)

אבונ
אבונסבא
יחוס פברח

our father, Shim'on (the) Elder, Yehosef his son

f)

ΜΑΘΙΑΚΑΙ ΣΙΜΩΝ
ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ ΥΙΟΥ 'ΙΑΙΡΕ
ΚΥΡΕ ΤΥΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ

Mathia and Simon, brothers; sons of Ya'ir. The masters of the tomb

g)

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ
ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΑΠΑΜΕΑ
ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΑΠΑΜΕΑ

AΡΙΣΤΟΝ 'Ariston
אריסטון אפאמי
אריסטון אפאמי
Ariston; Ariston of Apamea; Judah the proselyte.

h)

ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΑΠΕΛΕΥ-
ΘΕΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ-
ΑΓΡΙΠΠΕΙΝΗΣ-ΣΟΡΟΣ

Theodotos apaleu-/therou basilissis-/Agrippina's freedman

Figure 21 **Special Inscriptions**

a)

b)

c)

ΘΑΛΙΑΡΧΟΣ ΛΚ
ΘΑΛΙΑΡΧΟΣ ΛΚ
ΔΩΣΙΘΕΟΥ

Θαλιάρχος ΛΚ/Θαλιάρχος ΛΚ/Δοσιθέου
Thaliarchos, aged 20/Thaliarchos, aged 20/son of
Dositheos

d)

e)

4 (ט) 1 מ drachma 1, obol 4

Figure 22 **Formulae**

- a)
- ΜΑΡΙΕΑΜΗΜΑΘΙΑΣ
ΓΥΝΗΑΝΤΙΣΚΙΝΗΣ
ΑΥΤΑΠΑΤΑΙΣΕΑΥΤΟΥ
ΟΥΠΟΥΝ
- Μαριεάμη Μαθίας/γυνή: ὁ ἀντισκινῆσ(ας)/αὐτὰ
πάταξε αὐτοῦ/ουρουν Maryame, wife of Mathia;
who(soever) moves these (bones) away, may
blindness strike him
- b)
- ΑΒΓΔ
ΕΖ
ΗΘ
Κ
- Φ
- ΑΒΓΔ/ΕΖ/ΗΘ//Φ

Figure 23 **Consolatory Inscriptions**

- a)
- שלום חלת שלום ברת שאול/די שבת, שלום ברתא
Shalom, daughter of Sha'ul/who failed to give birth.
Peace, daughter!
- b)
- שלום
- שלום peace(?)
- שלום שלום שלום
- שלום שלום peace peace(?)
- שלום שלום שלום
- שלום שלום שלום peace peace(?)

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