REMEMBERED FOR GOOD

The Social World of Biblical Antiquity, Second Series, 5

Remembered for Good

A Jewish Benefaction System in Ancient Palestine

Susan Sorek

Sheffield Phoenix Press

2010

Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press
Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield
45 Victoria Street, Sheffield S3 7QB

www.sheffieldphoenix.com

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

Typeset by Forthcoming Publications
Printed by Lightning Source

ISBN 978-1-906055-69-1

Contents

Part II
THEORETICAL HYPOTHESIS

Preface

This work examines the nature of the Jewish benefaction system in Palestine from the second century BCE to the sixth century CE. It is the first monograph-length study of this topic that attempts to define the ideology of the Jewish system by assessing the available evidence. Many modern scholarly works that make any reference to a Jewish benefaction system approach the subject with the notion that charity, a particularly Jewish concept, was the only recognizable benefaction system employed by the Jews of Palestine. Other evidence is often overlooked or amalgamated into this framework of charitable benefactions.

The Jews of first-century CE Palestine never appear to have acquired the 'epigraphic habit', or euergetism, of their Graeco-Roman counterparts. However, epigraphic evidence can be found on the numerous synagogue inscriptions erected to donors and patrons that occur from the second century CE onwards. By analysing the formulae used in these inscriptions, it is possible to make an evaluation of the motivating ideology behind the inscription. The present work reviews all the epigraphic evidence, re-examining the translations in depth. This evidence reveals some new and important information, not only about the benefaction system, but also the social and economic conditions of the period under review.

This work is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to the University of Wales, Lampeter in 2004. In the time that has elapsed since the submission of the thesis and the publication of this revised form, a number of publications that address the nature of benefactions in Roman Palestine have been produced. The present work takes these new publications into consideration.

While recent scholarly treatments have dealt with benefactions, there is still no major work that considers how a benefaction system specific to the Jews may have operated. The present work seeks to address this situation. A significant aspect of the present work is the development of a hypothesis that accounts for the benefaction practises observed in the inscriptions and literature for the period in question. The word *hesed* will be seen to play a major part in the discussion, and one of my aims will be to demonstrate that the Jewish benefaction system may, in part, be

motivated by the ideology of *hesed*. *Hesed*, as I hope to demonstrate, is a varied and complex word to translate, and it appears that *hesed* had a practical application in the day-to day dealings of Jews in Palestine. Evidence for this is obtained from biblical literature, as well as contemporary first-century CE writers such as Josephus.

It is my hope that the present work will present a challenge to the existing consensus concerning the nature of Jewish benefactions, and that it will open up further areas of research for the future.

I would like take this opportunity to mention the constant support of my supervisor Dr David Noy, who ceaselessly and patiently gave me his time and shared with me his great knowledge of inscriptions, and who has subsequently become a great friend as well as mentor. I also wish to acknowledge the support of the Classics Department at Lampeter, especially the late Mr Keith Hopwood, who read drafts of the manuscript and offered helpful advice. Professor Rosemary Wright offered support and encouragement in the early stages of my work. I am grateful to Canon P.J. Morris MA (deceased January 2010) of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies for his assistance with difficult aspects of the Hebrew language. I acknowledge with appreciation the assistance of Dr Jonathan Price (Tel Aviv University), Dr Benjamin Isaac (Hebrew University), Dr Leah di Segni (Tel Aviv University) and Professor L. Levine (Hebrew University), who have always been most gracious in answering my email queries, often providing useful insights. Finally, my thanks go to Professor Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, who encouraged me to pursue the publication of my research.

I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support given to me by the Laura Ashley Foundation, the British Federation of Women Graduates and the Ellen Stamford-Thomas Travel Fund.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for the support they have given me. It is impossible to express how much they have helped me. Nevertheless, I would like to extend my gratitude to my supporters, in particular to my parents. Though, sadly, they did not live to see the publication of this book, I wish to dedicate this work to them.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJ	Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* (trans. H. St J. Thackeray; London: Harvard University Press, 1997)
ANET	James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950)
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–)
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BCH	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
BEFAR	Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome
BHS	*Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*
BIES	*Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*
BJ	Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* (trans. H. St J. Thackeray; London: Harvard University Press, 1997)
BJPES	*Bulletin of Jewish Palestine Exploration Fund*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BMCR	*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*
BS I	B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim*. I. *Report on the Excavations during 1936–1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, on behalf of the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1972)
BS II	B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim*. II. *Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974)
BS III	B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim*. III. *Excavations 1953–58* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976)
BTR	*Biblical Theological Review*
BZAW	Beihefte zur *ZAW*
CA	Josephus, *Contra Apionem* (trans. H. St J. Thackeray; London: Harvard University Press, 1997)
CIJ	*Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*. II. *Asie–Afrique* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1952)
DD	Damascus Document
DJD	*Discoveries from the Judaean Desert*
EAEH	*Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1975–77)
GNT	M.S. Bushell and M.D. Tan (eds.), *Greek New Testament New Revised Standard Version: New International Bible* (Bibleworks CD Rom vv 4.0.; Big Fork, MO, 1992–99)
EI	*Eretz-Israel*
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia judaica*

HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IES	*Israel Exploration Society Publication*
IGCVO	*Inscriptiones graecae christianae veteris occidentis*
IGRR	Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes
IGUR	Inscriptiones graecae urbis Romae
IJudO	D. Noy *et al*. (eds.), *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003)
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JIGRE	W. Horbury and D.E. Noy (eds.), *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
JIWE	*Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–95)
JJHC	*Journal of Jewish History and Culture*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JPOS	*Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, Robert Scott and H. Stuart Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 9th edn, 1968)
LXX	Septuagint
MAMA	Monumenta Asiae Minoris antiqua
MT	Masoretic text
NDIEC	G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1976* (North Ryde, New South Wales: Ancient Document Research Centre, 1976)
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OGIS	Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae
OTL	Old Testament Library
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
PEFQS	*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*
Qad	*Qadmoniot: Quarterly for the Antiquities of Eretz Israel and Bible Lands*
QDAP	*Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*
RB	*Revue biblique*
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum*
SWJ	*Studies of Women in Judaism.*
Vita	Josephus, *Vita Josephi* (trans. H.St.J. Thackeray; London: Harvard University Press, 1997)
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins.*

Introduction

The aim of this work is to attempt to identify and define a Jewish benefaction system operational in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine. The methods employed comprise an evaluation of the available literary and epigraphic evidence to ascertain whether the Jews of Palestine, during the second century BCE to the sixth century CE, had a distinctive benefaction system of their own, which may or may not have been focused on charity, or whether the system employed was merely a copy of the Graeco-Roman system of euergetism.

In a recent (2004) work by Crook, it has been stated categorically that the Jews did not have a benefaction system similar to the Graeco-Roman one.[1] Crook says instead they had a horizontal system of reciprocity that shared many features in common with general reciprocity, features that were socially enforced but not enshrined in formal contracts. Crook argues that it is difficult to claim the Jews thought of God as a patron/benefactor since they lacked the vocabulary or the necessary social model. It was contact with Hellenism that provided the Jews with the necessary vocabulary. This argument is sound up to a point, but Crook appears to have overlooked the vital Hebrew word *hesed*, which in my opinion defines the Jewish system, enabling the Greek-speaking Jews to vocalize what was already a firm foundation of benefaction and of which more will be said later in this work.

In the Graeco-Roman world euergetism was the main vehicle of benefactions. Euergetism is a neologism, created from the wording on honorific decrees of the Hellenistic period in which cities honoured those persons whom, through money or personal activity, as Veyne puts it, 'did good to their city'.[2]

Euergetism was an asymmetrical exchange relationship, one which arose within a state structure in which authority was dispersed and state activity was limited in scope. The essence of euergetism was that communities, in particular cities, expected the rich to make contributions

1. Z. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004).

2. P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses* (trans. B. Pearce; London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 10.

from their personal wealth to public expenses. Their expenditure centred mainly on pleasure and public works (entertainments in the arenas, circuses, banquets, and public buildings). This involved acts of indirect reciprocity between a benefactor (patron) and the recipients (clients), in these cases usually the citizens in general who benefited from such public works; in return for benefactions bestowed on communities, the clients could advertise the patron's power, either politically or socially. The greatest accolade a benefactor could receive was to be honoured by an inscription.

The benefactor's responsibilities were to the city as a whole, not to individuals, whether singularly or collectively; anything other than this would be seen as corruption. This is well attested to in the law of the Roman Republic, where it was considered electoral corruption if a candidate, during his campaign for election, invited to a feast only certain members of the citizen population. No such claims could be made if he invited everybody to his banquet.[3] Therefore, as Veyne says, '*euergesiai* were regarded not as gifts from (those) on high but acts of homage offered up to the city'.[4] The manner of giving was also important, perhaps more so than the gift itself, and a true benefactor would be advised to 'avoid all boasting…first and foremost he was a citizen'.[5]

The problem in trying to identify a Jewish benefaction system lies in the fact that, as a general rule, scholars have dismissed the notion that any kind of system, even one remotely resembling euergetism, could have been operational within Palestine in the Second Temple and post-Temple periods, despite the fact there are some recorded instances of benefactions being made. From the many scholarly works currently available, it is far more usual to find that 'charity' is accepted without question as the main form of Jewish benefaction, even though no case of any organized charity prior to 70 CE can actually be proven. Taken in isolation, what little evidence there is for a Jewish system can often be overlooked or ignored, but when it is amalgamated it proves not insubstantial and requires further explanation. This work will attempt to demonstrate that there was a system in operation that was neither charity nor euergetism.

The Jews of Palestine in the Second Temple period lived within the Hellenistic world without really being part of it. The Jewish village or city was different from the Hellenistic one. It contained no temples, altars, gymnasia, stadia or idols; instead it had synagogues or houses of

3. For a fuller discussion on this topic, see Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, pp. 75-78.
4. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 75.
5. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 75.

study. To the Jews, the erection of public monuments and other grand displays of personal wealth would, it appears, have been an impious act. In the first century CE, the writer Josephus makes reference to this and says that 'the Jewish nation is by Law opposed to all such things (*Ant.* 16.157-58).[6]

Josephus also comments that grand displays of wealth were frowned upon when it came to funerary monuments: '…the pious rites, which it provides for the dead, do not consist of costly obsequies or the erection of conspicuous monuments' (*Apion* 2.205). However, it should be stressed that, despite Josephus's assertions to the contrary, actually there was no written law that forbade these practices.

Because of the nature of Judaism, it is not clear how a benefaction system of the kind evidenced by euergetism could operate, partly because the Jews of Second Temple Palestine never fully acquired the epigraphic habit, at least not in the way that their Graeco-Roman counterparts did. It is true to say, however, that Jewish benefactions were implicitly connected to religious obligation, and that they can be divided into two main categories: the obligation to the Temple and the obligation to others, both singularly and collectively, within the community, especially those in need and for whom quite definite prescriptions had been given in the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

The most striking difference is that while euergetism could be seen as the activity of those people who did good to the city with their wealth, and who in return were honoured with inscriptions and other forms of recognition, the Jewish system could be seen as the activity of doing good deeds *without* expecting a return in the form of inscriptions or other secular honours. Therefore, it would be totally inappropriate to equate the Jewish system with euergetism. And yet, since the Jewish system was not solely based on a policy of re-distribution, it would also be inappropriate to equate it entirely with charity, for it was designed to have personal benefits also. It appears 'charity', in the sense that we have come to know it, was born in the Mishnaic era, partly due to necessity, at a time when, to quote Vermes, 'the catastrophe of 70 CE forced the rabbinic successors of the Pharisees to attempt to create an "orthodoxy" by reducing dangerous multiplicity to a simple, tidy and easily controllable unity'.[7]

6. Josephus is referring here to Herod's desire to be honoured in the same manner accorded to Hellenistic monarchs.

7. G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Forty Years On* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 15-16.

It has been taken for granted that the Deuteronomic laws on helping others were aimed specifically at the poor. Therefore, the notion that charity had always been in place within Judaism leads to the idea that as a consequence all Jewish benefactions somehow fall into this category. Words like 'poor' and 'charity' have all too often been used inexactly, and this can lead to many misinterpretations. The Deuteronomic laws make two distinctions: (1) they not only govern the relationship between humans and God, while (2) *they also govern the relationship between human beings.* This relationship did not revolve around charitable deeds alone; it encompassed many varied forms of reciprocity between individuals. What was unique about the Jewish system, compared to the rest of the ancient world, was that it offered a mechanism by which less well–off members of society could be admitted into the benefaction system, and this *included* the very poor, something that euergetism did not encompass.[8] The rich Greek or Roman did not feel any obligation towards the poor: for the Romans, the majority did not count and the word 'poor' took its meaning as a relative term within the minority we would consider rich. As Veyne says 'the poor were the rich who were not very rich'.[9]

Saller comments that, for the Romans, poverty was not an economic problem but a moral and political one. According to Saller, the Romans' discussion of poverty 'was underpinned by a shared individual and social psychology. Finally the shame of poverty was reinforced by the basic symbols of Roman culture that marked out the social hierarchy for all to see.'[10]

It was the development of this unique aspect of the Jewish system that came to play a vital role in the later development of Christian euergetism and charitable practice throughout the later Roman Empire. To the Jews there was only one authority, and that was God—he was the great benefactor. The intention was that benefactions should be undertaken on his behalf. Therefore, any recognition for good deeds should be given to God not his human agent. Doing good deeds to others earned recognition of merit for the individual from God, not necessarily from the recipient(s). To usurp the role of God as benefactor would endanger the status quo, for it was upon God that everyone depended for the position they held in life, whether rich or poor.

8. Similarly, the Jewish attitude towards poverty was unique in ancient society.

9. P. Veyne, *A History of Private Life*, I (ed. P. Aries *et al.*; London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 119-20.

10. R. Saller, 'Poverty, Honour and Obligation in Imperial Rome', *Criterion* 37 (1998), pp. 12-20 (20).

If the hallmarks of euergetism are not discernible during the Second Temple period, then the same cannot be said about the Late Antique period in Palestine. From this period (third century CE onwards) synagogue inscriptions reveal patrons of the synagogue were honoured with the erection of an inscription. It appears they finally acquired the 'epigraphic habit', but in a very distinctive way.

Historical Context and Modern Scholarship

For most historians it was the rabbis who became the focus upon which to base a reconstruction of post-Temple Jewish history.[11] Other scholars have argued differently, notably Morton Smith, who changed the historiography of Judaism, and E.R. Goodenough, who minimized the importance of the rabbis in Jewish culture. Both scholars sought to understand the Jewish world beyond the confines of 'Normative Judaism'. Judaism was now viewed as an amalgamation of Judaisms, a position expounded by such recent scholars as Levine, Neusner and Cohen. Schwartz's 2001 work provides the most recent and controversial discussion of the period in question, and therefore it is appropriate to concentrate here on a brief discussion of his hypothesis. This will serve to introduce the historical context of the evidence presented later in the work.

Historical Background

In the second century BCE the Hasmonean monarchy began as a Jewish reaction against Seleucid rule, one which involved the secular ruler also being high priest. This monarchy acquired many of the trappings of a typical Hellenistic state. When the Romans replaced the Hasmoneans with their nominee, Herod, secular and religious power were theoretically separated again, though the high priests were political nominees. Some Jews regarded the whole system of monarchy and Temple as corrupt.

From the end of the Hasmonean monarchy up to 66 CE, the Temple was largely controlled by the high priests (usually Sadducees) who co-operated with the political authorities. There were many other trends in Judaism at this time also, including: the Pharisee movement, which favoured separation and purity; the growing messianic movements, including the Jesus movement; and the nationalists, the Zealots, who came into prominence during the revolt of 66–70 CE. Schwartz minimizes the importance of the sects and says that they had 'little discernible

11. See, e.g., S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); S. Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

impact on Palestinian Jewish society'.[12] He uses a range of Jewish literature and archaeological evidence to contend that during the Second Temple period a distinct Jewish identity existed, one which was focused on Temple and Torah. Schwartz stresses the unity of Judaism up to 70 CE, against more recent writers who have concentrated on its diversity. Nevertheless, Schwartz acknowledges that, 'Judaism was complex and rather baggy, and the fact that most Jews professed adherence to it tells us surprisingly little about how they actually conducted their lives'.[13]

After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the Bar Kochba rebellion of 132 CE, the process of urbanization, begun in the Hellenistic period, resulted, by the end of the second century CE, in the whole of the coastal plain, almost all the central ridge and lands east of the Jordan being transformed into municipal areas. Only Upper Galilee, Golan, Bashan and Hauran proved resistant to city culture, and remained, according to Schwartz, 'unurbanized and relatively unhellenized'.[14] Indeed, the amount of Hellenization/Romanization varied considerably throughout Palestine. This is illustrated, for example, by the choice of language in synagogue inscriptions.

This Jewish identity was formed in response to Hellenistic and Roman imperialism. According to Schwartz, however, the role of the rabbis is of limited importance until the end of the fourth century CE.[15] Even then, according to him, it was 'informal and mainly city based'.[16] The Jews, although some were city dwellers, took little part in the development of the urban culture of the third and fourth centuries CE. There were two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, that were almost wholly Jewish. Even in these Jewish cities, according to Schwartz, 'the norms were pervaded by pagan religiosity and were basically shared by imperial Greek cities generally'.[17]

In the aftermath of 132 CE, the main aim of some influential Jews was to re-instate the Sanhedrin and establish the importance of the Patriarchate, so the chose Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel as Patriarch. It was his son Judah who gave the final form to the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), a codification of the Oral Law in six Tractates, which constituted the basis of 'Normative' Judaism, although its immediate impact outside rabbinic circles may not have been very great.

12. S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
13. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 98.
14. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 162.
15. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 103.
16. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 124.
17. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 104.

After a succession of weak Roman emperors that threw the empire into political and economic chaos, the emperor Diocletian (284–305 CE) re-established central control. The adoption of Christianity by his eventual successor, Constantine I (306–337 CE) as the dominant religion of the Roman Empire meant that the status of Palestine changed: no longer was it a small province; instead, it was the 'Holy Land' upon which subsequent emperors and Christian elites lavished great wealth.

Constantine allowed the Jews to keep their rights, but the succession of Constantius II (337–361 CE) or possibly his cousin Constantius Gallus (351–354 CE), may have provoked a revolt that resulted in the Jews' rights being rescinded.[18] The Roman authorities, however, recognized the Patriarch as the leader of the Jews, though it is not clear how far his authority was recognized by the Jews of Palestine, or by the rabbis, who were an important but not a completely dominant force in Judaism. Schwartz sees the Patriarchs acquiring much influence in the late fourth century CE, 'precisely by relaxing their ties to the rabbis and allying themselves instead with Palestinian city councillors, wealthy Diaspora Jews, and prominent gentiles'.[19]

Because of the lack of mention in Palestinian synagogue inscriptions, it would also appear, according to Schwartz, that the Patriarchate was more interested in Diaspora cities than in Palestinian peasants. Schwartz notes that, 'The Patriarchs of the fourth century were, if the legal and literary sources do not completely deceive us, mainly concerned with raising money, although we have no idea what they did with it all, apart from transforming it into senatorial rank'.[20] The evidence from the catacombs at Beth She'arim show many Diaspora Jews wished to be buried in Palestine in this period.

The fifth century CE saw Christians becoming the majority in Palestine. Many villages had two, three or even five churches, and private donors vied with each other in their construction in typical euergetistic fashion. Palestine's new status as the 'Holy Land' meant that the character of this new society was cosmopolitan, especially in Jerusalem. Many of the Roman aristocracy, including wealthy widows and patrician ladies, came to live with their husbands in or near the city, thereby increasing economic prosperity. One such lady, Eudocia, the estranged wife of the Emperor Arcadius (383–408 CE), made it possible for Jews (and Samaritans) once again to inhabit Jerusalem.

18. The available evidence is, admittedly, rather limited, making it impossible to offer confident statements on this matter.
19. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 104.
20. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 124.

However, the situation of the Jews in Palestine at this time was paradoxical. Jews were subject to many legal restrictions and excluded from the civil service, and they also suffered discrimination in other spheres of public activity. They could not legally build new synagogues or restore old ones. Furthermore, the emperor Theodosius II (402–450 CE, Eudocia's son) abolished the Patriarchate around 429 CE on the death of Gamaliel IV.

The traditional view of Judaism being undermined by Christian legislation from the fourth century CE has been challenged by archaeological discoveries showing synagogues being built or renovated at a time when it should have been illegal to do so. The general prosperity of Palestine in this period evidently released money for such activities, enabling Jews to continue their communal life. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence for the destruction of synagogues in Syria and elsewhere in the Diaspora, though strangely enough not in Palestine.[21]

By the end of the fifth century CE, a schism in the Christian Church meant conditions for the Jews finally began to improve. However, this would be short-lived. The Samaritan revolt of 529 CE was quickly suppressed during the reign of the Emperor Justinian I (527–565 CE) and resulted in widespread havoc among the churches in Palestine. Justinian's policy of forcible conversion caused Jews to seek help from the Persians.

The Persian conquest of 614 CE saw Jerusalem returned to Jewish administration and the Christians banished. By 629 CE, the Persians had abandoned their conquests, including Palestine, and less than ten years later Jerusalem had fallen to the Arabs.

Scholarly Interpretations

In a recent review of Schwartz's work, Fine has commented upon his 'marginalization of the heroes of the only extensive literary sources we do have for that period (second–third century CE), the rabbis as portrayed in rabbinic literature'.[22] This has resulted in Schwartz viewing the status of the rabbis in Jewish society with 'an amazingly thick cloud of ambiguity'.[23] Schwartz suggests, according to Fine, that in this period after the revolts against Rome,

21. See D.E. Noy and S.M. Sorek, 'Peace and Mercy upon All your Blessed People: Jews and Christians at Apamea in Late Antiquity', *JJHC* 6 (2003), pp. 11-24.

22. S. Fine, Review of S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE*, *BAR* 30 (March/April 2004), pp. 56-58.

23. Fine, Review of S. Schwartz, p. 58.

> Judaism 'shattered'. Its shards were preserved in altered but recognisable form by the rabbis, who certainly had some residual prestige and thus small numbers of close adherents and probably larger numbers of occasional supporters. But for most Jews, Judaism may have been little more than a vestigial identity, bits and pieces of which they were happy to incorporate into a religious and cultural system that was essentially Graeco-Roman and pagan…[24]

Schwartz now refers to 're-Judaization' in response to Christianization,[25] and believes in a common ideology despite the lack of centralizing institutions among the Jews. For the period spanning the second to fourth centuries Schwartz speaks of Palestinian cities being, 'not simply Greek but Graeco-Roman; unlike most classical Greek cities but like other Graeco-Roman cities, the Palestinian cities were oligarchies characterized by euergetism rather than democracies in which expenditure was state controlled…'[26]

Schwartz sees the Jews in Late Antiquity as 'fragmented politically, socially and economically. Though loosely bound together by a complex and varied religious ideology, they lacked any sort of institutional centralization, especially after the end of the Patriarchate, around 425.'[27] Nevertheless, Schwartz believes that 'the Jewish cultural explosion of late Antiquity'[28] emerged in various complex ways as a response to the empire's gradual Christianization. According to Fine, the most problematic element of Schwartz's book is his discussion of the period between the destruction of the Temple and his idea about the 'emergence of a new Jewish identity' in the aftermath during the second and third centuries. Fine refers to his 'marginalization of the rabbis', and says that by ignoring rabbinic sources Schwartz draws 'broad historical conclusions based on what does not exist'.[29] Fine also takes issue with his 'casual acquaintance with art historical and archaeological approaches', as well as his lack of engagement with other scholars' work, notably Yadin, Reich and Millar. In another review by Gibson, it is noted that although Schwartz's work has merits, it leaves 'many questions in need of further investigation, and many questions unanswered'.[30]

24. Fine, Review of S. Schwartz, p. 58.
25. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 179.
26. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 161
27. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 180.
28. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 291.
29. Fine, Review of S. Schwartz, p. 58.
30. E. Leigh Gibson, Review of S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE*, *BMCR* 2002.09.36 (2001), online: http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002-09-36.html.

Summary

The present work does not attempt to argue any general case for the extent of Hellenization, the unity of Judaism, or the role the rabbis played. It will show, however, that superficially Hellenized practices could have been based on traditional Jewish ideology. This volume will review the epigraphic evidence for Jewish communities in Late Antiquity (which shows a surprising amount of building activity), from a different perspective to Schwartz. It will also show that the rabbis were more actively involved in the synagogue-based benefaction system than Schwartz *et al.* realize, although, as he notes, there is almost no evidence of involvement by the Patriarchs.

Much of the evidence presented in this work is difficult to date precisely, and therefore of limited use in addressing his re-judaization argument, since it is rarely clear whether it should be seen as pre-dating or post-dating parallel Christian developments. Nevertheless, one motivation for the growth of Jewish donor inscriptions could have been a response to the frequency of Christian inscriptions during this period. I also suggest other ways in which the Jewish benefaction system worked. If my interpretation is correct, the 'core ideology of Judaism'[31] had more influence on Jews in Palestine in Late Antiquity than Schwartz accounted for.

Methodology and Sources

The first part of this work will concentrate on the available evidence for Jewish benefactions from archaeological, literary and epigraphic sources for the period second century BCE to sixth century CE. The aim is to distinguish whether there is any discernible pattern of benefactions and whether this is distinctively Jewish in nature.

The first nine chapters examine the evidence for a benefaction system that may have been operational in the Second Temple period (from the second century BCE onwards). The scarcity of reliable evidence in the form of inscriptions or written sources for the Second Temple period makes the task difficult. Nevertheless, there are a few remaining pieces of documentary evidence, such as references in 1 and 2 Maccabees. 1 Maccabees is in effect an apologia for the Hasmonean monarchy. Nevertheless, this book can be considered a useful historical source, for the author appears to have had access to state archives and public records (1 Macc. 14.27, 48-49; 16.24). The book may have originally been written in Hebrew, though the oldest surviving manuscript containing a copy, the Codex Sinaiticus, dating to the fourth century CE, is in Greek.

31. Leigh Gibson, Review of S. Schwartz, p. 103.

In contrast, 2 Maccabees is less concerned with historical events than with the theological opposition between 'Orthodox' Judaism represented by the high priest Onias and the 'Hellenized' Judaism of Jason and Menelaus. Nevertheless, it is still valuable as a piece of historical source material, since it deals knowledgeably with Jerusalem politics and makes reference to Temple archives (1.1–2.18; 11.16-38). The work can be dated to the period between 124 BCE and 63 BCE; the text is preserved in the fifth-century CE Codex Alexandrinus and there are translations in Old Latin, Syriac and Armenian. Other Apocryphal books, such as Tobit, written some time between 225 and 175 BCE, may be less reliable. Although the book has the outward appearance of an historical account, the narrative is best viewed as a novella. This does not preclude it, however, being a useful source of social history.

The transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman period is accounted for in the writings of Flavius Josephus. These works form a substantial piece of evidence, and comprise the most important sources of contemporary information about Jewish life, history and culture in Palestine during the second and first centuries BCE and the first century CE. However, one needs to be mindful of the often-apologetic nature of his works.

Throughout this work reference is made to the Talmud and Mishnah. It has to be noted, however, that the use of these sources is a point of some controversy. Many New Testament scholars as well of ancient history are convinced that it is not possible to gain accurate historical insight into the first century from documents containing no definable historical facts and which were redacted so late (third–sixth centuries CE). However, in my view, the use of rabbinic material for historical research was transformed by the work of Jacob Neusner: although he was not the first scholar to use rabbinic material, he highlighted the need to analyse this material in the same way as any other historical literature.[32] His seminal article on (and titled) 'The Use of the Late Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First Century Pharisaism' warned of the dangers of using rabbinic literature for the study of the New Testament with regard to accurate dating.[33] Many advances have been made in recent years to formulate a reliable chronology, the result being that early rabbinic material has been identified and a plausible picture of the proto-rabbinic world before 70 CE is emerging.

32. J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70 CE* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971). See also D. Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Eerdemans, 2004).

33. J. Neusner, 'The Use of the Late Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First Century Pharisaism', in W.S. Green (eds.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (BJS, 1; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), pp. 215-25.

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, however, holds a less restrained view of Neusner's outlook, and is confident that Jewish literature must be used if we are to gain insight into the world of the New Testament. Safrai contends that 'the failure to exploit the wealth of Talmudic sources has resulted in casting Jewish and early Christian reality in an increasingly Hellenistic mould'.[34] Safrai summarizes what he believes to be the correct way of dealing with Talmudic literature. He notes the work done by a few scholars[35] in using the literature and reality of the Classical and early Christian world, to arrive at a responsible philological and historical explanation of Talmudic tradition. It becomes clear from work done by these scholars that by cautious analysis it is possible to clarify to some degree when one tradition may be accepted and another not. Often it is possible to determine what part is historical and what part is only the historical interpretation of later generations. Parallel passages can be studied and evaluated, all of which help to clarify which part of the tradition is historically based and which is not.

There is one additional criterion to which Safrai says particular note should be given:

> The literature (Talmudic) reflects a culture and heritage that evolved orally from generation to generation and when it was written down was not recorded systematically in either the halakhic or aggadic spheres. Whatever was clear to everyone who had studied was deemed unnecessary to summarize either orally or in writing… Often the words preserved in the sources are only the tip of the iceberg, which contains a vast world of thought and practice. Often a study of these sources from a philosophical point of view or from an historical point of view should reveal, by use of fragmentary sources, the intellectual and real world that exists in the background and is reflected in a particular saying or aggadic description.[36]

The abundant evidence for Jewish charitable practice in the Late Antique period contained in these sources has yet to be set in a convincing chronological and historical context, although Safrai has attempted to do this.[37] Evidence from the Diaspora also challenges the assumption by the writers of the Talmud that there was an institutional standard of poor relief,[38] so clearly these sources have their limitations. I shall endeavour

34. Z. Safrai, 'Talmudic Literature as an Historical Source for the Second Temple Period', *Mishkan* 17/18 (1992–93), pp. 121-37.

35. Safrai mentions in particular Ginzberg, Alon and Epstein.

36. Safrai, *Talmudic Literature*, p. 128.

37. Z. Safrai, *The Jewish Community in the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Centre, 1995 [Hebrew]), pp. 62-77.

38. J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge Philological Society Supplements, 12; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987), pp. 26-29, and the criticism of this view by M. Williams, 'The Jews and Godfearers Inscriptions at Aphrodisias: A Case of Patriarchal Interference in the Third

to derive relevant information from them where appropriate, without making any assumptions about the influence of the rabbis or the uniformity of Jewish practice.

The majority of recorded benefactions date mainly from the third to sixth century CE, and are to be found in the inscriptions from synagogues in Palestine. They shed an interesting light upon the nature of benefactions made both by individuals and communities. The numerous inscriptions found in the synagogues of Palestine are written in Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive corpus of all the epigraphic material from Palestine available to consult, although a project is underway to remedy this. The *Corpus inscriptionum judaeae/palestinae* (*CIIP*) will eventually contain all inscriptions from Palestine from the fourth century BCE to the seventh century CE and will be of enormous value for studies such as this.[39] Without such a valuable tool as the *CIIP*, a variety of diverse publications need to be consulted. Chiat's 1982 work, *Handbook of Synagogue Architecture*,[40] contains perhaps the most up-to-date compilation of all synagogue inscriptions found in Palestine, though, however, they are only given in translation, and the numerous inscriptions discovered since the *Handbook*'s publication are not included. The two earlier major compilation works of Jewish inscriptions in their original language (Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek) are J.B. Frey's *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*, II (*CIJ*),[41] published in 1952, which contains 530 inscriptions from Palestine, and B. Lifshitz's *Donateurs et fondateurs des synagogues juives*,[42] published in 1967, which contains about 100 Greek inscriptions. However, only 25 are from Palestine, and mostly these are from the Greek-speaking cities such as Ashkelon, Gaza and Caesarea. Excavations since 1967 have added to the number of Palestinian synagogue inscriptions, taking the total at present to about 200, 70 of which are in Greek. L. Roth-Gerson, in her book *Greek Inscriptions of Eretz Israel*,[43] lists 30 inscriptions from Palestine, but omits 16 from Beth She'arim and three from Hammath Gadara. However, since

Century?', *Historia* 41 (1992), pp. 297-310. Also, on the idiosyncratic organization of the synagogues in the Diaspora, see T. Rajak and D. Noy, '*Archisynagogoi*: Office, Title and Social Status in the Graeco-Roman Synagogue', *JRS* 83 (1993), pp. 73-93.

39. Personal communication (in 2001) with Dr Jonathan Price of Tel Aviv University.

40. *A Handbook of Synagogue Architecture* (BJS, 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982).

41. *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*. II. *Asie–Afrique* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1952).

42. *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique, 7; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1967).

43. *The Greek Inscriptions from Synagogues in Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1987 [Hebrew]).

this work is only available in Hebrew, as is J. Naveh's *On Stone and Mosaic*,[44] which supplies a corpus of inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic, their use by scholars in the field has been limited.

New Greek inscriptions from Palestine can be located in the *Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* (*SEG*). Those in Hebrew/Aramaic are published in the British Epigraphy Society's periodical, *Syria*. For the present study, the original excavation reports have been consulted where appropriate.

A further three volumes have been consulted in order to make comparisons between the inscriptions found in synagogues and those found in a funerary context. These volumes contain epitaphs from the catacombs at Beth She'arim by B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim*. I. *Report on the Excavations during 1936–1940* (*BS* I),[45] M. Schwabe and B. Liftshitz, *Beth She'arim*. II. *The Greek Inscriptions* (*BS* II),[46] and N. Avigad, *Beth She'arim*. III. *Excavations 1953–58* (*BS* III).[47]

Finally, there are nine unpublished inscriptions from Sepphoris and several more in Tiberias.[48] Diaspora synagogue inscriptions number approximately 170. There are other inscriptions, mainly from the catacombs in Rome, totalling roughly 100, which mention deceased synagogue officials and add to evidence concerning the synagogue and its functions. It will be necessary occasionally to use evidence from the Diaspora, though this will be done sparingly in order not to detract too much from the Palestinian evidence. This work does not intend to address the similarities or differences between the Palestinian and Diaspora evidence, preferring to analyse primarily the Palestinian evidence. The archaeological evidence in Palestine for the Late Antique period is more extensive than for the Diaspora, with over 100 synagogue buildings excavated or identified, compared to 14 in the Diaspora.[49]

44. *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1978 [Hebrew]).

45. *Beth She'arim*. I. *Report on the Excavations during 1936–1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, on behalf of the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1972).

46. *Beth She'arim*. II. *Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974).

47. *Beth She'arim*. III. *Excavations 1953–58* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976).

48. See L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 163.

49. A new synagogue has recently been found in the coastal town of Saranda in Albania. A series of mosaic floors have been uncovered and the synagogue has been dated to the fifth or sixth century CE. For more information, see *Archaeology* 56.5 (Institute of American Archaeology, 2003).

A Brief Synopsis of the Present Work

This work is divided into two major parts, with Part I (Chapters 1–10) dealing with the historical sources, and Part II (Chapters 11–18) treating matters of interpretation. Chapter 1 opens Part I with a brief survey of euergetism, making comparisons where applicable between the Jewish system and the Graeco-Roman one. Chapter 2 examines the instances of recorded benefactions dating from the second century BCE to the first century CE, nearly all from literary sources, in order to make comparisons with the Graeco-Roman system of euergetism. The remaining chapters of Part I examine the synagogue and its function (Chapter 3), as well as the languages used in the inscription material from Palestine. There is still a great deal of research to be carried out in both of these areas, research which is beyond the remit of this work, nevertheless, it is essential to place the inscriptions within some sort of cultural and linguistic framework. Recent research reveals that as much as 70 per cent of the retrieved inscriptions from Palestine are written in, or contain some Greek.[50] This raises several questions: Does this tell us that the *lingua franca* of Palestine was Greek and not Aramaic? What does this imply for those inscriptions composed in Hebrew/Aramaic? How representative are inscriptions for determining the spoken language of the *majority* of people in Palestine? A general discussion of the languages will have to suffice at present, for which I have relied upon the works of Fitzmyer, Van der Horst and Lieberman for general background information.

As previously stated, the aim of this work is to try and ascertain whether there was a Jewish benefaction system operational within Palestine distinct from the Graeco-Roman system. Chapters 4 to 7 analyse the inscriptions and the various formulae that appear on them to try to identify any pattern that emerges which could indicate the Jews of Palestine had a distinctive system of their own. For that purpose I have selected 77 inscriptions from synagogues in Palestine that specify the donor and/or the nature of the donation made. Sixteen are in Greek, the remainder in Hebrew/Aramaic. Those inscriptions that contain exclusively literary texts have naturally been omitted, as have those considered too fragmentary to supply analysable details. The concentration upon Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions serves two purposes: first, it allows the formulae (which are significantly different from the Greek) to be evaluated in their own right; second, it may be easier to distinguish some aspects of a Jewish system in the Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions

50. Personal communication (in 2003) with Dr Jonathan Price of Tel Aviv University.

rather than the Greek, since the latter tend to follow the Graeco-Roman writing formulae fairly closely.

Translations are generally taken from the work of Hüttenmeister and Reeg,[51] Frey, Lifshitz, Naveh and Chiat.[52] There are cases, however, where I have used other translations, or have supplied my own. These cases are duly noted, with any significant differences in interpretations commented upon.

Chapter 8 examines the role women played as benefactors in Palestine, and here we see a notable lack of evidence. Compared to Jewish women in the Diaspora, women in Palestine seem to have a very low profile in terms of recorded benefactions. The question is: Why? Scholarly works like that of Brooten, whose book, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, has advanced the study of women's role in the ancient world, concentrate mainly on whether or not women could hold official positions.[53] There is no current work that considers what part women played in the benefaction system as a whole. Most instances of recorded donations are usually discussed in isolation or with regard to their relationship with their male counterparts.

Chapters 9 and 10 draw the inscriptional research to a conclusion, and I have attempted to place this research within the area of debate concerning the socio-economic functions of the Jewish community in Late Antique Palestine. The work done by Rajak, on Diaspora communities, and Schwartz and Lapin,[54] on the egalitarian nature of the Palestine communities, will be discussed, and will help in the evaluation of how the evidence presented in this work can add to the meagre knowledge of this period.

Part II of this book will attempt to formulate a hypothesis for a motivational ideology behind Jewish benefactions. The word *hesed* (חסד) appears on one inscription from Beth She'an indicating the manner in which the donation is to be carried out. Therefore an examination of the word *hesed*, which occurs throughout the Hebrew Bible, will be attempted. The objective here is to evaluate whether this was the underlying motivation behind the Jewish benefaction system. However, *hesed*

51. F.G. Hüttenmeister and G. Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1977).

52. Chiat, *Synagogue Architecture*.

53. B.J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (BJS, 36; Chigaco: Scholars Press, 1982).

54. T. Rajak, 'Jews as Benefactors', in B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer (eds.), *Studies in the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Te'uda, 12; Tel Aviv: Ramot, 1996), pp. 17-38; H. Lapin, 'Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity', in E. Meyers (ed.), *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 239-69; Schwartz, *Imperialism*.

is not a word that can be translated easily. For the most part it is translated into English as 'mercy, kindness, loving kindness, loyal kindness'; in Greek it is most frequently translated as ἔλεος, occasionally δικαιοσύνη, and on even fewer occasions as χάριν. However, none of these translations adequately encompasses the true nature of the meaning of this word. In order to understand what the word is trying to convey, it has to be understood in its lexical field. As Clark points out in his work, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*,[55] problems are encountered

> when attempting to determine the members of a lexical field in a body of literature that has developed over a considerable period of time, and the Hebrew Bible has an extensive and extended literary history. Therefore a decision has to be made whether to confine the investigation to the corpus of known works of a single author, or works known to be contemporaneous, or to the text as it existed at a certain point in time.[56]

Clark therefore chose to conduct his study of the word *hesed* as it occurs in the Masoretic text published in the *Biblica hebraica stuttgartensia* (*BHS*). As he points, out this does not mean it is *the* text of the Hebrew Bible. Discoveries at Qumran in the Judaean desert clearly indicate that there were several types of manuscripts circulating in the era before the Christian one, some of their readings differing from those adopted by the Masoretes.

It is also difficult to isolate a time period during which the texts were composed. Most scholars believe the reading tradition used by the Masoretes to be much earlier than the 100 CE date conventionally assigned to the standardization of the consonantal text. Indeed, the graphic signs and accents used by the Masoretes can be dated during the period 600 to 750 CE. This is supported by material from the Cairo Genizah.[57] Scroll fragments were found with some Masoretic material included in the text. Yeivin[58] dated the fragments with Palestinian pointing to the eighth or ninth century CE.

In summary, the Masoretic period began during the sixth century CE and continued through to the eleventh century CE, when the production of the Hebrew Bible as it stands today was completed. The fact that the text on which most modern work is carried out is dated to the medieval period also raises problems for the following reasons given by Clark:

55. G.R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 157; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

56. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 35.

57. The Cairo Genizah was a room in a synagogue in Old Cairo in which thousands of manuscripts were found.

58. I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (trans. and ed. E.J. Revell; Masoretic Studies, 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), pp. 123, 164.

> It precludes any investigation of the semantic development during the period of formation and transmission of the text… [B]ecause the text examined is remote from the original writer or speaker, the objective cannot be to determine the meaning of a passage or term when it was first written or spoken, nor to determine the meaning it conveyed to the original readers or hearers.[59]

Nevertheless, finds from the Judaean desert have indicated that there may have been little change to the texts over the centuries. Accordingly, Chapters 11 to 15 deal with the word *hesed* as it appears both in the Masoretic text and the Septuagint (LXX), the purpose being to evaluate whether the word gives any indication of a motivating factor that could underlie a benefaction system.

Clark also studies the ancient persons involved, thereby highlighting the distinction between different field members. His work reveals insights into the nature and meaning of *hesed* and it becomes very clear that the word refers to a rich and varied concept. The term is used more frequently with God as the agent, but when used of human behaviour it always implies an element of reciprocity. Using these findings, Chapter 14 attempts to show how a benefaction system based on *hesed* could have operated, while Chapters 15 and 16 expand the theory with an analysis of both human and divine *hesed* and *raham* (רחם).

Chapter 15 deals with other relevant words, only briefly examined by Clark, such as *raham* and *tsedakah* (צדקה), of which there has previously been no comparative study. Both words are, I believe, connected to that aspect of *hesed* which deals with alms and charity, and which has a non-reciprocal element attached. Utilizing Clark's analysis of the semantic field in which these words are found in relation to *hesed*, I will attempt to show that there is a distinction between them, and that this distinction is vitally important for understanding how the benefaction system worked. Using the LXX, I have attempted to take Clark's work one step further. This has yielded some interesting results and it may be possible to show that a distinction in the words used was apparent in ancient times. It seems that misrepresentations occurred more frequently with later translations of the Bible, notably in English.

Chapter 17 briefly examines how the ideology of *hesedism*, as I have named the practitioners of Jewish benefaction system, was transferred into the Christian benefaction system, via charity (*tsedakah*), and fused together with the Graeco-Roman system of euergetism, where, according to Veyne,

59. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 36.

> …we see three things converging: a virtue that was dear to the Jewish people, loving kindness (*hesed*), which forbids one to claim everything that one has a right to, and makes almsgiving a duty; popular pagan morality, to which this loving kindness (*hesed*), so natural to all humble people in every clime, was not alien either; and finally the solidarity that bound together members of the Christian sect like any other.

He continues:

> Charity was an alien morality that became acculturated in Rome: the morality of a sect that had become a Church, a popular morality imposed on everyone in the name of religious principle.[60]

All translations of biblical passages are taken from the second edition of the British and Foreign Bible Society's translation of the Hebrew Bible,[61] except when making comparisons, where other translations are used. The use of other Bible translations has been noted in the text. I have, however, avoided using the translation of the key words *hesed* and *raham* because of the variability in the translation of the words consequently they are transliterated throughout.

Chapter 18 deals with another aspect of *hesed*. With regard to women it appears from rabbinic sources that *hesed* is a quality bestowed upon women more than men. If the theories proposed in this book are valid, then an examination of the role of women during first century CE, and their later participation in synagogue affairs during the third–sixth century, should provide some evidence to support the hypothesis.

The concluding chapter summarizes the evidence presented to make a case for a distinctive Jewish benefaction system. The Jewish system was clearly different from the Graeco-Roman one for religious reasons. While it is not possible to provide conclusive proof for the nature of the whole ideology behind the system, I suggest the motivation of *hesed* can provide a plausible framework for the benefactions recorded in literature and inscriptions. The people who produced the inscriptions were not usually the same as the people who produced the Greek or rabbinic literature, though I suggest there is enough common ground between them to show a consistent attitude towards benefactions among Palestinian Jews of different backgrounds.

60. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, pp. 18-19.

61. *The Old Testament*: *Hebrew and English* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 2nd edn, 1992).

Part I

The Empirical Evidence

Chapter 1

Graeco-Roman Euergetism

Before any attempt can be made to investigate the Jewish benefaction system it is necessary to have some understanding of Graeco-Roman euergetism. The system of euergetism was first analysed in depth by Veyne and has since been studied in more detail by various people, largely on the basis of inscriptional evidence. Euergetism has also become a hot topic among classicists ever since the English edition of Veyne's work, and it is now an influential concept among many students of Greek and Jewish history.[1]

Euergetism is a neologism created from the wording on honorific decrees of the Hellenistic period in which cities honoured those persons who, through money or personal activity, 'did good to their city'.[2] Euergetism is a manifestation of an 'ethical virtue', a quality of character, namely magnificence.[3] Veyne says that 'it can be claimed, in fact, that the analysis in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* is simply an analysis of what we now call euergetism'. Quoting Tricot's translation notes in the *Ethics*, he says that 'throughout his study of magnificence Aristotle has all the time in mind the liturgies and the system of *euergesiai* that was nascent in the decades when the philosopher teaching'.[4]

At the beginning of Book 4 of the *Ethics*, Aristotle analyses two virtues related to the art of spending and receiving properly (liberality and munificence). He explains that magnificence does not 'like liberality

1. For example, K. Lomas and T. Cornell (eds.), '*Bread and Circuses': Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (London: Routledge, 2003); V. Vuolanto, 'Male and Female Euergetism in Late Antiquity: A Study on Italian and Adriatic Church Floor Mosaics', in R. Berg *et al.*, *Women, Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire* (Acta Instituti Finlandiae, 25; Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2002), pp. 245-302.
2. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 10.
3. 'Magnificence' is the term used in the English translation of Veyne's work for the literal translation of the Greek μεγαλοπρέπεια, that is, 'the actions of a "great" man'. However, 'munificence' would have been the more appropriate word to use.
4. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 14.

extend to all the actions that are concerned with wealth, but only to those that involve expenditure, and in these it surpasses liberality in scale'.[5]

The magnificent man is a social type, a rich notable, who holds a high position within his society. He spends his money on anything that benefits the city, or people who hold a position in the city, without receiving presents in exchange. In contrast, the poor man cannot be magnificent,

> since he has not the means with which to spend large sums fittingly and if he tries he is a fool, since he spends what is beyond what can be expected of him and what is proper, but it is *right* expenditure that is excellent. But great expenditure is becoming to those who have suitable means to start with, acquired by their own efforts or from ancestors or connections, and to people of high birth or reputation, and so on; for all these things bring with them greatness and prestige.[6]

According to Veyne, while magnificence is a virtue, it is also an 'invariant' of euergetism, which Veyne reduces to two or three themes. The themes can be summarized as follows: first, there is voluntary euergetism, which Veyne calls patronage, the tendency all men have to display their wealth and power, to realize their potentialities; second, there is euergetism *ob honorem*, the complicated relations men have with the world of politics; finally, there is the type of euergetism that shows a desire for immortality, care for what comes after one is dead, for one's memory, funerary euergetism.[7]

Euergetism in the Hellenistic and Roman City

In the Graeco-Roman world euergetism was the main vehicle of benefactions. The ideology of euergetism is only comprehensible within the city of antiquity. The *euergetai* were the notable people the leaders of the city's population, and their euergetism consisted mainly of voluntary patronage. However, these notables lived in cities that were political corporations and as political rulers they were required to apply themselves to political euergetism (*ob honorem*). Veyne says that 'as a town, the city was the principal setting for voluntary euergetism, and as a city it was the principal cause of political euergetism'.[8] There were of course other environments where patronage was exercised, for example in a province with its provincial assemblies and festivals of the Imperial cult, or private associations with their religious or professional objectives.

5. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV 4-6 (1122a 30).
6. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV 4-6 (1122a 30).
7. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 17.
8. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 35.

The framework of social life in antiquity was the city, not the nation, whether this is an independent city-state like those of the Classical Greek and some Hellenistic cities, or the autonomous cities of the Hellenistic kingdoms and provinces of the Roman Empire. The states of those times were either small, being the cities themselves, or large kingdoms or the Empire, their fabric being composed of cells consisting of autonomous cities, for example Athens in the Roman Empire. This was the case in the civilized regions and, as other regions came within the sphere of civilization, they too became Hellenized and organized themselves into cities. This 'city system' spread over most of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East during the Hellenistic period and later during the Roman period to the west.

Therefore the city provided a reference point for social distinctions and became the ultimate focus of social life, for it was here everyday decisions of importance were taken. When a Roman or Greek spoke of his *patria* this always meant his city, not the Empire. There was no Roman bourgeoisie, only Pompeian, Athenian or Ephesian bourgeoisie. Likewise, the craftsmen who belonged to professional associations were not members of an international trade union, but of local 'collegia'.

The essence of euergetism was that communities, in particular cities, were dependent upon the rich and powerful for their economic and political success. *Euergesia* was the urge to 'do good' by public benefactions, and a *euergetes* was a 'doer of good', virtues which were highly prized by the elite. The rich saw themselves as fellow citizens of a distinctive community, their city. The *euergetai* showed their love for their city by giving gifts, either to increase the civic amenities by building temples, gymnasia or other civic buildings, or by giving to a core of citizens, ideally those who were descended from citizens and who had resided there for many generations. For these acts a rich man would be praised for being *philopatrios*, a lover of his city. Comparisons were made between one city and another, and so the *euergetai*, spurred on by this competitive aura, endeavoured by their gifts to make their city the best. It had to outshine its neighbour in the quality of its architecture, resulting in, as the *Digest* (L 10.3) comments, 'competition between cities'.

Euergetism had two sides: it was civic in that it was of benefit to the city or citizens as a whole, but it was also the act of a particular social class, the notables, who gave because they considered themselves to be superior to the mass of people. This second aspect was essential, for euergetism was the expression of political ascendancy. The city consisted of those who gave and those who received. The work done by scholars

such as van Bremen[9] shows that although *euergetai* were normally men, it is not unusual to find financially independent women acting as *euergetai*, especially in Asia Minor, sometimes even *ob honorem*.

Hellenistic Euergetism

In the Hellenistic cities euergetism expressed the superiority of the noble classes in its entirety; the specific historical feature of this epoch was that the social superiority of the notables obliged them to express themselves, 'not through conspicuous consumption but through conspicuous patronage'.[10] They had to spend for the benefit of the city; the gifts they gave were for the city and not for the arts or for the poor. The *euergetai* behaved as a political class, the notables defined by their participation in the government of their city.

The various decrees from this period indicate the *euergetes* was an all-round political man who 'did good' to his city by means of his counsel, wealth and high connections. The decrees and inscriptions that record their efforts were a part of the city's acknowledgment of the good deeds. Veyne gives as an example a decree from Miletus, where Irenias, a leader of the pro-Pergamene party, acted as an intermediary between his city and King Eumenes of Pergamum. Irenias persuaded the king to donate corn to his city to be sold, the proceeds of which would be put towards the construction of a gymnasium, and also to donate the wood required for the construction. The people awarded honours to the king, and Irenias, while conveying this news to him, also managed to persuade the king not only to increase his liberality but also to pay the cost of the honours awarded to him. Irenias himself was also liberally disposed toward his city; he lent money free of interest, an act that is also an integral part of Jewish benefaction practices, and helped sustain public finances during difficult times.[11] This and other similar inscriptions show that a *euergetes* would come to the rescue of the public treasury and also feed and entertain the population, taking on all or part of the expenditure that would be connected to some of the city's functions.

The Hellenistic decrees ascribe euergetism to two virtues: first, to emulation or competition (*philotimia*), among good citizens who wanted to distinguish themselves and be honoured for having rendered some service to the city; second, to patriotism. Finally, the Hellenistic *euergetes* would leave to the city some building to serve as a monument to their political activity.

9. R. van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation* (Amsterdam: Giessen, 1996). See also Rajak and Noy, '*Archisynagogoi*', pp. 84-87.
10. Van Bremen, *Limits*, p. 105.
11. Van Bremen, *Limits*, p. 106.

Euergetism was, in principle a Graeco-Roman ideology rather than a Jewish one. In practice, however, the Jews of Palestine in the Second Temple period also lived within the Hellenistic world. In 1 Maccabees we find evidence of similar decrees to those seen in Hellenistic cities being employed in Palestine, which were also accompanied by the awarding of honours (1 Macc. 14.26). Here it is recorded that bronze tablets were set up on the Temple Mount, which appears to have been the place for the erection of inscriptions.[12] These tablets relate to the period of the high priesthood of Simon (142–141 BCE) listing his benefactions, which included providing the towns of Joppa and Gazara with 'everything needful for their welfare'. He also spent large sums of his own money arming the soldiers of his nation and providing their pay. These tablets took the form of a decree honouring Simon and his family and conferring upon him the high priesthood and leadership of the Jewish people. None of the people or priests was allowed to nullify any part of the decree and to do so invited severe punishments.

The high priest Simon could be seen to have performed acts of voluntary euergetism, which had prompted his recognition by the people. Therefore the honour, perhaps under Seleucid influence, was a discretionary rather than a formulaic response, and the whole Jewish nation took the place of the Graeco-Roman city in receiving the benefactions. Honouring people with inscriptions was an essential part of euergetism, but not, so it would appear, part of the Jewish tradition.

Another inscription, also from 1 Maccabees, relates to the Hellenistic king Demetrius and his benefactions to the Jewish nation:

> We have determined to do good to the nation of the Jews, who are our friends and fulfil their obligations to us because of the goodwill they show toward us (1 Macc. 11.33).

Some aspects of the system of euergetism can be seen at work here and the extent to which the system operated among the Jews will be discussed later. The important point is that, prompted or not, the Jews of Palestine, during the Second Temple period, were quite ready to comply with the setting-up of an inscription to record a benefactor in a similar manner to other Hellenistic cities.

Euergetism *ob honorem* is participation in politics, which was considered as an absolute right, and can be seen in the establishment in the cities of a regime of notables who regarded public offices as their responsibility and so gave pledges or paid for this right. For this to work effectively, for these public offices to be considered an honour and a

12. Among which include the Greek and Latin inscriptions warning Gentiles not to enter the sacred precincts; *CIJ* 1400, *SEG* VIII, 169.

privilege, another factor was needed, one which was significant in this period, namely, the decline of the cities on the international level. However, the decline of the cities on the international level meant that public functions were now mainly centred upon responsibilities at the municipal level. The relationship between euergetism and municipal functions can best be seen by a comparison between the Roman Senate and the Greek city dignitaries. In the Roman towns euergetism flourished in a similar way to the Greek cities; however, in Rome itself there was little euergetism to be seen in the actions of the Senators. While the Senators of Rome did give gifts, they did so very differently. This is well attested in the public law of the Roman Republic that it was considered electoral corruption for a candidate, during his campaign for election, to invite to a feast only certain members of the citizen population. If, however, he invited everybody to his banquet, this was not considered to be corruption.[13] The Roman senators did not care for honorific dignities or euergetism; they had no need to, for they possessed the real power, wielding hegemony over a third of the known world, which removed the need to cultivate social superiority by acts of euergetism *ob honorem*. This in turn meant that Rome did not foster the awarding of honours to *euergetes*. If a senator became a *euergetes*, especially towards his home city, then it was solely because he wished to give expression to political glory, or to symbolize relations in the sphere of high politics: to have a triumph or be elected consul.

However, for most people in the Graeco-Roman world the city was psychologically the principal framework of everyday life. *Euergesiai* did matter for the majority of the population, for what they produced both materially and morally; for the notables it was the public functions that created their social superiority, their participation in local politics marking them off from the commoners. The functions now called for a payment, a gratuity, for the honour of holding a public office; this is the origin of euergetism *ob honorem*. It is also interesting to note that euergetism was a family tradition. A person was a *euergetes* because of the family they belonged to, and the wealth essential to maintain it, since the noble status was passed on via inheritance, tending eventually to create almost a *de facto* hereditary nobility.

During the Roman Empire decrees regularly praise a benefactor's ancestors and say he has inherited their worth or has followed their example.[14] An inscription on a marble pillar, dated first/second century CE from Çavdarhisar in Western Asia Minor, is a good example:

13. For a fuller discussion on this topic, see Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, pp. 75-78.
14. *SEG* VIII, 708; 783.

> The Council and the People honoured Menophilus, son of Nicostratus, priest of Zeus for ten years, who conducted himself toward his homeland in all other matters with love of reputation.[15]

Voluntary Patronage

Voluntary patronage in the Greek East reached its height during the Imperial period in the second century CE. There were many different types of patronage, but by far the most popular form of gift was for entertainment and public buildings. This was followed closely by the great festivals of the Imperial cult, celebrated throughout the province, in which a dignitary, who was also a priest, provided the most expensive form of *euergesia*, a gladiatorial combat.

The Greek author Lucian (117–180 CE), in his work *The Ship*, tells of a man who is a dreamer, wondering what he would do with his money if he were rich. The man would apparently would acquire real estate as extensive as Attica, have rich men as his clients who he would make wait for him in his antechamber, and be served by 2000 slaves. He continues: 'I should set apart something for the public service too: a monthly distribution of 100 drachmas a head to citizens and half that to foreigners and the most beautiful theatres and baths you can imagine…'[16]

Patrons erected public buildings to express their elevated social position. They gave entertainment to the people because the people asked for them and because it gave them the opportunity to preside over the occasion, thereby firmly establishing their position of grandeur. They provided banquets for their fellow citizens, provided bathing oils at a low price, or free, or distributed money, at so many denarii per head. New dignitaries, when introducing themselves to the public for the first time, invited everyone to join them at their expense, inviting to their family festivals all those they considered to be 'their people', which in effect meant the whole city. From the late Hellenistic period onwards honorific decrees contain full descriptions of these kinds of public banquets; sometimes it was only citizens that were invited but this could be extended to foreigners, either resident or strangers passing through, and, under the Empire, even slaves.

A decree from Acraiphia, in poverty-stricken Boeotia, records how the rich notable Epaminondas, having assumed in his turn the supreme magistracy, was tireless in his magnificence. Epaminondas had apparently sacrificed a bull to the Emperors, before then offering a celebration and banquet for the city that lasted a whole day.[17] Furthermore, he spent

15. MAMA IX 35 (trans. D. Noy).
16. Lucian, *The Ship* 24.
17. *Inscriptiones graecae* 7.2712.

lavishly on the festival and games of the Ptoia. Veyne says that these largesses had several origins including piety:

> Hunger, piety, a taste for display and solemnity, the pleasure of socialising under a pretext, concentration into a short period of the small surplus available, so as to get the maximum enjoyment therefrom by consuming it all at once—all this explains the explosive rhythm of collective life in poor societies and the considerable place occupied in them by banquets. Feasting is a regular institution in such societies, figuring in all sorts of combined activities, and religion is sometimes the principal motive and sometimes just the pretext for it.[18]

The need to form wide social connections and bonds can be seen in the attitude to feasting and the entertaining of strangers in the poorer Hellenistic cities. These were also prominent features of Jewish life. Certainly during times of major religious festivals many thousands of pilgrims would have flocked into Jerusalem and its environs. These pilgrims would have been classified partially as strangers, that is, they came from other cities and towns, even from other countries, but they were Jews not Gentiles. According to Jewish tradition, these strangers were entitled to receive free accommodation. In return, they would make a sacrifice on the householder's behalf or give some token offering to the house. In Jerusalem itself, the traveller would supply the householder with the skins from the sacrifices they made. Feasting was of course part of the religious calendar, but there were other private occasions for feasting, such as funerals, and, by the first century CE, according to Josephus, feasting was a custom that 'reduced many to poverty, such entertainment of the people being considered obligatory and its omission an act of impiety' (*War* 2.1).

It could well be that these public feasts were an opportunity for the wealthier members of society to advertise their social standing. It could also be seen as competition between patrons, each trying to outdo the other in terms of the amount of beneficence shown, similar to the Graeco-Roman system.

Funerary Euergetism

Funerary euergetism is in contrast with the charitable works of the Christian world, which had large numbers of legacies left to the Church and many pious foundations. However, it should be noted the pagan institution of funerary euergetism has some superficial relationship with the pious foundations of Christianity.

18. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 146.

A *euergetes* could make gifts during his lifetime and also bequeath legacies to the city in his will. Legacies could be made to individuals or to a group, sometimes in perpetuity. Some foundations were religiously motivated, many were for the benefit of an association or organization and it was the latter that seemed to proliferate more during the Hellenistic period. During the third century BCE social foundations appear; funds were set up or bequeathed to finance the supply of oil to the bath-houses or for the upkeep or improvement of schools.

Under the Roman Empire the title of 'eternal gymnasiarch' or 'eternal agonothete' was awarded to those liturgists who established a foundation in perpetuity. The foundation, whether it was games- or a bath-house, would bear the benefactor's name, meaning that a benefactor who wanted to guarantee a public service for ever and promote his values for the future would at the same time guarantee his memory would be perpetuated: euergetism could make him immortal.

Another factor to be taken into consideration was from the beginning of the Hellenistic period, a concern for the afterlife led to a desire to immortalize one's own memory and thus to funerary acts of euergetism. The benefactor left a capital sum and the income generated would enable a sacrifice to be made regularly in his honour. Wealthier individuals would leave a sum to the city, and then all the citizens would take part in the feasting. In the second century BCE, a certain Critolaus established a fund for the benefit of the city of Aegiale. The city in recognition heroized by decree the son he had lost. The income from this fund made it possible to celebrate his memory every year with all that composed a cult in Greece: games, a procession, a sacrifice and a banquet.[19] As Veyne says:

> Euergetism here served as a means, as subsidiary for a funerary cult. It could also serve to honour the memory of the dead man, even without a cult… What was essential was no longer the cult of the dead since the foundation aimed only to obtain agents who would perform these rites. What mattered was the memory the beneficiaries would retain of the dead man and his generosity… Here we see people establishing a foundation for the sole purpose of perpetuating their memory. The two forms of behaviour merged together, and when the fund was entrusted to a city, they merged with euergetism.[20]

Veyne comments that the dead wanted to live in the piety of those who survive them and that ritualistic automatism was no longer enough for them: they must live in people's memories. This was the prime motivation for these foundations; the desire to be remembered can be

19. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 113.
20. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 114.

equated with conspicuous giving. Of course, this is only one aspect of funerary euergetism—funeral ceremonies are related to the 'socialization of death', and also to the metaphysical aspect of death, usually religious in character. However, belief in personal immortality did not stop the Christians or the Jews wishing to survive in the memories of their descendants. This is evident from the numerous synagogue inscriptions from Late Antique Palestine, which will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. But unlike the later charitable and pious foundations of Christianity, and to some extent Judaism, which were largely derived from religion, pagan foundations owed little to the metaphysical aspect of death. The pagan *euergetes* did not leave huge bequests in order to save his soul—instead, he indulged 'in spite of death', projecting into an indefinite future the same ideals and interests he had held during his lifetime.

As a postscript to this, Champlin[21] makes a very useful observation when he says that the voluble record of benefactions that has come down to us should not eclipse the silent majority of less ostentatious benefactors. These benefactors gave less to their city when they were living, remembering the city in their wills, giving only what was strictly necessary to maintain their name and that of their family. Thus a larger section of society acted as *euergetai* than might appear to be the case from the very long inscriptions of the wealthiest benefactors.

Christian Charity and Almsgiving

According to Veyne euergetism and pious and charitable works differ in ideology, in beneficiaries and agents, and in the motivations of agents their behaviour. Charity, he says,

> shows the convergence of three things: a virtue that was dear to the Jewish people, loving kindness (*hesed*), which forbids one to claim everything that one has a right to and makes almsgiving a duty; popular pagan morality, to which this loving kindness, so natural to all humble people in every clime, was not alien either; and, finally, the solidarity that bound together the members of the Christian sect like any other.[22]

The 'popular morality' (*hesed*) of which Veyne speaks consists, according to him, of mutual aid and almsgiving. This morality was also to become a sectarian morality. One of the early Fathers of the Latin Church, Tertullian (160–220 CE), writes that, instead of giving *euergesia*, the members of the early Christian sect gave to their poor, their orphans

21. E. Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 BC–AD 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 155-68.

22. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 19.

and the old people among them, noting, 'it is mainly the deeds of love so noble that lead many to put a brand on us. See, they say, how they love one another.'[23]

This mutual aid was to be one of the effects of the solidarity that bound members of the early Church together, encompassed by almsgiving—a duty, according to Veyne, which was 'incumbent on all Jews' and which was a traditional feature of the Jewish sects. One of the scrolls of the Essene sect from the Dead Sea, the Damascus Document, speaks of the levying of a tax to be utilized in a common chest from which the poor and old could be helped. This would be a practice the Christian Church would adopt from the second century onwards.

Therefore, charity, targeted at society's neediest, can be viewed as an alien practice that became acculturated in Rome, which then engendered three new practices. The euergetistic nature of Roman society had caused civic edifices to be built; now it would build churches instead. Individual concern about the afterlife caused many people to make pious liberalities in the form of legacies to the Church, and finally the practice of charity, which had profound ramifications throughout the Empire, became widespread.

Roman Euergetism in the Late Antique Period

In the fourth century CE, the aristocrats of Rome and the municipal notables were still *euergetai*, and the practice changed so little that the Fathers of the Greek Church are among the richest sources for the history of euergetism. A Christian *euergetes* could be both charitable and contribute to the building of churches. The bishops inherited the social responsibilities of the notables. St Cyprian, for example, ruined himself in the performance of his official duties.[24] The masses expected the new religion would still give them the same satisfaction they had received from the pagan festivals and feasts, and they were not disappointed. As a consequence, many Christian notables and priests were ruined.

Veyne says that almsgiving succeeded euergetism and Bolkestein showed the contrast between civic assistance to the poor in pagan antiquity and Christian charity. The word 'poor', he comments, is peculiar to the vocabulary of the Jews and Christians.[25] Clark, quoting Patlagean, says that the recipients of welfare, during the fourth to sixth centuries were now defined in terms of need rather than of status, the

23. Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 39.7; *Epistle to Diognetus* 1; Minucius Felix 9.2, cf. 31.8.

24. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis* 21-22.

25. H. Bolkenstein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege in vorchristlichen Altertum* (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1939), cited in Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 32. See also my comments regarding this matter in Chapter 16.

usual method of determining who got what.[26] In Greece and Rome, assistance or redistribution was given to the people, but only if they were citizens—the Roman corn dole, for example, was available only to this class of the population and was seen as a civic measure, not charity. The recipients did not receive the corn because they were poor, but because they could produce a *tessera,* a token that identified them as citizens. However, this is not to say that no form of 'charitable' action ever took place within pagan society.

Seneca (4 BC–65 CE), the Roman Stoic and statesman, records that 'the wise man will give a coin to a beggar without dropping it in a contemptuous manner, as do those who wish to be charitable (*misericordes*) only for the sake of appearances'.[27] The beggar was a feature of everyday life in the ancient world, and this contact between citizen and poor man was unavoidable, but it did not include the welfare institutions that were a significant feature of Christian charity. Cicero took pride in the sort of philanthropic action that consisted of ransoming a fellow citizen or providing a dowry for a citizen's orphaned daughter. As Saller says, for the Romans poverty was not an economic problem but a moral and political one: 'their discussion was underpinned by a shared individual and social psychology. Finally the shame of poverty was reinforced by the basic symbols of Roman culture that marked out the social hierarchy for all to see.'[28] Almsgiving was simply an everyday action that was not regarded as an act of high morality or indeed as a duty of the state; this all changed, however, with the coming of Christianity.

The fourth century CE saw a new society emerging, and with the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Empire charity now played an integral, if not major, role in the benefaction system. But charity could only come to the fore where the civic sense of community had been weakened by extraneous forces. The communities of the Empire were now divided between rich and poor. Bolkestein connected this with the coming of Christianity and the collapse of the Roman Empire in the third century CE.[29]

This situation was further elucidated by Patlagean, who, carrying on the work done by Veyne, outlined the manner in which the civic model gave way to the society, which was seen in terms of an all-embracing 'economic' model that juxtaposed rich and poor.[30] As the cities proved

26. G. Clark, 'The Gifts of Women' (unpublished conference report, Connecticut College, January 2001), pp. 6-8.

27. Seneca, *De clementia* 6.2.

28. Saller, 'Poverty, Honour and Obligation in Imperial Rome', p. 20.

29. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege*.

30. E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance: 4e–7e siècles* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), pp. 17-35.

unable to absorb the various forms of poverty created in the eastern provinces by the expanding population, poverty could now be seen 'in its full economic nakedness, stripped of the civic veil with which Rome had screened its reality'.[31]

Clark makes the point that the redefinition of good works as euergetism is gradually replaced by a programme of charity to the poor most strongly manifest in the numerous benefactions made by important and wealthy women, what she terms 'matronage'. Clark sees this matronage as being directly related to pre-Christian civic euergetism.[32]

When considering Jewish euergetism Schwartz says that most Palestinian inscriptions from the Late Antique period come from a time when the culture of urban pagan euergetism was dying out, having given way to the closely related culture of Christian charity. He continues:

> The Palestinian inscriptions therefore do not reflect the same sort of self-conscious distancing from the discourse of *philotimia.* For example they often note that gifts were made *ek ton idion*. Nevertheless, here, too the language of *philotimia* has in general yielded to that of religious obligation.[33]

Rajak, in her article 'Benefactors in the Diaspora', wrestles with the same question of whether or not the Jews practised euergetism—and if not, why? She says that 'visible abstention from social competition [in the Graeco-Roman cities] and from its various manifestations was a way of marking out a community from its civic environment and binding it together'.[34] While this statement may serve for the Jews of the Diaspora, how far can the same be said for the Jews in Palestine? Rajak asks whether or not the Jews had any role to play in civic euergetism and if their reluctance to accept its principles was a factor in their marginalization. Did the Jews adopt any aspects of the system? And did they effectively re-constitute them to suit their own particular principles? These questions could also be addressed to the Jews in Palestine.

However, there are several obstacles to this kind of comparison, for, as Rajak notes,

> There is no hard and fast distinction between a Diaspora Greek city and a city within Palestine but with a cosmopolitan population, like Caesarea, one on the fringes of Palestine such as Gadara, and one a little further afield but still within the same cultural world, for example Beirut.[35]

31. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*.
32. Clark, 'The Gifts of Women', p. 7.
33. Schwarz, *Imperialism*, pp. 284-87.
34. Rajak, *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora*, p. 374.
35. Rajak, *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora*, p. 379.

As Rutgers points out, the non-Jewish elements in the various communities also had some input into the benefactions made to synagogues:

> the donation of money to the Diaspora synagogue indicates that the Jewish communities of the Diaspora commanded much respect. It seems that one of the ways to augment one's status within ancient society as a whole was by becoming a benefactor of the local synagogue.[36]

Rajak also notes that in terms of cultural patterns Syria is sometimes regarded as being closer to Palestine than the Diaspora communities. Further complications arise with synagogue inscriptions, since the vast majority found are of donors recorded from the Galilean villages of the later Roman period rather than cities or towns. This is no longer a civic phenomenon. Therefore, as Rajak says, 'the Diaspora–Palestine distinction may not always be the most useful one within which to operate, in writing about the Jewish history of this period [i.e. the first century BCE to second century CE]'.[37] Finally, it is also important, when considering the possible nature of a Jewish benefaction system, to take into consideration the fact that, in the further regions of the Roman Empire. From Britain in the west, to Syria and Palestine in the east, the city itself was a less prominent feature than in the Mediterranean Graeco-Roman urban system. Indeed, the same could be said for the Late Antique period.

The lack of identifiable patrons on Jewish inscriptions led Rajak to emphasize the ideological component of the tendency of the Jewish communities to open the ranks of the named benefactors to even the modestly affluent and to commemorate the gifts of the community as a whole. This, according to Schwartz, indicates that 'euergetism was modified by egalitarianism'.[38] However, this may not necessarily be so easily defined.

In a recent article by Joubert, a very interesting point has been raised—namely, that benefaction and patronage are two very different, but related forms of social interchange.[39] As Holman notes, 'the Jews practised piety not only by ritual but also in very specific social behaviours directed at supporting the needs of the community and strengthening civic and kinship ties'.[40]

36. L.V. Rutgers, 'Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archaeology in the Graeco-Roman World', in S. Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 67-95 (93).

37. Rutgers, 'Diaspora Synagogues', p. 380.

38. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 286.

39. S.J. Joubert, 'One Form of Social Exchange or Two? "Euergetism", Patronage, and Testament Studies', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (Spring 2001), pp. 1-12.

40. S. Holman, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappodocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 43.

Therefore patronage could not at this period or any other have been an important feature of any system of benefaction operated by the Jews in Palestine. It is possible, on the other hand, that there were some rural communities in Galilee that enjoyed the patronage of an individual member of the landowning class. Such individuals are attested in both the writings of Josephus and the Talmud,[41] though, sadly, not in the archaeological record, for as yet no major country villas have been located.[42] These powerful men may have extended patronage in a variety of ways to urban and rural communities in Galilee, yet none are recorded in inscriptions. This would not be surprising if piety were the prerequisite for not receiving accolades on stone. The motivation behind synagogue benefactions and patronage should be viewed, as Joubert says, as two distinct elements. This may go some way to resolving the apparent anomalies that occur when trying to evaluate the nature of the Jewish system in Palestine in the Late Antique period.

It would appear from the available evidence that Goodman is correct when he says that the Jews of Second Temple Palestine never acquired the epigraphic habit of their Graeco–Roman counterparts.[43] There are no extant remains of inscriptions or decrees expounding the public benefactions made by members of the ruling elite, and this may be due to religious reasons. Philosophy and religion was usually the domain of the wealthy, who, to quote the words of Ben Sirach 'cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough…that driveth oxen, and is occupied with their labours' (Sir. 38.24-25).

The religious establishment in most Graeco-Roman cities was usually in the hands of an aristocratic oligarchy that had both the wealth and time to fulfil their religious positions and maintain the cults, as well as to be the leaders of their society. In the Graeco-Roman world at least, priests and public benefactors were often one and the same person.[44]

The Jews in this period did not, it seems, acquire the 'epigraphic habit'. And yet, as has already been noted, in 1 Maccabees there was an exception and there is no reason to suppose there may not have been

41. See *y. Ber.* 9.1, 12a–b. Also D. Sperber, *Roman Palestine 200–400: The Land: Crisis and Change in Agrarian Society as Reflected in Rabbinic Sources* (Jerusalem: Bar Ilan University Press, 1978), pp. 119-35.

42. See M. Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132–212* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), p. 33.

43. M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

44. See E.P. Sanders, *Judaism*: *Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), p. 383; R. Lane-Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 46-89.

other ones. There were also religious reasons against the epigraphic honouring of individuals. These reasons will be discussed in more detail later, but for now it can be noted that a major reason may have been the influence of the Pharisees, who did not usually come from the socio-economic elite. Jewish religious leaders were not necessarily the aristocratic oligarchy, unlike the leaders in the Graeco-Roman cities. However, that the Jewish high priest was often a member of the social elite could account for the anomalies evidenced in 1 Maccabees. The next chapter will examine other evidence for benefactions made during the Second Temple period.

Chapter 2

Benefactors and Benefactions in the Late Second Temple Period (Second Century BCE to First Century CE)

Literature provides the vast majority of Jewish evidence for benefactions during the late first century BCE/early first century CE, and this creates problems for analysing the nature of a Jewish benefaction system. As already noted in the Introduction, what was considered by the various early first-century writers, with their differing agendas, to be the norm may have been very different to what actually took place. Nevertheless it is necessary to attempt an evaluation of this evidence and compare it, when possible, with the scant epigraphic and archaeological evidence available for this period.

With regard to Temple benefactions, Josephus says that the Jewish forefathers 'adorned the sanctuary mainly at the expense of aliens' (*War* 2.413). It is no exaggeration to say Gentiles or sympathizers made the vast majority of recorded benefactions to the Temple. Presumably this might be because Gentiles regarded their donations *as* euergetism and wanted acknowledgment, while the Jews had a different motivation one requiring a certain amount of anonymity. The Bible states that sacrifices and offerings were to be accepted from Gentiles, a practice that appears to have been operational since First Temple times (Lev. 22.25). It was agreed that if a Gentile sent a burnt offering from overseas without the necessary accompanying libations these must be provided out of public funds (*m. Shek.* 7.6). Presumably this money came from that acquired from the sale of objects donated for the altar. The Temple reciprocated the benefactor by offering a daily sacrifice for the welfare of the Gentile ruler, for Seleucid kings like Demetrius I (1 Macc. 7.33) and also for Roman emperors.

The gifts Gentile rulers donated towards the upkeep of the Temple were not inconsiderable, and because of the vast quantity of offerings, special regulations were made: 'Vow offerings (*nedarim*) and freewill offerings (*nedavot*) are to be accepted of them' (*m. Shek.* 1.5).

As early as the sixth century BCE, the Persian king Darius I (548–486 BCE) had donated funds for the completion of the Temple structure and for the regular sacrifices from the taxes gathered from the province 'beyond the river' (Ezra 6.8-17). Ezra also records the gifts made by Artaxerxes I (fifth century BCE; Ezra 7.20-23), and Josephus tells us that Ptolemy II Philadelphus (308–246 BCE) gave a golden table and vessels to the Temple (*Ant.* 20.40-44).[1] Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE) gave enough of his income to defray all the costs connected with the service of the sacrifices (2 Macc. 3.3), and so did other Hellenistic kings (*Ant.* 13.78; *Apion* 2.48). Antiochus III (242–187 BCE) donated 20,000 silver shekels for sacrifices and in addition gave great quantities of wheat, flour, salt, and materials necessary for the Temple repairs, including cedars of Lebanon (*Ant.* 12.140-41). Similarly, Demetrius I promised the 'Jewish nation' that he would consecrate the town of Acco to the Temple in order to defray the expenses from its taxes, and in addition gave 15,000 shekels from his own income (1 Macc. 10.39-45).

During the later period of the Second Temple, during the first century BCE and first century CE, Josephus records that M. Agrippa (*Ant.* 16.14) went up to the Temple to sacrifice, as did the Roman governor of Syria, Vitellius (*Ant.* 18.122). The Roman emperor Augustus and his wife Livia gave 'all manner of gifts' to the Temple; it may even be possible that the gifts given to Josephus by Poppaea, the wife of Emperor Nero, were intended for the Temple (*Life* 16). Although we should be wary of accepting everything Josephus says because of the apologetic nature of his works, the accumulated evidence for Gentile benefactions is impressive.

However, there were also many Diaspora Jewish benefactions in the first century CE. King Monabazus, who was a convert to Judaism, had all the handles for the vessels used on Yom Kippur made of gold, while his mother, Queen Helena of Adiabene, commissioned a gold candelabrum to be set over the door of the sanctuary (*b. Yom.* 3.10). The Talmud records a few individual Jewish benefactions to the Second Temple; at the time of its construction, Heldai, Tobiah and Jedaiah from the *golah* (returning Babylonian exiles) donated the gold crowns, which hung from the ceiling in the Temple.

During the rebuilding of the Temple in the reign of Herod, other Diaspora Jews are noted for their gifts; Ben Kattin donated 12 spigots and a machine (pulley) for the laver (*b. Yom.* 3.10). Ben Gamala replaced the boxwood lots, also used on Yom Kippur, with gold ones. Philo of Alexandria's brother donated the gold and silver-plating of the gates of the sanctuary (*War* 5.53). Nicanor of Alexandria donated the famous

1. This account can also be found in the *Letter of Aristeas* 33; 40; 52-82.

'copper gates of Corinthian workmanship' (*b. Yom*. 3.10).[2] Over the gate of the sanctuary, the 'Great Gate' of the Temple, was the golden vine, to which people used to donate a leaf or pip of gold, or an entire cluster of grapes that the priests would attach to it (*b. Mid*. 3.8). This must have been quite a splendid adornment: Tacitus refers to it in his *Histories* (5.5), giving it as an example of the great wealth of the Jews. There is also epigraphic evidence of donations being made to the Temple. Paris, son of Akeson of Rhodes, donated a pavement to Herod's Temple building (discussed later).

There were other recorded donations made by Jewish families who undertook the obligation to donate wood on specific days of the year. When they brought the wood they would offer freewill burnt offerings and the day would be a festival for them. Nine such families are mentioned in the Talmud (*b. Ta'an* 4.6). Almost all of these were returning exiles listed in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the list being based on a tradition going back to the beginning of the Second Temple period. The 15th of Av (July/August) was set aside as a day of wood offering (*War* 2.425). Generations after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, these families still celebrated this anniversary (*b. Ta'an* 4.6). This is similar to the type of funerary *euergesia* of the Graeco-Roman world discussed earlier, where families instigated beneficial foundations to be carried on through succeeding generations.[3]

Epigraphic Evidence for the Second Temple Period

The Jewish world, it is suggested,[4] did not subscribe to the euergetistic practices of the Graeco-Roman world, yet there is evidence to suggest that not all of these Graeco-Roman practices were frowned upon. Rather than conclude that the Jews never acquired the habit of honouring their benefactors epigraphically, in fact it seems they did so in certain circumstances. However, their choice of who should be honoured was selective. For the Hellenistic period there is a record in 1 Maccabees (14.26) of bronze tablets being set up on the Temple Mount, which appears to have been the place for inscriptions.[5] These tablets relate to the period of the high priesthood of Simon (142–141 BCE) listing his benefactions, which included providing the towns of Joppa and Gazara

2. *JIGRE*, 153.

3. I have used the rabbinic evidence here because, even if the material is not necessarily reliable in every detail, they show the general principles of the kind of benefactions the Temple received.

4. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 128.

5. Among which are included the Greek and Latin inscriptions warning Gentiles not to enter the sacred precincts: *CIJ* 1400; *SEG* VIII, 169.

with 'everything needful for their welfare'. He also spent large sums of his own money to arm the soldiers of his nation and provide their pay. These tablets took the form of a decree honouring Simon and his family and conferring upon him the high priesthood and leadership of the Jewish people. None of the people or priests was allowed to nullify any part of the decree and to do so invited severe punishments. The high priest Simon could be seen to have performed acts of euergetism, which had prompted his recognition by the people, perhaps under Seleucid influence. However, the honour was discretionary rather than the formulaic response associated with Graeco-Roman euergetism.

Another inscription, also known from 1 Maccabees, relating to the Hellenistic king Demetrius and his benefactions to the Jewish nation, has already been cited (1 Macc. 11.33). The important point is, whether they were prompted or not, Jews were sometimes ready to comply with the setting up of an inscription to record a benefactor.

In recent years, further epigraphic evidence from the first century CE has come to light, evidence which challenges the assumption that recording the benefactions in the public arena was not a Jewish practice. One inscription concerns a non-Judaean, held by many to be a Jew or at the very least a sympathizer, Paris of Rhodes, who donated a pavement for Herod's Temple building.[6]

The inscription was not found *in situ*, but south of the Temple Mount, 90 metres from the triple gate, so it is not possible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy which pavement it refers to. Josephus says that the southern court of the Temple was paved with a variety of stones, so it may have well belonged here (*War* 5.2). Mazar found abundant remains of paving in the area of Temple Mount,[7] and considering that a substantial sum must have been donated, it seems likely that the Temple Mount is the original site.[8] Isaac believes the pavement referred to could actually have been part of the Royal Stoa. The inscription has been dated to 18/17 BCE and is of considerable importance as one of the few extant epigraphic documents relating to the Temple and its benefactors. The left-hand side of the text is missing and would have included a verb such as 'gave' or 'made' with details of the sum of money spent:

(φτοὺ) κ' ἐπ' ἀρχιερέως
]Πάριϛ 'Ακέσωνος
]ἐν Ρόδωι
π]ροστρῶσιν
δ]ραχμάϛ

6. B. Isaac, 'A Donation for Herod's Temple in Jerusalem', *IEJ* 33 (1983), pp. 86-92.
7. B. Mazar, *Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem: Preliminary Report of the First Season* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969), p. 12.
8. Isaac, 'A Donation for Herod's Temple'.

The donor's name is Paris, son of Akeson, and the name Akeson is attested at Rhodes and elsewhere.[9] Line 3 indicates that Paris was a foreigner resident in Rhodes, not a Rhodian who would, according to Fraser, be described in l. 3 as Ῥόδιος not ἐν Ῥόδωι. Citizens of Rhodes were few in number; the population mainly consisted of foreign residents and slaves.[10] Foreign residents played an important part in the business life of Rhodes[11] and the benefactor mentioned in the inscription could well have been a wealthy member of the community. Isaac suggests that Paris must have been a Jew or at least a sympathizer.[12] However, his name and the language of the inscription are wholly Greek—only the benefaction as such indicates any link to Judaism.

There is some evidence of a Jewish presence on Rhodes in the mid-second century BCE. For instance, a letter about an alliance between Rome and the Jews was sent to various states, including Rhodes (1 Macc. 15.23). Also, Suetonius records a Jewish grammarian on Rhodes, Diogenes, who lectured every Sabbath.[13] What seems significant, however, is that Rhodes was the recipient of Herod the Great's benefactions. At Rhodes, Herod rebuilt the temple of Apollo and made donations for the maintenance of the Rhodian fleet (*Ant.* 16.147; *War* 1.401). These were, of course, gifts made by a monarch to another state, whereas the inscription records a private donation. Yet, it is possible this private donation was one of many and may well have been in response to Herod's great desire to complete the Temple building. Whether or not Paris was a Jew or a sympathizer, the fact remains that an inscription honouring him as a *euergete* was erected in the city of Jerusalem, without any apparent objection.

The Temple was rich in dedications and gifts, frequently described in literary sources, but there is no mention in any sources of private contributions towards the actual costs of the Temple buildings. Josephus says in *Antiquities* that the rebuilding of the Temple was a project specifically financed and carried out solely by Herod, who 'surpassed his predecessors in spending money' (*Ant.* 15.396; *War* 1.401). However, if we compare this account with his account in *War* (5.189), we see here that Josephus avoids directly naming Herod, giving the impression that

9. For Rhodes, see C. Blinkenburg, *Lindos, fouilles de l'Acropole 1902–14. Inscriptions 2* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1941). Elsewhere *Inscriptiones graecae*, XII I no. 764.

10. M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 689-91.

11. P.M. Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 113-24.

12. Isaac, 'A Donation for Herod's Temple'.

13. Suetonius, *Tiberius* 32.4. See M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, II (Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), pp. 111-12.

the Temple was rebuilt as a result of a collective effort on the part of all the Jewish people. Clearly Josephus had used the account of Nicolaos of Damascus, the biographer of Herod, as a source for his *Antiquities*, and this could possibly account for the emphasis on Herod's contribution. Likewise Josephus could have remembered the Temple in his own way and quite possibly wanted to see it as the creation of a great many people. The construction of Greek temples and Jewish synagogues was often supported by benefactions from various sources, private individuals, city-states and rulers.[14] Perhaps these individual donations (for it is inconceivable that the pavement would be the only one of its kind) were more important as an indication of support for Herod's work than Josephus, in *Antiquities*, will admit.

There is another point worth mentioning. Josephus writes that Herod's undertaking of the rebuilding of the Temple caused great consternation: 'And while the unlikelihood of his realizing his hope did not disturb them, they were dismayed by the thought that he might tear down the whole edifice and not have sufficient means to bring his project to completion' (*Ant.* 15.388).

According to Josephus, the rebuilding of the Temple was a project that had to be seen to be achievable if Herod was to identify himself with the Jewish people and keep his kingdom. Similarly, the necessity of keeping large numbers people employed, rather than having them disaffected and roaming the streets of Jerusalem, would also have been of prime consideration (see *Ant.* 20.219). If funds had been short, obviously Herod could have expected some returns from those he had patronized in the past, like the wealthy Rhodian. However, this does not necessarily mean that Paris was Jewish or even a sympathizer; it is equally likely that Paris had been a direct or indirect recipient of Herod's benefactions in the past and wished to return the favour. Thus, Paris may have been contributing to a building project that was held in high esteem by all Gentiles, which is shown by other benefactions previously mentioned.

Herod: A Jewish Benefactor?

Herod's kingdom comprised two units. The first, the 'king's country', was ruled directly through the governors of the provinces of Galilee, Judaea and Peraea. Each province was divided into twenty toparchies; each toparchy consisted of several villages. Also in this unit were the royal estates in the Jezreel Valley, the military districts beyond Jordan and the colonies of veterans at Gaba and Heshbon.

14. See Lifshitz, *Donateurs*.

The second unit consisted of the Hellenized cities, some of which were grants from Rome to Herod, the others being cities Herod had established or revived. The most famous of these were the port of Caesarea, Samaria (Sebaste) inland and another Caesarea at Paneas. All of these cities enjoyed local autonomy, although they were supervised by one of the king's officials.

In Judaea, Herod acted with a double purpose. He naturally wanted to provide for his own security, so he built or rebuilt fortresses at Masada, Hyrcania and Herodium, a fortified palace in Jerusalem and the Antonia fortress, which commanded the Temple Mount. At the same time, Herod also needed to show he was a worthy monarch, and to this end he undertook the refurbishment of the Temple.

Benefaction lay at the heart of the ideology of Hellenistic kingship—so much so, the Gospel of Luke says that 'those who exercise power over them [the people] are called benefactors (εὐεργέται, euergetes)' (Lk. 22.25).

It became customary to display other qualities of kingship on decrees or coinage. Among these qualities were the virtues of wisdom, courage, piety and generosity. It is with regard to piety (*eusebia*) that the ideals of Hellenistic kingship are most likely to meet the requirements of the Jewish benefaction system. Josephus informs us that Antiochus I was referred to as *eusebes*, 'because of his exaggerated devotedness' (*Ant.* 13.244). Polemo of Pontus is also described on his coinage this way.[15] Polemo was a client king, a contemporary of Herod the Great, yet we have no epigraphic record from Judaea of Herod ever being described as *eusebes*. We do know from Josephus however that Herod strove to earn prestige and honour as a benefactor and that he especially cultivated the virtues of beneficence, heroism, and piety (*Ant.* 16.150-54).

Although Herod's enthusiasm 'for all things Greek' cannot be overlooked as a prime motivating factor, it is also worth noting Smallwood's comments. As a client king of Rome, Herod was, to a certain extent, duty bound to prepare his subjects for assimilation into the Roman Empire using Graeco-Roman culture as his main instrument.[16] Herod introduced (c. 28/27 BCE) certain Hellenistic activities to Judaea, for example the Actian games, celebrating Augustus's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. The games included musical compositions, horse races, athletic contests and contests between wild beast, scheduled every four years in Jerusalem. Three buildings were erected to accommodate these events: a hippodrome in the city on the south side of the Temple, and two others

15. R.D. Sullivan, 'Dynasts in Pontus', *ANRW* II, 7.2 (1980), pp. 902-30 (918).
16. E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), p. 82.

outside the city walls. To some Jews, however, this was seen as a step too far towards the Hellenization of their country, especially the gymnastics and wrestling competitions. This sort of activity had been a major political issue at the time of the Maccabaean war, over a century earlier, and was regarded as symbolic of the pagan Hellenism it had been the purpose of the rebellion to eradicate (1 Macc. 1.10; 2 Macc. 4.17-19). This was something pious Jews felt very strongly about.

Herod also wanted his buildings to be magnificent, but was faced with the problem of depicting human or animal forms on the sculptured reliefs, a practice that would flout the second commandment. While Herod duly respected the sentiments of the second commandment, he unadvisedly adorned some of his buildings with representations of trophies, containing armour and weapons, which was also anathema to the Jews. Herod's schemes aroused so much animosity that an attempt was made, unsuccessfully, to assassinate him.

From this it can be concluded that even within his own kingdom Herod had little scope for self-expression and had to look to the Greek cities to the west of Palestine and beyond. The Jewish benefaction system, it appears, did not encourage self-expression and Herod was far more likely to think in terms of Graeco-Roman euergetism. In Samaria, the corridor between the Greek cities of the west and Judaea to the east, Herod founded the city of Sebaste, named after his patron, the emperor Augustus. Caesarea, on the coast, was another city that benefited his kingdom greatly, opening up a new port that allowed access to fresh trading routes.

Herod was probably one of the greatest benefactors of the ancient Near East, and his list of benefactions to Gentile cities is long and imposing (*War* 1.402–28).[17] Yet, it appears Herod won the gratitude of the Greeks alone. His own people, we are told, continued to despise him. The Pharisee Sameas advocated the acceptance of Herod's rule only on the grounds of divine punishment (*Ant.* 14.176).

Within Judaea Herod had to confine himself to other acts, pious ones. He is credited with the construction of the Patriarchs' tombs in Hebron as well as the building of a memorial to Abraham two miles from Hebron. However, his greatest achievement was the re-building of the Temple, which commenced c. 20 BCE, some two years after Herod's initial announcement of the project. As previously mentioned, not

17. Herod's benefactions within Palestine included the Temple of Augustus at Paneion, near the River Jordan, the foundation of Agrippium, Antipatris, Cypros and Phasaelis. Herod provided gymnasia for Tripolis, Byblos and Damascus, and numerous buildings in Berytus, Tyre and Sidon, not counting numerous other benefactions to cities in the Greek east.

everyone was ready to accept that this project would come to fruition, and Herod was required to prove the feasibility of it before it could commence. To allay their fears he further promised not to pull down any of the Temple buildings until the materials for re-building were in place.

Herod employed thousands of workmen on the Temple-building enterprise and trained priests as masons and carpenters since the Law prohibited laymen from entering the Temple building itself. Two separate Aramaic ossuary inscriptions record one of these workmen:

סמוג [*sic*] בנא הכלה

> Simon builder of the sanctuary.

As Naveh points out, the location and form of the inscription point to the person in question not being *the* builder of the sanctuary but one of many.[18] It seems rather ironic that in terms of remembrance, this humble inscription is extant, whereas there is no inscription recording Herod's magnificent contribution. Grant notes: 'After the destruction of the Temple, Hebrew lawyers and theologians tended to express admiration for the building while ignoring its association with Herod'.[19] Although, according to Josephus, Herod repeatedly referred to this work as a pious enterprise (*War* 5.189), his Jewish subjects seem to have been unconvinced of his sincerity and later rabbinic traditions even claimed his real motivation for the building of the Temple was the remorse he felt for killing so many Jewish scholars (*b. B. Bat.* 4a).[20] Herod had to tread carefully because his Jewish credentials were doubtful, shown by the fact that in non-Jewish contexts he was often associated with the 'epigraphic habit' of Graeco-Roman euergetism. A good example can be seen on a statue base from Athens:

> The people [honoured] King Herod, Friend to the Romans, for his good deeds and goodwill towards it.[21]

Avi-Yonah says:

> This seems to emphasise the dichotomy of his era. His place in the Roman Empire depended upon his governance of the Jews; he felt bound therefore to respect the religious views of the main body of them. On the other hand, he was convinced that if no compromise were reached between Judaism and Hellenism there would be a catastrophe and the first

18. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 34.
19. M. Grant, *Herod the Great* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p. 164.
20. However, it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of these comments because by the time the Babylonian Talmud was written there was a long established anti-Herodian tradition and rabbis would have had their own agendas.
21. OGIS 414 = IJudO I Ach38.

> victim would be his dynasty and all that he had striven to accomplish. Hence the bridging of the gap between the Jews and the world about them was his principal aim.[22]

Nevertheless, there are some anomalies and it would appear that many of them could be directly related to the biases of the various ancient authors, especially Josephus.[23] Josephus appears to sum up the attitude that Herod's subjects had towards their king's benefactions when he says:

> For the very same attentions which he showed to his superiors he expected to have shown to himself by his subjects, and what he believed to be the most excellent gift that he could give another he showed a desire similarly to obtain for himself. But as it happens the Jewish nation is by Law opposed to all such things and is accustomed to admire righteousness rather than glory. It was therefore not in his good graces, because it found it impossible to flatter the king's ambition with statues or temples or such tokens (*Ant.* 16.157-58).

However, elsewhere Josephus informs us that the population was 'filled with joy and offered thanks to God, first of all for the speed of the work and next for the King's zeal and as they celebrated they acclaimed the restoration'. And goes on to say, 'on the day of the Temple's completion this coincided with the King's accession, which they were accustomed to celebrate and because of the double occasion the festival was a glorious one indeed' (*Ant.* 15.419-24).

That they were accustomed to celebrate the anniversary of Herod's accession is rather surprising in view of the fact that the festival commemoration of royal anniversaries formed part of the ruler cult in the major Hellenistic kingdoms. If the Jewish population refused to honour Herod in the manner customary for a Hellenistic king, then how could they have celebrated his accession anniversary? There is no mention of any opposition to this, even on a small scale, which would suggest the Jewish people were quite happy to accept this arrangement. Perhaps this is an instance where a foreign festival is condoned, simply because it does not come into conflict with any religious requirement and does not usurp God's authority, for obviously Herod would be the instrument by which God chose to have his people ruled and, therefore, should be accepted.

It is also notable in these extracts from Josephus that we can perhaps begin to perceive the nature of a Jewish benefaction system emerging,

22. M. Avi-Yonah, *A History of Israel and the Holy Land* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 149.

23. Josephus appears to have used the work of Nicolaos of Damascus, Herod's biographer, but clearly also consulted other unknown sources. Josephus may well have put his own interpretation on events.

that the praise for the work is first given to God, yet Herod's significant part in the building does not go unrecognized. Herod is doing God's work, on behalf of God for God's people; Herod is an instrument of God and it is to God alone he owes his position. God is using Herod as his servant to carry out the work on his behalf. Therefore, the recipients are not obliged to show gratitude to Herod because he is merely doing God's work; any honour or gratitude must be shown to God. Herod would have won the approval, at least of the ordinary mass of the population, because he would be seen to be behaving in the manner that a *Jewish* king would have been expected to behave, not necessarily a Hellenistic one.

Those Jews (probably the elite) who had their own agenda give most of the information we have about the Jews attitude toward Herod in retrospect (i.e. after Herod's death). Perhaps it is only this element of the population who felt such opposition to Herod's reign and it is their opinions that have been transmitted to us. Nevertheless, in spite of Josephus's inferences elsewhere, it appears that at this time he was given recognition for his role in the rebuilding of the Temple and accepted in the manner of a Jewish monarch by a majority of the Jewish population. The celebration of his accession may have been a concession to Herod's idea of himself as a Hellenistic monarch and this would have been acceptable, as his behaviour on this occasion reflected the virtues of a Jewish king.

If there is no extant record of Herod being honoured with the title *eusebes*, then the same cannot be said of him being acclaimed *euergetes*. An intriguing artefact, a round limestone weight, was acquired from a Jerusalem antiquities dealer in 1967.[24] The weight bore the following Greek inscription:

(ἔτους) λβ′ βασ (ιλέως) Ἡρ(ώδου) εὐ(εργέτου)
φιλοκ(αίσαρος).
ἀγορ(άνομου)
μνᾶ τρία.

Year 32 of King Herod, the Benefactor
Loyal to Caesar.
of the Inspector of Markets.
Three Minas.[25]

24. Y. Meshorer, 'A Stone Weight from the Reign of Herod', *IEJ* 20 (1970), pp. 97-98. The weight was eventually acquired by the Israel Department of Antiquities.

25. The actual weight of the stone relates roughly to the Attic mina which equals 1209.8 grams.

According to Meshorer, the date, year 32, most probably relates to 9 BCE, for the manner of recording the date is identical to that used on the coins of this period.[26] The lettering and technique of the inscription are rather clumsy. The expression φιλοκαίσαρος appears in the titulature of Herod in an inscription from Athens,[27] and has parallels elsewhere in the coinage of Agrippa I and II. The provenance of the weight is not known but it is believed to be the Jerusalem area. It is conceivable that the weight may have come from Caesarea or another Hellenistic city in Palestine. Therefore, if the weight comes from Jerusalem then the most surprising feature about it is that we have a record of Herod being called a εὐεργέτης within Judaea.

Hellenistic kingship also entailed the duty of the monarch to aid his subjects in times of need.[28] However, there is another model of food crisis relief, the idea of the Hellenistic king as *soter* ('saviour') and *euergetes* ('benefactor'). Although royal intervention in times of crisis is not a commandment, according to some eastern traditions of kingship the king is expected to care for the welfare of his people.[29] Herod no doubt had to contend with the memory of the Hasmonean ruler, Simon Maccabaeus, who, as already noted, had shown particular concern for his people. Herod's actions therefore are in keeping with the accepted traditions of a Jewish ruler as well as a Hellenistic one.

Goodman says that 'the classic act of a typical Greek or Roman *euergete* was the provision of food in times of famine, whereas in Judaea the converted royal family of Adiabene not the local men of wealth performed this act'.[30]

In 25/24 BCE there was an extreme drought and severe famine in Palestine. Food was available, but only at a high price. People sold their personal possessions to buy food, and even slaughtered their animals, which meant meat became cheaper (*Ant.* 15.299-36). The drought also rendered people in need of clothing and personal items as well as provisions. The consequence was that gradually people had less to sell and what they did have would be worth little, since the market was flooded with surplus. Josephus's account can be borne out by modern

26. Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer & Massada, 1967), Nos. 37-40.

27. OGIS 427 = IJudO I 39.

28. See the discussion in L.L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 19.

29. M. Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1995), pp. 45-46 and pp. 145-51.

30. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 126. See also P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. xi.

empirical research into famine situations where similar situations require a similar response and would appear to be an accurate assessment of the situation.[31]

Josephus tells us that Herod's response was to melt down all the ornaments of gold and silver in his house to make coins to purchase grain from Egypt. Herod needed Roman consent to purchase the grain, and he used his influence with his Roman friend, Petronius, governor of Egypt at the time, who intervened on his behalf (*Ant.* 15.309-14). However, a document from Qumran tells us these measures were not enough; apparently, 'the help received from Egypt was ineffective and could not supply sufficient provisions for the suffering population' (4QpHos 9.2.12-14). This raises the following question: Was Herod unable to pay for sufficient supplies or was he only allowed a certain quota of grain by Rome?

For those unable to provide food for themselves by their own labour, Herod distributed grain and put bakers to work to bake bread for those unable to do so for themselves. He also employed a special labour force, totalling some 50,000 men, from his own payroll to harvest the land; they were supervised no doubt by government staff. A portion of the supplies Herod purchased was used for seed, in which case Herod was being far-sighted enough to try to help prevent a drift into debt, which would have occurred had freeholders been forced to buy seed at exorbitant prices. He then aided the surrounding countries also hit by this catastrophe. All of these actions by Herod can be seen as being politically motivated; however, they won for him, for the first time, the admiration of his Jewish subjects. Josephus tells us that his generosity made such an impression that, 'hatreds that had been aroused by his altering some of the customs and royal practices were completely eradicated throughout his entire nation' (*Ant.* 15.314).

The evidence suggests that Herod displayed all the attributes, in this instance of a גמל חסידים ('benefactor'). The word *gomal* is a participle and can be translated as 'one who deals bountifully' in 'acts of kindness (*hesed*)'.[32] Herod in this instance is performing acts for the communal good. Importantly, while Herod's actions show considerable similarities to those of a Hellenistic *euergete*, this may be due to the overlap of the two systems.

31. See J. Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge), pp. 119-22. Also J. Dreze and A. Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 91, regarding falling prices.

32. See Chapter 17.

Famine Relief: The Jewish Response

I return now to the other part of Goodman's statement, namely, that in famine situations there was no response from the Jewish elite. While it is true that there appears to be no institutionalized response to such catastrophic situations as famine, is the only reason because the Jewish world had no system of benefaction that could accommodate such acts? There could be another reason and the answer may lie in the fact wealthy Graeco-Romans had something their Jewish counterparts lacked—access to grain stocks other than those produced locally. As Goodman noted, local men of wealth, who on the whole controlled food production and distribution, usually performed the alleviation of food crises in Hellenistic society. Of course, the local men of wealth would have had access to locally produced grain. However, in the event that local harvests failed, this would not apply.

During the famine of the Maccabaean period (160 BCE), the Jewish response was to turn to the Hellenizers, who were the only ones in a position to import the amount of grain needed to alleviate famine.[33] Importation requires the ability to make unobstructed purchases, use funds without hindrance, and move goods along the commercial routes—all these things were denied to the Jewish rebels.

Herod's famine relief actions entailed dealing with three different aspects of the crisis: (1) immediate relief, (2) provision of clothing and (3) the prevention of a re-occurrence. The first aspect involved locating a source of wheat, buying it, bringing it in and distributing it. Buying the wheat involved two separate problems: funding and Roman consent to the purchase. We know from Josephus how Herod dealt with the problem of payment. Josephus also tells us that Petronius, governor of Egypt, was a friend of Herod and that it was mainly due to this that Herod was able to secure a supply of grain. A famine in Judaea would not necessarily have affected Egyptian supplies of grain, especially if the famine had been caused by drought. It seems that Rome in times of widespread famine would be concerned first with securing enough supplies for Rome itself, meaning that the remainder would be highly sought after. Only someone with a certain amount of prestige would be able secure the exporting of grain.

It cannot be argued that Herod had insufficient funds, especially if we take into account all the other measures he put in place. And yet, however, Rome only allowed a certain quantity of grain to be purchased. Another point worth mentioning is that estimates for the population of

33. For an account of the famine, see 1 Macc. 9.25-54.

Palestine at this time, compared with the amount of grain Herod shipped in, show that there would not have been enough to supply the whole population—a fact that is recorded in a Qumran document (4QpHos 9.2.12-14). This brings us to an important question: If Herod had been unable to purchase enough grain, what chance would the other members of the Jewish elite have had to do the same? Josephus suggests there may have been private individuals who provided a source of relief, and we assume only those who had sufficient income, namely, the elite, are referred to in Josephus's statement, 'both peoples and cities and those *private persons* who found themselves in need because they had provided for too many others' (*Ant.* 15.313).

Could it be possible that among the 'private persons' Josephus speaks of, there were men of wealth and prestige who impoverished themselves in order to help? If this is correct, then euergetism, in the Graeco–Roman sense of the word, is not being practised. This is because impoverishing oneself for the good of others is not typical of this system. Clearly, there is a system operating here which is distinctly Jewish.

During the second major famine in Palestine we have evidence for, during the reign of Emperor Claudius (44/45 CE), once again wealthy Jerusalemites are not seen to have participated in the alleviation of the crisis. The only mention of assistance in Josephus is from Queen Helena of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism, who responded by purchasing grain from Alexandria and dried figs from Cyprus, which she then had distributed to the needy (*Ant.* 20.51). Could this have been because Helena's prestige as an Oriental Queen from a buffer state between Rome and Parthia gave her, like Herod, who had personal contacts among Roman authorities, an added advantage in Roman eyes? We have no way of ascertaining how much grain Helena purchased, or indeed whether it was enough. Perhaps she found herself in a similar situation to the one Herod experienced, hence her importation of dried figs: something not possible for Herod because the port of Caesarea was not fully operational during the time of the earlier famine.

Queen Helena is the first female benefactress recorded by Josephus, of who he says, 'she has left a very great name that will be remembered forever among our whole people for her benefaction' (*Ant.* 20.52). Her acts, once again, are seen to be not typical of acts of euergetism, but a response to communal need, with no thought of personal gain on the part of the donor. We can see from this that Queen Helena was given recognition, not with an inscription, but with everlasting fame among the Jewish people for her piety.

We also know from Josephus that Helena's son Izaates sent a great sum of money to the leaders in Jerusalem, once again an act that could be

ascribed to Hellenistic euergetism. This is interesting because in times of high food prices, modern research has shown regarding famine victims in African countries that the earning of cash becomes one of the most vital survival strategies. Not only does it go some way to help the individual, but it also influences the market prices.[34] Cash also gives access to food and there is evidence in Acts to show it was cash relief that was sent from the Jews in Antioch to their brethren in Judaea during this period (Acts 11.27-30).

The requirements of the Jewish community were similar to the Hellenistic one: that leaders, usually men of wealth and status, dealt with the distribution of provisions, grain and so on. However, in the Jewish community such men may have been called upon to distribute money—either money sent by others, or even their own funds.[35] During such extreme times as famine, both systems would require the same behaviour from their leaders.

We have two instances where it appears the wealthy Jewish elite did respond to this kind of crisis in a manner similar to their Greek and Roman counterparts during the first century CE. The Talmud refers to an incident connected with the period of the siege of Jerusalem, when wealthy men offered to keep the city supplied with grain, oil and wood:

> Three men of great wealth, Nakdaimon b.Gurion, Ben Kalba Shabua and Ben Zizith Hakeseth said to the people of Jerusalem, 'I will keep them in wheat and barley'. The second said: 'I will keep them in wine, oil and salt'. The third said: 'I will keep them in wood'. These men were in a position to keep the city for twenty-one years (*b. Git.* 56a).

Apparently the rebels had burnt the Temple stores of wheat and barley and this led to a famine in the city. Although the amount of time specified that these men were able to supply the needs of the city may be exaggerated, and the story may only be symbolic, there is no reason to suppose that this was not a normal reaction in times of need. Indeed, within the context of the text it is not seen as an unprecedented action, and the emphasis of the story is on the refusal of the rebels to accept any kind of reconciliation with the Romans, consequently leading to the destruction of the Temple. There is further literary evidence from the period in question to show there were men of wealth who could and did support the people in times of need. Josephus tells us in *Antiquities* that 'Ananias daily advanced greatly in reputation and was splendidly rewarded by the goodwill of the citizens for he was able to supply them with money'. The passage continues: 'at any rate he daily paid court with gifts to Albinus and the High Priest' (*Ant.* 20.205).

34. Dreze and Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*, p. 102.
35. In fact, Josephus attests to this actually happening (*Ant.* 20.205).

Goodman,[36] reviewing the Loeb translation of this passage, says that this indicates Ananias bribed the procurator Albinus, for Josephus also tells us in *War* (2.274) that many influential men were in the habit of bribing the procurator. Yet Goodman makes no mention of the money given to the people or why it was done. Surely this is an important indication of the way in which some wealthy Jerusalemites may have disposed of their wealth in the manner befitting a public benefactor. Josephus continues, 'but Ananias had servants who were utter rascals', and goes on to tell us about their misappropriation of the priests' tithes. The contrast is implicit: Ananias did good things for the people but his servants were totally unscrupulous. We could even go as far as to suggest that Ananias may have bribed Albinus—not necessarily for his own benefit, but to secure better treatment for the people.

There is, however, a slight anomaly concerning this passage in Josephus, which begins with the lines: 'When Albinus reached the city of Jerusalem he bent every effort and made every provision to ensure peace' (*Ant.* 20.204). This passage in *Antiquities* is referring to the beginning of Albinus's procuratorship (62 CE), long before any bribery would have taken place, so presumably the gifts Ananias gave him were just that, 'gifts', not bribes. The *War* account is very different and speaks of Albinus's atrocious acts, and it is in this version we learn of the bribery that went on between him and men of influence in Jerusalem.

So, why would Ananias give handouts of money to the people? There are two possible reasons. First, there could have been a famine. There is some confusion in Josephus's accounts of the famine of 44 CE surrounding whether or not he is referring to one famine or two—one in the reign of Claudius and a later one. Thackeray[37] suggested the famine recorded in *Antiquities* (3.320-21) is separate from the other one for two reasons: the source states (1) that the famine occurred during the time of Claudius and the high priest Ishmael, while (2) it says that the famine occurred, 'shortly before the recent war'. Since the only high priest named Ishmael to have lived at that time was Ishmael b. Phiabi, who, it is thought, served in the period of Felix's procuratorship (c. 60 CE), then Josephus has either made an error in recording the name of the emperor (Nero was also called Claudius), or it could be an error in the name of the high priest. On the other hand, some scholars have dismissed the idea of a second major famine;[38] Pastor believes that had such a thing occurred Josephus would have explicitly mentioned it.[39]

36. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 127 n. 22.
37. In his LCL translation of Josephus's *Antiquities*.
38. D.R. Schwartz, 'Ishmael ben Phiabi and the Chronology of Provincia Judaea', in Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen: J.C.B.

However, the severe famine of 44 CE could have had repercussions over the next two decades, and while a further severe famine may not have happened, there were regular food shortages. This in turn would mainly have affected those people who had lost their land and resorted to itinerant work in the city. The rise of banditry in this period also attests to troubles with land ownership. Regular droughts were not uncommon in this part of the world, and regular food shortages would have been commonplace. Therefore, Ananias could well have distributed money to alleviate the food shortages among some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The second explanation for Ananias's distribution is that he was handing out money to the unemployed. According to Josephus, the workers on the Temple had numbered over 18,000 men (*Ant.* 20.219-23), and we know men of influence had urged Agrippa II to consent to further building projects on the Temple partly out of fear that gangs of disaffected unemployed would end up roaming the streets.[40] Both of these reasons seem perfectly valid and complement the passage in Josephus, which speaks of the prestige Ananias received from the people because of his acts. Therefore, if this is the case, then Ananias can be seen to be performing acts of beneficence in keeping with the ideology of a Jewish benefaction system.

Clearly the Hellenistic practices of euergetism did not apply to Jewish benefactions, whose criteria appears to have been one of piety not prestige, yet piety did in some respects involves prestige, especially for a high priest like Ananias.

A Brief Survey of Diaspora Epigraphic Material from the First Century CE

It is beyond the remit of this book to examine all the first-century CE epigraphic material from the Diaspora. Therefore, I am relying upon the evidence presented by Rajak in her article, 'Benefactors', which has already been cited.[41] The vast majority of Diaspora Jewish inscriptions do not describe any honours that were awarded to Jewish benefactors, but there are cases where Jews are recorded as awarding honours to pagan benefactors in the Greek euergetistic manner. Before summarizing the

Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1992), pp. 218-40. Also J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 143 n. 9.

39. Pastor, *Land and Economy*, p. 153.
40. This topic is discussed more fully in Chapter 16.
41. See the Introduction.

evidence for a Jewish benefaction system operating during the Second Temple period in Palestine, it is important briefly to review evidence from the Diaspora, to ascertain whether there was any common element to Jewish benefactions as a whole.

It appears that, despite the assertions made by Josephus and Philo that the Jews shunned any form of public recognition,[42] there is epigraphic evidence to the contrary from Leontopolis in Egypt concerning a Jew called Abraham, who probably lived in the first century BCE or first century CE. The inscription reads:

> Ἀβράμου φυχῆς τοῦ μακαριστιτάτου
> οὐκ ἀγέραστος ἦφυ γὰρ ἀνὰ πτόλιν
> ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχῇ πανδήμῳ ἐθνικῇ
> ἐστέφετ' ἐν σοφίᾳ

> …of the soul of…Abramos, the most fortunate of men. For he was not without honour in the city, but was crowned in his wisdom.[43]

We see that far from shunning honours, he 'was crowned with the wreath of magistracy over all the people'.

Another example can be dated to the late first century BCE/first century CE and comes from Berenice. It is a decree honouring M. Tittius, son of Sextus, presumably a Roman official (ἔπαρχος), who had been a patron to the Jews.[44] This individual was awarded an olive wreath and a wool fillet at each new moon and at each assembly. The archons had the decree inscribed on marble and set up in the most prominent position in the amphitheatre. This is similar to what we see happening in Palestine in the Hellenistic period with the honouring of Simon.[45]

A slightly different scenario is found in the inscription from Acmonia in Phrygia. This is the earliest inscription so far retrieved from a synagogue in Asia Minor, dating to the 80s or 90s of the first century CE. In this inscription, the three restorers of the synagogue, which had originally been established by Julia Severa, are honoured for their benefactions with a gilded shield:[46]

> Τὸν κατασκευασθὲ[ν]τα ο[ι]κον ὑπὸ Ἰουλίας Σευήρας
> Π. Τυρρώνιος Κλάδος ὁ διὰ βίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος
> καὶ Λούκιος Λουκίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος καὶ Πολίλιος
> Ζωτικὸς ἄρχων ἐπεσκεύασαν ἔκ τε τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν
> συνκαταθεμένων καὶ ἔγραψαν τοὺς τοίχους καὶ τὴν
> ὀροφὴν καὶ ἐποίησαν τὴν τῶν θυρίδων ἀσφάλειαν καὶ τόν

42. Josephus, *Apion* 2.217-18; Philo, *De decal.* 1.4-7.
43. *JIGRE*, 39.
44. *JIGRE*, 20.
45. See p. 43.
46. *CIJ* 766.

> [λυ]πὸν πάνρα κόσμον οὖστινας κα[ὶ] ἡ σωναγωγὴ
> ἐτείμησεν ὅπλω ἐπιχρύσω διά τε τὴν ἐνάρετον αὐτῶν
> δ[ια]θ[ε]σιν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὴν συναγωγὴν εὔνοιάν τε καὶ
> σ[που]δήν.
>
> This building was erected by Julia Severa; P(ublius) Tyrronios Klados, the head for life of the synagogue, and Lucius, son of Lucius, head of the synagogue, and Polilios Zotikos, archon, restored it with their own funds and with money which had been deposited, and they donated the (painted) murals for the walls and the ceiling, and they reinforced the windows and made all the rest of the ornamentation, and the synagogue honoured them with a gilded shield on account of their virtuous disposition, goodwill and zeal for the synagogue.

There is no evidence to suggest Julia Severa was a Jew. In fact, given that she appears to have been involved in the Imperial cult, it is more likely that she was a sympathizer. The Jewish benefactors are recorded as having donated, ἔκ τε τῶν ἰδίων ('from their own funds'). The important point is, as Trebilco notes, that the benefactors were honoured in the traditional fashion of Greek cities.[47]

An inscription from Berenice dated c. 54 CE reveals another aspect unique to Jewish inscriptions, namely, what Levine refers to as the 'communal dimension'.[48] Furthermore, the inscriptions from Berenice provide valuable evidence about communal Jewish structure in the Diaspora. For example, in one inscription, a decree, the Jews of Berenice were to write the names of those who contributed to the repair of the synagogue.[49] Two further inscriptions,[50] erected in the amphitheatre, suggest that the Jews attend the games there, along with their Greek neighbours, and actively participated in civic life, in typical Graeco-Roman euergetistic fashion.

In these inscriptions we see the cost of the operation being split, ten drachmas from ten archons and one priest and twenty and twenty-five drachmas from three individuals who hold no office, plus others whose names are missing. Perhaps this suggests that in the Jewish euergetistic world there were no individuals who had sufficient wealth to be sole *euergetes*, as in the pagan communities. On the other hand, perhaps the communal aspect of the inscriptions indicates that rather than accept individual honours and public acclaim, with respect to piety, communal donations were viewed as making members of the community equal in

47. For a full discussion on the community at Acmonia, see P.R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 3.

48. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, p. 423.

49. The word 'synagogue' in this context to both the community and the building. The full texts of all the Berenice inscriptions can be found in *CJZC* (72).

50. *CJZC* 70 and 71.

the sight of God. This topic will be addressed in more detail in Chapters 5–8 with regard to Palestinian inscriptions from the Late Antique period.

It would appear from the evidence that first-century BCE/first-century CE Jews of the Diaspora and Palestine had no difficulty in assimilating some of the Graeco-Roman euergetistic practices. Nevertheless, it is also clear the Jewish inscriptions that record donations made by Jews, rather than pagans or sympathizers, are few indeed, and indicate that while the Jews interacted with the society around them, they created at the same time their own euergetistic framework within which to operate.

None of these inscriptions indicate that charity was a motivating factor, and as the evidence has shown, 'charity' as we would understand the term was not an organized institutional response to poverty during this period. Almsgiving was the usual method of alleviating poverty, but this was left to the individual to determine. As Rajak says, 'as far as the Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora go, the evidence for charitable foundations is slight indeed',[51] and certainly the same is true for Jews in Palestine. The Theodotus inscription is a synagogue dedication; the *euergetes* responsible did not see this as charitable any more than a Graeco-Roman *euergetes* would have seen the foundation of a gymnasium or theatre as charitable.

The vast majority of empirical evidence for a Jewish benefaction system comes from the Late Antique period. However, little is known about the social and economic history of this period. The synagogue inscriptions are the only tangible evidence that may shed some light on these areas. According to Schwarz, the inscriptions reveal a purely local, self-enclosed, egalitarian character of the community. The ideology of self-enclosure may point to tension with wider social and economic realities, as well as tensions within religion. By 500 CE, however, all Palestinian Jewish settlements shared the ideology of the synagogue and the symbolic centrality of the Torah.

The inscriptions reveal little concerning how the communities operated, which is frustrating. Nevertheless, they are revealing in as much as they can shed light upon how the communities thought about themselves. As Schwartz says:

> In constructing synagogues and decorating them with sacred iconography and with monumental writing, the Jews of late antique Palestine were constructing a religious world that bore an oblique and shifting relationship to the social world in which it was embedded.

He concludes:

51. Rajak, 'Jews as Benefactors', pp. 38-39.

> The Jewish community was in the details of its ideology and function distinctively Jewish. But the Jews, in imagining their villages as partly autonomous loci of religious obligation and meaning, and in acting on this idea by producing monumental religious buildings were participating in the general late antique process, itself a consequence of Christianisation.[52]

This period also saw the development of charity as an organized response to increasing poverty, not only of the Jewish world in Palestine, but throughout much of the Empire. The following chapters will examine in detail the inscription evidence from Palestine for this period, with reference to the Diaspora where applicable, to see whether any distinctive patterns emerge to validate the existence of a Jewish benefaction system unrelated to Graeco-Roman euergetism.

52. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, pp. 288-89.

Chapter 3

Post-temple Benefactions: Synagogue Inscriptions from Palestine

Synagogues and their Functions

Before examining the inscriptions found in synagogues, it is necessary to give a brief introduction to synagogues and their functions. The origins of the synagogue (Hebrew בית הכנסת) still remain uncertain. The only physical evidence retrieved so far comes from the Diaspora; two inscriptions from Egypt, which are dated to the second half of the third century BCE[1] and which speak specifically about a synagogue, and the oldest synagogue building so far excavated, dated to after 88 BCE, on Delos.[2] The earliest epigraphic reference to synagogues in Judaea has come from the discovery of a Greek inscription in Jerusalem, the Theodotus inscription, dated to the late first century BCE, which will be discussed later. Other information comes from literary sources of the first century CE, namely Josephus, and the New Testament accounts of Jesus and Paul's ministry, which inform us the synagogue was a widespread and well-known institution. We learn from the New Testament in Caesarea a Roman centurion acted as a benefactor and built a synagogue for the people: 'For he loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue' (Lk. 7.5; see also Mt. 8.5-13).

Rabbinic sources have preserved a number of traditions with regard to the Second Temple-period synagogue, with varying historical reliability. According to some rabbinic sources, Jerusalem had hundreds of synagogues, but this figure would appear to be greatly exaggerated. Millar points out:

1. *JIGRE*, 35-37 no. 22 (Schedia), and 201-203 no. 117 (Arsinoe).
2. Not universally accepted as a Jewish synagogue. See IJudO I 60–69.

> behind the term synagogue lies more than a single phenomenon for the term synagogue need not refer to formal well defined structures since it could also connote the congregation that gathered for various types of communal religious expression.[3]

Furthermore, a passage in the Talmud differentiates between public and private synagogues (*m. Meg*. 3.73d), which raises the question: How would private synagogues be distinguished from ordinary houses in the archaeological remains?

A Toseftan tradition, reported by Rabbi Simeon b. Gamaliel, concerns disputes between the Houses of Shammai and Hillel (first century CE) over synagogue practices acceptable on the Sabbath (*t. Shab*. 16.22). Another tradition reports that a first-century CE synagogue of Alexandrian Jews, which was located in Jerusalem, was purchased by Rabbi Eli'ezer b. Rabbi Zadok and was used for private purposes (*b. Meg*. 26a). We also read in rabbinic literature that there were synagogues that catered for Greek-speaking communities, presumably in Palestine, such as the one in Caesarea where Jews did not know enough Hebrew to recite the *Shema* (*t. Meg*. 3.8; *y. Sot*. 7.1.21b).

Archaeology has been instrumental in verifying some of the sites named in the sources. However, dates for the structures are still not clearly defined. Three possible synagogue sites have been excavated dating to the first century CE, at Masada, Herodium and Jerusalem, and have yielded some evidence to support this possibility. There could well be another, at Gamla, although this building is not universally accepted as a synagogue, and a recently discovered building at Qiryat Sefer near Modi'in may well provide a fifth.[4]

The lack of material evidence for synagogue buildings before 70 CE is a little surprising: the main reason given for this is that they must all have been destroyed after the various revolts during the period 66–135 CE. We know Vespasian (or Titus?) converted the synagogues of Caesarea and Daphne into an odeum and theatre respectively, so it may be possible other synagogues were converted into pagan establishments.[5] Another theory that is the early synagogue was not an identifiable building. Like the early Christian churches, synagogues were private dwelling houses utilized for communal gatherings and would therefore be difficult to distinguish. This theory, however, would seem to be at variance with what little physical evidence we do have for

3. S. Millar, 'On the Number of Synagogues in the Cities of Eretz Israel', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 51-67 (65).

4. Excavated 1995; see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, p. 43.

5. L.I. Levine, *Roman Caesarea*: *An Archaeological and Topographical Study* (Qedem, 5; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology Hebrew University, 1975), pp. 25-26.

Palestinian synagogues. Gamla and Masada were essentially communal buildings and were constructed as such, containing separate edifices with columns as well as benches on four sides. Literary sources also confirm the public character of such buildings, for example Caesarea and Tiberias, as well as information supplied by the Theodotus inscription, which will be discussed later.

A third explanation proposed by Levine may be the most plausible.[6] He says that, generally speaking, synagogue remains prior to the late Roman and Byzantine strata are hard to come by because at almost every site, in cities and villages alike, extensive re-building from Late Antiquity onwards has almost entirely obliterated any earlier record. A similar situation may have been true for earlier eras as well, given the large-scale construction of synagogues and other structures in Late Antiquity.

There is, however, more explicit evidence for the late Roman period (third–fourth centuries CE). Remains of synagogues have been uncovered in Galilee and Judaea. Many communities had more than one synagogue. In the third/fourth century CE Tiberias was said to boast thirteen synagogues, while Sepphoris had eighteen. Archaeological evidence gives credibility to this statement, revealing even small towns and villages, such as Gush Halav and Bar'am, had several synagogues. There is also rabbinic material that attests to the flurry of building activity at this time (*y. Meg*. 3.1.73d; see also *b. Meg*. 26b). This material refers to several cases where local Jewish communities were interested in building a new synagogue in locations where old ones once stood, and corroborates what the archaeological data are now revealing.

The reason for this sudden rise in building activity at a time of political and economic crisis has been the subject of great debate among scholars. Levine proposes a credible solution to the problem.[7] Owing to the loss of the Temple, as well as Jerusalem and much of the region of Judaea, following the unsuccessful rebellions in the first and second centuries, many Jewish communities may have endeavoured to re-assert their identity and demonstrate their cohesiveness by building communal centres. He also suggests that the likely breakdown of political order would stop the Jewish communities paying taxes to the Roman government, which meant that it was not possible for them to direct the money previously destined for the Temple toward the construction of a local synagogue. Most synagogue buildings were funded by the local community. Indeed, a passage in the Mishnah discusses the buying and selling of communal religious property (*M. Meg* 3.2-3), although some synagogues were built or purchased by individuals: 'Said Rabbi Judah:

6. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue,* p. 171.
7. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, pp. 176-77.

it happened that Rabbi Lazar son of Rabbi Zadok acquired the synagogue of the Alexandrians that were in Jerusalem, and did with it as he wished'.[8]

Material evidence is scattered throughout the entire province of Judaea; however, a concentration of sites exists in the Galilee, Jerusalem and the Judaean area, with three additional examples in the coastal areas. Unfortunately, the dating of most Palestinian synagogues remains less certain. Only one synagogue bears an inscription that speaks of the initial construction date. This inscription comes from Kefar Neburaya and reads:

למספר ארבע מאות ותישעים וארבע שנה
לחרבן הבית ניבנה

> The synagogue was built 494 years after the destruction of the Temple [i.e. in 564 CE].[9]

Two other inscriptions have dates recording renovations: all three instances are dated to the Byzantine period. Therefore, it is more usual for archaeological excavators to date synagogues to one of two building phases: the late Roman/early Byzantine (third–fourth centuries CE) and the middle and late Byzantine (fifth–early seventh centuries CE).

There is no pre-70 CE source that systematically addresses the functions of the first-century Judaean synagogue. The writings of Josephus and the New Testament provide some evidence, even if only in passing. What this scant evidence suggests is that by the middle of the first century CE the synagogue had become an important Jewish institution in the community and was responsible for a variety of activities. What is clear is that in the Second Temple period there were two social developments. First, Jerusalem was a growing urban centre as well as a focus of pilgrimage for thousands. The Temple had assumed a greater role in Jewish life since its expansion during Herod's reign, while the Temple Mount had become a significant setting for social, economic and religious activities. The second development was the evolution of the synagogue, which replaced the city gate as the forum for communal activities, and which after 70 CE would emerge as the pivotal institution for Jewish affairs.

The Theodotus inscription confirms that prayer, study and hostel accommodation were among the activities of a synagogue.[10] Josephus, supported by archaeological evidence, tells us that sacred meals and an

8. S. Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Graeco/Roman Period* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), p. 41.

9. J. Naveh, 'Ancient Synagogue Inscriptions', in J. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), pp. 133-39 (137).

10. See Chapter 16 on charity.

assembly hall were features of the synagogue. A court was present in the synagogue of Tiberias. Inscriptions from Stobi and Caesarea both mention dining halls.[11] Josephus tells us about an edict by Julius Caesar that allowed the Jews to assemble together for communal meals and to collect money for these meals:

> Now it displeases me that such statutes should be made against our friends and allies that they should be forbidden to live in accordance with their customs and contribute money to common meals and sacred rites for this they are not forbidden to do even in Rome. I forbid other religious societies but permit these people alone [i.e. the Jews] to assemble and feast in accordance with their native customs and ordinances (*Ant.* 14.214-16).

Writing to the Jews of Asia Minor, Augustus also makes reference to a banquet hall as well as to money stored there (*Ant.* 14.259-61). Both Philo and Josephus confirm that the Diaspora synagogues were repositories for funds, and that this was where the annual Temple tax was collected and held until its transfer to Jerusalem.[12] This tradition of collecting money and storing it within the synagogue could have continued throughout the following centuries. The excavations at the Beth Alpha synagogue, dated to the sixth century CE, revealed a hole in the floor, covered by stone slabs, which Jerome Murphy-O'Connor has pointed out could have served as a repository for communal funds.[13] A similar device has been found in the apse of the synagogue at Elche, southeast Spain, which revealed a 45 cm high stone base with a 9 to 10 cm cavity beneath.[14] Its purpose is not clear, but it has been suggested that it could have served as a store for money collected from donations. Recent excavations at the synagogue at Arbel (Galilee) have uncovered what has been interpreted as the community *kuppah*, or collection basket, placed in such a way to allow for individual donations to be made from the outside of the building.[15]

Despite the lack of material evidence, what has survived shows that there was a great deal of diversity in pre-70 CE Judaean synagogues. Jesus is depicted in the Gospels as operating differently in various synagogue settings. Perhaps the majority of synagogues in Jerusalem were linked to the various Diaspora communities, which may have practised different customs. The literature referring to the synagogue

11. Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions*, pp. 115–17, and Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 10.

12. Philo, *Embassy* 156-57; 216; 291; 312-16, and *Spec. Leg.* 1.77; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.112-13, 214-16, 260, 261; 16.160-72.

13. J. Murphy O'Connor, *The Holy Land*: *An Archaeological Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 160.

14. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, p. 261.

15. Z. Ilan, *Ancient Synagogues in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1991), pp. 116-19.

and its functions in Tiberias stands in contrast to what is known about other synagogues of this period, as evidenced by the three synagogues so far excavated at Masada, Gamla and Herodium.

The most striking difference is the apparent regional diversity of the Judaean synagogues, especially when the coastal areas are compared with the rest of the country. At Dor and Caesarea the synagogues were high-profile buildings, central institutions recognized by Jews and Gentiles alike. This, of course, had its disadvantages, for they could become the targets of attack from hostile elements of the population. Synagogues could be desecrated or destroyed or even converted into churches in times of political or religious unrest.[16] The synagogues of the coastal area were usually located in pagan urban centres, in similar situations to the majority of Diaspora communities. They had to deal with situations that would not arise in areas where Jews were in the majority, that is, in the interior of Judaea or Galilee. Levine says:

> that in the hellenized largely non-Jewish coastal region, the Jews, living among a pagan population sought to enhance their communal institution with a religious dimension, much the same as their Diaspora co-religionists did. Within the strictly political realm, this kind of quasi Diaspora orientation held with regard to events in first century Caesarea.[17]

Furthermore, he points out:

> As a communal institution, local needs and customs were clearly shaping the synagogue in each and every region of Second Temple Judaea. This was certainly the case with regard to Jerusalem. Given the presence of the Temple, there can be little doubt that what were considered usual synagogue practices elsewhere often found expression within the precincts of Jerusalem's Temple Mount.[18]

Fine demonstrates that the synagogue became the pivotal institution for Jewish affairs in Late Antique Palestine, 'reflecting a "common Judaism" shared by various groups who placed the synagogue at the centre of their religious lives'.[19] Therefore, Fine says, the synagogue was also 'a logical setting in which a Jewish community would honour one of its prominent members by placing a commemorative inscription therein, often in recognition of a generous donation'.[20]

16. See M. Simon, *Verus Israel*: *A Study of the Relationship between the Christians and the Jews in the Roman Empire*, *135–425 AD* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1996), pp. 265-70.
17. L.I. Levine, 'The Jewish–Greek Conflict in 1st Century Caesarea', *JJS* 25 (1974), pp. 381-97.
18. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, p. 72.
19. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, p. 97.
20. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, p. 124.

Languages of Palestine from the First Century CE Onwards

Before discussing the inscriptions, it would be useful to say something about the languages in use during this period. It appears that Hebrew and Aramaic co-existed for several centuries prior to the exile. By the Persian period, Aramaic had gradually supplanted Hebrew as the *lingua franca* in most areas of Palestine. Nevertheless, Hebrew continued to be used, which is indicated by the composition of the books of Daniel and Ben Sirach. Although this may point only to a literary use of the language, it is possible there were areas or even strata of Palestinian society that still employed Hebrew. Fitzmyer[21] points out there may have been an attempt to reinstate Hebrew at the time of the Maccabean revolt, as a token of loyalty to the national effort. This may explain why the majority of Qumran texts were written in Hebrew, and may indicate also that the language was being spoken. It is interesting to note that a few fragments of the Old Testament written in Greek were also found at Qumran in Cave IV, which suggests that some of the community were at least able to read Greek if not actually speak it. The main reason for the appearance of Greek manuscripts was the fact Greek had now supplanted Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of the Near East. Fitzmyer says that the use of Greek had spread from the Hellenistic cities that dotted the countryside of Palestine to the less Hellenized towns such as Jerusalem, Jericho or Nazareth from the third century BCE. Greek influence can be seen in the book of Daniel, which was redacted into its final form after the Maccabean revolt, and further influence is seen in other deuterocanonical compositions such as 1 Esdras, 2 Maccabees and the additions to Esther.

It is difficult to determine how widespread the use of the Greek language was among the general population during the first century CE. With the arrival of the Romans, in 63 BCE, Latin was introduced into Palestine. The evidence implies the Romans used Latin mainly for official purposes. There is little evidence to suggest that the indigenous population was actually speaking Latin.

Josephus speaks of his knowledge of Greek at the end of *Antiquities* (20.263-65). However, Josephus gives the impression that few Palestinian Jews of his day could speak Greek fluently, or that it was desirable to do so, as he boasts of his efforts to master the language:

> My compatriots admit that in our Jewish learning I far excel them. But I laboured hard to steep myself in Greek prose, after having gained knowledge of Greek grammar; but the constant use of my native tongue

21. J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean*: *Collected Aramaic Essays* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979), p. 30.

> hindered my achieving precision in pronunciation. For our people do not welcome those who have mastered the speech of many nations or adorn their style with smoothness of diction… Consequently, though many have laboriously undertaken this study, scarcely two or three have succeeded and reaped the fruit of their labours.

Despite Josephus's comments, Fitzmyer says that there is evidence to show by the first century CE some Palestinian Jews in some areas may have spoken nothing but Greek.[22] He cites various epigraphic evidence: first, the Greek inscription forbidding non-Jews to enter the inner courts of the Temple; second, the Theodotus inscription; third, the hymn inscribed in the necropolis of Marisa; fourth, an edict (of Augustus?) at Nazareth concerning the violation of tombs; and finally, a dedicatory inscription from Capernaum.[23] While these data may prove only that some of these inscriptions are intended for foreigners rather than the indigenous population, the same cannot be said for the hundreds of ossuary inscriptions found in the vicinity of Jerusalem, the majority of which are in Greek. Although it is impossible to say whether or not they all date to the first century CE, it should be noted that ossuary burial was rare after 70 CE.

Information on the use of Greek by common people comes from the period of the Bar Kochba revolt (second century CE). Discoveries of Greek papyri from the Murabba'at caves show that although they wanted to use Hebrew, Greek was used in an official capacity when no one was available who could write Hebrew. Letters found in a cave in Wadi Habra revealed that communications between Bar Kochba and his lieutenants were written in Greek. The situation by the third and fourth centuries, as evidenced by rabbinical writings and inscriptions, clearly indicates that Greek was widely spoken in Palestine.[24]

According to Fitzmyer, Aramaic was the most common spoken language used in first-century Palestine.[25] He breaks its development down into five phases, of which phases three and four are relevant for the inscription material from the synagogues. Phase three, or Middle Aramaic (200 BCE–200 CE), sees the development of local dialects, while phase four, or Late Aramaic (200 CE–c. 700 CE), sees further local dialectic developments with a 'mounting influx of Greek words and constructions'.[26]

22. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 35.
23. *SEG* VIII, 477; *CIJ* 1404; cf. *SEG* VIII, 244, 774.
24. S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942).
25. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 61.
26. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 35.

Epigraphy is one area where perhaps the influence of Hellenistic culture in Palestine can be quantified. According to van der Horst,[27] the count for all Palestinian inscriptions so far retrieved shows that between 55 and 60 per cent are written in Greek.[28] At the catacombs of Beth She'arim, 75 per cent of the inscriptions are written in Greek. Contrary to what Fitzmyer says that van der Horst argues, it is only in Jerusalem that the number of Semitic epitaphs equals the number written in Greek.

It can also be demonstrated from the poorly executed scripts of some tomb inscriptions that Greek was a familiar language of most classes and that it was not restricted just to the rich or educated among the population. This in turn appears to imply, according to Lieberman, that Greek was the first language of the majority of Palestinian Jews at this period. Indeed, it would appear that Greek was the language most used in funerary contexts. But what of those inscriptions found in synagogues? Goodenough says about the Jews who went to the synagogues that 'they admired the Hebrew/Aramaic but read the Greek'.[29] The most logical observation on this comment must be: Why put an inscription in a public place that could not be read by the community? This would appear to defeat the purpose of erecting an inscription in the first place, so it seems more likely most people could at least read the Hebrew/Aramaic.

The majority of the Palestinian synagogue inscriptions, for which the total number is approximately 200, are in Aramaic and Greek, with few in Hebrew. We find that, of these 200 inscriptions, only 70 are in Greek, that is to say roughly 35 per cent, which is much less than with funerary inscriptions. What does this imply? Surely the inscriptions set up in synagogues were far more likely to be read by more people than funerary inscriptions? If not, then what purpose would it serve to go to the expense and trouble of setting up inscriptions in the synagogues? As Rajak says of the Diaspora Jewish benefactors, wealthy individuals would commemorate their gifts as a means of gaining prestige, perhaps while fulfilling a religious vow or serving the common good, or the community would commemorate them.[30] It would seem logical if you had made a significant benefaction he/she would want people to read about what had been done. Therefore, the use of Greek would imply the congregation could read Greek. However, publicizing the benefaction

27. P. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Kampen: Pharos, 1991), p. 22.

28. Price (in a personal communication in 2001) gives a higher estimation based on new material retrieved; he gives a figure of 65 to 70 per cent.

29. E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbolism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. and abridged J. Neusner; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), II, p. 213.

30. See T. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue between Greece and Rome*: *Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), pp. 305-19.

would not appear to be in keeping with the principles of Jewish piety, although it was familiar practice in the Greek world, and this might complicate language choice.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of the inscriptions is very revealing. It appears that in the more Hellenized coastal areas Greek was the predominant language, while Hebrew/Aramaic dominated in rural areas of Palestine. Most Hebrew inscriptions were found on sites in the upper Galilee and Golan Heights in the north, and as far as Beersheba in the south. Coastal areas show that Greek and/or Aramaic was the predominant language (as was the case at Hammath Tiberias), while at Beth She'an (A) we see a mix of Greek and Paleo-Hebrew. In Beth She'an (B) and Beth Alpha, Greek and Aramaic are the favoured media for inscription writing.

It is interesting to speculate on the different languages used at Beth Alpha. The Aramaic inscription speaks of the donation and construction of the mosaic. The Greek inscription calls for the artisans to be remembered. Could the appearance of this latter inscription be the result of Greek-speaking artisans working on their own initiative rather than the community's? A similar situation occurs in reverse in the earlier synagogue at Gerasa, where one single Aramaic inscription mentions the mosaicists, who appear to have been Aramaic speakers, working in a synagogue of a Hellenized community.

In Rehov, the inscriptions are primarily in Hebrew with only some Aramaic, while the subject matter mainly concerns laws that are important to that community. At Ma'oz, on the other hand, only one Hebrew word is found, *shalom*, while the rest of the inscriptions are written in Aramaic (Hebrew was normally used for theological inscriptions that contained biblical quotations).

It would seem that van der Horst's statement would be more appropriate than the one made by Goodenough. Van der Horst says:

> We may tentatively conclude that Roman Palestine was a largely bilingual, even trilingual society, alongside the vernacular Aramaic (and to a much lesser extent Hebrew). Greek was widely used and understood—but we have to add that the degree of use and understanding of the Greek language probably varied strongly according to locality and period, social status, and educational background, occasion and mobility.[31]

The inscriptions were usually carved into stone, on lintels, columns, marble slabs and chancel screens; they also appear in mosaic pavements. It is not usual to find any inscription that mentions the date of the

31. P. van der Horst, 'Greek in Jewish Palestine', in J.J. Collins and G. Sterling (eds.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), pp. 154-74 (166).

building,[32] although there has been some information retrieved from the synagogues at Nabratein, Beth Alpha, Ashkelon and Gaza. Naveh divides the inscriptions by their content into two main groups: (a) dedicatory inscriptions and (b) 'literary texts'.[33] The dedicatory inscriptions also follow specific formulae, the texts of which, according to Naveh, were composed by the congregation, while the literary texts were taken from literary sources, such as the Bible and Talmud.

Inscriptions served a variety of purposes: representations of the signs of the zodiac were accompanied by Hebrew legends and can be found in the synagogues of Hammath Tiberias, Beth Alpha, Sepphoris and Na'aran. Biblical scenes (although not commonplace) and texts can also be found at Jericho (Ps. 125.5) and Merot (Deut. 28.6). Some inscriptions served as communal documents, of which there are several from the Diaspora and one from Palestine at Ein Gedi. This inscription begins with a list of the fathers of the world according to 1 Chronicles 1, the zodiac signs and corresponding months of the year, the names of three biblical patriarchs and the three friends of Daniel, followed by the names of three patrons. Next, the community is warned that it must abide by the series of vows detailed, the text going on to supply instructions on the manner in which the community should act toward one another and the outside world, especially with regard to the 'secret of the town'. This mosaic inscription was prominently placed in the forecourt of the synagogue building. The inscription from Rehov features laws relating to the Sabbatical year observances in northern Palestine. It is the longest inscription retrieved so far, containing 29 lines and 365 words, and was placed in a prominent position next to the main entrance of the synagogue. The majority of inscriptions are, however, dedicatory in nature. The inscriptions would usually be placed near to the object donated, although they could be placed anywhere in the synagogue building. It is these inscriptions that provide the main focus for research into the nature of a possible Jewish benefaction system operating in Palestine during the Late Antique period.

32. See my previous reference to Kefar Nabarayan; see also the evidence from Nabratein, Beth Alpha, Ashkelon and Gaza, as well as Dura and Stobi in the Diaspora.

33. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 136.

Chapter 4

'Remembered for Good': Synagogue Dedicatory Inscriptions

Dedications to the Living or Memorials to the Deceased?

Modern scholarly works on synagogue inscriptions attribute the inscriptions to living donors, those persons honouring themselves or being honoured by the community or their family. According to that view, if there is any significant difference between these inscriptions and Graeco-Roman ones, it is that in the Jewish ones the communal dimension is also apparent. No doubt this assumption is partly due to the fact that the Graeco-Roman system of honouring living benefactors is the *raison d'être* behind any inscription that contains reference to a donation made. So, the same rationale should apply to Jewish inscriptions recording donations, whether they occur in a synagogue environment or elsewhere. Nevertheless, there appear to be some anomalies with the formulae found in the Jewish inscriptions requiring clarification, which may indicate that these inscriptions did not always record a benefaction by a living donor, but may have been *memorials* to deceased benefactors.

There are several reasons for supposing this to have been the case. First, there are instances where no donation is mentioned, only the name of the supposed 'donor'. Why is this? Surely, if the inscription is meant to honour a person for their contribution, then reference to that contribution should form an integral element of the inscription? Second, some of the formulae found in synagogue inscriptions also occur within a funerary context, especially in pagan and Christian inscriptions. Does this mean that Jewish inscriptions have borrowed these formulae to use for commemorating living donors? Or, alternatively, is it pagan and Christian funerary inscriptions have borrowed the Jewish formulae, and if so, what implication does this have for Jewish synagogue inscriptions? Would not the use of funerary formulae be at variance with the idea of honouring living donors? Also, how could such a prominent display of self-promotion on an inscription equate with the ideal of piety?

There are several obstacles to arriving at a conclusion about whether the majority of synagogue inscriptions are intended as honorific dedications to living donors or whether they represent memorials erected by the community or family members in honour of a deceased person. First, the provenance of many of the inscriptions is debatable. Some have been found at a distance from the synagogue building itself, some have been re-used in other buildings and some that have been re-used may have originated in disused cemeteries. Second, the date of many inscriptions is not at all certain, making it almost impossible to show whether the use of certain phrases was related to any particular time period. Third, the cultural differences between the more Hellenized Greek-speaking coastal areas and the rural Aramaic/Hebrew-speaking areas of Palestine could involve a different attitude regarding the erection of inscriptions in synagogues, as well as a different interpretation of the formulae used within them. Clearly, there were many diverse cultural influences at work during this period of Judaism. As Momigliano says, 'the rabbis, humane and alert as they were, chose or were driven to create a new Jewish culture, [one] which touched only the fringes of Greek culture'.[1]

However, just how much Greek culture was absorbed into each area is difficult to ascertain, as is the amount of influence the rabbis exerted over the population in each area. Finally, the fragmentary nature of many inscriptions also makes the postulation of a cohesive theory difficult. Nevertheless, there are some instances where, I believe, it is possible to show that memorials for the deceased were placed within the synagogue environment.

In order to examine the feasibility of the hypothesis of erecting memorials to the deceased in a synagogue setting, it is necessary to find a motivation for doing so. Josephus refers to the attitude taken regarding benefactions in the first century CE, on several occasions. In *Contra Apionem* he says:

> Τοῖς μέντοι γε νομίμως βιοῦσι γέρας ἐστὶν οὐκ ἄργυρος οὐδε χρυσός, οὐ κοτίνου στέφανος, ἢ σελίνου καὶ τοιαύτη τις ἀνακήρυξις, ἀλλ' αὐρὸς ἑκασταςαύτῷ τὸ συνειδὸς ἔχων μαρτυροῦν πεπίστευκεν, τοῦ μεν νομοθέτου προφητεύσαντος, τοῦ δέ θεοῦ τὴν πίστιν ἰσχυρὰν παρεσχηκόντος, ὅτι τοῖς τοὺς νόμους διαφυλάξασι κἂν εἰ δέοι θνήσκειν ὑπέρ αὐτῶν προθύμως ἀποθανοῦσν δέδωκεν ὁ θεὸς γενέσθαι τε πάλιν καὶ βίον ἀμείνω λαβεῖν ἐκ περιτροπῆς.
>
> For those who live in accordance with our Laws the prize is not silver or gold, no crown of wild olive or parsley or any such mark of public distinction. No; each individual, relying on the witness of his own conscience and the lawgiver's prophecy, confirmed by the sure testimony of God, is firmly

1. A. Momigliano, quoted in Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, p. 401.

> persuaded that to those who observe the laws and, if they must needs die for them, willingly meet death, God has granted a renewed existence and in the revolution of the ages the gift of a better life (*Apion* 2.217-18).

Josephus says that the individual's reward will be a better life, presumably in the hereafter: the phrase ἐκ περιτροπῆς corresponds to his use of ἐκ περιτροπῆς in his speech at Jotapata (*War* 3.374).[2] Earlier on he also says:

> Τῆς εἰς τοὺς τετελευτηκότας προυνόησεν ὁσίας οὐ πολυτελείαις ἐνταφίων, οὐ κατασκευαῖς μνημείων ἐπιφανῶν.
>
> The pious rites, which the Law provides for the dead, do not consist of costly obsequies or the erection of conspicuous monuments (*Apion* 2.205).

Philo writes in a similar vein in the opening lines of his work *On the Decalogue*, claiming that 'pride brings divine things into contempt, although these ought to receive the highest honours' (*De decal*. 1.4-7). As Rajak points out, the many splendid tombs of the high priests, still to be seen in the Kidron Valley, would appear to go against this ideology. However, principle is not the same as practice, so consequently it is necessary to be wary of accepting as a statement of fact that what these early first-century writers imply was common practice.

The sentiment is echoed again much later in a Talmudic source that says 'There need be no monument on the graves of righteous men; their own words are memorials' (*b. Shek*. 4-7a).

This would seem in accordance with the ideology interpreted by the rabbis of the Late Antique period that God would reward good deeds that were done by an individual not in life but after death. The contract would be between God and the patron and any outward display of munificence by the patron would consequently negate that contract. Once again, as with all ideologies, there can be no hard and fast rules that dictate what was considered to be an excessive display of munificence. Certainly the Graeco-Roman idea of benefactions within the system of euergetism differed from the Jewish one. The importance placed upon 'acts of kindness' (*hesed*) by the rabbis may have played a significant role in how benefactions were given, and more importantly on how they were recorded. However, the views expressed in the rabbinic writings are not necessarily the views of all the people who made the inscriptions, for Palestinian Judaism was not necessarily monolithic, what is important is that the inscriptions suggest there may have been a general area of shared belief.

2. See p. 381 n. *h* of Thackeray's LCL edition.

The Formula 'Remembered for Good'

The most significant prolific formula in Jewish inscriptions is the phrase 'remembered for good'. Of the 77 Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek inscriptions examined, 40 inscriptions begin with this formula,[3] and 9 contain no reference to any donation made.[4] A further 20 do not contain the formula 'remembered for good' anywhere in the inscription.[5] It is interesting to note that within this group, 10 of the 20 are in Greek. A further 9 inscriptions are too incomplete to know for certain whether or not this formula was originally present.[6] Within the 17 Greek inscriptions, two translate the formula and two contain variants of it.[7] A further eight do not have this particular formula but employ a different one, 'remembered for a blessing'.[8] Finally, 13 containing the 'remembered for good' formula record anonymous donations.[9]

In total 40 inscriptions begin with the phrase 'remembered for good' (Hebrew: זכור לטוב; Aramaic: דכיר לטב). In most cases this is then followed by the name of the person who is to be remembered, occasionally with a description of their status or family relationships, and finally the donation is recorded. Invariably the inscription ends with a blessing, or simply 'peace' (שלום). It is evident these inscriptions are not a personal proclamation of the donors' wealth or standing but are supposedly a communal recognition of their benevolence, framed as a public prayer for the well being of the donor(s). Naveh says that the formula 'remembered for good' is being directed to the deity and not to the general public, a point to which I shall return later in this chapter.[10]

3. The inscriptions (quantities in brackets—see Table 4 in the Appendix for full listings) come from the synagogues at Er Ramah, Chorazin, I'Billin, Jassud Hamma'le, Sepphoris (2), Capernaum, Beth Alpha, Beth She'an (2), Isifyah, Eshtemoa, Horvat Susiya (5), Nar'an (8), Bet Guvrin, Ma'on, Jericho, Kefar Kana (2), Horvat Kanef, En Gedi, Hammat Gadara (4), Hammath Tiberias, Ashdod, Kefar Hananyah (2).

4. Sepphoris, Isifyah, Horvat Susuiya, Nar'an (4), Horvat Kanef, Ashdod.

5. Meron, Alma, Horvat Ha'Ammudin, Capernaum, Daburra, Hammath Tiberias, Kazrin, Ashkelon (2), Jerusalem, Huldah (2), Kefer Hananyah, Nazareth, Gaza (2), Caesarea (2), Fiq, Gerasa.

6. Alma, Korkav Ha Yardin, Tiberias, Horvat Susiya (2), Bet Guvrin, Ashkelon, Gaza, Caesarea.

7. Beth She'an B, Hammath Tiberias; Beth She'an B, Ashkelon.

8. Gush Halav, Kefer Bar'am, Daburra (2), Ed-Danqualle, Hammath Tiberias (2), Huldah.

9. Beth Alpha, Beth She'an B (2), Isifyah, Horvat Susiya (2), Nar'an, Ma'on, En Gedi, Hammath Tiberias, Ashdod, Kefer Hananyah (2).

10. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 34.

The conclusion of the inscription was frequently taken from prayers, often using the words Amen, Selah, Shalom (שׁלום, סלה, אמן) or a mixture of all three. The prayer formula has been commented on frequently and is most concisely discussed by Foerster,[11] who compares the יקום פורקן or מי שׁברך prayers of the Jewish prayer book with the phraseology inherent in the inscription from Jericho dated to between the sixth and eighth centuries CE. Foerster[12] equates the blessing formula of this inscription, given below, with the conclusion of the *Kaddish* prayer:

דכירין[ן לט]ב יהוי דכרנהון לטב כל
קהלה [קד(י)ש]ה רביה וזעוריה דסייע
יתהון מלכיה דעלמה ואתחזקון ועבדו
פסיפסה דידע שמהתון ודבניהון ודאנשי
בתיהון יכתוב יתהון בספר חיים[עם]
צדיקיה חברין לכל ישראל שלו[ם אמן סלה]

> May they be remembered for good, may their memory be for good all
> [the] holy community, its elders and its youth
> whom [the] King of [the] world helped and who exerted themselves and made
> the mosaic. He knows their names and the names of the peoples of their households, shall write them in the Book of Life together with
> the just. They are associates with all Israel. Pea[ce. Amen. Selah].[13]

The inscription is in Aramaic, only the phrase ספר חיים ('Book of Life') is written in Hebrew. The Jericho inscription also bears a striking similarity to prayer formulae that emerged much later in Jewish liturgy. This raises an interesting point made by Shinan[14] that there are close liturgical connections to be seen between an extant version of the Kaddish, the prayer also said by mourners of the deceased, and the inscription from Jericho. Shinan says:

> The Kaddish prayer of the communities of Cochin, India and Kaffa (Feodosiya) in the Crimea share a Palestinian source with this text (Jericho). The Kaffa version reads: *Remembered for good and may their memory be for good*… All of the holy community, the elders and the youths… He who knows their names will write them in the book of life with the righteous [ones].

And continues:

11. G. Foerster, 'Synagogue Inscriptions and their Relation to Liturgical Versions', *Cathedra* 19 (1981), pp. 12-40 (Hebrew).
12. Foerster, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', pp. 14-15.
13. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 189-92.
14. A. Shinan, 'The Literature of the Ancient Synagogue and Synagogue Archaeology', in Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm*, pp. 130-52.

> These similarities point to a long subterranean liturgical development. A text that influenced the composition of the mosaic inscription in Jericho was transmitted to and preserved in two distinct and geographically distant liturgical traditions that were influenced by ancient Palestinian modes of prayer.[15]

However, Foerster assumes, because the synagogue inscriptions resemble inscriptions found in votive inscriptions from Hatrean temples, in Mesopotamia (from the first to third centuries CE), and prayers found in later Jewish liturgy, they must therefore have functioned in the same way, as a prayer from the donor to God. However, these prayers are private prayers from the donor to God; unlike the synagogue inscriptions, they are not intended as a public record of a donor's benefactions. Despite the valuable insights given by Foerster, the social implications and indeed the context of the synagogue inscriptions are sadly overlooked.

The phrase 'remembered for good' probably originates from the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 13.31 reads:

זכרה לי אלהי לטובה

> Remember me, O my God, for good.

The LXX translation reads:

> μνήσθητί μου ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν εἰς ἀναθωσύνην

This is seen on a chancel screen from Ashdod dated to around the fifth century CE. The inscription is in Greek, with the Hebrew word שלום at the end.[16]

These examples, however, use the imperative form of the verb in the *qal* (Hebrew) and *aorist* (Greek). The Cairo Genizah Hebrew book of Ben Sirach (second century BCE) also contains the phrase, using the passive voice of the verb. Speaking of Moses it says משה זכרו לטובה ('Moses, may he be remembered for good').[17] The Aramaic version found in synagogues is identical except for orthography and also occurs in blessing inscriptions for donors and votaries in the Hellenistic Samaritan temple on Mt Gerizim.[18]

However, the LXX translation of Sir. 45.1 reads:

15. Shinan, 'The Literature of the Ancient Synagogue', p. 145.
16. *CIJ* 971; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 70-71.
17. Cairo Genizah; Sir. 45.1.
18. More information can be found in Y. Magan, L. Tsfania and H Misgav, 'The Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions from Mt. Gezirim', *Qad* 33 (2000), pp. 125-28 (Hebrew).

> Μωυσῆν οὐ τὸ μνημόσενον ἐν εὐλογίαις
> Moses may he be remembered in *blessings*.

The blessing formula occurs again in Sir. 46.11—'the Judges may their memory be blessed'— appearing in both the LXX and Genizah. Another reference to people's memory being blessed can be found in 1 Macc. 3.7, referring to Judas Maccabeus:

> αἰῶνος τὸ μνημόσενον αὐτοῦ εἰς εὐλογίαν
>
> His memory be for a blessing.

This is rather intriguing, as the Genizah version of Sir. 45.1 reads 'remembered for good', while the Greek version uses 'blessing' and does so in all subsequent instances of the phrase. Does that mean there was a difference, or can both phrases be used to refer to someone living or, as in the cases mentioned above, deceased? Lieberman[19] notes that the Hebrew phrase זכר לטוב seems to have been used in Palestine for living persons only, or for Elijah the prophet who never died; consequently, the Aramaic version, דכיר לטב, found in numerous synagogue inscriptions, refers to living donors.

Literature from the Late Antique period shows the rabbis used this phrase in connection with a deceased person. The instances of its use in this context in the *Talmud* refer to comments by Rabbi Judah who says 'The name of Ezekiel, may he be remembered for good, for if not for him the Laws would have been forgotten' (*b. Av. Zar.* 8b also referred to in *b. Men.* 45a).

There is a similar reference also to a deceased person in *b. Chill.* 54a, when the phrase is used for living persons in the *Talmud*, is it written 'they *will* be remembered for good', meaning when they die they will be remembered by God (*b. Sanh.* 18a). The future (imperfect) tense naturally implies this is something that will happen, not as Lieberman suggests, something that has already happened.

It would appear that remembrance was seen as recognition of the good deeds of the person concerned as early as the first century CE. As Josephus said of Queen Helena, 'She has thus left a very great name that will be remembered forever among our whole nation…' (*Ant.* 20.53).

In a recent article, Amit and Stone examine the tombstones from a cemetery in Armenia where reference is made to the incumbents leaving behind a good memorial. They date these inscriptions to the late medieval period and note that the texts contain phrases that occur both in synagogue inscriptions (זכר לטב) as well as tomb inscriptions from

19. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, p. 70 n. 23.

Roman/Byzantine Palestine (נוח נפשׁ).[20] The phrase זוכרן טאב ('a good memorial') is accompanied by וניחות נפשׁתה ('repose of soul'), and they comment that significant differences (between the synagogue inscriptions and tomb inscriptions) are seen in the use of a passive participle, and they are of the opinion that these inscriptions are meant to evoke the memory of the living not the dead.[21]

However, the phrase can be shown to be evoking the memory of the dead rather than the living in the synagogue inscriptions. There is also another occurrence of the phrase being used on a memorial, in Aramaic, from Dura Europus:

[ ]אחיה בר
[ ]ה מן בנה לוי
[דכי]ר לטב קדם
[מרי ש]מיא אמן
זאתא
דכרא לטב

Ahia son of ……
……..of the sons of Levi
Remembered for good before
the God of Heaven Amen
This is a memorial for good.[22]

This inscription was found 100 m north of the synagogue, in the embankment close to a house (insula K8) within the town walls, and is dated to the third century CE. It was initially thought to have been an epitaph, partly because of the wording, but more significantly because beneath the inscription was a drawing of a human torso. However, Naveh, on the basis of its location, has proven conclusively that this is a dedication rather than an epitaph.

The depiction of human figures accompanying inscriptions is not unknown, but it hardly ever occurs in a Jewish context. In non-Jewish contexts there are two inscribed reliefs in Aramaic from Nerab, a small village 7 km southwest of Aleppo in Syria. The upper part of the first inscription surrounds the head and upraised hands of a human figure at prayer, presumably representing the priest mentioned in the inscription.[23] In the second inscription the priest is represented sitting before an altar. The wording speaks of 'his picture and his grave'. Although dated

20. D. Amit and M. Stone, 'Survey of a Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Armenia', *JJS* 53 (2002), pp. 66-106 (76).

21. Amit and Stone, 'Survey'.

22. IJudO III = *CIJ* 84; Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 104.

23. J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Semitic Inscriptions*. II. *Aramaic Inscriptions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 95-97 Nos. 18 and 19.

to the seventh or sixth century BCE, the idea of using a picture to represent the deceased was a tradition obviously carried on for some time, evidenced by the pagan tomb reliefs from Palmyra dated to the second and third centuries CE.

While the idea of human representation in Jewish funerary art could be seen as a violation of religious principles, human representations are seen in synagogue environments—for example, in synagogue mosaics. There are, rather, generalized depictions of the human form. Importantly, however, they are not representations of living persons, or indeed of those who are deceased. It could be suggested the tradition of placing portraits of the deceased alongside their memorials could possibly be acceptable only in a non-funerary context, especially in this particular area. The location of the Dura inscription proves that it is not a funerary inscription. The last line suggests that Ahia is no longer living, for it clearly states that the inscription represents 'a memorial for good'. In this instance, it would appear to be a memorial inscribed on a building, one for which Ahia may have made a donation at some time prior to his death.

Reynolds and Tannenbaum refer to the inscription when discussing the donation of a building at Aphrodisias for communal use. They believe that the building on which this inscription was painted indicates, 'something that Ahia had donated in the hope of being remembered for good, therefore probably a construction for community use'.[24]

This building can be paralleled with the building at Er Ramah, which also appears to have been built or donated for communal use.[25] Another important clue regarding the inscription being a memorial is the fact that the formula 'remembered for good' is quite clearly being used in a memorial context, to honour the dead not the living.

This is in one sense affirmed by van der Horst, who says that Jewish epitaphs from antiquity very rarely call for the deceased to 'be remembered', unlike their Christian or pagan counterparts.[26] Yet the important point here is that in Christian and pagan epitaphs the remembrance is being requested of the living, not the divine. However, this only means that 'to be remembered' is not a stock Jewish *funerary* formula; it does not necessarily mean that 'remembered for good' is only used for the living. There are however, a few examples where the idea of being remembered by God does occur in a Jewish funerary context. An inscription from Catacomb 17 Hall B at Beth She'arim reads:

24. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers*, p. 40.

25. A fuller discussion of the possible function of the Er Ramah building will be given later in this chapter.

26. Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 45.

κύριε μνήσθητι τῆς δούλης σου Πριμοσα, κύριε,
μνήσθητι τοῦ δούλου σου Σακερδος.[27]

Lord remember your servant Primosa and Lord
remember your servant Sacerdos.

According to Schwabe,[28] Sacerdos acquired the hall in his lifetime, with the inscriptions being carved after both he and his wife had been buried there.

There is also a synagogue inscription from Beth Alpha which employs the word 'remember', this time using the future tense:

Μν(η)σθ(ώ)σιν (οἱ) τεχνίτ(αι)
(οἱ) κάμνοντες
τ(ὸ) ἔργον τούτ(ο)
Μαρίανος καὶ
᾽Ανινὰς (υἱ)ός

Remember the craftsmen
who carried out
this work.
Marianos and
Hanina, his son.[29]

The request is for the craftsmen who carried out the work to be remembered in the future, perhaps remembered for a blessing on their work, or alternatively advertising their work in the hope of receiving commissions, although the inscription does not make this clear. Therefore, when the phrase is used in the Greek, it can be in the future tense without the qualifying 'for good' attached, denoting a living person(s) as the subject(s) of this request. Alternatively, it is used in the aorist tense, third person, on behalf of the donor for whom a request for remembrance by God is being made.

This raises several questions: first, why does the formula 'remembered for good' appear frequently in Hebrew/Aramaic synagogue inscriptions, yet hardly ever in synagogue inscriptions written in Greek, when the formula, as we have seen, can be translated? Second, if this phrase is intended to honour the deceased, why does it not appear in Jewish funerary inscriptions? Does the phrase reflect the living donor's desire to be remembered by the congregation?

27. *BS* II, 184.
28. *BS* II, 167.
29. *CIJ* 1166; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 77; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 44-50.

Could the explanation be that Hebrew/Aramaic synagogue inscriptions are intended to be memorials for the deceased and represent the wishes of the congregation for donors to be remembered by God when they eventually die?

'Remembered for Good' in Translation

One main point to consider is the fact that very few synagogue inscriptions from Palestine written in Greek use the 'remembered for good' formula. Why should this be, when clearly the idea of remembrance by God can be found in Greek on epitaphs? Lietzmann said of the word μνήσθητι (imperfect aorist passive, second person singular):

> Eine Untersuchung dieses Typs wurde sich lohnen: in A.T. kommt diese Gebetsform nicht vor, ebensowenig—soweit ich sehe—im späteren jüdischen Ritus: auch nicht im griechischen.[30]

While not carrying out the investigation required, Nock made some relevant points. First, the idea that God is asked to remember Israel and grant new life: the word μνήσθητι occurs frequently in the LXX where God is remembering both the nation and individuals.[31] The early Christian Church inherited this view of its relationship with God and its belief that God knows the requirements of all its members. In the New Testament, in Mt. 6.32, we see a reflection of the *memento Domine,* reminding God by intercession of communal needs:

> μάντα γὰρ ταῦτα τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιζητοῦσιν· οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος ὅτι χρήζετε τούτων ἁπάντων

> For it is the Gentiles that strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things (NRSV).

Formally, μνήσθητι is employed in the nature of an acclamatory prayer. This form of prayer finds common use in Syrian Christian dedications and graffiti. Lifshitz notes that this is a 'formule extrêmement fréquente surtout dans les inscriptions chrétiennes'.[32] It is more common to find μνησθῇ (aorist passive, third person singular) used. Examples of use by pagan communities can also be seen, for instance on the walls of the temple of the Palmyrene gods at Dura.

30. 'An investigation of this sort would be worthwhile: in the Old Testament this type of prayer doesn't occur, even less, as far as I know, in later Jewish ritual, and not in Greek [ritual]' (trans. D. Noy). Lietzmann in A.D. Nock, 'Liturgical Notes: The Didache', *JTS* 30 (1929), pp. 381-95.

31. 27 times in relation to God.

32. Lifshitz Prolegomenon to the reprint of *CIJ* I, cited in *NDIEC*, p. 108.

It would appear in this context that μνησθῆ corresponds to the Aramaic דכיר. However, some inscriptions originally thought to be Christian are proving to be otherwise. For example, Schwabe re-examined an inscription from Ed Dumer in Syria[33] that had been classified among the Christian inscriptions:

εἰς θεὸς ὡ βοειθῶν	To the one God.
Μνήσ-	Remember
θη[τι] 'Ανόμ-	Anomus
ου καί Σεμοῦ-	and Samuel
έλου υἱοῦ	his son…
ὃ] ς…	
καλῶς ἐ-	who
π[ο]ἰ[η]σ/ 'ν-	made well the
ήλωμα	expense of
[τῆς οἰ]κο-	his building
δομῆ[ς αὐ]του	500 coins
νωμί[σ]ματα φ'[34]	

Dumer was an important town during Roman times, about 40 km east is a large Roman camp and 'around it there was formerly an important town'.[35] The inscription was found in the south-eastern corner of the Roman camp in a building, 'perhaps a church', constructed from earlier ruins.[36] The exact nature of the building from which it came remains uncertain, it may have formed part of a synagogue but there is not enough available evidence to formulate a definite conclusion. Schwabe also suggests that the building could have been a hostel, like the building mentioned in the inscription from Er Ramah.

Schwabe also says that the first editors had placed the inscription among the Christian ones on the basis of their own interpretation, one which was not warranted by the text. Schwabe makes a convincing argument for the inclusion of this inscription among the corpus of Jewish ones and he also makes the point of stressing the correlation between μνησθῆ and דכיר.[37] Therefore, it would appear μνησθῆ may occur more frequently than at first supposed in Greek-Jewish inscriptions to mean remembrance by God, and not necessarily by individuals.

At Beth She'arim there are a few tomb inscriptions in Greek that indicate a belief in the afterlife.[38] However, *BS* II, 187 (see p. 86) would appear to indicate more than just a request to God to recall the deceased

33. M. Schwabe, 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', *PAAJR* 20 (1951), pp. 265-77.
34. Schwabe 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', p. 265.
35. Schwabe 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', p. 274.
36. Schwabe 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', p. 275.
37. Schwabe 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', p. 268.
38. *BS* II, 129, 130, 183, 194.

now and then. The word μνήσθητι could be interpreted in the light of its use in Lk. 23.42:

> καὶ ἔλεγεν Ἰησοῦ μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου
>
> And he said to Jesus, 'Remember me when you come into your kingdom'.

The eschatological overtones contained in this passage are clear. It can be compared to the passage in Sir. 10.16 in the Cairo Genizah, which says that those who turn away from God will certainly be 'forgotten by the Lord'—in other words, they would not be remembered, which is reminiscent of the דכיר לטב of synagogue inscriptions, and which may indeed have the same eschatological overtones, namely, that God may remember X in the afterlife for all that (s)/he has done in this life. This is evidenced from a Jewish inscription in Greek from Rome. *JIWE* II, 542 (*CIJ* 496):

> [Ἐνθά]δε κεῖτε
> [……]ια Μαρκελ-
> [λα μή]τηρ συνα-
> [γωγῆς] Αὐγουστη-
> [σίων. Μ]νησθῇ
> [……ἐ]ν εἰρήνῃ
> [ἡ κοίμη]σις αὐ-
> [τῆ]ς.
>
> Here lies
> […….]ia Marcel-
> la Mother of the syna-
> gogue of the Auguste-
> sians. May [……] be remembered (?)….
> In peace
> her sleep.

As Noy points out, μνησθῇ, μνησθῆς and μνήσθητι occur in a number of Christian inscriptions. Noy cites *IGCVO* 489–511 as examples, texts which contain a request that God remember the deceased. This is borne out by the fact God is the subject of the verb in the Christian inscriptions,[39] and this supports the arguments of van der Horst concerning God remembering the deceased in the afterlife, rather than a call to the living to do the remembering.[40] The inscription from Beth She'arim is clearly indicative of a Jewish occurrence of a formula that was previously believed to occur only in Christian inscriptions.[41]

39. See *JIWE*.
40. Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*.
41. The phrase 'your servant' in this inscription is otherwise almost exclusively Christian also.

The Afterlife

There are several early Jewish texts that connect the idea of being remembered by God with the eschatological idea of a 'Book of Life'. This phrase is seen in the Jericho inscription (cited in the previous section). 'Book of Life' is the only Hebrew phrase contained within the inscription.

Horsley remarks that 'the process of Christianisation of Jewish texts is apparent: formulae distinctive of Christian texts are being incorporated in Jewish ones'.[42] According to him, in the Jericho inscription the donors retain their anonymity, and therefore something common in Christian texts occurs here in a Jewish text for the first time.[43] Levine believes the dedicatory formulae are patterned after current Christian and pagan models: 'Thus the Greek "May he be remembered" is found in Christian and pagan inscriptions and the Aramaic "May X be remembered" is found in Syrian and Nabatean Aramaic inscriptions'.[44]

However, this may not necessarily be the case; in fact, it is more likely to be the other way round, that Christian and pagan formulae are being influenced by the early Jewish literature already mentioned.[45]

There can be little doubt about the eschatological connotations of the notion of being remembered in inscriptions. However, what form the afterlife took is not clear. There are a few references to resurrection (e.g. *BS* II, 162, 194) and it seems apparent there was a wide diversity of belief concerning the afterlife in Judaism at this period.[46] However, the belief in a blissful afterlife among the pious buried in Beth She'arim can also be deduced from the frequent occurrence of the formula εὐμοίρει ('have a good portion/share'). Inscription 173 from Hall L, Catacomb 13 reads:

> Εὐμοίρι Ἀριστέ[α: ἐν εἰ]ρ[ήνη]-
> νμι ἡ κύμισις τοῦ
> ὁσίου Ἀριστεου< τοῦ
> ὁσίου>

42. See *NDIEC*.

43. Another possible instance of Christian terminology permeating a Jewish text is discussed in D. Feissel, 'Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne V', *BCH* 105 (1981), p. 281.

44. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, p. 591.

45. In a recent article by J.W. van Henten and L. Huitink, 'Inscriptions from Israel: Jewish and Non-Jewish Revisited', *Bulletin of Judeo-Greek Studies* 32 (Summer 2003), pp. 37-46, the authors make an important observation regarding the sixth-century Greek inscription from the synagogue at Beth She'an B. The formula, according to Lifshitz, appears to be Christian. However, the authors of the article note that parallels can be discerned in the Septuagint (Sir. 14.11 and 50.13), which might indicate Jewish antecedents for the formula—in which case great care must be taken when ascribing an exclusively pagan, Christian or Jewish use for a specific formula.

46. See J.S. Park, *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

> May your portion be a good one Aristeas;
> May the pious Aristeas repose in peace.

The formula is not Jewish in origin; rather, it is found in pagan Hellenistic epitaphs where it wishes the deceased a happy afterlife.[47] It is also found in three Christian inscriptions from Egypt.[48]

Lieberman[49] proves that the epithet εὐμοίρος corresponds to the Hebrew חלק טוב ('of good endowments/virtues'), which is found in the Mishnah and Talmud. However, Lieberman also believes that it does not appear to indicate a moral attribute, but a wish for the departed to be happy in the next world. He also says that this formula took on a new value in the Jewish context: an early creedal form in the Mishnah states:

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא

> All Israelites have a share in the world to come (*m. Sanh*. 10.1).

As van der Horst says:

> The associations with חלק (share) evoked by the (pagan) wish εὐμοίρει, in which the element μοίρα (share, portion) was well recognisable, might explain the popularity of that wish among the Jews.[50]

Van der Horst then remarks that the frequency of εὐμοίρει inscriptions at Beth She'arim could indicate a belief in the afterlife.[51] Park[52] has argued that there is no compelling reason to accept this eschatological meaning over the more general one of good endowments. In fact, the most common usage of the words beginning with εὐμοίρ- seems to be something like 'happily given'. Park points out that the term occurs in Philo 22 times in substantive form, in association with φύσις, to refer to a person's natural endowments, which will lead to a good life. In fact, citing several of the Beth She'arim inscriptions that contain the εὐμοίρει formula, he argues not all such inscriptions have the afterlife in mind.[53]

However, there is some evidence, to show this phrase was used not only indirectly in funerary inscriptions, in words of exhortation, εὐμοίρει, θάρσει, but also directly, addressed to a deceased person. The Greek inscription *BS* II, 130 has no Greek parallel elsewhere. It was engraved on the left wall of room V, to the left of the entrance to the passageway to

47. See L. Robert, *Bulletin épigraphique* (10 vols.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972–87).
48. G. Lefebvre, *Recueil des inscriptions grécques-chrétiennes d'Egypte* (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1907), pp. 569, 671, 681, cited in *BS* II, 2.
49. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 72-74.
50. Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 120.
51. *BS* II, 2-7, 9, 13, 26, 27, 33, 47, 52, 56, 57, 69, 124, 129, 130, 171, 173, 187.
52. Park, *Conceptions*, p. 122.
53. Park, *Conceptions*, pp. 123-26.

room VI in Catacomb 2, and was composed by a son (and possibly his wife) for his deceased parents:

> Εὐμοίρει κύρι μου πατήρ μετὰ τῆς κυρίας μου μητρὸς καὶ ἔσηται ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν ἐχομένη ἀθανάτου βίου
>
> May your portion be good my lord father and my lady mother,
> and may your souls be bound (in the bundle) of immortal life.

The inscription begins with the conventional form of the εὐμοίρει blessing. However, the second part of the inscription is a prayer for the eternal life of the parents. As Schwabe says, the verb ἔχεσθαι in the middle voice followed by the genitive appears in a metaphorical sense in Euripides, governing the noun βιοτή (= βίος), and in the New Testament in connection with σωτήρια. It appears the verb in this inscription has a passive meaning, 'tied' or 'bound', approaching the Hebrew formula in the benediction for the dead:

> תהי נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים
>
> May his soul be bound in the bundle of life.

Schwabe proposes that 'everlasting life' is called ἀνάνατος βίος in the early Greek formula (1 Tim. 6.16). In this inscription, reference is made to a soul which does have a portion in eternal life.

The commemorator addresses his parents formally, using the titles κύριος and κυρία, and there are parallels to this formula to be found in Talmudic literature:

> …how does a man honour his father after his death? If he cites a tradition, which he heard from him, let him not say: thus spoke my father, but thus spoke my lord (מרי) father. May I be a propitiation for him (i.e. his grave). Thus he speaks during the first twelve months. After that he would say: May he be of blessed memory in the everlasting life of the world to come (*b. Kid*. 30).

The Hebrew word מרי carries the meaning 'master' with respect to anyone who has authority over another, in this case the father over the son, and is also seen in the inscription from Horvat Susiya, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In this inscription from Beth She'arim we see the respect shown to the parents and the wish for them to have a share in eternal life, expressed, as Schwabe notes, in Greek, but showing the son's Jewish outlook: 'He employs words familiar to him, which express the Greek ideas of immortality, in order to portray the Jewish idea of eternal life'.[54]

54. *BS* II, 115.

Park says that the simplest explanation of the imperative εὐμοίρει inscriptions would be a wish for the deceased to receive good things after death in a general sense.[55]

Thus, the idea of wishing someone a good share in some kind of afterlife, in whatever form it was viewed, would be more appropriate in a memorial context than in donor inscriptions. Nevertheless, the use in synagogue inscriptions of the 'remembered for good' formula reflecting some kind of belief in an afterlife is usually assumed to refer to the living. Are we certain that all synagogue inscriptions intended to evoke, as Amit and Stone say, 'the memory of the living rather than the dead'?[56]

Eight Possible Memorial Inscriptions

Of the 24 inscriptions containing the 'remembered for good' formula and the name of a donor, there are eight for which a case could be made on other grounds than that of memorials to deceased donors. They are the inscriptions recovered from Er Ramah, Chorazin, I'Billin, Horvat Susiya, Bet Guvrin, Kefar Kana, Ein Gedi, and Hammat Tiberias. A further three that do not contain the formula could also be classed as memorials: Nazareth, Beersheba, and Huldah. All the inscriptions are in Aramaic with the exception of Hammat Tiberias and Huldah, which are in Greek, and Horvat Susiya, which is in Hebrew.

Er Ramah

The hypothesized site of a synagogue is located at the foot of Mt Ha-ari about 12.5 km west-south-west of modern Safed. The evidence for a building is fragmentary and based on the discovery of a decorated lintel presumed to have come from a synagogue. The lintel was found on the Akko–Safed road, near to the village. The inscription is considered by Klein[57] to be contemporary with the two synagogues at Kefer Bar'am and dated to the third century CE. The inscription records the donation by Rabbi Eleazar son of Theodor and his sons of a house to be used (possibly) as a guest-house. This calls to mind the Theodotus inscription where a similar donation was made. The inscription reads:

דכירין לטברבי אליעזר בר טדאור דבניו בית דה דאורחותה
דמיך קדם (wreath) להרעא חולקהן [עם צריפים]

> May they be remembered for good Rabbi Eleazar, son of Theodor and his sons who built this house as a guest-house(?)

55. Park, *Conceptions*, p. 127.
56. Amit and Stone, 'Survey', p. 76.
57. S. Klein, 'The Inscription at Er Ramah', *JPOS* 13 (1933), pp. 94-96.

is dead (?)/ buried(?) in front of the gate. May they have a share with the just.[58]

Line 2 of the inscription has proven to be rather controversial. Klein reinterpreted the word דמיך as 'wreath', not 'dead' or 'buried', for it would be against *halakhah* to have a grave located near to a synagogue. He also suggested it was a memorial, represented by the two genii holding aloft a wreath incised upon the stone and flanked by the second line.

For the purpose of this discussion the final part of the inscription that is of importance. It refers, if the restoration is correct, to the rabbi and his sons having a 'share with the just'. As Park says, 'this denotes a specific Jewish expectation of a blissful afterlife',[59] occurring in Jewish funerary inscriptions in Hebrew as משכבם עים צדיקים ('their rest with the just').[60] The inscription has parallels with Greek and Latin funeral inscriptions but it has been argued by Frey that this is a wish for the deceased to enjoy eternal life with the patriarchs.

The eschatological reference reflects the rabbinic statement, 'all Israel has a share in the world to come', and is evident in the following Chorazin inscription as well, which says לה חולקן עם צדיקים ('May he have a share with the righteous/just'). In literary sources, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are presented as the 'Just' who receive the deceased into their bosom and provide them with a celestial banquet.[61] This raises the obvious question why such a phrase would be used in a donor inscription, when usually it is encountered in funerary inscriptions. It would appear that the rabbi and his sons constructed this building presumably for the purpose of a guest-house, and that this inscription was erected by a third party, quite possibly the community who wished the patrons to have a 'share with the just'. It is this phrase that is important and it occurs only twice in all of the synagogue inscriptions found so far. The second instance comes from Chorazin.

Chorazin

דכיר לטב יודן בר יׁשמעאל
דעבר הדן סטוה
ודרגׁשה דפילה יהי
לה חולקן עם צדיקים

58. Translation by Klein. Other translations can be found in *CIJ* 979; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 367-69; A. Marmorstein, 'The Inscription of Er Rama', *PEFQS* (1933), pp. 100-101.

59. Klein, 'The Inscription at Er Ramah', p. 112.

60. *JIWE* I, 134.

61. For references to this see van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 117.

> Remembered for good Judan b. Ishmael
> Who made this stoa(?)
> and its steps. For his work may he have
> a share with the righteous.[62]

The synagogue at Chorazin is located 4 km north of Capernaum. The inscription was carved onto the front of a 'Chair of Moses' (קתידרה), carved from a single block of basalt. The inscription has been dated to the fourth century CE, and is believed to refer to the man who occupied the seat of honour. Lines 2 and 3 are disputed, since they could refer to a portico or a stoa—yet the most likely explanation is that the term in question refers to the chair itself and the steps leading up to it.

The main criterion for proposing this as a memorial is the last line of the inscription, which refers to 'a share with the righteous'. With regard to the inscription from Er Ramah, which has been seen as a donor inscription, the phrase used is unusual, since it is normally associated with epitaphs. As already noted, this is a wish for the deceased that is found most frequently on tomb inscriptions from Beth She'arim. I believe this indicates that the donation of the chair is either a posthumous one or the inscription was carved onto the chair after Judan b. Ishmael died, as an epigraphic memorial of his gift.

The use of the chair is also disputed, since there is no clear evidence to indicate how it was used or by whom. One suggestion is that Judan b. Ishmael may have been the first elder to sit in the chair.[63] There is a passage in the Talmud that speaks of special honours being awarded at the synagogue of Ma'on, where a major donor to charitable causes was seated next to the leading sage of the institute (*y. Meg*. 3.2.74a).[64] Other suggestions propose Judan was a leading teacher[65] or founder, but all the suggestions presuppose that he sat in the chair. An article by Rahmani[66] suggests the so-called chairs (two others have been found in Palestine, including one at En Gedi, and three more in the Diaspora) would have been used for holding torah scrolls: the isolated position of these three Palestinian chairs contrasts with the seating arrangements in ancient synagogues. The elders would always sit facing the people with their

62. *CIJ* 981; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 275–81.

63. E.L. Sukenik, 'Cathedra of Moses in Ancient Synagogues', *Tarbiz* 1 (1929), pp. 21-24 (Hebrew).

64. See also Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 13 and 22, for similar honours awarded to a benefactress in the Diaspora.

65. M. Hengel, 'Proseuche und Synagogue', in J. Gutmann (ed.), *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture* (New York: Ktav, 1975), pp. 157-84 (167).

66. L.Y. Rahmani, 'Stone Synagogue Chairs: Their Identification, Use and Significance' *IEJ* 42 (1990), pp. 192-214.

backs to the Holy (i.e. Jerusalem) (*t. Meg*. 4.21). Therefore, although Judan donated the chair from the synagogue at Chorazin it does not necessarily mean he was the occupant of it, if indeed it was a chair at all. Rahmani suggests that these chairs have a close parallel to the chair from Suweida, in southern Syria, which represented an empty throne.

There is much merit in Rahmani's theory, a discussion which is beyond the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, the evidence provides some proof that a member of the congregation, presumably someone of some standing and wealth, donated the chair and that his donation was acknowledged epigraphically after his death.

Beth Guvrin

The Beth Guvrin synagogue is located 37 km southwest of Jerusalem. The inscription was carved onto a column dated to the fourth to sixth centuries CE.[67] It reads:

דכיר
לטב קוריס
עיי ניח נפ[ש
בר אוכסנטיס
דיבן הדין עמודא
ליקרה דכנישתא
שלם

Remembered
for good Kyrios
Rest upon his so[ul].
The son of Auxentios
who built this column
in honour of the synagogue
Peace.[68]

The relevant section on this inscription is the phrase ניח נפש ('repose/rest of soul'), a phrase commonly used in funerary inscriptions and commented on by Amit and Stone.[69] This phrase may be seen to be reminiscent of Ps. 116.7:

שובי נפשי למנוחיכי כי יהוה גמל עליכי

return unto thy rest O my soul for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee.

67. D. Berag, 'Aramaic Inscription from the Hebron Area', *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 147-49.

68. *CIJ* 1195; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 51-53; Naveh, *On Stone*, pp. 109-11.

69. Amit and Stone, 'Survey', p. 76.

This phrase is found at least five times in Jewish inscriptions from Palestine (*CIJ* 892, 900, 988, 1196, 1195). Two more Jewish tombstones from Ghar es Safieh, dated to the fifth or sixth century CE, also contain the phrase and read: 'At rest be the soul of Saul, son of…' (Tomb I) and 'At rest be the soul of Halifu' (Tomb II).[70] It also occurs in sixth-century Italy (*JIWE* I, 86).

Naturally enough, this phrase does more than suggest that the person it is referring to is dead. The usual custom in Palestine, according to the rabbis, when talking about a dead righteous person was to say נוח נפשׁ ('whose soul is at rest'; *y. Pes.* 4.1.30d). Therefore, even in a synagogue context it must undoubtedly indicate that this is a memorial. Furthermore, this inscription is not an anomaly, for there are two further synagogue inscriptions containing the phrase. The first, from Nazareth, is on a marble plaque and may be a Christian rather than Jewish inscription because its provenance is uncertain); nevertheless, it has been included among Frey's corpus of Jewish inscriptions and Park also includes it among the Jewish occurrences of the phrase.[71] The second inscription, from Beersheba, is definitely from a synagogue and, despite being rather fragmentary, can be dated to the sixth century CE. Appearing on a portion of chancel screen, l. 2 of the inscription ends with 'upon his soul'.[72]

Kefar Kana

דכיר לטב יוסה בר
תנחום בר בוטה ובנוי
דבדון הדה טבלה
תהי להון ברכתה
אמן

Remembered for good Jose son of
Tanhum son of Boutah and his sons
who made this mosaic.
May it be a blessing for them.
Amen.[73]

The inscription of Kefar Kana is set into a mosaic pavement, now under a Franciscan church, located 6.5 km from Nazareth and dated to the third or fourth century CE. Avi-Yonah has suggested that the pavement was

70. J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts 2nd Century BC–2nd Century AD* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), nos. A50-52.
71. *CIJ* 988; Park, *Conceptions*, p. 103.
72. *CIJ* 1196.
73. *CIJ* 987; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 246-49.

constructed as a memorial to a father from his sons, who are also mentioned in the inscription.[74]

The verb is in the singular and therefore indicates that the phrase 'remembered for good' applies to the father only. His sons are to be blessed for honouring him in this way by the construction of a mosaic. This phraseology could have implications for other inscriptions where several names are mentioned, some being remembered for good while others a blessing. Does this suggest that when the living were being honoured they only received a blessing, presumably on their life and livelihood, but in order to be 'remembered for good' one had to be dead? What is clear is that the mosaic was made after the death of the father, in order to honour him.

Hammath Tiberias

> Μνησθῆ εἰς ἀναθὸν καὶ εἰς
> εὐλογίαν Προφοτοῦρος ὁ μιζό-
> τερος ἐποίησεν τὴν στοὰν ταύ-
> την τοῦ ἁγίου τόπου. Εὐλογία αὐτῷ
> Ἀμήν. שלום
>
> Remembered for good and
> for a blessing Profuturus the el-
> der constructed the [this] stoa of
> the holy place. Blessing upon him
> Amen. Peace.[75]

The Hammath Tiberias inscription could also be interpreted as a memorial, possibly executed by relatives of the deceased. It is the only inscription in Greek to contain this formula, which is not surprising, since Greek was the usual language of the Hammath Tiberias synagogue. The straight translation of the phrase from the Aramaic does not sound well in Greek and one could ask why it was not written in Aramaic, which would have suited the phraseology better, for there is an occurrence of an Aramaic inscription in the synagogue,[76] a prescriptive rather than donor inscription, which will be discussed later.

The Greek inscription was located in a mosaic floor on the easternmost aisle. Other inscriptions list the various donors and their contributions in the form of fulfilling a vow. The expression 'Long may he live'

74. M. Avi-Yonah, 'Mosaic Pavements in Palestine', *QDAP* 2 (1933), pp. 136-81 (178-79).

75. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 76; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 163-72; M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*: *Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains. Final Excavation Report 1* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), p. 61.

76. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias.*

accompanies each dedication. This particular inscription, however, was inserted some time after the initial construction of the mosaic; the difference in the script points to a fourth-century date for its insertion. The only Hebrew word to appear on this inscription is שׁלום, which frequently accompanies Greek Jewish inscriptions in Palestine, Egypt and Rome, especially in epitaphs. It also appears on a Greek inscription from Ashdod.

Dothan[77] says that 'Amen' together with 'Shalom' usually indicates a memorial for the deceased, where 'Shalom' is used as a parallel to εἰρήνη at the end of memorial inscriptions to mean, ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἡ κοίμησις, נוח בשׁלום and *requiescat in pace*. It would appear that this inscription was a commemoration of a gift Profuturus made during his lifetime, one which was not commemorated until after his death. The question must be why this was the case, when other donor inscriptions relating to the mosaic were completed at the same time as the mosaic? Could it possibly be that the wording, that is, 'remembered for good', could not be applied to a living person and that Profuturus had preferred this gift to remain anonymous until the time was fitting for a remembrance?

I'Billin

I'Billin is the name of a village in Galilee about 12 km northwest of Sepphoris. An inscription spanning two lintels was found in secondary use in the village, and it is believed that they come from either a synagogue or tomb. The date is uncertain and the inscription has been defaced, thereby making a good translation difficult. The text reads:

דכיר לטב [...
[.....]
דאתחזק [ועבד]
הדין תרעה
[אמן] שׁלום

Remembered for good……
[Son of……]
who gained merit [by making]
this gate.
[Amen]. Peace.[78]

According to Chiat, the gate referred to could be the object donated, or it could be the synagogue, in which case the donor would be the founder. The word 'gate' appears on other lintels from Er Ramah, Daburra and

77. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*, pp. 57-62.

78. Translation by F. Hüttenmeister in 'The Aramaic Inscription from the Synagogue at H. 'Ammudim', *IEJ* 28 (1978), pp. 109-12; also *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 27-29.

Abellin, and some scholars believe that it denotes the synagogue building itself. If we follow Dothan's theory that 'Amen' and 'Shalom' occurring together indicate a memorial, then these two words occur together in this inscription could indicate a memorial, commemorating either a notable leader who founded the synagogue, or a donor who gave the lintel.

En Gedi

דכירין לטב יוסה ועזרון וחזיקיו בניה דחלפי

רבי יוסה בר חלפי חזקיו בר חלפי דכירין לטב
דסגי סגי הנון עדו לשמה דרחמנה שלום

> May they be remembered for good: Yose and Ezron and Hizziqiya the sons of Hilfi.
>
> Rabbi Yose the son of Hilfi, Hizziqiya the son of Hilfi, may they be remembered for good. For they did a great deal in the name of the Merciful. Peace (ll. 9, 17-18).[79]

The En Gedi inscription, which was found in a mosaic in the west aisle of the synagogue, represents, after the inscription from Rehov, the longest inscription so far discovered in Palestine. Consisting of 18 lines and 118 words, the text is divided into four sections, with the first two sections in Hebrew. The first section is taken from 1 Chron 1.1-4, the second lists the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve months of the year, followed by the names of the Patriarchs and the three companions of Daniel. Levine says:

> The first eight lines constitute a distinct unit indicated by the following considerations, first the lines are accompanied by a well attested ending, second they contain an all Hebrew section and finally are followed on the mosaic by a black line dividing the inscription.[80]

The third section begins with the names of three brothers—Yose, Ezron and Hizziqiya, the sons of Hilfi—and the formula 'may they be remembered for good'. There then follows a prescriptive list warning the congregation about slandering their neighbours, and revealing the 'secret of the town' and instructing them on appropriate modes of behaviour toward one another.

The fourth section is the one of interest to this discussion, and is divided by a double line just before the concluding two lines. It begins with the 'remembered for good formula' and lists the same individuals

79. Hüttenmesiter, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 108-14.

80. L.I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), p. 142.

as before, with the exception that now we read 'Rabbi Yose', where Hizziqiya, the second son Ezron, is not mentioned. Mazar[81] has suggested this section is a later addition, inserted into the mosaic after the death of Ezron, when Yose had become a rabbi. It must be said that the style of the epigraphy does support Mazar's hypothesis. However, Levine[82] disagrees with this conjecture. According to him, the uniform format of the mosaic suggests completion more or less at the same time. He proposes that the brothers were first honoured for their donation (presumably the mosaic floor) and later the other two brothers were honoured for their contribution to communal life.

It is possible that all three brothers were deceased when the inscription was made. Perhaps it refers to the fact all three sons of Hilfi, who must also have been a prominent member of the community, did over a period of years do good works for the community. Even after the death of Ezron, when his brother Yose became rabbi, the remaining brothers continued this work. The fact the inscription uses the perfect tense implies these are past actions. In fact, the brothers may have been founders of the synagogue, in which case this inscription would be a memorial to them. The placement of the reference to the brothers in this particular inscription, which contains prescriptions as well, could point to a political reason behind its construction. Mazar[83] has suggested that conflicting loyalties resulted in a schism among the townsfolk, hence the references to slandering one's neighbour and revealing the secret of the town. If there were a political motivation behind the mosaic, then calling to mind those people who in the past had done a great deal for the community could have had a salutary effect upon those who read it.

Horvat Susiya

זכור לטובה קדושת מרי
רבי
איסי הכהן המכובד
בירבי שעשה
הפסיפוס הזה וטח את
כותליו בסיד מה
שמתנדב במשתה
רבי יוחנן הכהן הסופר
בירבי
בנו שלום על ישראל
אמן

81. B. Mazar, 'Inscription of the Floor of the Synagogue in En-Gedi', *Tarbiz* 40 (1970), pp. 18-23 (Hebrew).
82. Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 144.
83. Mazar, 'Inscription of the Floor', pp. 18-23.

Remembered for good the sanctity of my master
Rabbi
Isai the priest, the honourable,
the venerable who made
this mosaic and plastered
its walls with lime,
which he vowed at a feast
Rabbi Yohanan the priest,
the venerable scribe,
his son. Peace on Israel.
Amen.[84]

The above text is the only inscription from the Horvat Susiya synagogue to have been written in what has been described as 'elegant and perfect Hebrew'—the rest are in Aramaic.[85] It was situated in a mosaic in the southern portico of the courtyard. The number of honorific titles is unusual, as it the use of the title ביר̇בי, which appears here not in its usual meaning of son of Rabbi X or house of Rabbi X, but as a special honorific, 'the venerable'. A similar use of the title is found in Talmudic sources in the phrase 'Rabbi Haqappar the venerable says…' (*b. Hull.* 28a), which the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi interpreted as: 'ביר̇בי (*berebbi*) a person who is great in his own generation'. The honorific titles are bestowed on the rabbi by his son, Yohanan, who honours his father by the word translated here as 'master' (מרי), but which should be translated as 'lord', corresponding to the Greek κύριος, and reminiscent of the inscription from Beth She'arim, *BS* II, 130, which has already been cited. As we have seen in the Beth She'arim inscription, this is a term employed when honouring one's dead parent. In this inscription, Rabbi Isai made the vow to donate at a feast, quite possibly a wedding feast. Presumably the donation was made at the time, the inscription being composed later. The inscription records that the vow had been fulfilled, denoting that the father had honoured his commitment. Therefore, this should be seen as a memorial set up by Rabbi Isai's son.

A Greek Remembrance

There is one more inscription, which may give added weight to the idea of memorial inscriptions in synagogues. This inscription, however, does not contain the formula 'remembered for good'. It comes from the synagogue at Huldah, 8.5 km south-east of Rehevot. The Greek inscription is set within a wreath, located on the pavement of the north room of the complex. It reads:

84. Translation by Gutmann, Yeivin, and Netzer in Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 123-28; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 422-23, 528.
85. Safrai, in Chiat, *Handbook*, p. 235.

Εὐτυχῶς
Εὐστοχίῳ
καὶ Ἡσυχίω
καὶ Εὐαγρίῳ
τοῖς κτίσ-
τες

Good luck/ to Eustochios/
and Hesychios/ and Euagrios
the founders.[86]

Chiat says that the phrase 'good luck' is unusual in Jewish inscriptions. However, it does appear at Beth She'arim in Catacomb 20 (*BS* II, 194). The interesting element about this inscription is that it mentions the resurrection of the souls of the deceased:

εὐτυχῶς τῇ ὑμῶν ἀνάστάσι

Good luck for the resurrection of your souls.

The belief in the resurrection is common in the New Testament, but is not made clear in any other Jewish inscription so far recovered. Schwabe says:

> The salutation εὐτυχῶς does not occur elsewhere at Beth She'arim, or in any other Jewish inscription from Europe, but is often found in Christian inscriptions. The word ἀνάστασις is found in the New Testament but as yet has not been found in any Jewish inscription.[87]

However, proper names Ἀνάστασις and Ἀνάστασια are found on Jewish tombs. What is interesting is that this inscription provides a translation of the Hebrew word עמידה, which appears in one of the Hebrew inscriptions from Catacomb 20: [עמידת]ן עם הכשרעם ('May they resurrect with the pure/just') (*BS* III, 15). Schwabe says that this formula also appears in a Hebrew/Aramaic inscription from the region of the town of Tblisi and in the Cairo Genizah. With reference to the inscriptions from Catacomb 20 (*BS* II, 194), Schwabe says:

> The Greek inscription carved in the corridor refers to persons on whose coffins Hebrew inscriptions were carved. Greek was their spoken language, but they were also familiar with Hebrew. The concept of the resurrection of the dead formulated once in Hebrew and once in Greek, proves that the authors of the inscriptions were not estranged from the tenets of their religion but thought it necessary to express their belief in the afterlife in Greek also.[88]

86. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 81a; Reeg in Huttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, II, p. 602.
87. *BS* II, 181.
88. *BS* II, 181.

The inscription from Huldah could similarly be expressing a wish for the resurrection of the souls of the founders. Although it is not specific, the term 'good luck' is extremely rare in Jewish inscriptions, so when it is employed it must have some specific connotation rather than just a general meaning. Park says that perhaps a more appropriate translation of the Beth She'arim inscription would be 'may you fare well with your resurrection'. The connotation of the words 'good luck' would be too unconditional if they referred to the resurrection of the deceased's soul.[89] Therefore, the Huldah inscription could be translated as 'farewell to…' and be a commemorative inscription to the founders of the synagogue, who were no longer living.

The Remaining Inscriptions

There are a further 16 inscriptions containing the formula 'remembered for good' plus the name of the donor and the donation made, and a further 7 inscriptions which have the formula and name but do not record any donation.

The first question this evidence raises surrounds the purpose that inscriptions containing no reference to a specified donation serve. Perhaps the original context of the inscription, for example, on a lintel or pillar, would make it obvious to the viewer that this was what had been donated. As Rajak says, 'an inscription is intended to inspire emulation',[90] usually in terms of the donations made. So what kind of emulation would these inscriptions inspire? Presumably the inscriptions acknowledge deeds done within the community. Since, however, the advertising of one's own piety during one's lifetime would doubtlessly negate that piety, perhaps these inscriptions are intended as memorials, to remind the congregation that good works will be rewarded in the hereafter. This would demonstrate to the living that the prospect of death was not to be feared, but rather kept in mind as an incentive to life, a thought often reflected in the sayings of the fathers: '[death] is an antechamber to the world to come and for which preparations should be made' (*m. Abot* 4.17).

The inscriptions all follow the same pattern: they begin with the formula and then the name of the person, but there is no reference to a donation.[91] Three examples contain the name of a wife or daughter, usually connected to a priest or rabbi.[92] It could be said that the inscrip-

89. Park, *Conceptions*, p. 165.
90. Rajak, *Jewish Dialogue*, p. 377.
91. Sepphoris, Horvat Susiya, Nar'an (4), Horvat Kanef.
92. Sepphoris, Nar'an (2).

tion represented the donation of the object onto which it was placed, so there would be no need to refer to a donation as it would be obvious. The inscriptions from Na'aran are all from a mosaic pavement, which contained in total ten inscriptions, the majority of which specify the donation made. So, it appears even when the donation is obvious, for example, contributing to a mosaic, some reference is given to the individual's contribution.

Of the remaining 16 inscriptions containing the formula and reference to the donation, one can be singled out for mention. Beth Alpha refers to donations made for a mosaic:

[הדין פ]סיפסה אתקבע בשתה
[ל]מלכותה דיסטינום מלכוה
.....חטייה מאת
.....אתנדבין כל בני
ק[הלתה ?.....]דבי
א[.....דכירין ל]טב כל
ב[.....]ן

This mosaic was made in the year….. of the reign
of the emperor Justin
……donation of money
……..and donations of all
the members of the community
[And the son of]Rabbi …….
May they be remembered for good all […][93]

The formula 'remembered for good' does not appear until the beginning of the penultimate line, when it says 'and the son of Rabbi X, may he be remembered for good' (the end of the last line is conjectured so therefore not used as evidence). The previous line refers to all the members of the community who contributed their donations, yet the 'remembered for good' formula is absent. Why is this? Could it be that the son of Rabbi X had been a leading figure in the community whose memory was being honoured by them in their new mosaic? This could also be a memorial, in the same way that inscriptions containing the words *amen* and *shalom* are considered by Dothan to be memorials.

An inscription from Hammath Gadara could also represent a memorial; the inscription supposedly lists two generations of the same family and speaks of their donations, which are 'present in every way', ending with 'Amen' and 'Selah'.[94] This inscription is also contained within a wreath, a motif noted by Avi-Yonah[95] and Goodenough[96] as

93. *CIJ* 1165; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 44-50.
94. *CIJ* 856-60.
95. See comments on Er Ramah.
96. See Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, pp. 39, 47, 57.

connected with funerary imagery. However, the validity of this idea must be questioned, since wreaths also appear when honouring living donors:

ודכיר לטב
קירס הופלים וקירה
פרוטון וקירס סלוסטיס
חתנה וקומס פרורוס ברה
וקירים פוטיס חתנה וקירס
חנינה ברה הננון ובניהין
דמיצותהון תדירין בכל אתר
דהבון הכה חמישה דינרין
רחם מלך עלמה יתן ברכתה
בעמלהן אמן אמן סלה

Remembered for good
Lord Hoples and Lady
Protone, and Lord Sallustius
his son in law, and Comes Phroros his son
and Lord Photios his son in law, and
Lord Haninah his son. These and their
sons whose gifts are present in every
place, who have given here five denariis.
May the King of the Universe give his blessing
on their work. Amen. Amen. Selah.[97]

The word קירס appears to correspond to the Greek κύριος and seems to denote an honorary title of some kind that is not of an official nature. The Aramaic word for 'lord' or 'master' is מרי, and was referred to in the earlier inscription from Horvat Susiya. 'Comes' in line four is indicative of an official title or office. It is usually accepted the inscription refers to two generations of the same family. However, it could, as the following diagram shows, refer to more generations than supposed:

Lord Hoples + Lady Protone
|
His son in law Lord Sallustius
|
His son Comes Phoros
|
His son in law Lord Photios
|
His son Lord Haninah.

97. *CIJ* 856–60; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 152-58.

If, as is usually supposed, Lord Sallustius and Comes Phoros are son-in-law and son respectively of Lord Hoples, why should the son-in-law take precedence over the son in the list? Could it be because the son was too young to be a benefactor in his own right? Surely protocol would demand the son and heir take precedence over the in–law? All the sons hold titles such as Comes or Lord, and perhaps it would be rather too much of a coincidence if they were all simply honorary titles; 'Comes' was a title given for a particular job, so obviously the title could not be given to a child.

Lines five to six imply that this may be the case. It says 'these (meaning all those named) and their sons whose gifts are present in every place', implying the sons of those named are old enough to be benefactors in their own right. The family tree given above would make more sense, when there were sons to follow the benefactor. In this case, the sons would be given preference over sons-in-law. This would then account for the 'remembered for good' formula applied to some members of the family in memory of their gifts over the years.

Line 5 concludes, 'these and their sons whose gifts are present in every way', which implies the sons referred to in this line are the sons not mentioned in the inscription, that is, there were other sons who had given gifts, perhaps smaller gifts, or perhaps sons who held no official title. Therefore, could the five denarii mentioned have been given by the anonymous sons referred to in l. 6, and by the family as a whole? The remainder of the inscription honours those benefactors who made unspecified gifts and have been awarded the 'remembered for good' formula for past generosity.

This inscription would, therefore, appear to honour a prominent family whose benefactions to the synagogue had continued over generations, rather than being one single benefaction made by several members of the same family at the same time.

The three further inscriptions from Hammath Gadara also contain 'Amen' and 'Peace' phrases referred to previously, so it may be possible that they are also memorial inscriptions. The inscriptions read as follows:

(וד[ביר ל] ט)ב רב תנחום הל (וי ב[ר חל]) יפה דהב חד טרימי
סין ודכיר לטב מוניקה דסוסיפה (צ" ל: סוסיתה?) צ(פוריה)
(וק[ירס פ])) טריק ד(כ)פר עקביה [וי]וסה בר דוסתי דמן כפר
נחין דיחבון תלתיהון תלת גרמין מלך
[ע]למה יתן)) ברכתה בעמל ה[נן] אמן סלה שולם ודכיר
לטב יודן ארדה מן בימאוס [?] דיהב תלת
(וד[בירין לט]>ב ארביל יי דיחבו([ז]) מחירהון (צ ל מחית-
הון?) מלך עלמ[ה] יתן ברכתב בעמלהון אמן אמן סלה

R[emembered for g]ood Rab Tanhum t[he Levite, the son of Hal]ipha, who donated one tremissis; and remembered for good Monikos of Susitha [or the Sepphorite] and K[yros Pa]tricius of [Ke]phar 'Aqabyah [and] Yose son of Dositheus of Capernaum, who, all three donated three scruples. May the King/of [the Universe best]ow blessing on [their] work. Amen. Amen Selah. Peace. And remembered for good Yudan…of…who donated three(?)/ [and remembered for g]ood the people of Arbela who donated of their cloths. May the[King of] the Universe bestow blessing on their work. Amen. Amen. Selah.[98]

(ו)דכ(י)ר לטב קירים ליאנטיס וקירה קלניק ד(ה[בו ן…
לי]קרה דכנישׁתה)
מלך עמה י(תן ב)דכתה בעמלה אמן אמ(ן סלה) שׁלום (יוכירה
לטב הדה אתה)
אנטוליה (ד[יהב]ה) חר דינר ליקרה דכני(שׁתה) מלך ע(למה
יתן ברכתה בימלה)
אמן אמ(ן[סלה]) שׁלום ודכירין לטב עידיא (דהבוין חד
טר(ימ)יסין)

Rem[embere]d for good Lord Leontis and Lady Kalonike [who have donated…
denarii in honour of the synagogue ?]
May the King of [the Universe bestow] blessing (on their work). Amen. Ame[n.
Selah.] Peace.
(Remembered for good one woman)
Anatolia [who donate]d one denarius in honour of the synagogue. [May the King
of the Universe bestow blessing on her work]./
Amen. Amen. [Selah.] Peace. Remembered for good the wakeful [who donated
one tr[em]issis.[99]

[ודכיר ל]טב אדה בר תנחום
בר מועניקה חד טרימיסין ויוסה
[בר] קרוצה ומוניקה דיהב[ו] חד פלגות
דינר לגו הד ([פסיפ]סה) תהוי להון
ברכתה אמ[ן ס]לה ש[שלום

[Remembered for] good Ada, the son of Tanhum the son on [Moni]kos who contributed one tremissis, and Yose, the son of Qarosah and Monikos, who contributed [one] half denarius to th[is mosai]c. May theirs be/ the blessing. Am [en. Selah. P]eace.[100]

There are several points of interest in these inscriptions. First, the name Monikos appears in two inscriptions. Is this the same person? Do the two inscriptions record different donations given over a period of time, or are

98. *CIJ* 856-60; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 152-58.
99. *CIJ* 856-60; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 152-58.
100. *CIJ* 856-60; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 152-58.

they all donations towards the mosaic? The first inscription speaks of donations of cloths being given by the people of Arbela. Did they do this to raise money for the mosaic, or did they give cloths to the synagogue for general use, in the *paroketh* for example?[101] The second inscription speaks of donations given 'in honour of the synagogue', which would appear to imply general donations, not a donation for a specific purpose. Only the last inscription specifically refers to the donations given for the mosaic.

Hammath Gadara's famed hot-springs attracted visitors from far and wide, and many of these visitors may have derived benefit from the curative waters, in return for which they made a donation to the community synagogue. In the first inscription we read of Monikos the Sepphorite, Patricius of Aqabyah, and Yose of Capernaum, all visitors, not locals. It could well be that these inscriptions record donations made over a period of time, finally commemorated when the mosaic was completed, which could have been some considerable time after the donations had been given.

With the exception of the last inscription, all the other inscriptions contain the phrase, 'May the King of the Universe bestow blessing upon their work', all have the 'amen' and 'peace' phrase, and all record donations made, either general donations or donations made in honour of the synagogue. Only the last inscription specifically states that the donations were intended for the mosaic and concludes 'may theirs be the blessing', not a blessing on their work. The blessing formula occurring with the 'remembered for good' formula can be indicative of deceased donors (as I will attempt to show in the next chapter). Whether or not the donors are alive or dead could be debated; nevertheless, the Hammath Gadara inscriptions appear to reflect donations made over a period of time by visitors and not a communal act by the community to sponsor a mosaic for their synagogue. The only community patrons that seem to be present are the family referred to in the earlier inscription, and these individuals appear to have been local patrons of this synagogue.

In order to ascertain whether there is a difference to be made between honouring the living or the dead, it will be necessary to examine the remaining inscriptions: those where the donors remain anonymous; those which contain a different formula, 'remembered for a blessing'; and those that honour the community as a whole.

101. The *paroketh* is the curtain that traditionally hung before the torah shrine.

Chapter 5

LIVING DONORS

The Communal Dimension

There are some inscriptions that appear to go against the memorial hypothesis, where the formula 'remembered for good' seems to be applied to living donors. It could be argued that the wish for a person to receive God's favour after death could be applied to living persons also. However, the element of piety would be infringed if people courted honours and public acclaim for themselves in this life. So how would such inscriptions be compatible with the ideology of Jewish benefaction applied to the memorial inscriptions discussed earlier? It seems for honour to be granted to the living, donor(s) must be anonymous, for only God would be aware of who they were and what they had done. There are seven inscriptions that contain the 'remembered for good' formula, where it appears to honour living anonymous donors. One specific element they have in common is that they all have a communal dimension.

Large donations to the synagogue usually came from individuals, and inscriptions record their contributions to the buildings. In some instances, an individual was solely responsible for the entire synagogue building, as is the case with the Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem and the similar one found at Er Ramah. The Leontis complex at Beth She'an was probably part of an individual's house donated for use as a synagogue, thereby saving the community much expense; the same conclusion can be drawn from Stobi in Macedonia.[1] Rabbinic literature attests to the building of synagogues by communal efforts, but shows that this could coexist with large-scale individual donations.

Naveh[2] stresses the communal dimension is most clearly attested in the inscriptions from Byzantine Palestine, and Di Segni[3] makes the point

1. IJudO Mac1 in D. Noy, A. Panayotov and H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones judaicae orientis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).
2. Naveh, *On Stone*, pp. 4-6.

that this communal involvement is in sharp contrast to the early Church building in Palestine, where it was almost exclusively Church authorities that were named. This comment may be a little over-simplified as bishops might act as individual benefactors using their own as well, since the Church's funds. Because Judaism was much less centralized, the onus was placed on the local communities, or individuals within those communities, to make their own arrangement about their synagogue, because there was no overseeing body to do this for them.

Levine contrasts the Palestinian inscriptions with the Diaspora ones and says, 'In contrast to the Diaspora evidence where benefactors are invariably individuals, most Palestinian inscriptions speak of communal efforts'.[4] This statement gives a misleading impression that the majority of inscriptions from Palestine recorded communal efforts/donations, rather than individual ones.

However, in Greek-speaking communities in Palestine where individual donations were commonplace, communal inscriptions were rare. There is only one instance, from Caesarea, where an inscription speaks of a donation τοῦ λαοῦ, 'of the people'.[5] Levine lists ten inscriptions from the synagogues at Beth She'an, Jericho, Hammath Tiberias, Susiya (two fragments), Na'aran, Beth Alpha, Ma'on, Ashkelon, and Caesarea, all of which, he says, refer to donations made by the community.

First, it is necessary to understand what is meant by 'communal'. It is usually assumed the communal dimension spoken of in inscriptions reflects the whole community's response to the needs of the synagogue in terms of refurbishments or decoration. The community pool their resources and act as benefactors and are recorded collectively for their efforts. This in turn implies that some of the community, at least, must be living. However, some of the inscriptions listed by Levine as communal ones do not actually say it was the community as a whole that was responsible for the benefaction, but only a certain section of the community. So is it justifiable to say that they are communal inscriptions?

Holy Congregation

In regard to this question, the inscription from Beth She'an B is of some importance. It says,

3. L. di Segni, 'The Involvement of Local, Municipal and Provincial Authorities in Urban Building in Late Antique Palestine and Arabia', *JRA* 14 (1995), pp. 312-17.

4. Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 423.

5. See Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions*, p. 25; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 68; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 70-90, 524.

דכירין לטב כל בני חבורתה קדישתה
דהנון מתחזקין בתקונה דאתהרה
קדיעוה ושלמה תהוי להון ברכתה אמן
רוב שלום חסד שלום

Remembered for good all the members of the Holy Congregation
who endeavoured to repair
The holy place and in peace shall they have their blessing. Amen
Great peace, *hesed*, in peace.[6]

The inscription makes reference to חבורתה קדישתה, 'Holy Congregation', and goes on to say that they endeavoured to repair the holy place, namely, the synagogue. The word חבורתה is often translated as 'congregation' but comes from חבר, which means 'association' in Hebrew. Therefore the correct translation should be 'Holy Association'. Gesenius' *Hebrew–Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* also translates this word to mean 'an alliance' (of several men). On the other hand, the word קהלה means an assembly (of people) and would, therefore, seem to be the appropriate word to use for a congregation. It is quite possible that this inscription from Beth She'an B refers to the leading men of the synagogue, the 'Holy Association', similar to the rabbis who formed the 'Holy Congregation' in Jerusalem;[7] for rabbinic literature speaks of a high-level rabbinic academy. Evidence for such an association can be seen in a *piyyut* from the Cairo Genizah, dating to the Byzantine period, which laments the murder of the *havurat Ono*, the association of Ono, a Jewish town near Lod.[8] It is not clear whether the association referred to the whole congregation, but the implication is that this was only a section of the congregation.

Fine says that it has been shown that *havurah* is a regular designation in Amoraic and post-Amoraic literature for gatherings of Sages and/or their students for the study of the Torah.[9] If this statement were correct, then the inscription would refer to the members of the association, not the community in general. Fine then goes on to say the anonymous nature of all three inscriptions from the Beth She'an B synagogue is a rare phenomenon. Apart from the two Aramaic inscriptions, this one

6. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, nos. 58-67; Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 46; D. Bahat and A. Druks, 'The Synagogue at Beth-Shean', *Qad* 5 (1972), pp. 55-58.

7. *B. Beit.* 27a; *b. Tam.* 27b.

8. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, p. 101.

9. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, p. 101; cf. Ilan, *Ancient Synagogues in Israel*, p. 177. Fine has suggested that Beth She'an B may be, to use his phrase, the 'Synagogue of the Sages'. The notion of a synagogue of Sages is unknown in rabbinic literature. In rabbinic sources a room set aside where Sages congregated, prayed and studied was known as a *beit midrash*.

and one recording the artisan who made the work, there is also a Greek inscription, which reads:

> A gift of those of whom the Lord knows the names, He shall guard them in times…[10]

Similar phrases can be seen in the inscription from Jericho.

דכיר[ן לט]ב יהוי דכרנהנו לטב כל
קהלה [קד(י) ש]ה רביה וזעוריה דסיע
יתהון מלכיה דעלמה ואתחזקון ועברון
פסיפסה דידע שמהתון ודבניהון ודאנשי
בתיהון יכתוב יתהון בספר חיים [עם]
צדיקיה חברין לכל ישראל שלש[ם אמן סלה]

> May they be remembered for good, may their memory be for good all
> [the] Holy Congregation, its elders and its youth
> whom [the] King of [the] world helped and who exerted themselves and made
> the mosaic. He knows their names and
> the names of the peoples of their households,
> may He write them in the Book of Life together with
> the just. They are associates of all Israel. Peace. Amen Selah.[11]

Lines 1 and 2, if the restoration is correct, speak of all of the 'Holy Congregation' (קהלה קדישה), which has been interpreted as the whole synagogue community. However, this group is referred to again in the last sentence of the inscription as 'Associates', *haberin* (חברין), the same word that occurs in the Beth She'an inscription. They are not just 'associates', but the 'holy congregation', and could be considered as *righteous* associates (צדיקיה חברין). This would appear to confirm when the term 'holy' is used in conjunction with the word קהלה it refers not to the whole synagogue congregation but to a specific group within the congregation, most probably the leaders.

On fragments 10 and 11 of the inscription from Susiya we see the same phrase used:

[קה]לה קדישה דאתחזק

> the holy congregation which endeavoured…….[12]

The wording once again reads 'the holy congregation'. The Susiya fragment gives no further details concerning what the congregation actually did, except to record that 'they endeavoured', presumably to repair or build the synagogue. However, another set of fragments (4, 5 and 6)

10. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 77b; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 58-67; Bahat and Druks, 'The Synagogue at Beth-Shean', pp. 585-87.
11. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 189-92.
12. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 422-23, 528.

from the same synagogue (see Table 4) refers to כל בני קרתה ('all the people of the town'):

[דכיר]ין לט[ב] [כ]ל בני קרתה
ד[הנון] מתחזק[ון]

> Remembered for good all the people of the town.
> Who endeavoured to repair…[13]

The fragments can be shown on palaeographical grounds to be contemporaneous. If we assume the inscription does actually refer to the synagogue congregation, then the second inscription is clearly making a distinction between those people who inhabit the town and the 'holy congregation'. It may be possible there were non-Jews who contributed to the synagogue, or that the town contained other synagogues whose members contributed to this particular one. There may even have been donations from people outside the town who came to the synagogue. Public collections are attested in rabbinic literature. However, it would seem more likely that the inscriptions are making a distinction between the 'holy congregation' and the general congregation of the synagogue. The plan of the synagogue, judging by other inscriptions found there, remained the same throughout much of its long history (fourth–ninth century), and appears to have been well supported by the local Jewish community.

Therefore, two inscriptions—the one from Jericho and the first Susiya fragment—mention a 'holy' association can be assumed to refer to those who formed an 'elect group' of the synagogue, that is, its leaders or possibly founders. This would then account for the distinction being made in the two sets of fragments from Susiya. Two inscriptions refer to the fact a 'holy' congregation/association was endeavouring to repair and/or build the synagogue, a not insubstantial project. It appears that these efforts were being remembered, rather than the fact that they actually achieved their aims. Indeed, they may have been given support from the community as a whole, though it seems the founders or leading members of the synagogue are being honoured for their instigation of the project, rather than everyone in the community.[14]

The Jericho inscription, which speaks of the 'holy congregation', also specifically mentions the 'elders and the youth of the holy congregation'. This could be interpreted as a reference to the young and old in the community in general, but more probably refers to the elder and

13. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 422-23, 528.

14. In this respect I disagree with Schwartz's view. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 275, understands all these terms to refer to the community as a whole, and says, 'Late Antique Jews regarded themselves as constituting religious communities and used a special terminology to convey the idea'.

younger members of the 'Holy congregation', perhaps the leaders with assistance from members of the family, that is, younger members who at present do not hold any official function. The use of the term 'holy' (קדיש) refers to those who set themselves apart from the rest of the people, who devote themselves to doing holy work, as with the חברה קדעשה, usually translated as 'burial society', but more correctly understood as an association (of people) who do holy work.

Therefore, at least three of these inscriptions are referring to a specific section of the congregation rather than the community as a whole. So, can they be considered communal inscriptions? The fact that individuals' names are not recorded would be the only difference between these and other founder inscriptions where the name of each founder is given—inscriptions that are not classified as communal. The omission of personal names would be in accordance with the requirement of piety, especially if the founders were 'holy' members of the synagogue.

The Community in General

If we compare these three inscriptions with three that clearly refer to the community as a whole, we can see there are other subtle differences. The inscriptions from Beth Alpha, Susiya, and Ma'on all refer to the community (קהלה) with no qualifying 'Holy' added.

The inscription from Ma'on says:

[ד]כירין לטב כל קהלה
[די] עבדו דדן פספה
וכן דצו[י]ן ותמה ויהודה
דיהבו תלתה [תג תרי] דנרין

> Remembered for good the whole congregation/ [who ha]ve contributed this mosaic/ [and furtherm]ore Daisin and Thoma and Judah/ who donated [the] sum [of] two denarii.[15]

At Susiya reference is made to all the members of the town, while at Ma'on and Beth Alpha it is all the members of the congregation. Susiya is too fragmentary to supply any further details of the contribution made, while the others refer to donations of money towards a mosaic. However, the Beth Alpha inscription may not refer to the whole congregation of the synagogue:

15. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 302-306.

[הדין פ]סיפסה אתקבע בשׁתה
[ל]מלכשׁתה דיוסטינוס מלכוה
.....חטייה מאת
.....אתנדבון כל בני
ק [הלתה.....]רבי
א [.....דכירין ל] טב כל
[ב.....ן]

This mosaic was made in the year….. of the reign
of the emperor Justin……donation of money
and donations of all the members of the c[ommunity
And the son of]Rabbi…… [May he be remembered for?] good
[and those who contributed to the construction??][16]

The end of l. 4 reads כל בני and l. 5, which is only partially legible, begins with ק. This has been translated as 'all the members of the community'. However, a similar phrase is used in the Susiya fragment mentioned earlier, a phrase which appears to be complete—כל בני קרתה, 'all the sons of the town'. It is possible that the Beth Alpha inscription says the same and reflects a collection made from all the townsfolk, whether or not they were synagogue members. The fact these inscriptions have been translated to read 'all the members of the community' has proven misleading. On the other hand, if the inscription was translated literally as 'all the sons of the town', then the question might be raised concerning who 'these sons' were.

The *Talmud* has several references to 'sons of the town',[17] and here we find these were men who represented the communal interests of the town, rather like a town council. In *b. Kam*. 26a we learn these groups comprised 'seven good men', presumably men who were noted for their good deeds and piety—in a word, incorruptible individuals whom the community could rely upon. Therefore in the Beth Alpha inscription we see it was the 'town council' who endeavoured to rebuild the synagogue, not the whole town.

There are other significant features in these inscriptions that require comment. The Jericho inscription also records the donations of those who *made* (the verb עבד is used) the mosaic (in the sense of paying for it rather than physically making, as is normal in Greek inscriptions). The other two record those who contributed (here the verb דהובה is used). This seems to imply that a communal effort is recorded as a *contribution*, while specific donors (single or as a group) are recorded as having *made*, that is, instigated and carried out, the task. There is another verb utilized, יהב, 'to give', and this verb is used when specifying amounts of money,

16. *CIJ* 1165; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 44-50.
17. *B. Meg*. 27a; *b. Kam*. 21b, 26a.

as in the Ma'on inscription. It is translated as 'donate', and it means to donate money as opposed to objects (e.g. of silver or gold, or even gifts in kind).

There are four more inscriptions in which, according to Levine, communal efforts are acknowledged. The inscriptions derive from Hammath Tiberias, Na'aran, Ashkelon, and Caesarea. The Ashkelon inscription makes no reference to either a community contribution or even a single donor, and since we have no way of knowing from this fragmentary inscription exactly who made the donation, it is inconclusive. The inscription from Caesarea is in Greek and mentions the people, τοῦ λαοῦ, contributing to the mosaic pavement. In this case, the term λάος indicates the Jewish community, especially in a Diaspora city. However, it seems unlikely that in a mixed community such as Caesarea it would mean the whole town.

The Hammath Tiberias inscription, discussed in the previous chapter, is even more interesting. Not only is the דכיר לטב formula missing, but also the inscription seems to be a prescriptive injunction to members of the community. Dothan[18] has translated דעבד מצותה to read 'everyone who fulfils charity' in the holy place. Although the Aramaic word for charity (רחם) is not used, the *mitzvah* spoken about could well refer to donations for charitable purposes. The verb עבד is used, which, according to Dothan, usually translates as 'donated' when it appears with the word מצותה; the meaning is primarily, according to Dothan, 'voluntary offering'.[19] The Hammath Tiberias inscription records that everyone who gives to charity will receive a blessing, while it urges the community to carry on making charitable donations in order to receive further blessings from God. There is no reason to suppose that the giving is always of a monetary nature, and it seems we have a reference to donations of food, clothing, or objects that could be sold to raise money for supporting those in need of shelter. A similar injunction is being given at Na'aran:

[ד]כירין לטב כל מ[
[ד] מתחזק ויהב או
[י] הב בהרן אתרה
[ק] דישה בן דהב
[ב] סף בן כל טקמה
[ל]היא [לה]ון חו[ל]קהון
בהדן אתרה קדישה
אמן

18. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*, p. 53.
19. See *Lev. R.* 34.14: דהוא עביד מצוון דאנה שמי ('I hear that he is a donor').

> May they be remembered for good all…
> who contributed and donated or
> who will donate to this
> holy place gold or silver
> or other valuable objects
> Who brought their share
> to this holy place.
> Amen.[20]

In this inscription individuals will be 'remembered for good' by God when they die. However, is a distinction being made here between those who donate and those who contribute? Clearly in communities where individual patrons may have been lacking, the community was urged to give what it could in order for the synagogue to carry out certain functions, such as the distribution of charity, and this could be considered a communal effort. However, while the community is being reminded of its charitable obligations, it does not necessarily mean the community actively engaged in such of its own volition.

To summarize so far: of the ten inscriptions which Levine says demonstrate a communal effort, the evidence would suggest that the inscriptions from Susiya, Beth Alpha, Beth She'an, and Jericho were not necessarily communal efforts but the efforts of a select few in the synagogue. Hammath Tiberias and Na'aran are prescriptive and Ashkelon does not mention the community *per se*. This leaves only the inscriptions from Ma'on and Caesarea, where a community effort is being honoured, and both the inscriptions refer to donations for a mosaic to embellish the synagogue. This means that a communal effort is recorded in just two out of the ten synagogue inscriptions, a figure which is equivalent to 2 per cent of all donor inscriptions reviewed in this book and 0.5 per cent of all Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions so far retrieved.

Therefore, the communal dimension may not be as 'important' as first supposed, and certainly not a feature of, as Levine states, 'most of the Palestinian inscriptions'. The emphasis on the communal dimension is wrongly placed. The significant aspect is not that the community contributed, but *why* particular contributions were recorded and the manner in which it was done.

Sponsorship

The synagogue of Apamea in Syria records the contributions made by a great number of community members towards the construction of a mosaic. At this site there were many small inscriptions recording

20. *CIJ* 1197-1207; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 324-34; S. Klein, *Jüdisch–palästinisches corpus inscriptionum* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920).

individual contributions. Why was this when they could have simply had one larger inscription recording a collective effort? A similar situation occurs at Hammath Tiberias, where there are several smaller inscriptions recording the pledges of giving made by donors, coupled with a record that they actually honoured their vows. Should we then classify the Apamea inscriptions along with the Hammath Tiberias ones as communal inscriptions?

The reason for the difference could well be financial: in smaller communities there may not have been anyone wealthy enough solely to finance such work, in which case collections from the community would have been necessary in order to carry out such projects.[21] In that case, it may have taken several years for sufficient funds to be collected on the basis of the small amounts each individual was able to give. Consequently, one inscription would have to suffice, as the individuals concerned would not have been able to supply the necessary extra cash to execute a personal inscription. In wealthier communities, larger sums could be donated which in turn would probably be sufficient to pay for an individual mention. At Beth She'an B, half a century had elapsed between the refurbishments and the actual laying of the mosaic floor.[22] If the Beth She'an B inscription is recording the actual building refurbishments, which clearly it appears to do, then this contribution was not recorded until at least half a century later when the mosaic pavement was laid.

At Ma'on the poor quality of the lettering of the inscription may indicate they had to employ a less skilled workman as a cost-saving exercise. If this was the case, it appears that economic conditions are also reflected in the communal inscriptions, rather than a different ideology.

There could, however, be another explanation—namely, that systematic sponsorship of projects took place. As already noted, there are similarities between the donor inscriptions from Apamea and those at Hammath Tiberias. However, there are interesting features in the Hammath Tiberias inscriptions that warrant some comment. First, the word εὐχόμενος (present participle) in the Hammath Tiberias inscriptions has not been found in any other Jewish inscription from Palestine. Variants of the verb often found in inscriptions include εὐξάμενος in the aorist, while the substantive εὐχή mostly occurs as ὑπέρ, ἐξ or ἕνεκεν εὐχῆς, 'from a vow'. In these particular inscriptions, like the inscriptions from

21. See Rajak's comments on the communal aspect reflected in the inscriptions from Berenice, quoted in Chapter 2.

22. With reference to the archaeological evidence cited, see D. Bahat and A. Druks, 'Beth She'an, ancienne synagogue', *RB* 78 (1971), pp. 585-86, also Bahat and Druks, 'The Synagogue at Beth-Shean', pp. 55-58.

Apamea, the meaning is different, for in the participle it means 'vowing' or 'solemnly promising'.[23] The present participle form could be an equivalent of the Hebrew נדב and אתנדב, which appears in the synagogue inscriptions from Beth Alpha and Isifyah. In Hebrew and Aramaic these words have the meaning of a voluntary promise or pledge. This is different from a vow or an oath (נרב or שבועה), usually made to God, which carried serious consequences if for some reason it could not be fulfilled.

Second, the word ἐποιησεν means 'made' and is often used in funerary as well as synagogue inscriptions. However, in the Hammath Tiberias inscription it appears to be the equivalent of the Aramaic יהב, 'to give', but perhaps more accurately could be identified with the Hebrew word קיים, 'to fulfil'.

The inscriptions relating to the founders of the synagogue, Ioullos and Severos, do not state that they made a vow and this could point to the fact they, as leading members of the synagogue, were responsible for the instigation of the project.

Σευῆ[ρος]	Seve[ros]	Ἰοῦλλος	Ioullos
θρεπτὸς	disciple(?)	προνούμ-	the supervisor
τῶν λαμ-	of the most	ενος πάντ-	Completed
προτάτων	illustrious	α ἐτελίωσε	the whole work.
πατριαρχ-	Patriarchs		
ῶν ἐποιγία-	made (it)		
εν. εὐλογία	Blessing upon		
αὐτῷ ἀμήν	him. Amen		

A further inscription in the mosaic says:

Σευῆρος θρεπτὸς τῶν λαμπρον
τάτων πατριαρχῶν ἐτελίωσεν
εὐλογία αὐτῷ και ’Ιουλλῳ τῷ προνουμενος

Severos, disciple of the most illus-
trious Patriarchs completed (it)
Blessing on him and on Ioullos the supervisor.[24]

This idea can be paralleled in the inscriptions from Apamea, where a similar situation appears to have occurred. This in turn could imply that Ioullos and Severos might not have been the founders, but rather leading officials who may have been responsible for organizing the project. One

23. This only applies to donations made by men in the Apamea inscriptions; those made by women are significantly different. For a discussion of this and the implications it has for women as benefactors, see Noy and Sorek, 'Peace and Mercy'. See also Chapter 8.

24. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 163-72, Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 76-77; Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*, p. 61.

or other of them could have been responsible for getting the leading members of the community to pledge a certain amount; only when such pledges had been forthcoming could the project go ahead. Severos is said to have completed the work, and perhaps this means he made up any deficit out of his own funds. Yet it could also mean that he completed his task of raising enough sponsorship to complete the project. Ioullos, on the other hand, supervised the work—nothing is said about him actually making a contribution. Thus, it is a distinct possibility that one person, Severos, was responsible for organizing sponsorship, and the other, Ioullos, was responsible for organizing the construction of the project.

At Apamea the donor makes a similar pledge to contribute a certain amount towards a specific project, a mosaic, and the amount to be given is stated in the inscription. If the Hammath Tiberias inscriptions refer solely to the mosaic, then we have a situation in which a lot of donors are contributing to a small mosaic. It therefore seems likely the donations are given for the synagogue as a whole, the mosaic being only a small part of the refurbishments.

The evidence suggests the donors at Apamea and Hammath Tiberias had pledged their support to the mosaic construction by offering to sponsor a certain amount of the work, presumably on condition that enough sponsors could be encouraged to participate, thereby enabling the project to go ahead. One could also conjecture that the eventual size of the mosaic depended upon how many people offered to sponsor it. If the congregation was generally prosperous, the competition between its wealthier members would naturally ensure a fairly substantial amount would be raised, enabling such a project to be carried out. It is apparent that at both Apamea and Hammath Tiberias the people responsible for the initiation of the project were prominent men of the synagogue.

We can see in the two inscriptions of Ilasius at Apamea[25] that there is no mention of him making a vow. Nor do we read of a vow made by Ioullos or Severus at Hammath Tiberias—yet all of these men contributed to the mosaic. At Apamea, Euthalis the *scholastikos* contributed 140 feet, one of the largest contributions, but once again there is no mention of him making a vow. Those involved in the instigation of the project, even if they had contributed financially, would not be recorded as having made a promise to do so. The other contributors would make their promises to the instigators, meaning that εὐξάμενος/η would be appropriate for them but not for the instigators.

This kind of euergetism shows Greek influences. The idea of sponsorship is primarily to foster a spirit of competition between wealthier

25. IJudO III 53 = *CIJ* 803; IJudO III 54 = *CIJ* 804. Syr 53, 54.

members of society who will in return have their generosity displayed, by being recorded in public. It is not usual to find this kind of euergetism operating within these areas of Jewish Palestine that experienced Greek influence, which is apparent in the choice of language for the Hammath Tiberias inscriptions. This Greek influence may have affected other aspects of culture.

These communities may have been wealthier than other Aramaic speaking ones, and consequently such euergetistic activities would have been more viable. Nevertheless, in other Aramaic-speaking synagogues of Palestine the communal dimension is also apparent. For example, at Beth She'an and Jericho, where perhaps a similar kind of sponsorship was being employed, an important difference is that individual donors did not leave a record of their individual contributions, but were rather recorded collectively. This could be for one of two reasons: either there was only enough money to pay for one large inscription or, due to religious scruples on the part of the donors, they felt it was more in keeping with God's wishes that they remain anonymous.

The inscriptions from Beth Alpha and Isifyah use the terms מנדב or פסק, 'made', to refer to a person who made a vow. (This sense of the phrase is close to ἐτελεσα at Sardis.)[26] This promise made by the donor (possibly female) at Isifyah equates with εὐξάμενος in the Apamea and Hammath Tiberias inscriptions, so we cannot completely rule out the idea of individual sponsors contributing to building projects in a number of Palestinian synagogues.

If this is the case, then it carries some important implications concerning those inscriptions that have until now been considered 'communal' in the sense of involving the whole community rather than just a section of it. Perhaps these communities had more patrons than has been supposed in the past? The difference with the Jewish system is the fact that mostly these patrons remain anonymous, at least in the inscription. It seems obvious that the community as a whole would know who these people were, and that therefore the benefactors would be given due deference and respect in their everyday lives without infringing their chances of receiving God's blessing by usurping his role as benefactor.

The point is made in a Diaspora inscription from Lydia[27] using the term ἐκ τῶν δωρεῶν τοῦ μανατοκράτορος θεοῦ,[28] variants of which include, ἐκ τῶν τῆς προνοίας δομάτων and ἐκ τῶν τῆς προνοίας, phrases found on other Diaspora inscriptions, signifying that the gift given by the donor

26. L. Robert, *Nouvelles inscriptions de Sardes* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1964), 39, nos. 3, 5.

27. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 20.

28. This term in particular is paralleled on an inscription from Aegina; see *CIJ* 722.

comes from God, or more often from the divine *pronoia* (provision). According to Rajak, Kraabel has associated the formula with the cultured Neo-Platonist milieu of late Roman Sardis, while the term 'pronoia' for the deity is, as she says, 'rooted in Greek-Jewish thought, being quite at home in Josephus'.[29]

Although the evidence presented here may show the communal dimension is not quite as prominent in Jewish inscriptions as would first appear, it still does not account completely for why the formula 'remembered for good' is found on inscriptions that appear to be specifically honouring living patrons. There is one aspect all communal Palestinian inscriptions have in common—namely, the fact they are recording anonymous donations. Accordingly, the next question is: Do all anonymous donations have the formula 'remembered for good'?

29. Rajak, 'Benefactors', p. 389.

Chapter 6

'Remembered for Good' and Anonymous Donors

It is necessary to examine in more detail those inscriptions where the donors remain anonymous to see if all anonymous donations have the 'remembered for good' formula applied to them. There are six inscriptions that contain the formula.[1]

On every occasion where reference is to the holy association/congregation, the inscription asks for the donors to be 'remembered for good'. When applied to the inscriptions that refer to the congregation in general who contributed, in some cases that contribution has been assimilated with the contributions of named individuals. At Ma'on the contribution of Thoma, Daisin and Judah, amounting to two denarii, is added to the community efforts and the phrase 'remembered for good' is used, apparently to encompass all the contributors. Two denarii would have been a relatively large contribution from three individuals, so they must have been important members of the community.

If we examine the wording of the Beth Alpha inscription, we do not see the phrase being used generally for the community. Only when the son of a rabbi is mentioned is the phrase used, asking God to remember him for good.

The last line of the inscription contains just two letters, ן.....ב, and the translation is hypothetical: therefore, this cannot be taken as conclusive evidence the phrase 'remembered for good' is being used to refer to the other anonymous donors who contributed. It could imply the son of Rabbi X was responsible for organizing a collection and therefore deserved the honour, while at the same time acknowledging those who made a contribution. In other words, to qualify for this honour one needed to be of some standing in the community; this differentiates between the community as a whole contributing and certain elite members of the community working together for the good of the community

1. Beth Alpha, Beth She'an B, Horvat Susiya, Nar'an, Ma'on, Jericho.

and acting as patrons or organizers. It seems likely the inscription recorded the son of Rabbi X for his good works in the community when the opportunity arose to record his name in the inscription as a memorial. Similarly at Ma'on, three individual donors are named but the wording, which is in part conjectured, seems to imply that Daisin, Judah and Thoma are the only ones being 'remembered for good'.

The remaining inscriptions refer to community efforts, so naturally has to be taken that the community comprises the living, as well as a few deceased patrons. The inscription from Susiya also refers to 'the sons of the town'. However, the fragment states 'they endeavoured' not 'contributed'. If we compare this to the Beth She'an B inscription, the possibility is that the 'sons of the town' in this instance endeavoured either to build or to repair the synagogue, perhaps working alongside the 'holy community', that is, those in charge. This could be borne out by the fact that the other fragment records the holy congregation's efforts, presumably at the same time, yet warranting a separate inscription. Why not record all the efforts in one inscription?

The community's efforts are of considerable significance and would warrant this accolade of remembrance, unlike small monetary contributions from an organized collection, which would naturally involve a certain amount of anonymity. Once again this could have been an organized collection from the townsfolk, irrespective of whether or not they were part of the synagogue community. Quite possibly the efforts to help repair or rebuild the synagogue may have involved many different activities and their contributions may have been physical rather than monetary.

The Beth Alpha inscription makes it clear that the contributors did not receive this accolade; this was reserved for the son of Rabbi X. Why was this? Quite possibly it is because the inscription commemorated recent activities of the community, therefore we could assume that the inscription was erected by living donors (hence no formula for them). However, they did chose to commemorate the son of Rabbi X, who presumably did good works for the community in the past, hence the formula being applied to him.

The inscription from Beth She'an B gives validity to this interpretation since it could apply to deceased donors, although all of them remain anonymous. The inscription tells us the 'holy association' 'endeavoured to repair the synagogue', not necessarily that they succeeded. The fact there is an inscription must suggest they did, but it was their efforts, rather than their actual monetary contributions, that were being honoured in the inscription. Like the inscription from Susiya, where similar wording can be seen, the efforts may have been physical as well as monetary.

Line 3 says, 'In peace shall they have their blessing', concluding with two words, 'peace' and 'amen', which, according to Dothan, are indicative of a memorial when used together. Presumably the blessing they will have in peace is being 'remembered for good' by God. It would appear this inscription is a commemorative one posthumously honouring the initial founders of the synagogue, giving further weight to the idea this 'Holy association' was a special group of people. However, there is more conclusive proof that this inscription should be considered to be a memorial.

The synagogue at Beth She'an has been described as a 'small praying room' located south of the house of the wealthy Jew, Kyrios Leontis, and across from what appears to be a small courtyard identified as a basilica court.[2] The inscription was set into a mosaic in the prayer room in the southern border. There are two periods postulated for the work carried out in the prayer room: stage one building work was completed from the middle of the fifth to the beginning of the sixth century and the mosaic pavement was laid in the second half of the sixth century during stage two.[3] The inscription speaks of those who 'endeavoured to repair the holy place', not those who contributed to the mosaic. Contributors to the mosaic are recorded in other inscriptions set into the mosaic and speak directly about the contribution to the mosaic.[4]

It could be said that to list all the donors may have proved too difficult a task financially and that these inscriptions do not reflect anonymous donations but a conservative use of synagogue resources when many individuals were involved in the benefaction. Ilan suggests that the anonymity of the donors in the inscriptions from Beth She'an B is evidence of the communal ideology of the community that used this synagogue.[5] This, however, is not necessarily the case, as it would appear not to be a *communal* effort but an effort by a specific group who are set apart from the community as a whole. Fine says that 'Dedicatory inscriptions were usually the way that individuals were honoured by the community for their benefactions. Anonymity sets aside this purpose.'[6]

Fine's statement would be appropriate if the inscriptions referred to a single unknown benefactor. In fact, it could be said that they were not anonymous, that they acted as a group and as a group, 'the holy association' they were acknowledged. This would be especially so if they belonged to a 'holy association' where piety would need to be shown.

2. Bahat and Druks, 'Beth She'an, ancienne synagogue', pp. 585-86.
3. Bahat and Druks, 'Beth She'an, ancienne synagogue'.
4. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 77b.
5. Ilan, *Ancient Synagogues*.
6. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, p. 101.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the very fact they are recorded as an association apparently detracts from their anonymity. If there were no attempt in their lifetime to record their efforts, only after the *founding* members of the association were deceased, this would be total anonymity.

The same hypothesis could apply to the Susiya inscriptions that record the efforts by both members of the community in general and the holy congregation to repair the synagogue. As the synagogue was built in the fourth century, and continued being refurbished until the ninth century, then the inscriptions could have been erected at any time during this period, although the style of writing indicates an earlier rather than a later date.[7] Once again, these inscriptions could be memorials to the initial founders/workers on the original synagogue building.

The inscription from Jericho appears to signify the persons referred to, the 'Holy Congregation', who were living donors. Yet it could be interpreted differently. It is the 'Holy Congregation' being 'remembered for good.' Lines 6 to 9 show it is the wish of the congregation that God writes the names of the '*peoples of their households*' in the 'Book of Life'. These people are presumably those members of the original community still living, perhaps grandchildren of members of the Holy Congregation. It is further honouring the righteous group when the community request of God their descendants also are to be written into the book. This could be seen as one of the reasons for being a benefactor, that it secured benefits for future generations. This reference to those who will be written in the 'Book of Life' also occurs at Beth She'an B, this time in Greek. The inscription was found by the east entrance, comprising six lines in Greek, which says, 'the gift of those whom the Lord knows the names. He shall guard them in times…'

Once again the desire to remain anonymous could be due to the fact, at this particular synagogue, that the element of piety attached to such donations required anonymity. However, significantly on this inscription there is no 'remembered for good' formula, which implies the donors were living and lends weight to the proposition that it is the people of the households who are to be written into the book in the Jericho inscription.

Furthermore, the first two lines of the Jericho inscription states not only the wish for the Holy Congregation to be 'remembered for good' by God, but also that their 'memory be for good'—in other words, they should have a good memorial, which implies that they would also be

7. Z. Yeivin, 'Inscribed Marble Fragments from the Khirbet Susiya Synagogue', *IEJ* 24 (1974), pp. 210-19.

remembered by the community as well as by God. All of this could point to the fact that these particular groups of people were no longer living.

Other Anonymous Donations

There are four other inscriptions that record anonymous donations and also contain the formula 'remembered for good'.[8] The first is also from Beth She'an B, and here we can see the artisan/craftsman in question has not been named:

דכיר לטב אומנה
דעבד הדה אידתה

> Remembered for good the artisan
> who made this work.[9]

Could this be because he is still living and was the artisan responsible for the mosaic previously discussed? This may well be the case, and given the pious nature of those who commissioned the inscription with regard to their own anonymity, then clearly their wish is that the artisan, of whom God knows the name, will in the future be remembered by Him for good. On the other hand, this inscription could have been made as a memorial. The inscription was not set in a *tabula ansata* like the other inscriptions but placed by the north entrance within a narrower border than the other inscriptions in the mosaic and could well have been placed there later.

A marble slab from Ashdod merely says 'remembered for good and for a blessing, peace'.[10] There is no mention of a donor or a donation, yet there would have been ample space to insert at least his/her name. Two inscriptions from Kefer Hananyah, from a bronze lamp and lustral basin respectively, also do not record the names of the donors and could well be posthumous commemorations, for they both conclude with 'peace' and 'amen'.

Another inscription, in Greek, from Beth Alpha appears to use the formula and also names the individuals, who, it would appear, are still living. This inscription makes reference to two artisans, Marianos and his son Hanina. They are the same two persons responsible for the annexe pavements in Room 7 at Beth She'an A, where a Greek inscription says, 'The work of Marianos and his son Hanina'.[11]

8. Beth She'an B, Ashdod, and two inscriptions from Kefer Hananyah.
9. Translated by Bahat in Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 77b.
10. *CIJ* 971; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 70; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 19-21; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 69; *SEG* VIII, 146.
11. See Chiat, *Synagogue Architecture*, p. 132. Beth Alpha inscription Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 77.

On first reading it appears the formula 'remembered for good' is being applied to the two living persons named. However, the verb is used in the imperative. Therefore it is not a request necessarily directed to God for remembrance in the afterlife; instead the persons named should be remembered in the future, that is, be recollected—there is no 'for good' attached. This is perhaps some type of advertisement for the work of the artisans and their request that should anyone wish for work to be done then these are the people to contact, which it seems the people at Beth She'an did.

From the available evidence it would appear that when anonymous donors are deceased they merit the 'remembered for good' formula in the same way as named donors. If anonymous donors, are living donors then they do not have this formula applied to them.

No Formula

Before reaching any final conclusions, it is necessary to examine the 18 remaining inscriptions where there is no 'remembered for good' formula. Of these, ten are in Greek[12] and eight are in Hebrew/ Aramaic.[13] Of the Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions, four record a name and donation.[14] The remaining four inscriptions do not contain either a donation or name.[15] For the purpose of this discussion, the Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions will be examined, and Greek ones used for illustration purposes only.

The inscription from Meron contains one line, 'Sholom son of Levi erected [this lintel]'. The inscription from Alma has two lines written in Hebrew and the final line in Aramaic.

אנה יוסה בר לוי הלוי אומנה דעבדת [הדן שקופה …]

I, Yose, son of Levi the Levite, an artisan who made [this lintel….][16]

A unique feature of this inscription is that it the only first person inscription in Aramaic or Hebrew retrieved so far from a synagogue in Palestine.

The inscription from Horvat ha 'Ammudin records the benefaction by two brothers, one of whom is a *hazzan*, of what is presumed to be the

12. Capernaum, Ashkelon (2), Jerusalem, Huldah (2), Gaza, Caesarea (2), Fiq.
13. Meron, 'Alma, Horvat ha'Ammudin, Daburra, Kazrin, Kefer Hananyah, Nazareth, Gaza.
14. Horvat ha'Ammudin, Daburra, Kazrin, Kefer Hananyah,
15. Meron, 'Alma, Nazareth, Gaza.
16. *CIJ* 978. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 311-14; Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 305.

synagogue building, that is, if the phrase 'gate of the Lord of Heaven' actually means the whole building and not just the entrance.

יוזור חזנה
ושמעון
אחוי עבדו
הדן תרא דמרי
שומיא

Yo'ezer the hazzan
and Shimeon
his brother made
this gate of the Lord of
Heaven.[17]

There is no formula whatsoever present in this inscription, meaning that perhaps we can assume that the inscription was placed in situ by the donors, and that as a synagogue official Yo'ezer would have deemed it impious to ask either to be 'remembered for good', or for a blessing on his work. Nevertheless, it would be important to establish the 'family' as leading or prominent citizens in the community with some permanent reminder of their benefactions. The inscription was inscribed onto a stone built into the synagogue wall. The date for the synagogue building has been tentatively placed between the end of the second and early third century, but this and other inscriptions are dated to middle of the third to early fourth century. If the two brothers were responsible for building the synagogue, it seems the inscription may not have been incised until much later, possibly some fifty years, so could this be a memorial? The intriguing question is why the stone was built into the wall. Was the intention to record its foundation at a future date, presumably when the founders were deceased? If the brothers had donated a lintel and not the entire synagogue, and it their donation was recorded onto the lintel stone while they were still living, then why was the inscription not built into the wall at the time of construction?

The inscription from Daburra likewise gives the name of the donor with no formula, concluding in Greek with the name of the builder. The Aramaic one-line inscription from Kazrin simply states; 'Uzzi made this square'(?).[18] Kefar Hananayah gives the date of the foundation of the synagogue and lists the officers who were in charge during that time, yet there is no record of any donation by individuals or the community and no formulae present.

17. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 12-15.

18. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 91-95; Z. Ma'oz, 'Art and Architecture of the Synagogues in the Golan', in Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, pp. 98-115 (101).

The inscription from Gaza B is bilingual, recording Ananias son of Jacob, in both Hebrew and Greek. The inscription lies below a wreath motif on a column in a *tabula ansata*, and reads: 'To Ananias son of Jacob'.[19] Despite having no formula present, it could perhaps be seen as a memorial, implying 'to his memory', or it could be honouring a living donor. It is, therefore, inconclusive either way. There are several inscriptions from Gaza (Sites A and B), all in Greek and all employing the same wording, 'for the salvation of…', which can be seen in the first inscription.[20] Once again, there is no formula present. These are fairly straightforward types of benefaction where the donors wish it to be known that they have made a significant contribution to the community in a way more Graeco-Roman than Jewish. One inscription from Gaza (site A) notes the donation is in gratitude to God.

To summarize briefly, it would appear that when the donors remain anonymous and there is no 'remembered for good' formula, then it could be argued that these are living donors, and that the need for anonymity could indicate a desire for piety. If the formula is present, then the donors, to whom the formula is applied, are specified, and therefore no longer living. The inscription would have been erected later, either as a commemorative inscription or when the opportunity presented itself for an inscription to be erected, that is, when living donors undertook some new work. Such acts by living donors still retain an element of piety in not asking for blessings, or for God to remember them. Such benefactions would be useful for establishing a family as leading citizens and benefactors within their community without using the effusive language of the Graeco-Roman system.

19. *CIJ* 967; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 72; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 135-36.

20. *CIJ* 967-69; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 130-37.

Chapter 7

THE 'BLESSING' FORMULAE

Jewish Blessings in Epitaphs and Inscriptions

There are many biblical quotations to be found in Christian epitaphs. The Jews, however, seem to have restricted themselves to just two, Prov. 10.7 and 1 Sam. 25.29. For the purpose of this discussion, זכר צדיק לברכה ('Let the memory of the righteous one be for a blessing'), attested in Prov. 10.7, is of primary interest. Although this appears to be a particularly Jewish formula, it is not restricted to Jewish inscriptions.

The LXX renders Prov. 10.7 rather freely as: μνήμη δικαίων μετ᾽ ἐγκωμίων ('the memory of the righteous ones be with laudations'). However, Noy points out that in Ps. 102.1 LXX, ברכה is translated as εὐλογία, and in the Hammath Tiberias synagogue inscriptions ברכה is also translated as εὐλογία.[1] The stricter translation of Aquila renders Prov. 10.7 as μνεία δικαίου εἰς εὐλογίαν, which carries the same meaning as the Hebrew. Different translations were used throughout the Diaspora and examples can be seen in the inscriptions from the catacombs in Rome, where the Aquila version is used (*JIWE* II, 112), the LXX version (*JIWE* II, 307) and a mixture of both (*JIWE* II, 276). There are bilingual and even trilingual inscriptions (*JIWE* I, 183 Tortosa and I, 120 Taranto) which provide the Hebrew text in free rendition with equally free Latin and Greek equivalents. Van der Horst[2] points out that *JIWE* I, 120 reads, נזכר צדיק לברכה ('may the righteous one be remembered for a blessing'), and has on the one side *benememorius* ('of blessed memory'), and on the other *memoria iustorum ad benedictionem*, which is a translation of the Hebrew Bible text, except that it uses the plural *iustorum*. However, *JIWE* I, 183 reads: תהי לברכה זכרונה ('may her memory be for a blessing'), with a verb added and 'the righteous one' missed out. The Latin part contains *benememoria*, and the Greek πάμμνηστος ('always to be remembered'), roughly the

1. *JIWE*, I, 208.
2. Van der Horst, 'Greek in Jewish Palestine', p. 38.

equivalents of the Hebrew quotation. This quotation appears, according to Frey in his introduction to *CIJ* LXVI, 'in Jewish epitaphs, in various forms and languages but most often in recognized Greek versions, which the engravers or those wording the inscription knew from synagogue services in Greek'.

Furthermore, Horsley believes inscription IGUR 1240[3] is Jewish because it includes μνημόσυνης ἀγαθῆς ('of good memory'), which he says alludes to Prov. 10.7.

The use of Prov. 10.7 was once thought to be quite late and limited to the Diaspora, but the discovery of the Beth She'arim catacombs shows that this is not the case. Two sarcophagi, from Catacomb 20 Hall A Room 21, carry the following phrases זכר צדיקים לברכה and זכר צדיק לברכה, which Avigad translated as 'may the memory of the just be blessed' and said, 'this is the earliest use of the phrase as a blessing for the dead'.[4]

Although the examples quoted above all refer to epitaphs, blessings could also be bestowed on the living. Frey, quoted by Park, notes that this term is a general wish or blessing and is used in Jewish inscriptions in a variety of ways, including the dedication of a thanksgiving to God, a benediction of those entering the synagogue, and a benediction of synagogue donors. Lifshitz takes the meaning of the word εὐλογία as 'praise' directed to both living and deceased.[5]

The 'blessing' formula occurs in synagogue inscriptions, and sometimes it accompanies the 'remembered for good' formula. The donor could be remembered for good and blessed in the same inscription, so was there any difference between the two formulae? How would a visitor to a synagogue know whether he/she were looking at a memorial or a donor inscription, if both terms apply respectively to living or deceased persons?

In the previous chapters a case was made for the possible use of the formula 'remembered for good' on memorials to deceased persons, as a special honorific denoting a person's piety in their generosity toward the synagogue. If this were the case then the blessing formula in synagogue inscriptions could also apply to deceased donors, as in the epitaph examples previously cited. Therefore it is necessary to examine synagogue inscriptions containing a blessing formula.

3. R. Horsley, '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society', in R. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 242-52.

4. *BS* III, 250.

5. Park, *Conceptions*, p. 135.

There are 23 inscriptions that contain a blessing to the donor(s)/community.[6] Of the 23 inscriptions listed, 15 contain the formula 'remembered for good' and include somewhere else in the text the word blessing.[7] Five of these contain the specific formula 'remembered for good and blessed/for a blessing'.[8] There are seven inscriptions where a variant of a blessing formula is the only formula used, where there is no 'remembered for good' present in the text, and where the context of the inscription appears to indicate the persons mentioned were living.[9] First to be examined are the inscriptions also containing the formula 'remembered for good'.

The first inscription in this category was found at Tiberias and contains the formula 'remembered for good and blessed':

[דכ]יר לטב וברכ[ה]
תר[ה] אמן

Remembered for good and blessed.
Tor[ah]……Amen.[10]

This Aramaic inscription, inscribed upon a stone, was found in the Roman baths. The context gives no clue about whether it is a donation or whether תר[ה] is really the name of the donor. Likewise the provenance of the stone is uncertain and could have come from one of the several different synagogues located within the town walls. It may have been an epitaph or a memorial plaque of some kind. If it is the latter, then the request is being directed to God that he should remember and bless the donor in the afterlife.

The remaining four inscriptions all contain the formula 'remembered for good and for a blessing'. The inscription from Ashdod is in Greek.[11] This inscription was found on a marble slab, which Sukenik said was part of a chancel screen. However, like the inscription from Tiberias, there is no donor's name recorded, although here the object of the donation was the chancel screen, and so would appear to be a memorial plaque to an anonymous donor.

6. Gush Halav, Kefar Bar'am, Sepphoris, Capernaum, Tiberias, Beth She'an B (2), Isifyah, Horvat Susiya, Daburra (2), Ed-Danqualle, Kefar Kana (2), Hammath Gadara (4) Hammath Tiberias (3), Ashdod, Huldah.

7. Sepphoris, Capernaum, Tiberias, Beth She'an B (2), Isifyah, Horvat Susiya, Kefar Kana (2), Hammath Gadara (4) Hammath Tiberias, Ashdod.

8. Tiberias, Beth She'an B, Horvat Susiya, Hammath Gadara, Ashdod.

9. Gush Halav, Kefar Bar'am, Daburra (2), Ed-Danqalle, Hammath Tiberias, Huldah.

10. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 436-61.

11. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 19-21.

The inscription from Beth She'an B is also in Greek. It records the donation by Leontis who made the panels of the mosaic for his and his brother's salvation. There is not enough evidence in the inscription to determine without doubt whether it represents a living or deceased donor. However, if, as I have suggested in the previous chapters, the 'remembered for good' formula is used to represent deceased donors, then the addition of 'blessing' must also signify the wish for the deceased to be blessed in the afterlife.

The inscription from Horvat Susiya (P26/7) is in Hebrew:

זכורין לטב
ולב[רכה……]
שׁהחזיקו ועשׂו [….]

Remembered for good
and a b[lessing…….]
who endeavoured and made […].

The names of the donors are missing and it is uncertain whether a blessing is included; however, for the sake of argument I have included it in this group. The persons referred to could have been those people who belonged to the 'holy congregation' or 'sons of the town' referred to earlier. The wording, 'who endeavoured', is the same as the wording on the marble fragments found in the synagogue and could relate to the initial founders of the synagogue.

Finally, this leaves the Hammath Tiberias inscription to Profuturus discussed in the previous chapter, which was shown to have been a memorial inscription. It is quite possible, therefore, that all the inscriptions containing this combination of formulae are memorials to deceased donors.

Other Occurrences of Blessings

The remaining inscriptions containing the 'remembered for good' formula all have 'blessing' in the inscription, usually in the concluding line. Those from Sepphoris,[12] Capernaum[13] and Kefar Kana all say, 'May the blessing be his/for him…' and are referring to the donor. In this context we can assume the donors are deceased, hence 'remembered for good' concluding with 'blessing be his' served as a memorial, the wish for God to remember and bless the donor in the afterlife for his good works. The other inscription from Kefar Kana, however, could be interpreted differently.

12. *CIJ* 989; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 1400-18.
13. *CIJ* 982; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 260-69; *CIJ* 983.

דכיר לטב יוסה בר
תנחום בר בוטה ובנוי
דעבדון הדה טבלה
תהי להון ברכתה
אמן

Remembered for good Jose Son of Tanhum,
son of Boutah and his sons
who made this mosaic.
May it be a blessing for them.
Amen.[14]

This inscription has already been discussed more fully with regard to the 'remembered for good' formula, where it was suggested that the blessing was intended for the sons who made the mosaic as a memorial to their father, but only the father was 'remembered for good'. It would appear that the sons were living when the inscription was put up; therefore, the blessing is on their work.

Four inscriptions from Hammath Gadara could also refer to living donors. However, since, as I have shown in the previous chapter, the 'remembered for good' formula is invariably indicative of deceased donors, how would this equate with the blessing contained in these four inscriptions? All four inscriptions follow a similar pattern insomuch as they record multiple donations. Whether the donors are alive or dead could be debated. Yet the blessing given is not to the donors, but to their work, 'may the King of the Universe bestow a blessing on their work'. Certainly, in the first inscription, as I have attempted to show, it is the work of those sons not mentioned in the inscription (those who are living), the blessing is for.

Therefore, when it is specifically the work done that receives a blessing, the donors could be living or deceased, only when the donor is 'remembered for good and blessed' is the donor definitely deceased. To add weight to this theory, there are seven inscriptions where no formula is present but where blessings are mentioned. Four in particular point to the fact that the people referred to are living. The first inscription is from Kefar Bar'am B, in Hebrew, and says:

יהי שלום במקי הזה ובכל מקומות ישראל
יוסה הלוי בן לוי עשה השקוף הזה תחי ביכח ב[
ש]ל[ום

May there be peace upon this place and in all the places of Israel
Yose the Levite, son of Levi made this lintel.
A Blessing on [his work?].
Peace.[15]

14. *CIJ* 987; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 246-49.

In this inscription it is the artisan and not the donor who is referred to; this is confirmed by an inscription from the synagogue at 'Alma. This time the inscription contains two lines in Hebrew with the remainder in Aramaic (P4):

אנה יוסה בר לוי הלוי אומנה רעברת [הרן שקופה.....]

I, Yose, son of Levi the Levite, an artisan who made [this lintel….][16]

Both inscriptions have been dated to roughly the same period (third century CE) and show similar phraseology by the use of the word 'place' to denote the synagogue. Also, both refer to the same artisan. Chiat[17] remarks that the word אומנה ('craftsman/artisan') is unique in synagogue inscriptions. However, the word does occur in a synagogue inscription from Beth She'an B (P19):

דכיר לטב אומנה
דעבד הדה אידתה

Remembered for good the artisan
who made this work.[18]

Another lintel fragment in Hebrew/Aramaic was originally attributed to the synagogue at Meron. However, the only record of its existence comes from a letter written by the Jewish pilgrim Samuel b. Simson dated 1211 CE, and it has been suggested that it was assigned to this site in error.[19] The wording on the lintel says:

זה עשה שלום בן לוי

Sholom son of Levi erected this (lintel).

Presumably the doubts surrounding the inscription's provenance have arisen because this inscription is in Hebrew/Aramaic and mentions a son of Levi, coupled with the fact Meron is in the same area as the other two synagogues, the assumption being made that Sholom is a member of the same family of artisans.

We see in the inscription from Kefer Bar'am that the person who made the lintel Yose, son of Levi the artisan, is alive, as it is a first person inscription, and confirmed by the wish for his property or activities to be

15. *CIJ* 974; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 35-38; Klein, *Jüdisch–palästinisches corpus inscriptionum*, pp. 79-80.
16. *CIJ* 973; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 9-11.
17. Chiat, *Synagogue Architecture*, p. 46.
18. Translated by Bahat in Lifshitz, *Donateurs*.
19. Hüttenmeister and Reeg (*Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 311-14) also believes that it should be attributed to Kefar Bar'am. There is, however, no significant archaeological evidence to back this up.

blessed. This is an interesting point, since as it is quite different from other inscriptions where the donor(s) is/are blessed; we could, therefore, accept that because the activity is blessed then it is ongoing.

The final three inscriptions also show evidence that the persons referred to are living. The inscription from Hammath Tiberias is prescriptive and has already been referred to in the previous chapter. The final line can also be interpreted as, 'May their lives be blessed', indicating it is directed specifically at living donors, those who have recently given or who will do so in the near future. Here we see an example of the blessing formula directed at living donors.

Similarly, a further inscription from Hammath Tiberias records the donations made by Severos and Ioullos, the possible founders who receive a blessing.[20] Here the blessings are extended to two people who carried out and supervised the work and once again it could be said that it applied to ongoing activities.

Finally, the inscription from Huldah, in Greek, says, Εὐλογ[ί]α τῷ λαῷ ('A blessing to the people'). Without doubt, this means the people concerned were alive and well, whether they are the people of the congregation or the people of Israel. This is a common expression found in Jewish inscriptions that is not necessarily connected to donor inscriptions. In fact, three out of the four, do not refer to any donation whatsoever—only the Hammath Tiberias inscription could possibly be referring to a donor and then only one, Severos.[21]

Four further inscriptions record the name of a possible donor. The Aramaic inscription from Gush Halav records that Jose son of Nahum made the column and concludes: 'May it be for him a blessing'.[22] Presumably this could be a memorial and the blessing a future blessing by God in the afterlife.

Two inscriptions from Daburra give little clue concerning the identity of the donor(s). The first says, 'May he be blessed', the second, 'they made the house, may they be blessed'. Clearly these fragments cannot offer much by way of evidence. A further inscription in Aramaic from Daburra records that Eleazar made the columns above the arches and concludes in Greek that Rusticus built it—yet this inscription contains neither the 'remembered for good' formula nor a blessing. The only comment that could be made concerning these inscriptions relates to the first Daburra inscription, where it appears it may be a communal

20. This inscription has been compared to the other inscription from the same mosaic which contained the 'remembered for good' formula in the previous chapter.

21. Kefar Bar'am, Hammath Tiberias, Huldah.

22. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 144-46; Klein, *Jüdisch-palästinisches corpus inscriptionum*, p. 78.

effort—'they' possibly referring to the whole congregation who set about constructing the synagogue, whether by donations or actually offering their services in the construction. It could be seen as a founding inscription possibly set up at the time of construction, when presumably the majority of those involved were still alive. However, as shown in the previous chapter they could all be memorial inscriptions to the initial founders. The fragmentary nature and uncertain provenance makes it difficult to offer any conclusive argument.

A similar situation occurs with the inscription from Ed Danqalle, which once again is too fragmentary for any specific comments to be made. It says, 'Blessed be…Halfso, son of…'[23] We have no idea what the donation was or whether indeed there was one.

There is one final inscription that needs to be discussed. In this inscription, from Isyfiah,[24] the blessings are placed before the 'remembered for good' formula in l. 4, and apply to one person only, Josiah. The inscription is too fragmentary to say with certainty whether l. 2 actually reads 'remembered for good', although logically it should follow a pattern, with the blessings coming before. Nevertheless there is a distinction made between the two formulae, otherwise why not begin with 'remembered for good' for the entire inscription and end with a general blessing on all?

A case can clearly be made for many synagogue inscriptions being memorials rather than donor inscriptions. The formula 'remembered for good' has eschatological connotations that would imply the inscriber/community expressed a wish that the donor would be 'remembered' by God in the afterlife, a wish expressed in various ways in funerary inscriptions.

Nevertheless, there appears to be in most cases a distinction between living donors and memorials to the deceased. This can be seen in the various inscriptions from Hammath Tiberias, where the majority are in Greek (only one is in Aramaic), and may be influenced by Graeco-Roman culture. Presumably the language of the synagogue was Greek, representing the everyday language of the people, yet the underlying, to quote Schwabe, 'tenets of their religion'[25] may still have been in place and is reflected in the single prescriptive Aramaic inscription. The two Greek inscriptions both record significant donations to the mosaic floor. In the first we see a straightforward acknowledgment of the contribution

23. Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 99-100.

24. This inscription is discussed in more detail in the following chapter concerning women as benefactors.

25. *BS* II, 181.

made by a prominent member of the community. There is no 'remembered for good' formula, and the donors, who may have been founders or who are at least prominent members of the community, receive a blessing. There is also another inscription to Ioullos, which says he completed the whole work. So, we could safely assume these donors were alive when the donation was recorded in the mosaic. Also in the mosaic are inscriptions listing other living donors, one example being: 'Maximos. Vow fulfilled. Long may he live.' All of them indicate these were not memorials. Yet, within the same mosaic we find the inserted inscription to Profuturus, already discussed, which is clearly a memorial, and the only one to have translated the formula 'remembered for good' into Greek. As Roth-Gerson notes, '…this inscription, like other Greek inscriptions reflects the use of blessings that were standard in Hebrew/Aramaic translated into Greek in a literal manner'.[26]

The prescriptive Aramaic inscription also lacks the formula. The last line could also be read as 'May their lives be blessed', indicating this is referring to living donors. There is no 'remembered for good' formula and this could be because the injunction made to the congregation to give to charity is being made to living donors, including those who had given recently, rather than commemorating past deeds. If so, it would appear the formula 'remembered for good' occurs only on inscriptions intended as memorials.

At Horvat Susiya all five inscriptions have the formula, including the ones referring to communal donations, while on the other end of the scale all three inscriptions at Daburra have no formula. At Capernaum one inscription in Aramaic has the formula, while the other, in Greek does not. And yet, both record similar donations made. At Beth She'an B all inscriptions have the formula, one in Greek, and one in Aramaic, which remember the artisan who made the work, and another to all the 'Holy Congregation'. So, did some synagogues use this formula consistently, irrespective of whether the donors were alive or dead? Or can specific distinctions be made between memorials and donor inscriptions? The questions posed by these inscriptions are intriguing. It appears the majority of inscriptions that begin with the formula 'remembered for good' are memorials. If this is the case, this would indicate a unique aspect of the Jewish benefaction system applicable only within Palestine.

There is also sufficient evidence to indicate that not all the anonymous donor inscriptions were referring to living donors. Certainly a case can

26. L. Roth-Gerson, 'Similarities and Differences in Greek Synagogue Inscriptions of Eretz Israel and the Diaspora', in A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (eds.), *Synagogues in Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak ben Zvi, 1987), pp. 133-44 (133) (Hebrew).

be made that the Beth She'an inscription refers to the initial founders of the synagogue, and archaeological evidence confirms that it was erected much later than the completion of the building. The same hypothesis could apply to the fragments from Susiya. We could conclude that if the formula 'remembered for good' appears with a name, then it implies a memorial. Without a name, it could still also apply to a deceased one, who wished to remain anonymous even in death. It does not infringe any aspect of piety, which could be seen as a prerequisite for the honour of being 'remembered for good' by God after death.

It appears there is only one universal formula applied to the living and the dead, namely, the 'blessing' formula. Of the 23 inscriptions examined which contain some reference to a blessing, a case can be made for at least five being memorials.[27] These five all had the 'remembered for good and a blessing' formula. With the exception of Beth She'an B and Hammath Tiberias, the inscriptions do not record a donor or donation. It has been shown previously the inscription from Hammath Tiberias was a memorial inscription honouring a donor to the synagogue, so it is feasible to suggest the inscription from Beth She'an, using the same formula, could also be a memorial.

Of the remaining ten inscriptions that contain the 'remembered for good' formula, six also had blessings bestowed upon the donor(s).[28] It has been shown that the Beth She'an inscription is a memorial and there seems good reason to suppose the others in this list could be the same. However, as commented on before, one inscription from Kefar Kana could be referring to blessings bestowed on the sons' work, rather than on the sons themselves. This raises a question: Was it the sons or the father who was the donor? Did the sons make the mosaic as a gift for their father's memory or did they fulfil their father's wish to donate the money for a mosaic and carry out the work themselves? If the sons are the donors, they are obviously alive, so the blessing is for their work, not for them. Perhaps the father is the donor, and it is the work that is testimony to their piety.

Of the remaining inscriptions, four from Hammath Gadara have the blessing bestowed on their work not on the donors themselves, and, as already discussed, could quite possibly represent memorials to past patrons. If this is the case, then the blessing is placed on the work they did because it is an ongoing reminder to future generations of the families concerned to carry on that patronage. In other words, blessings engender future benefactions.

27. Tiberias, Beth She'an B, Horvat Susiya, Hammath Tiberias, Ashdod.
28. Sepphoris, Capernaum, Beth She'an B, Isifyah, Kefar Kana (2).

Of the seven inscriptions containing no 'remembered for good' formula, four can be shown to refer to living persons.[29] We could include the inscription from Kefar Kana in this group despite the fact it contains the 'remembered for good' formula, shown to refer to the father and not the sons.

It appears, the use of blessing in an inscription can be variable and can refer to either the living or the dead. It has to be put into context with the rest of the inscription in order to ascertain whether the donor is alive or dead. However, the majority of inscriptions containing the 'remembered for good' formula either have the blessing attached to the formula, which can indicate the person mentioned is deceased, or the blessing is being directed to the person responsible for carrying out the wishes of the patron. In other words, when the blessing is not attached to the 'remembered for good' formula often the person receiving the blessing is either not the donor, or the blessing is put upon their work, not themselves.

Of the 77 inscriptions examined, a good case can be made for 30 (39%) of them being memorials rather than straightforward donor inscriptions. Analysis of the inscriptions reveals that there is a unique motivating factor behind the majority of donor inscriptions. This motivation meant all members of the community, rich or not so rich, could be benefactors and the benefactions could be material or spiritual. This could only operate within a system where piety and good deeds played a crucial part in the motivation to acknowledge benefactions, and where benefactors did not expect tangible reward or public acknowledgment in this life: that is evidenced by the number of anonymous donors appearing in these inscriptions.

29. Kefar Bar'am, Hammath Tiberias (2), Huldah.

Chapter 8

Women as Benefactors

Before reaching any final conclusions about the nature of a benefaction system in Palestine, it is necessary briefly to examine one other aspect of the evidence, namely, the role played by women in the benefaction system. The reason for doing so is twofold: first, there is a surprising lack of inscriptional evidence from Palestine for women as benefactors compared to women in Diaspora communities.[1] Second, what evidence there is appears to demonstrate that women in Palestine acting as benefactors through piety rather than with material donations. What evidence there is from the Second Temple period for the role women played in the system indicates that their benefactions were often significantly different from those of their male counterparts: for example, the 'worthy women of Jerusalem' whose acts of beneficence were in keeping with the requirements of piety in its purest sense.

Josephus (*Ant.* 18.82) speaks of Gentile women who were benefactors, not only with material gifts to the Temple, as shown by the story of the swindling of Fulvia, but also women who intervened on behalf of the Jews, for example the Roman emperor Nero's wife, Poppaea Sabina (*Ant.* 20.189-96; *Life* 13-16).[2] The greatest praise to be bestowed on a proselyte woman was given to Helena of Adiabene for her acts of piety regarding famine relief, it is she who the Jewish people would acknowledge as being 'remembered for good' by God.[3]

1. Refer to Chapter 6 where the differences between Palestinian and Diaspora women benefactors are discussed more fully.

2. Some scholars have argued that Poppaea was a 'God-worshipper'. E.M. Smallwood ('The Alleged Jewish Tendencies of Poppaea Sabina', *JTS* 10 [1959], pp. 329-35) argued that θεοσεβής here meant that Poppaea was religious and so convinced Nero to respect other people's religious scruples. However, M. Williams (*Jews among Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* [London: Duckworth, 1998) has refuted Smallwood and shown that the linguistic usage of Josephus is against an understanding of θεοσεβής as 'God worshipper'. Rather, Josephus indicates that Poppaea's attachment to the Jewish religion was not specific.

3. See Chapter 2.

Women who were early converts to Christianity are also noted for this type of benefaction. The book of Acts speaks of one woman, Tabitha Dorcas, who was 'full of good works and acts of charity' (Acts 9.36 [NRSV]). Indeed, there were a great many women, some wealthy, who supplied the Apostles with food and shelter on their journeys, even allowing their houses to be utilized for the common good. According to Riet van Bremen, in the Roman East during the early first century CE women were taking a more prominent position in public life and were being recorded in inscriptions for their public donations.[4] The situation in Palestine on the other hand implies the opposite—whereas Gentile women could display a more public image in terms of benefactions, Jewish women it appears, did not.

Women and Vows in the Diaspora

In the Mishnah there is one recorded contribution by an unnamed woman to the Temple. This individual made a vow to give the weight of her daughter, Yarmartia, in gold if her daughter recovered from an illness.[5] The vow was for the salvation of the daughter and can be paralleled with inscriptions from Delos, found there in a building (presumed to be a synagogue) constructed in the first half of the first century BCE.[6] The women's inscriptions record:

> Λαωδίκη Θεῶι ‘Υψίστωι σωθεῖσα ταῖς ὑφ’ αὐτοῦ θαραπήαις εὐχήν
>
> Laodice to the Highest God, who cured her of her infirmities, in fulfilment of a vow.[7]
>
> ‘Υψίστῳ εὐχὴν Μαρκία.
>
> To the Most High, Marcia in fulfilment of a vow.[8]

They in turn are comparable to the vows undertaken by the women in Apamea in the synagogue mosaic inscriptions four centuries later. These women make vows on behalf of and for the welfare of their families. However, the women at Apamea are not making a specific request as the women from Delos or Yarmatia are—nevertheless, they do include their families in their solemn undertaking, of which more will be said later.

The prominence of women among the contributors at Apamea has often been noted: they paid for 50% of the mosaic and amounted to

4. Van Bremen, *Limits*.
5. *M. Ar.* 5.1; *t. Ar.* 3.1.
6. P. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (BEFAR, 217; Paris: de Boccard, 1970).
7. *CIJ* 728.
8. *CIJ* 730.

slightly over 50% of the contributors. However, there has been little comment on the difference between how male and female contributors were acknowledged.[9]

Panels 10-15 of the mosaic floor at Apamea all record female contributors. All of the panels are the same size and contain the same wording, only the name of the donor is different; there is no room for any information about the woman's family, or any personal touch added to the inscription. This poses two questions. First, is there a significant difference between how male and female contributors are recorded? Second, what does the lack of reference to the women's families signify about the role of women in their society?

As with the previous discussion on sponsorship (Chapter 6) comparison can be made with the inscription from Hammath Tiberias, where all the contributors' inscriptions, with the exception of those of the founders, contain a simple formula. They give the name of the donor followed by 'having made a vow; long may he live'. The Apamean inscriptions give the name of the donor followed by 'having made a vow, made…', followed by the amount of mosaic donated. The only exceptions are those inscriptions that refer to the instigators of the project who, as noted above, are all male. So, it would seem that the wording does not in itself show any significant difference in status between the male donors who make a vow and fulfil it and female donors who do the same.

However, the most striking difference between the male and female donors at Apamea is that men are recorded as 'having made a vow, made…', while on all the female donor inscriptions the wording is 'having made a vow, for the welfare of…made…' As already noted, the 'male' formula implies a promise made to other men rather than a religious vow made to God. The addition of ὑπρ σωτηρίας in the 'female' formula adds an extra level of serious commitment, since it makes the welfare of others contingent on the fulfilment of a vow. But why should there be such a notable difference in the formulae when both men and women are contributing to the same mosaic with presumably the same agenda? All the female donors' inscriptions state that the donor has made a vow *for the welfare of* all her people/family. The men's inscriptions say they made a vow *with* their wives or relatives, who are usually named, not for their welfare.[10] The women's inscriptions usually refer to their families' welfare with an unspecified formula, πάντων τῶν ἰδίων ('all of their people'), a phrase which has no other certain occurrences outside Apamea.

9. See Noy and Sorek, 'Peace and Mercy'.

10. The only exception is inscription 16. This text is fragmentary and the donor's name is uncertain. See Noy and Sorek, 'Peace and Mercy'.

Such terms as συναγωγή and λαός would be more suitable for referring to the Jewish community itself. A third-century CE inscription from Acmonia says:

> Ὑπρ εὐχῆ[ς] πάση τῇ πατρίδι
>
> Because of a vow for the whole *patris*.[11]

The word πατρίδι could refer to the city of Acmonia, and Philo says that the Jews regarded the city in which they were born and reared as their πατρίδες (*Flacc.* 46). Furthermore, a number of other inscriptions from Acmonia also use this term and clearly demonstrate that the wish is for the whole city and not just the Jewish community within.

At first sight, it appears that the donations made by women seem to be treated as less significant because of the uniformity of the formulae and the anonymity of the women's relatives. Nevertheless there is another possible explanation. The Hammath Tiberias inscriptions show uniformity of wording is not necessarily specific to female donors. The most striking difference between 'male' and 'female' formulae at Apamea lies in the more serious aspect of the vows made by female donors: these vows can include not just the immediate family, but everyone who is connected to the household:

> Εὐπιθὶς
> εὐξανένη
> ὑπὲρ σωτη-
> ρίας πάντων
> τῶν ἰδίων
> ἐ[ποί]ησεν πό[δας] ῥ
>
> Eupithis
> Having made a vow
> For the welfare of her household,
> Made the place.

In addition, in another inscription[12] we find a vow made by a woman on behalf of her own welfare, as well as that of her children and her descendants. This can be paralleled by a further third-century CE inscription from Tralles in Caria, in which the female donor states she,

> ……(π)οήσασα τὸ
> πᾶμ βάθρο[ν] ἐσκούτλεσα τ[ὸ]ν (ἀ)ναβασμον ὑπ[ὲρ]
> εὐχῆς ἑαρῆς [και ?] πεδὶων τε καὶ ἐγγόων
>
> … made the platform and the inlaying of stairs in fulfilment
> of a vow for myself and my children and my grandchildren.[13]

11. *CIJ* 771.
12. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 54.
13. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 30.

Also, it appears male donors are often not solely responsible for their donations, since they often make them with other family members, most notably females, who are acknowledged as participants and named. On the other hand, the female donors are donors in their own right. They take full responsibility for the vow and any consequences for their families' welfare that might result from breaking it. They obviously have their own income and can dispose of it as they wish, without any need to make reference to their husbands or other relatives. It cannot be assumed that they are all widows, since the inscription of Eupithis mentions an unnamed husband. Surely it would be in his interest to be named if stressing the important role of kinship connections within the community? Rather than diminishing women's status, the independence of their donations adds to it. Their public piety is enhanced by implying that these women were prepared to vow on behalf of the welfare of their family, as well as to contribute to communal efforts.

Women in Palestinian Inscriptions

In the Diaspora, women made generous contributions and were recorded in inscriptions—they may even have held offices of importance within their communities. The work of Brooten has advanced the study of the role of women within the synagogue, certainly as prominent individuals and possibly as office holders.[14] Despite the current tendency to minimize the differences between the Diaspora and Palestine, the evidence from Palestine seems to reflect an apparently different story in the acknowledgment of women as benefactors.

There are only four inscriptions in Aramaic that record the name of a woman, three of which carry the 'remembered for good' formula,[15] with one also containing the 'blessing formula'.[16] There are another two inscriptions from Hammath Gadara that contain the names of women, but they appear alongside their husbands as donors, and only one woman, Anatolia(?) is mentioned in her own right. A further inscription in Greek from Ashkelon also appears to be recording female donors. This is interesting, as it shows women *could* be recognized for the role they played within the community. Yet, unlike the majority of Diaspora inscriptions, these inscriptions may indicate that the honour was given more for their acts of piety than for a single donation.

The inscription from Isyfiah, near Haifa, appears to refer to a woman of some importance within the community:

14. Brooten, *Women Leaders*.
15. Isifyah, Nar'an (2). Horvat Susiya.
16. Isifyah.

[.....] וברוכה [חל׳]פו [ו]אתה דברבי [...]...
[דסיר לטב כל מן דפ] חק ויהב פסקתה תהי [להוה ברכתח...]
[... דכי] ר לטב דכיר לטב יושיה ד (׳) הב [...]

> And blessed [Hal[i]fo (the wife?) of the scholar (Rabbi?)[…….]
> [Let every one who prom]ised and gave his (or her)[donation be?….]
> [Remember]ed for good. Remembered for good Josiah who (?)
> gave…[…][17]

The translation given by Hüttenmeister takes Halifo to be the 'wife' of the rabbi. The word אתה can carry the meaning 'wife' but it can also mean 'woman'. The inscription is very fragmentary and difficult to interpret. However, the feminine suffix attached to the construct noun *baruk* (ברוכה, in 'and she is blessed', feminine suffix attached) at the beginning of l. 1 led Avi-Yonah to believe it referred to a female donor.[18]

Avi-Yonah translated the Isyfiah inscription as 'and blessed be …(of) the scholar…etc.', the term דברבי (at the end of l. 1) being taken to mean 'BeRebbi', meaning a person honoured by their own generation as venerable, seen in l. 4 of the inscription from Horvat Susiya, already cited. This is then understood to mean a woman scholar. However, these various interpretations are still a source of some controversy. Naveh, for instance, gives a different reading, so it has to be admitted that the evidence from Isyfiah is by no means conclusive.[19]

Important questions relating to this inscription are: For what reason was this woman being blessed? What did she contribute? Whether or not she was the wife of a rabbi or a venerable scholar, or a scholar in her own right, the fact remains the congregation was honouring her with a blessing. This inscription has already been discussed in regard to the idea of sponsorship within the synagogue, the phrase ויהב פסקתה being used to represent someone who had made a vow similar to the vows made by the donors at Hammath Tiberias and the women at Apamea. Indeed, Halifo could be compared to the donors in the Hammath Tiberias inscriptions. Like them, it appears she has made a donation after having vowed to do so, a typical act of a female benefactor, as evidenced by other Diaspora Jewish female donor inscriptions. But this is by no means conclusive and she may have been honoured, not for a donation, but because of her good works within the community.

17. *CIJ* 885; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 183-84.

18. M. Avi-Yonah and N. Makhouly, 'A 6th Century Synagogue at Isyfiah', *QDAP* 3 (1933), pp. 118-31.

19. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 39. This is merely pointed out as a matter of interest and does not affect the theories proposed in this work. The reason for this inscription's inclusion is the discussion about the motivation for a woman receiving a blessing. The arguments concerning her status are peripheral.

The two inscriptions from Na'aran refer to a wife and a daughter and make no mention of any donation:

דכירה
לטב
רבקה
אתתה
פינחס

Remembered
for good,
Rivka [Rebekah]
Wife of
Phineas

דכירה לטב חליפו ברת רבי ספרה
דאתחזקת בהדין אתרה ק(די)שׁה אמן

Remembered for good Halifo daughter of Rabbi Saphra,
who has gained merit in this holy place. Amen.[20]

Both inscriptions are set into a mosaic that contains other donor inscriptions. However, the other inscriptions say the person commemorated donated or gave to the mosaic or the synagogue. Admittedly, according to the translation by Vincent and Carrière, it does say Halipho 'gathered her resources', and if this interpretation is correct, we could infer that she had at some time donated something to the synagogue.[21] Nevertheless, this is not conclusive and she could have gained merit in other ways, for instance, by doing outstanding services in the community. It is to be noted that women carried out a lot of communal duties, taking care of the sick, the dying, orphans, and of course dispensing charity, and no doubt some did this with more piety and willingness than others. As Holman says, 'Social aid in the Jewish community of Late Antiquity was an intrinsic part of religious life because "good deeds" pleased God'.[22] Therefore, being honoured by an inscription for doing good works would be a fitting memorial, especially for a woman.

It could also be argued the 'Rivka' inscription could be a memorial to a deceased wife, the husband donating a share on her behalf in her memory. In such a case, the 'remembered for good' formula would imply a bequest made by the wife and fulfilled by the husband, or a memorial.

20. An alternative reading for l. 2 is 'who gathered her resources for this holy place'. See L.H. Vincent, 'Chronique. Découverte de la synagogue des affranchis à Jérusalem', *RB* 30 (1921), pp. 585-87.

21. L.H. Vincent and B. Carrière, 'La synagogue de Noarah', *RB* 30 (1921), pp. 579-601

22. Holman, *The Hungry*, p. 47.

There is a Samaritan inscription from Mt Gerizim that records a Caesarean *popinarius* who gave three *nomismata* 'on behalf of his sister Rebekah'. This inscription raises a further question, namely, whether offerings presented by men may in some cases have originated from women.[23] In this inscription, however, there is no 'remembered for good' formula. As previously discussed, the 'remembered for good' formula has a deeper meaning than being merely a memorial—the congregation are asking God to remember the person named in the afterlife for their good deeds, not just for the fact they were no longer living. It could be that Rivka was a notable person in the community, noted for her good works and therefore deserving of remembrance by God, whether or not she had made any specific donation.

Another inscription making possible mention of females is from Horvat Susiya. The inscription reads:

[ד]כירין לטב
מנחמה ישוע שׁהרה
ומנחמה שׁ[.....]

[Re]membered for good
Menahemah Yesu'a the witness
and Menahemah Sh[….]

Fitzmyer[24] translates l. 2 as 'councillor Yesu'a' because the proper name Menahemah is rare. The syntax is puzzling unless both names are feminine and the first is understood as 'wife/daughter of Yesu'a'. The other interesting point is that the word translated here as witness, שׁהרה, has the connotation of 'martyr' in Syriac, although this word would be like the Greek *martyros*, the meaning of which ranged from 'witness' to 'martyr' in Christian contexts. Perhaps there is a similar connotation in the Aramaic? If so, then the person(s) would be deceased. Interestingly, the inscription was found in the southern portico of the courtyard, set within a *tabula ansata,* which means that it could be indicative of a memorial plaque, rather than a reference to any object donated. Perhaps it served to memorialize these persons for their acts of piety? With the possible exception of the inscription from Isifyah, none of these inscriptions conclusively demonstrates that women were acting as benefactors in their own right.

The only times we see women acting as general benefactors are in two inscriptions from Hammath Gadara and one from Ashkelon. Here we see the woman's name accompanying the husband's—'Lord Hoples and Lady Protone', and 'Lord Leontis and Lady Kalonike'—so it can be seen

23. *SEG* VIII, 40, 1505. I am grateful to Leah di Segni for bringing this inscription to my attention.

24. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. A 55.

as a joint benefaction, presumably from a local elite family. There is, however, an interesting reference to a woman in this inscription who appears to be acting in her own right as a benefactor. Lines 6-7 read:

ודבירה לטב הדח אתה
אנטול יה ד[יהב]ה הד דינר ל יקרח דכני

Remembered for good one woman,
Anatolia who d[onate]d one denarius in honour of the synagogue.

Hüttenmeister has translated the phrase הדח אתה אנטול יה as, 'one woman, Anatolia', while Naveh has translated it as 'one law-abiding woman'. Presumably Naveh has read טול יה as תרה, although he does not elucidate further on why he gives this interpretation.[25] This is the only Aramaic inscription retrieved so far from Palestine that actually records a woman as a benefactor, with no mention of a husband/father. Of course a variety of reasons could be proposed: perhaps she was a wealthy widow or had no male relative to share the benefaction. Her gift would be no less welcome and indeed she would be honoured in the same way as male benefactors, if only out of courtesy. But are we really to believe this inscription is an anomaly? Surely there must have been many wealthy widows only too willing to contribute to the needs of the community? If Naveh's interpretation is correct, then one aspect that distinguishes it is the fact the woman remains anonymous. One is reminded of Yarmatia's mother who made a solemn vow at the Temple. Why did the mother remain anonymous, since, after all, it was she who made the donation? Following Naveh's interpretation, it would be the fact that she was law-abiding that is of significance—in other words, she was being honoured for her piety. On the other hand, if Hüttenmeister's interpretation is correct, then the woman, Anatolia, was able to control and manage her own resources—something the Babata archives have shown was possible for women to do.

Of all the Greek inscriptions from Palestine, there is only one which clearly appears to show women acting as benefactors on their own behalf. The inscription involved comes from Ashkelon, one of the Greek-speaking coastal cities where similarities can be seen with Diaspora inscriptions mentioning women:

(Θεὸς) β(οήθει) κυρὰ Δόμνα Ἰου[λιανοὺ καὶκῦ] ρ(ος/α) Μάρι(ν)
Νόννου εὐχαρ[ιστοῦντες]
προσφέρωμεν. Κῦρ[ος....εγ] γόνιν Ἑλικίου [εὐχαριστῶν]
τῷ Θ(ε)ῷ κ(αὶ) τῷ ἁγ[ίῳ τοπῳ προσήνεγκ]α ὑπὲρ σωτερ(ίας)
Κῦρ(ος) Κόμ[μοδος προήν]-
εγκα ὑπὲρ σωτερ(ίας) [καὶ] ζοήν. ετους θψ'

25. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 34.

> God help, We, lady Domna, the daughter (or wife) of Ju[lianos (?) and Lady Marin(?)
> The daughter (or wife) of Nonnos
> Donate in thanksgiving. I lor[d (or lady)]…, the grandchild of Helikios [donate]
> In thanksgiving to Go[d and] to this ho[ly place], for my salvation.
> I lord [or lady] Kom[modos……donate]
> for my salvation [and] for my life. In the year 709.[26]

This inscription is one of three found in the synagogue. There is a very fragmentary Hebrew inscription containing the 'remembered for good' formula, and another Greek inscription that says 'For the salvation of Menahem and his wife and son'. The date could be either late fourth or early seventh century depending on the chronological timeframe used. Lifshitz and others read ll. 1-2 as '*Lord* Marin son of Nonnos'.[27] However, there is evidence to suggest this may not be the case. For instance, there is a stele from Leontopolis in Egypt recording a 'female priest' by the name of Marin.[28] Indeed, it would be rather unusual to begin the dedicatory inscription with a woman's name rather than a man's, so it could be proposed that all four donors named are female. All are offering a donation 'in thanksgiving to God', which may imply that they had vowed previously, as shown in the case of Yarmartia's mother, and it seems that God had fulfilled their request. The donation is directed specifically to God, through a general benefaction to the synagogue, and would indicate the solemn and pious vows made.

A number of inscriptions from Delos already referred to contain similar wording. There has been some debate surrounding whether or not the inscriptions are Jewish, but the most significant feature, pointed out by Mazur, is the term προσευχή, which 'remains almost exclusively a Jewish term'.[29] In these inscriptions we read that the women are making a thank offering to God for having fulfilled their request, their offering being accompanied by a solemn vow.

However, the question remains why was there such a significant difference between Diaspora women and women in Palestine in terms of the number of benefactions recorded? It seems clear women in Palestine were occasionally given honours and that those honours may have been given because of their piety or good deeds. On the other hand, it is likely that the difference is not between Palestine and the Diaspora, but within Palestine itself. The evidence shows that women in the Hellenized parts

26. *CIJ* 962; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen*, I, pp. 21-26; Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 70-71.
27. Lifshitz, *Donateurs*, 70.
28. IGRR 84.
29. B.D. Mazur, *Studies in Jewry in Greece*, I (Athens: Hestia, 1935), pp. 15-24.

of the country were given more acknowledgment for their participation in the benefaction system than elsewhere in Palestine.

The idea of piety when applied to the role of women in the community seems to be apparent in some recorded instances of benefactions made by women. Just because written testimonies on stone do not exist, it cannot be argued that their role was undervalued or insignificant. There are many gaps in the evidence—for example, we cannot be sure whether or not women were involved in the 'holy societies' spoken of in inscriptions. Also, we cannot be completely sure about the role of individual women mentioned in inscriptions; for example, there is uncertainty about the phrase referring to 'merit' or 'gathering resources' because they imply significantly different motives.

Lapin says:

> The paucity of women in inscriptions implies that not only in the communal arena of the synagogue but in the sphere of family commemoration as well, this was a society in which it was easier for men, in a literal way, to make a name for themselves.[30]

He further adds a comment about the gender differential that is reflected in:

> the fact that, like men, women were occasionally known as 'blessed' or 'holy' (in funerary inscriptions) or bore the title kyra (lady), and appeared regularly as the mothers of their children or the wives of their husbands, but only rarely as playing another social role.

Certainly some Diaspora evidence, unlike Palestinian evidence, suggests that women's role in synagogue affairs may have been a substantial one. However, the evidence for women as benefactors in Apamea also suggests that unusual circumstances were responsible for the presence of so many female donors in one place. A specific historical detail which is undoubtedly of relevance is the fact that in 388 CE at Callinicum, about 20 km from Apamea, the synagogue was burnt down on the orders of the local bishop. Furthermore, Bishop Marcellus in the territory of Apamea was carrying out anti-pagan measures. Perhaps the Jews of Apamea were unaffected by the measures taken against the pagans. Alternatively, perhaps the anti-pagan measures were extended to the synagogue. This may have been the reason why the synagogue needed refurbishment after it had been damaged. The mosaic represents a last communal effort to unify and solidify a community facing a crisis. For whatever reason, women, who may normally have been benefactors in other more practical forms of communal service, perhaps decided to

30. Lapin, 'Palestinian Inscriptions', p. 251.

enter the public arena by raising the spirits as well as the profile of the community during a difficult and testing time in its history.

We can conclude that within the realms of charitable work a similar case could be made for Jewish women in Palestine. As the evidence shows, if women are named in inscriptions, then usually no donation is recorded; when they are mentioned, they are honoured for their pious acts rather than for a specific donation. Therefore, there is no need for a public record, for they are known to all the community by their 'good deeds', whereas a benefactor who donates a sum of money will only be 'known' to a wider audience by a public announcement, that is, an inscription. Paradoxically, the involvement of women in pious charitable acts makes it less, rather than more, likely they would be named in inscriptions as contributors to large-scale building projects. In the Graeco-Roman system, epigraphic acknowledgment of female donors played an intrinsic role, which in the Jewish system it was women's unacknowledged contributions that were more crucial.

Chapter 9

THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: CONCLUSIONS

The literary evidence for a Jewish benefaction system in Palestine during the Second Temple period is scant. There is a similar paucity of evidence for the Late Antique period, with the majority of evidence available for this period coming from rabbinic material; it consequently contains an element of bias. What the rabbis considered to be the ideal was not necessarily what actually happened on a day-to-day basis.

However, the funerary and synagogue inscriptions in Palestine were not usually the product of the rabbis, and they afford an insight into the everyday social and economic relationships within communities in general. Funerary inscriptions, although illuminating, do have limitations. They can supply names and sometimes professions of the deceased, they show family relationships and, occasionally, wider communal connections. However, these are 'private' inscriptions, expressions of family grief, meant for the immediate family and not for public consumption. The other limitation is that they only reflect a certain strata of society—those who could afford to honour their relatives in this way. Such inscriptions therefore are of limited value when trying to ascertain how society was structured during the first centuries CE. This limitation applies even more to synagogue inscriptions.

On the other hand, the evidence from synagogue inscriptions has a different value: they can inform us about how communities functioned and what was considered to be worthy of public record. The inscriptions are, to quote Lapin,

> …the products of specific, generally quite localized social relationships.[1]

Even so, the economy of words in inscriptions has limitations for the amount of actual evidence we can amass from them, and it is all too easy to make generalizations based on small amounts of tangible evidence.

1. Lapin, 'Palestinian Inscriptions', p. 251.

We still have no clear picture of the organization of the synagogue, or how the various officials were elected, or even what qualifications were required to hold office. As a result, we have no way of knowing how

> connections between wealth, communal authority, and local prestige played themselves out in the day to day workings of the communities and their synagogues.[2]

Nevertheless, we can get some idea from these inscriptions of how patronage may have worked within these communities. Lapin has argued for a distinctive Jewish-Palestinian ethnicity emerging from synagogue inscriptions. He cites the mosaic pavement from Sepphoris as an example of the absence of individuality and officialdom, which reflects the egalitarian ethos that de-emphasizes hierarchical structures. Indeed, it could be said this new Judaism, which emerged in post-Temple Palestine, had its roots firmly in an older system of benefaction, which was based upon an ethic of piety. This is a completely different from the system of euergetism in the Graeco-Roman world, where individuality was of paramount importance.

Although the rabbis tried to regulate it, the institution of the synagogue was firmly the domain of the community. Therefore, the inscriptions are, as Schwartz says, 'nuggets of ideology' from which we obtain some idea of community activities and values.[3] Almost all the Jewish settlements built synagogues—some were larger than others, some wealthier than others. The discussion has identified some elements of a shared ideology, although the synagogues were of course not part of any unified system that reflected the daily life of the community, both religious and social.

Contrary to the popularly held opinion that all these inscriptions are dedications to living donors, I believe a good case has been made to show the 'remembered for good' formulae in synagogue inscriptions are memorials to deceased synagogue donors. The economy of words in the majority of these inscriptions makes its difficult to prove conclusively, but a sound case can be made for eight out of the 41 inscriptions that contain this phrase being memorials, and a substantial case for at least half the entire number of inscriptions.

Even in inscriptions that do appear to be commemorating living donors, a case can be argued against this, evidenced in the inscription from Beth She'an B. Archaeological evidence has shown a fifty-year disparity between the foundation of the synagogue and the inscription recording those responsible for the foundation. Obviously, the

2. Lapin, 'Palestinian Inscriptions', p. 254.
3. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 276.

inscription was not erected at the time of the donation, and since the 'remembered for good' formula is present, this must clearly indicate a memorial. This type of action by the community in honouring their deceased benefactors would fit an ideology that encompassed piety very well. This is in contrast to the Graeco-Roman system, where actions rather than motivation or attitude were all that really mattered.

The community, or more likely family members, erected the inscriptions to show the deceased was 'remembered for good' by God—something no doubt to be striven for. At the same time, the family of the donor(s) are asserting their place within the community, by association, but without infringing any aspects of piety through self-glorification.

Living donors are also acknowledged. Here the general formula of a blessing is used, either a blessing upon the donor, or upon the donor's work. Once again, the primacy of the donating family is emphasized, for blessings can be seen to engender future blessings. What is surprising is that there are only eight inscriptions that contain this formula alone.

The communal dimension also needs to be analysed in detail, for this is a prime component of any assessment of the structure of society. The evidence has shown that what is often regarded as a communal effort, that is, contributions from all the community, is not necessarily so. There appear to have been certain 'holy associations' responsible for the instigation of synagogue buildings. Members of these associations may have been wealthy members of the community, while on the other hand they may have been pious but not necessarily wealthy members entrusted with the task. It could have been their remit to collect donations and to oversee the project on behalf of the community, rather than make straightforward donations themselves. They are honoured for 'their endeavours', seen in the inscriptions from Beth She'an B, Beth Alpha, Horvat Susiya, and Jericho, and honoured by the community later. The question is: If all the community contributed, why was the whole community not included in the inscription? The only occurrences of this can be seen at Ma'on and Caesarea, the relevant inscriptions comprising 2 per cent of all the donor inscriptions reviewed in this work, and 0.5 per cent of all the Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions so far retrieved. This certainly does not reflect evidence for a communal effort in, as Levine states, 'most of the Palestinian inscriptions'.[4] Therefore, the communal dimension, as shown in inscriptions, may not be as important as at first supposed. This is not to say, however, that the running of the synagogue was not based on communal involvement.

What do the inscriptions tell us about the donors? Schwartz says:

4. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, p. 423.

> Like the biblical and rabbinic communities of Israel, the ideology of the late antique Jewish community was characterized by tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism, though in a rather different way. While the Torah and the rabbis granted special status to priests and scribes/scholars, there is little evidence for these groups in the synagogue inscriptions. In the quasi-euergetistic world of the community it is the handful of named donors who occupied a special position.[5]

Unlike the Diaspora communities who often relied upon a single patron, adopting the Graeco-Roman euergetistic ideology, the Jewish communities in Palestine appear to have many. The hypothesis proposed is that some communities may have had fewer wealthy members than others; as such, a greater number of (smaller) contributions was needed in order to meet the building costs associated with the local synagogue. There is, however, a danger of making generalizations when it comes to ascertaining who the donors were. There is not usually enough evidence to say with any certainty whether the donors were leading figures of the community, wealthy members of the community, or ordinary individuals.

Having examined the synagogue inscriptions, several things become apparent. If we discount those inscriptions pertaining to multiple donations, such as those found at Hammath Gadara, those inscriptions referring to anonymous donations, and the Greek inscriptions, 24 in Hebrew/Aramaic contain enough evidence to show a pattern emerging. These inscriptions all have a named donor, and all have the 'remembered for good' formula. What emerges is that 11, that is 45 per cent, name the donor as, X son of…, son of…, or wife or daughter of…, though this tells us little about the individuals or the role they played within the community. If these individuals were honoured after their death, then being seen to be a benefactor offered little in the way of material reward in this life. Accordingly, prestige and honour within the community would not be sought in this fashion. The awarding of honours and titles would be surplus to requirements. However, if it is the donor's family who are responsible for the inscription and not the community in general, then the prestige naturally falls upon the surviving members of the family. It could also perhaps release the family from the need to make further contributions, since they could be seen to have done their share, while acting as a reminder to those who had not yet contributed. There are no inscriptions, with the exception of those from Hammath Gadara, that show families continuing to make benefactions over generations. In fact, the number of inscriptions in the majority of synagogues is quite small (two or three), considering the time-span, in some cases

5. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 283.

three centuries, of the building's use. The inscriptions do not necessarily indicate an egalitarian society, but rather an egalitarian method of recording donations, which may have come only from a few prominent families.

The second point is to take issue with the statement made by Schwartz about the lack of evidence for groups such as priests, scholars and rabbis in the inscriptions.[6] The remaining 13 inscriptions of the 24 examined all refer to a rabbi or priest, even venerable rabbis, or sons/wives/daughters of rabbis—in all, rabbis or priests are linked to a staggering 54 per cent of the texts. Clearly, these people played a prominent role as benefactors, but we must also be aware that often no specific donation is recorded, which may imply that they are being honoured for other services to the community. To advertise one's generosity would not be something a rabbi or priest would have felt comfortable doing—in fact, patronage was frowned upon.[7] This appears to be typical of the Jewish benefaction ideology—no one was to become dependent upon a human benefactor, and there is no reason to suppose this ideology would have been radically altered to suit the synagogue environment.

The element of piety necessary for making such donations may indicate that many donations made by rabbis, priests and their families were carried out as bequests of the deceased. The inscription from Horvat Susiya shows that Rabbi Isai vowed to donate a mosaic at a feast. However, it was his son who carried out the work on his behalf later, presumably after his death. This could be seen as giving back to the community that which had been on loan from God, in keeping with the idea that God is the benefactor, and that all material things must be returned in order to be 'remembered for good' by him.

It cannot be overlooked that some inscriptions record other types of benefaction and not just the items on which they are erected. There are several inscriptions that do not mention a donation and it is assumed the donation is the object on which is inscribed. However, there are some important clues that show that this may not necessarily be the case. Several of these inscriptions refer to women. Na'aran speaks of Halipho the daughter of Rabbi Saphra who 'gained merit in this holy place'. This inscription and another also from Na'aran are set into a mosaic with other donor inscriptions. The other inscriptions specifically say they have contributed to the mosaic, while the inscriptions in question do not. Why is this? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact people could be honoured in inscriptions for the pious work they did within the community, perhaps in the case of Halipho, charity work. We cannot assume that

6. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, pp. 282-85.
7. See *y. Ber*. 9.1, 12 a-b.

all inscriptions honouring Jewish benefactors refer to large-scale, one-off donations. Once again this is in stark contrast to Graeco-Roman euergetism where the rationale behind the donation was to increase the power and prestige of the donor. Thus, anonymity or only posthumous acknowledgment would serve no purpose whatsoever.

Chapter 10

'Nuggets of Ideology': The Motivational Force behind a Jewish Benefaction System

Recapitulation

The empirical evidence cited has shown that there were distinctions between the euergetism of the Graeco-Roman world and the benefaction system employed by the Jews. In the Diaspora it appears Jews that lived in the cities were not outside the framework of euergetism; to quote Rajak, the Jews 'manifested a complex interaction with the society around them'.[1] Through this agency, important political gestures were made, for example at Berenice for the honouring of a Roman administrator in the amphitheatre.[2]

Comparisons with Diaspora synagogue inscriptions can be illuminating, but they can also hamper a straightforward assessment of the Palestinian ones. Rajak has explored ways in which the Jews of the Diaspora transformed euergetism as they adopted it, but that is the difference—they 'adopted' euergetism because it was already in place around them. On the other hand, in Palestine they were freer to create their own benefaction ideology. What is significant is, as Rajak has shown, that Jewish benefactors in the Diaspora implied their gifts came from God, not from their own possessions, as pagan benefactors implied.[3] This is a similar ideology to that seen in Palestine, where God was seen as the only real benefactor.

The inscriptions were meant to be read by the community, and reflect the ideology of the community. As Schwartz notes, Jewish synagogue inscriptions are concerned with the memorialization of individuals. He finds similarities between Jewish, Christian and pagan inscriptions and

1. Rajak, 'Jews as Benefactors', p. 38.
2. See Chapter 2.
3. Rajak, 'Jews as Benefactors', pp. 17-38.

notes Jewish synagogue donors were marking their place in the social order of the community by their donation. However, much of Schwartz's argument is made from a Graeco-Roman euergetistic perspective, which, although appealing, can be misleading. The Jewish benefaction system appears to be distinct and unique to the Jews. Concentration on the Graeco-Roman system means many of the unique Jewish features can be overlooked.

If the Jewish benefaction system is differentiated by the idea that all benefactions originate with God, then all benefactions should encompass a degree of piety, something irrelevant in the Graeco-Roman system. This is clearly manifested in those inscriptions where the donor remains anonymous. There could be no reason for anonymity other than piety, the belief that God knows what the donor has done, and it is God who will reward the donor, not the community.

Both Lapin and Schwartz use the synagogue inscriptions to try to evaluate the ideology of the social structure of the community during the Late Antique period. However, because the motivating ideology of a Jewish benefaction system is not fully explored, comparison is often made with the Graeco-Roman system, resulting in a rather distorted picture, leaving many questions unanswered.

The formula 'remembered for good' can be found in the majority of synagogue inscriptions. Lapin and Schwartz, among others, view this as indicating that these inscriptions are dedications to living donors. With the notion that they represent living donors, the inscriptions are naturally viewed from this perspective, and subsequent formulae, such as the 'blessing' formula, are not discussed or evaluated, as they are seen to form part of the same general wish granted to a living donor. This work has examined all the synagogue inscriptions with regard to the benefaction system. All the inscriptions have been viewed as a component of the whole and not taken in isolation, and this has revealed some very useful and important points, which may go some way to helping evaluate the social structure of Jewish communities in Palestine.

It is not within the remit of this work to analyse the whole socio-economic role of the community in Late Antique Palestine. Primarily the aim has been to attempt to evaluate the evidence for a benefaction system, mainly supplied by synagogue inscriptions from the Late Antique period in Palestine. When viewed from the perspective of this system, rather than compared to the Graeco-Roman one, several important elements can be seen. First, it becomes apparent that the benefaction system did not necessarily rely solely upon the wealth or prestige of the donors. Piety and good deeds played a crucial part in the system, which in turn opened it up to everyone. All members of a community, rich or not so

rich, could, in theory, be benefactors, and benefactions could be material or spiritual.

Second, to be 'remembered for good' by God was the reward for 'good deeds' and motivated the way in which benefactors conducted themselves in making their benefactions. This formula could have been used not as an indication by the people that they would also remember the donor, but as a reminder to the people that this was the reward in the hereafter. This idea can be seen in the prescriptive inscription from Na'aran, which says, 'May they be remembered for good, all who contributed or who will donate to this place'. Such an understanding explains why the Jews eventually got the epigraphic habit: not for the glorification of individual donors, but to encourage the smooth running of their benefaction system. At the same time the frequency of Christian donor inscriptions may also have contributed to motivating the Jews to record their donations.

Finally, in agreement with Schwartz, Lapin and Rajak,[4] the egalitarian nature of the Jewish system sets it apart from its contemporaries. Although, in attempting to explain why, too many comparisons have been made with the Graeco-Roman system, as Schwartz says, 'The local religious community was autonomous, self-contained and egalitarian, although at the same time influenced by old Graeco-Roman urban ideas about euergetism and honour'.[5]

As this work has attempted to show, the Jewish benefaction system has little in common with euergetism, apart from the most obvious element of recording benefactions on stone. The motivation is entirely different; unlike euergetism, dependence upon a benefactor is not an essential part of the system, except that God is seen as the ultimate benefactor. The egalitarian nature, a prime feature of the system, renders such dependence undesirable. There are no inscriptions from Palestine that record donations of entire buildings, or large sums of money, although it seems unrealistic to suppose no communities had very wealthy members who could have made substantial donations. In fact, Schwartz mentions the village of Meroth, which in the fifth century had vast quantities of untouched gold it had acquired through extensive trading.[6]

If wealthy patrons did make benefactions, they were recorded in the same way as any other benefactor—by name only, no titles, no show of prestige and no honour other than 'remembered for good' by God, or blessed (presumably by God) for their good works. In complete contrast

4. Rajak, 'Jews as Benefactors'.
5. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 285.
6. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 279.

to euergetism, rewards were obtained in the hereafter, not in the physical world.

The Jewish system is unique. It rivals euergetism in the benefaction arena, but perhaps more importantly, its influence was to permeate the very system of euergetism, which Schwartz says influenced it. The 'popular morality' of the Jews, transmitted through the Christian doctrine of redemptive alms and charity, fused with pagan euergetism, found its ultimate expression in the benefaction system of the later Christian Roman Empire.

'Popular Morality': Hesed

At the outset of this study I outlined an important question: What is the 'popular morality' of the Jews and does this 'popular morality' form the motivational force behind Jewish benefactions? There exists one inscription which states that *hesed* was the motivation behind the act of benevolence, and this comes from the synagogue at Beth She'an B.

Beth She'an has an interesting history. When the Romans conquered Palestine in 63 BCE, Beth She'an was returned into pagan hands and the name Scythopolis was reinstated. During the Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE) the pagan Scythopolitans massacred the city's Jewish community. The city prospered later during the reign of Hadrian, reaching its zenith after the Bar Kochba revolt under Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Jews returned to the city along with Samaritans and both established communities there. In 409 CE the Emperor Theodosius divided Palestine into three provinces and Scythopolis became the capital of Palestina Secunda, a province encompassing the large northern valleys of Galilee and western Transjordan.

The Jewish community in Scythopolis towards the end of the fourth century CE began to build a synagogue.[7] However, archaeological evidence from Beth She'an shows there were two synagogues. The earlier one, Beth She'an A was built around 400 CE, with a third and final phase of building activity c. 600 CE, when thicker walls were added proof, according to N. Zori, that the synagogue was used for defensive purposes.[8] Beth She'an B was located within the Byzantine city walls and comprised a small room within the house of the wealthy Jew Kyrios Leontis and dates from fifth–sixth century CE, with a further phase of

7. See the comments in G. Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century* (trans. R. Tuschling; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), p. 139.

8. N. Zori, 'The Ancient Synagogue at Beth She'an', *EI* 8 (1967), pp. 149-67 (Hebrew).

renovations in the second half of the sixth century. Other synagogues discovered in the region suggest these Jewish settlements were flourishing communities in the fifth and sixth centuries, and were able to exist well into the Arab period. This area had a growing Christian community during the third/fourth century, but there is no archaeological evidence to suggest the Christian communities displaced the Jewish ones.

The inscription from Beth She'an B reads:

דכירין לטב כל בני חבורתה קדישתה
דהנון מתחזקין בתקונה דאתרה
[קדי]שה ובשלמה תהוי להו ברכתה אמן
רוב שלום חסד בשלום

> Remembered for good all the members of the Holy Congregation
> who endeavoured to repair
> The holy place and in peace shall they have their blessing. Amen
> Great peace, *hesed*, in peace

This inscription has already been discussed in relation to the communal dimension of synagogue benefactions. The last line is of interest, for here the word *hesed* is inserted between the two occurrences of the word *shalom*, which means 'peace'. The inscription is recording the communal efforts of the holy association to repair the synagogue and dates from the fifth/sixth century CE. This is the only time the word *hesed* appears on any inscription so far retrieved, and its appearance has to be noted. Naveh[9] (and others) have translated *hesed* as 'kindness', but is this the same idea as the 'popular morality' ideology of which Veyne speaks?

Hesed could also be translated as 'piety', 'mercy' or 'loving kindness', but do they mean the same thing? Surely piety is not the same as kindness? Whatever the translation it would appear that the motivating factor behind this act of benevolence was *hesed*. The holy congregation felt it necessary to state this, possibly to distinguish their benefactions from the pagan and Christian benefactions that would have been visible on a daily basis throughout the city.

It is hard to envisage the appearance of Roman Scythopolis without the architectural and artistic contributions of private, civic-minded donors who adorned the city with great love and commitment as well as with the expectations of being honoured and praised by their fellow citizens.[10]

Perhaps the reference to *hesed* was a way for the Jewish community to express their own unique ideology?

9. Naveh, *On Stone*, p. 623.

10. Y. Tsafir and G. Foerster, 'Urbanism in Scythopolis: Beth She'an in the Fourth to Sixth Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), pp. 85-146 (118).

The second part of this work will examine the evidence for a possible motivation for Jewish benefactions. In light of the wording on the Beth She'an B inscription, and comments made by Veyne and others, the word *hesed* needs to be examined in more detail.

Part II

THEORETICAL HYPOTHESIS

Chapter 11

THE WORD *HESED*

The final section of this work will attempt to formulate a hypothesis for a motivational ideology behind the Jewish system of benefactions. Veyne has suggested the motivational factor behind Jewish acts of benevolence was the 'popular morality' of the Jews, but he and others equate this solely with charity and almsgiving (see Chapter 16). As this work will demonstrate later, during the first century CE there is no proof that organized charity existed within Palestine. Yet there is some slight evidence to suggest other forms of benefaction, similar to the Greek and Roman euergetistic practices were being employed by the Jews of Palestine. This is even truer for the Late Antique period, where the recorded benefactions from the synagogues demonstrate that 'charity' was not the primary focus. The synagogue inscriptions show the gifts given to the community were in some respects similar to the kind of euergetistic practices of Greek or Roman benefactors, but the underlying motivation for these acts was different. In fact, it seems the motivation was one of piety, and in this respect was especially Jewish in nature. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the word *hesed* (חסד) is used on an inscription from Beth She'an B, and it was proposed that this could perhaps be motivational factor behind the 'communal' donation. Therefore, an examination of this word and its implications may throw some light upon the type of motivation behind a Jewish system of benefaction, and possibly lend weight to the argument for a unique Jewish system comparable to Graeco-Roman euergetism.

As Clark points out in his work, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, there are problems

> when attempting to determine the members of a lexical field in a body of literature that has developed over a considerable period of time, and the Hebrew Bible has an extensive and extended literary history. Therefore a decision has to be made whether to confine the investigation to the corpus of known works of a single author, or works known to be contemporaneous, or to the text as it existed at a certain point in time.[1]

1. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 35.

Clark therefore chose to conduct his study of the word *hesed* as it occurs in the Masoretic text published in *BHS*, but as he points out, this does not mean it is *the* text of the Hebrew Bible. Discoveries at Qumran in the Judaean desert clearly indicate that there were several types of manuscripts circulating in the era before the Christian one, and some of their readings differ from those followed by the Masoretes.

It is also difficult to isolate a time period during which the texts were written. Most scholars believe the consonantal text was standardized around 100 CE. Though the reading tradition is considered old, the graphic signs representing the vowels and accents of that tradition are general viewed as more recent Masoretic convention. The beginning of the use of graphic signs for vowels and accents can be dated somewhere during the period 600–750 CE. This is supported by material from the Cairo Genizah.[2] Scroll fragments were found with some Masoretic material included in the text. Yeivin[3] dated the fragments that had Palestinian pointing to the eighth or ninth century CE.

In summary, the Masoretic period began during the sixth century CE and continued through to the eleventh century CE, when the production of the Hebrew Bible as it stands today was completed. The fact the text on which any modern work is carried out is dated to the medieval period also raises problems for the following reasons, given by Clark:

> It precludes any investigation of the semantic development during the period of formation and transmission of the text. Again because the text examined is remote from the original writer or speaker, the objective cannot be to determine the meaning of a passage or term when it was first written or spoken, nor to determine the meaning it conveyed to the original readers or hearers.

Nevertheless, finds from the Judaean desert have indicated that there may have been little change to the texts over the centuries. The idea is to investigate the word *hesed*, as it appears both in the Masoretic text and the LXX, in order to evaluate whether the word gives any indication of a motivational factor that could underlie a benefaction system.

Definition of Hesed

The word *hesed* is generally translated from Hebrew into English as an act of kindness or mercy.[4] There are 206[5] references to *hesed* in the

2. The Cairo Genizah was a room in a synagogue in Old Cairo where thousands of manuscripts were found.

3. Yeivin, *Tiberian Masorah*, 123.0000 164.

4. In this respect it is comparable to εὐεργέτημα, which is a good deed, service or kindness.

5. See Table 1 of the Appendix for a full list.

Hebrew Bible,[6] counting the instances where it appears with suffixes.[7] Usually the word is linked to God's mercy or acts of kindness to his people.[8] It is also used to describe human acts: the ratio of the word when applied to God's act or human act is roughly 4:1. This word has been the subject of three major studies in the last century.[9] The most recent aforementioned work by Clark has amalgamated the evidence for its usage in the Hebrew Bible and re-evaluated its meaning, using modern lexicographical methods. To quote Clark in his conclusions, because former researchers did not concentrate on the relationship of *hesed* with other words,

> The principles of structural linguistics which have been applied to the lexical fields consisting of words found either in the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament have not been used to examine the word חסד. This study has shown that it is possible to investigate חסד in a lexical field.

The first major study of the word by Glueck[10] defined the distinction between the secular, religious and theological use of *hesed*. The secular is concerned with the practice of *hesed* between human parties; in the theological usage it is God who extends *hesed* to a human party. The religious use governs people's conduct towards each other and their relationship to God. Glueck's findings showed that when two parties entered into a relationship that involved them in mutual obligation, *hesed* described the appropriate conduct of the parties and the nature of *hesed* in such a relationship could be best expressed as, 'one good turn deserves another'. By definition, this implies an element of reciprocity.

Bowen submitted the word to further examination, using a different methodology, and confirmed some of Glueck's findings.[11] In particular, when used of human beings *hesed* is essentially an expression of a beneficent relationship growing out of a tie or bond. Bowen uses the

6. On three occasions the word has a different connotation. Twice it is used as a name of an individual (1 Kgs 4.10; 1 Chron. 3.20) and on one occasion it means 'a wicked thing' (Lev. 20.17). B. Davidson (*The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* [Michigan: Zondervan, 1970]) states that it has this meaning in Aramaic but gives no further elaboration.

7. The suffixed forms are: חסדי, חסדיו, חסדיך, חסדך, חסדם.

8. This should be viewed as a reciprocal action. As a reward for keeping God's commandments he responds with acts of *hesed*.

9. N. Glueck, *Das Wort* hesed *im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftgemässe Verhaltungsweise* (BZAW, 47: Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1927); B.M. Bowen, 'A Study of CHESED' (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1938); Clark, *Hesed*; K.D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Enquiry*' (HSM, 17; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).

10. Glueck, *Das Wort* hesed.

11. Bowen, 'A Study of CHESED'.

term 'reciprocal' frequently and clarifies the nature of this reciprocity, which he translates as 'loyal kindness', both when it is shown as a divine quality and a human one. Bowen says that when Abimelech requested *hesed* from Abraham he requested reciprocity for the *hesed* he extended to Abraham (Gen. 21.23). Abraham's response was partly reciprocal and partly in fidelity to a solemn oath, and here *hesed* could best be translated as 'loyal kindness'. However, Bowen also translates *hesed* as 'loving kindness', especially in its usage by some of the prophets—either as a social quality (Hos. 4.1) expressed in a person's relationship with others, or for 'a social beneficence which is an expression of loyalty to a religious ideal'.[12]

Bowen summarizes the meaning of the word and its areas of use within the prophetic literature and concludes that *hesed* was a social quality incumbent upon the righteous man, which broadened the area of application. It was an obligation a person owed to everyone, not only to close relations or a guest in the home. Bowen demonstrates that in the prophetic literature *hesed* took on a new and distinctive emphasis.

A further enquiry by Sakenfeld,[13] using a different methodological approach, provided fresh insight into the use and meaning of the word. However, she rejected Glueck's idea of mutual reciprocity while not attempting to give a translation. She believed that there was no adequate English equivalent, asserting that it was 'both difficult and dangerous to select a single phrase to apply in all cases'.[14]

The main contributions to the understanding of *hesed* by Sakenfeld are summarized by Clark[15] as follows:

1. The type of relationship in which *hesed* is appropriate is not limited to a formal covenant relationship.
2. *Hesed* is an action for a situationally inferior party by a superior party who has a responsibility that is moral, not legal, so to act, and is, notwithstanding, free not to perform the act.
3. It is well nigh impossible to find any single English expression to convey the content, in all its usage, of this extremely flexible term.

What becomes clear from all of these studies is that *hesed* has usually been examined one-dimensionally and therefore cannot easily be translated because it encompasses many different ideas. In order to remedy this, Clark's work investigated the lexical field; clues to the meaning of

12. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 18.
13. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed*.
14. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 20.
15. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 21.

lexical items may be obtained by considering the contexts in which they occur.

The methodology adopted in Clark's study revealed that a deep, enduring, personal commitment to each other is an essential feature of situations in which one party extends *hesed* to another. He says, 'this is a mutual, bilateral commitment, unlike the unilateral commitment proposed by Hills[16] and Sakenfeld'.[17]

This methodology also demonstrates the variety and richness of the content of *hesed*.

Elements Associated with Hesed

Because of the ambivalent nature of *hesed*, its meaning in each context where it occurs has to be ascertained by looking at the syntagms most closely associated with it. Clark defines 'syntagm' in the following manner: 'the term "syntagmatic" was introduced by Saussure to refer to the sequential characteristics of language'.[18] This is the second axis along which language, seen as a string of items in linear order, may be investigated. Each lexical item in a chain contracts syntagmatic relationships with the other items in the chain. A group of items closely linked together, such as a collocation, is called a syntagm. A collocation is a linguistic term applied to groups of lexical items that occur regularly or habitually together. For the purposes of this discussion, those syntagms of *hesed* relating to human relationships will be the main focus of debate.

Clark has demonstrated that *hesed* is frequently the object of the verb עשה ('to do, fashion, accomplish'). Those passages containing this syntagm show, with very few exceptions, the parties concerned have a commitment to each other; this is always the case between humans, and between God and humans. The content of *hesed* is clearly expressed in the narrative and demonstrates it is not merely an emotional reaction to a set of circumstances, but a practical activity beneficial to the recipient. Often in interpersonal situations the action has the intention of preserving life, seen in the stories of Rehab and her family (Josh. 2.12-14), and the man from Bethel (Judg. 1.24). It is also concerned with caring for those in need or making provision for others, as David did for Jonathan's son (2 Sam. 9.7). For Abraham and Abimelech it involved preserving each other's welfare (Gen. 21.12-13). This demonstrates, as Clark says,

16. S.O. Hills, 'The *Hesed* of Man in the Old Testament' (unpublished paper delivered at the November meeting of the Bible College in Pittsburgh 1957), cited in Clark, *Hesed*.

17. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 261.

18. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 14.

that 'To do, to show, to practice חסד are all suitable translations for these syntagms, as is also to express חסד — provided that the expression is not confined to mere words: it is the deed that is important'.[19]

Another important verb is *mahtsah* (מצא, 'to find'), which helps to reveal significant contrasts between *hesed* and the word *hen* (חן, 'favour'). In translations, *hesed* is sometimes rendered as a favour granted, ignoring the fact there is a specific word for 'favour' and that that word is definitely not *hesed*. When *hen* occurs in a situation where the benefactor's status is superior to the recipient, the expression מצא חן בעיני ('to find favour in the eyes of') is most frequently used: the noun *hen* is used chiefly of men between whom there is, or can be, no specific bond or covenant. There are further notable distinctions made by Clark, which are summarized as follows:

1. מצא frequently takes חן but never חסד as its object; whereas עשׂה frequently takes חסד, but never חן.
2. The question of commitment is irrelevant when מצא and חן occur together. But commitment is an essential part of חסד.
3. There is a difference of status between the two parties involved when the expression מצא חן בעיני is used. This status is irrelevant for חסד.

Hesed *and* Emeth*: The Common Bond*

The expression '*hesed* and *emeth*' (חסד ואמת) is a compound phase, and *emeth* ('faithfulness', 'loyalty') can be seen to form an essential corollary of *hesed* in relationships between humans. This phrase is an example of hendiadys, which according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'two substantives with "and" instead of an adjective and a substantive'. It has been suggested by Brongers[20] that, to express a single idea for which a single, completely descriptive word did not exist, the author used this particular expression, and a few similar ones. Clark examined the passages where this expression is used either with God as benefactor or with humans as benefactors. It has been shown it is the trustworthiness or faithfulness of the participants brought into focus by *emeth* in the compound expression. Kochler gives 'lasting solidarity' as a translation.[21]

The phrase is used twice in Genesis 24 with God as the benefactor in the account of the quest of Abraham's steward to find a wife for Isaac. When the steward arrived at the city of Nahor, he prayed God would extend his *hesed* to Abraham, and speaks of how this will happen, the

19. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 186.
20. Reference in Clark, *Hesed,* p. 243.
21. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 255.

manner in which God will lead him to find the right wife, thereby showing his *hesed* to Abraham. Almost immediately the very scenario he spoke of happens, and Rebekah, the daughter of Abraham's nephew, arrives and does what the steward has requested. The steward realizes that God has led him to the right place and brought him to the woman Abraham had specified as a suitable wife for his son. The narrator underlines the complexity and grandeur of the incident as the steward acknowledges that his master has received not just the requested *hesed* but *hesed* and *emeth*:

ויאמר
ברוך יהוה אלהי אדני אברהם
אשר לא־עזב
חסדו ואמתו מעם אדני אנכי
בדרך נחני יהוה
בית אחי אדני

> And he said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham who hath not left destitute my master of His *hesed* and His *emeth*: I being in the way the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren' (Gen. 24.27).

This is no ordinary experience and the narrator emphasizes this by using two nouns that underline the faithfulness of God to Abraham. The hendiadys highlights the commitment of God to Abraham, while at the same time highlights Abraham's commitment to God, which had prompted him to send the steward on this quest.

The steward repeats the phrase later when speaking with Abraham's nephew and his wife, when he recounts the events that brought him to ask for Rebekah as Isaac's intended bride.

ועתה אם־ישכם
עשים חסד ואמת את־אדני
ואפנה על־ימין או על־שמאל

> And now if ye will deal in *hesed* and *emeth* with my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. (Gen. 24.49)

The dignity and elevation of the situation is again emphasized, the steward indicates his desire that his hosts will be faithful to their kinsmen, reflecting the faithfulness God has already shown.

Hesed and *emeth* is also seen in 2 Sam. 2.6-9. Note, in particular, 2 Sam. 2.6, which says:

עתה יעש־יהוה
עמכם חסד ואמת וגם אנכי
אעשה אתכם הטובה הזאת
אשר עשיתם הדבר הזה

> And now the Lord shew *hesed* and *emeth* unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness because ye have done this thing.

When King David is attempting to unite the kingdom of Israel, he is aware of the loyalty of the men of Jabesh towards Saul and his heirs. Clark says,

> One false move on David's part could swing the men away from David to align themselves behind Saul's son. David's approach is intended to elevate the incident above normal expectations of the people of Jabesh. The words of his messengers are conciliatory, acknowledging and commending the Jabeshites' loyalty to Saul. David's purpose is to transfer their allegiance from Saul's family to himself, although there is no open invitation for them to do so. Verse 6 vaguely suggests and the hendiadys implicitly assures the Jabesh-gileadites that David also will be faithful to those who commit themselves to him.[22]

A similar situation can be perceived in the story concerning Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15.20), where once again the features provide a context in which hendiadys is most appropriate, again emphasizing faithfulness as an essential component for relationships involving human *hesed*:

תמול בואך
והיום (אנועך) [אניעך] עמנו
ללכת ואני הולך על אשר־אני
עמך חסד ואמת

> Whereas thou camest but yesterday should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Seeing I go whither I may, return thou and take back thy brethren, *hesed* and *emeth* be with thee.

The permanence and reliability is not so much an attribute of *hesed* as of the parties involved in *hesed*, whether God to human or human to another human. Their relationship is an enduring, reliable commitment to each other in which *hesed* is the appropriate action. This is seen in Gen. 47.29, when Jacob, who is dying, calls upon his son Joseph:

ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת
אל־נא תקברני במצרים

> And deal with *hesed* and *emeth* with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.

This ideal is summed up in Prov. 3.3, where the context is fatherly advice being given to a young man, the practice of extending *hesed* and *emeth* to other human beings is strongly advocated, since it wins not only favour with humans but with God:

חסד ואמת
אל־יעזבך קשרם על־גרגרותיך
כתבם על־לוח לבך

22. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 246.

> Let not *hesed* and *emeth* forsake thee: bind them about thy neck: write them upon the table of thine heart.

To summarize Clark's findings on the variations of human *hesed*: he notes that *hesed* cannot be translated adequately into many languages, including English (and, from my further analysis of the word, I would also like to emphasize, Greek). *Hesed* is closely related to *hen*; it includes grace, mercy and favour, but is much more. *Hesed* is also closely related to *raham* (רחם) which also means 'mercy', 'compassion', discussed in more detail later; it includes compassion but is not merely compassion. *Hesed* is a similar ideal to *amon* (אמן); it includes faithfulness, reliability, confidence, but it is more than that.

The motivating agent for acts of *hesed* is most definitely God. The use of the word in the Hebrew Bible when applied to God indicates *hesed* is fundamentally a characteristic of God rather than human beings, for whom it becomes an act. In Hos. 6.6 the prophet tries to persuade the people to express *hesed* and their knowledge of God in a practical manner when dealing with each other. God's pleasure is greater when he sees his people extending *hesed* rather than making him offerings:

> כי חסד חפצתי
> ולא־זבח ודעת אלהים מעלות

> For I desired *hesed* and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

According to Clark,

> God expects His people to emulate this quality, even if it is only a pale reflection of God's, which he constantly directs towards them in the hope that they will repent and renew the relationship that had its origin in the covenant He made with Abraham… [I]t is rooted in the divine nature and expressed because of who He is rather than what is required by humanity. God expects his people to emulate this quality that He frequently demonstrates, even though people's expression of it can only be a pale reflection. As Morris says,[23] 'In men it is the ideal: In God it is the actual'.[24]

God always gives *hesed* but can never be the recipient of human *hesed*. God declares throughout the Bible he practises *hesed*, *mishpat* and *tsedakah* (חסד, משפט and צדקה);[25] God is the benefactor and the recipients are always human. He contrasts those who know him in this way with those who trust in wisdom, strength and wealth, which do not bring security. God desires his people to return to him and to see them behave

23. L. Morris, *Testaments of Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 81.
24. Clark, *Hesed,* p. 267.
25. *Hesed*, *mishpath* ('justice') and *tsedakah* ('righteousness').

in accordance with a commitment to each other that will result in the wellbeing of their fellow human beings. What becomes abundantly clear from Clark's research into the meaning of *hesed* is that it is not possible to translate this word adequately into any other language. It is important to remember that *hesed* was a *characteristic* of God, and that he expected his people to emulate in their dealings with/acts towards one another, and with non-Jews. God's *hesed*, however, was reserved for his people alone and was non-reciprocal.

The work instigated by Clark, which I have briefly summarized, demonstrates the word *hesed* encompasses a motivation for a benefaction system; the motivation comes from God and his covenant with the people of Israel. Although based in religious ideology, it was meant to have practical applications, especially with regard to human relationships.

Chapter 12

TYPES OF *HESED*

The following chapter will attempt to demonstrate some guidelines or rules of a Jewish benefaction system that can be distinguished within the lexical field. There are two types of human *hesed*: one in which the parties, frequently of equal status, enter into a contract of mutual reciprocity, and another in which the parties, usually unequal in status, have no personal commitment to one another yet require an element of indirect reciprocity, either collectively or singularly. As the act itself is of primary importance, status is not the main issue, for some people of unequal status could perform direct acts of reciprocity.

Redemptive almsgiving is also part of the *hesedism* system, but this involves God's *hesed* expressed through human agents. This kind of *hesed* will be the subject of a subsequent chapter. Almsgiving is the main feature of this aspect of indirect human *hesed* where the parties concerned are *always* unequal in status and have no commitment to one another. The difference, in this case, is that mutual or collective reciprocity is *not* required. In fact, it is an essential feature of redemptive *hesed* that this act should be non-reciprocal. It is redemptive *hesed* that becomes the forerunner of charity as we have come to understand the meaning of the word.

Human Hesed

Speaking of human *hesed*, Hills[1] noted the benefits granted by *hesed* are unlimited in their variety and extent, and include: deliverance from death, proper burial of the dead, perpetuating a man's name through his descendants, protection from harm, material support, fellowship and consolation, and restoration of the sanctuary.

1. Hills, 'The *Hesed* of Man', cited in Clark, *Hesed*, p. 261.

These instances where the word *hesed* is applied to human relationships demonstrate the reciprocal element inherent in the meaning, as well as the variety and range of the benefits such acts bring to the recipient. In Gen. 40.14, Joseph requests *hesed* from the butler who he helped:

כי אם־זכרתני
אתך כאשר ייטב לך ועשׂית־נא
עמדי חסד והזכרתני אל־פרעה
והוצאתני מן־הבית הזה

> But think on me when it shall be well with thee and show *hesed*, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house.

Jacob also requests *hesed* from Joseph, when he requests Joseph show *hesed* to him by not burying him in Egypt. What is interesting is *hesed* never plays a part in the relationship between Joseph and his brothers. While Joseph provides them with food and arranges for them to settle in Goshen, as well as his desire to see Benjamin and Jacob, all elements of commitment on Joseph's part, his brothers, on the other hand, feel no commitment. Therefore no reciprocity is evident; the use of *hesed* is precluded in the relevant passages (e.g. Gen. 50.15-21).

In 2 Sam. 9.7 David requests *hesed* from Jonathan who promises to inform him about Saul's reaction to his absence. In return Jonathan requests David to extend *hesed* to him and his descendants. David keeps his promise by seeking out Mephibosheth:

ויאמר לו דוד
אל־תירא כי עשׂה אעשׂה עמך
חסד בעבור יהונתן אביך
והשׁבתי לך את־כל־שׂדה שׁאול
אביך ואתה תאכל לחם
על־שׁלחני תמיד

> And David said unto him, 'Fear not: for I will surely shew thee *hesed* for Jonathan thy father's sake and I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father: and thou shalt eat bread at my table continuously'.

In the book of Joshua, Rehab requests from Joshua's spies in Jericho they repay her for the help she gave by saving the lives of her family. At Josh. 2.12 we read:

ועתה השׁבעו־נא
לי ביהוה כי־עשׂיתי עמכם
חסד ועשׂיתם גם־אתם עם־בית
אבי חסד ונתתם לי אות אמת

> Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord since I have shewed you *hesed*, that ye will also shew *hesed* unto my father's house and give me a true token.

A similar theme, found in Judg. 1.24, is also the content of the *hesed* offered to the man of Bethel:

וירְאוּ הַשֹּׁמְרִים
אִישׁ יוֹצֵא מִן־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
הַרְאֵנוּ נָא אֶת־מְבוֹא הָעִיר
וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמְּךָ חָסֶד

> And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city and they said unto him, 'Shew us, we pray thee the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee *hesed*'.

At first reading one assumes the spies will save the man's life, providing he tells them what they want to know. However, the story continues, and we learn not only that his life and the lives of his family are spared, but also that he goes to the land of the Hittites where he builds a city. Obviously he had acquired the wherewithal to do this: perhaps this indicates that he was paid handsomely for his information. Whatever the case, it hardly reads as if the man was forced on pain of death to tell them what they wanted to know.

The *hesed* requested by Ben Hadad also involves the preservation of life. 1 Kings 20.31 reads:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו
עַבְדֶיךָ הִנֵּה־נָא שָׁמַעְנוּ כִּי מַלְכֵי
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־מַלְכֵי חֶסֶד הֵם
נָשִׂימָה נָא שַׂקִּים בְּמָתְנֵינוּ
וַחֲבָלִים בְּרֹאשֵׁנוּ וְנֵצְאָה אֶל־מֶלֶךְ
יִשְׂרָאֵל אוּלַי יְחַיֶּה אֶת־נַפְשֶׁךָ

> And his servants said unto him, 'Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are kings of *hesed*: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life'.

And the preservation of life also results from the *hesed* shown by the Kenites to the people of Israel in 1 Sam. 15.6:

יֹאמֶר שָׁאוּל
אֶל־הַקֵּינִי לְכוּ סְרוּ רְדוּ מִתּוֹךְ
עֲמָלֵקִי פֶּן־אֶסְפְּךָ עִמּוֹ וְאַתָּה
עָשִׂיתָה חֶסֶד עִם־כָּל־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעֲלוֹתָם מִמִּצְרָיִם וַיָּסַר
קֵינִי מִתּוֹךְ עֲמָלֵק

> And Saul said unto the Kenites, 'Go, depart, set you down from among the Amalekites lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed *hesed* to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt'. So the Kenites departed from the Amalekites.

These examples show the variety of forms *hesed* in human relationships could take between Jews, as well as the inclusion of non-Israelites into the system.

God's Hesed *and* Raham

The previous section dealt with human–human relations, though it also touched on the fact that *hesed* also played a significant role in divine–human relations. In contrast to human *hesed*, God's *hesed* (חסד יהוה) is accompanied by other grammatical elements, elevating the idea of *hesed* to its ultimate definition, that of 'loving kindness'. One aspect important for this work is the use of the verb *nathan* (נתן, 'to give'), which is used only twice with *hesed* but occurs several times with *raham* (רחם, 'compassion') and *hen* (חן, 'favour'). Usually *hesed* predominates in God–human and human–human relationships; however, *raham* and *hesed* share a common semantic field. *Raham* is used with the verb *nathan* to show that God, although he is the subject of the verb (the instigator), is not the agent of the activity described by the element. The agent is a person in a position to give practical assistance, but it is not essential for any commitment to exist between the two human parties.

Therefore, as Clark noted, *raham* and *hesed*, when applied by God to his people, are closely related to pardon and forgiveness.[2] The key word here is *raham*. Like *hesed*, this word can be translated as compassion or mercy, so is there a difference for its usage, and if so, what is it and how do we distinguish the difference?

According to Clark,[3] *hesed* and *raham* are found more in contiguity than parallel; however, there are four instances where they are parallel and in each instance refer to an attribute of God.[4] Clark says the evidence he cites shows God's *raham* is thus intimately connected with his *hesed*, and there is an almost bewildering complexity in the relationship between these two elements, which he summarizes as follows:

A They are so frequently closely connected that it is difficult to distinguish between them, while the evidence supports the hypothesis that the two elements cover the same region in the semantic field. Instances of this relationship can be summarized as follows:
   1. Both are taken away when rebellious Israel rejects God (Jer. 16.5).

2. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 202.
3. Clark, *Hesed*, pp. 142-46.
4. Isa. 63.7; Pss. 51.3; 69.17; Lam. 3.22.

2. Their removal is suspected by one who feels forsaken by God (Ps. 77.9-10).
3. Their continuance is requested by one of the faithful (Ps. 40.12).
4. Their enduring nature is asserted by the poet (Lam. 3.22).

B. Each element is associated with similar requests. The preservation of life (*hesed* in Ps. 119.159, *raham* in Ps. 119.77, 156). For God to remove from his sight and memory the sins of the psalmist (*hesed* in Ps. 25.7, and *raham* Ps. 51.3).

However, Clark points out there is evidence to suggest the regions of the semantic fields covered by *hesed* and *raham* do not overlap entirely. Psalm 145.8-9 refers to *hesed* as an attribute peculiar to the relationship between God and Israel, while *raham* is extended to people of all nations. In Isa. 54.7-8 *raham* enables God to gather the faithless Israel to Himself but *hesed* enables Him to show compassion. Clark says: 'This suggests that חסד is the basic, the primary quality that is expressed as רחמים'.[5]

This idea is supported by those who distinguish between the application of the singular and plural forms of *hesed*.[6] Thompson regards the singular *hesed* as referring to 'a permanent attitude of magnanimity and devotion', whereas the plural denotes 'a number of specific acts in which *hesed* is displayed'.[7]

In passages where the two words occur together in the singular, *hesed* normally precedes *raham*, the writer implying that *hesed* is being shown in certain defined ways. However, the plural *hesedim* follows *rahamim* in only Isa. 63.7 and Ps. 25.6, where Thompson says, 'the חסדים and the רחמים were both regarded as specific examples of חסד יהוה'.

In Dan. 9.4, Daniel addresses God as the God who extends *hesed* to those people who love and obey him. Later, in v. 9, he says even though Israel has rebelled and disobeyed God they still experience his *raham* and forgiveness because he has not allowed the calamities that befall them to destroy them but cause them to seek his favour and put an end to their sinfulness. In Ps. 77.9-10, the psalmist queries whether God has cut off both his *hesed* and his *raham*.

There are several passages where God withholds his *raham* from his people—namely, Isa. 63.15; 9.16; Jer. 13.14; Hos. 1.6; and Zech. 1.12—yet on only one occasion does God withhold his *hesed*, at Jer. 16.5. Therefore, *hesed* is the basic quality expressed as *raham*. As Clark says:

5. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 146.
6. Bowen, 'A Study of CHESED', and J.B. Durmortier, 'Un rituel d'intronisation: Le Ps lxxxix 2-38', *VT* 22 (1972), pp. 175-96, both cited in Clark, *Hesed*, p. 147.
7. J.A. Thompson, 'The Vocabulary of Covenant in the Old Testament' (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1963), p. 312, cited in Clark, *Hesed*, p. 147.

> חסד is not only extended to, but also experienced by, those who obey God, those who are rebellious are unaware that חסד is being extended to them. God has allowed them to be punished in order to remind them that they have sinned, but that He is ready to pardon them and restore them when they return penitently to Him.[8]

Although these passages allow an insight into the relationship between the two words, they still imply a complexity that cannot be reduced to a uniform pattern. All that can be discerned is in the regions of the semantic field covered by these words; they overlap but do not coincide.

The semantic relationship between *hesed* and *raham* is summarized by Clark as follows.[9]

1. *Raham* can be seen as a motivating force that leads to the expression of God's *hesed* (Isa. 54.7-8).
2. *Hesed* is peculiar to the relationship between God and Israel, but *raham* is not so restricted (Ps. 145.8-9).
3. *Hesed* is experienced by those who fear God, but *raham* is extended also to rebellious Israel (Dan. 9.4, 9). Nevertheless, none of these passages throws any light onto the semantic distinction between the words, except, as Glueck notes,[10] that they are distinguished by the obligatory aspect of *hesed* that is absent from *raham*.

These passages are all concerned with God's *hesed* and *raham* towards humans. However, it is the attitude humans express to each other that is of importance when considering the mechanism of almsgiving. Since Clark's work does not encapsulate this aspect of *raham*, I will now attempt to do so.

Human Raham

Other passages provide evidence that human *raham* is a deep-seated emotion which is aroused spontaneously, most often when someone becomes aware of another person's need or distress. Clark quotes Eichrodt as describing divine *raham* as 'a quite spontaneous expression of love evoked by no kind of obligation', and Morris sees this as an appropriate description of human *raham* as well.[11]

8. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 147.
9. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 158.
10. N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (trans. A. Gottschalk; New York: Ktav, 1967), p. 62.
11. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 237-38, and Morris, *Testaments of Love*, pp. 85-86, both cited in Clark, *Hesed*, p. 148.

In human situations, *raham* manifests itself in practical aid toward a needy person, without involving any commitment between the giver and the receiver. It has already been demonstrated in Gen. 50.15-20 that *hesed* never plays a part in the relationship between Joseph and his brothers, despite the fact that there is considerable commitment on the part of Joseph. In Gen. 43.14, Joseph is speaking to his brother Benjamin. Joseph is unaware of his emotional reaction. Here the word *raham* is used, and this distinguishes the relationship between Joseph and his brother Benjamin:

ואל שׁדי יתן
לכם רחמים לפני האישׁ ושׁלח
לכם את־אחיכם אחר
ואת־בנימין ואני כאשׁר שׁכלתי
שׁכלתי

> And God give thee *rahamim* before the man that he may send away thy other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved of my children I am bereaved.

Joseph is apparently acting spontaneously, out of love and compassion for his brother. What is important is that no commitment is necessary on Benjamin's part, or indeed on any of the brothers' parts for Joseph to act benevolently toward them.

This is further reinforced in Neh. 1.11, where Nehemiah records a prayer:

ותנהו לרחמים לפני האישׁ הזה
ואני הייתי משׁקה למלך

> and grant him *rahamim* in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

Nehemiah 2.1-8 recounts how the prayer is answered. Once the king sees the sadness of the cupbearer, he is concerned and immediately authorizes Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem. While Nehemiah has a commitment toward the king to serve the king, there is no such commitment incumbent upon the king.

Clark has demonstrated the significant difference between the two words with relation to human acts in his analysis of the *nathan* syntagms. The verb *nathan* ('to give') is used only twice with *hesed* but occurs six times with *raham* and *hen* (see Chapter 11). When used with *hesed*, *nathan* is always accompanied by different field elements. However, there is a passage in the Bible where the two words occur together, and where their difference is significantly highlighted. In Dan. 1.9,[12] God is the instigator but not the agent of the act:

12. The other occurrence is in Mic. 7.20.

ויתן האלהים
את־דניאל לחסד ולרחמים
לפני שר הסריסים

> Now God brought Daniel into *hesed* and *rahamim*
> with the prince of the eunuchs.

The passage recounts the story of Daniel and his imprisonment in Babylon. When he and his fellow Jewish prisoners are forced to eat the 'unclean' food sent to them by the king we see God's role is to soften up the official who mediates God's *hesed* and *raham* to Daniel and his companions by permitting them to test their proposed diet. The immediate outcome of the divinely inspired *hesed* is that they do not defile themselves by eating the food provided by the king of Babylon. There is no commitment between Daniel and the official, but the commitment by Daniel to God is apparent and the final outcome results from God's commitment to Daniel. In other words, this passage demonstrates that when God extends his *hesed*, through a human agent, then the agent manifests this element of *hesed* as a less committed version of human *hesed*, that is, *raham*.

Raham occurs in five more passages with the verb *nathan*: at Gen. 43.14; 1 Kgs 8.50; Ps. 106.46; Neh. 1.11; Jer. 42.12. Each time God is the source and in all but one instance a human agent mediates the *raham*. The relevant passages display the following features:

1. The recipient is a person in need who is unable to do anything about it.
2. The agent, in a position of authority, gives practical assistance.
3. A commitment between the agent and recipient is not essential.

These are essential features of giving and receiving *raham*. It apparently encompasses a deep-seated emotion but does not simply remain a feeling of goodwill. It is an emotion expressed in practical assistance, which may take place between parties who previously had no contact, nor are likely to have contact in the future.

Chapter 13

A Benefaction System Based on *Hesed*

The previous chapters have attempted to show how *hesed* is used in the Hebrew Bible: the following chapters will now suggest how it could have been a motivational force behind a Jewish benefaction system in both biblical and non-biblical sources.

For the purpose of this chapter, human *hesed* will be simplified by dividing it into two separate categories: *direct* and *indirect hesed*. Direct *hesed* is present in situations where the parties, most frequently of equal status, enter into a contract of mutual reciprocity, while indirect *hesed* arises when the parties, usually unequal in status, have no personal commitment to one another yet require an element of indirect reciprocity, either collectively or singularly. As the act itself is of primary importance, status is not the main issue; some people who were unequal in status could perform acts of direct reciprocity. Therefore, I have assigned to this system of doing 'good deeds' or services to gain merit with God (and one's fellow individuals) a neologism: I have called it *hesedism*.

Hesedism seems to have been applied as early as the seventh century BCE in the Deuteronomic laws,[1] designed to encompass the needs of an agrarian society. These laws supplied the means for provision for a large number of different people, including the poor, but not consisting solely of them. In modern sociological terms, it was a 'dyadic' contract, one of horizontal reciprocity, where temporary imbalances are corrected by horizontal exchange.[2] This means that people of equal status exchange goods or favours, each to benefit the other. In an agrarian society, the success of the society largely depends upon this form of dyadic contract. It is in everyone's best interests to offer assistance in times of need. But it

1. According to B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan (eds.), *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), the main part of the book of Deuteronomy was probably composed during the reigns of Manasseh (696–642 BCE) and Josiah (639–609 BCE). Other parts of the book were probably composed after Josiah's death in 609 BCE.

2. A term coined by Foster in 1967; see Dreze and Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*.

is also equally important that the assistance offered is within the capabilities of the assisted to repay, whether this is in the form of money or physical help.

Hesedism appears to be universal of a dyadic system since the same values are being emphasized in Greek literature from the same period when Hesiod, the eighth-century BCE Greek poet, speaking of an agrarian community, expounds the virtues of a dyadic contract and the benefits it brings:

> Be cordial to your neighbour, for when trouble comes at home, a neighbour's there at hand… No cow of yours will stray away if you have watchful neighbours. Measure carefully when you must borrow from your neighbour, then, pay back the same, or more, if possible, and you will have a friend in time of need.[3]

The 'Poor' and 'Needy'

In Deuteronomy, however, this becomes a prescription rather than an ideal. The word *hesed* occurs only once in Deuteronomy in the absolute, but its appearance is vitally important. Deuteronomy 5.9 reads:

> ועשׂה חסד
> לאלפים לאהבי ולשׁמרי
> מצותו (מצותי)

> And showing *hesed* unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.[4]

The phrase ועשׂה חסד shows quite clearly that God will extend his *hesed* (which is an exalted form of beneficence) to those who carry out his commands. But God is also requesting a practical activity, not just an ideal. These commandments are to be carried out in a manner requiring a practical commitment to one another. Therefore, the provisions made for certain groups in these laws presuppose they will reciprocate in some way. The laws (see Table 2 in the Appendix) make specific reference to Levites, widows and orphans. All these groups are made up of people who were not necessarily poor. The Levite performs the sacrifices on behalf of the community and because of this he is precluded from working his land; yet he gives the community a vital service, requested of them by God, and for which the community reimburse him. Likewise, a similar case could be made for widows, who may have performed

3. Hesiod, *Work and Days* 343-51.

4. This is an instance where *Kethib* says 'his commandments', but *Qere* reads 'my commandments'. *BHS* gives the *Qere* reading. The differing readings do not affect the interpretation offered in the present chapter.

other services for the community, including such time-consuming tasks as looking after the children, caring for the sick and tending to the dead. Orphans are part of the community and they too need care, if only for the simple reason that they will no doubt contribute to their community in the future. However, another significant factor may be found in the fact that some may have been left land or money requiring the oversight of a guardian. However, it should be stressed that the Hebrew word יתום, translated as 'orphan', actually means 'fatherless' and does not necessarily have the same connotation as the English word, the dictionary definition of which is typically 'one whose *parents* are dead'. There are 17 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of this word יתום.[5] In Deuteronomy, the important phrase to note is:

משפט יתום ואלמנה

judgment of the fatherless and the widow.[6]

Importantly, the biblical references are not applied to orphans as we understand the term, but to children who have no father; like the widow who has no husband, an orphan is understood to be any child who has no male responsible for representing him/her legally. Being an orphan does not necessarily involve poverty. Therefore, it is justifiable to assume that none of these groups mentioned in Deuteronomy were necessarily 'poor'.

Within the Exodus dynamic[7] the supposition is one of a society without oppression or poverty. Yet the covenant given on Mt Sinai supposes the future existence of poverty in Israel. Deuteronomy changes the semantic field of poverty. The words to define 'poor' are reduced in number and I have classified them into two groups (see Table 2 in the Appendix). Group 1 contains אביון, which could be classified as poor or in need, and group 2, עני, representing the abject poor. There is a passage in Deuteronomy containing both words, indicating there were distinctions in the levels of poverty. Deuteronomy 15.11 reads:

לאמר פתח
סתפתח את־ידך לאחיך לעניך
ולאבינך בארצך

5. Deut. 10.18; 24.17; 27.19; Job 6.24; 24.9; 31.17, 21; Pss. 10.14, 18; 146.9; Isa. 1.17, 23; Jer. 5.28; 7.6; 22.3; Ezek. 22.7; Hos. 14.4.

6. Deut. 10.18. Also Deut. 24.17; 27.19.

7. I have assumed that there is no need to elaborate on the Exodus message (Exod. 3.8) and God's promise to his people. It is interesting to note that the Law Code of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE) also promised help to the poor, yet his laws do not mention the poor at all. See *ANET*, pp. 163-80, for the full details of the Law Code of Hammurabi.

> You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and to your needy in your land.

There are further occurrences of the word pairing of poor *and* needy in numerous other passages throughout the Bible[8] that emphasize the distinction between those who were regarded as abject poor ('poor') and those temporarily fallen on hard times ('needy'). It appears אביון corresponds to 'needy', while עני translates as 'poor'. The distinction presumably is between someone who has temporary needs and someone who is permanently in a state of abject poverty, due to weakness or infirmity and seemingly has no recourse whatsoever to alleviate their situation. This can be seen by the nature of the laws in Table 2 and the entitlements each group could claim.

This can further be demonstrated by looking at seven laws that form part of a system of fourteen laws. Their common element always provides for the economic maintenance of and participation in the life of Israel by certain groups of the population. These are always the groups who do not possess land of their own (see Table 2).

The groups consist of slaves, Levites, strangers, orphans and widows. According to the different needs of each group, their involvement in all fourteen laws varies. Sacrifices and tithes fall mainly to the Levites, and there is no mention of orphans and widows, who are the recipients of harvesting, along with strangers. In some they all come together, especially those concerning the two annual harvest pilgrimage feasts.

The accepted reasoning concerning these laws is that they reflect a concern for the poor, yet when we examine them we see the words for poor do not occur at all. Would slaves, for example, be considered 'poor'? Usually they did not lack food or clothing, what they did lack was freedom. Admittedly, some slaves would be worse off than others, though speaking in general terms we must assume they were not always poor: to assign them to the ranks of the poor creates an artificial poverty. The same could well be true of the other groups; all of these people were, for whatever reason, not able to cultivate their own land. It seems apparent what Deuteronomy is doing is to reclassify the structure of society so as to provide for these people. It is possible, according to Deuteronomy, to create a world in which one could be a stranger, orphan or widow without being poor. A widow has the same status as a Levite, a very honoured member of the community; similarly, slaves are also raised to the same level, participating in feasts in the same way as everyone else. It is apparent that it is not the status of the individual that

8. See also Deut. 15.4, 7; Pss. 72.4; 113.7; Prov. 14.31, where the distinction is most clearly emphasized.

was important, for a slave or widow would not have been honoured like a Levite; yet the fact is that their needs were similar and they would be able to reciprocate in some way. Even slaves reciprocate, although this may appear a little obscure. If slaves were not reasonably well looked after, then their usefulness would decline, which in turn causes problems for the owner. So, by making sure the owner gives them sufficient food, the reciprocation of a productive workforce is ensured.

The two words for 'poor' occur in only one group of laws (see Table 3 in the Appendix). These laws are primarily concerned with a situation in which poverty may occur, that of increasing indebtedness, and they deal with the remission of debts on a seven–year cycle.[9] If a farmer ran into difficulties and needed a loan, Deuteronomy (15.7-11) urges their neighbour to make them a loan. In order to repay the loan the debtors may have to offer themselves as day labourers. If the creditor offers to take a pledge, then there are guidelines on the most acceptable way to handle it. If it comes to the point where the debtor is obliged to enter debt slavery, and if it happens to be a fallow year, the lender, according to Deuteronomy, is not allowed to exact payment and the debt is cancelled. If the debtor becomes a debt slave in another year, the servitude must be cancelled in the fallow years and the creditor has to give the debtor the means necessary for starting a new economic existence. In essence, these laws demand that a needy person should receive help from their neighbour even if it means their neighbour may be at risk of a financial loss.

We can summarize the situation outlined in Deuteronomy by condensing two seemingly contradictory sentences: 'the poor will never cease out of the land' (Deut. 15.11), and 'there will be no poor among you' (Deut. 15.4). The Hebrew word used for poor is אביון, a needy person. This can be summarized as 'there will always be poverty' or 'always people in need', but this stimulates fellow Jews to react against it and alleviate it immediately. Because of this reaction, which always calls forth a divine blessing, and because of the functioning system of provisions for different groups of people in Israel, there will theoretically be no permanently poor people. This implies that there will only be people in temporary need, for which acts of *hesed* provide a solution. This is an act of indirect *hesed*, one in which both the parties are unequal in resources but where an element of reciprocity is expected—it is an act that benefits the community as a whole and maintains the status quo.

In Leviticus, however, there is an apparent regression—there is nothing in this code corresponding to the fourteen laws in Deuteronomy.

9. Deut. 15.1-6 contains three of these laws, the other two can be found in Deut. 24.

It should be noted that many scholars disagree about the order in which the biblical books were written. The widely accepted view is that Deuteronomy is the earlier work, and that therefore Leviticus later assumes poverty will be a permanent feature of life. Deuteronomy guarded against this by elevating those individuals classified as 'poor' to a status encompassing other individuals who were not. Leviticus, on the other hand, creates a new classification of 'poor'.[10] For example, Deuteronomy provided something to be left in the fields after harvesting, specifically for the stranger, orphan and widow as part of the provision for groups without landed property; these people were not categorized as poor. In Leviticus, however, what is left in the fields is for the stranger and the poor (עני). Not only does Leviticus presuppose the normal existence of poor people by replacing orphan and widow with the general word 'poor', it also demotes them to this class of person. Another way of viewing this is to reason that any orphan or widow who was not especially poor would not be entitled to this provision. Therefore, to assume every widow or orphan was poor is incorrect. Presumably anyone, whatever their status, who fell into the category encompassed by the word 'poor' would now be entitled to this share. Could this be a reflection of the increasing numbers of poor people it was beyond the capabilities of the community to control?

A Change of Perspective

Whatever the case, the system instigated by Deuteronomy appears at some time to have been abolished. The economic resistance to the first stages of poverty is replaced by a recurrent fifty-year period of waiting for the return of a balanced economic and social situation. The liberation of slaves, for example, now took place every fifty years, not every seven as had previously been the case. It would be surprising, then, given the short life expectancy of the period, for many impoverished people ever to see it. However, here we see a future classification of dependent people that includes those who would come to rely solely on almsgiving as the only viable means of alleviating the plight of the permanently poor.

Hesedism can be seen in the horizontal reciprocity of the Deuteronomic laws and also in the asymmetrical code of Leviticus. The ideology of *hesedism* was to avoid becoming dependent upon a human benefactor, thereby rendering the recipient at risk of increasing indebtedness and society at risk by increasing the number of dependents. The original

10. See especially the Jubilee regulations of Deut. 15.9-12.

message was one of mutual aid for the good of the community, which, although practical for smaller tribal units, becomes unrealistic if applied to a more differentiated society. However, *hesedism* ensured everyone had access to the benefaction system—rich or poor—and the notion that one could be a benefactor to someone temporarily less well off than oneself went some way to ensuring that the definition of poverty was very restricted. For as long as a person could give aid to someone less fortunate, he/she did not consider him-/herself poor, even if by other standards or cultures he/she would be. However, this was not charity, for there was always a reciprocal element involved: the one now giving might eventually require similar aid at some future date.

It is also important to remember that *hesed* was the motivation behind the exchange rather than a moral notion of bestowing a gift or granting a favour, and as such this motivation required by its very nature a reciprocal action, however indirect. The terminology subsequently applied to this act, namely, 'charity', is in this context totally inappropriate. Charity was aimed specifically at the poor and the gift was meant to be free. The free gift caused in its wake a dependency, which was not always a positive thing (as charity later demonstrated). *Hesed*, on the other hand, meant that the act was supposed to be reciprocated. This would be either as a favour owed or in a 'pass the parcel' kind of reciprocity, one person passing their favour on to someone else, rather than returning the favour to the original benefactor. This latter concept, then, released the recipient from any kind of dependency. It was important not to create a society that relied upon the good deeds of the few to the detriment of the whole community. The obligation was implicit—to do and show *hesed* in one's dealings with others, rich or poor.

There is some evidence from passages in the Hebrew Bible to show that there was a benefaction system in place that was based upon the Deuteronomic laws. However, during the centuries that followed, the changes occurring in the socio-economic climate in Palestine meant the old 'dyadic' system of exchange gradually became unworkable as more and more people flocked into the cities. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the motivational force of *hesed* was altered by subsequent methods of benefaction. In order to get a clearer picture of the role *hesed*, and to some extent *raham*, played in motivating a system of benefaction, it is necessary to review how *hesed* might have been understood during the period spanning the second century BCE to first century CE. Such a review demands of the available literature of the period. The following chapter will look at the use of the word *hesed* and *raham* in the LXX, and will try to evaluate how this motivational idea was interpreted in other first-century CE literary sources.

Chapter 14

Hesed and *Raham* in the Septuagint

The term for the translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, abbreviated to LXX, which means seventy, is derived from the legend that Ptolemy II (285–246 BCE) requested seventy-two elders of the tribe of Israel to translate, at Alexandria in Egypt, in seventy-two days, the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Most scholars partly accept the legend and maintain that the LXX was written in the third century BCE in Egypt for Greek-speaking Jews.

The earliest manuscripts of the LXX come from Qumran and are dated to the second century BCE. The relationship between the Greek and Hebrew textual traditions was fluid, and there were frequent revisions of the Greek to bring it closer to the Hebrew as time progressed. The LXX also includes some books, known as the Apocrypha, not found in the traditional Hebrew canon. The LXX became the primary form of the Bible for Hellenized Jewish communities: when the Bible is quoted in the New Testament, it is always from the LXX version.

Crook has noted that contact with Hellenism gave the Jews a language, Greek, with which they could express their ideas of benefaction, as well as acquiring some of the Graeco-Roman benefaction ideology. Crook declares it would be difficult to claim that the Jews thought of their God as a patron or benefactor.[1] However, while examining some words in translation, such as χάρις, the word *hesed* has been overlooked, and this is a critical oversight if we are to determine exactly how the Jews may have viewed their system of benefaction.

Hesed *in the Septuagint*

Table 1 (in the Appendix) lists the number of occurrences of the word *hesed* in the Hebrew Bible. They have been divided into two sections: first, the instances of the word relating to God's acts of *hesed*, whether

1. Crook, *Reconceptualizing Conversion*, Chapter 3.

direct or indirect using a human agent; and second, those instances where the act occurs between humans. In every instance, with the exception of two passages,[2] the word is rendered in the LXX as a compound of the word ἔλεος, the definition of which is given in LSJ as 'mercy', 'compassion' or 'pity', an 'object of compassion' or a 'piteous thing'. The translation of the word implies there is always an element of pity attached to such acts, even mercy, which, as we have seen in the Hebrew Bible, clearly is not case.

There is one instance where *hesed* has been translated in the LXX as χάριν, presumably because the context seemed to suggest this implicitly:

בעיניו ותשׂא חסד לפניו

[The maiden pleased him] and received *hesed* in his eyes.

The passage in question is in the book of Esther, which tells the story of how Esther was sent to the king's palace in Shushan. There had been a royal decree to gather to the capital all the eligible young virgins in the land in order for the king to choose a suitable candidate to marry. The girls are brought to the harem where they are in the keeping of Hegai the keeper of the women. The verse in question concerns Esther's meeting with Hegai. The Greek and various English translations of Est. 2.9 run as follows:

καὶ ἤρεσεν αὐτῷ τὸ κοράσιον καὶ εὗρεν χάριν

And the maiden pleased him and won his favour.
The girl pleased him and won his favour.[3]

The Hebrew uses the word *hesed*, not *hen*, which quite clearly indicates what Esther received was more than just favour. This is demonstrated in v. 17 where we learn that Esther becomes Queen and she then obtains from the King *hen* and *hesed* (חן וחסד). In this verse the Greek renders *hen* (חן, 'favour') as χάριν but there is no attempt to translate *hesed*, despite the fact these are two separate words linked by 'and', an example of hendiadys. When this phrase is used in Hebrew in v. 17 it denotes the *hesed* received is indirect i.e. the act of *hesed* is in response to a favour requested, there is no required commitment between the two parties and their status is not equal. However, here the semantic field is slightly different since the verb *nahsha* (נשׂא, 'to raise up') is used. But this does not answer the question of what is the *hesed* in v. 9. Obviously it is not favour. The LXX translator, admittedly because of the content of the

2. The exceptions are Est. 2.9 and Isa. 57.1.
3. The references are LXX, NRSV and NIB, respectively.

passage, had probably made an attempt to understand the meaning of the word and its implications. However, because of the complicated nature of the word, he failed to take into account the lexical field in which it was contained, therefore placing the wrong interpretation upon it. The later Masoretic text made this distinction, and used the appropriate word for the action performed.

If we translate the phrase ותשׂא חסד לפניו literally, it reads, 'she raised up *hesed* in front of him'. The verb *nahsha* (נשׂא) means to 'raise up' or to make a solemn oath or promise (by raising up the hands as in prayer). In this context *hesed* denotes the manner in which it is done, and clearly indicates that *Esther* was the instigator, it was *she* who made a promise containing the element of reciprocal commitment essential between two parties of equal status. In other words, Hegai found Esther pleasing and *she* instigated a contract of mutual reciprocity between them; if he helped her, then when she was in a position to return his kindness (i.e. if the king chose her to be queen) she would do the same for him. The rest of the verse confirms this, it says:

> …and he speedily gave her things for her purification with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens which were to be given her out of the King's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

The motivation for Hegai performing these tasks must surely be that he expected her to reciprocate his kindnesses when she is in a position to do so.

In v. 17 Esther receives the promise from the king that he will look kindly upon any favour she may request from him because he has put her in the position of queen. Although they have a mutual commitment to one another, they are not of equal status, Esther having been raised up to that position by the king. This unequal status is made apparent in 5.8, where *hen* is used instead of *hesed*:

> אם־מצאתי חן בעיני
>
> If I have found favour in the sight…

Concerning the Masoretic version, Clark says:

> In this phrase the recipient is always the subject of the verb making their request directly to the donor. There is never any intermediary. The request is always followed by a further request for something that is of special significance to the recipient who recognises the inferior status.[4]

4. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 210.

The passage continues:

אם־מצאתי חן
בעיני המלך ואם־על־המלך
טוב לתת את־שׁאלתי ולעשׂות
את־בקשׁתי יבוא המלך והמן
אל־המשׁתה אשׁר אעשׂה להם
ומחר אעשׂה כדבר המלך

If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said.

At first this request of Esther's does not appear to be very significant and the narrator does not highlight the difference in their status. The incident has to be taken in context, especially in 3.8-11 and 4.8-14. Here Esther approaches the king and is very aware of her subordinate status, emphasized by the added phrase, 'if it please the king'.

At the banquet (7.3) we see the same formula:

ותען אסתר
המלכה ותאמר אם־מצאתי חן
בעיניך המלך ואם־על־המלך
טוב תנתן־לי נפשׁי בשׁאלתי
ועמי בבקשׁתי

Then Esther the queen answered and said. 'If I have found favour in thy sight O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request'.

The urgency of Esther's request is underlined by her repetition of the phase, showing her awareness of her utter dependency on the king. Esther makes a further plea at 8.5:

ותאמר
אם־על־המלך טוב ואם־מצאתי
חן לפניו וכשׁר הדבר לפני
המלך וטובה אני בעיניו

And said, 'If it please the king and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes' etc.

This is prefaced by another modified expression לפניו that replaces בעיניו, and augmented once again by 'if it please the king'. This final request supplements the earlier one and it is this request that is of vital importance to Esther and the Jews. Clearly the evidence demonstrates that because there is no equality of status between Esther and the king, *hesed* is not an appropriate term, unlike the earlier interchange between Esther and Hegai.

Even when these verses are translated into English, the meaning is still not clearly understood. This demonstrates that *hesed* is, as Clark says, '…distinctly and peculiarly a Hebrew word, the content of which can only be determined by investigating it in the culture of the Hebrew people as it is in the Hebrew Bible'.[5]

From these and similar examples one can clearly see that, when applied to human relationships in the biblical narratives, *hesed* is usually performed between persons equal in status. However, because of the nature of *hesed*, it is also very important to note that status is not the primary focus, it is the beneficent act itself that is important, and this comprises a deep enduring commitment between the two persons or parties concerned.

Raham *in the Septuagint*

There is no word in Hebrew specifically for 'almsgiving'. The word *hesed* is never used in relation to giving to the poor. The only aspect of *hesed* discerned in almsgiving is the *hesed* manifesting from God to the agent, who is motivated by it. In other words, the desire to continue to experience God's *hesed* is the motivation for an act of *raham*; no reciprocity is expected from the human beneficiary of the act. We can see quite clearly from the lexical evidence that *raham* is most definitely the element involved in situations where practical assistance is rendered to a needy person, with no commitment involved.

Therefore, I propose *raham* could sometimes be equated with the Greek word ἐλεημοσύνη, which carries the meaning of a gift, usually of money, to a needy person with the element of compassion attached to the meaning. The book of Tobit, compiled around 225–175 BCE, written for Greek-speaking Jews, places great emphasis upon almsgiving and the manner it is to be carried out, and could provide an insight into how it worked:

> καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσι τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων σοι ποιεῖν ἐλεημοσύνην καὶ μὴ φθονεσάτω σου ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν σε ἐλεημοσύνην· μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς τὸ πρόωπόν σου ἀπὸ παντὸς πτωοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σοῦ οὐ μὴ ἀποστραφῇ τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ θεου ὡς σοὶ ὑπάρχει κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος ποίησον ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐλεημοσύνην ἐὰν ὀλίγον σοι ὑπάρχη κατὰ τὸ ὀλίγον μὴ φοβοῦ ποιεῖν ἐλεημοσύνην· θέμα γάρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ εἰς ἡμέραν ἀνάγκης.
>
> To all those that practise *righteousness* give *alms* from your possessions and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them

5. Clark, *Hesed*, p. 217.

> in proportion: if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity (Tob. 4.7-9, NRSV).

The book of Tobit uses the words δικαιοσύνην and ἐλεημοσύνεν. Unfortunately, there is no Hebrew translation of this book, though I suggest that if there were, this line would read: 'To all those who practise δικαιοσύνην (*hesed*), give ἐλεημοσύνεν (*raham*) from your possessions'.

And yet, the LXX (with only two exceptions) uses *eleos*, when referring to any act of *hesed*, as a consequence the exact meaning appears to have been totally misrepresented. It is interesting to compare the Greek interpretation of *raham*, especially where the word occurs with *hesed*. The following table presents the relevant texts and terms:

Passages Cited Containing raham *with/without* hesed *with Greek Translation*

רחם		חסד
Isa. 9.16	ἔλεος	n/a
Isa. 63.7	″	δικαιοσύνη
Isa. 54.7	″	n/a
Isa. 63.15	οἰκτιρμός	n/a
Ps. 25.6-7	″	ἔλεος
Ps. 51.3	″	″
Ps. 119.159	n/a	ἔλεος
Ps. 119.156	οἰκτιρμός	n/a
Ps. 145.8-9	″	ἔλεος
Ps. 77.9-10	″	″
Ps. 106.45-6	n/a	″
Hos. 1.6	ἔλεος	″
Hos. 2.19	οἰκτιρμός	″
Dan. 9.4	n/a	″
Dan. 9.9	ἔλεος	n/a
Neh. 1.11	οἰκτιρμός	ἔλεος
Neh. 9.27-28	″	n/a
Zech. 1.2	ἔλεος	n/a
Zech. 7.9	οἰκτιρμός	ἔλεος
Lam. 3.32	″	″

With the exception of five passages, *hesed* as it appears in the Masoretic text is translated as ἔλεος, while *raham* is always translated as οἰκτιρμός. LSJ's definition of οἰκτιρμός is 'mercy', 'compassion', 'pity'; similarly, ἔλεος is also translated as 'mercy', 'compassion'. The translators of these texts could be forgiven if they found it difficult to differentiate originally between the two Hebrew words. Indeed, in Dan. 9.4 and 9.9, both Hebrew words have been translated as ἔλεος, despite the fact that they must clearly represent two separate concepts—otherwise, why use two

separate words? Nevertheless, there is a conscious attempt to differentiate between them.

However, if we consider the other five passages where a different translation has been used, we can see *raham* is equated to ἔλεος, while, significantly, in Isa. 63.7 *hesed* is equated to δικαιοσύνη or a related adjective. The LSJ definition of δικαιοσύνη is given as 'justice', 'righteousness', and according to Barclay Newman's Greek dictionary, 'doing what God requires, God putting man in the right relationship with Himself'.[6]

ἔλεος *and* δικαιοσύνη

Significantly, there are other biblical passages where *hesed* is translated as δικαιοσύνη.[7] If we examine the context of some of these passages we can see the meaning of *hesed* is made explicit, and so has been translated accordingly, as for example in Gen. 21.23:

> Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son but according to the *hesed* that I have done to you, you shall do to me and to the land where you have sojourned.

The Hebrew reads as follows:

ועתה השבעה
לי באלהים הנה אם־תשקר לי
ולניני ולנכדי כחסד
אשר־עשיתי עמך תעשה עמדי
ועם־הארץ אשר־גרתה בה

The LXX reads:

> νῦν οὖν ὄμοσόν μοι τὸν θεὸν μὴ ἀδικήσειν με μηδὲ τὸ σπέρμα μου μηδὲ τὸ ὄνομά μου ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἣν ἐποίησα μετὰ σοῦ ποιήσεις μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ τῇ ᾗ σὺ παρῴκησας ἐν αὐτῇ.

The context implies that *hesed* is the manner by which all favours are reciprocated, in honest, fair and just dealings between the parties concerned; therefore, the Greek translation is appropriate, and reflects the nature of an act of *hesed*.

In Isa. 57.1 we read of 'merciful men', men of *hesed*:

הצדיק אבד ואין
איש שם על־לב ואנשי־חסד
נאספים באין מבין כי־מפני
הרעה נאסף הצדיק

6. Barclay M. Newman, *A Concise Greek–English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006).

7. Gen. 21.24-27; 23.24-29; Exod. 15.13; 34.7; Isa. 55.3; 57.1.

> The righteous perish and no man lays it to heart: and men of *hesed* are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

The LXX version is as follows:

> ἴδετε ὡς ὁ δίκαιος ἀπώλετο καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐκδέχεται τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ ἄνδρες δίκαιοι αἴρονται καὶ οὐδεὶς κατανοεῖ ἀπὸ γὰρ προσώπου ἀδικίας ἦρται ὁ δίκαιος.

Once again *hesed* is associated with a righteous, just and fair attitude, doing what God requires in one's dealings with others, and this translation would fit the criteria for understanding the meaning of *hesed* shown by Clark's work. Therefore, *raham* would be better equated with ἔλεος for it fulfils the criteria of compassion associated with any act of mercy, and can be given to anyone, not just to Jews. This is clearly demonstrated in the six passages mentioned.[8]

A passage from *Antiquities* may demonstrate that this is how, in the first century CE the Jewish author Josephus viewed it. When he comments upon the ideals of John the Baptist, *Ant.* 18.117, he says,

> κτείνει γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον Ἡρώδης ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις κελεύοντα ἀρετὴν ἐπασκοῦσιν καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλους δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ

> For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practise *justice* towards their fellows and piety towards God.

Josephus uses δικαιοσύνῃ where, if he had been writing in Hebrew he would clearly have used *hesed*. Furthermore, there are two significant passages from the Gospel of Matthew where the matter of almsgiving is being addressed. Matthew 6.1-2 reads:

> Προσέχετε (δέ) τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε τῷ πατρι ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

> Ὅταν οὖν ποιῇς ἐλεημοσύνην μὴ σαλπίσῃς ἔμπροσθέν σου, ὥσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ ποιοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς ῥύμαις, ὅπως δοξασθῶσιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρωπών. ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.

> Beware of practising your [*justice*][9] before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

> So, whenever you give *alms*, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you they have received their reward. (NRSV translation)

8. Zech. 1.2; Dan. 9.9; Hos. 1.6; Isa. 54.7; 63.7, 9-16.

9. Other versions give the translation for δικαιοσύνη, 'alms' (KJV), 'righteousness' (NIB), 'charitable deeds' (NKJV), 'alms' (Webster Bible), 'uprightness' (NJB).

While there is no version in Hebrew, I would suggest, based on the evidence so far, that if there were then v. 1 would read: 'beware of practising your *hesed*' and v. 2; 'when you do your *raham*'.[10] Once again, the Greek equivalent of *hesed* is not entirely correct, the Greek writers demonstrate an awareness of the concepts of *hesed* and *raham*, yet lack the Greek vocabulary to make the distinction clear. The Greek clearly makes a distinction between a 'righteous act' (δικαιοσύνη) and 'almsgiving' (ἐλεημοσύνη). Furthermore, in v. 1 the idea is implicit that righteous acts are rewarded by God. The idea appears to be that individuals will be rewarded in this life, although the passage is not explicit about this.

This distinction between the righteous act and almsgiving was also emphasized earlier in the Apocryphal book of Tobit, in the passage previously cited, and also in 12.8, which reads:

> …ἀγαθὸν προσευχὴ μετὰ νηστείας καὶ ἐλεημοσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνης.
>
> …prayer is good [when accompanied] with fasting, almsgiving and righteousness.

The above English reading is taken from the NRSV translation of the Apocrypha; in this English translation we see that δικαιοσύνη is rendered as 'righteousness'. There are further instances in the Apocrypha where the same distinction between the two words is made: Tob. 13.8; 14.8, 11, and Bar. 5.9.

It is apparent that misinterpretations have subsequently arisen with the various English translations of passages containing these words. There appears to be no set formula for the translation of the words from either Hebrew or Greek or from the Hebrew into Greek, and no attempt to formulate a translation from their contextual meaning. From the evidence cited it is feasible to suggest that *hesed* should be equated with δικαιοσύνη and *raham* with ἐλεημοσύνη.

All the elements of *raham* are evident in ἐλεημοσύνη, more so than with *hesed*. The very anonymity of almsgiving renders the recipient free of the element of human obligation; the obligation is between the agent (donor) and the patron (God). The importance of anonymity can be seen in a passage from Matthew. Specifically speaking about giving of money as a gift to the poor, Mt. 6.4 (in the NRSV) reads:

> ὅπως ᾖ σου ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ.
>
> So that your alms may be in secret.

10. In the second example the Greek verb means 'do' not 'give'.

The NIB version translates the Greek as 'So that your giving may be in secret', which appears to reflect the original meaning of a gift, rather than alms. Unfortunately, however, on this occasion, where it is referring specifically to the poor, the NIB misses the element of compassion that should accompany the giving, by omitting the word alms altogether. Almsgiving was specifically incumbent upon the pilgrim, especially in Jerusalem. As Jeremias points out,[11] Jerusalem would have become a centre for beggars because it was considered especially meritorious to give alms there.[12] Tobit tells us that he would, 'for six years save up a second tenth in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem'.[13]

Josephus states the numbers of pilgrims flocking into Jerusalem at Passover and the Feast of Weeks was in the region of three million,[14] though modern scholars' more conservative estimates range from 100,000 to 125,000 people, which is still an impressive number.[15] There is no concrete evidence to suggest that there were special chambers for donations to the poor within the Temple complex. However, it is possible that pilgrims may have donated money or food via synagogues, which implies that most of the pilgrims would be carrying out an act of *raham*.

11. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus,* pp. 131-34.

12. In the accounts of Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem the act of almsgiving is noted to the exclusion of sacrificial offerings.

13. Tob. 1.7.

14. *War* 4.423-26.

15. See W. Reinhardt, 'The Population of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church', in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 237-73 (259-65).

Chapter 15

THE APPLICATION OF *HESED* IN THE SECOND CENTURY BCE TO SIXTH CENTURY CE

Hesed *and Jewish Benefactions*

From the available literature for this period there appear to be ten main aspects of Jewish benefactions:

1. Loans or other monetary help.
2. Abolition of debts.
3. Entertaining strangers.
4. Feasting.
5. Famine relief and public works.
6. Care for orphans and widows (briefly discussed in the Deuteronomic Law in Chapter 14).
7. Proper burial of the dead.
8. Ransoming captives.
9. Contributing to the institutions of the community.
10. Almsgiving (which as I shall try to demonstrate is a separate category of *hesed*, and as such requires an individual classification).

Chapters 1–8 in the book of Numbers encompass all those areas of human relationships where some reciprocity is expected. It can be direct reciprocity, for example, loans, or indirect, as in feasting or entertaining of strangers (Num. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8), where the donor expects the same courtesies to be shown to him when he should require it, although not necessarily by the recipient of his act.

Hesed involving a direct reciprocity between donor and recipient included loans with or without interest, where the donor worked on a one-to-one basis with the recipient. The ideal was to loan money on an interest-free basis, but with the obligation to repay the original amount. Initially both parties would have been of equal status, and the motivation would have been to encourage enterprise and to act as a preventative to poverty, very much in keeping with the ideals of a

dyadic contract. Such contracts would usually have been carried out between members of families or very close associates, for obvious reasons. Poverty was anathema to the Jews and should someone find themselves in difficult circumstances, then other members of the family (or extended family or tribe) would be obligated to remedy the situation, thereby ensuring the family retained its social position. Loans that carried interest were reserved for those who had no familial association with the creditor. The debtor would have to show they could repay within an acceptable period. This created more than just a business relationship between the two parties—it also involved a commitment to one another that created a bond.

However, *hesed* is also the motivation for such contracts to be entered into between persons of unequal status, as well as an ideal. It was the act itself, motivated by *hesed* that was of primary importance, not the status of the parties concerned; however, there was always an element of reciprocity.

Documents from the Judaean desert dating from the first century CE supply some evidence that appears to suggest that in financial dealings the original motivation of *hesed* had been abandoned, suggesting that contracts entered into between persons of unequal status were often to the detriment of the recipients. The promise to repay meant that goods or land could be forfeit in lieu of payment, and it is possible a good deal of land acquisition came about through this system in the first century CE. Goodman discusses this, and says that 'the only logical reason to lend was…the hope of winning the peasant's land by foreclosing on it when the debt was not paid off'.[1]

The zeal with which the debt archives were burnt in Jerusalem in 66 CE adds weight to this statement (*War* 2.427). Goodman suggests the most damning evidence for the motivation behind lending can be found in the acceptance of the institution of the *prosbul*, at some time during the first century CE.[2] A document from the Judaean desert dated to this period[3] conforms to the parameters set out in later Mishnaic writings (*m. Sheb.* 10.3-7). We learn from this text that the debtor had to agree to repay his loan even after the advent of the Sabbatical year when the loan should have been automatically cancelled. The abolition of debts, according to Deuteronomy, was to take place every seven years, though this was later amended to a fifty-year cycle. Josephus is at variance with Scripture (Deut. 15.1-20), when he says debtors were absolved in the Jubilee year (*Ant.* 3.281-84). Indeed,

1. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 57.
2. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, pp. 57-58.
3. *DJD* 11.18.

if the lenders were acting from financial self-interest, then the point Goodman is making would be correct. On the other hand, if the explanation of the motivation behind acts of *hesed* is correct, the loans are a survival from the old system, where such acts would have been prompted by *hesed*, which the rich appear to no longer work to. The system in which *hesed* played a motivational role appears to have broken down considerably by the first century CE, especially in the cities where such ideas of horizontal reciprocity were difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, the Deuteronomic ideal was still being called upon to help remedy the situation of increasing poverty. From the evidence it appears Josephus and the writers of the New Testament were clearly aware of the ideals of *hesed*, even if it was difficult for them to express them clearly in Greek, and even if *hesed* was not always being practised in the real world. There is one further piece of evidence from the first century CE for direct acts of *hesed*, namely, *hesed* and peer solidarity.

Hesed *and Peer Solidarity*

A study by Avidov[4] on the significance of peer solidarity as evidenced in the writings of Josephus throws interesting light upon the application of this idea during the first century CE. Avidov concentrates mainly upon *xenia* and how this forms part of the social position and outlook of the elite classes of the Judaeans. He says Herman defines *xenia* as 'a bond of solidarity manifesting itself in an exchange of goods and services between individuals originating from separate social units'.[5]

This is an important difference between *xenia* and friendship of any other kind, xenoi were foreigners turned friends. Avidov states Herman has argued forcefully that there are no grounds for believing xenia was an essentially Greek institution. Avidov says that Josephus provides many indications that in Judaea this institution was

> not only a very active factor in structuring the political involvement of members of the ruling class in the international arena, but also a very central and deep seated component of the author's own outlook as a cultivated Jew and member of the Judaean elite.[6]

4. A. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity and Communal Loyalty in Roman Judaea', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 264-80.

5. G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 265.

6. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 265.

Avidov considers, for Josephus that '*xenia*, *philia* and their attendant obligations constituted a very serious matter, a central component of his social outlook and not a matter to be slighted in any way'.[7] Avidov says we can see that *xenia* 'overlapped to a large extent with kinship, mainly in that it mimicked its practices and adopted its assumptions of perpetuity by being hereditary'.[8]

It is possible to trace *hesed* in the roots of Josephus's attitude to ties or commitments within and outside of his own community. Avidov points to the fact Josephus in certain biblical passages uses the word *xenia* in his rendering of *hesed*. This is Josephus's own interpretation, for the LXX uses the word *xenia* just seven times,[9] and twice it is given as a place of lodging or guest–room.[10] None of these occurrences of the word *xenia* correspond to the instances Josephus refers to. One reference in particular from Josephus is noteworthy. In *Ant*. 1.259, Josephus tells us King Abimilech welcomed Isaac in virtue of his former *xenia* and *philia* with Abraham (cf. Gen. 21.23). When referring to the beneficial treatment of Abraham by Abimelech in the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew uses the word *hesed*; therefore, because of this *hesed* Abimelech is obligated to treat Isaac well, despite the fact they have a less than trusting relationship:

ועתה השבעה
לי באלהים הנה אם־תשקר לי
ולניני ולנכדי כחסד
אשר־עשיתי עמך תעשה עמדי
ועם־הארץ אשר־גרתה בה

> Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the *hesed* that I have done unto thee… Thou shalt do unto me and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

The LXX renders the same passage in the following manner:

> νῦν οὖν ὄμοσόν μοι τὸν θεὸν μὴ ἀδικήσειν μὴ μηδὲ τὸ σπέρμα μου μηδὲ ὄνομά μου ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν δικαιοσύην ἣν ἐποίησα μετὰ σοῦ ποιήσεις μετ' ἐμου καὶ τῇ γῇ ᾗ σὺ παρῴκησας ἐν αὐτῇ.

The LXX translates the Hebrew word *hesed* not as *xenia* but as δικαιοσύνη. Therefore, obviously Josephus must not have used the LXX here; his understanding of δικαιοσύνη was to equate it with one of the meanings of *hesed*, as already noted. Josephus uses the word *xenia* to

7. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 275.
8. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 265.
9. 2 Sam. 8.2, 6; Hos. 10.6; 1 Macc. 10.36; 11.34; *3 Macc.* 1.8; Sir. 20.2.
10. Sir. 20.2; Hos. 10.6.

represent one aspect of *hesed*, and the question must be to what extent could *xenia* be regarded as an equivalent of *hesed* (and *emeth*) in the social relationships of first-century Judaea.

Josephus may have taken his version of the story from another text, which implies he has associated *hesed* with *xenia*, or, as would seem more likely for a Greek-speaking Jew, interpreted the LXX to fit with his understanding of this aspect of a Jewish benefaction system. The idea of *emeth* is implicit (do not deal falsely, i.e., deal with *emeth*), although in the verse it is not actually written; this could be because the interaction is taking place between a Jew and a non-Jew. What is interesting is Josephus renders this as ξενίαν καὶ φιλίαν, which appears to be associated with *hesed* and *emeth*. We could easily substitute *hesed* and *emeth* for *xenia* and *philia* and retain the same basic meaning.

Further examples from Josephus's writings make the point the idea of *hesed* and *emeth* were an essential part of Jewish ideology. When Josephus, as commander in chief of Galilee, wrote to his lieutenant in Tiberias, he ordered him to give *xenia* to John of Gischala, the leader of the rival camp, and to provide for his needs (*War* 2.615). The most striking difference is that while *hesed* and *emeth* was usually applicable only to fellow Jews, *hesed* (*xenia*) could freely be applied to foreigners. Avidov, quoting Aristotle,[11] says *xenia* was

> …considered to be a sub-species of *philia*, with which it shared many of its features… It also overlapped to a large extent with kinship, mainly in that it mimicked its practices and adopted its assumption of perpetuity by being hereditary.[12]

Josephus must not have been alone in his association of *xenia* with *hesed*; to members of his class, the Judaean elite, this must have been a usual method of forming alliances and bonds of friendship, especially with foreigners, which would have a reciprocal element attached. Avidov makes an interesting point that, in *Ant.* 16.21, while reporting Nicolaus's speech before Agrippa, Josephus

> resorts to the language of *xenia* in order to express the notion of an especially close, in this case indeed, ritualized bond, not however to the particular institution of *xenon* as an interpersonal relationship. These instances of the use of the language of *xenia* are valuable clues to the author's cultural outlook precisely for not being forced upon him by his material.[13]

11. *Magna moralia* 2.1211a.46.
12. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 265.
13. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 273.

Similarly Avidov mentions Josephus's use of *xenia* when discussing the Essene practice of attending to the *xenoi*, who may have arrived during their evening meal. The *xenoi* could not have been strangers, yet members of their own order visiting from other parts, and as such the common bond of *hesed* and *emeth* would mean it was their duty to attend to them (*War* 2.125).

The basic principles of *hesed*, which appear to have been in place in Jewish social relationships since biblical times, facilitated the forming of bonds of friendship (*xenia*) with foreigners, that is, non-Jews, by the elite. However, as Avidov points out in his summary, peer solidarity and involvement in extra-communal networks were to manifest themselves in a distancing between the elite and the other members of their own communities contributing to the process of internal marginalization.[14]

There is little if any evidence to show what system operated for those not of the elite class, though it may not be unreasonable to suggest that social relationships, during the first century CE were characterized by the motivation of *hesed*. This may perhaps have been more manifest in circles where the opportunities for creating social relationships outside of the Jewish world (*xenia*) was limited in scope. However, the concept could be transferred into the wider social relationships formed by those of the elite class, including their relationships with those of the non-elite class and with non-Jews.

Other Categories of Hesedism

Certain elements of *hesedism* fall into both directly and indirectly reciprocal categories. The need to form wide social connections and bonds can be seen in the attitude to feasting and the entertaining of strangers. This could be done between persons of equal or non-equal status. During times of major religious festivals many thousands of strangers would have made their way on pilgrimage to Jerusalem (it should be stressed that 'stranger' meant a Jew from another country, even village or neighbourhood, and is not a reference to Gentiles). A person was entitled to receive free accommodation in return for some token offering to the house or the making of a sacrifice on the householder's behalf. In Jerusalem, in return for accommodation, an individual would supply the householder with the skins from any sacrifice they had made. Feasting was, of course, part of the religious calendar but there were other private occasions for feasting. This was always

14. Avidov, 'Peer Solidarity', p. 279.

considered to be an important element in Graeco-Roman culture as well. The religious festivals carried certain *mitzvahs,* and the poor had a prescriptive right to share in such communal feasts.

Funerals were also an occasion for public feasting and in the first century CE, we read in Josephus, many found that this was one custom 'that reduced many to poverty, such entertainment of the people being considered obligatory and its omission an act of impiety' (*War* 2.1).

It could well be that such public feasting was designed to be the vehicle for advertising the wealth of the person concerned. This could have become a competition between wealthy members of society, each individual trying to outdo the other in terms of hospitality. This is borne out by the fact because of this many became impoverished (Josephus, *War* 2.1). The act of *hesed* itself was a commitment to the deceased, to honour their memory and to ensure that they would not be forgotten (something the later synagogue inscriptions make a point of doing) and part of the ongoing commitment such family bonds entailed, as expounded in Ruth 1.8. By doing such acts the donor would receive God's continuing *hesed*:

יהוה עמכם
חסד כאשר עשיתם עם־המתים
ועמדי

> the Lord show *hesed* to you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

The reciprocity became widespread as the benefactors would be reciprocated by attending the feasts of others at no expense to themselves. They could also expect suitable funerary rites of their own when they died. Both feasting and entertaining of strangers provided opportunities to widen social networks and strengthen feelings of religious bonds between different communities of Jews.

Care of the fatherless and widows can also be included in this category. The fatherless or widow could be a member of one's own family or a member of one's community. For example, a fatherless child could have the same status as the guardian, the difference being that someone is required to represent them in legal matters until they can manage their own affairs, as discussed in a previous chapter. There could be other practical ways in which the fatherless child could be helped—ways not amounting to guardianship. The same was true for widows. This system appears to have been operational in the second century CE, with evidence coming from documents found in the Judaean desert concerning a woman Babata, who lived in the time of

Bar Kochba, leader of the rebellion against Rome in 132–135 CE. Two documents relate to the issue of the 'guardianship' of her son after the death of her husband and the issues raised concerning legal questions about her son's representation.[15] Her son was far from poor, for one of the issues concerned how to achieve the most lucrative income for him.

With respect to widows, there is a passage in the New Testament in the Letter to Timothy, which, I believe, supports the notion that not all Jewish widows were poor but all widows had prescriptive rights to a share in the goods of the community:

> If a widow has children or grandchildren they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her trust in God (1 Tim. 5.16).

The passage is referring to the increasing burden put onto the early Jewish Christian church with regard to care for the widows and orphans in their communities, something creating severe financial difficulties. What is implicit in this passage is that the old religious duties to take care of the widows in one's own family should be re-implemented within the new communities of Jewish Christians. The very basic ideal of Deuteronomy is being emphasized, and the reciprocal element involved is between family members (or indeed community members), where widows can perform duties to benefit the family or community concerned in return for a portion of the fruits of the land. The 'real' widow, that is, the poor widow, is the one who is alone, and it is *she* who requires assistance.

Indirect Hesed

Indirect *hesed* can also be defined as any act responding to the needs of the community, such as famine relief, which was originally a duty incumbent upon kings, and which, as Goodman remarks, was 'a classic act of a typical Greek or Roman *euergete*'.[16] *Hesed* is indirectly reciprocal and designed to be carried out by a king or leader acting as God's representative on earth, one who owes their elevated position to God's continuing *hesed*. It responds to an emergency situation, not to a structural feature of society.

15. The documents can be found in N. Lewis (ed.), *The Documents from the Bar Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters*: *Greek Papyri* (Judaean Desert Studies, 2; Jerusalem, 1989).

16. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 59.

It is not necessary for the donor to be a member of the community they are aiding. What is important is the parties on both ends of such a tie are permanently unequal in control of resources and so differ in terms of wealth and status. Another important factor is that *hesed* in this sphere seems to be primarily aimed at keeping order in the community and is always performed by persons of a higher social status than the recipient(s). Josephus tells us Queen Helena of Adiabene acted as benefactor to the people of Palestine during a particularly severe famine during the first century CE.[17]

The potential breakdown of a community causes the wealthy to suffer more in the long term, so the necessity to relieve the situation becomes the impetus for such acts. The reciprocity is indirect in the beneficiaries reciprocate by *not* rioting and enabling the wealthy to maintain their status during the crisis. The commitment is to the community rather than the individual. In this respect *hesedism* is similar to euergetism. The difference between them is that while euergetism has a secular motivation, *hesedism* recognizes the person who is in a position to relieve this situation owes their position to God's continuing *hesed*. The recipients are also made aware of God's *hesed* by the fact God allows the donors to remain in this position only if they behave in the way he wishes. So, the motivation behind *hesedism* is completely different from motivating factors behind euergetism.

The second aspect of indirect *hesedism* can be seen in the participation in public works. A good example is the paving of the city of Jerusalem financed by the Jerusalem elite. Goodman is not entirely correct when he says,

> The ability in normal times to rely on employment on public works was paralleled nowhere else in the Roman Empire. In the towns of Italy, for instance, spending by the state was matched by massive public spending by rich aristocrats, competing to win the favour of the populace. This euergetism did not appeal to the Jerusalem rich… They preferred to spend within the intimate privacy of their luxurious houses, buying in beautiful objects from abroad. Their role in making it possible for the very poor to continue to live in the great city was by the more insidious practice of charity.[18]

According to Josephus, after the completion of Herod's Temple, over 18,000 workmen were unemployed. This caused great consternation among the elite, who were fearful of such a large group of people were roaming the streets. So, in response to this potential social catastrophe, the wealthy among the Jerusalemites decided to spend their

17. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion concerning her role as a benefactor.
18. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 65.

money re-paving the city. Here we see the working classes, presumably including the poor, were offered a measure of social aid and were able to reciprocate indirectly, by not rioting, either as individuals or as a group (*Ant*. 20.219-22).

However, Josephus's account is slightly contradictory about the motivation behind this act. At first we are led to believe it was out of concern for the plight of the 18,000 unemployed, but the preceding passage suggests it was done out of fear such a large number of disaffected people would attract the attention of the Romans. The wealthy had vast sums held on deposit in the Temple and naturally felt this made them vulnerable to Roman scrutiny and the Romans may have decided to instigate their own work projects, and commandeered some of this wealth.[19]

So, the statement by Goodman raises the question. Are we to believe that when a Greek or Roman benefactor paid for a public edifice to be erected he was performing a charitable act by providing work? Public building works were a regular feature of the Graeco-Roman system, but even so those working on the Temple project realized it was only temporary. The behaviour of the Jerusalem elite here is not charity, which requires no reciprocity. Neither is it euergetism, since the elite received no acknowledgment of their act. But it is entirely consistent with a system motivated by *hesed.*

The ransoming of captives may also fall into the category of indirect *hesedism*; however, any information available on this comes from later rabbinic sources. There is only one specific mention of the ransoming of captives in the Hebrew Bible. This occurs in Exodus and instructs the owner of a slave is responsible for redeeming him and paying whatever is asked (Exod. 21.30).

The rabbis regarded the ransoming of fellow Jews, captured by slave dealers or robbers, or imprisoned unjustly by the authorities, as of paramount importance (*b. B. Bat*. 8a and b). The rabbis ordained they should be redeemed only at their market value as slaves, and laid down a series of rules for redemption in the *halakah*. For example, women should always be ransomed before men and scholars before kings. A man could even be compelled by the courts to ransom his wife (Maimonides, *Yad* 252.10). Someone who contributed to the ransoming of a fellow Jew could therefore expect to be ransomed himself if it ever became necessary.

The penultimate category of indirect *hesedism* concerns contributing to communal institutions. Unlike the majority of other categories of

19. See S.M. Sorek, 'Render unto Caesar: Pontius Pilate and the Temple Funds', *Eras* 4 (2002), available online at http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras.

hesedism, where, due to the nature of the benefaction, the record is often fragmentary or unnecessary, this is one area where recording the benefaction in stone would seem to be appropriate. Evidence from many synagogue inscriptions from the Late Antique period may indicate how this particular aspect of *hesedism* could work. In the inscriptions we see there is no direct reciprocity—the donor will expect others to behave in the same way in the future so that in general the community benefits; this is evidenced by inscriptions from Nar'an, Hammath Gadara, and to some extent Hammath Tiberias (which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter).[20]

Also evidenced by inscriptions, as already shown, *hesedism* works against public acknowledgment of benefactions at the time of their benefaction. The rewards the donor will receive are divine rewards, also evidenced by inscriptions. The motivation of *hesedism* requires everyone to contribute to the interests of their community including the Temple, in the form of the Temple tax, and after 70 CE, to the synagogue, without any direct human reciprocity. God reciprocates, so the donor and his/ her descendants benefit indirectly, through the many functions the synagogue provides.

Hesed can be seen in the actions humans perform to one another, either in direct reciprocity, where donor and recipient work on a one-to-one basis, or indirectly, where an act performed by one person may be reciprocated by someone other than the recipient over a longer time span. The evidence from the first century CE shows the survival in some forms of the biblical system of benefactions, which I have called *hesedism*. Its motivation was very different from euergetism, even if some of its practical effects were similar.

The final category of *hesed* relates to God's *hesed*, which primarily manifests itself in almsgiving. This separate category is the forerunner of charity and it is this aspect of *hesed* requiring a third party, God, where both Jew and non-Jew can experience a portion of God's *hesed* on a human level, that is, in a practical way.

20. The inscriptions from Na'aran and Hammath Gadara are discussed in Chapters 6 and 5, respectively. Hammath Tiberias is discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

Chapter 16

CHARITY IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

Charity in the Graeco-Roman World

Although there is no evidence to suggest that charity, as we know it, existed within Graeco-Roman culture, it is something assumed by scholars to be part of Jewish culture during the Second Temple period. From many scholarly works currently available it is usual to find 'charity' accepted without question as the main form of Jewish benefaction, during and after the Second Temple period, but is it the correct interpretation of the evidence?

In the Graeco-Roman system the primary recipients of benefactions were those people who could acknowledge and feel obligated to them. Philo gives us a good indication of how it was considered a Hellenized Jew should use his wealth in the correct manner:

> You will contribute freely to needy friends, will make bountiful gifts to serve your country's wants, you will help parents without means to marry their daughters, and provide them with an ample dowry; you will all but throw your private property into the common stock and invite all deserving of kindness to a share.[1]

There are several Graeco-Roman principles to be found in this statement that are in keeping with the ideology of a Hellenized Jewish benefaction system as expounded by Philo. For example, helping friends and parents without means to provide dowries for their daughters and contributing to the needs of the country both coincided with Graeco-Roman ideology.[2]

In fact, it also bears out what the Greeks and Romans believed, namely, that it was virtuous to support their poor friends who did not deserve their poverty. Presumably this is what the last sentence of the above quotation from Philo is referring to—that is, not inviting just

1. Philo, *De fuga et inventione* 29.
2. As evidenced in the works of Cicero.

anyone to share someone's wealth, *but anyone who deserved* to have a kindness shown them. The Graeco-Romans however, may have drawn the line at throwing all their private property into the common pot. The only principle not shared with Graeco-Roman ideology was the communal dimension regarding private property. Yet the system described by Philo was motivated by a very different ideology. This was the result of a development of a much older concept that kinsmen and relatives were the only ones to be trusted. However, as the social environment changed, so the boundaries of who qualified for trust also changed. Writing in the eighth century BCE, the Greek poet Hesiod gave the advice that it is a waste of time to give favours to those who were geographically or socially far removed from the donor: 'Invite your friend but not your enemy to dine: especially, be cordial to your neighbour, for if trouble comes at home, a neighbour's there, at hand: while kinsmen take some time to arm themselves'.[3] This a sentiment that is reiterated in the Bible: 'Thy friend and thy father's friend do not forsake; and do not go to thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity. Better is a neighbour who is near than a brother who is far away' (Prov. 27.10). Every society naturally encourages its members to take care of each other and this was true for Greek, Roman and Jewish culture.

Roman society was organized into a hierarchy based on wealth. The authors who discuss poverty were wealthy individuals, so they did so relatively and we have no way of accurately assessing the levels of poverty at any given time. They do not, however, consider the 'real' poor and destitute, except to find it a repulsive thing, not deserving consideration. Seneca, throughout his works, reflected the common view that poverty was a disgrace. He was an extremely wealthy man, worth 300 million sesterces, and he seems to mention poverty more than other authors. Seneca's notion of being poor, however, was to have to manage with only a few slaves.[4]

For the Romans, the majority did not count and the word 'poor' took it's meaning as a relative term within the minority we would consider rich. To quote Veyne, 'The poor were the rich who were not very rich',[5] and 'the truly poor were not within the mental horizons of Roman authors'.[6] Saller says,

3. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 342-45, 353-54.
4. Seneca, *Letters*, *De beneficiis* and comments on poverty and the poor throughout his other works.
5. Veyne, *History of Private Life*, I, pp. 119-20.
6. Veyne, *History of Private Life*.

> For the Romans, poverty was not an economic problem but a moral and political one. Their discussion was underpinned by a shared individual and social psychology. Finally the shame of poverty was reinforced by the basic symbols of Roman culture that marked out the social hierarchy for all to see.[7]

Charity in Palestine

The rich Greek or Roman did not feel any obligation towards the poor; both in Rome and the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus free corn was not given to the poverty-stricken but to the privileged among the plebs.[8] However, according to Goodman, the rich people of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period similarly did not feel any obligation to the poor. The various distributions of food made under different guises, banquets or religious festivals, were not primarily aimed at the poor and destitute, although the poor could benefit from such occasions. In many respects the observation made by Goodman is a true statement of affairs at this time; the very poor, although they had prescriptive rights, were generally reliant upon the receipt of alms. Likewise, as far as the available evidence shows, the Jerusalem rich, unlike their Greek and Roman counterparts, did not embark upon *massive* expenditures on public works.

The problem lies with Goodman's notion that 'charity' was the normal method in the Second Temple period, the mechanism by which poor people gained access to a benefaction system. Goodman, like Veyne, appears to refer to almsgiving, but this is neither euergetism nor charity, if anything it would appear to be the 'popular morality' (*hesed*) of which Veyne speaks. Goodman tells us what the rich did not do but says nothing about an alternative system operational in lieu of euergetism, although he does not discount the possibility that one may have existed. He says,

> Other forms of euergetism were weakened by the Jewish tradition of charity as a duty incumbent on everyone not himself destitute and aimed not at fellow citizens who might repay the donor with social prestige, but at the very poor. Furthermore the custom of regular taxes for the redistribution of wealth to the poverty stricken—the corner of the field left un-harvested, the second tithe donated in some years to the destitute and so on…destroyed the element of spontaneous voluntary gift giving which was the essence of the achievement of prestige by euergetism.[9]

7. Saller, 'Poverty, Honour and Obligation', p. 20.
8. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 65.
9. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 128.

Goodman then refers in his footnotes to Veyne's discussion of charity. Although a discussion of what kind of benefaction system was employed in Judaea is not within the remit of his work, Goodman does agree with Veyne, who states, 'in Deuteronomy charity undergoes a systematic development'.[10]

Veyne has not fully taken into account the criteria responsible for determining who benefited from these prescriptions and in what measure. Both Goodman and Veyne accept the fact that charity and almsgiving is one and the same thing, with the consequence that charity is not perceived as a development of almsgiving. Both have assumed the Deuteronomic laws[11] were aimed specifically at the poor, not at society as a whole. Brown in his work *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* points out that in the Israel during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE the word 'poor' had connotations entirely different from the word 'poor' used in modern times. He says,

> the poor of the message of solidarity in Israel were self-reliant tribesmen, small farmers, even impoverished aristocrats, whose 'cry' to God and to the powerful was not for alms but for justice and the cessation of violence.[12]

In fact, there is no scholarly work that attempts to place examples of beneficence shown to have occurred among Jews within any benefaction framework whatsoever. Because of this we are led to believe that there was no benefaction system operational in Second Temple times other than charity. This, then, forces us to accept that those non-charitable benefactions that did occur were merely an anomaly within the daily structure of society.

Relative Use of the Words 'Charity' and 'Poor'

Perhaps more importantly, the main problem appears to be one of language and centres on the use of such words as 'poor' and 'charity', which appear too often to be used relatively. Brown also makes a further reference to the nature and image of the poor as reflected in the Christian texts of the Late Roman period and sees a similar situation where 'poor' is used as a relative terminology. As he points out, references to the poor in these works are specific images, created for a specific purpose, and not

10. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, p. 19.
11. The Deuteronomic laws are discussed more fully in Chapter 14.
12. P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH; Brandeis University Press, 2002), p. 19.

a 'faithful sketch taken from real life'.[13] He notes there were many differing degrees of poverty ranging from 'shallow poverty' to the 'deep poverty' of actual destitution, and impoverishment could fall on anyone at anytime, hence the tell-tale blurring of the 'poor' in the literature of the Late Antique period. Brown sums up by saying that in his opinion in Late Antiquity much the same level of poverty existed as had always been there, the only difference being that, for the Christians, poverty was a moral challenge and a spur to action.[14]

When looking at the Jewish system, therefore, because the Deuteronomic laws encompass a structure for social behaviour, which includes the treatment of the poor, any reference to the 'poor' immediately implies the Law must be viewed as charitable regulations, which is not entirely true.

Another good example of this type of misinterpretation can be seen in the Loeb translation of Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.283-84:

> μιμεῖσθαι δέ πειρῶνται καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἡμῶν ὁμόνοιαν καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀνάδοσιν καὶ τὸ φιλεργὸν ἐν ταῖς τέχναις καὶ τὸ καρτερικὸν ἐν ταῖς ὑπὲρ τῶν νόμων ἀνάγκαις.
>
> Moreover they [other nations] attempt to imitate our [the Jews'] unanimity, *our liberal charities*, our devoted labour in the crafts, our endurance under persecution on behalf of our laws.

Thackeray[15] has rendered the Greek ἀνάδοσιν as 'charities', but the Greek dictionary definition is 'distributions'.[16] The striking feature is that this is the only occurrence of the word in the whole of Josephus's writings pertaining to any human action.[17] This may appear a trivial point to make at first, for certainly the word 'distributions' could be equated with the daily distributions in Acts 6.1, which were concerned with daily handouts to 'poor' widows and therefore could be interpreted as an act of charity. However, the Greek word used in Acts for this distribution is διακοσυνη, meaning a 'contribution, help or support', not ἀνάδοσις, which is what one would expect if the word meant the same thing Josephus is speaking about. The problem lies with the English translation, for if

13. The texts quoted by Brown include *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* by Cyril of Scythopolis, Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St Martin*, Leontius, *Life of John the Almsgiver* and John Chrysostom, *Homily 66 on Matthew*.

14. For a full discussion, see Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, pp. 15-17.

15. Thackeray, translator of the 1926 Loeb edition.

16. LSJ, p. 49. They also give the following information: ἀνάδοσις = giving up (as of plants or animals) or distribution of viands at dinner (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*).

17. The word occurs two more times in Josephus (*War* 7.187; *Apion* 2.192). On both occasions he is referring to the giving up of water and of crops.

Josephus meant 'charity', why did he not make use of the more common Greek words, φιλανθρωπία or ἐλεημοσύνη, even διακονία, found frequently throughout the New Testament corresponding to our understanding of the word 'charity'?

Furthermore 2 Maccabees the verb referring to re-distribution of goods is also rendered as ἀποδώσειν:

> ὃν δέ πρότερον ἐσκύλευσεν ἅγιον νεὼ καλλίστοις ἀναθήμασιν κοσμήσειν καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ σκεύη πολυπλάσα πάντα ἀποδώσειν τὰς δὲ ἐπιβαλλούσας πρὸς τὰς θυσίας συντάξεις ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων προσόδων χορηγήσειν.
>
> …and the holy sanctuary, which he had formerly plundered, he would adorn with the finest offerings: and all the holy vessels he would give back many times over [i.e. redistribute] and the expenses incurred for the sacrifices he would provide from his own revenues (2 Macc. 9.16).

Another striking feature in the passage from the Loeb translation of Josephus is the words πρὸς ἀλλήλους ('towards each other') have not been translated at all. This is a vital element for what Josephus is referring to. The distributions were made only to members of the Jewish nation, to 'each other'. This is the direct reciprocity envisaged by the Deuteronomic laws.

The implication of the Loeb translation is that Josephus is telling us that charity, in our accepted sense of the word, was flourishing in the first century CE. Not only was it flourishing but it was also an integral component of the Jewish benefaction system, so much so that other races felt compelled to imitate it. However, the more likely interpretation of this passage is that Josephus is referring to the system of divinely guided redistribution, set out in Deuteronomy. Here, everyone (whatever degree of poverty they found themselves in) had access to a benefaction system, including, but not exclusively the 'poor', but it was only for Jewish people and would be very different from the institution of charity.

The Evidence against Organized Charity in the Second Temple Period

There has been great debate about whether the organized care for the poor, as it is set out in the *Mishnah,* existed in the Second Temple period. Jeremias[18] argues the *kuppah* ('basket') and *tamhui* ('tray') were operational in pre-70 CE Jerusalem and therefore proves organized charity existed in first century CE Palestine. The *kuppah* and *tamhui* were used to collect donations of food or money to be given to the poor. Most probably, individuals placed leftover food on a tray, while the *kuppah* was

18. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 131-34.

a basket used to collect donations of money. Seccombe[19] attempts to show that Jeremias's arguments carry little weight. However, some of Seccombe's arguments to prove the opposite do not bear close scrutiny either. He also misapplies the word 'charity' and, by trying to disprove Jeremias's theory, concentrates on the modern idea of charity rather than assessing what was in place and how this compares with an organized institution.

The argument revolves around three major precepts laid out by Jeremias. The first involves a section from the *Talmud* (*b. Ket*. 13.1-2), where there is a discussion about a woman's claim on the estate of her deceased husband. Seccombe shows that Jeremias has wrongly interpreted this to mean a claim upon the community, that is, charity. However, Seccombe says the line contained in the passage which reads 'the sons go a-begging' is a clear indication that no form of organized charity existed. This is where great care is needed in interpreting Talmudic sources. Many statements in the *Talmud* are analogous to each other, and need to be read carefully in context. In this instance the *Talmud* is placing emphasis on the fact women take priority over men when it comes to inheritance. It was considered immodest for a woman to have to look outside the family for a means of support. If there is not enough inheritance to go round, then the sons, metaphorically, 'go a-begging' and have to find their living elsewhere or make do with what little they get. This is not, as Seccombe supposes, a case for no organized charity, for it has nothing whatsoever to do with charity.

The second issue concerns the provision for the Passover meal for the poor from a tray (*tamhui*; *m. Pes*. 10.1). The tray was originally used to collect offerings of food that were distributed to the poor, but as money became an easier option for giving to the poor, *tamhui* eventually became the term applied to a communal soup kitchen where temporary relief from hunger could be found. *B. Pes*. 10.1 states that a poor man should be given no fewer than four cups of wine on Passover eve, even though he is supported from the *tamhui*. Jeremias says that this passage 'can only refer to a time when the Passover was still celebrated in Jerusalem'.

However, Seccombe has shown that the talmudic text is probably not pre-70 CE since it is written as a prescription, describing what is to happen now and henceforward (לא יפהחו לא יאכל), whereas when *b. Pes*. 5.1-6 describes the proceedings of the Passover in the Temple and what took place (נוהט ופרב) there is no reference made to a *tamhui*. As Seccombe rightly points out, Jeremias has not taken into account the use of the

19. D. Seccombe, 'Was there Organised Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?', *JTS* 29 (1978), pp. 140-43.

tenses: the former is written in the imperfect (future) and the latter in the perfect (past).

Nevertheless, Seccombe has failed to inspect biblical sources, especially a passage in Esdras, which speaks of the celebration of Passover by Josiah:

> They [the priests] roasted the Passover lamb with fire, as required: and they boiled all the sacrifices in the bronze pots and cauldrons, with a pleasing odour, *and carried them to all the people*. Afterward they prepared the Passover for themselves and their kindred the priests, the sons of Aaron (1 Esd. 12-13).

Admittedly this was an unusual Passover in the amount of sacrifices given by Josiah. However, it may be an indication this action by the priests was a feature of Passover celebrations in general, and set the precedent for the future employment of the *tamhui* when the Temple and priests were no longer there to perform this duty. Perhaps not all the people would normally have shared in the sacrifices but it is definite under Deuteronomic prescription that all were entitled. Communal meals are also well attested to in the Roman world.[20] These feasts were connected to cultic acts, such as the Passover sacrifice in the Temple. Temple settings were well suited to provide space for large communal gatherings or for various kinds of fraternities, and there is much archaeological evidence for banqueting areas within temple precincts to be found throughout Greece and Asia Minor, even in Caesarea Maritima.[21] Josephus speaks of 'communal meals' when referring to the order issued by Julius Caesar that Jews in the Diaspora should be allowed to follow their customs, 'to contribute money to common meals and sacred rites' (*Ant*. 14.214-16). Therefore, the idea of the *tamhui* operating in the first century CE, after the destruction of the Temple is not difficult to comprehend. It would enable all members of a Jewish community to benefit from a communal meal, such as Passover, without necessarily being present. The fact that the rabbis chose the very poor to be the recipients of the *tamhui* could be indicative of the changing social and economic environment brought about in the aftermath of the Temple's destruction.

The final argument concerns the Temple treasury, where there existed a chamber known as the 'Chamber of Secrets' (לשכת השאים), through

20. A.D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), and J.P. Kane, 'Mithraic Cultic Meal in its Greek and Roman Environment', *Mithraic Studies* 2 (1975), pp. 313-51.

21. R. Bull, 'Mithraeum of Caesarea Maritima', *Textes et mémoires* 4 (1978), pp. 75-89 (79).

which the *hasheina* ('secret ones')[22] gave money secretly to the 'poor of good families' (*b. Shek*. 5.5), who were supported by it. Jeremias concludes that this is evidence of a charity *kuppah* operating in Temple times. According to the Tosefta (*t. Shek*. 2.16), there were such chambers in every city, presumably in the synagogues. Seccombe concedes that this is charity and sees it as selective giving, which is correct, but he does not consider to whom charity was given or why. Once again, the assumption is that this is 'charity', as we understand it; the fact that it is selective is not a point worth making without qualification, as all later forms of charity contained an element of selectivity. Christian charity, for example, was open to those who had need provided they were Christian. The intriguing questions are: Who are these 'poor of good families'? Why should they be singled out for assistance?

In order to resolve questions, it is necessary to take a closer look at the wording of the phrase. The Hebrew text reads: עניים בני טובים. Seccombe translates this as 'poor of good families', while the Soncino translation of the Talmud says the 'poor descended of the virtuous' and the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says 'poor descendants of good families'. The word עניים is a masculine plural absolute adjective from the verb עני, which means 'to humble, afflict or oppress'. So, the recipients may not be necessarily be afflicted by poverty, but afflicted or oppressed in some other way. The line could be translated as 'the oppressed/afflicted sons of the good/virtuous ones'. In conclusion to this, there is an interesting inscription from the early Second Temple period, found in a cave at Giv'at ha Mivtar, near Jerusalem:

אנא אבה בר כהנה א
לעז בר אהרן רבה אנ
ה אבה מעניה מרד
פה די יליד בירושלם
וגלא לבבל ואסק למתה
י בר יהוד וקברתה בנו
ערתה דזכנת בגטה

I, Abba, son of the priest Ele-
az(ar), son of Aaron the elder,
I Abba, the oppressed and the pers-
ecuted, who (was) born in Jerusalem
and went into exile in Babylon, brought (back to Jerusalem) Matta-
thi(ah), son of Jud(ah): and I buried him in the
cave which I had acquired by the writ.[23]

22. Referred to in *EncJud* as 'sin fearing'. They are also called 'wealthy members of the community'; see *b. Shek*. 5.4.

23. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 169 n. 68. J. Naveh gives a slightly different translation in 'An Aramaic Tomb Inscription Written in Paleo-Hebrew', *IEJ* 23 (1973), pp. 82-91 (91).

The third line says 'oppressed', but could also be translated as 'poor' or 'humiliated', but in what sense? The inscription may give a clue to the meaning of the word. In it, reference is made to the exile, which could be seen as the calamity which made Abba oppressed or poor/humiliated.

What this inscription reveals is that the word עני means more than just 'poor'—it can also mean those who were oppressed in other ways. A further inscription, this time a tri-lingual one, on an ossuary from Jerusalem, implies that 'poor' was also used as an epithet and could well have carried a meaning similar to 'pious':[24]

Line 1	Hebrew:	חנין הבשׁני
Line 2	Greek:	Ἀνὶν Σκυθοπολείτης
Lines 3-4	Aramaic:	יהוסף בר אנין עניה אבה קבר בריה

Hanin the Bashanite.
Anin the Scythopolitan
Joseph the son of Anin, the poor [man],
The father buried the son.

This formula is also seen on a funerary inscription from Beth She'arim, where the deceased's father is described as πενηχρου, about which Lifshitz says, 'the epithet, no doubt, commends Isaac as a man who lived a frugal, god fearing life'. Lifshitz goes on to quote some rabbinic texts about poverty being a virtue.[25]

There is no way of knowing when the 'Chamber of Secrets' was operational. Was it all through the Second Temple period, or only part of it? It may well have been a way in which families returning from the exile were initially helped upon their return, in a quiet, dignified manner, so that they would not feel the shame of poverty, which had come about through no fault of their own. The assistance to those persons who had a temporary need would also have been a usual feature of the Graeco-Roman benefaction system.

Seccombe further tries to make his case by referring to a story, which, for him, even if exaggerated, 'is difficult to account for if there was a system of public charity'.

The story concerns Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who, while travelling from Jerusalem encounters the daughter of a formerly rich man, Nakdamon ben Gurion, picking barley grains from the dung of Arab cattle. Seccombe dates this incident prior to 66 CE,[26] and goes on to say

24. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 246. It appears that the Aramaic part was added later to the Hebrew and Greek inscriptions.

25. *BS* II, p. 99.

26. Seccombe, 'Was there Organised Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?', does not supply an explanation for the date he cites.

that such an occurrence would have been hard to imagine under a later system, one which even gave priority to women. Here, yet again, we have another instance where interpreting Mishnah stories literally can lead to misunderstanding.

Seccombe fails to continue with the story, thereby missing important clues to its correct meaning. When Rabbi Yohanan asked the girl how she came to be in this predicament, she replied, 'Is there not a proverb in Jerusalem, that the salt of money is diminution?' (*b. Ket*. 66b).[27]

The girl goes on to say the wealth of her dowry was also lost, to which Yohanan replies,

> Happy are they when they do the will of the Omnipresent, no nation nor any language speaking group has any power over them: but when they do not do the will of the Omnipresent he delivers them into the hands of a low people and not only into the hands of a low people but into the power of the beasts of low people.

The rabbis interpreted Yohanan's words to mean her father only practised 'charity' for his own glorification, not as God had commanded it to be done. So, because her father did not uphold God's will, they lost their money.

The Hebrew text of this passage uses the word *hesed*,[28] which the translators have rendered as 'charity'. The 'charity' ben Gurion practised can be seen in the story of him having woollen cloths spread out beneath his feet when he walked out from his house; the garments would then be gathered up by the poor who followed behind. Presumably he would pay them for doing this service, as it does not say the poor were allowed to keep the cloths. Therefore, it was not so much the act itself that was at fault, but the *manner* in which it was done. Ben Gurion did not act in the spirit of *hesed*, but made a public display of his benevolence instead of recognizing that he was merely God's agent (i.e. he was usurping God's role as benefactor). In effect, he was not distributing alms; instead of giving them the money (alms/charity), he made them work for it, and in a humiliating fashion. This is certainly not the way in which almsgiving (*raham*) is intended to be done, by shaming another less fortunate person in order to advertise one's wealth, even if the person is reciprocating in some way for what they are given. Not surprisingly, because he abused his position as a benefactor, God did not allow him to keep his wealth.

If we compare this story with a passage in *b. Gittin* (56a), we read in the time of Vespasian (during the siege of Jerusalem), three men of great wealth said to the people of Jerusalem that they would keep them in all

27. Some translations of the Hebrew word give 'benevolence' instead of 'diminution'.

28. For a full discussion of this word and its implications, see Chapter 12.

necessary commodities. We are told that they were wealthy enough to keep the city supplied for 21 years, which is perhaps a little exaggerated. Nevertheless, the point is that Nakdamon ben Gurion was one of these three men who had offered to supply wheat and barley. Unless this is another man with the same name, from the same place, Jerusalem, of a similar wealthy background, then it must be the father of the girl referred to in the previous story. If this is so then Yohanan must have encountered the girl after 70 CE, that is, after the fall of Jerusalem (for the story reveals Yohanan encountered the girl in Acco).

Nevertheless, it is highly doubtful that any system of poor relief which may have been in existence would have been operating in this post-war climate. Seccombe's dating of the incident to 66 CE is inaccurate, and he fails to say why he gives this date. Presumably this is intended to tie in with his argument that no organized system of poor relief existed prior to the destruction of the Temple.

What Seccombe not realized is this whole story is allegorical. As Satlow notes, 'there is some description in rabbinic prescription but that description must be prised loose from its complex meaning'.[29]

This is exactly what Seccombe fails to do. The incident epitomizes Yohanan's viewpoint on the disaster of the Temple's destruction. Like Josephus, he was calling on the people to achieve a better fortune through their own efforts. The people of Israel could only be happy if they submitted themselves to God *and* the Romans, following the Laws laid down by both. Josephus and Yohanan conceived the fulfilment of Jewish law as interpreted by the Pharisees to be the righteous life in this world, which carried the assurance of a portion in the next. The ideals of charity were to be expounded in the following centuries based upon this concept of righteousness.

However, there are better ways of explaining the evidence than the arguments that Seccombe and Jeremias put forward. Seccombe is partly correct when he suggests there was no organized charity, but he evaluates the evidence with the assumption that charity operated without any form of organization, and fails to evaluate what kind of system was in place.

There is one piece of epigraphic evidence relating to the Second Temple period to which Seccombe also makes reference, and which shows the practical application of some of the principles of euergetism being employed—the evidence in question comes from the 'Theodotus' inscription.[30] This inscription has been examined in more detail previously, and

29. M.L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. xxiv.

30. *CIJ* 1404; *SEG* VIII, 170.

for the moment it is referred to for its supposed connection with charity. This inscription was carved on a block of limestone and found in the cistern in the southern part of the south-eastern section of Ophel Hill in Jerusalem, during excavations carried out in 1913/14. This block was found with other archaeological remains, stored in an orderly fashion, suggesting that they were being preserved for future restoration.[31] Levine[32] dated the inscription to the end of the first century BCE, a date now generally accepted by most scholars.[33] This acceptance of a pre-70 CE date is based partly on the palaeographical similarities in the irregularity of the letters between this inscription and the 'Rhodian Jew' inscription (see Chapter 3), dated to 18/17 BCE.[34]

The excavations carried out helped to confirm the dating. The results revealed that after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the hill of the city of David was neglected. The structures of the lower city on its ridge and supporting walls on its slopes collapsed and tumbled down the hill. The eastern slope for its entire length became covered with a layer of debris several metres thick and included finds carried down there from the buildings at the top of the slope, none of which were later than 70 CE. Geva has elaborated on this further, concluding that, 'a summary of the finds indicates that for most of the Roman period (after 70 CE) the city of David remained largely outside the built up area of Aelia Capitolina, serving mainly as a source for building stones'.[35]

The inscription is as follows:

Θ[ε]όδοτος Οὐεττήνου ἱερεὺς καὶ
ἀ[ρ]χισυνάγωγος, υἱὸς ἀρχισυναγ[ώ]-
γ[ο]υ, υἱωνὸς ἀρχισυν[α]γώγου, ὠκο-
δόμησε τὴν συναγωγὴν εἰς ἀν[άγν]ω-
σ[ιν] νόμου καὶ εἰς [δ]ισαχ[ὴ]ν ἐντολῶν, καὶ
τ[ὸ]ν ξενῶνα, κα[ὶ τὰ] δώματα καὶ τὰ χρη-

31. L. Hoppe, *The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).

32. L.A. Levine, 'The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years', in *idem* (ed.), *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Theological Seminary/American School of Oriental Research, 1987), pp. 7-32.

33. J. Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament: Research and Theories* (Leiden: Brill, 1952); Goodenough, *Jewish Symbolism*; H.C. Kee, 'The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 CE: Its Import for Early Christianity', *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 1-24. For a full discussion, see J.S. Kloppenborg Verbin, 'Dating Theodotos (*CIJ* II 1404)', *JJS* 51 (2002), pp. 243-80.

34. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this inscription.

35. H. Geva, 'Jerusalem: The Roman Period', in *New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, III (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1976), pp. 758-67.

σ[τ]ήρια τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς κατάλυμα τοῖ-
ς [χ]ρήζουσιν ἀπὸ τῆς ξέ[ν]ης, ἣν ἐθεμε-
λ[ίω]σαν οἱ πατέρες [α]ὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ πρε-
σ[β]ύτεροι και Σιμων [ί]δης

Theodotus [son] of Vettenus priest and
archisynagogos, son of an archisynagogos
grandson of an archisynagogos,
constructed the synagogue for the reading of the
law and teaching of the commandments and
the guest room and the [upper?] chambers and the
installations of water for a hostelry for those
[needing] them from abroad, which was
founded by his fathers and the
elders and Simonides.

The archaeological findings suggested that the stone inscription was found near the original site of the synagogue building. Further architectural fragments of installations were found near to the inscription's location. Nearby were three basins identified as *miqvaot* ('ritual baths'); close to the bathing installation were found the remains of a building, comprising two to three layers of limestone blocks very well worked, and the remains of a pavement. The evidence makes it highly probable that these are the remains of the synagogue mentioned in the inscription.

The building comprised not only rooms for services (reading the law) and a school (teaching the commandments), but also contained ritual baths and accommodation for pilgrims. Seccombe says that it 'is indicative that there was no system of poor relief to be found in the synagogues of this period, even though this [the hostel] shows some kind of humanitarian effort being undertaken'.

But even if it existed, would poor relief necessarily be mentioned in the inscription? Surely a special room would not be needed to accommodate it. However, we have very little archaeological detail about early synagogues in Palestine, mainly due to difficulties in identifying them.[36] According to Fine,[37] numerous synagogues did exist in Jerusalem during the first century CE, though they were probably located in private houses, like the 'upper' rooms evidenced in Acts and elsewhere.[38] Nevertheless, the building of Theodotus is, in the absence of other excavated

36. Synagogues mentioned in Luke include the ones at Nazareth (4.16-28) and Capernaum (7.1-10). Scholars are fairly sure of their locations. See V. Tsaferis and M. Peleg, 'Kefer Nahum', *Excavation and Survey in Israel* 4 (1986), p. 59.

37. Fine, *Sacred Realm*, pp. 21-36.

38. Acts 9.37 among others. Also, upper rooms are mentioned in a synagogue inscription from Stobi, Macedonia (see *CIJ* 694, third century CE). Although the donor occupied these rooms, this does not necessarily mean that in the first century upper rooms were not used for synagogue meetings.

identifiable sites, unique. Its location was opposite Temple Mount, so it appears the hostel may have been particularly designed for visiting pilgrims and had nothing whatsoever to do with charity of the kind referred to by Seccombe and Jeremias. What it demonstrates is the application of the biblical commandment to give succour to the visiting sojourner.

This is a tangible example of a Jewish benefaction system with similarities to euergetism,[39] and not, as Seccombe implies, some sort of humanitarian effort towards the alleviation of poverty. Nowhere in this inscription is any mention of the hostel being used for free by strangers or strangers who were destitute. Indeed, the accepted method by which hospitality during times of pilgrimage was reimbursed was the receiving of the sacrificial skins from the guest. On occasions other than pilgrimage it could be assumed that the usual rates of room hire would have applied, for there is nothing telling us otherwise. In fact, the provision of the entire building would fit into a system of Jewish euergetism. Theodotus's actions and the community's recognition of them are consistent with euergetism, although presumably the motivation was different: whatever the nature of the motivation, it cannot be regarded as charitable.

Theodotus is believed by some to have been the son or grandson of a Roman freedman, rather than a rich Jew.[40] It is equally possible he could have been both. The inscription implies, according to Brooten, that 'some sort of council formed the founding body'.[41] Hengel[42] has suggested that Theodotus was a Pharisee because they were the only ones who were responsible for teaching the Law, while Sanders[43] suggests he came from a family of wealthy priests not necessarily affiliated to any party.

If Theodotus was a descendant of a freedman, then this synagogue may be associated with the 'Synagogue of the Libertines' mentioned in Acts 6.9. There the implication from the way Luke formulates the phrase is that freedmen were organized in their own synagogue in Jerusalem. Caring for the traveller may have consisted of no more than an exclusive 'club' for those of the 'libertini' who came from the Diaspora on pilgrimage. An epitaph on one of the ossuaries from the Goliath family in Jericho reads: 'the ossuary of Theodotus, freedman of Queen Agrippina'.[44]

39. See Chapter 1.
40. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, p. 127.
41. Brooten, *Women Leaders,* p. 25.
42. M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1983), pp. 16-18.
43. Sanders, *Judaism*, p. 177.
44. R. Hachlili, 'The Goliath Family in Jericho: Funerary Inscriptions from a First Century A.D. Jewish Monumental Tomb', *BASOR* 235 (1979), pp. 31-66 (33, 46).

Josephus tells us that in the two centuries around the turn of the era many Jews were taken captive by the Romans and sold into slavery. Philo (*Spec. Leg*. 155) says that if they were manumitted and became freedmen, they sometimes formed their own groups. The Theodotus of the ossuary inscription, after being freed, returned to his family in Palestine. It is possible the Theodotus of the synagogue inscription was of a similar status, although the only evidence to substantiate this is the Latin name of his father.

Whatever the case, it seems fairly unlikely that visiting pilgrims from the Diaspora would have been poor and in need of the 'humanitarian effort' Seccombe sees as the *raison d'être* for this hostel. Once again, from the evidence in this inscription, there is little of substance to make a case for the existence of charity, whether organized or not. Although we can see the seeds of charity were already being sown in the Second Temple period, the idea of an institutionalized response to poverty is not apparent.

Misrepresentation of the word 'poor' can be seen in the biblical accounts of the festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Purim, where, we have been led to believe, 'giving gifts to the poor', that is, 'charity', was of major significance. Once again, on examination of the texts, we can see that *nowhere are the 'poor' specifically mentioned*. When Ezra and Nehemiah taught the people anew about the meaning of Rosh Hashanah, they told the people:

> ויאמר להם לכו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים
> ושלחו מנות לאין נכון לו

> Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared (Neh. 8.10).

Likewise in the book of Esther (9.18-19) we read about 'sending portions to one another' at Purim. This would imply a level of personal commitment between the parties concerned, which is not the case with an act of almsgiving (*raham)*. Presumably the portions would be sent locally and the donor would have had to be aware of the need—the recipient could, for example, have been a neighbour who was ill and not able to prepare his/her own food, or perhaps someone who had returned from a journey and who had not had time to make preparations. There is nothing in these texts to indicate that these gifts were intended specifically for the poor; they were to be given to anyone, quite possibly someone not as wealthy as the donor, but it does not mean they were poor in the way that we might interpret poverty. The fact that someone may not have had anything prepared also does not necessarily mean they were poor. Yet if they were poor, how poor were they? Were they destitute,

deserving pity, or were they slightly poorer than those able to supply lavish feasts. There is a great difference.

The Hebrew texts declare that everyone was supposed to give, usually money, to someone less fortunate—even the 'poor' would be expected to give to the abject poor. This means that the parameters of exactly who qualified as poor cannot be clearly defined, and that recipients of these gifts need not necessarily be permanently poor. They could have been people who had temporary needs.

The city created a different environment from the countryside. The kind of 'dyadic'[45] contract that worked well within agrarian communities could not possibly function within the city. The city created its own class of dependencies and its own classification of poverty. Generally speaking, in the city, temporary imbalances could not be alleviated by the same method because of their variability; hence the need later for the rabbis to formulate a code by which aid could be dispensed to address the needs of those in desperate situations. No doubt this also served to control those who begged as a profession, as related in a story (*y. Pe'ah* 8.5.21b) concerning Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Simeon,[46] who were accosted upon entering a bathhouse in Tiberias by a beggar who turned out to be a phoney; for upon the beggar's death he was found to have a purse full of gold coins.

The mechanisms for charity already existed within the Jewish system via the practice of almsgiving (*raham*). However, because charity did not exist in an institutionalized way there was no Hebrew word to accommodate this new development. Almsgiving was not intended to eradicate poverty; it was a vehicle by which the morality of the donor could be preserved and went some way to preserving the equilibrium of the community. Therefore, almsgiving was the precursor of charity. Yet, it was not clearly defined or institutionalized, and as more and more people lost their land and became less able to repay debts, they flocked to the city where they could be assured via almsgiving of some small measure of sustenance. There was no formula to determine who should be classified as 'poor' and likewise no prescriptions concerning entitlement. This was something that the rabbis of the late first/early second century CE would remedy, when 'charity' became an institutional response to increasing poverty and a means of salvation for the Jewish people.

45. 'Dyadic' is a term coined by Foster in 1967, referring to the horizontal reciprocity practised in agrarian societies whereby temporary imbalances are corrected by horizontal exchange. See Dreze and Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*.

46. Circa second century CE.

This system provided a way of coping with the social problem of large-scale poverty, with all its inherent dangers, for this problem had escalated dramatically by the end of the first century CE. It would appear a Jewish benefaction system in general could accommodate such philanthropic ideals, which were later to become incorporated in charity, and which before being codified by the rabbis would have been left to the individual to determine.

With the loss of the Temple, both Judaism, with its rabbis, and Christianity, with its apostles and clergy, were to draw on the middle classes for their religious leaders. In order for them to pursue their religious dedication they expected to receive encouragement and ultimately financial support. In essence, they created a new class of 'poor'. Those whose all-absorbing commitment to religion afforded no opportunity to be able to support themselves, and who came to be increasingly reliant upon the financial support of their community, as the Levites had done previously. This potential conflict between support of the normal 'poor' and those 'ministering poor' within the Christian communities is highlighted by the apostle Paul, who, in the book of Acts, is recorded as saying:

> I coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel…these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus how he said 'It is more blessed to give that to receive' (Acts 20.33-35).

The situation may have been similar within Judaism; however, the extent of the financial support of the rabbis is not clear, simply because the social composition of the rabbinate is itself unclear.[47] What is certain is that the rabbis of the later centuries set about adapting many of the Laws to the conditions of their own time. It is important to remember that after 70 CE the population was much reduced, especially in Judaea, with a predominant element now in Galilee. Therefore, it would appear during the period second century BCE to the first century CE that no organized response to poverty, that is, 'charity', existed.

47. See C. Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), pp. 263-66.

Chapter 17

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *TSEDAKAH*

As Urbach says, 'The extent to which the ordinances by the Sages were liable to changes due to social and political circumstances is particularly manifest in their dicta concerning charity'.[1]

From the late first to early second century CE, owing to social and economic changes that had taken place within Palestine, 'charity' became an increasingly important ideology, and the rabbis of the period organized and developed the concepts embodied in the practice of almsgiving. After the destruction of the Temple, the monetary benefits allocated to the Temple for its upkeep and maintenance, incorporated in the obligatory Temple tax, now went to the Roman State. A new system of salvation, other than daily sacrifice, was required. After the destruction of the Temple, prayer took the place of sacrificial worship (*m. Abot* 1.2). The *Pirqe Abot* contains the following statement: 'By three things is the world sustained: by the Law, by the Temple (service) and by deeds of *hesed*'.[2]

Many scholars have regarded this statement as a brilliant summary of the essence of Jewish religion. With the loss of the Temple, acts of *hesed*, which increasingly became identified with acts of 'charity',[3] would have had an atoning function, with a promise of inheritance in the next world. This marks a fundamental break with the atoning and saving functions of sacrifice in Temple worship.

Mauss has demonstrated that alms are the fruits of the moral notion of the gift and good fortune, on the one hand, and the notion of sacrifice, on the other: 'Generosity is an obligation, because Nemesis avenges the poor and the gods for the superabundance of wealth and happiness of some people who should rid themselves of it'.[4] Mauss calls this 'the ancient morality of the gift', which becomes a principle of justice: 'The

1. E.E. Urbach, *The Sages*: *Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), I, p. 348.
2. *Abot de R. Nathan*.
3. Although other elements of the system already discussed were still included.
4. M. Mauss, *The Gift* (trans. W.D. Halls; London: Routledge, 1993), p. 18.

gods and the spirits accept that the share of wealth and happiness that has been offered to them in useless sacrifice should serve the poor and children'.[5]

The rabbis of the Talmudic period adopted the word *tsedakah* (צדקה) to incorporate this new ideology, singling out one important element of the benefaction system; it is used almost exclusively throughout rabbinic literature to imply helping the needy by giving gifts. Acts of charity encompass the poor, not only the Jewish poor but all poor people and every facet of their needs. The word *tsedakah* is defined as doing what is just, right or fair, without the element of compassion embodied in the word *raham*. *Raham* is equated with almsgiving, which is a voluntary action prompted by compassion, while *tsedakah* is a prescriptive right of the poor person and an incumbent duty of the giver. The element of spontaneity is no longer apparent. There was thus a substantial departure from the system of *hesedism* which did not involve compulsion and which required some reciprocity from the receiver.

The Laws by themselves were inadequate; and so they were interpreted with a fervour that often strains the meaning of the original Law. A good example can be seen in the oldest juristic comment on Deut. 15.7-11.[6] It seems clear that much of the doctrine on charity was interpreted *into* and not *out of* the texts. Parallels are numerous, especially in the New Testament teachings of Jesus (e.g. Mt. 5.42). To lend to a would-be borrower is no longer optional but obligatory, and it is no less obligatory to lend to the poor according to the need of the borrower and the ability of the giver. This is true even if the lender puts himself into penury by doing so—what is important is he trusts the promise of Deut. 15.10, if a person does their part then God will do his. In other words, the poor will benefit from God's promised *hesed* in that he will keep them at least in the same position. So, for instance, if they are poor, they will not become destitute.

During the troubled period following the war in the second century CE, during the reign of Hadrian, some of those who still had the wherewithal wished to part with their possessions to relieve the plight of their countrymen. However, there were those who considered this action might cause even greater distress subsequently by the impoverishment of this class of person, thereby adding to the number of poor. Consequently a rule was laid down that no one should use more than a fifth of his property in this manner.[7]

5. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 18.
6. *Sifre* Deut. 116–18. In *Sifre* this part comes from the school of Akiva.
7. This ordinance was adopted at Usha, where the leaders assembled under the leadership of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel and is reported by a contemporary, R. Isi'a; see *b. Ket*. 50a.

The rabbis by their choice of word (צדקה) reveal quite a lot about their attitude to the subject. They seemingly saw charity not as a favour to the poor, but as something to which the poor have a right and the donor an obligation: 'In this way the poor man does more for the householder [in accepting alms] than the householder does for the poor man [by giving him the charity]' (*Lev. R*. 34.8).

In other words, the poor man is giving the donor an opportunity to perform a *mitzvah*. This attitude came from the awareness that all men's possessions belong to God, who can give or take as he pleases: 'Give unto him what is his, seeing that thou and what thou hast is his' (*m*. *Abot* 3.8). So, they saw it as giving to God not to the human recipient. The importance the rabbis attached to the *mitzvah* of *tsedakah* can be seen in the words of Rabbi Assi, who stated that *tsedakah* was as important as all the other commandments put together (*b. B. Bat*. 9a). Rabbi Eleazar expounded the verse, 'To do righteousness and justice (צדקה) is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice' (Prov. 21.3), which according to him meant that 'charity' was greater than sacrifice (*b. Suk*. 49b). There is an even higher form of this virtue, which not merely relieves the immediate situation by almsgiving or contributions to organized charities, but gives personal attention, sympathy and service: *Gemilut hasidim* (usually translated as 'deeds of loving kindness'), the 'popular morality' of which Veyne speaks and of which more will be said later in this chapter.

Tsedakah*: Its Organization and Development (Second Century* CE *Onwards)*

Relief of the poor was not left solely to the individual. The community was required to share in the obligation to assist those in temporary or permanent need. Since *tsedakah* was considered to be a biblical commandment, the rabbis found it necessary, as with every other *mitzvah*, to define it in minute detail, spelling out, for example, who should give, who should receive, how much should be given and in what manner. These Laws can be found scattered throughout the Talmud and later codified by Maimonides in his *Yad*, in the twelfth century CE, the last four chapters of which deal specifically with the laws of charity. However, it is not possible to know how far the system worked in practice according to the rabbis' regulations.

The regulation of these particulars in the *Tosefta Pe'ah* (4) shows the system was well established and familiar by the end of the second century CE. It is probable it was organized or re-organized under Simon b. Gamaliel and the scholars who gathered to him in Galilee after the war with Hadrian. Charity was organized as a public concern in connection

with the synagogue. For the preceding century the evidence is scanty. We know that Hanina b. Teradion, who taught at Siknin in Galilee and who was one of the alleged victims of the persecution of teachers under Hadrian, had a proverbial reputation as an administrator of the community alms chest (*b. B. Bat*. 10b). Rabbi Akiva also is mentioned as a collector having the charity tithe assigned to him (*b. Kid*. 27a).

For the poor, who had to be registered in a town or village, the community chest would provide food, clothing or money. According to Hamel, among those poor could be people who had a certain social status, and the difference in social status was recognized in the distributions—in fact, maintenance of social status was considered a need.[8] Therefore, people of higher status received more than people of lower status. Everybody was obliged to give *tsedakah*, even someone who was dependent themselves upon charity (*b. Git*. 7a). The court could compel someone to give. If they withheld charity or donated less than their means allowed the court could intervene and assess how much was to be donated to the fund. The miscreant could suffer severe penalties for failing to comply—they could be flogged, and if they still refused to give, the court could seize their property (*b. Ket*. 49a).

To qualify as a recipient of charity, an individual was defined as poor if he/she owned less than 200 zuz.[9] This sum was the limit of capital held unless it was being used in business. The relative value of the zuz is difficult to determine as it fluctuated greatly during the period under discussion. Anyone with more than these sums of money would not be entitled to take *leket* (anything that falls to the ground during reaping), *shikhhah* (any produce grown on trees overlooked during the picking)[10] or *pe'ah* (the produce of the corner of the field left for the poor), the poor man's tithe or charity. Anybody who did take it falsely would, according to the rabbis, come to know real poverty before they died.

Charity could also be dispensed to non-Jewish poor in order to preserve good relations; however, charity could not be accepted from non-Jews unless it was completely unavoidable. Women took precedence over men and poor relatives came before strangers. The general rule is that 'the poor of your town come before the poor of any other town',[11] but this rule was lifted for the poor of Eretz Israel who take precedence over all.

8. G. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine: First Three Centuries CE* (NES, 23; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 218.

9. One zuz roughly equates to one denarius. Each coin is a mixture of 7/8 bronze and 1/8 silver and was the equivalent of 96 barley grains.

10. See *EncJud s.v.*

11. Maimonides, *Yad* 251-53.

A traveller in a strange town who runs out of funds is considered to be poor and may take charity even though he/she has money at home. When the traveller returns home he/she is not obliged to repay the charity that was taken (*m. Pe'ah*. 5.4). The importance of taking care of strangers was also recognized in Graeco-Roman culture.

A man is not obliged to sell his household goods in order to maintain himself but is eligible for charity even if he owns land, horses or other property. He is not required to sell them at a disadvantage if the prices are lower than usual (*m. Pe'ah*. 8.8). It is permitted to deceive a poor man who out of pride refuses charity, allowing him to think he has been given a loan. However, a miser who refuses to use his own means is to be ignored. The limits or assessments made on how much should be given appear to reflect the original system of tithes. To give a tenth of one's income to charity was considered middling, to give a twentieth mean. The rabbis in Usha argued that one should not give more than a fifth of one's income in case it made the givers impoverish themselves and become dependent upon charity.

The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which charity was dispensed. The prime consideration was that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. Rabbi Jonah, speaking of Ps. 41.2, said: 'It is not written. "Happy is he who gives to the poor" but "Happy is he who considers the poor".'

If Rabbi Jonah met a man of good family who had become impoverished he would say: 'I have heard that a legacy has been left to you in such a place; take this money in advance and pay me back later'. When the man accepted it he then said: 'It is a gift' (*b. Pe'ah* 9.21b).

Out of consideration for the sensibilities of the poor the rabbis considered the best form of almsgiving to be one in which neither donor nor recipient knew each other: 'Which is the *tsedakah* that saves from a strange death? That in which the giver does not know to whom he has given and the recipient from whom he has received' (*b. B. Bat*. 10b).

Rabbi Eleazar saw the secret giver as being greater than Moses (*b. B. Bat*. 9b). There are many such stories in the Talmud that emphasize this principle and relate how the pious used to devise ingenious methods for giving charity so as to remain anonymous.[12]

In each municipality two collectors were appointed, known as *gabbie tsedakah* (גבאי צדקה; *b. B. Bat.* 8b). These were men of good character entirely responsible for the whole business (*b. B. Bat.* 9a, referring to 2 Kgs 12.16). Together they made their rounds every Friday to the market, shops and private houses, taking up the weekly collection for charity in money or kind (*b. B. Bat.* 8b). If a man was not prepared to pay

12. See *b. Ket*. 67b; *Ta'an* 21b-22a among others.

his contribution there and then they could ask him for a pledge, but not in an oppressive manner (*b. B. Bat.* 8b). Because the charity warden was involved in the collection and distribution of public funds, special care was taken to ensure there should be no suspicion of dishonesty. The two wardens were not permitted to leave one another for any reason during the collection. The distribution was to be made by at least three wardens in whose hands lay the decision to whom to give to and how much. Besides money, food and clothing were also distributed. It appears the poor were registered with the fund and mendicants who went from door to door begging were not given any sizeable sums (*b. B. Bat.* 9a).

These duties were responsible and difficult, especially the distribution, which was also done on a Friday. It appears funds would be allocated for different purposes, requiring separate coffers of money and goods, and consequently a great deal of organization. However, it is not clear how the money was allocated—whether, for example, surplus money would be designated for orphans or whether a specific amount would regularly be assigned to this fund. Generally speaking, the charity money should be used for the purpose for which it was given and it was forbidden to divert the funds to some other cause. It is possible that there were separate chests for donations, rather like the ones in the Temple, inscribed with the object for which the donation was being made. Three members of the commission had to investigate the needs, and sometimes competing claims of the recipients. In cases of dire necessity they might have to make up the deficiency themselves or borrow to meet it (*b. B. Bat.* 11a). The task was so great that Rabbi Yose prayed: 'May my lot be with those who collect charity rather than with those who distribute it' (*b. Shab.* 118b). Apparently he preferred the risk of humiliation to misjudgment.

To the poor of the town there was given every Friday enough to provide for the coming week (fourteen meals); if needed, clothing was also provided. Apart from maintaining the poor, the fund was also used for the support of orphan children to see them launched in life. This consisted of the renting and furnishing of a house for a man, and the fitting out of a girl with clothing and a dowry for which a minimum sum was fixed (*t. Ket*. 6.5-8). If the funds in the orphan community chest were low, then the girl had priority over the boy. With regard to this, depending upon the funds available, consideration was given to the former status of the beneficiary and the kind of life they had had; this also applied to the type of clothing for the orphan bride (*m. Ket*. 6.5). Burial of the poor was also provided from the funds, as was the ransom of captives, an obligation that superseded every other (*b. B. Bat.* 8a-b). Once again, women

took priority over men when it came to being ransomed. For these extraordinary expenses special collections were made.

Besides the collections for the community chest (*kuppah*), there was also a daily collection from house to house of victuals, the *tamhui*. The *tamhui* was a tray or shallow dish with compartments for different kinds of food. Presumably cooked food 'leftovers' were collected in this dish. This was received and distributed by a committee of three persons to those who were in pressing need of food for the coming day (*b. B. Bat.* 8b). Nobody who had two meals in the house could claim relief from this source, just as no one who had provision for the week could claim it from the *kuppah* (*m. Pe'ah*. 8.7).

While the *kuppah* was for residents, the *tamhui* was also for strangers. For the 'poor man passing from place to place' a minimum ration of bread was prescribed; if he stayed overnight he was given lodging, oil and pulses; over the Sabbath, food for three meals, oil, fish, fresh vegetables and pulses. This more generous fare belonged to the Sabbath observance, 'to make it a delight' (*t. Pe'ah*. 4.8); however, if they knew the person involved they could give him clothing as well. Public provision for relief of this kind was disfavoured if the vagrant went begging from door to door; often charitable housewives would give food to beggars, which meant the latter would forfeit their right to assistance from the overseers of the poor. Even the smallest gift of one dried fig would preclude them from gaining assistance from the overseers of the poor.

Of course, this system was open to abuse. The rabbis ruled that if someone pleaded hunger, he/she should be fed immediately, while if an unknown beggar asked for clothing, the case would have to be investigated. There were mendicants who gave themselves wounds or simulated illnesses in order to gain from the fund, because their incapacity would prevent them from working. It would be difficult to prove whether they were being untruthful about their circumstances. However, they were sternly warned before they died that they would in reality suffer from the afflictions they were now pretending to have.[13] Similarly, one who took alms that were not needed would one day wind up in genuine poverty (*b. Ket*. 68a). This implies that the recipient was seen, in fact, to be cheating God, who is the benefactor, and that God's judgment on the recipient will be more severe than human punishment.

Hamel says that, 'poor people were encouraged to stay away from these funds: their sense of shame was called upon. Or extreme merit was assigned to poor people who, though entitled to use public charity funds, did not come forward and claim them'.[14]

13. See *t. Pe'ah*. 4.14; *b. Ket*. 68a.
14. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity*, p. 218.

However, this statement needs further qualification. When it was necessary the acceptance of charity carried no stigma, however people were strongly advised to do everything possible to avoid it: 'Make your Sabbath a weekday [by not eating special food or wearing good clothes] rather than be dependent upon other people' (*b. Shab.* 118a; cf. *Pes*. 112a). Likewise, 'even a wise and honoured man should do menial work [skinning unclean animals] rather than take charity' (*b. Pes*. 113a).

Many eminent scholars supported themselves and their families by doing manual labour. The primary aim of this aspect of the Jewish benefaction system was that no one should become permanently dependent upon charity.

Everyone, without exception, was required to give to public charity, based on their ability and the current need. Men who moved into a town were liable to the daily collection of victuals (*tamhui*) after thirty days of residency. After three months they had to contribute to the weekly collection (*kuppah*); after six, to the collection for clothing; after nine, to the burial fund; and at the end of a year to the defences of the city (*b. B. Bat.* 8b). Minor orphans, even though they inherited property, were not assessed for charity (*b. B. Bat.* 8b) or for the ransom of captives; nor were women and children of the household. From women who were head of their household, the collectors were allowed to receive only small voluntary contributions (*t. B. Kam*. 11.6). The impoverished dependent upon charity were permitted to make small contributions to the *kuppah* but not urged to do so (*b. Git*. 7b). Where there was a suspicion that the contributor was not the owner then it was forbidden to accept what he offered (*m. B. Kam*. 119a).

Gemilut Hasidim *and Charity*

During this period, 'charity' (צדקה) and 'deeds of loving kindness' (גמלות חסידים) became equal in rabbinic thinking to all the commandments of the Law. The following table outlines the differences between the two concepts.

	Almsgiving: Raham	*Gemilut Hasidim*
1.	Could only be practised towards the living.	Could be done for the living and dead.
2.	For the benefit of the poor only.	For the benefit of rich or poor.
3.	Could only be done with money.	Could be done with money or person.

The Talmud says, 'in this the superiority of *gemilut hasidim* is affirmed' (*b. Suk.* 1c). Here we can see the ideology is expanded to include every aspect of human reciprocal relationships. The term *gemilut hasidim* is interesting; it is usually translated as 'deeds of loving kindness', but could be translated as 'good acts of the pious ones'. According to R.

Eleazar (second century CE), God requites almsgiving only in proportion to the amount of *hesed* in it. Alms given in this spirit are more than all the sacrifices,[15] and 'deeds of loving kindness' more than almsgiving (Hos. 10.12).

From now on all acts are free from obligation on the recipient; in fact, the obligation is now firmly placed upon the donor, also these acts do not require any element of reciprocity. For those acts that of necessity require some reciprocity (the repayment of loans, for example) the term *hesed* is used, indicating that there was a clear delineation being made between the old system of benefaction and the new. The high estimation placed upon these deeds can be illustrated by many quotations. However, the best example is a passage from *Sifre*, which sums up the whole of man's side of religion. On the words, 'If they were wise they would consider this', the comment runs: 'If Israel would consider the words of the Law that was given to them, no nation or kingdom would have dominion over them' (*Sifre* Deut. 32.39).

Redemptive Almsgiving in Judaism and Christianity

The development of the doctrine of 'redemptive' almsgiving can be seen to develop as early as the fourth and third centuries BCE, particularly in the Greek (LXX) translation of Proverbs. Proverbs 16.6 in Hebrew reads, 'By *hesed* and *emeth* (חסד ואמת) iniquity is atoned for', while the Greek says, 'By ἐλεημοσύνη and ἀλήθεια sins are purged away'. A similar distinction between the two translations can be seen in Prov. 20.28. In Prov. 21.3 and 21, the idea of redemptive almsgiving is expanded: 'The way of δικαισύνηS and ἐλεημοσύνηS will find life and glory'. These two verses are cited in rabbinic discussions of redemptive almsgiving where צדקה is interpreted as alms. Here, however, in the LXX translation ἐλεημοσύνη is used to render *hesed* not *tsedakah*. As Dodd says,

> this may well point to an evolution of the belief that almsgiving is both an act of kindness and mercy, and that it is righteousness that redeems from sin and death, a righteousness more acceptable to God than sacrifice.[16]

Evidence is also seen from the books of Tobit and Sirach. The Apocrypha, notably Daniel, Proverbs, Tobit and Sirach go beyond the Old Testament when they specifically identify righteousness and almsgiving claiming that ἐλεημοσύνη had the power to purge sin, to atone for and redeem iniquities, therefore implying almsgiving rescues from death. Daniel 4.27, for instance, reads:

15. Prov. 21.3 is the favoured text, but it is also found in Hos. 6.6.

16. C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 65.

> O King, let my counsel please you. Redeem your sins by almsgiving and your iniquities by compassion on the poor. It may be that God will be long suffering of your trespasses.

The book of Tobit also identifies almsgiving with righteousness and the Greek translator of Sirach associated almsgiving with *tsedakah* in at least six passages.[17]

The *Talmud* appears to advocate redemptive almsgiving, with the identification of righteousness with almsgiving being taken for granted. While the Temple still stood, Yohanan ben Zakkai regarded redemptive almsgiving as being for Gentiles only and not Jews: 'Just as sin offering makes atonement for Israel so charity makes atonement for the heathen' (*b. B. Bat.* 10b).

This idea is central to the story of the King of Adiabene (first century CE) who saw his generous almsgiving as an investment in the afterlife: 'My fathers stored up below and I am storing above. My fathers gathered for this world, but I have gathered for the future world' (*b. B. Bat.* 11a).

It is this aspect that emerges in early Christianity.

This ideology is seen in the Apostolic Fathers who imply that it was a theological concept irrespective of the fact that sociological factors are also a consideration. However, there is a tradition in Luke–Acts which may point to the fact redemptive almsgiving is advocated in the early Christian literature prior to the Apostolic Fathers (Acts 9.36 and 40). The story concerns Tabitha, a woman well known for her good works and almsgiving who was raised from the dead. It is possible that Luke cites this story in order to imply that almsgiving leads to life. Luke makes another allusion to the rewards gained by almsgiving, but this time the rewards are given to a Gentile:

> At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion, of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people and prayed constantly to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, 'Cornelius'. And he said to him, 'Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God' (Lk. 10.1-4, 31).

This last line is interesting for we see the idea of being remembered before God for doing good deeds is remarkably similar to the wording on later synagogue inscriptions, where, as I attempted to show, inscriptions are memorials rather than dedications.

17. Tob. 3.14, 30; 7.10; 12.3; 40.17, 24.

Paul's use of Ps. 112.9 in 2 Cor. 9.9 appears to refer to the enduring value of almsgiving, identifying it with *tsedakah*: 'He has dispersed abroad: he has given to the poor: his righteousness remains forever'. This implies that Paul shared the belief of Rabbinic Judaism that almsgiving and *tsedakah* was one and the same thing. If so, this supplies the link for the development of redemptive almsgiving.[18]

There are many other New Testament passages and early Christian writings promoting the idea of redemptive almsgiving, but it is not within the remit of this work to examine them further. What it does show is some of the principles of the Jewish system of almsgiving (and later charity) were clearly transferred to the Christian system of benefaction. The evidence would suggest, first, that the post-Temple system was building on ideas which existed earlier and which still fit the system of *hesedism* because people were acting for a religious reason, and, second, that it was not necessarily because the Jewish system was more philanthropic than the pagan one, though it was more philotheic. Under euergetism people did good deeds so that their community would reward them, while under *hesedism* they did them so God would reward them. This remained true under the rabbinic system of *tsedakah*, even though in some ways it departed from *hesedism*.

Dothan has argued for the importance placed upon *tsedakah* in the Late Antique period from evidence recorded on the inscription from Hammath Tiberias, where synagogue members are reminded of the importance of giving:

יהי שׁלמה על כל מן דעבד מצותה בהדן
אתרה קדישׁה ודעתיד מעבד מצותה
תהי לה ברכתה אמן אמן סלה ולי אמן

May peace be upon anyone who has offered charity in this
holy place and anyone who will offer charity
may he be blessed. Amen, Amen, Selah, and for myself Amen.[19]

Literally, the phrase דעבד מצותה means 'who did (or does) the good deed' and is found here for the first time in any synagogue inscription. The archaeological record affords some means of dating; according to Dothan's linguistic analysis, this is Galilean Aramaic of third to fourth centuries CE. The orientation of the inscription and its prominent *position* in the passage to the nave may indicate, according to him, that the place was used for collecting charity donations from the congregation.[20]

18. See J. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 52-53.

19. Translation from Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*, p. 85.

20. This inscription is also discussed in Chapter 6 with reference to the role it played in communal inscriptions.

Also, according to Dothan, when the word עבד appears with מצוה the meaning is primarily נדב, a 'voluntary offering' or 'charity donation', as in דהוא עביד מצוון דאנה שמיע ('I hear that he is a donor', *Lev. R.* 34.14).

Dothan goes on to say that with this meaning מצוון also appears in an inscription from Hammath Gadara. However, the inscription from Gadara, and also one from Nar'an, both have the 'remembered for good' formula. Both inscriptions refer to actual donations or donors, not to general 'good deeds', which could be interpreted, like Dothan has done, as charitable works. Such acts are not necessarily represented by gifts of money or valuable objects.

If Dothan's interpretation is correct, it implies that the Hammath Tiberias inscription is unique, being the only record where the congregation is encouraged to do good deeds, that is, charity. Schwartz's sweeping statement, even if partly, correct is a little misleading in that

> we know nothing about the role of charitable foundations. They were an essential part of the medieval and modern Jewish community and are sporadically attested in rabbinic literature. But they are never mentioned in inscriptions and are invisible in archaeology.[21]

Rabbinic literature stresses the importance of *tsedakah*, and there are many references to the *kuppah* and *tamhui*, yet this word does not appear on any inscription. The majority of inscriptions do not necessarily record 'charitable' benefactions, so it cannot be said the Jewish benefaction system was solely based on the ethic of charity. However, archaeological evidence from Aphrodisias, and even, as already shown, Er Ramah, where buildings were given by benefactors possibly to accommodate charitable aid to the destitute, indicates charitable foundations may have existed. There is no reason to doubt that charity was an important factor in the economic life of any given community, and not simply a product of the rabbis' imaginations. If the hypothesis set out so far is correct, then it would follow that pious acts, such as charitable ones, would not normally be recorded on inscriptions—but this does not mean they did not exist.

The next chapter will examine the role that women played both in the *hesedism* system and as benefactors in Palestine, where it appears such charitable works or 'good deeds' may have played a requisite part in the recognition of women in the public arena of the synagogue.

21. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 201. He also dismisses Tannenbaum's interpretation of the Aphrodisias inscription as implausible, but offers no alternative interpretation to back up his statement.

Chapter 18

WOMEN AND *HESED*

Women in Palestinian Inscriptions

The ideology of *hesedism* when applied to the role of women in the community seems also to be apparent in the recorded instances of benefactions made by women. Simply because written testimonies on stone do not exist does not mean that women's role was undervalued or insignificant. There are many gaps in the evidence; for example, we cannot be sure whether or not women were involved in the 'holy societies' spoken of in inscriptions. We also cannot be completely sure about the role of individual women mentioned in inscriptions; for example, there is uncertainty about the phrase referring to 'merit' or 'gathering resources' as they imply significantly different motives.

Lapin says,

> The paucity of women in inscriptions implies that not only in the communal arena of the synagogue but in the sphere of family commemoration as well, this was a society in which it was easier for men, in a literal way to make a name for themselves.[1]

He adds a further comment about the gender differential reflected in,

> The fact that, like men, women were occasionally known as 'blessed' or 'holy' (in funerary inscriptions) or bore the title *kyra* (lady), and appeared regularly as the mothers of their children or the wives of their husbands, but only rarely as playing another social role.

Certainly Diaspora epigraphic evidence, unlike the Palestinian evidence, suggests women's role in the synagogue was a substantial one, but perhaps it is because Jewish women in Palestine were more involved in charitable endeavours, which do not usually leave an epigraphic record. As the evidence shows, if they are named in inscriptions, then usually no donation is recorded, and it appears that when they are mentioned they

1. Lapin, 'Palestinian Inscriptions', p. 251.

are often being honoured for pious acts rather than any specific donation (see Isifyah, Nar'an, Ashkelon). Therefore, there is no need for a public record, for they are known to all in their community for their 'good deeds', whereas a benefactor who donates a sum of money will only be 'known' to a wider audience by a public announcement, that is, an inscription. Paradoxically, the involvement of women in charitable acts of *hesed* makes it less, rather than more, likely that they would be named in inscriptions as contributors to large-scale building projects.

Women and Hesed

There is other evidence to suggest that with regard to women *hesed* plays a crucial role in Late Antique Palestine. The Talmud constantly compares men and women. Usually the male takes precedence over the female but there is one region where it appears women surpass men, namely, in the realms of *hesed*. Women, we are told in the commentaries, are consistently more merciful and quicker to extend acts of charity and *hesed*.[2] The sages state that women are naturally compassionate (נשים רחמניות הן, *b. Meg*. 14b). The word *rahamnith* (רחמנית) is used to explain the element of compassion. It is not clear whether the sages mean all women or only Jewish women, but it is possible, as it is not specified, that it is common to all women. The mercifulness of a woman is an integral part of her being and results in greater charity (*b. Ta'an*. 23a). The rabbis refer to Solomon's paean to the 'woman of valour', which focuses on the merits of her *hesed* rather than the fact that she is a woman of wealth and independence (Prov. 31.20). Clearly this is a quality possessed by woman always praised. There is a story concerning Rabbi Abba Hilkiya, the tannaitic sage, who was asked why his wife's prayer for rain was answered before his prayer. He replied that when a man performs an act of *hesed* it is usually with money whereas a woman gives food, since she is usually approached in her home: 'Giving a hungry person a coin is not equal to giving the person food to eat' (*b. Ta'an*. 23b).

In terms of the benefaction system as displayed in synagogue inscriptions, this would make sense—men give money (i.e. donations), women do 'good works'. One qualifies for recording in an inscription more often than the other simply because the items donated are on display and are presumably more substantial, materially speaking.

There is another story concerning Mar Ukba, a third-century CE Talmudic sage who was said to be very charitable and sensitive to the needs of the poor. He and his wife ran into a furnace from which a fire

2. Rashi on 2 Kgs 22.14.

had just been swept to avoid being discovered by recipients of their charity. The embers burned Mar Ukba's feet, so his wife told him, 'Stand on my feet and be protected', which he did, the embers not burning her feet. The rabbis determined that her level of *hesed* was greater than his was, and in her merit he was protected (*b. Ket*. 67b).

The sages teach that women extend more *hesed* to others; they are more hospitable, more considerate of the stranger, and more empathic to the needs of others (*b. Ber*. 10b). Women initiate and participate in communal charitable endeavours more than men. As already noted, the *Talmud* tells of women conducting campaigns for the support of people confined to the Cities of Refuge (*m. Mak.* 2.6) and of the noble women of Jerusalem who personally proffered medicines to the dying in order to ease their suffering (*b. Sanh*. 43a). We are also told about the worthy women of Jerusalem responsible for the maintenance of those women whose sons were raised to assist the high priest and who could not incur any ritual impurity by daily work (*b. Ket*. 106a).

There is a general agreement among scholars over the substantial role women played within the community involving acts of *hesed*: 'An area where women could have been functionaries is in the realms of charity'.[3]

Whether or not women held offices within the community has been long debated. Bernadette Brooten[4] attempted to show women held important offices in the synagogue. She demonstrated women held important titles, even if those titles did not necessarily have any specific functions attached to them. Kraemer's[5] fresh analysis of an inscription from Malta, recording a woman *presbytera*, seems to provide some additional compelling evidence in favour of Brooten's theory.[6]

There is a very interesting passage in the *Talmud* (*b. Shek*. 62a) that may provide further evidence for one synagogue office open to women. There is a discussion between two rabbis over the issue of wearing a signet ring in public. The rabbi answering the question gives as his example a woman who is a *gizbar* (גזבר), literally a 'treasurer', who would need the ring not as an ornament, but to impress her seal on orders for charity disbursements. The translator's note says that it is unusual to find a woman holding this office. However, from the way in which the rabbis discuss this case it would appear they did not find this at all unusual.

3. S. Krauss, *Synagogale Altertümer* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966), p. 166.
4. Brooten, *Women Leaders*.
5. R. Kraemer, 'New Inscriptions from Malta and the Question of Women Leaders in the Diaspora Jewish Communities', *HTR* 78 (1985), pp. 431-38.
6. Also M. Conticello de'Spagnolis mentions another presbytera, from Nocera (Nuceria).

This is supported by another passage that shows the important role these functionaries were to play, for we are told female charity overseers are allowed to marry into the priesthood without any check on their ancestry (*b. Qid*. 76a). This is indeed a significant break from previous practice, for Josephus says that in the first century CE, in order to marry into the priesthood, the paternal lineage of the bride was checked (*Apion* 1.33). This could indicate that women (because it is women that are referred to) held important offices within the realms of communal charitable works, and that these offices were so highly regarded that the usual formalities concerning eligibility to marry into the priesthood were waived. Why were these offices so highly regarded? It seems that the answer must lie in the salvationist aspect inherent in *hesed*.

Another interesting and important issue is the fact from some time in the late first and early second centuries CE women could convert to Judaism in their own right. Prior to this, the only way a woman 'converted' and was considered a Jew was by marriage. Indeed, while there were many women who became enamoured of Judaism and followed the Law, we do not know whether they were considered Jewish. Were they regarded as God-fearers or sympathizers?[7] Why should it be important for women to be converted? If a Gentile woman wished to marry a Jewish man, then surely she would become Jewish. If a Gentile woman wished to follow the Law or customs but did not marry a Jewish man, then why should the rabbis have considered her conversion necessary or even welcome? What could a woman contribute, that would be an asset, to the future of Judaism? The only attribute women appear to possess to a greater degree than men is their natural inclination towards *hesed*, which gives them a special closeness to God, for they have the greater capacity to experience God's *hesed*.

By a ceremony of immersion (*b. Yev*. 47a-b), women were by the first century CE entering a covenant with God in a similar way to the male covenant of circumcision. Therefore, if *hesed* were a strong trait in women in general, surely it would be important that a female convert would require such a covenant with God to establish her spiritual identity. This is not unusual, for God had entered into covenants with women in patriarchal times.[8] The most interesting occasion for the purposes of this chapter is his intervention on behalf of Abraham's wife, Sarah. God rejected Ishmael as Abraham's heir and supported Sarah when she cast out Hagar and her child and He told Abraham:

7. Josephus tells us quite a lot about such women as Helena of Adiabene (*Ant*. 20.17-53) and Fulvia (*Ant*. 18.81-84) among others.

8. Also see the stories concerning Rebekah and Rachel.

כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקלה כי בצחק יקרא לך זרע

> Whatever Sarah says to you, hear her voice, for in Isaac shall your seed be called (Gen. 21.12).

It could be said that God was promoting a matrilineal principle because it was Sarah's son, not Abraham's, whom God wanted to inherit: it was the mother who was the important figure here. In fact, this idea of having the right mother is further attested when Isaac sends Jacob to Haran to take a wife from his mother's family (thus ensuring he will take the right wife; Gen. 28.4). The contradiction occurring within the narratives is regarding how to affirm the importance of having the correct mother while ignoring the implications of such an affirmation for tracing descent. These biblical heroines, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, believed their most important task was to raise and nurture the next generation of the House of Israel; their role as a mother was therefore a substantive one. According to the Midrash, it was Rachel's *hesed* that caused God to redeem the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

The significant role played by *hesed* can also be seen in the story of Ruth, a Moabite princess. Ruth was urged by her mother-in-law Naomi to approach her kinsman Boaz to redeem her in a levirate marriage. Because of her great *hesed*, Boaz says to her, 'Blessed of God my daughter that you have made your latest act of *hesed* [putting the welfare of her mother-in-law before her own] greater than the first', and subsequently takes her for his wife.[9] The lineage connected to Ruth is significant, for she will become the great-grandmother of King David, from whom, according to tradition, the Messiah will issue. Some sages believe her actions are greater than Abraham's.

The evidence suggests that *hesed* was an important factor in the continuation of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. The evidence also indicates women were naturally endowed with this quality, so much so that they fulfilled one of the requirements God asks of his people. Women, so we are told in the Talmud, allow their children to experience *hesed*, which is a direct experience of the greatest quality of God. At this time we see women are allowed to convert to Judaism in their own right. Does this imply once a Gentile woman enters into a covenant with God her natural inclination for *hesed* is now spiritually confirmed? Is this the quality she brings to ensure the salvation of the Jewish people? If so, it is logical that women had to be given more consideration in the role they played as progenitors. This was not only, as the Rabbis said, because it is

9. Ruth 3.10.

> the women who send their children to school, watch over them to study the Torah, encourage them with kind words and watch them when they slacken their efforts in Torah, and teach them to fear sin while they are still young. Thus it is the righteous women who are responsible for the continuation of Torah and reverence of God.[10]

Women were also afforded more consideration because they teach their children other qualities, allowing them to experience *hesed*, which is a direct experience of the greatest quality of God.

The legal and national ramifications of a matrilineal principle became a major issue for debate and dissenting opinion. It is also not clear exactly when the principle was adopted, except to say it occurred some time after the fall of the Second Temple. Perhaps, as time went by and the prospect of re-instating the Temple became less hopeful, the way to salvation perceived in *hesed* gradually took on a greater prominence. It could be argued that women supplied the spiritual or religious identity of a child.

The lack of concrete evidence may not be too surprising. If *hesed* was universal to women, it was something that would apply to matters concerning everyday life, crossing all boundaries, whether rich or poor. It would not necessarily raise the profile of women in the public arena, for in order to maintain their supremacy with regard to *hesed* they had to continue to fulfil the role demanded of them by God. Therefore, this would not affect the *status quo* of the male-dominated synagogue environment. The more wealthy women in the community, most likely the Rabbis' wives, may have played a significant role in charitable works and donations. For this they may have been honoured in inscriptions, as evidenced by the inscriptions already cited.

It is also significant to note that a funerary inscription from the catacombs of Beth She'arim (second to mid-fourth centuries CE) records that Rabbi Hillel bore the surname אטיון (Ation) of the maternal side of his family.[11] Talmudic literature also testifies to this practice; for example, we know of Rabbi Mari bar Rachel (*b. Shab.* 154a) and Abba Shaul b. Miriam (*b. Ket.* 7a). Therefore, *hesed* is a factor deserving consideration and may supply a rationale for the sudden change to a matrilineal principle. The possibility is hinted at in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Discussing the duties a child has to its parents even when one is poor, 4Q16 says: 'Honour your father in your poverty and your *mother in your ways*.[12] Perhaps the ways spoken of refer to *hesed*, the greatest benefit a woman

10. Reshit Hochmach (Rabbi Schlomo Gardfield 1804–1886), Lublin 1888, Perek Derech Eretz.
11. *BS* III, Catacomb 20 Inscription 13.
12. 4Q416 Frag. 2 Col. 3 15-16.

could bestow on her children. It brought them closer to God and allowed them to experience his *hesed* and as a consequence provided the continued salvation for the people of Israel. This, as already noted, is something that he wishes his people to emulate above all else, and so, because of this, 'Greater is the reward promised to women than to men' (*b. Ber.* 17a). It is also quite possible that *hesed* played a significant role in the development of the matrilineal principle during this formative period in Judaism.[13]

Why the Rabbis Adopted a Matrilineal Principle

A child can only be regarded as a Jew if its mother is a Jew. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says that in one respect the Jewish law discriminates against men and invests women with an advantage: children take their national identity from their mother, the result being that children from mixed marriages will only be regarded as Jewish if their mother is Jewish.[14] The matrilineal principle is not attested in the Bible or in any other literature of the Second Temple period. In the first century CE, writers such as Josephus and the Gospel writers were not familiar with the idea, although Niehoff has shown in a recent article[15] that Philo was at least considering the matrilineal principle for a child to take its mother's identity. Philo defined Jewish identity by reference to maternal pedigree; according to Philo, a child could only be regarded as Jewish if it had *two* Jewish parents who were legally married at the time of the child's birth. However, the Mishnah gives an explanation of the matrilineal principle, not only considering the status of a child born to a Jewish man and non-Jewish woman, but the status of a child born to a Jewish woman and non-Jewish man (*m. Qid.* 3.12). The outcome is that the child takes its Jewish status from its mother, irrespective of the status of the father. While the Mishnah provides no reason for this change, according to rabbinic law, from the second century CE onwards, this has been the rule.

In his recent book, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, Shaye J.D. Cohen rightly says of the matrilineal principle: 'This is surprising within the context of ancient culture especially Jewish culture, where the important

13. See S.M. Sorek, 'Mothers of Israel: Why the Rabbis Adopted the Matrilineal Principle', *Studies in Women in Judaism* 3 (2002), pp. 35-40.

14. It should be noted that recently the Reform movement has attempted to change that discrimination against males.

15. M.R. Niehoff, 'Jewish Identity and Jewish Mothers: Who was a Jew according to Philo?', *Studia Philonica Annual* 11 (1999), pp. 31-45.

parent was always the father'.[16] With only a few exceptions, rabbinical family law is patrilineal, the status of kinship succession being determined through the father. 'The family of the father is considered family, the family of the mother is not considered family' (*b. Bat.* 109b).

So why did the Rabbis use the matrilineal principle for the offspring of mixed marriages? The central rabbinic text concerning a matrilineal principle can be found in *m. Qid.* 3.12 and runs as follows:

> A. Wherever there is potential for a valid marriage and the sexual union is not sinful, the offspring follows the male. And what is this? This is the daughter of a priest, Levite, or Israelite who was married to a priest, Levite or Israelite.
> B. Wherever there is potential for a valid marriage but the sexual union is sinful, the offspring follows the parent of the lower status. And what is this? This is a widow with a high priest, a divorcee or a related woman with a regular priest, a *mamzeret*[17]or a *natinah*[18] with an Israelite, an Israelite woman with a *mamzer* or a *natin.*
> C. And any woman who does not have the potential for a valid marriage with this man but has potential for valid marriage with other men, the offspring is a *mamzer*. And what is this? This is he who has intercourse with any of the relations prohibited by the Torah.
> D. And any woman who does not have the potential for a valid marriage either with this man or with other men, the offspring is like her. And what is this? This is the offspring of a slave woman or a Gentile woman.

These passages exemplify the four possibilities in determining status: the offspring follows the father, the mother, either parent, or neither parent. However, these passages only account for one half of the matrilineal principle—they do not account for the status of the offspring of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. *B. Qiddushin* 73a says that Israelite women of good pedigree are not prohibited from marrying men who are unfit. Similarly, there are a few texts from the Second Temple period that deal with the status of such offspring. The most obvious one occurs in Acts:

> And he (Paul) came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and he circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek (Acts 16.1-3).

16. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, p. 283.
17. A *mamzer* or *mamzeret* (fem.) is someone who, because of the circumstances of their birth, may not marry a native Jew.
18. A *natin* or *natinah* (fem.) is a Temple slave.

Although there has been considerable debate over Timothy's 'Jewishness', it is accepted by most scholars that he was not previously considered Jewish but Greek like his father.[19]

The status of such offspring is, however, accounted for elsewhere in the Mishnah. For instance, *m. Yev.* 7.5 states that the offspring of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father is *mamzer*:

> If the daughter of an Israelite was married to a priest, or if the daughter of a priest was married to an Israelite, and she bore him a daughter and if that daughter went and was married to a slave or to a gentile and bore him a son—he is a *mamzer.*

Most commentators assume that because the woman cannot enter into a valid marriage, her children are rendered fatherless. Yet there is another explanation suggested by R. Simeon in the Tosefta which paraphrases Simeon the Temanite in *m. Yev.* 4.13, nothing that a *mamzer* can only issue from a forbidden union that entails 'extirpation' (*karat*):

> Who is a *mamzer*? (The offspring of a union with) any of one's own flesh who is included in the (scriptural) prohibition of intercourse. (These are) the words of R. Akiva.

Simeon the Temanite says,

> (The offspring of a union with) any of those on account of whom they are liable to extirpation at the hands of heaven. And the law is according to his words.

Rabbi Joshua says,

> (The offspring of a union with) any of those on account of whom they are liable to death (at the hands of) a court.

However, the anonymous authority in the opening statement of the Tosefta declares that a *mamzer* issues from any prohibited union, not only an incestuous one.

According to *t. Qid.* 4.16, 'A gentile or a slave who had intercourse with an Israelite woman and she gave birth to a child—the offspring is a *mamzer'.* As Cohen[20] points out, if this is correct, then the Mishnah does not consistently follow a single full matrilineal principle.

Both versions of the full matrilineal principle are contained, however, in a Babylonian discussion of *m. Qid.* 3.12. In order to prove that the offspring of a Gentile mother takes her status, the two Rabbis quote a statement of R. Yohanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohani: 'Learn from this (the exegesis of R. Simeon) that your daughter's son who is fathered

19. For a discussion of the various views held, see Cohen, *Beginnings*, pp. 364-77.
20. Cohen, *Beginnings*, p. 278.

by a gentile is also called your son'. If this is correct, then R. Simeon first connected the two halves of the matrilineal principle sometime around the middle of the second century CE.

Nevertheless, there continued to be great debate about the status of children born of a Jewish mother and non-Jewish father. Some of the *amoraim* followed the Mishnah ruling, while others regarded the offspring of such unions as Jewish, though blemished. Others followed R. Simeon and declared the offspring to be *kasher* ('fit') and legitimate.[21] However, despite the controversies, Cohen says that 'within rabbinic society the matrilineal principle commanded universal respect'.[22]

The same problem occurs when dealing with the offspring of converts. The idea of converting to Judaism was introduced in the Hasmonean period, though it was initially only an option open to men who converted through ritual circumcision. Though initially woman joined the community only by marrying a Jewish man, gradually conversion for women through a ritual of immersion was introduced. As Cohen says, this should signify that

> the gentile woman who converted was now a person whose Jewishness could be determined without reference to her Jewish husband. If she converts to Judaism, the children she bears are Jewish, if she does not they are gentiles, despite the Jewishness of her husband.[23]

Some converts were discriminated against because of their non-Jewish lineage; however, this was not the case if 'their mother is of Israel' (*m. Bikk*. 1.4-5). So, should we conclude that if their father is a Gentile or a convert they are legally not Jewish, while if their mother is classed as Jewish, they are also? The whole question of rabbinic interpretation of this text to be found in *m. Bikk.* 1.4-5 and the various arguments are discussed at length by Cohen.[24] This text does seem to confirm explicitly a matrilineal principle, yet even so it does not fully answer the question posed: How can a convert have a Jewish mother? If children have a Jewish mother, then surely by this argument they do not need to convert? Cohen concludes that the offspring referred to must be offspring of the second generation, who would have had a mother who had been converted after they were born. Therefore, she would be considered Jewish, but not her children, only those children born after conversion would be free of any legal disability, having a Jewish mother. Clearly the status of

21. See Cohen, *Beginnings*, p. 280, for a full discussion on this aspect.
22. Cohen, *Beginnings*, p. 282.
23. Cohen, *Beginnings*, p. 306.
24. Cohen, *Beginnings*, Chapter 10.

the mother was sufficiently powerful to remove the stigma of conversion and the barriers it entailed to being considered Jewish.[25]

These texts show, after some debate, that a new system was adopted for determining Jewishness. However, none of these texts give any clue to the *reason* for the change from the patrilineal to matrilineal system. It seems that, at some point after the destruction of the Temple, women were considered to play an important role in determining the Jewish status of a child born from a mixed marriage. The subsequent debates deal with the mechanisms involved in progressing the idea of a matrilineal principle and how it would work legally. To this end Roman law could well have provided some solutions. As we have seen, there was no universal consent to the matrilineal principle and indeed there were many anomalies to be resolved. In fact, the debates have continued for centuries, meaning that once again we are left with the question posed by Cohen: 'What, if anything, compelled them (the Rabbis) to depart from Biblical tradition and from the practices of the Second Temple period?'

However, many scholars believe that the shift was evolutionary and one for which there are biblical precedents. Furthermore, evidence appears in Josephus to support the argument.[26] Nevertheless, Cohen's evidence is substantive.

Cohen analyses seven possible reasons for this change: (1) the evidence from the Scriptures (Deut. 7.34), (2) Ezra's laws, (3) the uncertainty of paternity, (4) the intimacy of motherhood, (5) primitive matriarchy, (6) Roman law and (7) the forbidden mixed marriage. He concludes that none of these hypotheses is determinative, though some are more plausible than others. The theory most often accepted as correct is that Ezra introduced a matrilineal principle. However, as Cohen points out, there is no evidence that Ezra attempted this, and even if he did, there is abundant evidence to show it was still unknown in the first century CE.[27]

Cohen focuses upon the merits of two explanations in particular: the influence of Roman law and the forbidden mixed marriage, which is judged matrilineally.[28] This is a feature of Jewish custom commented on by Tacitus (*Histories* 5.5), who says: 'They abstain from intercourse with foreign women' (*alienarum concubitu abstinent*). Cohen favours the idea that Roman law influenced the matrilineal principle. He points out that the language of *m*. *Qid.* 3.12 echoes Roman legal terminology, and if

25. Cohen, *Beginnings*, Chapter 10

26. See L.H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985).

27. Cohen, *Beginnings*, pp. 268-78.

28. Based on Deut. 7.3-4; 22.9; Lev. 19.19.

rabbinic law has an external source, then this is the only real possibility. Under Roman law, the child is the legal heir of the father only if the father and mother are joined in a legal marriage *(iustum matrimonium*). The capacity to contract a legal marriage (*conubium*) was possessed almost exclusively by Roman citizens. Marriage between a person with *conubium* and one without was valid, though it was not considered a *iustum matrimonium*, without which status the child took the rank of the mother. Sometime during the first century BCE the Lex Minicia was passed which declared a child of such a union followed the person of lower status. Philo also wrestled with this problem. Philo defined a Jew as someone born to two Jewish parents. He assumed both parents of a Jew were free. To summarize Niehoff's findings: Philo constructed Jewish descent so as to meet Roman requirements and to assert the upper class Jewish status of people like himself.

While Cohen's arguments are positive, they only explain *how* the Rabbis might have come to a matrilineal principle but not *why*. Ultimately, he has to conclude, 'Why then, did the Rabbis break with previous practice? I do not know.'

There is one fairly notable change during the period in question, not commented on by Cohen, which may provide a rationale for the Rabbis' desire to evolve a matrilineal principle. Numerous Jewish scholars have argued that rabbinic law was determined in part by social and economic needs, and Cohen acknowledges this but only within the context of women being allowed to convert to Judaism.

As Urbach says: 'the extent to which the Ordinances by the sages were liable to changes are due to social and political circumstances *and is particularly manifest in their dicta concerning charity*'.[29]

As already commented upon, the doctrine of alms and charity began in the Mishnaic period. After the destruction of the Temple, and with hope fading it would be reinstated, the Rabbis had to look for a means of salvation for the Jewish nation other than daily sacrifice. Accordingly, prayer took the place of sacrificial worship. With the loss of the Temple, acts of *hesed* had an atoning function, with a promise of inheritance in the next world for all performing acts of kindness.

Also, as already discussed, charity is a development of almsgiving, borne out of *hesed*. Yet, because charitable acts can and should be conducted to everyone, the Rabbis chose the term צדקה ('righteousness') to accommodate it. Almsgiving is instigated by God, who reveals his *hesed* to the benefactor who in turn extends רחמים ('mercy') towards the person in need. Almsgiving was a spontaneous act; the individual free gift was

29. Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 348.

always of money, which placed the donor under no obligation. Charity, however, was to be given either collectively or individually; the gift could be money, clothing, food, or accommodation. Unlike almsgiving, the donor had an obligation to act charitably if asked. It is with regard to charity that women began to play an important role within Jewish society in the Late Antique period.

Chapter 19

Conclusion

The last part of this work has attempted to make a case for a Jewish benefaction system that was operational during and, to some extent, after the Second Temple period, one based upon the motivational ideology of *hesed*. This motivation was grounded in the horizontal reciprocal laws of Deuteronomy, which formed the basis of an agrarian society. Basically, the idea was to avoid becoming dependent upon a benefactor and the Deuteronomic laws carried the message of mutual aid for the good of the community.

Clark's work, which I have elaborated upon, has shown that the word *hesed* encompasses the motivation for a benefaction system; primarily, the motivating agent is God and his covenant with his people. *Hesed* was a characteristic of God, which he wished his people to emulate in their dealings with each other. God's *hesed* was reserved for his people, and was non-reciprocal, while human *hesed* was motivated by God and had a reciprocal element attached.

The evidence shown suggests that by the first century CE the system had changed. With regard to loans, they now became a binding contract. *Hesed* no longer was the motivating factor that corrected temporary imbalances; the motivation was now financial, to profit from misfortunes. Yet, *hesed* was still apparent in other forms of human relationships. *Hesed* and *emeth* can be seen to form the basis of bonds of friendship and mutual aid between parties of equal status.

Human *hesed* can be divided into two categories: direct and indirect. Of the ten features of benefactions, many can be both direct, carried out on a one-to-one basis, or indirect, where the recipient is not always repaying the original donor. There is only one anomaly, involving famine relief. Here, the parties concerned are always unequal, the donor being in a position to remedy a situation for the common good. A ruler, or some other person in a position of authority, usually performed this act, upon whom it was incumbent.

There is one other category of *hesed*—redemptive, or divine *hesed*—of which *raham* is the significant feature. Clark's work briefly evaluates *raham* in relation to *hesed*, but further research into this word in this work has demonstrated that *raham* plays a significant role in the development of almsgiving into the charitable institutions from the second century CE onwards. The donor, desirous to experience God's *hesed*, was prompted by that *hesed* to extend *raham* ('compassion') to the recipient, who received *raham* not *hesed*. Both Jew and non-Jew could receive *raham*, but only the Jew received God's *hesed*.

The rabbis of the Late Antique period recognized the salvationist aspect inherent in *hesed* and adapted and modified the system to suit the changing social and economic needs of the time. They chose the word *tsedakah* to reflect a new 'almsgiving', which encompassed everyone, Jew or non-Jew, and allowed the recipient to experience God's *tsedakah* directly, the donor being a channel for the *tsedakah*. *Tsedakah* was compulsory, unlike *raham*, and the recipient had a prescriptive right and the donor an obligation. The new ideology required rules and organization. The ideology that nobody should become dependent upon charity was similar to the original ideology, which stated that nobody should become dependent upon a benefactor. However, this was more difficult to achieve with the growing social and economic problems that presented themselves in post-Temple times, and many did become dependent, some maybe permanently.

Hesed, *raham* and *tsedakah* formed a benefaction system I have labelled '*hesedism*', a system with superficial similarities to Graeco-Roman euergetism, but one which also displayed some fundamental differences. Some of the principles of *hesedism* can clearly be seen in the Christian benefaction system, and it would appear that both Christian and Jewish charity developed simultaneously, from the same basic ideology. Christianity was the mechanism by which *hesed* transmitted itself to the wider Graeco-Roman world, as Veyne says, fusing with pagan euergetism, to form the benefaction system of the later Roman Empire. Although the system is based in religious ideology, it was meant to have practical applications regarding human relationships. As this work has shown, *hesed* is not easily translatable, and many misunderstandings have arisen because of this fact. It is a word that encompasses a rich and varied concept and one which underlies the whole of the Jewish benefaction system. The lack of evidence for the Second Temple period poses some problems. However, where evidence is available, then, as I have attempted to show, it fits the ideology of *hesedism* very well.

The changing social and economic climate over the centuries meant that many of the laws had to be adapted, especially with the destruction

of the Temple in 70 CE. Nevertheless, *hesed* still played a pivotal role with regard to almsgiving and the development of charity. *Hesed*, rather than sacrifice, now became the means of salvation for the Jewish people. The 'new' benefaction ideology still encompassed the horizontal reciprocal element, which it adapted to urban settlements as well as rural communities. The communal dimension of the synagogue environment highlights the importance of this 'dyadic' form of reciprocity. The synagogue was the heart of the community, and its activities were more than just religious activities, covering a host of different social interactions. The importance placed upon doing 'good deeds' in the Late Antique period can be demonstrated from the inscription recorded at Hammath Tiberias, where synagogue members are reminded to make contributions for the benefit of their community.

However, one element that always emerges is that, to the Jews, God was the only benefactor. Whatever humans achieved, they did so only because God allowed it, and in order to retain God's favour certain obligations were required from them. These could have been in the form of the payment of the Temple tax, or giving alms, or charity or dealing with others in a fair and just manner. To put it in euergetistic terminology, God was the patron and humans were his clients.

The majority of non-literary evidence for the Late Antique period comes from the abundance of synagogue inscriptions. The inscriptions were not the product of the rabbis but the communities. Although the Rabbis tried to regulate the institution of the synagogue, it remained firmly in community hands. Nevertheless, the information gleaned from inscriptions has limitations. What the inscriptional data do afford, however, is a general insight into the functioning of the community and what the community thought worthy of recording. Lapin has argued for a distinctive Palestinian ethnicity emerging from the inscriptional evidence, while Schwartz views the value of inscriptions in terms of offering 'nuggets of ideology' from which we can gain some insight on community values and activities.

The inscriptions were meant to be read by the community, and to reflect the ideology of the community. As Schwartz notes, Jewish synagogue inscriptions are concerned with the memorialization of individuals. He finds similarities between Jewish, Christian and pagan inscriptions, and notes that Jewish synagogue donors were marking their place in the social order of the community by their donation. However, much of Schwartz's argument is made from a Graeco-Roman euergetistic perspective, which, although appealing, can be misleading. The Greeks and Romans recorded benefactions with inscriptions, and because the Jews do this also, the conclusion that they copied this idea is drawn. Yet, it

should be stressed that the recording deeds in stone was not unique to the Graeco-Roman world. The motivation for the Jewish benefaction system is distinct and unique to the Jews, just as the Graeco-Roman system had its own distinctive features. Therefore, comparisons with the Graeco-Roman system means that many of the unique Jewish features can be overlooked. Although comparisons with Diaspora inscriptions can confuse the issue, as Rajak has pointed out, Jewish benefactors in the Diaspora usually stated that their gifts came from God, not directly from the donor. This is similar to the ideology of *hesedism* seen in Palestine.

If, as I believe, *hesed* is the basis of the Jewish benefaction system, then all benefactions should encompass a degree of piety, something irrelevant in the Graeco-Roman system. This is clearly manifest in those inscriptions where the donor remains anonymous. There could be no reason for anonymity other than piety, the belief God knows what the donor has done, and that it is God who will reward the donor, not the community.

Both Lapin and Schwartz use the synagogue inscriptions to try to evaluate the ideology of the social structure of the community in the Late Antique period. However, because the ideology of the benefaction system is not fully understood, comparison is often made with the Graeco-Roman system resulting in a rather distorted picture, leaving many questions unanswered.

The formula 'remembered for good' can be found in the majority of synagogue inscriptions. Lapin and Schwartz, among others, view this as indicating that these inscriptions are dedications to living donors. With the notion that they represent living donors, the inscriptions are quite naturally viewed from this perspective, and subsequent formulae, such as the 'blessing' formula not discussed or evaluated, as they are seen to form part of the same general wish granted to a living donor. This work has examined all the synagogue inscriptions with regard to the benefaction system. All have been viewed as a component of the whole and not taken in isolation. This has revealed some very useful and important points that may go some way to helping to evaluate the social structure of Jewish communities in Palestine.

Contrary to the popularly held opinion that all these inscriptions are dedications to living donors, I believe the present work had made a good case for showing that the 'remembered for good' formulae in synagogue inscriptions are memorials to deceased synagogue donors. The economy of words in the majority of these inscriptions makes its difficult to prove conclusively, but a good case can be made for at least eight of the 41 inscriptions containing this phrase being memorials.

Even in the inscriptions that do appear to be commemorating living donors, a case can be argued against this, evidenced in the inscription from Beth She'an B. Archaeological evidence shows a 50-year disparity between the foundation of the synagogue and the inscription recording those responsible for the foundation. Since, obviously, the inscription was not erected at the time of the donation, the 'remembered for good' formula present in the inscription must indicate a memorial. This type of action by the community in honouring their deceased benefactors would fit the ideology of *hesedism* very well.

The community, or more likely family members, erected the inscriptions to show that the deceased is 'remembered for good' by God, something no doubt to be striven for. At the same time, the family of the donor(s) are asserting their own place within the community, by association, but without infringing any aspects of piety.

Living donors are also acknowledged. Here the general formula of a blessing is used—either a blessing upon the donor, or upon the work. Once again, the primacy of the donating family is emphasized, for blessings can be seen to engender future blessings. What is surprising is that there are only eight inscriptions containing this formula alone.

The communal dimension also needs to be analysed in more detail, for this is a prime component of any assessment of the structure of society. The evidence in this work has demonstrated what is often regarded as a communal effort, that is, a contribution from all the community, is not necessarily the case. There appear to have been certain 'holy associations' responsible for the instigation of synagogue buildings. These people may have been wealthy members of the community, or they may have been pious members of the community entrusted with the task. It could have been their remit to collect donations and oversee the project on behalf of the community, rather than make straightforward donations themselves. They are honoured for 'their endeavours', seen in the inscriptions from Beth She'an B, Beth Alpha, Horvat Susiya, and Jericho, and honoured by the community later. If all the community contributed, then why was the whole community not included in the inscription? The only occurrences of this happening can be seen at Ma'on, and Caesarea, a mere 2 per cent of all inscriptions reviewed in this work, and only 0.5 per cent of all Hebrew/Aramaic inscriptions so far retrieved. This certainly does not reflect evidence for a communal effort being the norm. Therefore, the communal dimension evidenced by inscriptions may not be as important as at first supposed. However, this is not to say that the running of the synagogue was not based on communal involvement.

What do the inscriptions tell us about the donors? Schwartz says:

> Like the biblical and rabbinic communities of Israel, the ideology of the late antique Jewish community was characterised by tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism, though in a rather different way. While the Torah and the rabbis granted special status to priests and scribes/scholars, there is little evidence for these groups in the synagogue inscriptions. In the quasi-euergetistic world of the community it is the handful of named donors who occupied a special position.[1]

Unlike the Diaspora communities that relied upon a single patron, the Jewish communities in Palestine appear to have several. The hypothesis proposed is that some communities may have had fewer wealthy members than others, and therefore, it required the contributions of many to fulfil the building requirements of the local synagogue. There is, however, a danger of making generalizations when it comes to ascertaining the identity of the donors. There is not enough evidence to say with any certainty whether the donors were leading figures of the community, wealthy members of the community, or ordinary individuals.

Having examined the synagogue inscriptions, several things become apparent. If we discount those inscriptions pertaining to multiple donations such as Hammath Gadara, those inscriptions that refer to anonymous donations, and the Greek inscriptions, 24 inscriptions in Hebrew/Aramaic contain enough evidence to show a certain pattern emerging. These inscriptions all have a named donor, and all have the 'remembered for good' formula. What emerges is that, out of the sample of inscriptions, 11 texts (or 45 per cent of the sample) name the donor as 'X son of…', 'son of…', or 'wife/daughter of…', and tell us little about the individual or the role they played within the community. If, as proposed, these individuals were honoured after their death, then being seen to be a benefactor offers little in the way of material reward in this life—thus, prestige and honour within the community would not be sought in this fashion. The awarding of honours and titles would be surplus to requirements. However, if it is the donor's family who are responsible for the inscription and not the community in general, then the prestige naturally falls upon the surviving members of the family. It could also release the family from the need to make further contributions, for they could be seen to have done their share, and act as a reminder to those who had not yet contributed, in a similar vein to the injunction seen on the Hammath Tiberias inscription.

There are no inscriptions, with the exception of those from Hammath Gadara, which show families continuing to make benefactions over generations. In fact, the number of inscriptions in the majority of synagogues is quite small, considering the time span, in some cases three

1. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 283.

centuries, of the building's use. The inscriptions do not necessarily indicate an egalitarian society, but rather an egalitarian method of recording donations, which may have come from only a few prominent families.

The second point is to take issue with is the statement by Levine about the lack of evidence for groups such as priests, scholars, and rabbis in inscriptions. The remaining 13 inscriptions of the 24 examined all refer to a rabbi or priest, even venerable rabbis, or sons/wives/daughters of rabbis, in all a staggering 54 per cent of the inscriptions. Clearly, they played a prominent role as benefactors, but we must be aware that often no specific donation is recorded, implying that they are being honoured for other services to the community. To advertise one's generosity would not be something a rabbi or priest would have felt comfortable doing—in fact, patronage was frowned upon (*y. Ber.* 9.1, 12 a-b). This would be typical in an ideology based on *hesed*, in which no one should become dependent upon a human benefactor, and there is no reason to suppose that this ideology would have been radically altered to suit the synagogue environment.

The element of piety necessary when making such donations may indicate that many of the donations made by rabbis or priests and their families were made at the bequest of the deceased. The inscription from Horvat Susiya shows Rabbi Isai vowed to donate a mosaic at a feast. However, it was his son who carried out the work on his behalf later, after his death. It could be viewed as giving back to the community that which had been on loan from God. In keeping with the ideology of *hesedism*, God is the benefactor, and all material things must be returned, in order to be 'remembered for good' by him.

It cannot be overlooked that some inscriptions record other types of benefaction and not the items on which they are erected. There are several inscriptions (from Sepphoris, Horvat Susiya, Nar'an [4], Horvat Kanef), which do not mention the donation, and so it is assumed that the donation is the object on which the inscription sits, being that there is no need to mention it. However, there are some important clues that show that this may not necessarily be the case. Several of these inscriptions refer to women. One, from Nar'an, speaks of Halipho the daughter of Rabbi Saphra who 'gained merit in this holy place'. This inscription, and another also from Nar'an, are set into a mosaic with other donor inscriptions. The other inscriptions specifically say that they have contributed to the mosaic, but these do not. Why is this? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that people could be honoured in inscriptions for the pious work they did within the community—in the case of Halipho, perhaps charity work. Once again, this hypothesis would fit with the ideology of *hesedism*.

It is not within the remit of this work to analyse the whole socio-economic role of the community in Late Antique Palestine. Primarily, the aim has been to define a benefaction system on the basis of empirical evidence from the late Second Temple period until Late Antiquity. When viewed from the perspective of this system, rather than compared to the Graeco-Roman one, several important elements can be seen. First, it becomes apparent that the benefaction system did not necessarily rely solely on the wealth or prestige of donors. Piety and good deeds played a crucial part in the system, which in turn opened up the system to everyone. All members of a community, rich or not so rich, could, in theory, be benefactors, and the benefactions could be material or spiritual.

Second, to be 'remembered for good' by God was the reward for 'good deeds' and motivated the way in which the benefactors conducted themselves in making their benefactions. This formula could have been used not as an indication by the people that they would also remember the donor, but as a reminder to the people that this was the reward in the hereafter. This idea can be seen in the prescriptive inscription from Nar'an: 'May they be remembered for good, all who contributed or who will donate to this place'.

Finally, in agreement with Schwartz, Lapin and Rajak, the egalitarian nature of the Jewish system sets it apart from its contemporaries. On the other hand, while trying to explain the Jewish system too many comparisons have been made with the Graeco-Roman system, as Schwartz says:

> The local religious community was autonomous, self-contained and egalitarian, although at the same time influenced by old Graeco-Roman urban ideas about euergetism and honour.

As this work has shown, the Jewish benefaction system has little in common with euergetism, apart from the most obvious element of recording benefactions on stone. The motivation is entirely different—unlike euergetism, in the Jewish system dependency upon a benefactor is *not* a desirable element. The egalitarian nature, a prime feature of the system, renders such dependency undesirable. There are no inscriptions recording donations of entire buildings or large sums of money, although it seems unrealistic to suppose that no communities had such wealthy members who could have made substantial donations. In fact, Schwartz mentions the village of Meroth, which in the fifth century had vast quantities of untouched gold it had acquired through extensive trading.[2]

2. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, p. 279.

If wealthy patrons did make benefactions, then they were recorded in the same way as any other benefactor—by name only, no titles, no show of prestige and no honour other than being 'remembered for good' by God, or blessed (presumably by God) for their good work. In complete contrast to euergetism, rewards were obtained in the hereafter, not in the physical world.

I have attempted to explain the ideology behind this system in terms of the biblical concept of *hesed*. There is little evidence offering a direct ideological explanation, but I believe *hesedism* is a viable hypothesis. *Hesedism* is unique. It rivals euergetism in the benefaction arena, but perhaps more importantly, its influence was to permeate the very system of euergetism, which Schwartz says it was influenced by. This work has shown a good case can be made for a Jewish benefaction system, unique to the Jews, based on an element of piety. With respect to piety, *hesed* would appear to play an important part in the motivational force behind this system of benefaction. *Hesed* may be one of many diverse factors that influenced the benefaction system, but even taken in isolation the ideology behind *hesed* can offer some explanation for some of the unique elements perceived in the Jewish benefaction system both in Palestine and the Diaspora.

APPENDIX:
TABLES

Table 1. *Occurrences of the Noun* Hesed *(with Suffixes and Prefixes) in the Hebrew Bible*

a. *God as Agent*							
Gen.	19.19	Pss.	5.8		86.13		119.54
	21.23		6.5		86.15		119.76
	24.12		17.7		88.12		119.159
	24.14		18.51		89.2		136.1-26
	24.27		23.6		89.3		138.2
	24.29		25.6		89.15		138.8
	24.49		25.10		89.50		143.8
	32.11		26.3		90.14		141.5
	39.21		31.22		92.3		145.8
Exod.	15.13		32.10		94.18	Prov.	14.22
	20.6		33.5		98.3		14.34
	34.6		33.32		100.5		21.21
	34.7		36.6		101.1	Isa.	63.7
Num.	14.8		36.8		103.4	Jer.	2.2
	14.19		36.11		103.11		9.3
Deut.	5.10		40.11		103.17		31.3
2 Sam.	22.51		40.12		106.1		32.18
1 Kgs	3.6		42.9		106.7		33.11
	20.31		44.27		106.45	Lam.	3.22
Ruth	2.20		48.10		107.1		3.32
1 Chron.	16.34		52.3		107.9	Hos.	1.6
	16.41		57.4		107.15		2.19
2 Chron.	1.8		57.11		107.21		4.1
	5.13		59.11		107.31		6.6
	7.3		59.17		107.43		10.12
	7.6		59.18		108.5		12.7
	20.21		61.8		109.12	Joel	2.13
Ezek.	3.11		63.4		109.16	Jon.	2.8
	7.28		69.14		109.21		4.2
	9.9		69.17		115.1	Mic.	6.8
Neh.	1.5		77.9		117.2		7.18
	9.17		85.8		118.1-4		7.20
	13.22		85.11		118.29		
Job	10.12		86.5		119.41		

b. *Human Agent*							
Gen.	20.13	2 Sam.	2.6	Neh.	1.11		20.28
	40.14		3.8		13.14		31.26
	47.29		9.1	Job	6.14	Isa.	40.6
Josh.	2.12		9.3	Pss.	51.3		54.3
	2.14		9.7		62.13		57.1
Judg.	1.24		10.2		89.29	Dan.	9.4
	8.35		15.20		114.2	Zech.	2.7
Ruth	1.8		16.17	Prov.	3.3		2.9
	3.10	1 Kgs	2.7		11.17		7.9
1 Sam.	15.6		20.31		19.22		
	20.8	1 Chron.	19.2		20.6		
	20.14-15						

Table 2. *Laws with Provisions for Certain Groups*

* = Provisions within the Laws for these groups
^ = House, which means that they were entitled to participate in the householder's feasts

Deuteronomy		*Slave*	*Levite*	*Stranger*	*Orphan*	*Widow*
5.14	Sabbath	*		*		
12.7	Sacrifice	^				
12.12	Sacrifice	*	*			
12.18	Tithe	*	*			
14.26	Tithe	^	*			
14.29	Tithe		*	*	*	*
15.20	Firstlings	^				
16.11	Weeks	*	*	*	*	*
16.14	Booths	*	*	*	*	*
24.19	Harvest			*	*	*
24.20	Harvest			*	*	*
24.21	Harvest			*	*	*
26.11	Tithe	^	*	*		
26.12	Tithe		*	*	*	*

Table 3. *Laws Regarding the Poor*

Deuteronomy		אביון	עני
7.11	Loans without interest	×5	×1
15.1-6	Fallow year, no extraction of debts	×1	
24.10-13	Pledge of a poor person	×1	
24.14-15	Daily pay for a poor labourer	×1	×2

Table 4. *Primary Sources for Sites Discussed*[1]

A = Aramaic; G = Greek; H = Hebrew

Site name/language/date (century)	*References*
'Alma (A and H/A, third)	*CIJ* 973; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 9-11
Ashdod (G, fifth?)	*CIJ* 971; Lifshitz (1967), 69; *SEG* VIII, 146; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 19-21
Ashkelon (G, fifth–sixth)	*CIJ* 962; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 21-26; Lifshitz (1967), 70-71; Clermont-Ganneau (1905), pp. 169-72
Beersheba (A, sixth?)	*CIJ* 1196; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 39-40
Beth Alpha (A, 508–78) (G, fifth)	*CIJ* 1165; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 44-50 *CIJ* 1166; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 44-50; Lifshitz (1967), 77
Beth Guvrin (A, fourth–sixth)	*CIJ* 1195; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 51-53; Naveh (1978), pp. 109-11; Barag (*IEJ*, 1972), pp. 147-49; Sukenik (1930), pp. 76-79; Klein (1932), p. 271
Beth She'an B (A, fifth–sixth) (G, fifth–sixth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 58-67; Bahat and Druks (1972), pp. 55-58; Naveh (1978), p. 46 Lifshitz (1967), 77b; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 58-67; Bahat and Druks (1972), pp. 8-9
Capernaum (A, third) (G, fourth)	*CIJ* 982; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 260-69; *CIJ* 983; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 260-69
Caesarea (G, fifth–sixth)	Lifshitz (1967), 68; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 79-90; Avi-Yonah (1956), p. 260; Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions*, no. 25
Chorazin (A, fourth)	*CIJ* 981; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 275-81; *EAEH*
Daburra (A, A/G, third-fourth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 91-95; Urman (1970–71), pp. 399-408, (1972), pp. 16-28; Ma'oz, p. 101
Ed Danaqalle (A, third)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 99-100
En-Gedi (H/A, fourth–seventh)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 108-14; Barag (*Tarbiz*, 1972), pp. 453-54; Mazar (1970), pp. 18-19
Er Ramah (A, second–third)	*CIJ* 979; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 367-69; Marmorstein (1933), pp. 100-101; Klein (1933), pp. 94-96
Eshtemoa (A, fifth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 117-21
Gaza A (G, sixth?)	*CIJ* 968; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 130-37; Lifshitz (1967), 72

1. For logistical convenience only abbreviated bibliographical references are supplied here. Author/editor name(s) are normally sufficient for identifying the bibliographical citations. Where necessary, specific dates are supplied to help the reader locate the relevant work in the bibliography.

Gaza B (H/G, sixth?)	*CIJ* 967; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 135-36
Gerasa (A, fourth–fifth)	*CIJ* 866-67; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 126-30; Sukenik (1930), pp. 48-49
Giv'at ha Miytar (A, third–second BCE)	Fitzmyer (1978), p. 169 n. 68; Naveh (1973), p. 91
Gush Halav (A, third–fifth) (G, third–fifth)	*CIJ* 976; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 144-46, Klein (1920), p. 78 Lifshitz (1967), 81a; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, II, p. 602
Hammath Gadara (A, fifth)	*CIJ* 56-880; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 152-58; Avi-Yonah (1933), p. 159; Naveh (1978), p. 34
Hammath Tiberias (A and G, fourth–sixth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 163-72; Lifshitz (1967), 76; Lifshitz (1973), pp. 43-55; Dothan
Horvat ha'Ammudin (A, third–fourth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 12-15; Hüttenmeister, pp. 109-12; Avigad (1960), pp. 62-64
Horvat Habra (H/A, sixth?)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 149-50
Horvat Kanef (A, fourth–fifth)	Ma'oz, p. 103
Horvat Susiya (A and H, fourth–fifth) (H/A, fourth–fifth frags)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 422-43; Safrai (1973–74), pp. 44-50; Z. Yeivin (1974), pp. 261-69; Fitzmyer (1978), p. A55
Huldah (G, sixth?)	Lifshitz (1967), 81a; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, II, p. 602; Avi-Yonah (1960), pp. 57-59
I'Billin (H ?)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 27-29; Hüttenmeister; Braslawski
Isyfiah (A, fifth–sixth)	*CIJ* 885; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 183-84; Avi-Yonah and Makhouly, pp. 118-31
Jassud Hamma'le (A, fourth)	*CIJ* 971; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 514-15; Klein (1928), p. 258
Jericho (A, eighth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 189-92; Avi-Yonah and Baranki, pp. 73-77; *EAEH*
Jerusalem (G, first BCE)	Isaac
Jerusalem (G, first BCE)	*CIJ* II, 1404; *SEG* VIII, 170; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 192-95; Lifshitz (1967), 79
Kazrin (A ?)	Ma'oz, p. 103
Kefar Bar'am (H, second–third)	*CIJ* 974; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 35-38, Klein (1920), pp. 79-80
Kefar Hananyah (A, fifth–sixth) (H/A, fifth–sixth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 526-27
	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 526-27; *CIJ* 980; Naveh (1978), pp. 34-35
Kefar Kana (A, third–fourth)	*CIJ* 987; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 246-49; Avi-Yonah (1933), pp. 178-79
Korkav Ha Yardin (A, third–fourth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 272-74
Ma'on (A, fifth)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 302-306; Z. Yeivin (1960), pp. 36-40; Kloner (1974), pp. 198-201

Meron (A, sixth?)	*CIJ* 978; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 311-14; Naveh (1978), p. 305
Na'aran (A, fifth–sixth) (A/G, third–fourth)	*CIJ* 1197-207; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 302-306; Z. Yeivin (1960), pp. 36-40; Klein (1920), pp. 69-74; Vincent and Carrière, pp. 585-87
Nazareth (A, third–fourth)	*CIJ* 988; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 339-42
Sepphoris (A, before 352)	*CIJ* 989; Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 400-18
Tiberias Roman Baths (A, second–third)	Hüttenmeister and Reeg, I, pp. 436-61; Schwabe (1954)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amit, D., and M. Stone, 'Survey of a Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Armenia', *JJS* 53 (2002), pp. 66-106.

Avi-Yonah, M., 'Caesarea', *IEJ* 6 (1956), p. 260.

—*A History of Israel and the Holy Land* (London: Continuum, 2001).

—'Mosaic Pavements in Palestine', *QDAP* 2 (1933), pp. 136-81.

—'Various Synagogal Remains: Huldah', *RB* 3 (1960), pp. 57-59.

Avi-Yonah, M., and D. Baramki, 'An Early Byzantine Synagogue near Tell-es Sultan, Jericho', *QDAP* 6 (1938), pp. 73-77.

Avi-Yonah, M., and N. Makhouly, 'A 6th Century Synagogue at Isyfiah', *QDAP* 3 (1933), pp. 118-31.

Avidov, A., 'Peer Solidarity and Communal Loyalty in Roman Judaea', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 264-80.

Avigad, N., 'An Aramaic Inscription from the Synagogue at Umm-el-Amed in Galilee', *RB* 3 (1960), pp. 62-64.

—*Beth She'arim*. III. *Excavations 1953–58* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976).

Bahat, D., and A. Druks, 'Beth She'an, ancienne synagogue', *RB* 78 (1971), pp. 585-86.

—'The Synagogue at Beth-Shean', *Qad* 5 (1972), pp. 55-58.

Barag, D., 'Aramaic Inscription from the Hebron Area', *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 147-49.

—'Kertah in the Inscriptions from the Synagogue of En-Gedi', *Tarbiz* 41 (1972), pp. 453-54 (Hebrew).

Blinkenburg, C., *Lindos, fouilles de l'Acropole*. *1902–14 Inscriptions 2* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1941).

Bolkenstein, H., *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege in vorchristlichen Altertum* (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1939).

Bowen, B.M., 'A Study of CHESED' (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1938).

Braslawski, Y., 'A Synagogue Inscription at 'Abellin', *BJPES* 2.3-4 (1935), pp. 10-13 (Hebrew).

British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Old Testament*: *Hebrew and English* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 2nd edn, 1992).

Brooten, B.J., *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (BJS, 36; Chicago: Scholars Press, 1982).

Brown, P., *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH; Brandeis University Press, 2002).

Bruneau, P., *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (BEFAR, 217; Paris: de Boccard, 1970).

Bull, R., 'Mithraeum of Caesarea Maritima', *Textes et mémoires* 4 (1978), pp. 75-89.

Champlin, E., *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 BC–AD 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Chiat, M.J.S., *A Handbook of Synagogue Architecture* (BJS, 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982).
Clark, G., 'The Gifts of Women' (unpublished conference report, Connecticut College, January 2001), pp. 6-8.
Clark, G.R., *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 157; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).
Clermont-Gannaeu, C., *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, II (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1896).
—'Sur diverses inscriptions de Palestine publiées par M. Dalman', *RAO* 6 (1905), pp. 169-72.
Cohen, Shaye D., *On the Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
Crook, Z., *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004).
Davidson, B., *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1970).
Dodd, C.H., *The Bible and the Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).
Dothan, M., *Hammath Tiberias*: *Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains*. *Final Excavation Report 1* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983).
Dreze, J., and A. Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989).
Durmortier, J.B., 'Un rituel d'intronisation: Le Ps lxxxix 2-38', *VT* 22 (1972), pp. 175-96.
Eichrodt, W., *Theology of the Old Testament* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1961).
Feissel, D., 'Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne V', *BCH* 105 (1981), p. 281.
Fine, S., Review of S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE*, *BAR* 30 (March/April 2004), pp. 56-58.
—*This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Graeco/Roman Period* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).
Fine, S., (ed.), *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
Fitzmyer, J.A., *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts 2nd Century BC–2nd Century AD* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).
—*A Wandering Aramean*: *Collected Aramaic Essays* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979).
Foerster, G., 'Synagogue Inscriptions and their Relation to Liturgical Versions', *Cathedra* 19 (1981), pp. 12-40.
Fraser, P.M., *Rhodian Funerary Monuments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).
Frey, J.B., *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*. II. *Asie–Afrique* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1952).
Garnsey, P., *Famine and Food Supply in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
Geva, H., 'Jerusalem: The Roman Period', in *New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, III (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1976), pp. 758-67.
Gibson, J.C.L., *Textbook of Semitic Inscriptions.* II. *Aramaic Inscriptions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).
Glueck, N., *Das Wort* hesed *im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftgemässe Verhaltungsweise* (BZAW, 47: Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1927).
—*Hesed in the Bible* (trans. A. Gottschalk; New York: Ktav, 1967).
Goodenough, E.R., *Jewish Symbolism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. and abridged J. Neusner; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Goodman, M., *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
—*State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132–212* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).
Grabbe, L.L., *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM Press, 1994).
Grant, M., *Herod the Great* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).
Hachlili, R., 'The Goliath Family in Jericho: Funerary Inscriptions from a First Century A.D. Jewish Monumental Tomb', *BASOR* 235 (1979), pp. 31-66.
Hamel, G., *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine: First Three Centuries CE* (NES, 23; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
Hengel, M., *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1983).
—'Proseuche und Synagogue', in J. Gutmann (ed.), *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture* (New York: Ktav, 1975), pp. 157-84.
Henten, J.W. van, and L. Huitink, 'Inscriptions from Israel: Jewish and Non-Jewish Revisited', *Bulletin of Judeo-Greek Studies* 32 (Summer 2003), pp. 37-46.
Herman, G., *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
Hezser, C., *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).
Hills, S.O., 'The *Hesed* of Man in the Old Testament' (unpublished paper delivered at the November meeting of the Bible College in Pittsburgh 1957).
Horst, P. van der, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Kampen: Pharos, 1991).
—'Greek in Jewish Palestine', in J.J. Collins and G. Sterling (eds.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), pp. 154-74.
Holman, S., *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappodocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
Hoppe, L., *The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).
Horsley, R., '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society', in R. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 242-52.
Hüttenmeister, F., 'The Aramaic Inscription from the Synagogue at H. 'Ammudim', *IEJ* 28 (1978), pp. 109-12.
Hüttenmeister, F.G., and G. Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1977).
Ilan, Z., *Ancient Synagogues in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1991).
Isaac, B., 'A Donation for Herod's Temple in Jerusalem', *IEJ* 33 (1983), pp. 86-92.
Jeremias, J., *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).
Joubert, S.J., 'One Form of Social Exchange or Two? "Euergetism", Patronage, and Testament Studies', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (Spring 2001), pp. 1-12.
Kane, J.P., 'Mithraic Cultic Meal in its Greek and Roman Environment', *Mithraic Studies* 2 (1975), pp. 313-51.
Kee, H.C., 'The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 CE: Its Import for Early Christianity', *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 1-24.
Klein, S., 'The Inscription at Er Ramah', *JPOS* 13 (1933), pp. 94-96.
—'The Inscription from Beit Jibrin', *JPOS* 12 (1932), p. 271.
—'Inscription from Jassud Hamma-le', *ZDPV* 51 (1928), p. 136.
—*Jüdisch–palästinisches corpus inscriptionum* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920).

Kloner, A., 'A Lintel with a Menorah from Horvat Kishor', *IEJ* 24 (1974), pp. 198-201.
Kloppenborg Verbin, J.S., 'Dating Theodotos (*CIJ* II 1404)', *JJS* 51 (2002), pp. 243-80.
Kraemer, R., 'New Inscriptions from Malta and the Question of Women Leaders in the Diaspora Jewish Communities', *HTR* 78 (1985), pp. 431-38.
Krauss, S., *Synagogale Altertümer* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966).
Lane-Fox, R., *Pagans and Christians* (London: Penguin Books, 1986).
Lapin, H., 'Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity', in E. Meyers (ed.), *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 239-69.
Lefebvre, G., *Recueil des inscriptions grécques-chrétiennes d'Egypte* (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1907).
Leigh Gibson, E., Review of S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE*, *BMCR* 2002.09.36 (2001), online: http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002-09-36.html.
Levine, L.I., *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
—'The Jewish–Greek Conflict in 1st Century Caesarea', *JJS* 25 (1974), pp. 381-97.
—*Roman Caesarea*: *An Archaeological and Topographical Study* (Qedem, 5; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology Hebrew University, 1975).
—'The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years', in *idem* (ed.), *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Theological Seminary/American School of Oriental Research, 1987), pp. 7-32.
Levine, L.I. (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981).
Lewis, N. (ed.), *The Documents from the Bar Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters*: *Greek Papyri* (Judaean Desert Studies, 2; Jerusalem, 1989).
Lieberman, S., *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942).
Lifshitz, B., *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique, 7; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1967).
—'L'ancienne synagogue de Tiberiade, sa mosaïque et ses inscriptions', *JSJ* 4 (1973), pp. 43-55.
Lomas, K., and T. Cornell (eds.), *'Bread and Circuses': Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (London: Routledge, 2003).
Magan, Y., L. Tsfania and H Misgav, 'The Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions from Mt. Gezirim', *Qad* 33 (2000), pp. 125-28.
Ma'oz, Z., 'Art and Architecture of the Synagogues in the Golan', in Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, pp. 98-115.
Marmorstein, A., 'The Inscription of Er Rama', *PEFQS* (1933), pp. 100-101.
Mauss, M., *The Gift* (trans. W.D. Halls; London: Routledge, 1993).
Mazar, B., *Beth She'arim*. I. *Report on the Excavations during 1936–1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, on behalf of the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1972).
—*Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem: Preliminary Report of the First Season* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969).
—'Inscription of the Floor of the Synagogue in En-Gedi', *Tarbiz* 40 (1970), pp. 18-23.
Mazur, B.D., *Studies in Jewry in Greece*, I (Athens: Hestia, 1935).
Meshorer, Y., *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer & Massada, 1967).
—'A Stone Weight from the Reign of Herod', *IEJ* 20 (1970), pp. 97-98.

Metzger, B.M., and M.D. Coogan (eds.), *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
Millar, S., 'On the Number of Synagogues in the Cities of Eretz Israel', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 51-67.
Morris, L., *Testaments of Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).
Murphy O'Connor, J., *The Holy Land*: *An Archaeological Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
Naveh, J., 'Ancient Synagogue Inscriptions', in Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, pp. 133-39.
—'An Aramaic Tomb Inscription Written in Paleo-Hebrew', *IEJ* 23 (1973), pp. 82-91.
—*On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1978 [Hebrew]).
Neusner, J., 'The Use of the Late Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First Century Pharisaism', in W.S. Green (eds.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (BJS, 1; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), pp. 215-25.
Niehoff, M.R., 'Jewish Identity and Jewish Mothers: Who was a Jew according to Philo?', *Studia Philonica Annual* 11 (1999), pp. 31-45.
Nock, A.D., *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).
—'Liturgical Notes: The Didache', *JTS* 30 (1929), pp. 381-95.
Noy, D., A. Panayotov and H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones judaicae orientis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).
Noy, D.E., and S.M. Sorek, 'Peace and Mercy upon All your Blessed People: Jews and Christians at Apamea in Late Antiquity', *JJHC* 6 (2003), pp. 11-24.
Park, J.S., *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).
Pastor, J., *Land and Economy in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge).
Patlagean, E., *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance: 4e–7e siècles* (Paris: Mouton, 1977).
Rahmani, L.Y., 'Stone Synagogue Chairs: Their Identification, Use and Significance', *IEJ* 42 (1990), pp. 192-214.
Rajak, T., *The Jewish Dialogue between Greece and Rome*: *Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001).
—'Jews as Benefactors', in B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer (eds.), *Studies in the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Te'uda, 12; Tel Aviv: Ramot, 1996), pp. 17-38.
Rajak, T., and D. Noy, '*Archisynagogoi*: Office, Title and Social Status in the Graeco-Roman Synagogue', *JRS* 83 (1993), pp. 73-93.
Reinhardt, W., 'The Population of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church', in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 237-73.
Reynolds, J., and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge Philological Society Supplements, 12; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987).
Robert, L., *Nouvelles inscriptions de Sardes* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1964).
—*Bulletin épigraphique* (10 vols.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972–87).
Rostovtzeff, M., *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).
Roth-Gerson, L., *The Greek Inscriptions from Synagogues in Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1987 [Hebrew]).

—'Similarities and Differences in Greek Synagogue Inscriptions of Eretz Israel and the Diaspora', in A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (eds.), *Synagogues in Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak ben Zvi, 1987), pp. 133-44 (Hebrew).
Reumann, J., *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).
Rutgers, L.V., 'Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archaeology in the Graeco-Roman World', in S. Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 67-95.
Safrai, Z., *The Jewish Community in the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Centre, 1995 [Hebrew]).
—'The Synagogues South of Mount Judah', *Immanuel* 3 (1973–74), pp. 44-50.
—'Talmudic Literature as an Historical Source for the Second Temple Period', *Mishkan* 17/18 (1992–93), pp. 121-37.
Seccombe, D., 'Was there Organised Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?', *JTS* 29 (1978), pp. 140-43.
Sakenfeld, K.D., *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Enquiry*' (HSM, 17; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).
Saller, R., 'Poverty, Honour and Obligation in Imperial Rome', *Criterion* 37 (1998), pp. 12-20.
Sanders, E.P., *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992).
Satlow, M.L., *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
Schiffman, L.H., *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985).
Schwabe, M., 'Jewish Inscription from Ed Dumer', *PAAJR* 20 (1951), pp. 265-77.
—'Tiberias Roman Baths', *BIES* 18 (1954), pp. 160-63.
Schwabe, M., and B. Lifschitz, *Beth She'arim*. II. *Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974).
Schwartz, D.R., 'Ishmael ben Phiabi and the Chronology of Provincia Judaea', in Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1992), pp. 218-40.
Schwartz, S., *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE–640 CE* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
Segni, L. di, 'The Involvement of Local, Municipal and Provincial Authorities in Urban Building in Late Antique Palestine and Arabia', *JRA* 14 (1995), pp. 312-17.
Shinan, A., 'The Literature of the Ancient Synagogue and Synagogue Archaeology', in Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm*, pp. 130-52.
Simon, M., *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relationship between the Christians and the Jews in the Roman Empire, 135–425 AD* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1996).
Simons, J., *Jerusalem in the Old Testament: Research and Theories* (Leiden: Brill, 1952).
Smallwood, E.M., 'The Alleged Jewish Tendencies of Poppaea Sabina', *JTS* 10 (1959), pp. 329-35.
—*The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).
Sorek, S.M., 'Mothers of Israel: Why the Rabbis Adopted the Matrilineal Principle', *Studies in Women in Judaism* 3 (2002), pp. 35-40.
—'Render unto Caesar: Pontius Pilate and the Temple Funds', *Eras* 4 (2002), http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras.
Sperber, D., *Roman Palestine 200–400: The Land: Crisis and Change in Agrarian Society as Reflected in Rabbinic Sources* (Jerusalem: Bar Ilan University Press, 1978).
Stern, M., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, II (Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980).

Stemberger, G., *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century* (trans. R. Tuschling; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).
Sukenik, E.L., 'Cathedra of Moses in Ancient Synagogues', *Tarbiz* 1 (1929), pp. 21-24 (Hebrew).
— Note on the Aramaic Inscription at the Synagogue at Gerasa', *PEFQS* (1930), pp. 48-49.
—'A Synagogue from Beth Guvrin', *JPOS* 10 (1930), pp. 76-78.
Sullivan, R.D., 'Dynasts in Pontus', *ANRW* II, 7.2 (1980), pp. 902-30.
Thackeray, H.St.J., trans., *Josephus: Antiquitates judaicae* (LCL; Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
—*Josephus: Bellum judaicum* (LCL; Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
—*Josephus: Contra Apionem* (LCL; Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
Thompson, J.A., 'The Vocabulary of Covenant in the Old Testament' (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1963).
Trebilco, P.R., *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
Tsaferis, V., and M. Peleg, 'Kefer Nahum', *Excavation and Survey in Israel* 4 (1986), p. 59.
Tsafir, Y., and G. Foerster, 'Urbanism in Scythopolis: Beth She'an in the Fourth to Sixth Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), pp. 85-146.
Urbach, E.E., *The Sages*: *Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975).
Urman, T., 'A Jewish Inscription from Daburra', *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 16-23.
—'A Jewish Inscription from Daburra in the Golan', *Tarbiz* 40 (1970–71), pp. 399-408.
Van Bremen, R., *The Limits of Participation* (Amsterdam: Giessen, 1996).
Vermes, G., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Forty Years On* (London: Penguin Books, 1987).
Veyne, P., *Bread and Circuses* (trans. B. Pearce; London: Penguin Books, 1990).
—*A History of Private Life*, I (ed. P. Aries *et al*.; London: Harvard University Press, 1989).
Vincent, L.H., 'Chronique. Découverte de la synagogue des affranchis à Jérusalem', *RB* 30 (1921), pp. 585-87.
Vincent, L.H., and B. Carrière, 'La synagogue de Noarah', *RB* 30 (1921), pp. 579-601.
Vuolanto, V., 'Male and Female Euergetism in Late Antiquity: A Study on Italian and Adriatic Church Floor Mosaics', in R. Berg *et al*., *Women, Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire* (Acta Instituti Finlandiae, 25; Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2002), pp. 245-302.
Weinfeld, M., *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1995).
Williams, M., *Jews among Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: Duckworth, 1988).
—'The Jews and Godfearers Inscriptions at Aphrodisias: A Case of Patriarchal Interference in the Third Century?', *Historia* 41 (1992), pp. 297-310.
Yeivin, I., *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (trans. and ed. E.J. Revell; Masoretic Studies, 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980).
Yeivin, Z., 'Inscribed Marble Fragments from the Khirbet Susiya Synagogue', *IEJ* 24 (1974), pp. 210-19.
—'The Inscription at Ma'on', *RB* 3 (1960), pp. 36-40.
Zori, N., 'The Ancient Synagogue at Beth She'an', *EI* 8 (1967), pp. 149-67.

INDEXES

INDEX OF REFERENCES

INDEX OF AUTHORS