

## *Jesus and the Ossuaries*

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*The recently publicized "James" ossuary is only one more remarkable archaeological find that may have significance for research into the life of Jesus and early Christian history. Further scientific study of this ossuary is needed before its authenticity and the controversial "brother of Jesus" portion of the inscription can be accepted. Review of other ossuary inscriptions, as well as three nonossuary inscriptions, will provide perspective and context for assessing the importance of this new find.*

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The recent announcement of the existence of the James ossuary, a bone box that may have contained the skeletal remains of the brother of Jesus, has created yet another media sensation focused on Christian origins.<sup>1</sup> It is but one of seven ossuaries<sup>2</sup> that may have direct

1. The announcement of this ossuary, which has been for some time in private hands, has aroused a great deal of public interest. The discovery of the ossuary, along with its remarkable inscription, and the damage done to it when shipped to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (in order to be on display when the AAR/SBL convened in that city in November 2002) have received wide coverage in the media. This coverage has included radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and several web sites.

2. Ossuaries, or bone boxes, are small stone sarcophagi, usually 50-60 cm in length (to accommodate the femur, the longest bone in the human skeleton), about a third of a meter in height, and almost the same in width (to accommodate the hips and rib cage). Ossuary lids can be flat, pitched, or rounded. Ossuaries are plain (without design) or ornate, usually adorned with rosettes. Some have inscriptions; many do not. Some 900 ossuaries have been found in and around Jerusalem, dating from the Herodian period. More than 200 of these have inscriptions, of which 143 are in Aramaic and 73 in Greek. More than a dozen are bilingual (in Greek and in Hebrew or Aramaic). A few have Latin inscriptions. Undisturbed ossuaries often contain coins, jewelry, and two or more skeletons. Ossuaries were used for reburial, or ossilegium, a practice common, especially in the environs of Jerusalem, in the first century BCE and the first century CE. One year after death, burial, and the decay of the flesh, the bones were gathered and placed in a box. In one of the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, we read: "Rabbi Eliezer ben Zadok said: 'When my father was dying he gave me this

bearing on the life, ministry, and death of Jesus, and the origins of the Christian movement. The six previously discovered and publicized ossuaries have advanced our knowledge of first-century life (and death) in the land of Israel. As amazing as it may seem, these ossuaries may have contained the remains of the high priest Caia-phas, who delivered Jesus to the Roman authorities; the remains of Alexander, the son of Simon of Cyrene, the man who carried Jesus' cross; the remains of a man who had been crucified at about the same time Jesus was executed; and the remains of a first-century descendant of King David.

It will be helpful to review together all seven of these ossuaries and their inscriptions. Three other archaeological finds—the Pilate stone from Caesarea Maritima, Caesar's edict against grave robbery, and the Jerusalem Temple warning—though not ossuaries, also deserve review in this context.<sup>3</sup> Let us consider these ten items in the order of their discovery and publication.

#### THE JEWISH TEMPLE WARNING INSCRIPTION—1871

In 1871 Charles Clermont-Ganneau found a limestone block (about 85 cm in length, about 57 cm in height, and about 37 cm thick), on which was inscribed a warning to Gentiles to stay out of the perimeter surrounding the sanctuary.<sup>4</sup> A fragment of a second inscription was found in 1935 outside the wall around Jerusalem's Old City.<sup>5</sup>

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instruction, "On my death bury me first in a valley, and later gather my bones and place them in an ossuary [גל וסקמא], but do not gather them with your hands." And so I did for him" (*Semahot* 12.9 [49b]). For scholarly discussion of ossuaries and the Jewish custom of reburial, see E. M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth. Secondary Burials in Their Ancient Near Eastern Setting* (BibOr 24; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971); P. Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries* (Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 20; Leiden: Brill, 1985); L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994).

3. Other items could be added, such as inscriptions that mention synagogues (CIJ no. 867; Gerasa) or synagogue rulers (CIJ no. 1404; the Theodotus inscription from Mount Ophel, Jerusalem, perhaps first century cc), the synagogue floor mosaic that lists the priestly courses, in which Nazareth is mentioned (Caesarea Maritima; third century cc), multilingual ossuaries, and ossuaries mentioning priests, scribes, and rabbis, or the names and trades of various people, such as Simon the builder of the Temple (ossuary no. 1; Giv'at Ha-Mivtar; first century CE).

4. Initially announced in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* (1871): 132; cf. C. S. Clermont-Ganneau, "Une stèle du temple de Jérusalem," *RAr* 28 (1872): 214-34 (esp. 220), 290-96 + pl. 10; J. Derenbourg, "Une stèle du temple d'Hérode," *JA* 20 (1872): 178-95. Both Clermont-Ganneau and Derenbourg rightly draw attention to the scriptural antecedents of this warning, as well as references to it in Philo and Josephus.

5. J. H. Iliffe, "The θάνατος Inscription from Herod's Temple: Fragment of a Second Copy," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 6 (1936): 1-3 + pls. 1-2. The

The inscription reads as follows (cf. *OGIS* no. 598; *CIJ* no. 1400; *SEG VIII* no. 169):

ΜΗΘΕΝΔΑΛΛΟΓΕΝΗΕΙΣΠΟΡΕΥΕΣΘΑΙ  
 ΕΝΤΟΣΤΟΥΠΕΡΙΤΟΙΕΡΟΝΤΡΥ  
 ΦΑΚΤΟΥΚΑΙΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΥΟΣΔΔΝ  
 ΛΗΦΘΗΔΥΤΩΙΑΙΤΙΟΣΕΣΤΑΙ  
 ΔΙΑΤΟΕΞΔΚΟΛΟΥΘΕΙΝ  
 ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ<sup>6</sup>

Let no Gentile<sup>7</sup> enter  
 within the partition and barrier  
 surrounding the temple; whosoever  
 is caught shall be responsible  
 for his subsequent  
 death.<sup>8</sup>

second fragment is 50 cm in height, 31 cm thick, and about 25 cm wide (the width varies due to the jagged right-hand edge). The inscribed letters were originally painted red, making them stand out against the off-white limestone. The extant text of the fragmentary inscription matches closely the wording and layout of the fully preserved inscription. The fragment, which corresponds to the left third of the full inscription, reads (see Iliffe, p. 2 and pl. 1; and J. Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969], 119-20):

ΘΕΝΔΑΛΛ  
 ΟΣΤΟΥ  
 ΤΟΥΚΑΙ  
 ΗΦΘΗΔΥ  
 ΙΑΤΟΕΞ  
 ΔΝΑΤ

6. Or, with spacing, punctuation, and diacritics: μηθένα ἄλλογενὴ εἰσπορεύεσθαι ἐντὸς τοῦ περὶ τὸ ἱερόν τρυφάκτου καὶ περιβόλου· ὅς δ' ἂν ληφθῆ αὐτῷ αἴτιος ἔσται διὰ τὸ ἐξακλουθεῖν θάνατον.

7. Lit., "other-race" (ἄλλογενής), i.e., non-Jewish. See LXX Exod 12:43; Lev 22:25; Ezek 44:9. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 12.3.4 §145, where ἄλλοφύλος is used: "It is unlawful for any foreigner to enter the enclosure of the temple that is forbidden to the Jews, except to those of them who are accustomed to enter after purifying themselves in accordance with the law of the country."

8. The inscription is discussed in A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton / New York: George H. Doran, 1927), 79-81 + plate (fig. 9); E. J. Bickerman, "The Warning Inscriptions of Herod's Temple," *JQR* 37 (1946-47): 387-405; S. Zeitlin, "The Warning Inscription of the Temple," *JQR* 38 (1947-48): 111-16; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols., rev. by G. Vermes, E. Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87), 2:284-87, esp. 285 n. 57; J. M. Baumgarten, "Exclusions from the Temple: Proselytes and Agrippa I," *JJS* 33 (1982): 215-25; P. Segal, "The Penalty of the Warning Inscription from the Temple of Jerusalem," *IEJ* 39 (1989): 79-84. The περίβολος "was the wall which encompassed the holy terrace within the outer court" of the temple, while the τρύφακτος (or תרופא; cf. *m. Mid.* 2:3) "was a stone barrier which stretched across the outer court to protect the flights of stairs leading up to the inner court" (Bickerman, "Warning Inscriptions," 389). On the meaning of αὐτῷ αἴτιος, see Bickerman, "Warning Inscriptions," 395-96; Segal, "The Penalty."

This inscription is almost certainly one of the inscribed warnings mentioned by Josephus. For example, he states: "Upon [the partition wall of the temple court] stood pillars, at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek, and some in Roman letters, that 'no foreigner should go within that holy place [μηδέν αλλόφυλον ἐντὸς τοῦ ἁγίου]'" (*J.W.* 5.5.2 §§193-94; cf. 6.2.4 §§124-28; *Ant.* 15.2.5 §417; *Ag. Ap.* 2.8 §103). Philo refers to the same law and penalty, though without mention of the inscribed warnings: "Still more abounding and peculiar is the zeal of them all for the temple, and the strongest proof of this is that death [θάνατος] without appeal is the sentence against those of other races who penetrate into its inner [ἐντός] confines" (*Legatio ad Gaium* 31 §212). Allusions to the death penalty for Temple violations are found also in the later rabbinic literature (e.g., *Sipre Num.* §116 [on Num 18:1-32]: "Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah sought to help Rabbi Yohanan ben Gudegedah [at the gates of the temple. But] he said to him, 'Go back, for you have already risked your life, since I belong to the gatekeepers, but you are a singer'").

The scriptural backdrop for these posted warnings includes 1 Kgs 8:41-43, which recounts Solomon's prayer of dedication, in which it is anticipated that Gentiles will visit the Temple; Num 1:51, which warns, "If any one else comes near [the tabernacle], he shall be put to death" (cf. Num 3:38; 19:13; Lev 10:2; 15:31; 22:9); and Lev 16:2, where Moses is warned by God, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, lest he die." Thus there was the expectation, on the one hand, that Gentiles may approach the Temple, but there were restrictions, with deadly consequences, on the other. Subsequent interpretation, custom, and tradition established the guidelines that were observed late in the Second Temple period.<sup>9</sup>

The inscription discovered by Clermont-Ganneau corroborates, to be sure, an important Second Temple detail recounted in Philo and Josephus. But from a Christian perspective the primary value of this inscription is its contribution to a better understanding of the setting and context of Jesus' action in the Temple precincts (cf. Mark 11:15-18 and parallels) and of the riot that overtook Paul in the same precincts some years later (cf. Acts 21:27-36, esp. v. 28, where the accusation is leveled against Paul that "he also brought Greeks into the Temple, and he has defiled this holy place [εἰς τὸ ἱερόν καὶ κεκοίνωκεν τὸν

9. Partitions and warnings against trespass by nonmembers or the uninitiated were common in late antiquity, and were observed by non-Jews, as well as Jews. See examples cited in Bickerman, "Warning Inscriptions," 389-90; for example, "From here only the covenanters"; "The uninitiated may not enter"; "Approach the sacred precincts in condition of purity and with pious mind."

ἅγιον τόπον τοῦτον]). It is in the light of this highly sensitive appreciation of the Temple precincts, especially that of the carefully protected sanctuary within them, that Jesus' remarks should be understood: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a 'den of robbers' (Mark 11:17; cf. Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11).

That Jesus' critical comment provoked a malevolent reaction on the part of the ruling priests (cf. Mark 11:18, 27-33; 12:12; 14:1-2, 43, 53, 58; 15:1-3, 11, 31-32) should hardly occasion surprise. However, his allusion to Isa 56:7, which is part of an oracle (i.e., Isa 56:3-8) that envisioned the day when the "foreigner" (ἄλλογενής/רַב־נְכַר־וְגֵר) will be welcomed into the house of God and receive "within the walls" a monument and name (Isa 56:3, 5), may have been particularly offensive. Indeed, Jesus' teaching may have been understood as directly opposed to the polity presupposed by the public warnings that "no foreigner enter within" the restricted area of the Temple.

Moreover, the Pauline (or post-Pauline) assertion in Eph 2:14-15 that Jesus "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances," may well represent a development of Jesus' teaching. This teaching and its later development in Pauline communities would have been highly controversial in some Jewish circles. Not only does it stand in tension with the polity presupposed by the posted warning inscriptions, it is sharply out of step with the eschatological vision expressed at Qumran:

["I appointed judges] over My people Israel" (2 Sam 7:10-11a). This "place" is the house that [they shall build for Him] in the Last Days, as it is written in the book of Moses: ["A temple of] the Lord are you to prepare with your hands; the Lord will reign forever and ever" (Exod 15:17). This passage describes the Temple that no [man with a] permanent [fleshly defect] shall enter, nor Ammonite, Moabite, bastard, foreigner or alien [רַב־נְכַר־וְגֵר], forevermore. Surely His holiness shall be rev[eal]ed there; eternal glory shall ever be apparent there. Strangers shall not again defile it, as they formerly defiled the Temp[le of I]srael through their sins. To that end He has commanded that they build Him a Temple of Adam, and that in it they sacrifice to Him proper sacrifices. (4Q174 1-2 i 2-7)<sup>10</sup>

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Temple warning inscription constitutes an important artifact that bears witness to a sensitive and controversial issue. Evidently this was an issue that played a part

10. Adaptation of M. O. Wise, M. G. Abegg Jr., and E. M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 227. For further discussion of the possible linkage between the warning inscriptions, Isa 56:7, and 4Q174, see Baumgarten, "Exclusions from the Temple."

in Jesus' teaching in the sacred precincts and in the deadly opposition he encountered at the hands of the ruling priests.

#### CAESAR'S EDICT AGAINST GRAVE ROBBERY INSCRIPTION--1878

In 1878 a marble slab, 61 cm high, 38 cm wide, and 8 cm thick, came to light, on which was inscribed an imperial edict forbidding robbing and vandalizing graves. It is believed that the stone came from Nazareth (though the provenance of this discovery has never been confirmed; it may well have come from one of the cities of the Decapolis). In 1925 it was sent to the Paris Bibliotheque Nationale and was published in 1930 by Franz Cumont.<sup>11</sup> It has been discussed subsequently in several studies.<sup>12</sup> The date of the inscription is unknown, but most epigraphers think it is from the first century, though possibly from just before the turn of the era.<sup>13</sup> The unqualified use of "Caesar" favors identification with Augustus.<sup>14</sup>

The inscription reads (*SEG VIII no. 13*):

1 ΔΙΔΤΑΓΜΑΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ  
 2 ΔΡΕΚΚΕΙΜΟΙΤΑΦΟΥΣΤΥΝΒΟΥΣ  
 3 ΤΕΟΙΤΙΝΕΣΕΙΣΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑΝΠΡΟΓΟΝΩΝ  
 4 ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΝΗΤΕΚΝΩΝΗΟΙΚΕΙΩΝ  
 5 ΤΟΥΤΟΥΣΜΕΝΕΙΝΑΜΕΤΑΚΕΙΝΗΤΟΥΣ  
 6 ΤΟΝΔΙΩΝΔΕΑΝΔΕΤΙΣΕΠΙΔΙΣΤΗΙ  
 7 ΝΑΗΚΑΤΑΛΕΥΚΟΤΑΗΛΛΩΤΙΝΙ  
 8 ΤΡΟΠΩΤΟΥΣΚΕΚΗΔΕΥΜΕΝΟΥΣ  
 9 ΕΞΕΡΡΙΦΦΟΤΑΗΕΙΣΕΤΕΡΟΥΣ  
 10 ΤΟΠΟΥΣΔΩΛΩΠΟΝΗΡΩΜΕ  
 11 ΤΑΤΕΘΕΙΚΟΤΑΕΠΑΔΙΚΙΔΗΤΩΝ  
 12 ΚΕΚΗΔΕΥΜΕΝΩΝΗΚΑΤΟΧΟΥΣΧΛΙ  
 13 ΘΟΥΣΜΕΤΑΤΕΘΕΙΚΟΤΑΚΑΤΑΤΟΥ  
 14 ΤΟΙΟΥΤΟΥΚΡΙΤΗΡΙΟΝΕΓΩΚΕΛΕΥΩ  
 15 ΓΕΝΕΣΘΑΙΚΑΘΑΠΕΡΠΕΡΙΘΕΩΝ

11. E. Cumont, "Un rescrit impérial sur la violation de sépulture," *Revue historique* 163 (1930): 241-66.

12. See esp. F. de Zulueta, "Violation of Sepulture in Palestine at the Beginning of the Christian Era," *JRS* 22 (1932): 184-97; B. M. Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," *New Testament Studies: Philological, Versional, and Patristic* (NTTS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 75-92; P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE-700 CE)* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 159-60; L. Boffo, "L'ordine imperiale di Nazaret (?) sulla violazione dei sepolcri," *Iscrizioni greche e latine per lo studio della Bibbia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1994), 319-33 (for additional bibliography, see pp. 319-20); R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL 7; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1293-94.

13. Cumont, "Un rescrit impérial," 265.

14. De Zulueta, "Violation of Sepulture," 186-87.

16 ΕΣΤΑΚΤΩΝΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝΘΡΗΣ  
 17 ΚΙΑΣΠΟΧΥΓΑΡΜΑΛΛΟΝΔΕΗΣΕΙ  
 18 ΤΟΥΣΚΕΚΗΔΕΥΜΕΝΟΥΣΤΕΙΜΑΝ  
 19 ΚΑΘΟΛΟΥΜΗΔΕΝΙ ΕΣΕΚΤΩΜΕΤΑ  
 20 ΚΕΙΝΗΣΑΙΕΙΔΕΜΗΤΟΥΤΟΝΕΓΩΚΕ  
 21 ΦΑΛΗΣΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΤΟΝΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ  
 22 ΤΥΜΒΩΡΥΧΙΑΣΘΕΛΩΓΕΝΕΣΘΑΙ<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ordinance of Caesar: <sup>2</sup>It is my pleasure that graves and tombs-  
<sup>3</sup>whoever has made them as a pious service for ancestors <sup>4</sup>or chil-  
 dren or members of their house--<sup>5</sup>that these remain unmolested <sup>6</sup>in  
 perpetuity. But if any person lay information that <sup>7</sup>another either  
 has destroyed them, or has in any other <sup>8</sup>way cast out the bodies  
<sup>9</sup>which have been buried there, or <sup>10</sup>with malicious deception has  
<sup>11</sup>transferred them to other places, to the dishonor of those <sup>12</sup>buried  
 there, or has removed the headstones or other <sup>13</sup>stones, in such a  
 case <sup>14</sup>I command that a trial <sup>15</sup>be instituted, just as if they were con-  
 cerned with the gods <sup>16</sup>for the pious services of mortals. <sup>17</sup>For beyond  
 all else it shall be obligatory <sup>18</sup>to honor those who have been buried.  
<sup>19</sup>Let no one remove them for any reason. <sup>20</sup>If not, however [i.e., if  
 anyone does so], <sup>21</sup>capital punishment on the charge of <sup>22</sup>tomb rob-  
 bery I will to take place.<sup>16</sup>

The imperial ordinance testifies to the sanctity with which tombs  
 were regarded in late antiquity, especially in Israel.<sup>17</sup> Most interest-  
 ing is the warning in lines 10 and 11 not to transfer bodies from one  
 grave to another. This part of the ordinance is especially relevant to  
 the Gospels' stories about the visit of the women to the tomb and, es-  
 pecially, the story in Matthew about Pilate's sealing the tomb and the  
 claim that the disciples stole the body of Jesus (Matt 27:62-66; 28:11-  
 15).<sup>18</sup> Even if the Matthean story is discounted as later apologetic, the

15. Or, with spacing, punctuation, and diacritics (and line numbers moved to the  
 left when word-breaks are joined): 1 Διάταγμα Καίσαρος· 2 Ἀρέσκει μοι τάφους τύνβους  
 3 τε, οἵτινες εἰς θρησκείαν προγόνων 4 ἐποίησαν ἢ τέκνων ἢ οἰκείων, 5 τούτους μένειν  
 ἀμετακινήτους 6 τὸν αἰῶνα. ἔαν δέ τις ἐπιδίξῃ 7 τινὰ ἢ καταλελυκότα ἢ ἄλλω τινὶ 8  
 τρόπῳ τοὺς κεκηδευμένους 9 ἐξερριφτότα ἢ εἰς ἑτέρους 10 τόπους δώλω πονηρῶ  
 11 μετατεθεικότα ἐπ' ἀδικία τῆ τῶν 12 κεκηδευμένων ἢ κτόχους ἢ 13 λίθους  
 μετατεθεικότα, κατὰ τοῦ 14 τοιούτου κριτήριον ἐγὼ κελεύω 15 γενέσθαι καθάπερ  
 περὶ θεῶν 16 ἐς τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων 17 θρησκίας. πολὺ γὰρ μᾶλλον δεήσει 18 τοὺς  
 κεκηδευμένους τειμᾶν. 19 καθόλου μηδενὶ ἐξέστω 20 μετακινήσαι· εἰ δε μή, τοῦτον ἐγὼ  
 21 κεφαλῆς κατὰκριτον ὄνοματι 22 τυμβωρυχίας θέλω γενέσθαι. Cumont ("Un rescrit  
 impérial," 243), de Zulueta ("Violation of Sepulture," 188-89), and van der Horst (*Ancient Jewish  
 Epitaph*, 160), have concluded that the Greek inscription is a translation of a Latin *Vorlage* (and  
 Cumont, on the page just cited, is able to retrovert the Greek into Latin).

16. The translation is based on Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," 77.

17. De Zulueta ("Violation of Sepulture," 195) thinks the edict was addressed  
 either to the legate of Syria or to the procurator (or prefect) of Judea.

18. See also Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2:1294. It has been suggested that the  
 edict was issued by Tiberius, to Pilate, in the aftermath of the priestly charge that the

laws pertaining to graves, such as what we find in the Nazareth inscription, contribute to the general backdrop of the Easter story and how readers and hearers of this story would have understood it.<sup>19</sup>

Bruce Metzger remarks: "If in fact the ordinance was published in Palestine some time prior to the death of Jesus, then . . . at the time of the resurrection there was in force a severe law against tampering with buried bodies, the consequences of infringing which the panic-stricken disciples are very unlikely to have braved."<sup>20</sup>

#### THE JESUS, SON OF JOSEPH, OSSUARY--1926(?)

In about 1926, Eleazar Lippa Sukenik found an ossuary, now identified as Jerusalem Tomb Ossuary 8, in the basement of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine (in Jerusalem). He published the discovery in 1931.<sup>21</sup> On this ossuary were the following inscriptions:

ישוע בר יהוסף	Yeshu'a, son of Joseph
* ישו *	* Yeshu *

We have the fully spelled **ישוע**, (Yeshu'a), as well as the shortened form **ישו** (Yeshu, or Jesus),<sup>22</sup> positioned between two rosettes (depicted above with asterisks). The ossuary probably dates to the first century CE. Although no one has seriously suggested that this ossuary at one time contained the remains of Jesus of Nazareth, it is significant nonetheless. It provides first-century attestation of the shortened

disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. This is quite speculative. Equally speculative is the suggestion that the edict is in response to the Samaritan desecration of the Jewish temple (ca. 8 CE), in scattering human bones in the precincts (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.2.2 §30). The difficulty with these suggestions is that the inscription gives no indication that a specific incident is in view; compare de Zulueta, "Violation of Sepulture," 195-97.

19. See B. R. McCane, "'Where No One Had Yet Been Laid': The Shame of Jesus' Burial," *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NTTS 28/2; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 431-52.

20. Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," 91; quoted by van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, 160. Metzger is paraphrasing de Zulueta, "Violation of Sepulture," 197. Interpreters have discussed what the threatened "capital punishment" (κεφαλῆς κατὰκρίτον) entailed. De Zulueta ("Violation of Sepulture," 195) thinks heavy fines were in mind.

21. E. L. Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems um Christi Geburt* (Jerusalem: Azriel, 1931), 19; A. Deissmann, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1931): 309-16; J. A. Fitzmyer and D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts (Second Century B.C.–Second Century A.D.)* (BibOr 34; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), 176-77 (text), 233-34 (notes).

22. Sukenik (*Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems*, 19 n. 1) suggested that *Yeshu* is a shortened form of *Yeshu'a*. This is probably correct. Rabbinic references to Jesus, where he is called *Yeshu* (cf. *b. Sanh.* 43a, 103a [ישו הנוצר], 107b; and probably *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 16b-17a, though the name *Jesus* is absent from most MSS), support this suggestion.

form Yeshu,<sup>23</sup> which in Greek was usually rendered Ἰησοῦς (though there are variants, such as Ἰεσοῦς<sup>24</sup> and Ἰέσουος<sup>25</sup>), from which the Latin *Jesus* and the English *Jesus* are derived. And of course, this ossuary attests the affiliation "Jesus, son of Joseph."<sup>26</sup>

#### THE ALEXANDER, SON OF SIMON, OSSUARY-1941

Among the ossuaries found by Sukenik in the Kidron Valley in 1941, one bears what appear to be inscriptions referring to a certain Alexander the Cyrene, son of Simon.<sup>27</sup> We find on the front and back sides of ossuary no. 9 clumsy attempts to inscribe in Greek "Alexander, (son) of Simon," while on the lid we find in Greek "(bones) of Alexander" and in Hebrew "Alexander (the) Cyrene." The inscriptions read:

<i>front</i>		
ΔΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ	Alexander	
ΣΙΜΩΝ	(son of) Simon	
<i>back</i>		
ΣΙΜΩΝ ΔΛΕ	Simon Ale	
ΔΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ	Alexander	
ΣΙΜΩΝΟΣ	(son) of Simon	
<i>lid</i>		
ΔΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ	of Alexander	
אלכסנדרוס קרני	Alexander QRNYT	

The front and back inscriptions are flawed. On the front the inscriber left Simon in the nominative case (Σίμων), rather than in the genitive (Σίμωνος). On the back he makes the same mistake, realizes his error

23. The rabbinic references mentioned in the preceding note are from a later period.

24. See S. Klein, *Jüdisch-Palästinisches Corpus Inscriptionum* (Pressburg: Loewit, 1920), inscription no. 46.

25. See M. Schwabe and B. Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, vol. 2: *The Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974), inscription no. 138.

26. Other interesting inscriptions that agree with NT name combinations include the "Simeon bar Jonah" Aramaic inscription on ossuary no. 19 (in burial place no. 79) at Dominus Flevit (cf. Matt 16:17, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona!") and the "Martha, Mary" inscription on ossuary no. 27 (in burial place no. 70) at Dominus Flevit (cf. John 11:1, "from the village of Martha and Mary"). Many NT names are attested at Dominus Flevit; cf. B. Bagatti and J. T. Milik, *Gli Scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'* (Jerusalem: Franciscani, 1958).

27. Although discovered in 1941 by E. L. Sukenik, who published a very brief announcement in *BASOR* 88 (1942): 38, the inscriptions and a detailed description were not published for another 20 years. See N. Avigad, "A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," *IEJ* 12 (1962): 1-12 + pls. 1-4. See also "Tomb South of the Village of Silwan," in N. Avigad, "Tombs," *NEAEHL* 2:750-53, here 753.

after inscribing the first three letters of Alexander, then starts over, getting it right in the second and third lines. On the lid the inscriber rightly puts Alexander in the genitive (as possessor of the contents, bones, etc., of the ossuary itself) and then inscribes the name in Hebrew.

It is the last word of the Hebrew epithet on the lid that is problematic. This word, קרנייה, is thought by some to mean "Cyrenean" (or Cyreanite). If this is the correct interpretation (and it is disputed),<sup>28</sup> we have in the Kidron Valley ossuary no. 9 a very interesting constellation. We may actually have the ossuary of the Alexander, son of Simon, mentioned in Mark's Gospel: "they compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene [τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναίου], who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander [τὸν πατέρα Ἀλεξάνδρου] and Rufus, to carry his cross" (Mark 15:21; cf. Matt 27:32;<sup>29</sup> Luke 23:26).<sup>30</sup>

### THE QORBAN OSSUARY--1956

In Mark 7:9-13 Jesus makes critical reference to the *qorban* tradition, whereby assets and property are consecrated, or "given" to God, and are therefore no longer available for profane, or secular use. In some cases, Pharisaic application of this tradition could have negative consequences. As Jesus puts it: "you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is *qorban*"' [that is, given to God]—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother" (vv. 11-12). In the past, commentators usually made reference to the mishnaic rules of *qorban* (esp. as spelled out in *Nedarim*).<sup>31</sup> But the discovery of an ossuary in 1956, first published and discussed by Józef Tadeusz Milik,<sup>32</sup> has given us a more precise

28. J. T. Milik (in Bagatti and Milik, *Gli Scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'*, 81) thinks קרנייה is an inscriber's error and that קרנייה ("[the] Cyrenean") was intended. Avigad ("A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," 11) doubts this explanation, but he too thinks קרנייה is related to Cyrene. The Hebrew NT renders "Cyrene" קוריני (e.g., Matt 27:32; Acts 2:10; 11:20; 13:1).

29. Both Matthew and Luke omit reference to Simon's sons Alexander and Rufus. Shem Tob's Hebrew Matthew at this point reflects either confusion or a different tradition; it reads: שמעון הכנעני ("Simeon the Canaanite"), probably under the influence of Matt 10:4. The DuTillet Hebrew text of Matthew, in agreement with the Greek, reads: אדם קירני ושמו סימון ("a man of Cyrene, and his name was Simon").

30. This identification is entertained by M. Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London: SCM Press / Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989), 67 n. 39; and van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, 140-41. Van der Horst remarks that "there is at least a good chance that we have here the ossuary of the son of the man who carried Jesus' cross."

31. See, for example, St-B 1:711-17 (on the parallel at Matt 15:5).

32. J. T. Milik, "Trois tombeaux juifs récemment découverts au Sud-Est de Jérusalem," *Studia Biblici Franciscani Liber Annuus* 7 (1956-57): 232-39.

parallel. The inscription, found on the lid of the ossuary, is in Aramaic and probably dates to the first century BCE. Joseph Fitzmyer has transcribed and translated the inscription as follows:

כל כי אגש מתהנה בחלתה דה  
קרבתן אלה מן דבגוה

Everything that a man will find to his profit in this ossuary (is)  
an offering to God from the one within it.<sup>33</sup>

The word קרבן is translated "an offering," its normal meaning. Whereas Milik thought the inscription pronounced a curse on anyone who pilfered the contents of the ossuary,<sup>34</sup> Fitzmyer thinks it better to understand the inscription as a close parallel to Mark 7:11. "The new inscription does not alter the sense of the word in Matthew or Mark but provides a perfect contemporary parallel."<sup>35</sup> Fitzmyer is correct. The *qorban* inscription thus provides a valuable parallel to part of Jesus' teaching, which in this instance stands in tension with Pharisaic halakah.

#### THE PILATE INSCRIPTION--1961

In 1960, Roman scholar A. H. M. Jones published an essay, in which he argued that the rank of Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, was *praefectus*, not *procurator*, the oft-quoted statement of Tacitus notwithstanding.<sup>36</sup> The following year the Pilate inscription of Caesarea Maritima was unearthed and published by Antonio Frova.<sup>37</sup> Jones was vindicated; the rank of Pilate was indeed that of a prefect. It is

33. The text and its translation derive from J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorban Inscription from Jebel Hallet et-Tûrî and Mk 7:11/Mt 15:5," *JBL* 78 (1959): 60-65; repr. in Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971; repr. SBLSPS 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 93-100. See also Fitzmyer and Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, 168-69, 222-23.

34. Milik translates: "Quiconque réutilisera à son profit cet ossuaire-ci, malédiction de Dieu de la part de celui qui est dedans!" (as cited by Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorban Inscription," 94). Milik's translation in English: "Whoever will reuse this ossuary to his profit, may there be a curse of God on behalf of him who is inside!" Milik acknowledges that קרבן is literally "offering" (and he inserts *offrande* in parentheses in his translation). But he understands this offering in an imprecatory sense, as we sometimes see in rabbinic use of the synonym קונם (*qonam*); e.g., *m. Ned.* 4:5. Fitzmyer ("The Aramaic Qorbân Inscription," 96) finds this reasoning unconvincing.

35. Fitzmyer, *ibid.*, 100.

36. A. H. M. Jones, "Procurators and Prefects in the Early Principate," *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), 117-25. According to Tacitus (early second century CE): "Christus . . . suffered the death penalty during the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator [*per procuratorem*] Pontius Pilate" (*Annals* 15.44).

37. A. Frova, "L'iscrizione di Ponzio Pilato a Cesarea," *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo* 95 (1961): 419-34, esp. p. 424, with fig. 3 on p. 424.

a rare thing indeed that a scholarly hypothesis receives such speedy and incontrovertible confirmation.

The left-hand side of the inscription has been chipped away, probably to make the stone fit better in its secondary usage to repair a landing for a set of steps leading into the theater at Caesarea Maritima. Fortunately, the inscription side of the stone was placed face down, thus protecting what remained of the inscription. It reads:

[       ]S TIBERIÉVM  
 [       ]TIVS PILATVS  
 [       ]ECTVS IVDA[ ]E  
 [       ]É[       ]

Restoration of the partially preserved words in the second and third lines was not difficult:

[PON]TIVS PILATVS  
 [PRAEF]ECTVS IVDA[EA]E

Restoration of the first and fourth lines has been far more difficult. Frova suggested DÉDIT ("has given") for the fourth line and CAESARIENS (an abbreviation for CAESARIENIBUS—"to the [people] of Caesarea"). Accordingly, the inscription may have originally read: "To the people of Caesarea, Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has given the Tiberieum." Jack Finegan understands the Tiberieum as a temple dedicated to Emperor Tiberius (ruled 14-37 CE).<sup>38</sup>

Several other restorations of the first line have been offered.<sup>39</sup> Géza Alföldy has recently suggested REFÉCIT ("has restored") in the

38. Finegan, *Archeology of the New Testament*, 80. Finegan (pp. 77, 80) points to the example of the Hadrianeion inscription, also found at Caesarea Maritima, which apparently dedicated a temple in honor of the Emperor Hadrian (rule 117-138 CE).

39. See A. Betz, "Zur Pontius Pilatus-Inschrift von Caesarea-Maritima," in *Pro Arte Antiqua. Festschrift für Hedwig Kenner* (ed. W. Alzinger et al.; 2 vols.; Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut in Wien, Sonderschriften 18; Vienna and Berlin: A. F. Koska, 1982), 1:33-35 + pl. 14; Boffo, "L'epigrafe di Ponzio Pilato a Cesarea," *Iscrizioni greche e latine*, 217-33; C. Brusa Gerra, "Le Iscrizioni," in *Scavi di Caesarea Maritima* (ed. G. Dell'Amore; Rome: Bretschneider, 1966), 217-28, esp. pp. 217-20; C. Gatti, "A proposito di una rilettura dell'epigrafe di Ponzio Pilato," *Aevum* 55 (1981): 13-21; J.-P. Lemonon, *Pilate et le gouvernement de la Judée: Textes et monuments* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1981), 23-32; B. Lifshitz, "Inscriptions latines de Césarée," *Latomus* 22 (1963): 783-84 + pls. 63-64; L. Prandi, "Una nuova ipotesi sull'iscrizione di Ponzio Pilato," *Civiltà classica e cristiana* 2 (1981): 25-35; G. Rinaldi, "Cesarea di Palestina," *BeO* 4 (1962): 100-103 + pls. 5-6; J. Ringel, *Césare'e de Palestine: Étude historique et archéologique* (Paris: Ophrys, 1975), 98-99; H. Solin, "Analecta Epigraphica," *Arctos* 6 (1970): 101-12, esp. pp. 108-10; I. Di Stefano Manzella, "Pontius Pilatus nell'iscrizione di Cesarea di Palestina," in *Le iscrizioni dei cristiani in Vaticano: Materiali e contributi scientifici per una mostra epigrafica* (ed. Di Stefano Manzella; Inscriptiones sanctae sedis 2; Vatican City: Edizioni Quasar, 1997), 209-15 + pl. 3.1.2; J. Vardaman, "A New Inscription Which Mentions Pilate as 'Prefect,'" *JBL* 81 (1962): 70-71; H. Volkmann, "Die Pilatusinschrift von Caesarea Maritima," *Gymnasium*

fourth line and NAUTIS ("the seamen's") in the first line.<sup>40</sup> Given Pilate's participation in the refurbishing of the harbor of Caesarea Maritima,<sup>41</sup> Alföldy plausibly speculates that the Tiberieum was a building related in some way to the harbor, perhaps a lighthouse. Thus, it is the Seamen's Tiberieum that Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has restored. Ongoing archaeological work at Caesarea Maritima may further clarify the governor's involvement in the updating and expansion of the harbor that took place during his administration.<sup>42</sup>

The greater appreciation of Pilate's building activities in Caesarea may shed light on his relationship to the Jewish power brokers in Jerusalem. The NT Gospels' portrait of a governor who arrives in Jerusalem for the Passover feast and acquiesces to requests of the ruling priests (viz., that Jesus of Nazareth be executed and Bar Abbas the rebel be released) is consistent with the possible implications of the Maritima inscription (viz., that the Roman prefect was occupied with other, far more important matters). Consistent too with this portrait is the fact that Pilate served alongside Caiaphas the high priest for the entire tenure of his office.<sup>43</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Valerius Gratus, who appointed a new high priest every year (according to Josephus, *Ant.* 18.2.2 §§33-35), Pilate appears to have been content with Jewish leadership.<sup>44</sup> This explains his lengthy tenure,

75 (1968): 124-35 + pls. 13-15; E. Weber, "Zur Inschrift des Pontius Pilatus," *BJ* 171 (1971): 194-200.

40. G. Alföldy, "Pontius Pilatus und das Tiberieum von Caesarea Maritima," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 18 (1999): 85-108.

41. For archaeological reports concerning the harbor of Caesarea Maritima, see A. Raban and E. Linder, "Caesarea, the Herodian Harbour," *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 7 (1978): 238-43; R. L. Hohlfelder, "Caesarea beneath the Sea," *BAR* 8/3 (1982): 42-47, 56; R. L. Hohlfelder et al., "Sebastos, Herod's Harbor at Caesarea Maritima," *BA* 46 (1983): 133-43; L. Vann, "Herod's Harbor Construction Recovered Underwater," *BAR* 9/3 (1983): 10-14; A. Raban et al., "Caesarea and Its Harbours: A Preliminary Report on the 1988 Season," *IEJ* 40 (1990): 241-56; R. L. Hohlfelder, "An Experiment in Controlled Excavation beneath Caesarea Maritima's Sea, 1990," *BASOR* 290/291 (1993): 95-107.

42. The harbor is described in Josephus, *J.W.* 1.21.5-7 §§408-14; *Ant.* 15.9.6 §§331-41.

43. D. R. Schwartz ("Pontius Pilate," *ABD* 5:395-401) has argued compellingly that Pilate's term in office began in 19 CE, not 25 or 26, as is usually supposed. Pilate assumed office about one year after Caiaphas was appointed high priest. The two held office until both were removed in early 37, in the aftermath of the Samaritan incident in late 36 (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4.1 §§85-87).

44. It has been pointed out that in none of the incidents in which Pilate clashed with the Jewish people was the governor at odds with the ruling priests. This important point has been underscored by R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 38-39; compare B. C. McGing, "Pontius Pilate and the Sources," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 416-38. McGing finds the Gospels' portrait of a cautious, opportunistic Pilate wholly credible.

the lack of conflict with the Jewish leaders, and the fact that he did not appoint a single high priest and finally was removed from office, in all probability for acting uncritically and incautiously according to the wishes of Caiaphas in the Samaritan affair.<sup>45</sup>

#### THE YEHOHANAN OSSUARY--1968

The discovery in 1968 of an ossuary at Giv'at ha-Mivtar (ossuary no. 4), just north of the city limits of Jerusalem, containing the bones of a man crucified sometime in the 20s of the first century CE, was one of the most dramatic single discoveries in biblical archaeology. In the right heel bone (or *calcaneum*) was found an iron spike (11.5 cm in length) with wood fragments attached at both ends. Several studies of the osteological and inscriptional evidence have been published.<sup>46</sup> To date, these are the only known remains of a person crucified in Roman Palestine. As such, this archaeological evidence makes an important contribution to our understanding of the literary evidence.

In recent studies Joe Zias, in collaboration with others, has concluded that most crucifixion victims in the Roman era were hung on crosses, with hands or arms tied or nailed to the crossbeam and feet, usually heels, nailed to the vertical beam. Zias also concludes that in view of the evidence it is philologically appropriate to speak of being "hanged," with reference to crucifixion. This observation should shed light on the debate surrounding the words *הלל* and *κρεμόνυμι* in the Hebrew and Greek Testaments (e.g., Deut 21:23 in both the Hebrew

45. It seems clear that the Roman governors of Judea and Samaria were guided by the counsel of the ruling priests, who would have explained the significance of the actions of men like Theudas and the anonymous Jew from Egypt. This would explain why the governors reacted the way they did. In all probability Caiaphas urged Pilate to quash Samaritan hopes to rebuild the temple at Mount Gerizim, not because such a program would have fomented sedition (with which Rome would have been very concerned), but because the Jewish high priest was not about to allow a rival temple to be rebuilt and a rival priesthood to be reestablished. Thus, Caiaphas's professional jealousies may have clouded his better political judgment.

46. See N. Haas, "Anthropological Observations on the Skeletal Remains from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20 (1970): 38-59; J. Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem," *IEJ* 20 (1970): 33-37; V. Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and near Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20 (1970): 18-32, esp. pp. 20-27; Y. Yadin, "Epigraphy and Crucifixion," *IEJ* 23 (1973): 18-22 + plate; H.-W. Kuhn, "Der Gekreuzigte von Giv'at ha-Mivtar: Bilanz einer Entdeckung," in *Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis* (Erich Dinkler Festschrift; ed. C. Andresen and G. Klein; Tübingen: Mohr, 1979), 303-34; V. Tzaferis, "Crucifixion: The Archaeological Evidence," *BAR* 11/1 (1985): 44-53; J. Zias and E. Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 22-27; J. Zias and J. H. Charlesworth, "Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 273-89 + plates following p. 184.

and the LXX; cf. Luke 23:39; Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal 3:13) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 4Q169 3-4 i 7-9;<sup>47</sup> 4Q385a 5 i 3-4;<sup>48</sup> 11QT 64:8-12 [= 4Q524 frag. 14, lines 2-41<sup>49</sup>), which seem to be used in reference to crucifixion.<sup>50</sup>

The inscription itself offers features of interest:

יהוחנן יהוחנן  
בן חגקול

Yehohanan

Yehohanan

son of HGQWL

Although Joseph Naveh thought all four words of the inscription were by the same hand,<sup>51</sup> it is almost certain that the top line was inscribed by one person and the second and third lines by another. Not only is the first occurrence of Yehohanan, in the upper right, not as deeply etched into the stone as the second and third lines, there are orthographical differences as well.<sup>52</sup> The importance of these observations will be made clear when we turn to the James ossuary below.

The chief difficulty in the study of the second inscription is the transcription and decipherment of חגקול. Various emendations have been suggested, but no one has succeeded in conjuring up a personal name. Naveh himself suggested a corrupt form of Ezekiel.<sup>53</sup> Yadin suggested a "corrupt transcription of a foreign name,"<sup>54</sup> which he himself subsequently found unconvincing.<sup>55</sup> Yadin later suggested emending the third line to read בן העקול, meaning "son of the one (hanged) with his knees apart."<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, the first Yehohanan is the father, the second Yehohanan is the son, whose nickname grimly

47. ". . . he used to hang men alive, [as it was done] in Israel in former times, for to anyone hanging alive on the tree, the verse applies."

48. ". . . to hang on the tree."

49. ". . . you are to hang him on a tree until dead. On the testimony of two or three witnesses he will be put to death, and they themselves shall hang him on the tree. If a man is convicted of a capital crime and flees to the nations, cursing his people and the children of Israel, you are to hang him, also, upon a tree until dead . . . anyone hung on a tree is accursed of God and men."

50. See Zias and Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 22-27; Zias and Charlesworth, "Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls," 282-85.

51. Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 35.

52. Rightly Yadin, "Epigraphy and Crucifixion," 18 and n. 5. However, Yadin may exaggerate when he says, "the shape of the letters differs greatly in each inscription" (p. 18 n. 5).

53. Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 35.

54. *Ibid.*, 35 n. 17; Yadin, "Epigraphy and Crucifixion," 18.

55. Yadin, *ibid.*

56. The word עיקול means "bowlegged"; cf. *m. Bek. 7:6*.

referred to the fate his father suffered. Yadin's reconstruction, however, is quite speculative.

The importance of this ossuary and its grim contents lies in the fact that we have at hand evidence from the early first century CE of the formal, or proper, burial of a crucifixion victim. His body was not simply thrown into an unmarked criminal's grave, or into a shallow pit and then covered over with lime.<sup>57</sup> He was buried in a tomb and one year later, in keeping with Jewish practice, his bones were placed in an ossuary, on which his name had been inscribed.

#### HOUSE OF DAVID OSSUARY—1971

In 1971, Amos Kloner excavated a burial cave at Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, in which were found sixteen ossuaries.<sup>58</sup> The inscription on ossuary M, in burial niche no. 6, reads:

של בי דוד

belonging to the house of David

Although it is disputed, דוד is probably best vocalized "David," and not *dod* ("uncle") or some other form. The Aramaic ב should be understood as the equivalent of the Hebrew בית ("house"). Thus understood, the inscription may be translated "belonging to the house of David," that is, the bones and other contents of the ossuary belong to a descendant of David. As such, this inscription seems to corroborate literary evidence that in the time of Jesus there were Jews who believed that they were indeed descendants of Israel's famous king (e.g., Menahem, son of Judah, if we rightly understand the implications of Josephus, *J.W.* 2.17.8-9 §§433-48 [Menahem entered Jerusalem "like a veritable king"; one of his followers was named "Absalom"]; *y. Ber.* 2.4; and Eusebius, who reports that various Roman emperors persecuted Davidic descendants; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.12-13

57. The implications of the Yehohanan ossuary do not support the hypothesis proposed by J. D. Crossan (*Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995], 188), that as a victim of crucifixion Jesus was probably left on the cross or thrown into a shallow pit, where his corpse was mauled by animals. On the contrary, the remains of Yehohanan show that proper burial for Jewish crucifixion victims was permitted (at least during peacetime).

58. A. Kloner, "A Burial Cave of the Second Temple Period at Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem," *Qadmoniot* 19-20 (1972), 108-9 [Hebrew]; idem, "A Burial Cave of the Second Temple Period at Giv'at Ha-Mivtar," in *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period: Abraham Schalit Memorial Volume* (ed. A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport, and M. Stern; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1980), 191-224 [Hebrew], with English abstract on pp. xii-xiii. For photograph and brief discussion of this inscription, see *NEAEHL* 2:755; and D. Flusser, *Jesus* (rev. ed., in collaboration with R. S. Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), 180-86.

["Vespasian . . . ordered a search to be made for all who were of the family of David"]; 3.19-20 ["Domitian gave orders for the execution of those of the family of David . . . he asked them if they were of the house of David and they admitted it"]; 3.32.3-4 [Certain heretics "accused Simon the son of Clopas of being descended from David . . . when Trajan was emperor"]; *m. Ta'an.* 4.5 ["The wood-offering of the priests and the people was brought nine times . . . on the 20th of Tammuz by the family of David of the tribe of Judah"].<sup>59</sup>

The evidence that there really were known descendants of David in the time of Jesus and the uncontroversial nature of early Christians' belief that Jesus was of the line of David<sup>60</sup> lend an important measure of support to the veracity of this Christian tradition.

### THE "CAIAPHAS" OSSUARY—1990

In 1990, while working in Jerusalem's Peace Forest, which is 1.5 km south of the Old City, a crew inadvertently uncovered a crypt, in which several ossuaries were discovered. Happily, most of the ossuaries were found intact, unmolested by grave robbers. Coins and the style of writing seen in the inscriptions have dated these ossuaries to the first century CE. On one of the ornate ossuaries (now on display in the Israel National Museum in Jerusalem), two very interesting inscriptions were found. The inscriptions have been inscribed as follows:

side of ossuary: יהוסף בר קיפא	Yehoseph bar Qyph'
end of ossuary: יהוסף בר קפא	Yehoseph bar Qph'

This ossuary contained the bones of a 60-year-old man (and those of two infants, a toddler and a young boy, and a woman) and is thought by some (including the authorities of the aforementioned museum) to be the ossuary of Caiaphas the high priest, to whom Josephus refers as Joseph Caiaphas (cf. *Ant.* 18.2.2 §35 [Ἰωσήπος ὁ Καϊάφας] and 18.4.3 §95 [τὸν ἀρχιερέα Ἰωσήπον τὸν Καϊάφαν ἐπικαλούμενον]) and the Gospels and Acts call more simply Caiaphas (Καϊάφας; cf. Matt 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; Acts

59. See J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM / Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 226, 277-288-99. Jeremias defends the Davidic descent of Menahem, as well as various rabbis, including Hillel.

60. In an almost casual way Paul presupposes the Davidic ancestry of Jesus (cf. Rom 1:3-4). The story that Jesus himself disputed the scribal habit of referring to the Messiah with the epithet "son of David" (cf. Mark 12:35-37) argues strongly that early Christians did not place much emphasis on the mere fact that Jesus was descended from David. Such descent, evidently, was neither unusual, nor of itself of great importance. Hence, early Christians made little of it. Accordingly, there was no incentive to invent a lineage whose falsity could easily have been shown (at least prior to 70 CE).

4:6). Those who think the ossuary belonged to Caiaphas vocalize the inscribed name as *Qayapha*, the Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent of the Greek Caiaphas.

A second ossuary in the tomb bears the name קפא. In a box containing the bones of a woman and bearing the name מרים ברת שמעון ("Miriam, daughter of Simon"), a coin minted during the reign of Herod Agrippa I (42/43 CE) was found in the mouth of the skull, probably reflecting the pagan custom of payment to the Greek god Charon for safe passage across the River Styx. The date of the coin greatly assists in the dating of the other ossuaries.

Although several scholars have concluded that the Joseph bar Qyph' ossuary belonged to the former high priest, "Joseph called Qayapha" (as Josephus calls him),<sup>61</sup> others, including Emile Puech and William Horbury, have expressed reservations.<sup>62</sup>

There are three principal reasons for doubting the high priestly identification. The first lies in the fact that the crypt in which the ossuary was found is not on the level of ostentation that one would have expected to find in the case of a former high priest and son-in-law of Annas, the most influential high priest of the first century. In contrast to the ornate, almost palatial, crypt of Annas<sup>63</sup> is the "Caiaphas" crypt, which is relatively plain.

Moreover, it seems strange that the ossuary containing the remains of such an important person, who served for nearly 19 years as high priest, would display such poorly etched inscriptions. The inscribing was not professional, but may have been done by the relative who placed the bones in the box. Indeed, the inscribing may have been done with one or both of the two rusty nails found in the crypt.

61. Including archaeologists, such as Z. Greenhut, "Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family," *BAR* 18/5 (1992): 28-36, 76; idem, "The 'Caiaphas' Tomb in North Talpiyot, Jerusalem," *'Atiqot* 21 (1992): 63-71; and R. Reich, "Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes," *BAR* 18/5 (1992): 38-44, 76; idem, "Ossuary Inscriptions from the 'Caiaphas' Tomb," *'Atiqot* 21 (1992): 72-77; W. R. Dömeris and S. M. Long, "The Recently Excavated Tomb of Joseph Bar Caipha and the Biblical Caiaphas," *JTSA* 89 (1994): 50-58; Flusser, *Jesus*, 195-206. Some scholars regard the identification as a foregone conclusion, for example, J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 242: "There should be no doubt that the chamber was the resting place of the family of the high priest Caiaphas named in the gospels for his role in the crucifixion, and it's very likely that the elderly man's bones were those of Caiaphas himself." In fact, there is substantial doubt.

62. É. Puech, "A-t-on redécouvert le tombeau du grand-prêtre Caïphe?" *MdB* 80 (1993): 42-47; idem, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future* (EBib 21; Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 2.193-95; W. Horbury, "The 'Caiaphas' Ossuaries and Joseph Caiaphas," *PEQ* 126 (1994): 32-48.

63. For description and photographs of what may have been the tomb of Annas, see L. and K. Ritmeyer, "Akeldama: Potter's Field or High Priest's Tomb?" *BAR* 20/6 (1994): 22-35, 76.

Further, it seems strange that relatives of such an exalted figure would have placed his bones in an ossuary along with the bones of several other persons, including young children.

The second and far more serious reason for doubting the Caiaphas identification lies in the spelling of the name. It is not at all clear that the second letter in קיפא is a *yod*; it may well be a *waw*—that is, קופא. In fact, it probably is a *waw*, which more easily explains its absence in קפא in the second inscription on the ossuary and on the other ossuary; for, when used as a vowel, the *waw* often drops out (as, e.g., in אלהים / אלהים, in biblical and postbiblical literature). However, a Caiaphas vocalization requires a consonantal *yod*—that is, *Qayapha*. The *yod* is not optional and therefore should not drop out. If *Qayapha* was intended, then it is hard to explain the absence of the *yod*. However, if the letter is a *waw* (and the *yod* and *waw* are notoriously difficult to distinguish in the Hebrew script of this period), then the two spellings קופא and קפא are not difficult to explain. They should be vocalized as either *Qopha* or *Qupha*. That is to say, the inscription refers to one "Joseph, son of Qopha," or "Joseph, son of Qupha."<sup>64</sup>

Third, Josephus does not actually call the high priest "Joseph, son of Caiaphas"; he refers to him as "Joseph Caiaphas" and "Joseph called [ἐπικαλούμενον] Caiaphas." So, even if we accept the unlikely vocalization *Yehoseph bar Qayapha*, we really do not have a match with the high priest's name as given in Josephus. Although the high-priestly identification is not conclusively ruled out, the difficulties are such that it is probably wise to leave the question open.

#### THE JAMES, SON OF JOSEPH, OSSUARY—2002

In the fall of 2002, the public—including the academic world—was stunned with the story that an ossuary that had been in private hands bears an inscription that may refer to James, the brother of Jesus. Several informative journalistic reports appeared in the media in the days and weeks following the announcement.<sup>65</sup> The first

64. Even if the letter in question is read as a *yod*, it is still probably a vowel, not a consonant. If we read *yod*, the name could be "Qeypha" or "Qiypha."

65. Among the best reports are those by David Van Biema (*Times*, 27 October 2002) and Claude Cohen-Matlofsky (*Globe and Mail*, 6 November 2002). Rochelle Altman's "Final Report on the James Ossuary" on the *Ioudaios* web page and Paul Flesher's "Does the James Ossuary really refer to Jesus Christ?" on the *Bible Interpretation* web site should also be mentioned. In November 2002, there were more than two hundred stories related to the ossuary posted on the internet. Eventually it was disclosed (cf. CNN web site posting, 8 November 2002, "Ancient Ossuary Owner Says He'll Never Sell Relic") that the owner of the James ossuary is one Oded Golan, an engineer from Tel Aviv. Golan claims to have purchased the burial box from an antiquities dealer sometime in the 1970s, not having any idea of the meaning of the inscription. In the spring

scholarly report published has come from the pen of the well-known French scholar and paleographer André Lemaire.<sup>66</sup>

Remarkably clear color photographs of the ossuary and its inscription have been made available on various web sites, and the same appeared in the journal in which Lemaire's preliminary study was published. In November 2002 the ossuary was publicly displayed in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The ossuary is some 50 cm in length at the base, widening to 56 cm at the top, some 30 cm in width at one end and about 26 cm in width at the other, and about 30 cm high. (Thus, the ossuary is not perfectly rectangular in form.) The inscription, which is made up of five words, is 19 cm in length. The lid is flat and rests on a ledge inside the rim. Badly weathered, the ossuary reveals faint traces of rosettes on one side. It is also reported that tiny bone fragments are present in the dust at the bottom of the ossuary.

The inscription is quite legible and reads as follows:

יעקוב בר יוסף אחיו דישוע

Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Yeshu'a  
or James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus

There are no spaces between the words; the letters are quite legible, and are deeply etched into the limestone. Lemaire has concluded that the style of writing points to the last two decades prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and that in all probability the inscription is authentic and is in reference to early Christianity's James, the brother of Jesus.<sup>67</sup>

However, not all scholars are convinced. The *dalet* prefixed to Yeshu'a is oddly formed, almost having the appearance of a misformed 'ayin. Because of this and because of what appear to be slight differences in style among the words themselves, some scholars suspect that the last two words, יאחיו ("brother [of]") and דישוע ("of Yeshu'a"), were written by a second hand, perhaps at a date much later than the first century.

James, the brother of Jesus, is mentioned a few times in the NT. He and his brothers and sisters are mentioned when Jesus is rebuffed in Nazareth: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James [Ἰακώβου] and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are

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of 2002, the inscription was deciphered by André Lemaire, who had been invited to examine other antiquities in Mr. Golan's collection.

66. See A. Lemaire, "Burial Box of James: The Brother of Jesus," *BAR* 28/6 (2002): 24-33, 70 + plates.

67. Lemaire, "Burial Box of James," 28, 33.

not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3; cf. Matt 13:55). No indication is given in the Gospels that James was a disciple of Jesus. But this changes after Easter, for James emerges as the leader of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17 ["Tell this to James and to the brethren"]; 15:13; 21:18). According to Paul, the risen Jesus appeared to James (cf. 1 Cor 15:7 ["Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles"]), who was also regarded a "pillar" in the early church (cf. Gal 1:19 ["James, the Lord's brother"—' Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου]; 2:9 ["James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars"], 12 ["certain men came from James"]). The letter of Jude identifies the author as "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James [ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου]" (v. 1; cf. Mark 6:3 ["brother of James . . . and Judas"]). And, of course, the NT contains a letter whose author is identified as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1).

According to Hegesippus, James 'was called the 'Just' by every one from the Lord's time till our own, for there were many Jameses" (apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.4). Eusebius goes on to say (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.4-8) that James was "holy from the womb," that he apparently observed the Nazirite requirements, that he frequented the Temple, praying for the people, and that he was referred to as the "gate of Jesus," perhaps alluding to Ps 118:19-20 ("this is the gate of the Lord"). When James refuses to discontinue his proclamation of Jesus as Messiah, he is flung from the pinnacle of the Temple (cf. Matt 4:5), stoned and clubbed to death, and buried nearby (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.11-18 ["they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his gravestone remains by the temple"]). Josephus apparently also refers to the death of James:

Ananus thought that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus was still on the way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus [τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ . . . Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτοῦ] who was called the Christ [cf. *Ant.* 18.3.3 §§63-64], and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned. Those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law were offended at this. . . . King Agrippa, because of Ananus' action, deposed him from the high priesthood, which he had held for three months, and replaced him with Jesus the son of Damnaeus. (*Ant.* 20.9.1 §§200-203)

If the James mentioned here is the brother of Jesus (and so we assume that the passage as we have it is authentic), then James died in 62, not long after Festus, the Roman procurator, died. If so, then we may further assume that the bones of James would have been gathered and placed in an ossuary in 63.

James is mentioned in other early Christian writers, including Clement of Alexandria, who says: "After the ascension of the Savior, Peter, James, and John did not claim preeminence because the Savior had specially honored them, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem" (*Hypotyposes* 6); and at greater length:

James the Just, John, and Peter were entrusted by the Lord after his resurrection with the higher knowledge. They imparted it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the seventy, one of whom was Barnabas. There were two Jameses, one the Just, who was thrown down from the pinnacle and beaten to death with a fuller's club, the other the James who was beheaded. (*Hypotyposes* 7)

The life, teaching, and martyrdom of James are featured in a variety of sources. For example, we have the *Protevangelium of James*, which fills in the gaps of Jesus' family, and the *Ascents of James*, which interprets the significance of James's ascent up the steps of the Temple. (The interesting figure James of Kefar Sekaniah, who is described in rabbinic literature as a disciple of Jesus, is probably not to be identified with James, the brother of Jesus.<sup>68</sup>)

Because of his relationship to Jesus, James is a favorite in Gnostic circles, lending his name to the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I, 2), the First Apocalypse of James (NHC V, 3), and the *Second Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 4). In the *Gospel of Thomas*, which gives the Apostle Thomas pride of place (cf. Prologue, §1, §13), we find an interesting saying about James:

The disciples say to Jesus: "We know that you will go away from us. Who is that shall be Rabbi over us?" Jesus says to them: "In the place that you have come, you shall go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came to be." (§12)<sup>69</sup>

Traditions such as these bear witness to the influence of James in the early church, an influence that in most of its history the Christian church has underestimated. The dramatic discovery of an ossuary bearing the inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus," will, if nothing else, stimulate renewed interest in this important personage.<sup>70</sup>

68. This figure appears in two important passages, in *t. Hul.* 2.22, where Rabbi Ishmael refuses to allow James of Kefar Sekaniah to heal ben Dama, the nephew of the famous rabbi, and in *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 17a, where James influences Rabbi Eliezer. On the disidentification of James of Kefar Sekaniah with James, the brother of Jesus, see R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903; repr. New York: Ktav, 1975), 106.

69. The declaration that it was for the sake of James that heaven and earth came to be has a rabbinic ring to it. In reference to Hanina ben Dosa, we are told: "Each day a heavenly voice was heard from Mount Horeb and said: 'The whole universe is sustained on account of my son, Hanina'" (*b. Ta'an.* 24b).

70. The James Consultation sponsored by the Institute of Advanced Theology, Bard College, directed by Bruce Chilton and supported by Jacob Neusner and several

Currently there are five major issues. Scientific investigation should be able to settle the first one and help settle the second and third; the fourth and fifth will probably never be settled. (1) The first issue concerns the authenticity of the ossuary. Early on it was reported that two scientists from the Israeli government's Geological Survey tested the box and its inscription, concluding that both are 19 centuries old.<sup>71</sup> If this report is accepted, then the question of the authenticity of the ossuary, as a first-century ossuary, is settled. This report, however, has not satisfied everyone.<sup>72</sup> In all likelihood there will be calls for more testing.<sup>73</sup>

(2) Closely related to this question is the authenticity of the inscription itself, particularly the last two words אָחוּי דִישׁוּעַ ("the brother of Yeshu(a)"). Some think that in contrast to the first three words יַעֲקֹב בֶּר יוֹסֵף, ("Jacob, son of Joseph"), which are etched deeply and neatly into the stone, the last two words are etched somewhat more faintly and poorly (such as the *šin* in Yeshu'a).<sup>74</sup> But other scholars, quoted in the media or quoted in the special session at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Toronto, have said that there is no reason to see more than one hand in the inscription. I agree. The 'ayin in *Jacob* (or *James*) is almost identical to the 'ayin in *Yeshu'a* (or *Jesus*). The *yods* in the first (Jacob), third (Joseph), and fifth (Yeshu'a)

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other scholars, continues to probe the origins and character of Judaic Christianity, especially that associated with James. A selection of recent work produced by participants and Fellows of the Institute include J. Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997; rev. ed., *Studies on Personalities of the New Testament*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); R. J. Bauckham, *James* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1999); B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans (eds.), *James the Just and Christian Origins* (NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999); B. D. Chilton and J. Neusner (eds.), *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). Other works are in preparation.

71. See the letter by A. Rosenfeld and S. Ilani of the Geological Survey of Israel, published as an exhibit in Lemaire, "Burial Box of James," 29: "The studied ossuary is made of this [first- and second-century limestone] chalk" found in the Jerusalem area; furthermore, "No signs of the use of a modern tool or instrument was found. No evidence that might detract from the authenticity of the patina and the inscription was found."

72. It has not satisfied Altman ("Final Report"), who concludes that the "second part of the inscription bears the hallmarks of a fraudulent later addition, probably around the 3rd or 4th centuries." She may be correct, but the evidence for this view is not as clear-cut as she thinks. A more cautious assessment is offered by Aramaic specialist Flesher, "Does the James Ossuary Really Refer to Jesus?"

73. Subsequent testing by the Royal Ontario Museum has supported the findings of the Israeli geologists.

74. This is relatively speaking, for ossuary inscriptions are often sloppy. The "Caiaphas" ossuary inscription considered above is much sloppier than the second part of the James ossuary inscription. In my opinion, Altman ("Final Report") exaggerates the differences in the two inscriptions.

words are quite similar. The size of the letters and their spacing are consistent.

Nevertheless, even it is concluded that the last two words of the inscription ("brother of Jesus") are secondary, this in itself proves little. Authentic secondary inscription was observed above in the case of the Yehohanan ossuary, where two hands are detected. There was no law in antiquity that said an ossuary could be inscribed but once, and then by only one person. It is entirely plausible to suppose that one person etched the words "Jacob, son of Joseph," and that a relative or Christian disciple sometime later added the words "brother of Yeshu'a."

One other point needs to be mentioned that may have a bearing on the quality of the last two words of the inscription and perhaps on the question of their antiquity and authenticity. Claude Cohen-Matlofsky points out what she thinks is a grammatical oddity. She claims that the *waw-yod* pronominal suffix added to "brother" (אָחוי) and the *dalet* prefix added to Yeshu'a (דִּישׁוּעַ) create a redundancy, as though these words read "the brother of of Yeshu'a."<sup>75</sup> However, this construction is well attested in Aramaic. In Gen 14:13, "brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner" in Hebrew is אָחִי אֶשְׁכּוֹל וְאָחִי עֲנָר, but in Aramaic it is אָחוי דִּישְׁכּוֹל וְאָחוי דִּעֲנָר (cf. *Tg. Neof.*), precisely the form we have in the James ossuary.<sup>76</sup> The אָחוי form is also attested in a synagogue inscription: "Simeon, his brother,"<sup>77</sup> in 1QapGen 21:34, "Lot, son of his [Abram's] brother," and in an ossuary found on Mount Scopus, "brother of Hanin."<sup>78</sup>

Hopefully scientific investigation can resolve the question of the relative age of all parts of the inscription. If the last two words were added in the third or fourth century—presumably by a Christian, whatever his intentions—then the chances that the ossuary inscription originally referred to James of early Christian importance are greatly reduced. But if analysis of the last two inscribed words shows them to be first century, even if inscribed at a somewhat later time (as in the case of the Yehohanan ossuary inscriptions), a reasonable chance remains that the burial box did indeed contain the earthly remains of James, the brother of Jesus.

75. In a column in the *Globe and Mail* (6 November 2002).

76. For more examples, see *Tg. Neof.* Gen 10:21; 28:5; 43:29 (*Onqelos* reads אָחוי דִּישְׁכּוֹל וְאָחוי דִּעֲנָר).

77. Fitzmyer and Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, 268-69 and 298 (for notes).

78. 1QapGen, dating to the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE (Fitzmyer and Harrington, *ibid.*, 122), reads לוֹת בֶּר אָחוי. The Mount Scopus ossuary, also dating to the same period (Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, inscription no. 570), reads אָחוי דִּחַנִּין.

(3) The ossuary is badly weathered and pitted; so much so that the rosettes on the side opposite the inscription are barely visible. The ossuary is also weathered on the side that bears the inscription. Yet the inscription itself is plainly and deeply etched into the limestone. In short, it is much better preserved than the other markings and artwork on the ossuary. How is this to be explained?

Some have already claimed that this is evidence of fraud, in that the inscription either was etched into an old weathered ossuary in the third or fourth century or was etched quite recently into an authentic ossuary of late antiquity, in which case it is a case of modern forgery.

Hershel Shanks and others have suggested that the ossuary had been in use several decades before the bones of James were placed in it. The ossuary may well have been carved in the first century BCE and then a generation or two later was used for James. This then could explain why the box, perhaps exposed to the elements before its use for James, came to be weathered and why the inscription etched upon it later is well preserved. Again, scientific analysis may be able to shed light on this question.

(4) Tragically we may never know where the James ossuary was discovered. Its owner, Mr. Oded Golan, claims that he cannot recall which antiquities dealer sold it to him. Even if the identity of this dealer was discovered, it is not too likely that the dealer would know where the ossuary came from. Thus, the provenance of this potentially very significant find may never be ascertained.

This means that there will be no opportunity to examine the crypt or cave in which the ossuary lay for almost two millennia. This means further that there will be no opportunity to compare the James ossuary to other ossuaries that may have rested nearby. Even the general location of the crypt or cave would have been revealing. And of course, there will be no opportunity to examine the contents (perhaps apart from some dust and tiny bone fragments) of the ossuary or other ossuaries that might have been in the same place of burial.

(5) Finally, the question of identity will remain unverified, even if scientific analysis proves that the ossuary and all parts of the inscription date to the first century. With the loss of provenance we shall simply never be in a position to say with any degree of certainty that this Jacob, whose bones at one time lay within this ossuary, was none other than the well-known James, son of Joseph and brother of Jesus.

However, as Lemaire and others have pointed out, the combination of the three names, in their proper relationship (James has a brother named Jesus and his father is Joseph), does significantly improve the odds that this ossuary did indeed contain the remains of

James, leader of the Jerusalem church. Also, as many have pointed out, mention of a brother is highly unusual and probably does suggest that this Jesus was much better known than the James, whose bones at one time were in the box.<sup>79</sup>

The value of the James ossuary lies not in its existence, for no serious scholar or educated person doubts that this person or his famous brother existed. The true value of the ossuary lies in what we do not have—its provenance and contents. We already knew that James lived and died in the environs of Jerusalem. By itself the James ossuary adds nothing to this knowledge.<sup>80</sup>

### CONCLUSION

My comments relating to the James ossuary in some ways sum up the overall evidential value of artifacts. In aggregate they constitute a measure of apologetical value (viz., Gospel figures such as Pilate really did live in Israel in the first century). Their principal value, however, lies in their contribution to historiography and exegesis. These artifacts supplement our literary sources and often force scholars to revise their interpretations. Artifacts shed light on how things were done and made, where things were kept, and in general where and how people lived. Archaeological finds often shed light on customs and conventions seldom—sometimes never—addressed in literary sources.

Ossuaries can be especially helpful in this respect. Their inscriptions provide evidence of family relations, of beliefs,<sup>81</sup> of customs and habits, of vocations, and of social standing. In a somewhat ironic sense, in showing us how people in late antiquity died, the ossuaries tell us something about how they lived.

Because the James ossuary is bereft of its burial contents and context, it will not be able to tell us many of the things that other ossuaries have told us. That it may actually have contained the earthly remains of the brother of Jesus is intriguing, to be sure, but in the end our knowledge of this important person and the role he played in consolidating his brother's achievement will probably not be significantly advanced.

79. Only one other ossuary inscription has come to light in which a brother is mentioned; cf. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, inscription no. 570 ("Shimi, son of Asaiah, brother of Hanin").

80. To this point some might reply that the fact of James's secondary burial, Jewish style, in an ossuary is surely significant (perhaps of an ongoing Jewish culture, even identity). But this point, too, is hardly an item of debate among serious scholars of James and Jacobean Christianity.

81. One is reminded of the inscription at Beth Shearim, which reads, "Good luck in your resurrection [εὐτυχῶς τῇ ὑμῶν ἀναστάσει]!"; see Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, vol. 2, inscription no. 194.