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*Erika Timm, Eleazar Birnbaum,
David Birnbaum (Eds.)*

**SOLOMON A. BIRNBAUM:
EIN LEBEN FÜR
DIE WISSENSCHAFT**
A LIFETIME
OF ACHIEVEMENT

VOLUME II
PALAEOGRAPHY

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Salomo/Solomon A. Birnbaum
Ein Leben für die Wissenschaft/A Lifetime of Achievement

II: Paläographie/Palaeography

Ein Leben für die Wissenschaft/ A Lifetime of Achievement

Wissenschaftliche Aufsätze aus sechs Jahrzehnten von/
Six Decades of Scholarly Articles by

Salomo/Solomon A. Birnbaum

herausgegeben von/edited by Erika Timm

in Zusammenarbeit mit/with the Collaboration of
Eleazar Birnbaum und/and David Birnbaum

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Preliminary Note

When many of the articles in this volume were first published, Hebrew palaeography was not yet considered a reliable scholarly discipline, in particular by certain well-known Biblical scholars and archeologists, whose views were all the more strongly expressed because they disagreed on the dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls etc.

Shortly after the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, but long before their publication, photographs were sent to Dr. Birnbaum to estimate their dates and authenticity. Relying on the palaeographic method that he had developed, he established dates which, though initially disputed by some scholars, were later confirmed by Carbon 14 physical testing and external archeological analysis. His dating of the Scrolls is now universally accepted by scholars.

His most significant major publication on palaeography is *The Hebrew Scripts* (2 vols., London 1954–1957 and Leiden 1971), containing hundreds of illustrations of dated Hebrew writing, a detailed palaeographical examination of each letter of the alphabet in each illustration, and an explanation of its place in the overall pattern of the development of Hebrew scripts.

More recent advances in the field of palaeography, based largely on Dr. Birnbaum's pioneering principles (whether acknowledged or tacitly accepted) have resulted in further progress. His methods, though revolutionary when he first enunciated them, are now widely regarded as norms, which have in some areas been further refined by new generations of researchers who have to a great extent, so-to-speak, stood upon his shoulders.

The present Editors believe that Dr. Birnbaum's articles should be read in the context of the time when they were written. Consequently the Editors have not attempted to update them in the light of later developments in the field.

For a more detailed description of Dr. Birnbaum's work on Hebrew palaeography see below, p. XX–XXIV.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the libraries and archives which provided photographs for the illustrations appearing in this volume.

Eleazar Birnbaum, David Birnbaum

Solomon Birnbaum's Life and Work¹

Overview: Solomon Birnbaum is the undisputed pioneer in two major, closely related fields of research: in historic Yiddish linguistics and in the palaeography of Hebrew and other Jewish languages. He was born in Vienna on December 24, 1891, where he attended high school, with the final two years in Czernowitz where he obtained his baccalaureate ('Abitur') in 1910. He then studied architecture in Vienna, but also began to devote himself to Semitic studies. From 1915 he served in the Austro-Hungarian army for three and a half years (achieving the rank of lieutenant with distinction). After the war he resumed his oriental studies, from which he graduated with a doctorate in Würzburg in 1921. From 1922 to 1933 he taught Yiddish at the University of Hamburg and became interested in Hebrew palaeography. In 1933 pressures from the Nazi regime forced him to emigrate to London with his family, where he taught Yiddish and Hebrew palaeography at two Schools of the University of London until his retirement in 1957. In 1970 he and his wife Irene moved to their sons in Toronto, where he died on December 28, 1989. – In detail:²

¹ The works of Solomon A. Birnbaum (occasionally: S. A. B.) briefly quoted below are listed in detailed form in the bibliography (volume I, p. XXIX–XLVIII) under the year of publication; the Yiddish language articles written in Hebrew script (in the second part of the list), are referred to with an "h" before the year.

² Of the numerous articles about S. A. B., which provide information about various aspects, we wish to quote the following: "Birnbaum, Solomon Asher", in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. (Second Edition, Detroit 2007), with literature. – Hugh Denman, "Terumato shel Shlomo Birnbaum labalshanut hayidish", in: *Ha-Sifrut* 10 (1986), p. 252–262 [Hebr.]. – Walter Röhl and Erika Timm, "Laudatio", in: *Verleihung der Würde eines Ehrendoktors der Universität Trier an Professor Dr. Salomo Birnbaum, 4. Juni 1986*. [Trier 1986], p. 10–14, reprinted as "In Memoriam Salomo Birnbaum", in: *Jiddistik Mitteilungen* 3 (1990), p. 16–22. This *Laudatio* has been partially incorporated into the above article. – Shmuel Hiley, "Solomon A. Birnbaum", in: Dov-Ber Kerler (ed.), *History of Yiddish Studies*. Winter Studies in Yiddish 3 (1991), p. 3–13. – Dovid Katz, "Shloyme Birnboym. 1891–1989", in: *Oksforder Yiddish* 2 (1991), p. 271–276 [In Memoriam]. – Peter Freimark, "Juden in der Hamburger Universität", in: Eckart Krause [et al.] (eds.), *Hochschulalltag im Dritten Reich*. Berlin/Hamburg 1991, p. 125–147 (especially 129–133 and 144–145). – Utz Maas, *Verfolgung und Auswanderung deutschsprachiger Sprachforscher 1933–1945*. Vol. I, Osnabrück 1996, p. 201–204, Art. "Salomon

I. Yiddish Philology

Solomon Asher Birnbaum³ was the oldest son of the writer and publisher Dr. iur. Nathan Birnbaum.⁴ Many of his ancestors had been rabbis in Germany, in Galicia and Hungary and had thus been native speakers of Yiddish. However, like his father, Solomon grew up in Vienna with German as his mother tongue. Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937) was one of the leading intellectual spokesmen of Judaism of his time. As a young man, he had turned his back on assimilation and henceforth resolutely regarded the Jewish people as a nation, not as a merely religious community. With this in mind, he had coined the term ‘Zionism’ long before Theodor Herzl.⁵ Unlike Herzl, Nathan Birnbaum wished to achieve complete, ethno-cultural equality for his people in the diaspora, at first within the multicultural Austro-Hungarian empire. In this context he

A. Birnbaum”. – Art. “Solomon A. Birnbaum” (contributed by David J. Birnbaum), in: John M. Spalek / Sandra H. Hawrylchak, *Guide to the Archival Materials of the German-speaking Emigration to the United States after 1933*. Vol. 3.1, Bern [et al.] 1997, p. 57–67 [about *The Nathan & Solomon Birnbaum Archives* (now located in Toronto), which were established by Solomon B.]. – Christopher M. Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich*. London / New York 1999, especially “Solomon Birnbaum”, p. 197–205. – Art. “Tsu Sh. Birnboym elftn yortsayt”, in: *Afn Shvel* 320 (2000), p. 1–8. – Susanne Blumesberger, Art. “Birnbaum, Salomo”, in: *Internationales Germanistenlexikon 1800–1950*. Vol. 1, Berlin / New York 2003, p. 190–192. – Kalman Weiser, “The ‘Orthodox’ Orthography of Solomon Birnbaum”, in: Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Dark Times, Dire Decisions*. Oxford 2004, p. 275–295. – David Birnbaum, “Der Nosn un Shloyme Birnboym-Arkhev in Toronte”, in: *Afn Shvel* 344–345 (2009), p. 41–44, David Birnbaum, “The Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum Archives, Toronto”, in: Kalman Weiser / Joshua A. Fogel (eds.): *Czer-nowitz at 100*. Lanham MD 2010, p. 181–188.

³ When writing in German, B. signed Salomo (occasionally: Salomo A.) Birnbaum, and in English he used the signature Solomon A. Birnbaum (rarely without the “A.”). In Yiddish it was Shloyme Birnboym (or, using his own transcription, Śloimy Biirnboim).

⁴ Basic information about Nathan Birnbaum is contained in Art. “Birnbaum, Nathan”, in: *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Jerusalem 1972 (Second edition, Detroit 2007), complete with literature. According to David Birnbaum, this article, which is marked with “Ed.”, was written by S. A. B. – Furthermore: S. A. B.: “Nathan Birnbaum”, in: Leo Jung (ed.), *Men of the Spirit*. New York 1964, p. 519–549, which also contains quotations from obituaries (1937) by a dozen illustrious contemporaries. – Joshua A. Fishman, *Ideology, Society and Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum*. Ann Arbor 1987. [With 15 selected articles by N. B. from the period of 1890 to 1931 (translated into English).]

⁵ 1890 in the journal published by him entitled *Selbst-Emancipation*, vol. 3, No. 4 dated May 16, 1890 (and others); cf. S. A. B. 1964 (above, n. 4), p. 523.

discovered the Yiddish language as the unifying force of Eastern European Jewry. In 1908 he convened the now legendary conference on the Yiddish language in Czernowitz, in which Solomon also participated at the age of 17.⁶ Eventually Nathan Birnbaum distanced himself from Zionism and turned to Orthodox Judaism. Many aspects of Solomon's ideas were rooted in those of his father, though not in the form of a *Publizist* but rather that of a scholar.

Solomon started learning Yiddish while still in high school. From 1906 onwards he began to correspond with his father in Yiddish.⁷ In 1907 he published a story by David Pinski, which he had translated into German, in the *Neue Zeitung* (Vienna) under the pseudonym *Ben Acher*⁸ and in 1913/14 he published an extensive series of Yiddish songs and excerpts from Mendele in the journal published by Fritz Mordechai Kaufmann entitled *Die Freistatt*, in a scholarly transcription designed by him, complete with translation. At an early age he displayed the aptitude and skills to produce accurate and stylistically valid translations of Yiddish literature into German: he practised this skill mainly in the nineteen-twenties, when he created his excellent Mendele translations – among others.⁹

Birnbaum's first major scholarly work was a Yiddish grammar, which he completed in 1915 and which was published in Vienna three years later.¹⁰ To date, this first work has not received the theoretical

⁶ Cf. David Birnbaum in: *Afn Shvel* (2009), p. 42f., also in: "Czernowitz at 100", p. 183f. (both above, n. 2).

⁷ Information kindly provided by David Birnbaum.

⁸ I. e. 'the son of *Mathias Acher*', his father's pseudonym. Until the 1930s (at least) Solomon used a variety of different pseudonyms (easily recognizable by anyone), including for instance *Shaban* / שאבן (=*Shlomo Asher ben Nathan*), and also אָשֶׁר (*Asher*); sometimes only the letters *Sch.* / ש. or *B.* / ב.; in the case of very short contributions the words בְּרִי אָדָם ('human being').

⁹ In the list of publications (in volume I, p. XXIX–XLVIII) under 1907, 1913/14, 1920, 1924 (and 1961 reprint). Conversely he translated Max Brod's novel *Tycho Brahes Weg zu Gott* into Yiddish (h1921). The Yiddish translation of *Bilder aus Palästina* by Davis Trietsch (1911 and later edd.), which was published in Yiddish in 1921 by the same publisher without identifying the translator, was, according to David Birnbaum, in fact done by S. A. B. He also translated parts of Glückel Hamel's Yiddish memoirs (1691–1719) into modern Yiddish and excerpts of these were published in the magazine *Der Jid* (1922).

¹⁰ The manuscript was completed in the summer of 1915. In the foreword to the fourth edition B. describes the difficulties in getting it published during the wartime period of 1916 to 1918. In many library catalogues the date of publication is erroneously stated to be 1915.

recognition it deserves as a milestone in the history of scholarship. It was the first coherent scholarly grammar of the Yiddish language ever produced. Due to its informational content this is a book which, even after many years of use, one continues to admire for the soundness and accuracy of each of its many observations. In particular, from a historical point of view, it is an early masterpiece of a strictly synchronic-immanent description of language. With admirable assurance Birnbaum managed to withstand the temptation of permitting his descriptive categories to be influenced by the German written language, by school grammar of Latin or by diachronic considerations. And last but not least: his classification of East Yiddish dialects outlined here continues to be of fundamental relevance to this day.¹¹ In sum, the book has retained all its freshness. Solomon Birnbaum obviously possessed the ideal prerequisites to produce such a successful creation: an opus distinguished by such amazing assurance in its overall concept as well as by such soundness of detail could only be written by an individual who displayed towards the Yiddish language the unconditional love associated with homecoming, but coupled with the objective detachment of the non-native speaker. The work was re-printed by the publisher Helmut Buske in Hamburg in 1966, and up to 1988 there were three further reprints. It is currently out of print.

A few years after producing the Grammar, while still recovering from his war wounds in hospital, Birnbaum wrote his second monograph in 1918:¹² another synchronic, but far more detailed description of the Hebrew-Aramaic component of the Yiddish language. This aspect of the Yiddish language was described here for the first time ever, in no more than fifty pages. Nevertheless this is neither a superficial outline nor merely a commendable basis for future work. The material penned by Birnbaum almost ninety years ago, without the benefit of relevant scientific tools and under unusual circumstances, can still claim complete relevance to this day. When he completed regular courses of oriental studies at the universities of Vienna, Zurich, Berlin and Würzburg after the war, this thesis, with some minor revisions, was accepted as a doctoral dissertation in Würzburg in 1921 and was printed in 1922. In volume I of the present publication two previously unpublished

¹¹ Already correctly evaluated by Max Weinreich, Shtaplen, Berlin 1923, p. 14–15. Cf. also Marvin Herzog, “Channels of Systematic Extinction in Yiddish Dialects”, in: *For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday*. The Hague 1964, p. 93–107, especially p. 93.

¹² It is this book that Birnbaum wrote while in hospital (not the Grammar, as is frequently reported).

articles (Chapters 3 and 4, from the period prior to and around 1930) are included, “*Der Vokalismus des Talmuds in aschkenasischer Überlieferung*” and “*Hebräisch und Jiddisch*”, which revisit the topics of the dissertation and reinforce the earlier findings with comprehensive material.

After obtaining his doctorate Birnbaum moved to Hamburg, where on the initiative of the Germanist Conrad Borchling he was offered a lectureship for Yiddish at the university as part of the “General Lectures” for the winter semester 1922/23. He remained in this position for more than a decade and, looking back, he said that here for the first time “the Yiddish language had been taught as a subject at a modern German university”.¹³

In addition to lecturing¹⁴ Birnbaum intensified his Yiddish research activities, focused primarily on history, which he continued up to an advanced age. These are so extensive that we are unable to acknowledge them in detail here. In subsequent decades he wrote a significant number of encyclopaedia articles; it should be emphasized that by this means basic information about the Yiddish language and literature was disseminated far more effectively than previously. He has no equal in his German language contributions towards improving the general knowledge and reference options in this field.¹⁵ We wish to highlight some topics of major relevance, which are also discussed in volume I. First: Etymology (Chapters 15, 16, 17; cf. also Chapter 62 in volume II); its main thrust is to caution against careless derivation from the Hebrew. Second: Origin and Age of the Yiddish language (Chapter 8), in which Birnbaum, for the first time, traces the history of Yiddish as far back as the 9th/10th century.¹⁶ Third: Yiddish and the German dia-

¹³ “[...] die jiddische Sprache im Rahmen einer modernen deutschen Universität Lehrgegenstand wurde”. Cf. Freimark (above, n. 2), p. 130: from a letter by Birnbaum to Freimark dated 12.7.1983.

¹⁴ The topics of the lectures (see p. 299 in volume I) indicate the broad spectrum of his current research projects.

¹⁵ Cf. Chapter 5 in volume I, also in the list of publications under 1929, 1931, 1932; English 1987. According to information supplied by David Birnbaum, S. A. B. wrote about 160 mostly short articles on Jewish personalities and terminology for the encyclopaedia *Großer Herder* (4th edition, Freiburg i.Br. 1931–1935), which were partially altered by the publishers, often contrary to the author’s intention. In his personal copy S. A. B. usually listed the articles contributed by him and in some of them the editorial revisions were identified. In the *Großer Herder*, articles generally remain unsigned.

¹⁶ A short summary already appears in Chapter 5 (paragraph entitled “History”) of 1929; cf. also the relevant paragraphs 1974, p. 1–16, and 1979 (*Survey*),

lects (Chapters 9, 10, 11). Fourth: Linguistic analysis of a variety of Old Yiddish texts (Chapters 7, 11, 12, 13, 14).¹⁷ In this context Birnbaum's discoveries about the historical development of phonetics have gained increasing importance. The article on "*Geschichte der u-Laute im Jiddischen*" (Chapter 11) deserves special mention.¹⁸ Here Birnbaum, with the aid of extensive documentary evidence spanning eight centuries, convincingly substantiates his theory that one of the most striking characteristics of Southern East Yiddish, namely the fact that /i/ and /i:/ corresponds to mhd. *u* and *uo*, originated in Germany, but subsequently disappeared from there after a pronounced initial phase (in the 14th–16th century).¹⁹

One particular issue was of special concern to him since the beginning of his Yiddish studies: A radical reform of orthography, which was 'wild' at the time, as well as a phonetically appropriate transcription of the spoken language into Latin script. In this context, right from the start his approach was established »on the basis of the *u*-dialect [i. e. the pronunciation in the Middle and Southern regions of East Yiddish] which comprises the majority of the speakers,²⁰ is associated with the classical authors of the language and predominates in the theatre«²¹ – as opposed to Yivo's efforts towards a standardisation of the language which started shortly afterwards, where preference was given to the northern pronunciation under the influence of the intellectuals from the North.

For Birnbaum the 'orthography/transcription' complex was associated with strong ideological emotions. In his view the Yiddish language was

p. 44–57, as well as h1931, h1966 and, incidentally, several articles on Old Yiddish.

¹⁷ Regarding Old Yiddish texts see also the list of publications under 1932, h1922 (Glikl Hamel), h1931, h1932 and h1938 (songs), h1939 and h1941 (letter), h1964 (psalms) as well as the relevant paragraphs 1974, p. 63–104, and 1979, p. 145–189.

¹⁸ 1934 in Yiddish, 1981 in expanded form, in German.

¹⁹ Since then the relevant trends in Late Medieval German have been explored in more detail in Germanistic research (s. Ernest Beyer, *La palatalisation vocalique spontanée de l'Alsacien et du Badois. Sa position dans l'évolution dialectale du germanique continental*. Strasbourg 1964), as a result of which a genetic relationship between the development of Yiddish and German can no longer be dismissed.

²⁰ In the decades prior to the Second World War "approximately three quarters" (as early as 1918 in the Grammar, p. 16, and elsewhere later).

²¹ 1923 ("Übersicht"), p. 122: "[...] auf der Grundlage des *u*-Dialekts aufgebaut, der die Mehrheit der Sprecher umfaßt, dem die Klassiker der Sprache angehören und der auf dem Theater herrschend ist"; correspondingly mentioned in the Grammar, p. 16, and elsewhere later.

fundamentally tied to the orthodox religious and cultural traditions of Ashkenazic Judaism, its *yidishkayt*, and this was most likely to be found in the *u*-dialect regions.²² Without traditional 'Jewishness' the language would inevitably be exposed to non-Jewish outside influences, resulting in stunted growth.²³ This attitude is the reason why Birnbaum was never prepared to accept an artificial standard – on any level of the language – which was not based on the tradition of the majority.²⁴

Firstly, orthography. Efforts to bring about an orthographic reform were being made since the end of the 19th century, more or less independently from one another, in many different places,²⁵ effectively since the 1920s. Three systems remained historically relevant: (1) The Yivo-system, generally accepted and in use nowadays, which was developed by a standing commission after 1926 and was adopted and published in 1937 in the *Takones fun yidishn oysleyg*,²⁶ (2) the Soviet system²⁷ and (3) Birnbaum's system.²⁸

Birnbaum saw the necessity for a reform²⁹ ever since he began working on the Yiddish language. It was his aim to revive the natural historical development of orthography, which had been interrupted by the actions of the Maskilim, and, starting from the *u*-dialects, to create,

²² Cf. Chapter 10 in volume I (with bibliographical comments by the author in note 3); otherwise predominantly in Yiddish, for instance h1925 "Yidish un yidishkayt" (English translation 1969), h1929 "Loshn, oysleyg un asimilatsye", h1930 "Yidishkayt un loshn", h1931 "Ge'ule fun loshn".

²³ Cf. the sensitive description of an Orthodox Jew, Shmuel Hiley (above, n. 2), p. 9f., also Shikl Fishman in: *Afn Shvel* (2000), p. 5; detailed in Kalman Weiser (above, n. 2), p. 279 passim. Birnbaum considers the influence of the German language to be the most insidious, since it impedes the natural development of the language; cf. for instance his article in the list of publications under h1939, entitled "A verter-reshime, Daytshmerish-Yidish", reprinted in *Afn Shvel* (2000), p. 6–8.

²⁴ Cf. Chapter 18 in volume I and, for instance, 1979 (*Survey*), p. 100.

²⁵ Illustrated in detail by Mordkhe Schaechter, *Der eynheytlekher yidisher oysleyg*. New York 1999; source material in: Joshua A. Fishman, *Never Say Die!* The Hague / Paris / New York 1981.

²⁶ As summarized by Schaechter (above, n. 25) with the text of the *Takones*.

²⁷ Cf. Birnbaum, Chapter 19 in volume I; cf. also Schaechter (above, n. 25), p. 18–26.

²⁸ Regarding Birnbaum's views on orthography cf. Chapter 5 (p. 55–58) and Chapter 6 in volume I; furthermore, list of publications under 1913/14, 1918 (Grammar) p. 11–33, 1979 (*Survey*) p. 197–215; in Yiddish: h1924, h1929, h1930 (several times), h1931, h1932 (*verter-bikhl*), h1953, h1977.

²⁹ In 1933 (Chapter 6 in volume I, p. 62f.) Birnbaum gave a concise and clear description of the differences between the five orthographic systems in current use.

according to scholarly principles, a new 'interdialectal' spelling system which could be read by any speaker of Yiddish in his own dialectal pronunciation. He considered a precise identification of the vowel qualities (and quantities) with the aid of diacritical signs to be the most important requirement. He designed such a system in 1915 for his Grammar and continued to refine it over several decades up to the *Survey* in 1979, in which he renounced several suprascripts,³⁰ which could be typed or printed only with difficulty. The system as such remained substantially the same from 1915 to 1979, especially with regard to the identification of the stressed vowels.³¹

In 1930, at a teachers' conference in Rabka,³² Birnbaum's orthography, which he had just presented in the brochure *Yidishkayt un loshn* (Warsaw 1930), was accepted for use in the orthodox *Bajs-Jakow*³³ [Beth Jacob] Schools and shortly afterwards also officially for the publications of the *Bajs-Jakow* publishing house; it was also used in orthodox periodicals such as *Jeshurun* (Warsaw) and *Kinder-gortn* (Lodz), as well as various orthodox daily newspapers.³⁴

Following the destruction of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, Birnbaum's system became virtually extinct, but he himself continued to use it until the end of his life and attempted to persuade editors to use it for his articles, with limited success.³⁵

³⁰ Cf. for instance in volume I, p. 56 (Chapter 5 of 1929) with p. 65 ff. (Chapter 6 of 1933).

³¹ Cf. the transcription table in his Grammar (1918) p. 11–18 with *Survey* (1979) p. 197–215 including annotations. He vacillated about the designation of secondary syllable vowels by an Ayin (1918 ff.) or Yud (from 1925), finally permitting both in some instances (examples in *Survey* p. 201–210, and elsewhere). – For additional details see Denman 1986, p. 253–255; Hiley 1991, p. 4 and passim; Weiser 2004, p. 279 passim (all above, n. 2). Cf. also Schaechter (above, n. 25), p. 33.

³² Birnbaum reported about the outcome of the conference in Rabka (approx. 50 km south of Cracow) in 1930 in German in *Der Aufstieg*, and several times in Yiddish, for instance in the *Oylem-bleter* (see h1930).

³³ Birnbaum's transcription. – The orthodox educational network of the *Beth-Jacob*-Schools for girls was founded in 1917 by Sarah Schenirer (1883–1935) and in 1935 comprised 227 schools with 27,000 pupils in Poland alone. Cf., for instance, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Second Edition, Detroit 2007, vol. 3, art. "Beth Jacob Schools" and vol. 18 "Schenirer, Sarah".

³⁴ Cf. Schaechter (above, n. 25), p. 33. – In practice, the application of the system was not so easy for the printers; a close inspection of publications, even those produced by the *Beth-Jacob* publishers, frequently discloses that they did not comply with the directions; there is also the fact that not all diacritical symbols were available for certain type sizes.

Equally, Birnbaum's efforts to create an optimal scholarly transcription system into Latin script continued for over seven decades.³⁶ His system was established, once more, on the basis of the language spoken by the majority in the *u*-dialect regions, but was intended to be applicable to all dialects. On the other hand, the very fact that it is designed to transmit the most subtle differences between the individual dialects means that it is complicated and cannot easily compete against the Yivo-system, which simply reflects the phonemic system of 'Standard Yiddish'. In this case, far more than in the orthography system, Birnbaum made several fundamental changes since the first version he introduced and applied in *Die Freistatt* (1913/14)³⁷ – compare this first version of the system, for instance, with the one in his Grammar (1915/18), in the article entitled “*Die Umschrift des Jiddischen*” (1933),³⁸ reprinted in volume I as Chapter 6, and in the *Survey* (1979, especially p. 200–223).³⁹ For this reason it is not possible – and would be a historical falsification – to impose a standard form of transcription on the articles contained in volume I, in view of the fact that they originate from different eras.⁴⁰ This is even more applicable to the presentation of Old Yiddish texts in Latin script.

³⁵ Successfully though, for instance, in 1964 in the Festschrift for Max Weinreich, see the charming presentation by Shikl Fishman in *Afn Shvel* (2000), p. 4. In the Yivo publications (after 1926) Birnbaum had to endure the use of their unwelcome orthography even in his own articles.

³⁶ According to the author (see volume I, p. 62, n. 1) “the first words printed in his transcription system go back to the year 1907” [in German]. He was probably referring to the individual words in the translation of Pinski's narrative “Durchgesetzt” in the *Neue Zeitung* in 1907. Regarding the final stage of this development see the Editors' foreword to Chapter 6 in volume I.

³⁷ Cf. the annotated pronunciation table p. 56–59 as well as the articles on p. 412–414 and 588–591. Already at this stage Birnbaum emphasized that his transcription was specifically designed for the purpose of providing cross-dialect legibility and should not be regarded as meaning to suggest that the Hebrew script should be abolished, since he “rejected this idea which has recently arisen” (p. 59, “[da er] diese letzthin aufgetauchte Idee ablehne”); cf. also Birnbaum's retrospective 1987 (volume I, p. 297).

³⁸ This article assumes a central position in the overall development and has been frequently cited in the research literature.

³⁹ Additional articles on the subject ‘transcription’ can be found under h1929, h1944, h1947 in the list of publications.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately Birnbaum did not elaborate in sufficient detail on his ideas regarding transcription and especially on his views concerning priority as applied to technical matters. For this reason readers of volume I wishing to discover details of the transcription will have to research the various stages of development on their own.

After Birnbaum concentrated more fully on the study of Old Yiddish texts (from 1932) he also felt the need to enrich Germanistic research by new insights into the Yiddish language, especially relating to phonetic developments,⁴¹ while continuing to highlight the distinctive individuality of the language. In this context he considered it unavoidable (at least for philological purposes) to present the texts in Latin script, depending on the language level involved. He rightly criticized the transcriptions published previously as being unsystematically oriented to German spelling.⁴² In fact he thought that “familiarity with older German linguistic usage, knowledge of Judaism [and] of the problems associated with old Yiddish spelling ought to be combined”⁴³ when preparing transcriptions of Old Yiddish texts. Obviously one cannot expect to have a uniform transcription for earlier states of the language spanning several centuries, due to the fact that considerable changes occurred not only in pronunciation (with regional differences) but also in spelling. On the occasion of his edition of psalm 6 in thirteen versions from several centuries (Chapter 12 in volume I) Birnbaum strongly emphasized that the transcriptions should be viewed with caution and should not be used as a basis for the phonological research of Old Yiddish. Nor was it possible – solely due to space considerations – to justify the transcription for each individual text. This would require devoting an entire article to each of the texts. He stated that the transcription should be “a compromise between the intrinsic phonetics, a pure transliteration of the characters, and the desire to avoid technical problems in printing.”⁴⁴ He continued constantly to search for an optimal compromise.⁴⁵

⁴¹ An opportunity rarely taken advantage of in German philology and comparative literature to this day, even though quite a few annotated editions of Old Yiddish texts have meanwhile become available.

⁴² This mainly referred to the book by Staerk and Leitzmann; cf. Birnbaum's (otherwise positive) review of 1924.

⁴³ In 1932 on the occasion of the edition of the treatise on bloodletting (*Teuthonista*, p. 198, “[vielmehr müssten sich] Bekanntschaft mit älterem deutschen Sprachleben, judaistisches Wissen [und] Erkenntnis der Probleme der alten jiddischen Schreibung vereinen”).

⁴⁴ Volume I, bottom of p. 178f., similarly Chapter 14, p. 207, on the occasion of the edition of 37 text samples from six centuries, and elsewhere.

⁴⁵ Evidently with the intention of avoiding Old Yiddish texts looking like German texts. – Already in 1932 (in other words, still in a German-language context) two highly different systems existed (compare the edition of the treatise on bloodletting [in *Teuthonista* 8] with the rendition of psalm 6 in Chapter 12 of volume I). Later, in an English-language context, all relics of

Towards the end of the 1920s, Birnbaum was inspired by a major plan about which he had been approached by Heinz Kloss, a researcher of minority languages and by Franz Thierfelder, a linguist concerned with cultural policies. It involved the establishment of an institute of closely related languages, which was to focus on Dutch, German, Yiddish, Afrikaans, Frisian and Pennsylvania-Dutch and in which Birnbaum was to run the Yiddish department.⁴⁶ In 1930 Birnbaum prepared a draft program for this, which was divided into three parts: 'Information' (e. g. about the cultural position of Yiddish in various countries, the Yiddish school and educational systems, the publication of Yiddish books in transcription), 'Research' and 'Teaching', whereby the preparation of teaching materials was to take precedence initially, but a synchronic and diachronic philology in its entire spectrum was envisaged – objectives which have remained wishful thinking in Yiddish research to this day – including for instance a comprehensive historical dictionary, an etymological dictionary, dictionaries of dialects, as well as an extensive historical grammar of the Yiddish language.⁴⁷ The institute of closely related languages was never established. However, Birnbaum continued to work on his plan for an *Institutum Germano-Judaicum*. The appeal which he sent at the beginning of 1933 to non-Jewish German scholars, general linguists, and Hebrew and Old Testament experts in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, received a response in the form of signatures and specific words of approval from 60 eminent professors.⁴⁸ However, in the atmosphere of the beginning Nazi period this project, too, was doomed to failure.

The extraordinarily fertile Yiddish research of the Hamburg years was later included in the two books mentioned previously: In 1974 the

German orthographic traditions were removed (*ch* for \aleph and \beth / γ was replaced by *x*; for some time *v* and *w* for ε / η and η were represented by *v* or *w* turned upside down [cf. p. 91 f. and 208 f. in volume I], then by *f* or *v* [p. 210 ff.]). What is unusual and difficult to understand is the choice of *s* for */s/* to represent a ζ , where previously *š* had been used (in the case of Modern Yiddish already as early as 1954, cf. for instance p. 279 in volume I; see also p. 221 ff. [1965]). The development of the designations of Old Yiddish vowel qualities and quantities can only be understood by studying them closely, compare the stages illustrated in Chapters 12 (1932) and 14 (1965) with the level in 1979 in the *Survey*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter 20 (from 1987) in volume I; see also in the list of publications under 1972.

⁴⁷ Cf. in the list of publications under 1930 ("Die Stellung der jiddischen Sprache"), especially p. 361–364. See also Freimark (above, n. 2), p. 130.

⁴⁸ Cf. the list of names and comments p. 301–304 in volume I.

book entitled *Die jiddische Sprache. Ein kurzer Überblick und Texte aus acht Jahrhunderten* was published in German in Hamburg,⁴⁹ and in 1979 a greatly expanded English edition entitled *Yiddish, A Survey and a Grammar*⁵⁰ was published in Toronto. This type of phenomenological overview of the Yiddish language, which is based almost exclusively on the author's own research, represents the lifetime achievement of the Yiddish scholar Birnbaum.

II. Hebrew Palaeography (and 'Jewish Languages')

While still in Hamburg Solomon Birnbaum – guided by his desire to date medieval Yiddish manuscripts and find their place of origin⁵¹ – took up palaeographic studies. In the spring of 1929 he submitted an 800-page paper with the title *Die nordjüdischen Kursivschriften. Eine Studie zur hebräischen Buchstabengeschichte* to the Faculty of Philosophy as his professorial ('habilitation') dissertation. In this study he covered the Hebrew scripts from the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era, used in Western and Eastern Europe. Despite several positive assessments the habilitation did not materialize, obviously for reasons of university politics. As P. Freimark pointed out, this would have been the first habilitation in Jewish studies at a German university.⁵²

In the spring of 1933 Birnbaum left Hamburg and escaped to London with his family. After several difficult years he experienced a turning point after meeting Norman Jopson, a professor of Slavonic and comparative studies. The latter arranged for Birnbaum to receive an invitation to give a series of lectures, which provided an entree to the University of London. From 1936 until 1957 he taught Hebrew palaeography and epigraphy at the *School of Oriental and African Studies* and from 1938 he also taught Yiddish at the *School of Slavonic and East European Studies*.⁵³ Although he continued to contribute to Yiddish

⁴⁹ Once again from the publisher Helmut Buske; two additional reworked and expanded editions were published in 1986 and 1997.

⁵⁰ A selection of 37 of the 75 text samples in the *Survey* can be found in Chapter 14 in volume I.

⁵¹ Cf. *The Hebrew Scripts I* (1971), p. 22, also David Birnbaum in *Afn Shvel* (2009), p. 42, and "Czernowitz at 100", p. 183 (both above, n. 2).

⁵² For details of the procedure see Freimark (above, n. 2), p. 125–147.

⁵³ According to information provided by Eleazar and David Birnbaum, S. A. B. was seconded from the university during the Second World War to the British Postal Censorship, specializing in Yiddish and other Jewish languages. In this way he discovered at an early stage that the Holocaust was actually taking

periodicals in Eastern Europe from England,⁵⁴ the main focus of his research activities over the next two decades was in the area of Hebrew palaeography. By contrast with his studies in Hamburg, he continually expanded the geographical areas of the script provenances in all directions, going back to the earliest traditions of Hebrew scripts.

Since most Jewish cultural groups used the Hebrew alphabet when writing their everyday languages, Birnbaum's interest was also directed towards Jewish languages other than Yiddish through his interest in palaeography. An impression of this is provided in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as Chapter 21, where the Jewish languages from the Eastern edges of Europe are specifically identified and illustrated by examples of texts.⁵⁵ Chapters 21–23 and 25–27 furthermore demonstrate an intensive scholarly preoccupation with *Judezmo* (the Jewish-Spanish language,⁵⁶ which Birnbaum later called *Jidic*), the Bukharic language (the Jewish-Persian of Central Asia)⁵⁷ – both areas for which very little groundwork existed at the time. Furthermore, Chapter 24 provides insight into an uncompleted handwritten study of about hundred pages, which examines the difference between the language of the Jews of the Maghreb (which Birnbaum called *Maaravic*), particularly in the City of Fez, with the language used by the Muslims in the same city.

During the 1930s his opus magnum *The Hebrew Scripts* became ready for publication, but could only be published after the end of the Second World War.⁵⁸ In the foreword to the first volume Birnbaum relates the dramatic printing history, which started in 1939 before the outbreak of the war and ended in 1971. The illustrations were lost in the upheaval associated with the beginning of the war. On the other hand, the delay provided Birnbaum with the opportunity to integrate his analyses of the Dead Sea scrolls and other documents, which had been

place and he did what he could to persuade the British authorities in power to take some action. In 1945 he compiled an English-Yiddish *Phrase Book* at the request of the *Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad*, which was used by staff members of the aid organizations in the post-war years.

⁵⁴ See the numerous articles in the list of publications starting from 1933, in orthodox as well as Yivo-journals.

⁵⁵ Additional articles on Jewish languages in the list of publications under 1944, 1947, 1951.

⁵⁶ Birnbaum did not like the linguistic terms 'Jewish-plus' or 'Judaeo-plus' (see, for instance, Chapter 2, p. 7).

⁵⁷ An explanation of the linguistic term can be found in Chapter 1, p. 3 (and Chapter 2, p. 8).

⁵⁸ In the list of publications under 1954 (Part II, *The Plates*) and 1971 (Part I, *The Text*).

discovered from 1947 on. On account of these new finds the work had to pass some unexpected tests which, from today's vantage point, it passed with flying colours. Although some of his date determinations initially met with doubts, since at that time palaeography was not yet regarded as a reliable scholarly discipline by theologians and archaeologists, they have since then been verified and generally accepted by experts with the aid of the radio carbon method and more recent archaeological analyses.

The most important individual research of Hebrew (and Aramaic) documents from the Dead Sea and of Old Yiddish manuscripts which had only recently come into the field of research, as well as of several other documents which were remarkable for various specific reasons, were assembled by the author himself for the present volume II.⁵⁹ They must be regarded as groundbreaking pioneering work within the context of the period in which they were composed. For this reason, the present Editors have refrained from making any attempt at modernizing them in the light of subsequent research.

The Hebrew Scripts contain around 400 representative examples (in the form of facsimiles of handwriting and alphabetic and comparative tables) showing the history of Hebrew script going back over 3000 years, each accompanied by detailed palaeographic descriptions of the letters and their significant characteristics classified within the general development pattern of the Hebrew scripts. With this extensive study Birnbaum transformed Hebrew palaeography from mere intuition into a systematic and comparative discipline. On the one hand, due to the abundance of material at his disposal, he was able to apply quantitative methods to the field of palaeography for the first time. On the other hand, he recognized that as a rule the palaeographic relationship between two Jewish cultural groups is based on their regional history. He was able to demonstrate that up to approximately the 13th century there was virtually no difference between the script of Northern French and German, i. e. Ashkenazic Jews, and he utilized this realization to support a strong argument that the original homeland of most German Jews was Romanic and not Byzantine-Slavic.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ On the documents from the Dead Sea: Scrolls, Chapter 33, 36–45 (on methodical principles, Chapter 38, and especially Chapter 43); everyday documents, Chapters 46–53; on Old Yiddish manuscripts: Chapters 56, 57, 59.

⁶⁰ Fundamental points already made in 1931, "Aschkenasische Handschriften. Woher stammen die deutschen Juden?", see also *The Hebrew Scripts* I, paragraphs "Zarphatic Type" and especially "Ashkenazic Type".

Even today, 40 years after completion of the publication of *The Hebrew Scripts*, it is possible to establish from the state of research that Birnbaum's monumental work continues to be the only historically accurate overall representation of Hebrew palaeography and for some purposes the only useable representation at all. In the intersubjective comprehensive documentation of the conclusions his work has set new standards for the entire field of palaeography, nor just the Jewish one.

In view of the sheer volume of Hebrew manuscript material⁶¹ now available it has become obvious that this gigantic subject could not possibly be handled by a single individual. Nowadays scholarly palaeography is in the hands of an Israeli-French joint project, which was established in 1965 and is amply staffed and financed.⁶² In addition to an abundance of manuscript publications arising from this project,⁶³ a detailed codicological database (SfarData) was set up under the leadership of Malachi Beit-Arié, which has made it possible, by means of a sophisticated retrieval system, to classify undated Hebrew manuscripts with more chronological and geographical precision.⁶⁴ In recognition of

⁶¹ At the *Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts* in Jerusalem microfilm copies of most of the world's major manuscript collections are available, a total of about 100,000 items. (Website: <http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/imhm/>).

⁶² Sponsored by the *Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* (in conjunction with the *Jewish National and University Library*) in Jerusalem and by the *Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)* in Paris.

⁶³ I mention here only the two major serial publications *Manuscripts médiévaux en caractères hébraïques portant des indications de date jusqu'à 1540*, ed. by Colette Sirat and Malachi Beit-Arié, 3 vols., Paris/Jerusalem 1972–1986, and *Codices hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore script fuerint exhibentes*, ed. by M. Beit-Arié [et al.], 4 vols., Turnhout 1997–2006.

⁶⁴ The computer database "SfarData" was presented by Malachi Beit-Arié several times, for instance in a graphic summary (with additional related literature), in his book *Unveiled Faces of Medieval Hebrew Books. The Evolution of Manuscript Production – Progression or Regression?* Jerusalem 2003, p. 16f. – In future, this database will become an important tool for the modernization or recompilation of manuscript catalogues, among others. The first occasion when Beit-Arié was able to use the database to assist with a palaeographical and codicological description, was for the *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*. Catalogue. Ed. by Benjamin Richler. Palaeographical and Codicological Descriptions by Malachi Beit-Arié. Jerusalem 2001. Since then, also *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library*. Catalogue. Compiled by the Staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem. Ed. by Benjamin Richler. Palaeographical and Codicological Descriptions by Malachi Beit-Arié in Collaboration with Nurit Pasternak. Città del Vaticano 2008.

Birnbaum's standard work, Beit-Arié writes: "[...] But not before the pioneering publication of S. A. Birnbaum's *The Hebrew Scripts* [...] did Hebrew palaeography become an independent discipline. One cardinal aspect of it, the typology and evolution of the script, was for the first time studied systematically".⁶⁵

* * * * *

In the course of his long career as a researcher Solomon Birnbaum established a terminological framework as well as many other basics for two major scholarly disciplines, for the benefit of future generations. However, he never established a 'School' in the narrow sense of the word. He largely distanced himself from the 'business of scholarship', even from the Yivo Institute.⁶⁶ Yet he invariably acted as an indefatigable and unbiased adviser. Anyone who approached him with a technical question was astounded by his virtually inexhaustible knowledge and an impressive willingness to impart information and to engage in dialogue.⁶⁷ He will go down in the history of scholarship as an individualist of exceptional personal nobility.

Even after the Holocaust he continued to keep up a correspondence with German scholars. In the 1960s, when a new young generation at the University of Hamburg under the leadership of the German scholar Walter Röll began to concentrate with renewed interest on the work started by Birnbaum, Birnbaum participated from London as a generous and friendly adviser. These friendly ties were maintained when Birnbaum moved to live with his sons in Toronto in 1970 and part of the Hamburg team relocated to the newly founded University of Trier, where they immediately started to establish Yiddish studies within the framework of Germanic studies. In 1986 Solomon Birnbaum was honoured by the University of Trier with an honorary doctorate and for the conferral he returned to Germany for the first time – at the age of 95. The university paid tribute to Birnbaum as an important scholar, a steadfast

⁶⁵ Beit-Arié, *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book. Studies in Palaeography and Codicology*. Jerusalem 1993, p. 7.

⁶⁶ See also the article devoted to *Shloyme Birnboym* in *Afn Shvel* 2000 (above, n. 2), especially p. 1 f.

⁶⁷ The archive established by S. A. B. called *The Nathan & Solomon Birnbaum Archives* (Spalek/Hawrylchak 1997 [above, n. 2], p. 57 ff.) bears eloquent witness to this: here, approx. 20,000 letters from and to S. A. B. dealing with linguistic, palaeographic and general Judaistic subjects are archived.

representative of supranational ideals and a person of impressive kindness. In his acceptance speech he emphasized “the feeling of satisfaction at seeing how much times have changed and that nowadays so much – relatively – is being done to continue what I and a few others started in those days”.⁶⁸ Since 1986 the situation has definitely improved all over the world in both disciplines.⁶⁹ No doubt Solomon Birnbaum would be very pleased about this.

Erika Timm

(Translated by Ruth Segal, Toronto)

⁶⁸ “[...] das Gefühl der Genugtuung, wie sehr sich die Zeiten geändert haben und daß heute so – verhältnismäßig – viel getan wird für das, was ich und wenige andere in jenen Zeiten angefangen haben”, in: *Verleihung der Würde eines Ehrendoktors* [...] (above, n. 2), p. 26. – In Hamburg the name of Solomon Birnbaum has also been honoured: The “Salomo-Birnbaum-Bibliothek” was established at the initiative of the late Dr. Günther Marwedel and nowadays contains about 3,000 volumes of Yiddish texts and studies. The “Salomo-Birnbaum-Gesellschaft für Jiddisch in Hamburg e. V.” was established in 1995 for the purpose of promoting Yiddish language, literature and culture (website: www.birnbaum-gesellschaft.org).

⁶⁹ Regarding palaeography see above; as for Yiddish studies, nowadays the range of activities in research and teaching – in Europe (even Eastern Europe) as well as America, Israel and even in China and Japan – can hardly be grasped. In Germany alone two chairs have been established: In 1990 at the University of Trier and in 1996 at the Heinrich-Heine-University in Düsseldorf. Yiddish studies are also represented in a more modest format at other universities in Germany (permanently in Berlin, Bonn, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Halle-Wittenberg, Heidelberg, Munich, Potsdam, Stuttgart and Tübingen), as part of the departments of German Studies, Slavic Studies, History, Jewish Studies or Theology.

Scholarly Articles by Solomon Birnbaum

A. The Palaeo-Hebrew Script

28. Table of Semitic Alphabets 10th–5th Centuries B. C. E.

The Table, drawn by Solomon A. Birnbaum, was first published in: *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*, by James B. Pritchard. Princeton 1954, p. 88.¹ (Carved letters are shown in outline, letters written in ink are shown solid.)

{In the present volume the table appears reduced in size. The Key to the table has been added by Eleazar Birnbaum (first column: no. in table; second column: title; third column: date B. C. E.; fourth column: illustration number in *The Hebrew Scripts (HS)* by S. A. Birnbaum, 2 vols., Part I: The Text, Part II: The Plates. London 1954–1957 / Leiden 1971.

For illustrations of documents containing the drawn alphabets, nos. 4, 5, 7, 13: see Chapter 34 in the present volume, figs. 1, 3, 4, 7 (pp. 101, 103, 104, 106); no. 16: Chapter 33 (p. 80). For further discussion of documents containing the alphabets: cf. Chapters 29–33, see also 34 / 35.

¹ {For special bibliographical information see pp. 281–282.}

Key to Table

1	Ahiram Inscription	ca. 975	<i>HS</i> 01
2	Yehimilk Inscription	ca. 950–930	<i>HS</i> 04
3	Samaria Ivories	ca. 900–875	<i>HS</i> 09
4	Gezer Calendar Tablet	ca. 875–850	<i>HS</i> 2
5	Moabite Stone Mesha Stele	ca. 830	<i>HS</i> 013
6	Kilamuwa Inscription	ca. 825	<i>HS</i> 014
7	Samaria Ostraca	ca. 775–750	<i>HS</i> 4–11
8	Shema Seal	787–744	<i>HS</i> 3
9	Bar Rakab Inscription	733–727	<i>HS</i> 018
10	Siloam Inscription	716–686	<i>HS</i> 14
11	Nerab Stelae	ca. 1st half of 6th cent.	<i>HS</i> I, col. 123
12	Pharaoh Letter	605	<i>HS</i> I, col. 122
13	Lachish Ostraca	597–588	<i>HS</i> 23–26
14	Jewish Seals	6th century	<i>HS</i> 19, 26*, 37
15	Meissner Papyrus	515	<i>HS</i> 122
16	Leviticus Fragments	ca. 450	<i>HS</i> 28–31
17	Elephantine Papyri	ca. 400	<i>HS</i> 147
18	Eshmunazar Sarcophagus	5th century	– }

Table of Semitic Alphabets 10th–5th Centuries B. C. E.

† w 9	‡ o ƒ s 3 ʿ v z	⊕ H I Y	† 9 K	Ahiram Inscription 1
x w 9 φ h	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	⊕ I Y 3	△ ^ 9 K	Yehimilk Inscription 2
χ ƒ	‡ ƒ ʿ	⊕ H I Y	△ ^ 9 ƒ	Samaria Ivories 3
χ w 9 φ h	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	⊕ I Y	△ 9 ƒ	Gezer Calendar 4
x w 9 φ h	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Moabite Stone 5
† w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Kilamuwa Inscription 6
x w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Samaria Ostraca 7
w 9	‡ o ʿ ʿ z		△ 9	Shema Seal 8
χ w 9 φ h	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	⊕ H 2 ƒ	△ 9 ƒ	Bar Rakab Inscription 9
x w 9 φ h	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Siloam Inscription 10
† w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ʿ ʿ ʿ ʿ v z	⊕ H 2 ƒ	△ 9 ƒ	Nerab Stelae 11
χ w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ʿ ʿ ʿ ʿ v z	H 2 ƒ	△ 9 ƒ	Pharaoh Letter 12
x w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Lachish Ostraca 13
† w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Jewish Seals 14
† v 9 φ ƒ	‡ v ʿ ʿ ʿ v z	H 2 ƒ	△ 9 ƒ	Meissner Papyrus 15
χ w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Leviticus Fragments 16
† v 9 φ ƒ	‡ v ʿ ʿ ʿ v z	H 2 ƒ	△ 9 ƒ	Elephantine Papyri 17
† w 9 φ ƒ	‡ o ƒ ʿ ʿ v z	H = Y	△ 9 ƒ	Eshmunazar Sarcophagus 18

29. On the Possibility of Dating Hebrew Inscriptions*

The determination of undated inscriptions in the original Hebrew script is certainly not an easy task. Should we, therefore, not attempt to tackle it at all, and rather wait¹ until new finds provide us with new material?

A real change in the situation could only be brought about by much better and more extensive ones than those hitherto brought to light. Are we justified in reckoning with the likelihood of such finds? Is it not at least as reasonable to expect that the present number of early inscriptions will not be very considerably increased?

And if this be so, should inadequacy of available material be permitted to act as a permanent bar to research? Have others allowed it to do so, in palaeography or in any other fields? The answer is, no.

North Semitic. In the present case the investigator has, too, a possibility of somewhat enriching his resources by drawing on non-Hebrew North Semitic writing.

It cannot seriously be contended that – as far as the early centuries are concerned – the scripts of Phoenicia, Syria and Moab may not under any circumstances whatsoever be ‘lumped together’ with the script of Israel and Judah. Actually, palaeographers do not separate them. The reason is apparent. If, for example, we put the alphabets of the Ahiram, Abibaal and Elibaal inscriptions, of the Arslan Tash Ivories, and of the Mesha Stele / Moabite Stone side by side with that of the Gezer Tablet, we realize that there is no difference in the basic forms or in the style. Those differences which do appear are connected with the chronological factor. Whatever regional differences there may have been between

* First published in: *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 76 (July–Oct. 1944), pp. 213–217. – {Illustrations of inscriptions mentioned in this chapter appear as follows: (1) In the present volume. Gezer Tablet / Calendar in: Illustrations to Chapters 34 / 35. Mesha Stele / Moabite Stone in: Illustrations to Chapters 34 / 35. Samaria Ostraca in: Illustrations to Chapters 34 / 35; Chapter 31. (2) In *The Hebrew Scripts* by Solomon A. Birnbaum, vol. 2, London 1954–57. Ahiram Tomb Inscription: plate 01. Abibaal Inscription: plate 05. Elibaal Inscription: plate 06. Arslan Tash Ivories: plate 012. Siloam Inscription: plates 14, 35.}

¹ Dr. Diringier thinks we should: “the extant material of early Hebrew epigraphy is not yet sufficient” (*PEQ* 75 [1943], pp. 50–54, the quotation p. 54). The present notes have been occasioned by his article.

the various North Semitic groups must have been very small indeed, since we cannot ascertain what they were, from our material. Hence, we need not, on the score of incongruity, shrink from utilizing documents other than Judæan and Israelite, for we are not violating the principle that comparisons should only be made within a group.

Scantiness of Material does not altogether prevent us from observing the main development, even though it restricts our observation of transitional stages. But from one point of view this might even be said to be of advantage.

Where all the stages are known, they are so near to each other that the forms have naturally many features in common. This complicates the work of comparison, since, in the development of script, regular movements of the whole alphabet do not take place. It is the individual letters – sometimes certain features, of a group – which undergo changes. And they do so at different rates of speed. In one and the same period and in one and the same documents, letters which have changed very little during a given time, appear by the side of others which have developed far more quickly. The investigator must not consequently be misled into ascribing too great an age to the document.

The absence of connecting links has the effect of throwing the differences into clearer relief, and of thereby, in a way, simplifying the task of comparison.

It is thus quite possible that certain conclusions drawn from a few documents may be as dependable as if they had been based on a far greater number. For example, the six inscriptions used for dating the Gezer Tablet / Calendar² suffice to show the growing measure of similarity between them and the Tablet, as we pass from the eleventh century of Ahiram's tomb³ inscription to the ninth century of the Mesha Stele.

Sometimes, still fewer even will suffice. For the dating of the Samaria Ostraca,⁴ use was made of two inscriptions only. From the regnal years on the Ostraca we know that these must have been written during one of the reigns of Ahab, Jehu, Jehoahaz or Jeroboam II. This knowledge would enable us to establish precise dates, provided we were in a position to relate the script of the sherds to that of dated inscriptions belonging to those times. The Mesha Stele (M) and the Siloam Inscription (Si) are available for that purpose. Both are well dated documents,

² *PEQ* 74 (1942), pp. 104–108 [= Chapter 30 in the present volume].

³ {Later S. A. B. dated the document 'ca. 975' (see *The Hebrew Scripts*, vol. 1, no. 01; see also above, Chapter 28, no. 1). – E. T.}

⁴ Above, n. 2, pp. 107–108.

the former from about 850, the latter from the end of the eighth century B. C. E. If, on comparison, we found that the script of the sherds was distinctly nearer to M than to Si (or vice versa), then we should be justified in assuming a closer temporal relation between the Ostraca and the reign during which M was written, than between them and the reign during which Si was written (or vice versa). In other words, if the script of the sherds resembles M, then the period of Ahab or Jehu – or in a lesser degree, Jehoahaz – would be probable; if there were greater similarity with Si, then the period of Jeroboam II would be the likelier. It would appear, therefore, that wealth of material is not always essential to reaching reliable results.

Certainty of Date. Even the principle that comparison may be based only on documents whose date is beyond doubt, needs qualification.

In favourable circumstances, even material of controversial date can be very useful, e. g., the Aḥiram inscription (*ibid.*). Some scholars have ascribed it to the middle of the thirteenth century, on account of the Ramses II fragments. But, as Spiegelberg points out, these cannot be taken as indicating the age of Aḥiram, since the tomb was plundered in the eighth-seventh century.⁵ It seems preferable to accept Albright's date ("probably not far from 1100 B. C. E.").⁶

The idea in using the sarcophagus alphabet is not, of course, to take it as a starting point from which to reckon out the time distance to the script of the Tablet. The Aḥiram alphabet is taken merely to represent the upper time limit, since comparison shows that the Gezer forms are clearly later and cannot belong to the Aḥiram period – wherever that might be placed.

Inscription and Manuscript. With so little material available, it is natural to make use of everything there is, and to turn to handwriting, too, for comparison. In theory this should of course be avoided, since all material imposes on the writer a particular technique, which may result in a difference of style or even in changes of the basic form of letters. Actually however, with the exercise of due care, the inherent danger of comparing incongruous scripts need not work out to be so great in practice as it would appear to be in theory.

⁵ {Wilhelm Spiegelberg, "Zur Datierung der Aḥiram-Inschrift von Byblos", in: *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 29 (1926), pp. 735–737. – E. T.}

⁶ {W. F. Albright, "A Neglected Hebrew Inscription of the Thirteenth Century B. C.", in: *Archiv für Orientforschung* 5 (1939), pp. 150–152, quotation p. 152: "we can hardly date [the Aḥrām inscription] earlier than the end of the period assigned it above, that is, about 1100 B. C." – E. T.}

If, for example, we put the Mesha and Siloam alphabets side by side with that of the Samaria Ostraca, we see that there is a general difference. It is one of style and is occasioned by the use of the pen for the Ostraca and of the chisel for the others. In handwriting, a strong contrast develops between up- and downstrokes. In the one, the writing edge of the pen is parallel to the movement of the hand, thin lines being the result, in the other, there is an angle of 90 degrees, resulting in thick lines.

But that is all. The writing of the Ostraca was not an ornamentally developed manuscript hand. The essential shape remained unchanged. Hence, comparison as to their respective stages of development is possible.

* * *

In the following, attention is given to the details brought up in Dr. Diringer's aforementioned article.

North Semitic. "The forms, with all their details, of the Ahiram characters [are not] the original forms of the north-Semitic letters" {p. 52}. I have nowhere in my article said or implied that they are.

Curving. Curves do not in themselves constitute a proof of either earliness or lateness of development. Both in cursive and ornamental development, straight lines become curved and vice versa.

Gezer Letters. Daleth. The right side is not "practically vertical". It slants to the right, it is perfectly parallel with the downstrokes of the Heth in the line above. (In the examples of Resh, the downstrokes are by no means all vertical. Forms like these are just indefinite, intermediate between a slant to the left or to the right. This may be said of Samekh, too.)

Waw. The top part of this letter in the fifth line is not, even "roughly speaking", a semi-circle. It is similar to all the other Waws of the Tablet. Their top parts are all narrow and high, sometimes these are straight-lined, or even completely angular. This is in clear contrast to the wide form of Ahiram, with its curved lines.

Kaph. In certain respects, the forms in the Tablet and in the Mesha Stele differ, but in both, the right hand stroke is projected downwards.

Mem. There is no reason whatsoever for assuming that the lowest stroke was initially of the same length as the others and that it was only lengthened later. The letter clearly has the younger form: a top part and a shaft.

Variants. It is not a feature peculiar to the Gezer Tablet that practically no letter appears twice in the identical shape. The variants, e. g., in the Ahiram inscription, are even more numerous.

The Gezer variants cannot be taken as “a proof that the forms of the letters were still unstable in details” {p. 53}. The man who wrote the Tablet does not appear to have been a professional engraver. His writing was thus a kind of cursive. We need only look at anything we write ourselves – and paper and pen are much easier materials to handle – in order to realize that we rarely shape a letter twice in precisely the identical way in one and the same line. Nobody would, however, therefore jump to the conclusion that the Roman characters of to-day are still unstable in detail.

30. The Dates of the Gezer Tablet and of the Samaria Ostraca*

I. The Gezer Tablet

The Gezer Tablet {see p. 101 in the present volume} cannot be dated from archaeological evidence. Let us see what aid towards determining its age can be derived from palaeography. There has been considerable deviation in the results arrived at by epigraphists on this score – the dates ranging from the eleventh century B. C. E. to about 900 B.C.E. This is not surprising since the material available for comparison is only very scanty. The following lines are an attempt, through a new, detailed comparison in the course of which a few recent finds have been utilized, once more to tackle the problem of their date.

The documents we shall utilize are: the Byblos inscriptions of Ahiram (A; early eleventh century)¹ and of Abibaal and Elibaal (AE; middle and second half of the tenth century), the Samaria Ivories (SI; first half of the ninth century), the Arslan Tash Ivories (AT; middle of the ninth century) and the Mesha Stele (M; about 850).

Aleph: In A, the oblique strokes, though converging, stop at the vertical and do not meet; they are curved. In the later inscriptions, they cross the vertical and meet; they are straight; the main stroke is longer than in A, and these characteristics are to be found also in G [=our Gezer Tablet], where, too, the angle of the cross strokes is much more obtuse than in M.

Daleth: In AE, the right side is vertical; in the later inscriptions and also in G, the right side is slanting. In AE and M, neither of the sides is produced downwards, which is also the case in G but not in SI and AT.

Waw: In A, the top part consists of a semi-circle; in SI, one example of it is still wide, both halves having nearly turned into straight lines; in M, the top is similar but narrower, which is also sometimes the case in G, where, too, there are forms with straight lines. Only in A does the downstroke turn left.

* First published in: *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 74 (July – Oct. 1942), pp. 104–108. – {For illustrations of inscriptions mentioned in this chapter see the introductory footnote to Chapter 29 in the present volume.}

¹ {Later S. A. B. dated the document 'ca. 975' (see *The Hebrew Scripts*, vol. 1, no. 01; see also above, Chapter 28, no. 1). – E. T.}

Zayin: In A, the two horizontals are short, in SI and AT they are long. The connecting stroke is usually vertical, but in SI a slanting one also occurs and it is this form which we find in G.

Heth: G agrees with A, SI and AT as against M, where the right hand vertical is prolonged downward.

Yodh: In A, the letter is a wide curve, halved by a short horizontal, and has a horizontal base; in AE, the top is nearly angular. In SI, AT and M it is completely so. The middle stroke is usually nearer the top stroke; both features are characteristic for G, too. The base is horizontal, as in A, in AE and AT; it slants upwards in SI and M; G has both upward and downward slants.

Kaph: In A and AE, all three strokes are of equal length, in AT the middle stroke, in M the right hand stroke is lengthened downwards. G agrees with M.

Lamedh: In A, the long stroke is slightly curved, in M, it is strongly curved; in AT, it is straight; the latter is also the case in G. The angle at the bottom is rather obtuse in A, but is acute in AT, as also in G.

Mem: In A, the lowest stroke is of the same length as the others, being just one line of the zig-zag. In the other inscriptions it is prolonged downward and this too, is the case in G. The downstroke is straight in G but in AT there is, besides this form, one whose end bends to the left, as in M.

Pe in A is practically crescent shaped, the upper part being just slightly less curved than the lower; in SI, the curve is broken; in M, the top is angular; G has the same feature but the left stroke of the angle is curved, whereas it is straight in M.

Sadhe and *Qoph* in G are as in AE and M.

Looking through these notes, we find that the difference between G and A is very marked: as many as about half of the letters of the alphabet have had to be discussed. Hence, the early part of the eleventh century seems to be out of the question for G. Aleph, Mem, Sadhe and Qoph would suggest that G cannot be older than the middle of the tenth century; Daleth, Zayin, Yodh and Mem would suggest that it is not older than the first half of the ninth century; Waw, Kaph, Lamedh and Pe would seem to bring it down to the middle of the ninth century. Looking now for characteristics pointing to a terminus ante quem, we come upon features of Aleph, Daleth, Heth and Mem which we no longer encounter after the middle of the ninth century. Thus our two lines of delimitation meet at this same date.

For the sake of convenience we might tabulate the results of our comparison as follows. When some characteristic of a letter points to a

definite chronological relationship between G and the other inscriptions, we shall indicate this by putting the approximate date of the inscription in question with a dash either before or after, e. g., “Yodh 875–” means: “The particular detail or characteristic of Yodh in the Gezer Tablet corresponds to that of the Yodh in the Samaria Ivories – it is younger than the forms of the Ahiram Sarcophagus and the Abibaal and Elibaal inscriptions; it therefore suggests a date for the Gezer Tablet not before or not much before the first half of the ninth century”.

(937 – AE, 875 – SI, 850 – AT, 850* – M.)

Aleph	937–
	–850*
Daleth	875–
	–850*
Waw	850*–
Zayin	875–
Heth	850*
Yodh	875–
Kaph	850*–
Lamedh	850–
	850–
Mem	937–
	–850
Pe	850*–
Sadhe	937–
Qoph	937–

The latest date on the left side and the earliest date on the right side indicate the period in which the Gezer Tablet was written. These are identical and give the middle of the ninth century.

II. The Samaria Ostraca

We did not include the Samaria Ostraca in our comparison for two reasons. Firstly, because their date is too uncertain. For the archaeological evidence bearing on their date offers us four possible periods: that of Ahab (867–854), of Jehu (842–815), Jehoahaz (814–798) or Jeroboam II (783–743). By utilising the Ostraca we should be trying to find the x of Gezer by means of the y of Samaria. Secondly, if possible, it is of course, preferable to avoid comparison between inscription style and handwriting.

The position is, however, different when attempting to date the Ostraca. No handwritten material near their period is available for comparison,

and so we have no alternative but to make use of inscriptions. There are, in all, not more than two inscriptions we can utilise. But they have the advantage of standing at the beginning and at the end of the period in question: the Mesha Stele and the Siloam inscription (Si; of about 700). Are the forms of the Samaria Ostraca (S) nearer M or nearer Si?

Aleph: The cross strokes of S are almost parallel, as in Si, but, on the other hand, they meet as in M. *Hê*: S resembles Si more than M. *Waw*: S and Si are identical as against M. *Zayin*: There is no Zayin in M, but, for the sake of completeness, we might perhaps compare G; S goes together with Si, as against G. *Heth*: S resembles Si more than M. *Yodh*: The angles in S and Si are on the whole more acute than in M. *Kaph*: S and Si have the downstroke bending to the left, in M it is straight. *Lamedh*: The slant is more like that in Si than that in M. *Mem*: The top parts of S and Si resemble each other with their parallel; M is different. *Nûn*: In S, the hook as a rule does not go to the top of the downstroke, in M it does. *Samekh*: There is no Samekh in Si; S does not agree with M. *Ayin*: S and Si have an oval in a slanting position, M has a circle. *Sadhe*: S has the duplicated form of Si, not the archaic form of M. *Qoph*: One of the forms of S agrees with the form of Si, as against M.

This comparison would seem to leave us no doubt that S is nearer to Si than to M and that the Ostraca belong to one of the later possible periods. The similarity is, in fact, so great that they can safely be ascribed to the latest period, that of Jeroboam II, i. e., to the years 774, 773, 768 and 766 B. C. E. This dating would also prevent there being too wide a gap between their time and the time of the Lachish Ostraca. If the Samaria Ostraca were put at the early 9th century, the small degree of development from this date to the Lachish Ostraca of the early 6th century would be somewhat surprising.

31. The Palaeo-Hebrew Ostraca Sherds and a Fragment of a Stele, all from Samaria*

A. Ostraca

The sherds dealt with in this chapter were first published by E. L. Sukenik. His untimely death has caused the present edition to be placed into other hands. He was – as Mr. Crowfoot told me – no longer satisfied with his original readings and would have suggested a number of changes had he lived to carry through a revision.

Many letters on these sherds are indistinct or mutilated and require detailed discussion before a reading can be arrived at. In the transliteration a line over a letter signifies uncertainty of reading, a double line indicates a higher degree of uncertainty.¹

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- A:** Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Inscribed Hebrew and Aramaic Potsherds from Samaria”, in: *PEFQS* 65 (1933), pp. 152–156.
- B:** Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Inscribed Potsherds with Biblical Names from Samaria”, in: *PEFQS* 65 (1933), pp. 200–204.
- C:** David Diringer, *Le Iscrizioni anticho-ebraiche palestinesi*. Florence 1934.
- D:** Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Potsherds from Samaria, Inscribed with the Divine Name”, in: *PEFQS* 68 (1936), pp. 34–37.
- E:** W. E. Staples, “A Note on an Inscribed Potsherd”, in: *PEFQS* 68 (1936), p. 155.
- F:** Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Note on a Fragment of an Israelite Stele Found at Samaria”, in: *PEFQS* 68 (1936), p. 156.
- G:** William F. Albright, “Ostrakon C 1101 of Samaria”, in: *PEFQS* 68 (1936), pp. 211–215.
- H:** Eleazar L. Sukenik, “A Further Note on an Inscribed Potsherd”, in: *PEQ* 69 (1937), pp. 140–141.
- J:** Shemuel Yeivin: *Toldot ha-ketav ha-‘Ivri*, vol. 1: ‘Ad ḥurban Bayit Rishon. Jerusalem 1939.
- K:** Sabatino Moscati: *L’Epigrafia ebraica antica 1935–1950*. Rome 1951.

* First published in: *Samaria-Sebaste*. Reports of the Work of the Joint Expedition in 1931–1933, and of the British Expedition in 1935. Vol. 3: *The Objects from Samaria*, by John W. Crowfoot [et al.]. London, Palestine Exploration Fund, 1957, pp. 9–34, plates 1–4.

¹ This device was first used in my article in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (*PEQ*) 71 (1939), pp. 20–28 and pp. 91–110 [= Chapter 32 in the present volume].

Some of the Documents used in the Study of the Script

		B. C. E.
AshD	Aššur Documents ²	659; ³ c. 660 ⁴
EgD	Egyptian Documents ⁵	third century
EIP	Elephantine Papyri ⁶	495–400
EIS	Eliakim Stamp ⁷	c. 590
Esan	Esangil Endorsement ⁸	330
Ged	Gedaliah Seal ⁹	586
GezT	Gezer Tablet ¹⁰	c. 875
HarO	Harvard Ostraca ¹¹	770 ¹²
Jaaz	Jaazaniah Seal ¹³	c. 590
LachO	Lachish Ostraca ¹⁴	c. 590 ¹⁵
lmlk	lmlk jar handle stamps (periods I–III)	726–589
Sen	Documents, Senacherib period ¹⁶	705–681
Shal	Documents, Shalmaneser period ¹⁷	727–722
ShemS	Shema Seal ¹⁸	c. 764 ¹⁹
Sil	Siloam Inscription ²⁰	c. 700 ²¹

² Mark Lidzbarski, *Altaramäische Urkunden* {aus Assur. Leipzig 1921} (Ausgrabungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft {E, 5. Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft} 38).

³ Berlin, Museum: V. A. 7498.

⁴ Berlin, Museum: V. A. 8384.

⁵ S. A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts*, nos. 148–150, 154–161.

⁶ A. H. Sayce and A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri* {discovered at Assuan. London 1906}; Eduard Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus* {und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine. Leipzig 1911}; Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, nos. 122–147.

⁷ Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, nos. 21 and 22.

⁸ Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris* {für semitische Epigraphik. 3 vols., Giessen 1902–1915}, vol. 2, p. 202.

⁹ {David Diringer, “On Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions Discovered at Tell ed-Duweir (Lachish)” – Part II, in:} *PEQ* 73 (1941), pp. 89–109, pl. VIII. 5.

¹⁰ Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, no. 2.

¹¹ George A. Reisner [et al.], *Harvard Excavations* {at Samaria, 2 vols., Cambridge 1924}; Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, nos. 4–9.

¹² Round figure for the years 773/772, 772/771, 767/766.

¹³ Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, nos. 19 and 20.

¹⁴ Harry Torczyner, {*Lachish. I:*} *The Lachish Letters*. {Oxford 1938}; Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, nos. 23–26; idem, “The Lachish Ostraca”, in: *PEQ* 71 (1939), pp. 20–28, 91–110 [= Chapter 32 in the present volume].

¹⁵ Round figure for the period 597–588.

¹⁶ *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (= *CIS*). Vol. 2, {Paris 1889ff.,} nos. 10, 15, 16, 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, nos. 2–7, 11.

¹⁸ Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, no. 3.

¹⁹ Round figure for the period 782–746.

²⁰ Birnbaum, *op. cit.*, no. 14.

²¹ Round figure for the period 716–684.

I. The Material in Palaeo-Hebrew Script

Sherd 1 (plate I. 1)

ברכשלם	1	brkšlm̄
ברכ // הועמהקשבו	2	brk // hw ^ʿ mhqšbw
ימנהשערמ _	3	ymnhš ^ʿ rm _

The contents are by no means clear. Perhaps the fact that each of the three lines is written by a different person²² may help us to discover the meaning of the ostracon.

Line 1: We could take *brk* as the name of the addressee and *šlm* as the greeting addressed to him: *baruk, šalom* ‘Baruch, greetings!’ On comparison with the Lachish Ostraca this interpretation does not commend itself. Most of these begin with the greeting (IV, V, VIII, IX), one with the address of the sender (III), and two start with the designation and name of the recipient (II, IV: *ʾl ʾdny yʾws*). Of these, the latter is the nearest in meaning to the interpretation of *brk* as ‘Baruch’. It differs, however, in an important respect. In LachO, the recipient is not directly addressed, but *ʾl* is placed before his name. It may therefore be preferable to take *brk* as the greeting: *baruk* ‘be blessed!’ The next word would then presumably not be another greeting – *baruk, šalom* ‘be blessed! peace’ – but the name of the addressee: *šallum* (or *šillem*). Line 1 would accordingly read: ‘Greetings, Shallum!’ This result – arrived at before examination of Sherd 4 – would be borne out by that ostracon. Finally, the possibility must be mentioned that the line contains no greetings but consists of two names: ‘Baruch, Shallum’.

Line 2: It would seem natural to read *brk* as a name: *baruk* ‘Baruch’. The numeral sign after it would connect its bearer in some way with two units of something – we do not know what. If we were to read *brk* as *barka* ‘thy grain’ (Yeivin) we would be exchanging our knowledge of the addressee’s name for that of the material. As the seventh sign is not a resh we cannot read *rōʿim* ‘shepherds’. This sign not being pe either, we cannot read *pʿm*. It would be very difficult to interpret too. *Happaʿam* signifies ‘this time in particular’ as distinct from other times, it is not the colourless expletive ‘now’. As a matter of fact, the phrase that has been suggested: ‘now pay attention’, would be a sort of expletive, and we would not expect to meet with that kind of thing in the short and necessarily elementary text usual on an ostracon. The letter in question

²² This is obvious from the script, and can be verified by a comparison of the individual letters (see pp. 21–24).

being most probably a waw, we seem to have here a phonetic spelling of the personal pronoun, third person masculine. The subsequent letters 'm, if read 'im 'with', would be compatible with such a reading, and the next letters hqs too, would fit in, if read haqqaš 'the straw'. Such a word would not be surprising in a context containing the word 'barley' (line 3). The last two letters of the line could then be read bo 'in it', 'in him', and this might conceivably refer to the field. The second half of the line is very crowded, especially at the end. I rather think no writing is missing on the left and the surface of the edge has only splintered off.²³ Anyhow, if haqqaš is correct, and b means 'in', then w cannot be the first letter of a word. Could we have here a haplography for hqs sbw, the second š being the relative pronoun? This word is considered to be late, but on the other hand, we have it in Phoenician (usually with a prosthetic aleph).

Line 3: If my suggestion that nothing is missing on the left of line 2 is correct, then the first letter of line 3 could not be the final one of the last word in line 2, and in that case the reading min 'from', 'of' would be impossible. Ymn hš'rm 'he shall count the barley' or ymnh š'rm 'he shall count barley' does not seem too likely in a document of this kind where we expect the registration of facts rather than references to the future. In addition, it would be striking in such a short text to employ quite unnecessarily the word 'counting' – the idea being already expressed in the figure connected with the word 'barley'. It appears preferable to regard ymnh and the word brk above it as parallel to each other, i. e., ymnh would be the name Imnah (Gen. 46: 17, etc.). In connection with the name Baruch we have an indication of a quantity ('2'); followed by a word denoting a material ('straw'). Likewise – although in different order – the name Imnah is connected with an object ('barley') followed by an indication of quantity ('13', or '3, 8, 23' etc.).

Tentative Translation and Interpretation:

- 1 Greeting, Shallum!
- 2 Baruch: 2; the one (?) with the straw.
- 3 Imnah: barley: 13 (or 3, 8, 23, etc.).

Perhaps our document is a receipt made out by two people – that would fit in with the fact that lines 2 and 3 are written by different hands. It would have been handed to a man in charge who forwarded it to Shallum and therefore wrote line 1, the formula of address. Or it might

²³ In line 1, however, a rather bigger bit has come off, although even that must have been a very narrow splinter.