

The Jewish Communities in Eastern Rough Cilicia

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This article discusses Jewish communities and their material remains in Eastern Rough Cilicia mainly during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. After mentioning some written sources about the Jewish presence in western Anatolia, the general paucity of testimonies about Jewish communities in central and eastern Anatolia is emphasized. This lack of evidence might be due to the fact, that both areas are not as well explored and researched as Western Anatolia. The focus of the paper lies on the eastern most region of Rough Cilicia. It discusses rock inscriptions, rock carvings, and (decorated) architectural remains which bear witness to a strong Jewish presence in many cities of this region.

The full extent of the Jewish diaspora will never be known. In the years following the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel, the Jewish people were dispersed throughout the Middle East. In the centuries that followed leading up to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, this dispersal of the Jewish people and their culture continued its expanse into Africa, Europe, and the Far East. It is difficult to determine the times and places where Jews settled in these regions. By examining ancient texts, researching ancient inscriptions, and excavating ruins, we are able to pin down a few times and places where Jews settled during these periods. However, this process is imperfect since these resources provide us with random finds. Evidence of a Jewish presence at a site does not always survive for thousands of years and some of the evidence that has survived can be disputed.

I have concentrated my research upon ancient Anatolia and I have particularly focused upon the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This territory is vast and has not been well explored. Comparatively speaking, most ancient sites in Turkey are relatively untouched when compared to sites in Israel, Greece, southern France, Italy, Egypt, and Jordan. Outside of several sites in western Turkey, the ancient sites in Turkey are scarcely excavated or not excavated at all. I have travelled to many of these sites for the past seventeen years and have visited more than 270 ancient sites in Turkey that date back to the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Some of these sites are unknown by their ancient city names and most of these are seldom visited. I have a collection of more than 250,000 photographs from these places, including many unpublished inscriptions still in situ. The point to be made is that there is an abundance of information that can still be gathered from ancient Anatolia.

With more scholars now turning their attention to Turkey, evidence of a Jewish presence in ancient Anatolia is increasingly being exposed. Paul Trebilco's *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (1991) was published twenty three

years ago and is already out of date.¹ Rachel Hachlili's *Ancient Synagogues – Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research* (2013), published within the past year, is excellent, but says almost nothing about Jews and synagogues in Asia Minor.²

Josephus claimed that Jews could be found in most cities: “This people has already made its way into every city; and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt.”³ Nevertheless literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence of a Jewish presence in the cities of Anatolia is fairly scant.

Josephus claimed that in the 3rd cent. B.C.E. Antiochus II relocated several Jewish families to Ionia and that Antiochus III transplanted 2,000 Jewish families from Mesopotamia to Phrygia.⁴ 1 Macc 15:16–23 cites a letter written by the Roman senate in 139–138 B.C.E. to several locations where Jews resided in Anatolia, including the Pergamene kingdom, Cappadocia, Caria, Lycia, and Pamphylia. Additionally, specific cities are mentioned: Myndos, Halicarnassus, Knidos, Phaselis, and Side. Later in 62 B.C.E. Lucius Valerius Flaccus impounded the temple tax of Jewish families from Phrygia (Laodicea and Apamea) and Mysia (Adramyttium and Pergamum) amounting to more than 220 Roman pounds.⁵ This money was destined for Jerusalem, but Flaccus objected to the export of such wealth. If this monetary figure is accurate, it would indicate that there were more than 90,000 male Jews over the age of 20 in Phrygia and Mysia at that time.⁶ In the 1st cent. C.E., Philo claimed that there were numerous Jews living in Pamphylia, Cilicia, Bithynia, and Pontus.⁷

There is ample evidence to indicate a sizeable Jewish presence in western Anatolia, but what about central and eastern Anatolia? Here, we are vaguely aware of the Jewish communities in these areas due to the paucity of our information. Our literary sources offer few references to Jews in these regions and there are relatively few inscriptions from the eastern parts of Anatolia. Why? Perhaps the reason is because Anatolia has not been well explored. While it can be said that archaeologists have been slow to dig in Anatolia, this is particularly true in eastern Anatolia. Many of the inscriptions in the eastern half of Anatolia are unpublished and are still in the field. Thus, the current lack of evidence for a Jewish presence in these areas is not proof that Jews scarcely populated these regions. In fact, the proximity of these regions to Palestine would suggest that the Jewish population in eastern Anatolia would be great.

1 P. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

2 R. Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues – Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 105; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

3 Josephus, *Ant.* 14.115.

4 Josephus, *Ant.* 12.125, 149.

5 Cicero, *Flac.* 28.67–69.

6 It has been argued that Cicero has inflated the amount of the payment.

7 Philo, *Legat.* 281–82.

For the purposes of this essay, I want to focus attention upon the western most region of Rough Cilicia from the Calycadnus River to the Lamas River. This region was known as a pirate enclave throughout the Hellenistic and early Roman period. In spite of Roman propaganda to the contrary, De Souza persuasively argues that the Romans never drove the pirates out of the region.⁸ Due to the rough mountainous interior the river routes were the only way to penetrate the interior. Here however, the sheer canyon walls made it easy for the pirates to hide and defend their territory.⁹ There is no evidence to indicate that Pompey or any of the earlier Roman military leaders did any fighting east of Anemurium. Those pirates who withdrew further east to Rough Cilicia could flee a short distance into the perilous interior where the Roman troops would have found it impossible to eradicate their presence. Due to the dangers and difficulty of travel in this region, I would suggest that few outsiders visited the region and those that did seldom penetrated the interior. Perhaps this is why we have few references to this area in the literary sources. Pliny's catalog of cities in Rough Cilicia only lists a few cities from the interior.¹⁰

In spite of the paucity of literary sources that referred to this area, there are enough clues to indicate that there was clearly a strong Jewish presence in Rough Cilicia. Josephus reports that Herod visited Elaioussa Sebaste with his sons. When he returned to Judea he came to the temple and boasted of the things he had done to gain favor with the Jews.¹¹ Although this passage mentions nothing of Jews in Cilicia, Herod's speech at the temple implies that he offered benefactions to Jews in Cilicia. Elsewhere Josephus noted that Herod offered tax relief to several cities in Cilicia, perhaps for the benefit of Jews in the region.¹² Acts 6:9 recorded the presence of a synagogue of freedmen in Jerusalem comprised of Jews from Cilicia as well as Cyrene, Alexandria, and Asia.¹³ Additionally, Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3 and Galatians 1:21 refer to the Jew Saul (Paul) as having come from Tarsus in Cilicia. Later in the 1st cent. C. E., Josephus referred to Alexander (the son of Tigranes, a Jewish king of Armenia) who was appointed king of Ketis in Cilicia by Vespasian.¹⁴ The appointment of a Jew to this position is probably an indication of a large Jewish presence in the region. In a peculiar move, Berenice married Polemo, king of Cilicia, and induced him to be circumcised only

8 P. de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

9 It has been fashionable in recent years to limit piracy during the Hellenistic period to the Bay of Pamphylia from Olympus and Phaselis in the west to Anemurium in the east. M. Durukan, "The Connection of Eastern and Central Cilicia with Piracy," *Adalya* 12 (2009): 77–102 persuasively argues that the pirates retreated further to the east, i. e. to the region east of the Calycadnus River.

10 Pliny, *Nat.* 5.27.

11 Josephus, *Ant.* 16.131–33.

12 Josephus, *J. W.* 1.428.

13 This may be referenced in the well known Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem.

14 Josephus, *Ant.* 18.140–41.

later to leave him.¹⁵ Sometime later the 4th cent. C. E. church father Epiphanius of Salamis narrated the story of a Jewish official named Joseph from Cilicia who was commissioned to collect taxes from the Jews and who, after experiencing opposition, was flogged in the synagogue.¹⁶

Ancient ruins and inscriptions from the area likewise bear witness to a strong Jewish presence in Cilicia. The door on a tomb in the necropolis at Seleucia Ad Calycadnum (Silifke) contains an inscription reading: “Tomb of a Hebrew.” Another tomb in the necropolis is marked with two menorot and an inscription “Tomb of Theodoros, grandson of Theodoros.” Ameling dates these to the 4th C. E. or later.¹⁷

About 23 kilometers inland from Silifke, a small altar with a relief carving of a menorah was found at Diocaesarea (Uzuncaburç). This has been dated to the 4th or 5th cent. C. E.¹⁸ The menorah is unusual in that it has only five branches, rather than the typical seven.¹⁹ Additionally, on the side of the altar there is a large relief of an ear. The use of pagan iconography such as the ear is unusual and Ameling interprets this as an appeal to God to listen. Inscribed on the front in large letters is the word EYXHN (“vow”). At Aphrodisias we have a reference to the “God who hears” and perhaps this is similar.²⁰ Alternately, the small altar could be a votive offering to God in keeping with a vow. Copies of body parts like these are common as votives to healing deities, particularly Asclepius.

A similar five branched menorah was found on a rock cut relief of Athena at Sömek, about 15 kilometers east of Diocaesarea (Uzuncaburç).²¹ Like the menorah from Diocaesarea, this menorah has five branches, rests upon a two legged base and contains a star at the top center of the menorah. Yet another five branched menorah with a two legged base was set in relief upon a lintel at Örendibi, not far from Sömek.²² Though the five branched menorah was uncommon elsewhere, it seems to have been more popular in Rough Cilicia.

15 Josephus, *Ant.* 20.145–47.

16 Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.11

17 W. Ameling, (ed.), *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis: Kleinasiens* (vol. 2 of *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 521.

18 Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 230.

19 R. Hachlili, *The Menorah, the Ancient Seven-Armed Candelabrum: Origin, Form and Significance* (Supplements to JSJ 68; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 157, notes that menorot appear on objects in Israel and the diaspora with three, five, six and nine arms.

20 Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 19. Aphrodisias had a large Jewish population. An inscription found at the site mentions at least 125 names – 68 identified as Jews, three as proselytes and 54 as Godfearers (*theosebeis*). Also from Tanais on the Black Sea, an inscription includes the words “to God Most High who hears,” *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* [CIRB] 1260; (Moskow: Nauka, 1965). A drawing of this inscription can be found in L. Stephani, “Erklärung einiger im südlichen Russland gefundener Kunstwerke,” *Compte rendu de la Commission Impériale Archéologique pour les années 1870 et 1871* (1874): 3–290, 232.

21 S. Durugönül and A. Mörel, “Evidence of Judaism in Rough Cilicia and its Associations with Paganism,” *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 62 (2012): 303–32, 308–11.

22 Durugönül and Mörel, “Judaism in Rough Cilicia,” 311–12.

One kilometer to the south of Diocaesarea a tomb dated to the first half of the third cent. bears the inscription: “Tomb of M. Aurelius Zoilos and Diogenes, Jews.”²³

Twenty five kilometers northeast up the coast from Silifke, the ancient city of Korykos has more evidence of a Jewish presence than in any other ancient Cilician town.²⁴ The large necropolis at Korykos contains at least twelve epitaphs of Jews buried in the city.²⁵ Among them are the following sarcophagi inscriptions with their *IJO* (and *MAMA*)²⁶ catalog numbers.

- #232 (*MAMA* III 205) “Tomb of Father Symonos, blessed among priests” – Menorah on right – 4th cent. C. E. or later.
- #233 (*MAMA* III 222) “Within lies Alexander from Anemurion, a Jew with his wife. If anyone should disturb us, he must pay 2,500 denarii to the most holy treasurer” – 2nd or 3rd cent. C. E., before 212.
- #234 (*MAMA* III 237) “Tomb of Anastasius and Jacob, shoemakers, sons of Diogenes the blessed” – Menorah on left – 5th or 6th cent. C. E.
- #235 (*MAMA* III 295 & 751) “Here lies Damianos a Jew” and “Tomb of Philonomius son of Philip” – 5th cent. C. E. cent or later.²⁷
- #236 (*MAMA* III 262) “Tomb of Aur. Eusanbatios son of Menandros, citizen of Korykos and his wife Matrones also known as Photion and also entombed, here lies within Photion herself, the granddaughter of Matrones and of ... ducenarius, both from Seleucia, and their sweet children. If anyone plans to put another body herein, he shall give to the descendants of the same Eusanbatios three ounces of gold ... Do not be disheartened, for no one is immortal except one, and this one has commanded that you come into being, and he brought us into the sphere of the planets.” – 3rd cent. C. E.
- #237 (*MAMA* III 344) “Here lies Eusambatios, a Presbyter, a Jew and a perfume dealer” – Two Menorah flanking the inscription – 4th or 5th cent. C. E.
- #238 (*MAMA* III 440) “Here lies within Judas and Alexas of Nisaios, sons of Jews. If anyone should disturb us, he must pay 2,500 denarii to the most holy treasurer.” – 3rd cent. C. E.

23 Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 231.

24 Ameling comments that there are few ancient cities from the Imperial period with more inscriptions than Korykos, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 500.

25 These are listed in Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 232–43.

26 J. Keil and A. Wilhelm (eds.), *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua. Denkmäler aus dem rauhen Kilikien* (vol. 3 of *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* [*MAMA*]; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931).

27 M. H. Williams, “The Jewish Community of Corycus: Two More Inscriptions,” *ZPE* 92 (1992): 248–52. Philonomius was later buried in the same sarcophagus. Williams argues that his name (“lover of the law”) and the fact that he was buried in the same sarcophagus as Damianos indicate that Philonomius was a Jew. Williams also argues that the inscription on *MAMA* III, 684 (below) was for a Jew. Ameling comments that Damianos was most likely named after one of the two Christian martyrs Cosmas and Damian, see Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, no. 506. According to tradition, Cosmas and Damian were twin brothers who were martyred and beheaded during the time of Diocletian (late 3rd cent.). If true, the fact that a Jew was named after a Christian martyr is remarkable.

- #239 (*MAMA* III 448) “Tomb of Julius, perfume dealer, son of Julius the Presbyter” – Menorah on right – 4th cent. C. E. or later.
- #240 (*MAMA* III 607) “Tomb of Moses, foremost Goldsmith, a Hebrew” – Hebrew = relatively late date.²⁸
- #241 (*MAMA* III 679) “Samoës, oar maker and Auxantios, Jews” Menorah on right – 4th cent. C. E. or later.
- #242 (*MAMA* III 684) “Samuel” and “Descendants of Samuoe: Theodotos and Samoës” – 4th cent. C. E. or later.
- #243 (*MAMA* III 758) “Here lies Charitines Deaconess, Samaritan, daughter of Epiphanios” – 4th–6th cent. C. E.

The large necropolis at Korykos contains the sarcophagi and rock cut tombs of Pagans, Christians and Jews and these tombs are randomly mixed throughout the necropolis. The mingling of these tombs probably tells us something of the social matrix of the Korykos society during the Roman imperial period and the early Byzantine period.

Surveying all of the Jewish inscriptions from Cilicia, Hengel and Schwemer conclude: “the fact that an amazing amount of Jewish or Judaizing epigraphic evidence has been preserved in the politically and economically much less significant ‘Rough Cilicia’ and the adjacent areas allows us to assume that the Jewish population of Tarsus and other Cilician cities must have been considerable.”²⁹

An Armenian castle is located on the shore at Korykos, a short distance from the necropolis. Another Armenian castle, known as Kızkalesi is 400 meters offshore. The castle on the mainland has a double wall encircling it and was built upon the ruins of earlier Byzantine and Roman fortifications. These fortifications surround the Roman agora of Korykos. The inner walls are a composite collection of different periods. In the southeast of the castle there is a lintel of a door, still resting upon its jambs, that is nearly buried. Rubble from the collapsing castle has filled the ground level approximately six feet. On the top left of the lintel there is a nicely inscribed squared menorah with a three legged base. This would seem to indicate a synagogue or at least the shop of a Jewish businessman. The presence of this synagogue or shop in the agora suggests that the Jews of Korykos were active in the trade and transport of goods. The presence of Jewish sarcophagi nearby with inscriptions describing occupations such as perfume dealer (#237 and #239), goldsmith (#240) and oar maker (#241) contribute to this conclusion.

Excavations by the Italians at the coastal city of Elaiouisia Sebaste, two kilometers northeast of Korykos, indicate that the community was extensively

28 M. H. Williams, “Jewish Use of Moses as a Personal Name in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: A Note,” *ZPE* 118 (1997): 274; and idem “The Case for Jewish Use of Moses as a Personal Name in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” *ZPE* 140 (2002): 279–83.

29 M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 161.

involved in the production and trade of wine and olive oil.³⁰ With Korykos located such a short distance down the coast, it would be surprising if Jews from Korykos were not involved in these activities.

Eight kilometers to the north of Korykos is an ancient site known locally as Kabaçam. The ancient city name is unknown, but the ruins indicate that the site was occupied from the Hellenistic period through the Byzantine period. In a small underground granary another menorah can be found. Etched into the plaster are four graffiti: a menorah, a goat and two ships. The menorah is unusual. Stretched laterally, the branches of the menorah are elongated giving the appearance of a ship (pl. 13, 2). The stem of the menorah is without a base and contains three prongs in the upper portion, perhaps giving the impression of a sail. The two ship graffiti are similar in appearance. The hull of both ships end with a curved bow terminating in a squared prow, typical of Phoenician ships.³¹ A Phoenician merchant ship from the 1st cent. similar to these graffiti can be found in Casson's *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*.³² If this interpretation is correct it seems that the Jews of Kabaçam were involved in trading with the coast of Palestine.³³ Several much larger granaries are located seven kilometers to the east of Kabaçam at the ancient coastal village of Tirtar Akkale. Again, the ancient city name is unknown, but the massive granaries here bear similarities as well as differences to those at Patara and Andriake, dating to the time of Hadrian.

Seven kilometers to the north of Korykos and about two kilometers from Kabaçam is another unknown ancient city known locally as Çatiören. The site originated as a Hellenistic fortress and continued to be occupied up to the Byzantine period. Ruins can be seen scattered on three parallel ridges with steep ravines and small streams separating them. The center ridge is topped

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- 30 V. Iacomi, "Some Notes on Late-Antique Oil and Wine Production in Rough Cilicia (Isauria) in the Light of Epigraphic Sources: Funerary Inscriptions from Korykos, LR 1 Amphorae Production in Elaiussa Sebaste and the Abydos Tariff," in *Olive Oil and Wine Production in Anatolia During Antiquity* (eds. Ü. Aydınoğlu et al.; Istanbul: KAAM, 2010), 19–32.
- 31 Cf. A. M. Smith, "Phoenician Ships: Types, Trends, Trade and Treacherous Trade Routes" (Ph. D. diss.; University of South Africa, 2012), 69–71.
- 32 L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 370–71, fig. 156. The ship is depicted on a sarcophagus dated to the second half of the 1st cent., currently in the Beirut National Museum.
- 33 Based upon the amphorae found in the area, Ferrazzoli remarks that the coastal cities of eastern Rough Cilicia from the Hellenistic period up through the 1st cent. C. E., were mostly involved in trading oil and wine with the Aegean region, but that they also had significant trading partners in the cities of Phoenicia. A. F. Ferrazzoli, "Economy of Roman Eastern Rough Cilicia: Some Archaeological Indicators," *Bollettino di archeologia online* 1 (2010): 39–50, 39–40. Phoenician amphorae in western Rough Cilicia, as well as a Phoenician inscription found at Laertes, dating back as far as the 7th cent. B. C. E. confirm the understanding that Rough Cilicia had a long standing trading relationship with the Phoenician coast. Cf. N. K. Rauh et al., "Life in the Truck Lane: Urban Development in Western Rough Cilicia," *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien* 78 (2009): 253–312, 269–70.

with the well preserved buildings of a Hellenistic fortification. The fortification was constructed with polygonal masonry similar to other buildings at Çatiören and numerous other structures throughout this region in Rough Cilicia. A large watch tower overlooks the site and is adjacent to an excellently preserved temple to Hermes. There are numerous other watch towers in the area, most of which are similarly constructed with polygonal masonry. The presence of these watch towers raises the question of security concerns among these ancient towns and villages. I will say something more about this later.

On the ascent to the central ridge other polygonally constructed buildings are not as well preserved. Many of them have succumbed to the steep slope and have fallen into the ravine below. One of these buildings has been significantly degraded, but is fairly well preserved and contains a simple menorah cut in the center of the lintel at the entrance to the building (pl. 14, 1). The menorah is primitive and does not have a tripod base, as is customary of later Roman and Byzantine menorot.³⁴ The simplicity of the menorah along with the polygonal construction of the structure both contribute to an early dating of the building. Next to the menorah there is another object. It may be a *lulav*, but this identification is not certain. The *lulav* is a collection of branches from the date palm, the myrtle and the willow. If this is a *lulav* it is represented with three distinct branches that are bundled at the center. As Hachlili notes, the *lulav* is represented in various ways, but if this is a *lulav* it would be a unique representation.³⁵ The previously mentioned five branched menorot from Sömek and Örendibi are accompanied with relief cut objects that have some similarities to this object from Çatiören. Durugönül and Mörel identify these objects as Zeus' thunderbolts and claim that the Jews of Cilicia were influenced by their Pagan neighbors and were comfortable utilizing these pagan symbols.³⁶ The objects from Sömek and Örendibi are dated later than the object at Çatiören and the reliefs from Sömek and Örendibi are better developed than the crudely inscribed object at Çatiören. Nonetheless, the similarities between the objects invite the suggestion that the Çatiören *lulav* is actually Zeus' thunderbolt.³⁷

At Çatiören, both the menorah and the *lulav* (or thunderbolt) are heavily pitted and are consistent with the pitting on the rest of the lintel and the building. The pitting demonstrates the antiquity of the building and the consistency of the pitting suggests that the menorah and *lulav* (thunderbolt) were

34 Hachlili, *The Menorah*, 16, states that the tripod base can be seen on Jewish candelabra as early as the 8th cent. B. C. E., but that the tripod base only became a dominant feature of the menorah in the 3rd cent. C. E. Hachlili adds: "in the earliest examples of the menorah in the Second Temple period the tripod base is absent" (167).

35 Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 325–27. The examples provided by Hachlili on page 326 exhibit a great deal of variety. It appears that there was no standard representation of the *lulav*.

36 Durugönül and Mörel, "Judaism in Rough Cilicia," 309–12.

37 I originally identified the object as a *lulav*. Cf. M. Fairchild, "Turkey's Unexcavated Synagogues: Could the World's Earliest Known Synagogue Be Buried Amid Rubble?" *BAR* 38.4 (2012): 34–41, 65. However, I am now inclined to see this as Zeus' thunderbolt.

placed on the lintel at the time of the building's original construction. Buildings higher on the ridge have collapsed and fallen into the building with the menorah, filling this building with debris at least five feet above the original floor. Consequently, the entrance with the menorah is nearly filled – making it difficult to crawl inside.

Once inside, the building is rather small, measuring approximately four meters square. On the inside of the lintel another small menorah is etched on the left (pl. 14, 2). On the wall opposite of the door, facing south, there is a small niche less than a foot square. From this location in Cilicia, Jerusalem is due south. This raises the possibility that this niche could have held Torah scrolls. In the southeast of the building the wall has crumbled enough that one can step out of the building and onto a rock cut staircase that led up to a second floor of the building (pl. 15, 1). It is tempting to speculate that the upper floor might have been used by either women or God fearers. There has been a great deal of discussion about the position of women and God fearers in the synagogues. Some have suggested that they were accommodated in a separate room or a second floor loft. However, nothing remains of the second floor in this building. Descending the rock cut steps and turning left, there is a water basin built into the eastern wall of the building with the menorahs (pl. 15, 1.2). Holes in the wall indicate where water fed the pool and rust stains remain on the wall. The basin has a small outlet at the foot to allow for a flow of water from the basin. The water outlet fed two small circular foot bowls.

With all of these features taken together, it is hard to escape the conclusion that we have an early synagogue in Çatiören. Since the construction of this building is consistent with other Hellenistic buildings at Çatiören and elsewhere in the area I would suggest that the synagogue dates to the Hellenistic period. This conclusion is strengthened by the existence of two inscriptions found at the site. Theodore Bent visited the site in 1890 and found six inscriptions, but failed to see the synagogue.³⁸ One of these inscriptions is almost unreadable, but Hicks was able to make out a few words from the squeeze: ἡ ἑταιρία τῶν σαββατιστῶν (“the associate [or religious associate] of the Sabbath Keepers”).³⁹

The second inscription was transcribed from a better squeeze. Translated it reads:

It is resolved by the religious members and God's Sabbath keepers, by [the authority of] the Sabbath keepers with regard to those in the synagogue to create an inscribed record excluding no one. But for those who do so, let them make a religious purification. If anyone wishes to deposit a curse against someone, may the one who wishes to do so be accursed. Protos says “Crown Dis Ibelion the synagogue official.” Of those

38 J. T. Bent, “Explorations in Cilicia Tracheia,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 12 (1890): 445–63, cf. also, J. T. Bent, “A Journey in Cilicia Tracheia,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 12 (1891): 206–24, esp. 210–11.

39 E. L. Hicks, “Inscriptions from Western Cilicia,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 12 (1891): 225–73, 236.

who are cursed in the sanctuaries and of those inscribed upon the steles, let no one be accursed, nor excised from the record, nor dismissed, nor removed. And if anyone in this regard should deviate or sin against the Sabbath God, let them also make payment to the Sabbath God of one hundred drachmas, and to the Sabbath keepers one hundred drachmas, and to the city one hundred drachmas, and to the ruler (dynast) one hundred drachmas. And let this stele be a record to welcome others with no partiality on this day. And may the priest utilize the payments to God for the maintenance of this place.

Hicks claimed that the inscription could not be dated later than the time of Augustus and suggested that it was written sometime earlier during the Hellenistic period.⁴⁰

This community at Çatiören has been described as “a group of ‘sympathizer’ gentiles who observed the Sabbath and worshipped Yahveh.”⁴¹ Walter Ameling asserts that the description of these people as “gentiles” is very doubtful and suggests that a Jewish presence in the community cannot be excluded.⁴² In fact, both Jews and gentiles are probably represented here. The second inscription distinguishes between two groups: the religious members and God’s Sabbath keepers. I take the reference to the “religious members” in both of these inscriptions to refer to non-Jewish associates, perhaps God fearers. There were probably various degrees of association with the synagogue for non-Jewish friends.⁴³ Rajak and others suggest that the synagogue was an organization that was not entirely based upon one’s birth, but rather allowed for individuals to choose membership.⁴⁴ As such, the synagogue was similar to other clubs or associations in the Greco-Roman world. Nevertheless, the distinction between Jewish members of the synagogue and non-Jewish members of the synagogue was maintained with the terms *Σαββατισταί* and *ἑταῖροι*.

The reference to Dis Ibelion is also interesting. Dis was a chthonic deity commonly identified or associated with Hades. With the nearby temple of Hermes at the top of the ridge, it might be suggested that Dis Ibelion was associated with the temple of Hermes (pl. 16, 1). Hermes, himself was a chthonic

40 Hicks, “Inscriptions,” 235–36.

41 D. S. Barrett, “Ancient Hellenism and the Jews: A Study in Attitudes and Acculturation,” in *Greek Colonists and Native Populations* (ed. J. P. Descœudres; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 547.

42 Ameling, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, 495–96. It is hard to imagine that we would find gentiles copying the Jewish faith at Çatiören without the presence of Jews in the community.

43 So F. O Fearghail, “The Jews in the Hellenistic Cities of Acts,” in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J. R. Bartlett; London: Routledge, 2002), 39–54, 51. There were various terms used to describe these associates (φοβούμενοι τὸν Θεόν, σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν, θεοσεβεῖς) and it is not clear how to understand them.

44 T. Rajak, “The Synagogue within the Greco-Roman City,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period* (ed. S. Fine; London: Routledge, 1999), 161–73, 166. Likewise, A. Fitzpatrick-McKinley, “Synagogue Communities in the Graeco-Roman Cities,” in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J. R. Bartlett; London: Routledge, 2002), 55–87, 63–65.

deity and transported the deceased to the underworld. Perhaps Dis Ibelion was an official at the temple of Hermes. Other inscriptions indicate that non-Jews were sometimes honored with titles, even titles like ἀρχισυνάγωγος (“leader of the synagogue”).⁴⁵ Such titles may have been honorific or temporary and several individuals within the synagogue may have been so honored. If Durugönül and Mörel are correct – that some of the Jews and Pagans of Rough Cilicia “performed their worship in common”⁴⁶ – then this inscription bears testimony of this religious interaction. The presence of Jewish menorot alongside Pagan symbols elsewhere in the area around Çatiören⁴⁷ supports the notion that many Jews had close associations with their Pagan neighbors.

The frequent references to curses or those who have been cursed (four times in the inscription) provides us with another connection to the Hermes temple. Curses against others were inscribed on terracotta or lead tablets, pierced with a nail and thrown into graves, wells, or temples of Hermes.⁴⁸ There it was thought that the imprecation would be taken to the underworld along with the person who was cursed. If my translation of the inscription is correct, it becomes clear that persons within the community at Çatiören were being cursed. The decree was an attempt to revoke all curses and to insure that other curses were not issued.

We are only left to speculate about the curses. As I mentioned above, Cilicia was rife with pirates and the successive attempts by the Romans to eliminate piracy along the southern Anatolian coast only succeeded in driving them further east to Rough Cilicia and finally forced them inland into the impenetrable canyons and gorges between the Calycadnus and the Lamas Rivers. Here, the pirates established footholds and fortresses to guard against anyone attempting to make their way inland. These unnamed strategic fortresses are abundantly evident today. Perched high upon cliff sides with numerous rock cut dwellings in the face of the cliffs, these strongholds offered the pirates a secure retreat from their foes.

But how did the intrusion of these pirates into the interior affect the local populations? The coastal cities were quickly overrun by the pirates, much like the coastal cities in Lycia, Pamphylia, and western Rough Cilicia. The residents of these cities were forced to either cooperate with the pirates or to retreat inland. Those who retreated inland found plots of farmland and reestablished their communities in small rural villages. Watchtowers were constructed to

45 Rajak, “Synagogue,” 162–63; Fitzpatrick-McKinley, “Synagogue Communities,” 66–67.

46 Durugönül and Mörel, “Judaism in Rough Cilicia,” 315.

47 Cf. The Athena relief at Sömek and the thunderbolts of Zeus at Sömek and Örendibi mentioned above.

48 J. G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); A. Lebedev, “Pharnabazos, the Diviner of Hermes: Two Ostraka with Curse Letters from Olbia,” *ZPE* 112 (1996): 268–78; H. C. Youtie and Campbell Bonner, “Two Curse Tablets from Beisan,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68 (1937): 43–77.

warn the citizens of intruders – particularly the pirates who were increasingly involved in robbery and theft on land. As the Romans were increasingly successful on the seas, the pirates eventually had to abandon the coastal cities and seek refuge inland. This once again created a dilemma for the residents, who were forced to cooperate with the pirates or to flee further inland. The inland pirate settlements were more rustic and were designed more for protection than for agriculture. These pirate settlements were located in places where they could carefully observe travelers to the interior and in places that could be easily defended. Plutarch refers to these pirate hideouts and “strong citadels” in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains.⁴⁹ During the early years of the 1st cent. B. C. E., the priest kings at Olba and Diocaesarea were usurped by oppressors who were vaguely described by Strabo as “numerous tyrants and gangs of pirates.”⁵⁰ Durukan suggests that these tyrants were pirates who fled to the rugged interior of Rough Cilicia to escape from the Roman forces of Servilius Vatia.⁵¹ The fact that Vatia’s troops fought skirmishes as deep into the interior as Isauria, indicates that the pirates had retreated into these mountainous regions. Surface surveys of the Olbian cities during the late Hellenistic period indicate a period of architectural stagnation, supporting the theory of a pirate invasion of the territory of Olba. Crude fortifications at Yapılın, Tarpureli, Hisarkale and Yeniyurt appear to be a few of these pirate settlements. These settlements contain none of the features typically associated with Hellenistic towns of the period (no theaters, no odeons, no public baths, no temples, no water fountains and no gymnasiums). Instead, they are austere fortifications that were designed for protection and survival.

Returning to the inscription at Çatiören written during this time of upheaval, I propose that the inscription refers to persons at Çatiören who have been cursed for their involvement in piracy. The accursed people were either directly involved in pirate activities or were complicit in cooperating with them or they were residents who had succumbed to the pirate demands for tribute. Around the same time at Syedra, another Cilician town, the citizens were faced with the same dilemma. They sought the advice of the oracle whether they should cooperate with the pirates or pay tribute to them.⁵² The

49 Plutarch asserted that the pirates established fortresses in the mountains to hide their families, elderly and injured and to conceal their treasures; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 28.1. Plutarch claimed that these pirates surrendered to Pompey at Korekesion and that they abandoned their citadels. Here, Plutarch was reflecting Roman propaganda and was enlarging his portrait of Pompey. Few scholars today believe that the pirates were resettled in the coastal flatlands between Soli and Adana and became placid farmers. Regardless, it does not appear that they abandoned their hideouts and fortresses in the mountains between the Calycadnus and Lamas rivers.

50 Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.5.10.

51 M. Durukan, “The Connection of Eastern and Central Cilicia with Piracy,” *Adalya* 12 (2009): 77–102.

52 An inscription from Syedra, a town on the border between Pamphylia and Cilicia, contains the response of the Clarian oracle to a question by the townsfolk: Should we cooperate with

decree at Çatiören was an attempt to heal the divisions that existed within the synagogue and within the community. The decree rescinded curses that had been levied against those who were involved in such activities. The decree even went so far as to enlist the aid of an official at the Hermes temple. Dis Ibelion was appointed leader of the synagogue⁵³ and the following statement may have been his judgment: “Of those who are cursed in the sanctuaries and of those inscribed upon the steles, let no one be accursed, nor excised from the record, nor dismissed, nor removed.” Dis Ibelion’s judgment carried significant weight since Hermes was the patron deity not only of Çatiören, but also the patron deity of sailors, merchants and pirates.⁵⁴

The Çatiören inscription bears testimony to a Jewish community that recognized the long term consequences of piracy in the region. A small town like Çatiören could not successfully hold out against the pirates in the long run. The pressure to cooperate with them or pay tribute was intense. Perhaps a larger city like Syedra with a larger population and a more defensible position could obey the oracle’s advice and fight the pirates. But even with their fortifications, Çatiören could not. We may never know the terms that were worked out with the pirates, but the disagreements within the community were deeply rooted. The inscription, backed by Dis Ibelion’s support, was an attempt to mend fences and to unite the community again.

the pirates? In this response, dated to around 100 B. C. E., the oracle instructed the people to “take up the fierce battle” to drive away the pirates and not to pay tribute to them. Cf. P. De Souza, “Romans and Pirates in a Late Hellenistic Oracle from Pamphylia,” *Classical Quarterly* 47 (1997): 477–81.

- 53 Was it possible for an official from a pagan temple to attain an office in the synagogue? In Acmonia (Phrygia) an inscription referred to the founder of the synagogue – Julia Severa, who was also known from city coinage dating to the time of Nero. Severa was also mentioned on another inscription as the high priestess of the house of the divine emperors. Along with Severa three others who were likely gentiles were given positions in the synagogue. Cf. Fitzpatrick-McKinley, “Synagogue Communities,” 66–67.
- 54 N. O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1947). Hermes was depicted as a thief who acquired others’ possessions through stealth or trickery, rather than through force. In this role Hermes became a hero of clever theft and his actions were looked upon positively, rather than with disdain.