New Perspectives on Aramean and Israelite Epigraphy, Inscriptions and Related Issues

Joint Annual Conference of the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times and the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History

Held at Bar-Ilan University (Ramat-Gan) and the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies (HU, Jerusalem)

Wednesday-Friday, March 1-3, 2017

Booklet for Participants
(schedule, abstracts, maps of venues, and materials for field trip)
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Schedule

Day 1: Weisfeld Lecture Hall, Feldman Building (301), Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan

8:30-9:00 – Arrival and coffee

9:00-9:15 – Greetings and Introductions (Chair – A. Maeir)

Amnon Albeck, Vice Rector, Bar-Ilan University

Aren Maeir, Co-Director of the Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times

Esther Eshel, Director of the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History

9:15-10:45 – 1st Session: New Perspectives on Papyrus Amherst 63 (Chair – L. Gonnermann)

9:15-10:00: Bezalel Porten – Papyrus Amherst 63: Ruminations

10:00-10:45: Tawny Holm – Nanaya Among the Arameans: New Light from Papyrus Amherst 63

10:45-11:45 – Workshop 1:


11:45-12:15 – Coffee Break

12:15-13:45 – 2nd Session: Aramaic Names in Babylon (Chair – J. Hackl)

12:15-12:45: Ran Zadok – Some Issues in the History of the Arameans in Mesopotamia

12:45-13:15: Yuval Levavi – Between Names and Titles in Neo-Babylonian Administrative Letters


13:45-14:45 – Lunch

14:45-15:45 – Workshop 2:

Juliane Stein – PhD Project: The Archaeology of Arpad
15:45-16:00 – Coffee Break

16:00-18:45 – 3rd Session: The History and Archaeology of Biblical Israel: 25 years to the Tel Dan Inscription (Chair – Y. Levin)

16:00-16:25: Amihai Mazar – The Northern Kingdom of Israel: What is Agreed and What Remains Debated?


16:50-17:15: Amit Dagan and Assaf Kleiman – Hazael's Campaign to the South: The Archaeological Evidence since the Tel Dan Inscription

17:15-17:30 – Coffee Break

17:30-17:55: Nili Wazana – Hazael at Umqi - A New Look at the So-Called Hazel's "Booty Inscriptions"

17:55-18:20: Aaron Demsky – An Historian’s Perspective on the Northern Israelite Kingdom

18:20-18:45: Discussion

19:00 – Supper (for invited guests; venue at BIU)

Day 2: Israel Institute of Advanced Studies (Feldman Building), Givat Ram Campus, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

8:30-9:00 – Arrival and coffee

9:00-12:30 – 1st Session: Aramaic in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Chair – E. Eshel)

9:00-9:45: Loren Stuckenbruck – Remaining Issues in the Textual Study of 1Enoch

9:45-10:30: Daniel Machiela – The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls as Evidence of a Second-Temple Period Literary Movement

10:30-11:00 – Coffee Break

11:00-11:45: Hillel Mali – The Aramaic Levi Document and the Mishnaic Sources

11:45-12:30: Jonathan Ben-Dov – Multiple Literary Editions of the Astronomical Book of Enoch

12:30-13:30 – Lunch

13:30-15:00 – 2nd Session: Small Aramaic Narratives (Chair – M. Frenschkowski)

13:30-14:15: James Nathan Ford – Some Contributions of the Incantation Bowls to the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Lexicon

14:15-15:00: Marco Frenschkowski – Jesus as an Aramaic Story Teller
15:00-15:20 – Coffee Break

15:20-19:00 – 3rd Session: Hebrew and Aramaic Epigraphy (Chair – A. Berlejung)

15:20-16:00: Shmuel Ahituv – The Jerusalem Papyrus

16:00-16:40: Christopher Rollston – The Jerusalem Papyrus: Another Perspective

16:40-18:20: Esther Eshel – Aramaic Ostraca from Maresha

18:20-19:00: TBA – Aramaic Epigraphy from Assyria: New Data and Old Issues

19:00 – Supper (for invited guests; at Darna Restaurant in Jerusalem)

Day 3: Half Day Field Trip (to sites in the Shephelah; for invited guests)

7:00 – Pickup from Bar-Ilan area; pickup from Jerusalem

For those planning to leave Israel on Friday, the trip should be finished around 13:00 and the bus can drop off at the airport, if needed.
Abstracts of Presentations at the Annual Meeting of the RIAB Minerva Center and Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History, Ramat-Gan/Jerusalem, March 1-3, 2017
(in order of appearance in the meeting schedule)

Day 1 (BIU):

1st Session:
Bezalel Porten – Papyrus Amherst 63: Ruminations
Acquired at the beginning of the last century by the Pierpont Morgan Museum in New York City, this papyrus is a scroll some 3 ½ meters long and 30 cm. high, with 22/23 columns of Aramaic text written in demotic script. A selection was first published in 1944 by Raymond Bowman, who never got around to follow up. Some forty years later two teams of scholars on either side of the Atlantic uncovered a paragraph with striking similarities to Psalm 20 in the Bible, and published their findings virtually simultaneously – Charles Nims and Richard Steiner at the University of Chicago and Sven Pieter Vleeming and Jan-Wim Wesselius in Leiden and Amsterdam. Both teams followed these up with subsequent decipherments, at times disagreeing with each other. A stream of articles followed, with the deity read as Horus by Steiner, followed by Zevit, but read as YHW by most other scholars, particularly Tawny Holm and Karel van der Toorn. We bring here three selections, presenting them in a literary format, with Biblical parallels. One of these is given a new interpretation. There is also a discussion of the problematics of the reading YHW.

Specific lines in the papyrus refer to soldiers coming from Samaria and Judah and their sister from Jerusalem (XVI.1-6). A prominent deity in the papyrus is Bethel and 2 Kgs 17:24-34 relates the settlement in Samaria of deportees from the east, each with their respective deities, and the return to Bethel of an exiled Samarian priest who taught them the mode of YHWH-worship. This is background material for the settlement of the Jews in Elephantine and of the Arameans in Syene, and also for the origin of the material in the papyrus.

Tawny Holm – Nanaya among the Arameans: New Light from Papyrus Amherst 63
The Mesopotamian goddess Nanaya was worshiped across the Near East from ca. 2000 BCE to ca. 1000 CE, and was especially revered by the Arameans. The main evidence for her Aramean cult before the Parthian era can be found in Papyrus Amherst 63, in which she is the most-often mentioned deity. This long manuscript includes a variety of compositions and was written in Aramaic but using Demotic Egyptian script, probably around 300 BCE. This paper explores some of the goddess’s main attributes and various aspects of her cult, as they are portrayed in the hymnic portions of the papyrus, a liturgical section that culminates with Nanaya’s sacred marriage.

Workshop 1:
In the Late Bronze and Iron Ages ancient Ashdod was an urban centre. Its harbours, Tel Mor and later Ashdod-Yam, functioned as stable gateways to the Mediterranean Sea. In the 8th century BCE, Ashdod reached its first golden era. The heydays came to an end in 712/711 B.C.E. with uprisings and revolts and finally with Sargon’s conquest of the city. The paper challenges the traditional view that the conquest ended in a massive destruction, and aims to demonstrate that Tel Ashdod surrendered peacefully to the Assyrians and continued to exist in the first half of the 7th century BCE. Furthermore, an up-to-date look on the renewed excavations at Ashdod-Yam will be presented.
2nd Session:
R. Zadok – Some Issues Pertaining to the Presence and History of the West Semites in Mesopotamia
The following issues pertaining to the history of the West Semitic population groups in the Jazira and Babylonia during the 1st millennium BCE will be discussed:
1. The Arabian presence in the Jazira, especially in the light of the sizable and compact documentation from Sargonid and early Neo-Babylonian Dūr-Katlimmu (both in NA and in Aramaic) with an attempt at a quantification;
2. The role of the Arameo-Chaldean kin-based groups in Babylonia under the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods and the emergence of the Arabians as a significant political factor on the fringe of Babylonia during the 2nd half of the 1st millennium BCE;
3. Towards a profile of non-urbanites in Babylonia from the Sargonid to the Parthian periods. It is needless to say, that the discussion of the status and role of the West Semitic groups (excluding Judeans and other Levantines), which is pursued in 1-2 above, is linked with that of other indigenous elements in Babylonia.

Yuval Levavi – Between names and titles in Neo-Babylonian administrative letters
The importance of formal address and the extent to which it reflects administrative and more importantly social norms are probably clear to the participants of a German-Israeli academic corporation. Thus, examining the way in which Neo-Babylonian officials addressed their superiors, colleagues or subordinates in administrative letters opens a window into these social norms, as well as into the personal interaction and the way in which those Babylonian bureaucrats perceived themselves in relation to their colleagues. This paper will focus on the use of personal names, hypocorisms, and titles in Neo-Babylonian administrative letters, and the social and professional interactions with which they present us. This will be done by looking for patterns in epistolary formal addresses, with special attention given to letters sent to and from high-level officials.

Michael Jursa – West Semitic Names in the ‘Yahudu Archive’: orthographic variation and its implications
The paper examines the orthography of the Judean onomasticon, in particular the high number of variants encountered for individual names. Based on this material some conclusions can be drawn about the linguistic background of the scribes of these text and about their social world.

Workshop 2:
Juliane Stein – PhD Project: The Archaeology of Arpad
The dissertation aims to analyze the archaeological material of the North-Syrian city of Arpad in combination with philological and other sources. On this base, a local stratigraphy and chronology of the city will be developed by drawing on the typological method and comparisons with contemporary sites. The main aim is an extensive reconstruction of the historical, sociocultural and urbanistic development of the site starting from the Late Bronze Age till the end of the Iron Age (14th-7th cent. BCE). Building on these insights, Arpad’s “label” as an “Aramaean” city in current research and the construction of “Aramaean” identity in general will be critically reviewed.

3rd Session:
Amihai Mazar – The Northern Kingdom of Israel: What is Agreed and What Remains Debated?
During the last generation, a vast amount of scholarly literature concerning the history of Israel in the biblical period has appeared, representing a wide variety of approaches. Much of this research refers to and relies on archaeological and epigraphic data. In this lecture, I will examine several archaeological issues relating to northern Israel during the 10th-9th centuries BCE. I will comment on several suggestions
by Israel Finkelstein concerning this subject and will attempt to show that while the general framework and many details are agreed and consensual, other suggestions are based on too slim or questionable evidence and should be regarded as tentative and debatable, while alternative reconstructions should not be ruled out. Among the issues to be discussed are the utilization of radiocarbon modelled dates, the proposed “Gibeah/Gibeon polity” in the 10th century viz. the situation in Jerusalem, interpretation of Shoshenq’s invasion, and questions regarding Tell el-Far`ah North (Tirzah), Tel Rehov and Hazor.

Israel Finkelstein – The Northern Kingdom: “Nothing Endures but Change”
In this lecture I will deal with both Archeology and biblical exegesis. Regarding archaeology, the radiocarbon-dictated chronology of the Iron Age strata revolutionized the reconstruction of the history and material culture of the Northern Kingdom. I refer to the early North Israelite polity in the Gibeon plateau, the early days of the Northern Kingdom, the time of the Omrides, the decline in the late 9th century and the peak prosperity in the early 8th century BCE. Specific issues that will be emphasized are scribal activity, cult and industries in the North. Regarding the biblical text, I will put the spotlight on biblical texts which come from the North and which were probably committed to writing in the first half of the 8th century BCE.

Amit Dagan and Assaf Kleiman – Hazael’s Campaign to the South: The Archaeological Evidence since the Tel Dan Inscription
The Kingdom of Damascus’s domination over the Southern Levant in the second half of the ninth century BCE is mentioned in several places in the Hebrew Bible. For many years, these biblical accounts constituted one of the sole sources for exploring the extent and impact of the territorial expansion of the Aramaean kingdom under the rule of Hazael and consequently were the subject of prolonged scholarly debates. While the discovery of the Tel Dan Stele dramatically improved our knowledge of the historical events, the insights gathered from this source alone were quite limited. Contemporary Archaeological excavations conducted in the two decades, following the discovery of Tel Dan Stele, broadened our understanding of Hazael’s military activities in the Southern Levant and its repercussions.

In our lecture, we wish to re-examine the archaeological evidence for the Damascene expansion in the Southern Levant, and to argue that the involvement of the kingdom in the region was not only gradual but also diverse. As a whole, the process can be divided into three main stages: (1) early conflicts in the Gilead with the Kingdom of Israel during the final days of the Omride dynasty; (2) an occupation of some of the Israelite territories in the north after the Assyrian withdrawal from southern Syria in ca. 838–837 BCE: directly or most likely through vassal-relationship; and (3) farther campaign(s) to southern Canaan, conducted towards the end of the ninth century BCE.

Nili Wazana: Hazael at Umqi – A New Look at the So-Called Hazael’s "Booty Inscriptions"
The local empire established by Hazael in the second half of the 9th century BCE is reconstructed mainly by archaeological evidence from sites such as tel es-Safi/Gath, and from external textual evidence - Assyrian inscriptions, biblical verses, and local inscriptions such as the broken stele mentioning Hazael, and the later inscription of Zakkur king of Hamath and Lu’ash discovered at Tell Afis. The Damascene textual evidence is meagre and originates mostly from the periphery – the Tel Dan stele and the so-called Hazael’s "Booty Inscriptions" found in Samos and Eretria and in Arslan Tash. In this paper, I will investigate anew these latter inscriptions, their genre and their meaning, and suggest a new reconstruction of Hazael’s achievements.

Aaron Demsky – An Historian’s View of the Northern Kingdom
In this brief paper, I will present an outline for an integrative approach for understanding the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel specifically in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE. Going beyond the important
contributions made by archaeology over the past twenty five years in illuminating the material culture of ancient Israel, I will review the nature of the sources, both biblical and epigraphic, in light of some of the more current trends and disciplines, like the impact of anthropology on questions of literacy and tribal identity expressed in genealogy, in addition to onomastics and gender studies. We will also look at developments in Assyriology in the context of biblical studies.

Day 2 (HU):

1st Session: Loren Stuckenbruck – Remaining Issues in the Textual Study of 1Enoch

The textual history of 1 Enoch is complex; it is due in part to existing fragmentary, though significant versions in Aramaic and Greek, respectively, and more "complete" recensions among numerous manuscripts in Geez/Old Ethiopic. While the Ethiopic textual witnesses are in themselves highly varied, especially the more important ones from the earlier "recension," and although they cannot be analyzed apart from the much later periods in which they were copied, a comparison with the Aramaic DSS, on the one hand, and with the Greek, on the other, demonstrates their importance for reconstructions of a text that circulated during the Second Temple period. On the other hand, where possible, the Aramaic evidence should remain the determinative point of departure. The paper shall point out several examples of this on the basis of the Book of Watchers in chapters 1 and 8, and portions near the end of 1 Enoch in chapters 91-93 and 104-107.

Daniel A. Machiela – The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls as Evidence of a Second-Temple Period Literary Movement

The Aramaic scrolls from Qumran have received increasing attention over the last decade as a corpus of texts to be distinguished from both the books of the Hebrew Bible and the 'sectarian' Qumran literature, written in Hebrew. We see some evidence of a common literary approach among many, though not all, of the Aramaic Qumran texts. This common approach is seen on multiple levels, from the basic literary genres chosen, to specific shared idioms. Building on earlier insights of scholars such as Jozef Milik and Elias Bickerman, this paper will examine several aspects of the Aramaic Scrolls as a corpus, against the backdrop of Persian- and Hellenistic-period Aramaic written culture. Specifically, I suggest that the Aramaic Qumran texts may be fruitfully compared with the picture of Judean and surrounding culture offered by the Elephantine, Wadi ed-Daliyeh, and Idumean epigraphic sources in Aramaic, with the Qumran texts having been written at a time roughly contemporaneous with these other sources.


As part of the composition known 'the Aramaic Levi Document', there is a section that deals with the instruction to the priests. This unit contains a number of laws related to the ritual purity of the priest and several laws concerning sacrifice, especially those related to the wood on the altar and the burnt offering. The unit, which appears within a literary frame of a grandfather (Isaac) instructing his grandson (Levi), was seen by a number of scholars as a composition written for pedagogical aims which was used for training the priests for their work in the Temple. Indeed, the very technical and concrete nature of the sections dealing with the quantities of wood, salt, and fine flour to be sacrificed on the altar seem suited to the practical training of the priests serving in the Temple.

I would like to propose a new reading of this unit of instructions to the priests, a reading whereby the various instructions appearing in the unit are not a 'collection of instructions' but rather a 'sequence of instructions', i.e., a sequential description of a ritual held in the Temple where each instruction leads to the next. I propose that the ritual described is the morning service that begins the day of sacrifice in the Temple. In light of this reading, I will relate to the thematic, structural, and stylistic similarity between this
instruction unit and the Mishnaic Tractate Tamid. Despite the chronological and linguistic gap between the works and despite the different context, I believe that the similarities between the compositions show that the editors of Tractate Tamid used the Levi document, which is similar to the tractate, or another work that was adapted according to it, to write the tractate. If this claim is well founded, then we have before us a unique example of the connection between rabbinic literature, at least at its early levels, and priestly sources from Second Temple literature.

Yonatan Ben-Dov – Multiple Literary Editions of the Astronomical Book of Enoch.
Despite its fragmentary preservation, the Astronomical Book (=AB) provides a fascinating record of literary transformations along many centuries. Along this path the treatise, now known as 1 Enoch 72-82, took various forms, with materials added to it and reduced from it according to its current garb in each stage of transmission. Having been first phrased as an Aramaic astronomical treatise based on Mesopotamian models in the 3rd century BCE and not necessarily Enochic, the book went through various modifications already in the first century BCE. One may point out literary predecessors, variant edition of scientific material, as well as what seems to be commentaries or expansions which did not make it to the canonical form of 1 Enoch. More modifications have been added probably in the stage of Greek circulation, although much of that activity may have taken place in Ethiopia. The paper will address the following sources: 4Q208, 4Q209, 4Q211, and 1 Enoch chapters 72, 73, 75 and 82.

2nd Session:
Nathan James Ford – Some Contributions of the Epigraphic Corpus to the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Lexicon.
The epigraphic corpus of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA) consists entirely of magical texts written on clay bowls from late Sassanian and early Islamic Babylonia and, occasionally, western Iran. During the past two decades the number of edited Jewish magic bowls has tripled and has now surpassed 400. Several times this number remain to be published. These texts contain numerous lexemes that are not attested in rabbinic literature from Babylonia. Some of these lexemes are listed in Michael Sokoloff’s A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (2002). Many of the new words, however, appear in manuscripts that were not available at the time that the dictionary was prepared or were misunderstood in the published editions. In this paper we will present a number of lexemes from the magic bowls that are new to the JBA lexicon and have not been previously noted in the scholarly literature.

Marco Frenschkowski – Jesus as an Aramaic Story Teller
Research in the parables of Jesus often had an unfortunate tendency to stress either some alleged un-Jewishness of Jesus, pointing out assumed differences between the allegoric stories abounding in Rabbinic literature and Jesus’ parables, or, in later research, avoiding or even denying any possible strange or surprising element in the parables, when the formulaic “Rabbi Jesus” became popular particularly in non-academic literature. What these different positions had in common, however, was that they looked primarily at the parables of Jesus and then tried to compare them, stressing either similarities or differences, according to the respective agenda. The project “small narratives (mainly in Aramaic)” turns the perspective around and tries to achieve a survey of small narrative units that not only may illuminate what the parables of Jesus are but also what they are not. It gives the same attention to all aspects of narrative culture, not only rabbinic parables, but also Greek fables, folktales from different sources (Jewish, Christian, Mandaic and others), the Aramaic historiolae from the magical bowls, and even literary allusions on how to tell Biblical stories orally (John Chrysostom). They all contribute to a larger overall image of Aramaic (and also oriental Greek) story telling culture, in which religious boundaries are less strict than in religious practice. The paper describes the project of surveying such small narratives, connecting such an endeavour also to the project of the Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur
historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung (in progress 1958-2015), the world’s largest global survey and categorization on oral narratives, now completed in 15 very large volumes and many supplementary publications and analysing literally hundreds of thousands of folk tales. How can such a work help to understand the smaller stories we have from Aramaic and Hebrew antiquity, and from the New Testament?

3rd Session:
Shmuel Ahituv – The Jerusalem Papyrus
The subject of this lecture is a small papyrus (10.5–10.9 cm long and 2.6 cm high) documenting a shipment of wine from Na’aratah to Jerusalem. The papyrus was seized by the Israel Antiquities Authority’s Antiquities Robbery Prevention Unit, and it is assumed that the papyrus came from one of the caves overlooking Nahal Hever. The papyrus had been already unrolled and torn into two fragments when we obtained it. The inscription is on the larger fragment and the other, the smaller fragment is blank and damaged at the bottom. The inscription was written on the recto. The verso is blank and without any text, nor traces of ink showing that the papyrus had already been written on before being damaged. The papyrus was folded, and the hole on the left margin of the papyrus suggests that it was sealed by a cord threaded through it. The folded and sealed papyrus may have been tied to one of the wine jars it mentions. Based on the content, this is a brief shipping certificate; if so, this is the first instance of a shipping certificate, and one on papyrus, from the First Temple period.

Dating the Certificate
Radiocarbon dating confirmed a date range for the papyrus between the mid-eighth century BCE and the last third of the fifth century BCE, but it difficult to date with any greater precision. Paleographic examination of the text indicates that the certificate should be dated to about the second half of the seventh century BCE.

Proposed Reading and Interpretation
Most of the letters can be clearly identified. A proposed reading of the text is as follows:

\[ \text{[year X. from PN1 daughter of PN2, hand]} \]
\[ \text{-maid of the king. from Na’aratah. two jars of wine.} \]
\[ \text{to Jerusalem.} \]

Discussion
Thus, we have here the first instance of an original shipping certificate from the First Temple period. Like the Samaria ostraca, the Arad ostraca, and the ostraca from Idumea, this papyrus is also a temporary document or certificate meant to accompany the shipment until it reached its final destination. There, it would have been copied into administrative records.

Na’arah/Na’arath is Na’aran of the Second Temple Period, located near Jericho. We assume that during the seventh century BCE, there was a royal estate at Na’arath and the papyrus discussed here is a certificate for the shipment of two jars of wine from this royal estate to the royal storerooms or king’s palace in Jerusalem. The estate was managed by ‘the king’s handmaid’, whose name has been lost from the certificate. Alternatively, the certificate may attest to a transfer of taxes to the king’s storerooms in Jerusalem by a tax-payer describing herself as the king’s handmaid. Whatever the explanation, this certificate is a rare testimony of the function of the organized administration in the kingdom of Judah in the second half of the seventh century BCE and of the existence of a high-ranking woman with an unusual status in the administration of the kingdom of Judah.
Christopher Rollston – The Jerusalem Papyrus: Another Perspective

The Jerusalem Papyrus is a fascinating piece. I wish that I could say with certainty that it is genuine, but I cannot say this. After all, the antiquity of the medium (be it an ancient potsherd or an ancient scrap of papyrus) is not necessarily demonstrative of the antiquity of the inscription on the medium. Moreover, even though the papyrus was tested in a laboratory, the ink has not been tested. But even here (as with the testing of the papyrus) the chemical composition of the ink would not be decisive. After all, for papyrus and for ink, the recent forgery of the now-famous ‘Jesus Wife Papyrus’ reminds us that modern forgers are indeed using ancient papyrus as well as carbon-based black inks (that mimic ancient inks) in order to forge inscriptions in the modern period. On top of this, the fact that the "author" of this inscription failed to use the proper construct form of nblm is also a red flag. After all, even in the Bible we have the proper form of the construct of this very word used. Finally, I should wish to emphasize that pillagers and dealers should not be considered reliable sources of information (as the stories of the ‘Jesus Wife Papyrus’ also demonstrate). In short, there are some serious red flags with regard to this papyrus. Caveat Eruditus.

Esther Eshel – Aramaic Ostraca from Maresha

More than a century of excavations at Maresha, starting in 1899 and still active to this day, have yielded tremendously exciting and varied finds. The site was first excavated by Bliss and Macalister, who discovered a planned and fortified Hellenistic city encircled by a town wall with towers. They identified two Hellenistic and one Israelite strata on the mound. Many of the ancient city's olive presses, columbaria and cisterns can still be seen surrounding the site. Large-scale excavations of surface areas and some of the subterranean complexes, were directed by Amos Kloner, from 1989 to 2000, under the auspices of the Israel Antiquity Authorities. The results of the excavations were published in three volumes and more are currently in preparation. Since 2000, Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert conducted further excavations. All told, the site has yielded more than 1200 Greek and Semitic – mainly Aramaic – inscriptions, dating to the Hellenistic period. Among them are 385 Aramaic ostraca found in Subterranean Complex 169, a cave complex that contains anthropogenic debris that was dumped from surface dwellings during the Hellenistic period, and, by the nature of the dumping, lacks a clear stratigraphic context. Included in this collection is a group of 137 Aramaic ostraca, dating to the third or second centuries B.C.E, sharing a similar textual structure thus creating a distinctive group of the "texts". In my paper I will present one of the largest of the ostraca included in this group, focusing on family issues described there.

TBA – Aramaic epigraphy from Assyria: New Data and Old Issues

1) The major epigraphic discoveries of Aramaic texts on clay tablets in Neo-Assyrian archaeological contexts during the 1990s in Syria and elsewhere. Theoretical issues: definition of this bracket as post-Old Aramaic, (pre-)Imperial Aramaic, or none of the two? The partial nature of the evidence. Additional linguistic data from Assyrian sources. Complementary historical data: the question of ethnicity. Who was a self-defined “Aramean” in 7th century BC Assyria? And how widespread were “Arameophones” in the various areas/provinces? A Biblical clue, perhaps...

2) The latest published collection of Aramaic texts on clay tablets: what does it show? An overview of the TSH evidence vis-à-vis other bodies of information. Hopes for new dimensions in future data. To conclude: a glimpse at a couple of recently studied and as yet unpublished texts....
Map of Bar-Ilan University Campus (venue in Building 301, marked by red circle)
Map of the Givat Ram Campus of Hebrew University (venue in Feldman Building, marked by red circle)
Materials for Field Trip, Friday, March 3rd, 2017

Map of the Shephelah and the Southern Coastal Plain

Tell es-Ṣafi/Gath Archaeological Project

Tell es-Ṣafi

Tell es-Ṣafi/Gath & its vicinity in the Iron Age
Tell es-Safi/Gath
Tel Azekah