

The Fourth Campaign at Beth Shearim, 1940

(Preliminary Report) by B. MAISLER

The excavations were undertaken simultaneously in the town area and in the necropolis.

The main attention was given to the clearance of the block of buildings and courts north-east of the hilltop, where a synagogue (building 'A') was discovered in the previous campaign (see p. 7, fig. 2). The main discovery was the building 'B' on the slope of the hill. Four successive periods of construction would be distinguished: I (first century A.D.); II (second half of the second century — beginning of the third); III (c. 220-352); and IV (fifth century). The building belonged mainly to period II. Its outer wall had well dressed blocks with smooth drafted margins (see pl. I, 1-2). Its lower floor (the only part preserved) consists of a series of rooms; some of which had roofs vaulted on arches. In the course of period III various changes were affected in the building. A layer of ashes proves that the building perished in a conflagration. A hoard of c. 1200 coins found in the ashes gives the terminus ad quem for this conflagration, viz. the middle of the fourth century. The author assumes therefore that the building — together with the whole city — was destroyed by *Gallus* in 352 A.D. Between the synagogue and the building 'B' were discovered remains of rooms and courts; there was originally a paved peristyle court. In one of its siderooms were found the two Graeco-Jewish inscriptions published by Prof. M. Schwabe (see below).

Near the south-east wall of the building 'B' were the remains of a big oven, a mosaic pavement, a reservoir and a plastered drain (periods III and IV). The author is unable to decide whether the remains constitute a bath or, more likely, a glass factory.

SE. of the synagogue were a room with a stone bench along three of its walls (probably a guest-house), and a courtyard with trough, cistern and a rock-cut cellar.

In the necropolis catacomb No. 11 was cleared; it consists of a court paved with a coloured mosaic pavement, and two halls. The main hall contained several Greek inscriptions and graffiti. More stone fragments of the mausoleum (discovered outside of this catacomb in 1938-9) were found in the court and in the main hall of this catacomb.

In addition a stretch of the city-wall, 30 m. long, was uncovered on the north-western slope of the hill.

Two Inscriptions from the Synagogue area, Beth Shearim

by M. SCHWABE

The author publishes two inscriptions found 1940 in a small-room NW. of the synagogue. One inscription (pl. III, 2) reads:

Ῥίβ Σουμ / ωήλος συσ / τέλλον (τος) και / Ἰουδα κοιμ(ῶντος).

Ῥίβ is one of the ways *Rabbi* was pronounced in the Talmudic period, as is proved by a passage in y Sanh. IV-22b. The verb συστέλλω occurs in Acts 5, 1 and has been much discussed. The present inscription shows that it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew **רָבָא** which is a collective term signifying all the acts required among the Jews for the preparation of the body for burial. The second person mentioned as κοιμῶν was responsible for the laying out the body in the tomb. The tablet designed the place occupied in the synagogue by two honoured officials connected with the administration of the huge cemetery at Beth Shearim.

The second inscription (pl. III, 1) reads:

Ἰακῶς Καισαρεὺς / ἀρχισυνάγω / γος Πανφυλί / ας. Shalōm.

The person honoured was head of the community of Jews from Pamphylia residing at Caesarea. He was most probably commemorated as a benefactor of the Beth Shearim synagogue. Both inscription date shortly before the destruction of the synagogue in 352. They were found in an adjoining room either in preparation for affixing them on the synagogue walls or because they were taken down and stored after the decease of the persons honoured.

Epitaph of a Jewess from Beth Shearim

found near Ben Shemen

by M. AVI-YONAH and M. SCHWABE

The authors publish a Judaeo-Greek funerary inscription reading: Ἄννας θυγα[τρός] / Μαθιθία Βισαρηνή. The inscription appears cut over the door of a cave-tomb between Ben-Shemen and Deir Abū Sallāmeh. It may be dated to the second century A.D. The name Β<η>σαρη appears here in full for the first time and confirms Prof. Schwabe's reconstruction of the mausoleum inscription from Beth Shearim (BJPES, VI, p. 110-111).

The Jewish Palestine Exploration Society deplores the decease of

Prof. David Yellin, Honorary President of the Society

and of its friends and supporters

Menahem Ussishkin

and

Pinhas Rutenberg