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Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity

LEONARD VICTOR RUTGERS

Abstract

In the recent past, scholars have argued that the Jewish community in Imperial Rome was affected far more by rabbinic Judaism as it developed in Palestine than by contemporary Roman society. Study of Jewish archaeological remains from Rome, an inquiry into the spatial relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish tombs, as well as a look at the Theodosian law code, however, suggest that the Jews of the Diaspora interacted with their pagan and Christian neighbors in ways more complicated than has previously been assumed. The daily lives of Jews in Imperial Rome cannot be understood exclusively in terms of societal disengagement.*

INTRODUCTION

For some time it has been customary to consider the notion of "isolation" as the keyword for understanding how Jews shaped their lives in Imperial Rome. Thirty years ago Momigliano, studying the relatively large collection of Jewish funerary inscriptions from Rome, remarked that the Jewish community in the capital of the Roman Empire was distinguished by its self-containedness and lack of contact with contemporary non-Jewish society.¹ Recently, Solin, in a valuable and meticulously documented study on Jews and Syrians in the Western part

of the Roman world, took up Momigliano's view and argued very much along the same lines.²

The view that the Jewish communities of the Diaspora formed an alien element, although based on a critical analysis of literary and epigraphical remains, echoes conclusions reached in the historiography of Judaism in the late 19th and early 20th century. Both stress the otherness of Jews in an environment insensitive and often openly hostile to their concerns. Writing about the Jewish catacomb under the Vigna Randanini, near the junction of the modern Via Appia Pignatelli and the Via Appia Antica, an anonymous author in the *Catholic World* of 1879, although not completely unsympathetic to the Jews, "a wonderful people," notes that "there is a cold and cheerless look about the place very different from that of any neighboring Christian catacomb so full of the warmth of faith and hope."³ This and comparable remarks show that in the last few decades of the 19th century, only years after the Jewish ghetto in Rome had finally ceased to exist, historians were still very much aware of the misery that until recently had characterized daily life within its now demolished walls. To them it seemed no less than reasonable to suppose that not only for those Roman Jews whose

* Parts of this article were first presented at the 91st General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America at Boston in December 1989 (*AJA* 94 [1990] 313) and at the Southeastern Regional Conference of the American Schools of Oriental Research in March of 1990, where it was awarded the Joseph A. Callaway Prize in Biblical Archaeology. For commenting on earlier drafts I am indebted to E.A. Clark, E.M. Meyers, and A.J. Wharton, as well as *AJA*'s anonymous reviewers. For useful remarks and the correcting of my English my thanks are also due to Stephen Goranson. Financial aid was provided by Rotary International and Duke University. For their support and hospitality I would like to thank Rotarians Lucien and Joyce Roughton.

The following special abbreviations are used:

- Frey J.B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* I (Vatican City 1936), II (Vatican City 1952), *Addenda* by B. Lifshitz (New York 1975).
- Leon H.J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia 1960).
- Linder A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit 1987).
- Simon M. Simon, *Verus Israel. Étude sur les re-*

lations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'empire romain (135–425) (Paris 1964).

Solin H. Solin, "Juden und Syrer im westlichen Teil der römischen Welt. Eine ethnisch-demographische Studie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der sprachlichen Zustände," *ANRW* II.29.2 (1983) 587–789.

¹ A. Momigliano, *Gnomon* 34 (1962) 179–80.

² Solin 602, 617, 717, 720; but see 695 n. 238a. Similarly now C. Vismara, "Orientali a Roma. Nota sull'origine geografica degli Ebrei nelle testimonianze di età imperiale," *DialArch* 5 (1987) 119.

³ *The Catholic World* 28:165 (1879) 342. It is remarkable that in a time when the study of catacombs had become a theological battleground for Catholics and Protestants (see F.W. Deichmann, *Einführung in die christliche Archäologie* [Darmstadt 1983] 15–19), scholars reported on Jewish materials in a strictly neutral manner, the only exception to this being the report by P. Aringhius, *Roma subterranea novissima* II (Rome 1651) 390–402. I intend to deal with this phenomenon in another article.

attempts at societal emancipation had been frustrated until the last days of the Risorgimento, but also for the poverty-stricken Jews of antiquity, living their miserable lives in Trastevere, "everything new was evil and dangerous" and that, consequently, "like everywhere isolation was their fate."⁴ Further corroboration for the view that hostility existed between the Jewish and Christian communities was adduced from references in the literature of the later Roman Empire.

It is undeniable that late ancient literary sources suggest that while certain pagan circles seem to have grown more appreciative of Judaism as the centuries passed,⁵ Christian hotheads had, by the fourth century, become violently anti-Jewish. The well-known destruction of a synagogue at Callinicon on the Euphrates in 388 and the ensuing clash between state and church was not an isolated occurrence. Also in Rome itself and elsewhere in what was commonly known as the civilized world, synagogues either went up in flames or were transformed into buildings for Christian worship.⁶ The continuous attempts in the legislative sphere, starting in the late fourth century, to protect the *locus religionis* of the Jews show that such incidents were neither innocent nor exceptional.⁷

Not that Jewish communities remained completely passive during these turbulent years. When Jews, during the annual celebration of the festival of Purim, cheerfully—so one may suppose—carried around a representation of Haman they had crucified instead of hung, Christians seem to have been offended and the imperial court intervened, forbidding the custom by law in 408.⁸

These sources belie the supposition that "the only ones to take pity on the Jews, to defend them from oppression . . . were the successors of the poor fisherman of Galilee," as our Catholic anonymous had still credulously assumed in 1879.⁹ Nevertheless it would be equally incorrect to claim that in the later Roman Empire Jews, Christians, and pagans related to each other exclusively in terms of conflict or to apply reductionistically to this relationship such insufficiently defined concepts as "isolation." Though violent clashes occurred, the relationship between the groups under discussion was far more complex than one of vendetta-like conflict. There is considerable evidence that, for most of the time, a more or less peaceful coexistence was the rule rather than the exception.

Ever since the spread of Hellenistic culture in the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, the question for Jews of how to preserve their heritage, on the one hand, and how to interact successfully with their pagan, and, later, the increasingly numerous Christian, neighbors, on the other, must have been as continuous as the solutions they found were multifaceted.¹⁰ A passage in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* illustrates how subtle Jewish sensibilities could be when confronted with non-Jewish, in this case Greek, culture. After granting citizenship to the Jews in Asia, Lower Syria, and Antioch, Seleucus Nicator (ruled 312–281 B.C.) "gave orders that those Jews who were unwilling to use foreign oil should receive a fixed sum of money from the gymnasiarchs to pay for their own kind of oil."¹¹ In other words, some of the Jews one encounters here were willing to enjoy the pleasures of an essentially Greek athletic and educational institution,

⁴ Citations S. Zweig, *Der begrabene Leuchter* (Vienna 1937) 28, 73. Notably Gregorovius, in his famous description of the Roman ghetto from 1853, sees Jewish history in terms of the "Jammerleben" of the Roman Jews of his own day; see F. Gregorovius, *Wanderjahre in Italien* (Munich 1967) 203, 239. For the view that Jewish history in Rome equals a "Leidens- und Gelehrten-geschichte," see also the uncritical booklet with evocative title by J. Carlebach ed., *Von Duldem und Kämpfen. Aus dem Nachlasse von H. Hildesheimer* (Frankfurt 1911). But the idea of isolation recurs in more scholarly studies of the period as well; see G. La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," *HThR* 20 (1927) 205, 211.

⁵ On this change in attitude see L.H. Feldman, "Prose-lytes and 'Sympathizers' in the Light of the New Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," *REJ* 148 (1989) 272. For Numenius's definition of Plato as atticizing Moses, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem 1974–1984) nos. 363a–e.

⁶ Ambrose, *Ep.* 40 and 41 (*PL* 16.1148–69). On the destruction of synagogues, see Simon 264–66.

⁷ See for a discussion of relevant passages G. Stemmerger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land. Palästina unter Konstantin und Theodosius* (Munich 1987) 126–29 and Linder 74.

⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.18. Cf. Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 7.16. And see Tert. *Apol.* 16. For a discussion, see A.M. Rabello, "La première loi de Théodose II, CTh XVI.8.18 et la fête de Pourim," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 55 (1977) 545–58 who notes that this law was later integrated in the *CJ* (1.8.11). I owe this reference to A.M. Rabello. Further examples of Jewish aggression in Linder 239–55.

⁹ *The Catholic World* 28:165 (1879) 744.

¹⁰ On the question when Hellenistic culture started to manifest itself, see L.H. Feldman, "Hengel's Judaism and Hellenism in Retrospect," *JBL* 96 (1977) 371–82.

¹¹ Joseph. *AJ* 12, 120.

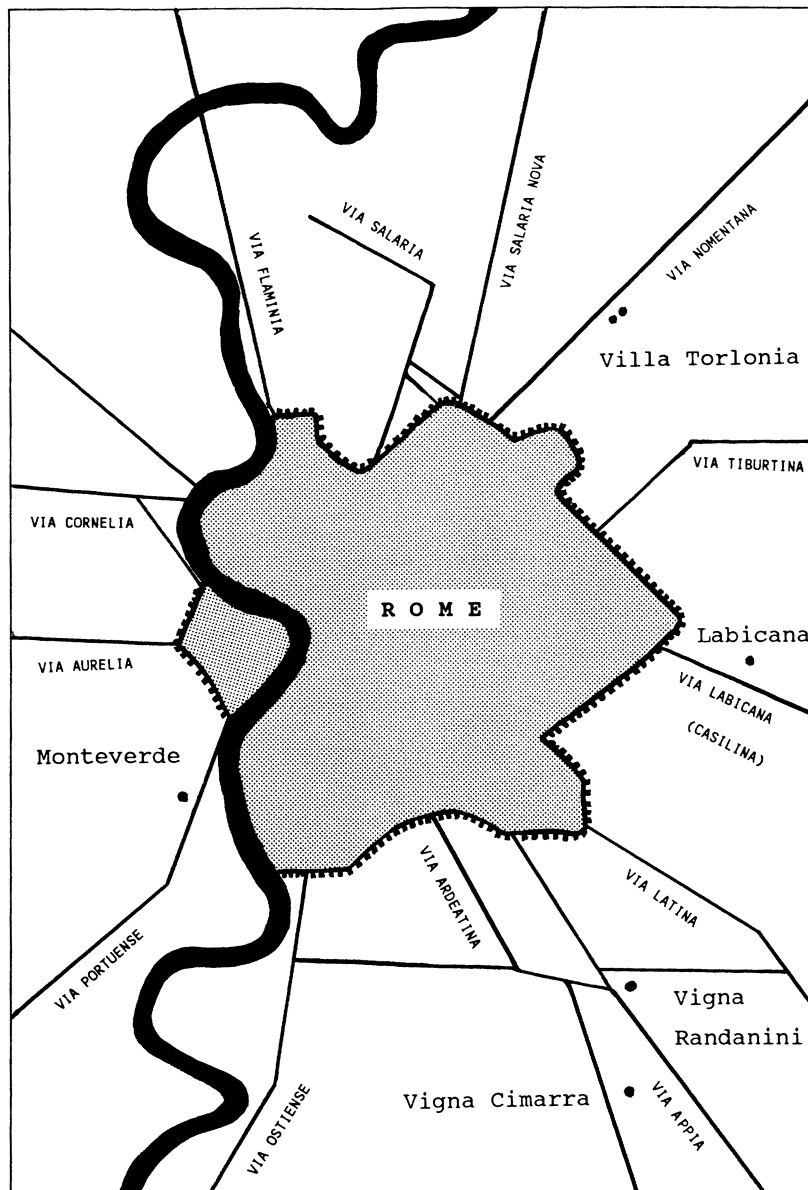


Fig. 1. Map of Rome, including specific locations of Jewish hypogea and catacombs

the gymnasium, but nonetheless insisted on using only oil provided by their own co-religionists.¹²

Study of the Jewish archaeological remains from the city of Rome, the largest coherent body of archaeological material pertaining to a Jewish Diaspora

community in the Roman period, along with comparative Jewish funerary materials from other sites around the Mediterranean, suggests that as late as the third and fourth century, the Jews continued to face the old problem of dealing with non-Jewish customs

¹² The question whether gentile oil was to be used or not continued to stir the minds of religious Jews; see Z.A. Steinfeld, "Concerning the Prohibition against Gentile Oil," *Tarbiz* 49 (1980) 64–77 (Hebrew). It is interesting to note here that when part of the gymnasium at Sardis (Asia Minor) was transformed into a synagogue, both structures were "related

integrally to another in plan and yet discrete, there is no question where one ends and the other begins." See A.T. Kraabel, "Paganism and Judaism: The Sardis Evidence," in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme. Mélanges M. Simon* (Paris 1978) 21.



Fig. 2. A fragment of a Season sarcophagus with sculpted menorah in *clipeus*. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano. (Photo author)

and lifestyles.¹³ References scattered throughout the literature of this period, together with several laws integrated in the *Codex Theodosianus*, support inferences made on the basis of the archaeological finds: that well into the fifth century Judaism held a powerful attraction for at least segments of the Christian population. This implies that Jews were not as unso- ciable as certain Church fathers or rabbis might have wished. Due to the character of the available evidence, it is far from easy to determine the extent to which, in the later days of the *Imperium Romanum*, Jews came under outside influence. On the material level they most certainly did, yet how this fact bears on our interpretation of the religious life of the several Jewish communities in Rome is not unambiguous.

WORKSHOPS

The Jewish archaeological remains from Rome are almost exclusively funerary in character and predominantly stem from four Jewish catacombs and two Jewish hypogea, all located around the *urbs*, outside the late third-century Aurelian city walls (fig. 1).¹⁴

¹³ Note that the Jewish catacombs of Rome cannot be dated earlier than the third century; see L.V. Rutgers, "Überlegungen zu den jüdischen Katakomben Roms," *JAC* 33 (1990) 140–57.

¹⁴ Details and further literature in Leon and Rutgers (supra n. 13), to which add: S. Frascati, "Un'iscrizione giudaica dalle catacombe di Villa Torlonia," *RACrist* 65 (1989) 135–42; I. di Stefano Manzella, "L. Maecius Archon, centurio alti ordinis. Nota critica su CIL VI 39084 = CII 1, 470," *ZPE* 77 (1989) 103–12; B. Chilton, "The Epitaph of Himerus from the Jewish Catacomb of the Via Appia," *JQR* 79 (1988–1989) 93–100. And see also S. Schwartz, "A Greek Inscription in the Library of the Annenberg Research Institute,"

Although the collection of preserved sarcophagi and goldglasses is fragmentary in nature and the number of wall paintings is small, they nonetheless allow for several conclusions on the character of artistic production for, and possibly by, Jews in third- and fourth-century Rome.

The most striking feature of the approximately 40 Jewish sarcophagi from Rome is the dominance of pagan or at least religiously neutral imagery, in some cases to such an extent that it is impossible today to determine if these sarcophagi were used for Jewish or for non-Jewish burials.¹⁵ On only four specimens are Jewish objects represented, one of which is but a casually incised graffito carved next to a short Greek inscription commemorating a certain Faustina.¹⁶ The most splendid example among the pieces with a clearly Jewish iconography (fig. 2) has already been known for a long time, since it first turned up in the hybrid collection of curiosities gathered by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680): it is a fragment of the front of a Season sarcophagus (or possibly loculus slab), displaying two striding Victories, holding a *cli-*

JQR 80 (1989) 87–91.

¹⁵ For a catalogue see A. Konikoff, *Sarcophagi from the Jewish Catacombs of Ancient Rome. A Catalogue Raisonné* (Wiesbaden 1986). For addenda and a short discussion of the problem of identification, see L.V. Rutgers, "Ein in situ erhaltenes Sarkophagfragment in der jüdischen Katakombe an der Via Appia," *Jewish Art* 14 (1988) 25. Not mentioned there: the possibly Jewish sarcophagi published by Frey I, 202, 350, and *CIL* VI, 14662, 29399. Uncritical: C. Vermeule, *Jewish Relations with the Art of Ancient Greece and Rome* (Boston 1981) 41–44.

¹⁶ Konikoff (supra n. 15) nos. 4, 13–15.

peus with sculpted menorah, as well as several playing cupids, "the children of the Nymphs that govern humankind."¹⁷

Like other sarcophagi with relief decoration, the popular Season sarcophagi were ordered from stock. Although in the case of the Jewish sarcophagus fragment with the seven-branched candelabrum prominently displayed in its central medallion it is difficult to establish workshop-identity ("Werkstattgleichheit") with specific other sarcophagi belonging to the same group, there can be no doubt that the Jewish piece originated in one of the Roman workshops whose existence depended not on Jewish customers alone, but mainly on pagan and perhaps on some Christian clients who considered the religiously rather neutral imagery of Season sarcophagi inoffensive.¹⁸

There are also indications that goldglasses were made in workshops with a mixed Jewish, pagan, and Christian clientele. Among the 14 known fragments of Jewish goldglasses¹⁹ two pieces show a decoration that is so similar in patterning and the use of color to that of four non-Jewish goldglasses that Engemann is probably correct in supposing that one workshop manufactured all six examples.²⁰

Finally, the decorative motifs framing the wall paintings in the Jewish Vigna Randanini and Villa Torlonia catacombs also have close parallels in contemporary pagan and Early Christian pictorial decorations. This again suggests that one crew of painters

could be employed to execute a variety of decorative projects.²¹

That there is in the arts such a strong link, on the level of execution, between Jewish and non-Jewish artifacts in third- and fourth-century Rome is significant, but not exceptional. The archaeological record in Israel provides examples of the same phenomenon. Several lead sarcophagi, for example, all coming from the same mold (as the layout of the decoration indicates) were sold to either Jews or Christians after some menorahs or crosses respectively had been stamped here and there on their sides and lids.²² In Beth Alfa, two mosaicists, known through inscriptions as Marianos and Hanina, used their skills to enliven with designs the floors of a Jewish synagogue as well as those of a Samaritan synagogue in nearby Beit Shean.²³ Although in the case of mosaic pavements it is admittedly not always easy to decide if stylistic and compositional resemblances should be explained through workshop-identity or through the use of the same patternbooks by different artists, the mosaics uncovered in a synagogue, a Christian monastery, and the House of Leontios, all in Beit Shean, may very well be the product of one specific group of craftsmen.²⁴ To give yet another example from the area, the overall appearance of some marble chancel screens suggests that one workshop could satisfy the iconographic needs of both Jewish and Christian communities.²⁵

¹⁷ Konikoff (supra n. 15) no. 14 and cf. G.M.A. Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks* (Cambridge, Mass. 1951) no. 493 as well as P. Kranz, *Jahreszeiten-Sarkophage* (ASR V,5, Berlin 1984) no. 69. On loculus slabs, see J.S. Boersma, "A Roman Funeral Relief in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam," *BABesch* 48 (1973) 131–32. Citation: Philostr. *Imag.* 16.

¹⁸ For workshop-identity, see Hanfmann (supra n. 17) 57. On sarcophagus production, see the remarks by K. Eichner, "Die Produktionsmethoden der römischen Sarkophagfabrik in der Blütezeit unter Konstantin," *JAC* 24 (1981) 90.

¹⁹ For a catalogue, see T.-M. Schmidt, "Ein jüdisches Goldglas in der frühchristlich-byzantinischen Sammlung," *FuB* 20:1 (1980) 273–80, to which should be added a fragment discovered by U.M. Fasola, "Le due catacombe ebraiche di Villa Torlonia," *RACrist* 52 (1976) 61 (and 19, "forse un vetro dorato"). A color picture of most Jewish goldglasses is to be found in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* 7 (1971) 620–21. Note that also in the Jewish catacombs goldglasses with non-Jewish imagery were discovered; see N. Müller, *Die jüdische Katakomba am Monteverde zu Rom* (Leipzig 1912) 59 (three fragments); and O. Marucchi, *Di un nuovo cimitero giudaico scoperto sulla via Labicana* (Rome 1887) 27–28.

²⁰ J. Engemann, "Bemerkungen zu römischen Gläsern mit Goldfoliendekor," *JAC* 11:2 (1967) 16–22.

²¹ For parallels and discussion, see Rutgers (supra n. 13) 146–51.

²² Examples in N. Avigad, *Beth She'arim. Report on the Excavations during 1953–1968* III. *Catacombs 12–23* (Jerusalem 1976) 173, 178. Cf. L.Y. Rahmani, "On Some Re-

cently Discovered Lead Coffins from Israel," *IEJ* 36 (1986) 243; "More Lead Coffins from Israel," *IEJ* 37 (1987) 143; "A Christian Lead Coffin from Caesarea," *IEJ* 38 (1988) 247–48 (pagan and Christian).

²³ See L.A. Roussin, *The Iconography of the Figural Pavements of Early Byzantine Palestine* (Diss. Columbia Univ. 1985). I owe this reference to M. Smith.

²⁴ On Beit Shean, see R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden 1988) 390; on patternbooks used for the decoration of the synagogue of Maon and the church of Shellal, see Hachlili, "On the Mosaicists of the 'School of Gaza,'" *ErIsr* 19 (1987) 46–58 (Hebrew).

²⁵ Examples in Hachlili 1988 (supra n. 24) 189–91. Note that in North Africa lamps decorated with the menorah may have come from pagan *officina*; see Y. Le Bohec, "Inscriptions juives et judaïsantes de l'Afrique romaine," *AntAfr* 17 (1981) 197 no. 82. The same holds true for a building like the synagogue at Ostia: constructed and remodeled following well-established Roman building traditions (post-Claudian *opus reticulatum* and *opus vittatum*), it was furnished with a Torah shrine, the architraves of which were decorated in relief with menorahs (which were subsequently gilded) so that no one could mistake the building for anything but a synagogue. See M. Floriani Squarciapino, "The Synagogue at Ostia," *Archaeology* 16 (1963) 194–203 and "La sinagoga di Ostia: seconda campagna di scavo," *Atti VI congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana* (Vatican City 1965) 299–315.

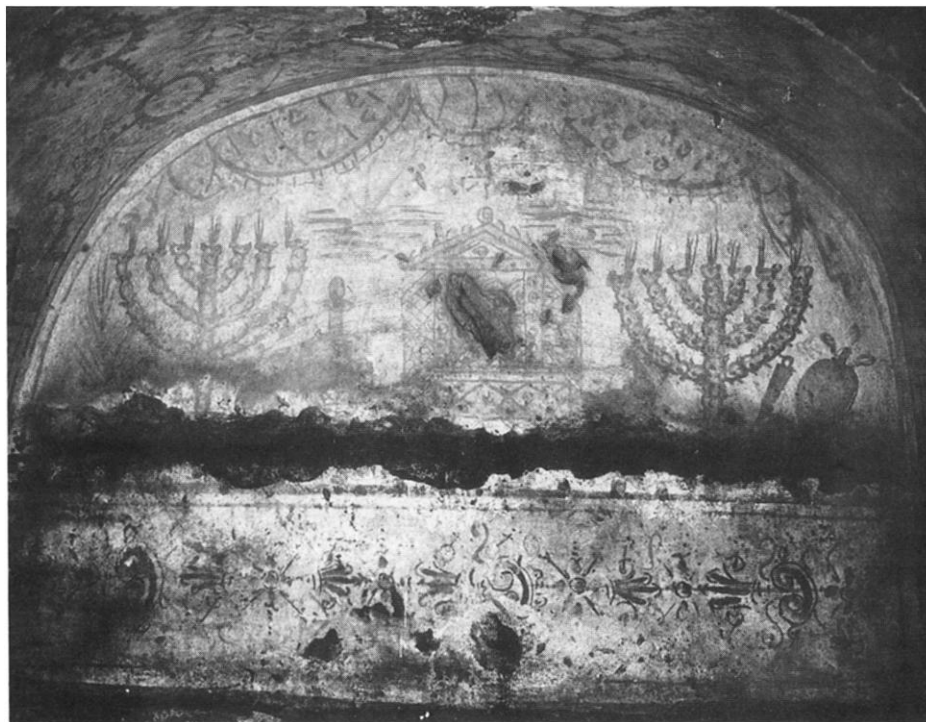


Fig. 3. Painted arcosolium. Rome, Villa Torlonia catacomb. (Courtesy Pontificia Commissione di archeologia sacra)

Moreover, the development of Early Christian art neatly mirrors that in the Jewish sphere. Before the end of the third century, Christians employed pagan workshops that provided them with sarcophagi on which bucolic or idyllic maritime scenes dominated, framing an occasional ram-bearer or *orans*.²⁶ Only in the days after Constantine's conversion (or slightly earlier) did such neutral scenes derived from the pagan iconographic repertoire increasingly undergo Christianization.²⁷ Similarly, Christian goldglass came from workshops that also catered to pagan customers.²⁸

Last, a look at art manufactured for the devotees of Mithras reveals that the situation was not very different there either. On the back wall of a Mithraeum at Marino (on the Lago di Albano, south of Rome) the god of Oriental origin, in the process of heroically slaying a bull, is rendered in a purely Roman fashion;²⁹ likewise the stylistic features of a

fourth-century Mithraic relief found in the Circus Maximus in Rome are genuinely Roman.³⁰ This being the case, it is hardly surprising to observe that the assistants of the valiant Mithras, the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates, also have Graeco-Roman prototypes.³¹

In short, Jewish, Early Christian, and Mithraic art were all nourished by the same Roman-pagan artistic traditions. Well into the fourth century, they drew on the same repertoire of Graeco-Roman prototypes.

What then is "Jewish" about these remains? Essential for answering this question is the previously mentioned Jewish Season sarcophagus. The central medallion of Roman sarcophagi of the late second century usually framed the portrait bust of the deceased or of a deceased couple, reflecting a general trend in Roman funerary art toward the private apotheosis of the dead.³² Significantly, the focal point of our Season sarcophagus with *clipeus* does not carry

²⁶ See T. Klauser, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst I–IX," *JAC* 1–10 (1958–1967); W.N. Schumacher, *Hirt und "Guter Hirt"* (Freiburg 1977); and N. Himmelmann, *Über Hirten-Genre in der antiken Kunst* (Opladen 1980).

²⁷ See J. Engemann, "Christianization of Late Antique Art," *The 17th International Byzantine Congress* (New York 1986) 83–105 with further literature.

²⁸ C.R. Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library. With Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections* (Rome 1959) nos. 21, 27, 28, and 32.

²⁹ M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithriaca III. The Mithraeum at Mar-*

ino (*EPRO* 16, Leiden 1982) 8, 24.

³⁰ Hanfmann (*supra* n. 17) no. 72.

³¹ See L.A. Campbell, *Mithraic Iconography and Ideology* (*EPRO* 11, Leiden 1968) 29.

³² See F. Matz, "Stufen der Sepulkralsymbolik in der Kaiserzeit," *AA* 1971, 102–16; J. Engemann, *Untersuchungen zur Sepulkralsymbolik der späteren römischen Kaiserzeit* (Münster 1973) 35–39; and H. Wrede, *Consecratio in formam deorum. Vergöttlichte Privatpersonen in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1981). Among the Season sarcophagi, the ones with *clipeus* were the most popular, so Hanfmann (*supra* n. 17) 25.

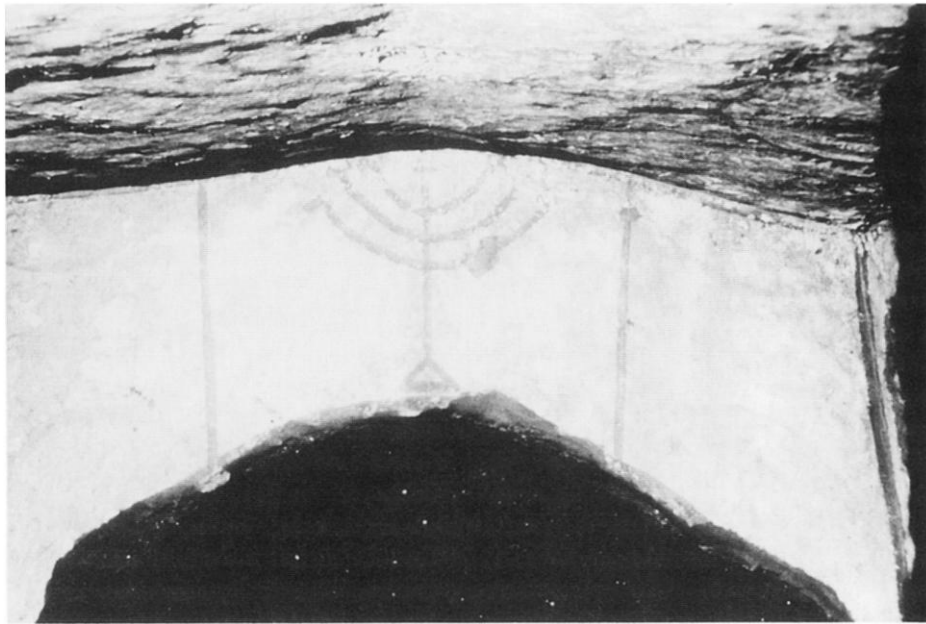


Fig. 4. Wall decoration with painted menorah. Rome, Vigna Randanini catacomb. (Photo author)

any portraits, but instead a menorah, in antiquity Judaism's most typical and widespread symbol. Comparably, in the upper catacomb under the Villa Torlonia (fig. 3), the menorah and the Torah shrine are in the center of the representations painted on the back wall of several arcosolia (all middle of the fourth century). Moreover, it was a large painted menorah that Bosio noted in December 1602 upon discovering the first Jewish catacomb in Rome south of Trastevere (now destroyed).³³ When, perhaps in the fourth century, Roman Jews decided to have a cubiculum in the Vigna Randanini decorated, a menorah, crudely rendered with a few lines in red paint on a ground of white stucco (fig. 4), was once again chosen to adorn the wall above the arcosolium facing the entrance.³⁴

The centrality of objects derived from either the destroyed Second Temple in Jerusalem or from synagogal worship is a prominent feature of Jewish funerary art, not only in Rome, but all over the Mediterranean: a stupendous painted arcosolium in Venosa (Basilicata), two graffiti on the wall of a Jewish rock-cut tomb at Noto Antica (Sicily), similar incisions

on the walls of Jewish hypogea at Rabat/Mdina on the island of Malta, a wall painting in a Jewish grave in the necropolis of Roman Doclea in present-day Dalmatia/Montenegro, and graffiti on the walls of a now destroyed Jewish mini-catacomb near Tripoli all have the menorah as the main theme of their decoration.³⁵ In the Jewish motherland itself, the menorah seems to have been an equally popular motif in graves, even though incised human figures and ships as well as painted floral and geometric designs occasionally also occur.³⁶

Returning once again to Rome, it seems that although Jewish art technically and in part also iconographically had its roots directly in non-Jewish artistic traditions, it also displays a preference for an iconography that was outspoken in its Jewishness. Such a preference did not mean that subjects of pagan origin were automatically excluded: someone who wanted to use for burial in a Jewish catacomb a sarcophagus decorated on both sides with Muses could do so, apparently without problems.³⁷

When in 168 B.C. the Roman consul Aemilius Paul-

³³ A. Bosio, *Roma sotterranea I* (Rome 1632) 143.

³⁴ On the exclusion of Painted Rooms I and II from the small corpus of Jewish wallpaintings from Rome, see Rutgers (supra n. 13).

³⁵ For further literature on these sites, see infra ns. 78, 84, 86, 87; for the catacomb near Tripoli, see P. Romanelli, "Una piccola catacomba giudaica di Tripoli," *QAL* 9 (1977) 111–18.

³⁶ L.Y. Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb," *IEJ* 17 (1967) 73. B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations during 1936–1940 I. Catacombs 1–4* (Jerusalem 1973); Avigad (supra n. 22) 268; R. Hachlili and A. Killebrew, "The Saga of

the Goliath Family," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9 (1983) 44–46; A. Kloner, "A Burial Cave of the Second Temple Period at Givat Seled in the Judaean Shephela," *Qadmoniot* 19 (1986) 102–105 (Hebrew); N. Feig, "A New Burial-Cave at Beth She'arim," *Qadmoniot* 20 (1987) 102–105 (Hebrew); U. Dahari, G. Avni, and A. Kloner, "The Jewish Necropolis at Beth-Govrin," *Qadmoniot* 20 (1987) 97–102 (Hebrew); and Z. Lederman and M. Aviam, "A Tomb in the Teffen Region of Galilee and Its Incised Menorah," *Qadmoniot* 20 (1987) 124–25 (Hebrew).

³⁷ For a picture of this sarcophagus, see Rutgers (supra n. 15) 21.

lus, after his victory at Pydna over Perseus, appropriated a pillar-like structure in Delphi, the monument, although Greek in style, came to carry a message that was unequivocally Roman.³⁸ It is obvious that this deed, although signaling Aemilius Paullus's appreciation of Greek culture as well as his political aspirations, did not turn him into a sophisticated philhellene overnight. Similarly one cannot simply suppose that the non-Jewish elements in Jewish art from Rome by themselves show that Roman Jews were receptive to Roman society and its values. Yet, the fact remains that it must have been perfectly normal for a Jew to walk into a non-Jewish workshop to order a sarcophagus, just as there was nothing abnormal in the attempt of a non-Jewish salesman to fill such an order as satisfactorily as possible.

Although it is not the purpose of this article to investigate the complex question of how ancient Jewish art and symbols may be interpreted, it should be noted that the Jewish fascination with pagan iconography implies at least superficial familiarity with and appreciation for the old myths of the Greeks and Romans. Even when in Jewish contexts the choice of Classical themes seems to have been rather limited,³⁹ Jews shared to an extent with the pagan "man in the street" knowledge of the Graeco-Roman pantheon with its colorful gods. They may have detested the idea of invoking these immortal pagan supermen, but when it came to artistic fashion, some Jews were receptive to what was in vogue in contemporary pagan society.

That the *same* artistic motifs and inscriptional formulae could enjoy popularity among *different* reli-

giously affiliated groups becomes especially discernible in the field of popular beliefs. Hence it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, for modern scholars to decide with which religion users of charms and amulets identified themselves.

Like the Chaldei, considered constant mischief-makers by the Romans, Jews in Roman antiquity were among those traditionally associated with magic. Juvenal, for example, described how superstitious women in first-century Rome had no scruples consulting a Jewess, styled as "interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem" and *fida internuntia caeli*.⁴⁰ Three and a half centuries later, Augustine in a passage stressing that "miracles were made known to help men's faith," tells how Petronia, a lady of great social distinction from the town of Uzalis near Utica in North Africa had, when she was sick, first consulted a Jew who outfitted her with some exotic sort of belt. Finally she paid a visit—as one was supposed to—to the shrine of a Christian martyr in Carthage, a step that had evidently not entered her mind earlier.⁴¹

Not only literary sources, but also archaeological finds point to the importance of "the Jewish connection" with things magical. Names such as Iao, Adonai, and Sabbaoth so frequently encountered on amulets were Jewish in origin,⁴² although one cannot be sure if, at a later stage, they were always written by Jews, for the inscriptional evidence is syncretistic in character to such an extent that the dividing line between Jewish and non-Jewish incantations often gets completely blurred.⁴³ Be that as it may, finds from Jewish and other sites prove that just as non-Jews tried to ward off demons and malevolent spirits by using amu-

³⁸ See J.J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge 1986) 150–63; and H. Kähler, *Der Fries vom Reiterdenkmal des Aemilius Paullus in Delphi* (Berlin 1965).

³⁹ See G. Foerster, "The Survival of Some Classical and Hellenistic Themes in the Iconography of Late Antiquity in Israel," *Acts, XII International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (Athens 1985) I, 130–33. For recent discussions of Jewish symbols in Rome, see esp. U. Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Judentum* (ZATW Beih. 44, Berlin 1978); see also P. Maser, "Darstellung des Olam habba in der spätantik-jüdischen Kunst," *Gedenkschrift A. Stüiber* (JAC Erg. Bd. 9, 1982) 228–38; M. Simon, "Conceptions et symboles sotériologiques chez les Juifs de la Diaspora," in U. Bianchi and M.J. Vermaseren eds., *La sotériologia dei culti orientali nell'impero romano* (EPRO 92, Leiden 1982) 782–802; J. Gutmann, "Early Synagogue and Jewish Catacomb Art in Its Relation to Christian Art," *ANRW* II.21.2 (1984) 1334–38; L. Dequeker, "L'iconographie de l'arche de la Torah dans les catacombes juives de Rome," *Augustinianum* 28 (1988) 437–60; and G. Stemberger, "Die Patriarchenbilder der Katakomben in der Via Latina im Lichte der jüdischen Tradition," *Kairos* 16 (1974) 19–78. Still useful is H.L. Hempel, *Die Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für die Programme der frühchristlichen Grabmalerei* (Diss. Johannes Gutenberg Univ., Mainz 1956) 84–102.

⁴⁰ Stern (supra n. 5) no. 299.

⁴¹ August. *De civ. D.* 22.8 (CC 48.824). For Jews practicing exorcism, see Justin, *Trypho* 85 (PG 6.680) and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.6.2 (PG 7.726). By the sixth century, Jews as well could be saved through the intervention of Christian saints; see L. Cracco Ruggini, "Pagani, Ebrei e Cristiani: odio sociologico e odio teologico nel mondo antico," *Gli Ebrei nell'alto medioevo. Settimane di Studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto 1980) 22 n. 16. For a tomb in which an amulet decorated with menorah was found next to a bronze cross, see J.H. Iliffe, "Rock-cut Tomb at Tarshiha," *QDAP* 3 (1934) 9–16.

⁴² See *LIMC* I (1981) s.v. Abraxas (M. Le Glay); on Iao: A.T. Kraabel, "Jews in Imperial Rome. More Archaeological Evidence from an Oxford Collection," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30–31 (1982) 50; C.A. Faraone and R. Kotanksy, "An Inscribed Gold Phylactery in Stamford, Connecticut," *ZPE* 75 (1988) 257–66. On Jewish magic in general, see P.S. Alexander in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* III,1 (Edinburgh 1986) 342–79.

⁴³ So for instance in the case of *P. Vindob. G. 42406*, see C. and H. Harrauer, "Ein jüdisch-christliches Amulett," *WS* 100 (1987) 185–98.



Fig. 5. Amulet depicting the head of Medusa. (From R. Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte cristiana* 6 [Prato 1873–1880] pl. 491.4)

lets whose invocations had ultimately originated in Jewish circles, so certain Jews seem to have been convinced of the benefits non-Jewish talismans might bring them.

At Rome, next to amulets the Jewish origin of which appears undisputed, a glass paste head of Medusa (fig. 5) was found on the breast of a skeleton in a seemingly undisturbed grave in the Jewish Vigna Randanini catacomb.⁴⁴ Only now that it has become known that in Jewish (and incidentally also in Christian) tombs excavated in Israel, Samaritan amulets were discovered in situ, the apotropaic (?) Medusa from Rome loses some of its poignancy.⁴⁵ Jewish literature of the period, e.g., the *Sefer ha-Razim* (dating to the fourth century or later) with its incantations to Helios, Aphrodite, Hermes, and the moon, further supports the notion that Jews were directly exposed to pagan magic and superstition.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For the Medusa head, see R. Garrucci, *Cimitero degli antichi Ebrei scoperto recentemente in Vigna Randanini* (Rome 1862) 8 (depiction in E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* 3 [New York 1953–1968] no. 1044). N. Müller, "Cimitero degli antichi Ebrei posto nella Via Portuense," *DissPontAcc* 12 (1915) 50–51, describes a small container with a fragment of parchment, probably a bulla. For further amulets, cf. R. Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovati nei cimiteri dei Cristiani primitivi di Roma* (Rome 1858) 16; *Storia dell'arte cristiana* 6 (Prato 1873–1880) pl. 491.6–7; *Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei musei d'Italia* II (Florence 1878–1879) 211, 212; Kraabel (supra n. 42) 50–55 and n. 65; I am not so sure if the Late Antique dating of an amulet first published in V.B. Mann ed., *Gardens and Ghettos. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy* (Berkeley 1989) cat. no. 24 is correct.

⁴⁵ See R. Reich, "A Samaritan Amulet from Nahariya,"

In conclusion, the difficult question of how much importance should be attached to the Jewish archaeological finds from Rome has to be addressed briefly. It is clear that on the material level the degree of interaction with the pagan world was considerable and that, notably in the case of amulets, the artistic traffic, and thus the stream of ideas, did not go just one way. Together with the evidence that will be presented below, this strongly suggests that on a day-to-day basis, a ghetto-mentality was not characteristic for Jewish life in third- and fourth-century Rome.

COMMUNAL CEMETERIES

With continuing excavations, it becomes increasingly clear that while the Christianization of the Roman Empire was in full swing, Christians and pagans continued to bury their dead together. In Rome itself, examples of this interesting phenomenon may be found in the Vatican necropolis,⁴⁷ possibly in a cemetery on the Via Appia, near the catacomb of Callixtus,⁴⁸ in the catacomb of the Giordani (*coemeterium Jordanorum*), in the catacomb of Vibia, and probably also in the famous collection of richly decorated hypogea on the Via Latina.⁴⁹ In the Roman provinces the practice is also widely attested.⁵⁰

On this point, as was the case with material culture, Jewish customs were not very different from those of their non-Jewish contemporaries: Hecataeus of Abdera's observation that Jewish burial customs had changed after the Jews had become subject to foreign rule was as true for late antiquity as it had been around 300 B.C.⁵¹

The following synopsis of Jewish burial sites from all over the Mediterranean proves that for the interment of the deceased members of their community, Jews used the same areas as non-Jews. Although it is impossible to determine if pagans, Jews, and Christians were buried in the same hypogeum or catacomb,

RBibl 92 (1985) 383–88; and R. Pummer, "Samaritan Amulets from the Roman-Byzantine Period and Their Wearers," *RBibl* 94 (1987) 251–59.

⁴⁶ On the *Sefer ha-Razim*, see Alexander (supra n. 42) 347–50.

⁴⁷ See P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1989) 19.

⁴⁸ U.M. Fasola, "Un tardo cimitero cristiano inserito in una necropoli pagana della via Appia," *RACrist* 60 (1984) 8; and Fasola in *RACrist* 61 (1985) 26. But note that the evidence is not unequivocal.

⁴⁹ Discussion in J. Engemann, "Altes und Neues zu Beispielen heidnischer und christlicher Katakombenbilder im spätantiken Rom," *JAC* 26 (1983) 128–51.

⁵⁰ Examples in R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100–400* (New Haven 1984) 78.

⁵¹ Stern (supra n. 5) no. 11 with commentary ad loc.

it is beyond doubt that all these groups could make use of one and the same cemetery.

Before surveying these communal cemeteries, it is necessary to comment on methodological difficulties involved. More often than not, the original archaeological context is heavily disturbed and intrusive materials have been introduced into the graves.⁵² Not only were tombs often subject to grave robbery, but also researchers in the past did not always excavate with the necessary care. Buonarroti, the first to publish, in 1716, three magnificent examples of Jewish goldglasses, exemplifies how an antiquarian in the early 18th century would hunt for precious artifacts and inscriptions: entering catacombs "per divertimento" and discovering that one underground gallery had already been emptied out completely, he would simply proceed to the next one and happily give free rein to his destructive talents there.⁵³

More important, however, than the disturbance of the archaeological record is the problem of how to identify Jewish graves and how to separate them from non-Jewish ones. The safest and simplest way to establish if graves were used for burial by Jews is on the basis of an inscription that can be considered Jewish for one reason or another.⁵⁴

When inscriptions are lacking, an identification as Jewish is much more difficult. Sometimes the representation of objects with a distinctive Jewish flavor

(first and foremost, the menorah) may be helpful. Although it is true that some early Christian authors, while writing about the seven-branched candlestick that had once adorned the Temple in Jerusalem, tried to appropriate this candelabrum for the Church, the menorah remained very much a Jewish object in late antiquity: the few fragments of actual menorahs that have been found (e.g., Tiberias, Ein Gedi, Tell Maon, and Sardis) all come from Jewish contexts, while many inscriptions that are certainly Jewish contain many menorahs as well, whether delicately rendered or crudely incised. It is furthermore remarkable that the few seven-branched candelabra that occur on Christian inscriptions have formal characteristics that differ from the traditional Jewish menorah with its seven semicircular branches.⁵⁵

Yet, the decoration of pottery lamps shows that it is very hard to arrive at firm conclusions on the basis of such artistic evidence alone. In the third and fourth century not only Jewish but also Samaritan craftsmen chose the menorah as the decorative theme for the discus of their lamps.⁵⁶ Thus there seems to be no way to be sure that a lamp embellished with a menorah was used by Jews rather than by Samaritans, or, for that matter, Jews that had converted to Christianity, Jewish Christians, Christians, or maybe even pagans who simply liked the design.⁵⁷ Finds in synagogues and churches show that Jews and Christians used the

⁵² On the possibly intrusive sarcophagi in the Vigna Randanini and Villa Torlonia catacombs, see Rutgers (supra n. 15) 25 n. 55. Problematic also is the attribution of the kline discovered by Müller (supra n. 19) 39–41 and the fragments listed in Fasola (supra n. 19) 15 n. 10. In the sealing of graves, materials were often reused, so for instance a small marble column found in a Jewish hypogeum in the Vigna Cimarra; see Frey I, 16*.

⁵³ F. Buonarroti, *Osservazioni sopra alcuni frammenti di vasi antichi di vetro ornato di figure trovati ne' cimiteri di Roma* (Florence 1716) XII.

⁵⁴ But this is not always easy. Note, for example, that the Greek term *archisynagogos*, at first sight sounding Jewish, was also in use among Ebionites according to Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.18.2; cf. G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 4 (North Ryde 1987) 213. Similarly, the word *synagogè* does not always mean that one is dealing with a Jewish community, cf. Horsley 213. On the identification of names as Jewish, see the discussion in Solin 711. On the problem of distinguishing Jewish from Christian formulae, see A.R.R. Sheppard, "Jews, Christians and Heretics in Aconia and Eumenia," *AnatSt* 29 (1979) 169–80.

⁵⁵ This holds true for the examples in *RömQSch* 10 (1896) 31 n. 30; in E.R. Goodenough, "An Early Christian Breadstamp," *HTHR* 57 (1964) 135–36; those cited by B. Bagatti, "Ricerche su alcuni segni delle catacombe romane," *Liber Annuus* 15 (1964–1965) 101 fig. 1.14–16; and Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision* (Jerusalem 1971) 201 fig. 86; as well as the example discussed by A. Negev, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Negev* (Jerusalem 1981) 29 no. 16.

M. Simon, "Le chandelier à sept branches, symbole chrétien?" *RA* 32 (1948) 971–80 is unconvincing. For the menorahs from Tiberias and Ein Gedi, see Hachlili 1988 (supra n. 24) pls. 54, 57; for Sardis cf. L.I. Levine ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem 1981) 181; Tell Maon, see D. Amit, "A Marble Menorah from an Ancient Synagogue at Tell Maon," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies Division B* 1 (Jerusalem 1990) 53–60 (Hebrew).

⁵⁶ See V. Sussman, "Samaritan Lamps of the Third–Fourth Centuries A.D.," *IEJ* 28 (1978) 238–50, saying that Jewish menorahs were more elaborately rendered than the Samaritan ones and were, moreover, usually accompanied by a *lulav*, an *ethrog*, or a shovel.

⁵⁷ Despite the efforts of the Franciscans (see Bagatti 1971 [supra n. 55] and Bagatti, *Gli scavi del "Dominus Fleuit" [Monte Oliveto, Gerusalemme]* [Jerusalem 1958] as well as E. Testa, *Il simbolismo dei Giudeo-Cristiani* [Jerusalem 1963]), it is still impossible to say if the various groups of Jewish Christians developed their own, distinctively Jewish-Christian iconography. Evidence for Samaritan communities in the Western part of the Mediterranean is scarce and mainly literary; see H.G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur samaritanischen Religion der aramäischen Periode* (Berlin 1971) 146–47, to which add the Samaritan inscription from Hipponion, mentioned in Frey, Addenda 49. And cf. J. Wilpert, "La statua di Simon Mago sull'isola tiberina," *RACrist* 15 (1938) 334–39. Note also that in Roman legislation a clear line is drawn between the Samaritan and Jewish communities; see Linder 61–62.

same type of lamps,⁵⁸ and this fact may serve to explain the occurrence of a fourth-century lamp with *Chi-Rho* incised on its handle, unearthed in the otherwise Jewish necropolis at Beth She'arim (as long as this incision is understood as a Chrismon), or a lamp decorated with menorah discovered in a Christian necropolis in Sidon (Phoenicia).⁵⁹ To make matters more complex, there are lamps that, as far as their iconography is concerned, do not seem to fit into any clearly defined category at all: what to think of the two completely preserved specimens, uncovered at the turn of the century by Orsi at Citadella (south-eastern Sicily), both decorated with five-branched candlesticks?⁶⁰ They may be Jewish, but they also may not be.

To decide if tombs are Jewish by looking only at grave types or modes of burial is extremely hazardous as well. Contrary to what is often stated, there is nothing specifically Jewish about loculi that were sealed with tufa and fragments of tiles,⁶¹ and to posit the existence of Jewish graves from the lack of grave goods,⁶² or to say that reburial and the presence of ossuaries must automatically point to a Jewish-Christian cemetery,⁶³ runs counter to everything that is known about Jewish burials in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁶⁴ Although in Rome graves cut perpendicularly to the wall and known under the name *kokhim* are confined to the Jewish Vigna Randanini catacomb and do not occur in Christian or pagan contexts, this grave type is so widespread in the eastern part of the Mediterranean that it can certainly not be considered as the Jewish grave type par excellence.⁶⁵ Last, but not least, the thickness of the wall

between individual tombs does not tell us anything about the confession of the people buried in such graves.⁶⁶

In Rome, following the prescription first formulated in the Law of the Twelve Tables (451–449 B.C.), burials took place outside the city.⁶⁷ It is there, among pagan burial sites and Christian catacombs, that the Jewish tombs are to be found. Pagan tombs were discovered close to the Vigna Randanini catacomb,⁶⁸ and the same seems to have been the case with the Villa Torlonia catacombs,⁶⁹ but it cannot now be determined if these burials were either earlier than or contemporary with the Jewish ones. Some finds, moreover, suggest that there must also have been Jewish graves outside of the Jewish catacombs, but lacking sound stratigraphical data, one cannot draw a very precise picture of such burials.⁷⁰

It is generally said that the Jewish catacombs themselves were used exclusively for the interment of Jews; yet, in the light of the intrusive materials mentioned earlier, it is not an easy task to arrive at incontrovertible conclusions. Especially problematic in this respect are several inscriptions discovered in the Monteverde and Villa Torlonia catacombs, with a dedication to the gods of the Underworld as an opening formula.⁷¹ Two of these plaques with the *DM*-inscription were probably reused, for they have a second, Jewish inscription on their back,⁷² but in the case of other inscriptions,⁷³ reuse cannot so easily be proven. Rather than conclude that we are dealing with pagan epitaphs, I am inclined to follow Goodenough, who observed that "certainly the majority of Jews and Christians felt as Frey, with Müller and Bees, thinks

⁵⁸ References in E.M. Stern, "Ancient and Medieval Glass from the Necropolis Church at Anemurium," *Annales du 9^e congrès international d'étude historique de verre* (Liège 1985) 47. I owe this reference to E. Marianne Stern.

⁵⁹ Avigad (supra n. 22) 188–90. On *Chi-Rho* cf. P. Colella in *RBibl* 80 (1973) 553–57. For Sidon see Bagatti 1971 (supra n. 55) 203.

⁶⁰ P. Orsi, "Nuove chiese bizantine nel territorio di Siracusa," *BZ* 8 (1899) 617. Picture in O. Garana, *Le catacombe siciliane e i loro martiri* (Palermo 1961) 137 no. 23.

⁶¹ Contra Bosio (supra n. 33) 142; Garrucci 1862 (supra n. 44) 16; Müller (supra n. 19) 23; J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London 1971) 237; Fasola (supra n. 19) 40.

⁶² Contra A.S. Burger, "The Late Roman Cemetery at Ságvár," *ActaArchHung* 18 (1966) 159–63.

⁶³ Contra Bagatti 1971 (supra n. 55) 266 with further unconvincing remarks.

⁶⁴ Nor do I understand why "in classical antiquity, of course [italics mine], Jews had to be laid to rest in caves or catacombs or rock-cut tombs, not buried in the ground (although the latter was the custom in Babylonia)," so J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cam-

bridge 1987) 38.

⁶⁵ For discussion, see Rutgers (supra n. 13) 155–57. In the Villa Torlonia and Monteverde catacombs there are no *kokhim* as C. Vismara, "Ancora sugli Ebrei di Roma," *ArchCl* 38–40 (1986–1988) 156–57, wrongly states. On *kokhim* in Israel, see now H.P. Kühnen, *Nordwest Palästina in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. Bauten und Gräber im Karmelgebiet* (Weinheim 1987) 48.

⁶⁶ Contra C. Schick, "Katakomben auf dem Ölberg," *ZDPV* 12 (1889) 196 n. 1.

⁶⁷ *Cic. Leg.* 2.23.58.

⁶⁸ C.L. Visconti, "Scavi di Vigna Randanini," *Bullettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* 1861, 16–22. Owing to the fact that this land is privately owned, I was unable to check these materials myself.

⁶⁹ See Frey I, CXXXVI.

⁷⁰ See Frey I, LXI and nos. 3, 4, 286; Konikoff (supra n. 15) nos. 1, 3, 12–15, 16 (Jewish?), 17–20. Cf. *NSc* 1911, 139.

⁷¹ See Frey I, s.v. *DM* and add Fasola (supra n. 19) 38.

⁷² Frey I, nos. 9* and 36*. On the reuse of epitaphs for the construction of tombs, see the remarks by Müller (supra n. 19) 34.

⁷³ E.g., Frey I, no. 464.



Fig. 6. Rock-cut tombs, the majority of which are Christian and one of which is Jewish. Noto Antica (Sicily). (Photo author)

they should have felt; as a result *DM* was not generally adopted by either group. This does not exclude the fact, however, that a number of Christians and Jews had no objections and did use the formula and their attitude has much to tell us.⁷⁴

To infer the “exclusivity” of the Jewish catacombs by arguing that Jews and (full) proselytes were, and so-called “Godfearers” were not, buried there is incorrect.⁷⁵ Even though there is ample evidence for the existence of a group or individuals located on the fringes of Judaism,⁷⁶ the epithet *metuens* in itself is not Jewish and occurs with relative frequency on early Christian inscriptions as well.

While the evidence from Rome is thus not particularly strong in demonstrating the existence and use of communal cemeteries, an observation that holds

true also for discoveries in the old and the new harbor of Rome,⁷⁷ Italian soil preserves other, less ambiguous, traces of the fact that “in death all were one.”

Near Venosa (Basilicata) a Jewish catacomb has been known to exist since 1853 (and possibly since 1842), and another, possibly Jewish, catacomb was recently explored. Both are dug into a hillside, honeycombed with hypogea or catacombs that, although they await future excavation, have already yielded finds that indicate that Christians used the same hill for burial.⁷⁸ If the evidence from pottery lamps is to be trusted (but see the remarks supra), one of the cemeteries of ancient Taranto (Apulia) may likewise have been used by Jews as well as by Christians:⁷⁹ “una serena convivenza delle parti” indeed!⁸⁰

Jewish finds from Syracuse (Sicily) are again more

⁷⁴ Goodenough, vol. 2 (supra n. 44) 140. Cf. also Leon 345. Le Bohec (supra n. 25) 177 no. 12 remarks that *DM* can also be explained as *Deo Magno*, cf. 185 no. 46 and 191 no. 71. See Solin 657 as well as L.H. Kant, “Jewish Inscriptions in Greek and Latin,” *ANRW* II.20.2 (1987) 699–700.

⁷⁵ Contra Solin 623.

⁷⁶ See Reynolds and Tannenbaum (supra n. 64) 48. Useful collection of sources in L.H. Feldman, “The Omnipresence of the Godfearers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12 (1986) 58–63. Cf. also Feldman (supra n. 5) 265–305 and see *RAC* 11 (1981) 1060–70, s.v. Gottesfürchtiger (M. Simon). I would like to thank L.H. Feldman for discussion.

⁷⁷ For Ostia, see M. Floriani Squarciaripino, “Plotinus Fortunatus Archisynagogos,” *Rassegna mensile di Israel* 36 (1970) 190 argues that Jews and pagans were buried together, but her conclusion is based on an *argumentum ex silentio*. The problem in Civitavecchia is that although admittedly also Roman tombs were found in the località Pozzolana (flanking the Via Aurelia), the inscription of Iulius

Iuda (Frey I, no. 636) does not come from a clear archaeological context; see *NSc* 1919, 224–25 and *NSc* 1940, 197–98.

⁷⁸ See H.J. Leon, “The Jews of Venusia,” *JQR* 44 (1953–1954) 267–84. For the numerous publications of C. Colafemmina, see Solin 734–35. For the recent excavations, see E.M. Meyers, “Report on the Excavations at the Venosa Catacombs 1981,” *Vetera Christianorum* 20 (1983) 445–59 and C. Colafemmina, “Saggio di scavo in località ‘Collina della Maddalena’ a Venosa,” *Vetera Christianorum* 18 (1981) 443–51. The Christian materials in C. Colafemmina, “Un nuovo ipogeo cristiano a Venosa,” *Nicolaus* 3 (1975) 162 (= *Vetera Christianorum* 13 [1976] 157). I would like to thank C. Colafemmina for guiding me around in the Venosa catacombs.

⁷⁹ C. Colafemmina, “Insediamenti e condizione degli Ebrei nell’Italia meridionale e insulare,” *Gli Ebrei nell’alto medioevo* (supra n. 41) 199.

⁸⁰ Colafemmina 1975 (supra n. 78) 159.



Fig. 7. Arcosolium with incised menorahs. Noto Antica. (Photo author)

difficult to evaluate. In tombs, known as “dei Cappucini,” a Jewish inscription and lamps on which the menorah (in one case with five arms!) was depicted were found together with other lamps decorated with a monogram.⁸¹ Jewish and Christian lamps from the Belloni, Trigila, and Bonaiuto catacombs attest to a comparable “promiscuità.”⁸²

In Agrigento, on Sicily’s southern coast, the finds speak a less complicated language. When in 597 the majestic Doric temple, popularly known as the Temple of Concord, was transformed into a basilica dedicated to Peter and Paul, Christians started to construct their graves around the city’s new religious center. Yet, directly next to the entrance to a catacomb of medium size dug by the Christians, a Jew was able

to acquire a small chamber, as a fragmentary funerary inscription reveals.⁸³ In addition, discoveries at Mazzarino, near Piazza Armerina, and at Noto Antica, 30 km south of Syracuse, where in a rocky slope a Jewish chamber can be found in the center of a row of Christian tombs (figs. 6 and 7), further attest to the close spatial relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish tombs.⁸⁴

Many sites from across the Roman world could be added to the list of communal Jewish-Christian-pagan cemeteries: S. Antioco on Sardinia,⁸⁵ Rabat/Mdina on Malta, where Jewish hypogea lay dispersed among Christian tombs,⁸⁶ Doclea (Yugoslavia) where Jews were laid to rest in an otherwise pagan necropolis,⁸⁷ Thessaloniki,⁸⁸ several sites in Asia Minor,⁸⁹ possibly

⁸¹ For the inscription see Frey I, no. 652. The lamps were published by P. Orsi, “Nuovi ipogei di sette cristiane e giudaiche ai Cappucini in Siracusa,” *RömQSch* 14 (1900) 193.

⁸² See P. Orsi, “Piccole catacombe di sette nella regione S. Lucia-Cappuccini,” *NSc* 1915, 205.

⁸³ C. Mercurelli, “Scavi e scoperte nelle catacombe siciliane,” *RACrist* 21 (1944) 21–22, and Mercurelli, “Agrigento paleocristiana,” *MemPontAcc* II.8.1. (Vatican City 1948) 61.

⁸⁴ On Mazzarino see *AA* 1954, 688–90 fig. 126 and L. Bonomi, “Cimiteri paleocristiani di Sofiana,” *RACrist* 40 (1964) 199 (the Jewish inscription was not found in situ, but most probably stems from the Eastern cemetery). For Noto see P. Orsi, “Catacomba giudaica,” *NSc* 1897, 89; V. La Rosa, “Archeologia sicula e barocca: per la ripresa del problema di Noto Antica,” *Atti e memorie dell’Istituto per lo studio e la valorizzazione di Noto Antica* 2 (1971) 96. I would like to thank V. La Rosa for enabling me to visit this site.

⁸⁵ A. Taramelli, “S. Antioco (Cagliari). Ipogeo con sepultura giudaica della necropoli sulcitana,” *NSc* 1908, 150; Taramelli, “Scavi e scoperte di antichità puniche e romane

nell’area dell’antica Sulcis,” *NSc* 1922, 335; G. Zilliu, “Antichità paleocristiane di Sulcis,” *Nuovo Bulletino di Archeologia Sardo* 1 (1984) 288.

⁸⁶ E. Becker, *Malta sotterranea. Studien zur altchristlichen und jüdischen Sepulkralkunst* (Strasbourg 1913) 21; M. Bhagian, *Late Roman and Byzantine Catacombs and Related Burial Places in the Maltese Islands* (*BAR-IS* 302, 1986) passim.

⁸⁷ A. Cermanović-Kucmanović and D. Srejić, “Jevresjka grobnica u Duklji,” *Jevrejski Almanak* 1963–1964, 56–62; map on p. 61: the Jewish grave is no. 281. I would like to thank Jos Schaecken for translating this article for me.

⁸⁸ B. Lifshitz and J. Schiby, “Tombeaux juives dans une nécropole à Thessalonique,” *RBibl* 1968, 377–78. See now D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III^e au IV^e siècle* (Athens 1983) 293.

⁸⁹ J. Keil and A. Wilhelm, *Denkmäler aus dem rauhen Kilikien* (*MAMA* 3, Manchester 1931) 18 (Seleukia on the Kalykadnos), 120–22 (Korykos).

Tyre (Phoenicia),⁹⁰ Alexandria,⁹¹ Teucheira,⁹² maybe Carthage,⁹³ Edessa in Syria,⁹⁴ and even as far away as Egra (northern Arabia) one encounters Jewish tombs among those of the local non-Jewish population.⁹⁵ The recent discovery at Beth Guvrin, south of Jerusalem, of a fourth- to eighth-century cemetery used by both Jews and Christians shows that the phenomenon was not unknown in Palestine itself either.⁹⁶

Furthermore, it is important to note that although in early Christian thought the dictum *vivere licet cum ethnicis, commori non licet* gained more and more acceptance over time,⁹⁷ and good Christians were not supposed to be interred with Donatists or pagans⁹⁸ (as the bishop of Spanish Merida, Martialis, was to find out to his great surprise in 254),⁹⁹ rabbinic literature of the period contains no explicit ruling condemning the burial of Jews together with those holding different religious ideas.¹⁰⁰ Despite the statement "for heathens or slaves no rites whatsoever should be observed," made in the tractate *Semahot*,¹⁰¹ the *Tosefta* as well as several *baraitoth* in the *Palestinian Talmud* state that just as in the case of the dead of Israel, so should non-Jewish dead be buried properly, a behavior prompted by the wish to preserve peace that was put into actual practice by Jews in Edessa.¹⁰² A parallel to the just-mentioned passages, a *baraita* transmitted in the tractate *Gittin* of the *Babylonian*

Talmud, goes so far as to state that non-Jewish dead are to be laid to rest with Jews that had passed away, again with an eye to guaranteeing peaceful relationships between the different groups involved.¹⁰³ Although Medieval Jewish commentators did not like this ruling, their ancient forebearers apparently did not have much difficulty with such a decision.¹⁰⁴

It is precisely against this background that the successful efforts of the always active Ambrose should be seen when, in 393, he came to the *post mortem* rescue of two Christian martyrs, Agricola and Vitalis, buried in a Jewish cemetery in Bologna *inter ipsorum* (*sc. Judaeorum*) *sepultura*.¹⁰⁵ Had he known that other Christians as well, after receiving the crown of martyrdom, had undergone a similar treatment, the bishop of Milan would have been even more upset.¹⁰⁶

Arguably, considerable importance may be attached to this funerary evidence. In the ancient world, the prospect of eternally wandering along the muddy shores of the "trista riviera d'Acheronte"¹⁰⁷ was to be avoided, as references in the literature, laws, and epitaphs of the period show, and proper burial, even of those who did not believe in some form of afterlife or other, had been a concern in Greece as much as it was to become in pagan or Early Christian Rome.¹⁰⁸ The same applied to Jews: even Aristides, a second-century Christian apologist who did not favor Juda-

⁹⁰ See J.P. Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines découvertes dans les fouilles de Tyr (1963-1974)* I. *Inscriptions de la nécropole* (BMusBeyr 29, Paris 1977) nos. 164-68 (also Samaritan).

⁹¹ C.S. Clermont-Ganneau, "L'antique nécropole juive d'Alexandrie," *CRAI* 1907, 234-43 and "La nécropole juive d'Alexandrie," *CRAI* 1907, 375-80.

⁹² S. Applebaum, *Jews and Greeks in Ancient Cyrene* (Leiden 1979) 149.

⁹³ M. de Vogüé, "Sur les nécropoles de Carthage," *RA* 1889, 184, but see Le Bohec (supra n. 25) 167-69 and 185 no. 46, who (168 n. 5) calls the possible burying of Jews and Christians in the same cemetery a "notion idyllique" in which he does not believe.

⁹⁴ See H.J.W. Drijvers, "Jews and Christians at Edessa," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (1985) 90.

⁹⁵ A. Jaussen and R. Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie (mars-mai 1907). De Jérusalem au Hedjaz Médain-Salez* I (Paris 1909) no. 4 and cf. no. 172. A. Negev, "The Nabataean Necropolis at Egra," *RBibl* 83 (1976) 216.

⁹⁶ See Dahari et al. (supra n. 36). I would like to thank A. Kloner for discussion.

⁹⁷ Tert. *De Idol.* 14 (CSEL 20.46).

⁹⁸ See W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford 1952) 190 n. 6.

⁹⁹ Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.6 (CSEL 3.2.740).

¹⁰⁰ Incorrect: J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain. Leur condition juridique, économique et sociale* (Paris 1914) 480; the inscriptions cited on p. 481 n. 6 and 483 ns. 2-3 do not, in

my view, prove Juster's point.

¹⁰¹ *Sem.* 1.9. See D. Zlotnick ed., *The Tractate "Mourning" (Semahot)* (New Haven 1966) who dates it to the third century.

¹⁰² *Tosefta Gittin* 3 (S. Lieberman, *The Tosefta according to Codex Vienna etc.* [New York 1973] 259); *PTAvodah Zarah* 1:3 and *PTDemai* 4:4. For Edessa see J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue* (London 1934) 145.

¹⁰³ *BTGittin* 61a.

¹⁰⁴ See for instance Rashi's commentary ad loc. And see S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-fsutah VIII. Order Nashim* (New York 1973) 850 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁵ Ambrose, *Exh. Virg.* 1.7 (*PL* 16.354).

¹⁰⁶ See the references in Parkes (supra n. 102) 145 n. 6. And cf. L. Cracco Ruggini, "Ebrei e Romani a confronto nell'Italia tardoantica," *Italia judaica. Atti del I. convegno internazionale, Bari 18-22 maggio 1981* (Rome 1983) 51 n. 68.

¹⁰⁷ Dante, *Inferno* III, 78 and cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6, 325.

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (Ithaca 1985) with many references 133-71; Toynbee (supra n. 61). On Pope Zephyrinus (198-217) and Callixtus, see L. Reekmans, *La tombe de Pape Corneille et sa région cémétériale* (Vatican City 1964). Laws: see Paulus *Sent.* 1.21. On *athanatoi* see the discussion by S. Lieberman, "Some Aspects of After Life in Early Rabbinic Literature," in S. Lieberman et al. eds., *H.A. Wolfson Jubilee Volume 2* (Jerusalem 1965) 513-20.

ism, was frank enough to recognize the Jewish respect for proper burial.¹⁰⁹ Thus nobody disagreed that the dead were impure, that "close human contact is considered a sacrilege," and that burial should take place outside the city's limits.¹¹⁰

In an area of life where good care and proper procedures were of prime importance, people must have acted very consciously. Consequently, when it is in this very area that one finds that many Jewish communities did not mind burying their dead close to those who had rarely heard about Mosaic law and had never been involved in rabbinic discussions, the conclusion becomes inescapable that we have here an uncensored and significant reflection of how Jews in the third and fourth centuries related to "others." Their daily lives were hardly affected by the sterile patristic discussions as to which faith really constituted the *Verus Israel*. Their non-Jewish contemporaries, for their part, were able to relate to Jews more peacefully than Theodosius II's law codes concerning the protection of synagogues suggest.

LITERARY AND OTHER EVIDENCE

Several laws in the *Codex Theodosianus* testify that for many Christians who were not theologians and did not have the *otium* either to ponder extensively over the question of how to perceive the continuing flourishing of Judaism in relation to the Church's claims to primacy or to get upset about all sorts of petty definition problems,¹¹¹ boundaries were not always clearly etched. In a time when women employed

in imperial weaving establishments had been "led by the Jews into the association of their turpitude," the emperor Constantine had taken legal steps against mixed marriages.¹¹² Yet, as late as 388 it was deemed necessary to stipulate by law that the government considered such marriages an act of adultery, worthy of nothing less than capital punishment.¹¹³ Five years earlier, in 383, another law attempting to prevent Christians from converting to Judaism had been promulgated. The designated punishment, namely that the property of such apostates would fall to the *fiscus*, suggests that, just as in the case of mixed marriages, the authorities tried to put an end to a problem that to them seemed as burning as it was unendurable.¹¹⁴

Implicitly, such laws tell us not only something about those who did not find the message of the Church especially attractive or meaningful,¹¹⁵ but also about the attitude of the Jewish community. Although further research is still needed to establish the precise nature and extent of Jewish proselytic activity in late antiquity,¹¹⁶ and the evidence for proselytes to Judaism in Rome itself is unfortunately scarce in the extreme,¹¹⁷ the prose *Refutations* by Ephrem the Syrian (who lived in Edessa after 363),¹¹⁸ several Canons from a Council held at Laodicea in the 60s of the fourth century,¹¹⁹ as well as several sermons of John Chrysostom from the years 386 and 387, known as the eight homilies against the Jews (although admittedly from the eastern part of the Roman Empire), support the impression left by the Theodosian Code

¹⁰⁹ Aristides 14.3 (E. Hennecke, *Die Apologie des Aristides* [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur IV.3, Leipzig 1893] 35).

¹¹⁰ Citation: Paulus *Sent.* 1.21. Cf. further *Dig.* 47.12.3; *CIL* VI, 31614 and 31615; *Cic. Leg.* 2.23.58. Concerning these regulations in a Jewish context see E.M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries. Reburial and Rebirth* (Rome 1971); L. Levine, "R. Simeon b. Yohai and the Purification of Tiberias: History and Tradition," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 79 (1978) 227–45; A. Kloner, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period* (Diss. Hebrew Univ. 1980) (Hebrew) and L.Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs," *BiblArch* 44:3 (1981) 171–77; 44:4 (1981) 229–35; 45:1 (1982) 43–53; 45:2 (1982) 109–19. As is well known, tombs were frequently built along the roads leading out from the city. In Jerusalem this seems not to have been the case, possibly for reasons of defilement (see Kloner 1980, 264–65). Note, however, that elsewhere Jewish epitaphs call on passers-by to contemplate the fate of the dead; see Frey II, nos. 1451, 1489, 1509–13 (from Tell Yehudieh in Egypt). For Jewish tombs discovered in close vicinity to a town, see E.M. Meyers et al., *Ancient Synagogue Excavations at Khirbet Shema', Upper Galilee, Israel 1970–1972* (Durham 1976) 121.

¹¹¹ Cf. for example August. *Ep.* 196 (*CSEL* 57.217), where the Church is presented as the true Israel, but its members may not call themselves Jews since they are Jews only in a spiritual sense.

¹¹² *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.6 from 329.

¹¹³ *Cod. Theod.* 9.7.5. Cf. also *Cod. Theod.* 3.7.2.

¹¹⁴ Cf. eventually the remarks by Linder 81 on similar laws from 409, 423, and 438.

¹¹⁵ Cf. eventually Feldman (supra n. 5) 282–83 who theorizes on possible grounds for conversion.

¹¹⁶ For a recent discussion of rabbinic attitudes to proselytizing, see M. Goodman, "Proselytizing in Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989) 175–85.

¹¹⁷ See Solin 616 and Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 115.14.

¹¹⁸ Drijvers (supra n. 94) 98 with further literature.

¹¹⁹ Canons 7, 16, 29, 35–38; see J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* II (Paris 1901) 563–73. See Simon 383 and cf. the remarks by A.T. Kraabel, "Synagoga Caeca: Systematic Distortion in Gentile Interpretation of Evidence for Judaism in the Early Christian Period," in J. Neusner and E.S. Frerichs eds., "To See Ourselves as Others See Us." *Christians, Jews and "Others" in Late Antiquity* (Chico 1985) 236.

that the discussion of religious topics was still possible and the conversion of Christian “renegades” to Judaism not unusual.

That such was the case, in some ways, could be expected, for in daily life it was simply impossible for Jews, Christians, and pagans to get exclusively in touch with the members of their own respective groups. For example, the lawgivers of late antiquity had pragmatically imposed the decurionate on Jews early in the fourth century when the fulfillment of the *munera* involved in this office had become a very dubious honor; since they did not force Jews to forsake the religion of their forefathers and convert to Christianity, they thus normalized dealings of non-Jews with Jewish magistrates.¹²⁰

Yet, this was not the first time Jews found themselves confronted with pagan society and vice versa. When Tacitus observed in the early second century that Roman households “comprise nations with customs the reverse of our own, with foreign cults or with none,”¹²¹ one can be quite sure that there were also Jews among those nations, for the Romans had enslaved them by the thousands on various occasions.¹²² For Jews, being reduced to slavery in a household in Rome was the most direct way to be intensely exposed to un-Jewish ways of life, just as the ownership of Jewish slaves presented the Roman masters with a most casual opportunity to learn, if they wished, about Jewish customs and monotheistic theology. We

do not know positively if the wealthy inhabitants of Rome forced their Jewish slaves to engage in pagan religious practices such as the cult of the *lares familiares*. We are also left to wonder if Jewish slaves once they had covered the road that led to freedom were, as freedmen, still participating in the daily ritual of the *salutatio* and the performance of other *officia* for the benefit of their former master and present patron.¹²³ In any event, the fact that in these “mixed” households ideas could be exchanged freely concerned the legal experts of the *Codex Theodosianus* when they tried to rule out the keeping of non-Jewish slaves by Jews—without much success, as a letter from 594 by Gregory the Great demonstrates.¹²⁴

In this context it should also be observed that even for those Jews who had freely come to Rome, pagans were never far off, for just as the tombs of deceased Jews and non-Jews were situated close to one another, so were the houses of the living. In Rome, one of the centers of Jewish settlement was in *Transtiberim*, present-day Trastevere, Augustus’s *regio* XIV.¹²⁵ This piece of land, located on the left side of the Tiber and outside the *pomerium*, attracted foreigners from all over the world, making it Rome’s most cosmopolitan district. As a study of the relationship between the available soil and known *vici* reveals, the area was densely populated and the ratio of the spacious *domus* to the uncomfortable *insulae* was the lowest anywhere in the city.¹²⁶ Thus ancient Trastevere was the setting

¹²⁰ Earliest laws *Dig.* 50.2.3.3 (time of Septimius Severus and Caracalla) and *Dig.* 27.1.15.6 (early third century). *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.3 (from 312), 16.8.2 (330), again released in 383, *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.194, and 398, *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.157, and cf. *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.158 on Jews trying to escape the state service in Apulia and Calabria. Laws against the employment of Jews in the public service date to the early fifth century: cf. *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.16 (404), 16.8.24 (418). But cf. *Nov.* 45 from 537! See for Venosa, Frey I, no. 611 mentioning “maiores cibitatis” (sic), and two Greek inscriptions with *pater pateroon*, see Frey Addenda nos. 619b and 619c. The *Cod. Iust.* 1.9.18 determines that Jews may not serve as *pater*. For Jewish “defensores civitates” on Minorca, see E.D. Hunt, “St. Stephen in Minorca,” *JThS* 33 (1982) 109, 111, 112, and 119. Jews holding civic offices are frequently mentioned in Asia Minor; see the references in Reynolds and Tannenbaum (supra n. 64) 65.

¹²¹ *Tac. Ann.* 14.14.

¹²² We are not very well informed about the actual numbers of Jews that came to Rome as slaves. For Pompey’s campaign of 61 B.C. cf. Joseph. *AJ* 14.78; Plut. *Vita Pomp.* 45.1–2; App. *Mithr.* 117.571; Eutropius, *Brev. a.U.c.* 6.16: they all mention only nobility from Judaea that came to Rome. But cf. the remarks of Philo, *Leg.* 155. For Sosius (37 B.C.) see Stern (supra n. 5) 367. Seven hundred Jews figured in the triumph of A.D. 71 of the Flavian rulers, see Joseph. *AJ* 19.278–91.

¹²³ Lampe (supra n. 47) 104 maintains that Christian slaves

were punished by their masters. It is not clear if Jews attained citizenship on manumission or if they became *Latini Iuniani*; see in general Solin 713. G. Fuks, “Where Have All the Freedmen Gone? On an Anomaly in the Jewish Grave-Inscriptions from Rome,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (1985) 25–32 works with wrong suppositions, for as I. Kajanto, “Minderheiten und ihre Sprachen in der Hauptstadt Rom,” *BjB* 40 (1980) 94, 99 has already pointed out, inscriptions do only in isolated cases mention the freedman or slave-status of the person commemorated (Kajanto found only 43 examples out of a total of 25,000 inscriptions!). Study of the nomenclature is of little help here, for Jewish names do not follow Roman conventions neatly (Leon 106: only 10 examples of triple names are known) and, moreover, the praenomen/gentilicium/cognomen system had largely disappeared by the fourth century; see A. Cameron, “Polynomy in Late Roman Aristocracy: The Case of Petronius Probus,” *JRS* 75 (1985) 164–82, a reference I owe to E.A. Clark.

¹²⁴ See Linder 82–85 and 273. Gregory, *Reg. Epist.* 4.21 (CC 140.239).

¹²⁵ Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 155–58. S. Collon, “Remarques sur les quartiers juifs de la Rome antique,” *MEFR* 57 (1940) 77 goes so far as to speak of the “forteresse du judaïsme romain.”

¹²⁶ For foreigners in Rome see Seneca’s complaints in *Ad Helv.* 6.2. On Trastevere see Lampe (supra n. 47) 31 who also notes (p. 36) that the strict adherence to the *pomerium* may have lapsed over time.

for an urban life that, like some cities in the Orient today, was hectic and noisy. We may very well doubt if urban alienation went so far that Novius was your neighbor "whose hands you could touch while reaching out of the window, but who was at the same time as far away as Terentianus who now is governor of Syene on the Nile."¹²⁷ The living conditions in Trastevere being what they were, Jewish families could hardly avoid communicating with neighbors having radically different religious preferences.¹²⁸

Of course the question of how much and in which ways the Roman Jewish community was affected by participating in pagan society remains speculative. Although the extant literary sources give us some clues, it is clear that the rabbis from the late first century onward in the continuous process of redefining Judaism (or to be more precise, their own group)¹²⁹ preferred, like their Christian colleagues, to focus on the differences rather than the similarities between themselves and other Jews, pagans, and Christians.

Jews, unlike for example Syrians, seem to have kept a strong sense of ethnic identity and were not readily absorbed into Roman society—as Augustine noted with some dismay early in the fifth century.¹³⁰ Approximately 50% of all epitaphs from the Jewish catacombs of Rome mention some function or other connected with the synagogue (i.e., the Jewish community), a percentage that rises to 85% in the case of inscriptions on sarcophagi that were decorated with blatantly pagan imagery. Yet, this expression of belonging to the Jewish community, also expressed in the material record by means of the prominent display of the menorah in different artistic media, is not identical to a uniformity of ideas within that community. Even though there is some evidence for rabbinic activity in Rome, especially in the form of the

much praised *beth midrash* led by Matthia ben Heresh,¹³¹ there is not enough information available on the Jewish communities to the west of Palestine to say with reference to rabbinic authority or the influence of the Patriarchate that already in the third century, "the diaspora did not go its own independent way."¹³²

The rabbis, knowing what had happened to Elisha ben Avujah, had categorically declared that the Greek language was one thing, but Greek wisdom another.¹³³ That this ruling was more or less observed, at least by the rabbis themselves, follows from the fact that Greek philosophical concepts did not find much acceptance in rabbinic literature, that the majority of Greek and to a lesser degree Latin loan words that permeated this literature are to be found in aggadic rather than in halakhic contexts, and that many other loan words concern artifacts used in daily life as well as synagogal furnishings and architecture.¹³⁴ In addition, community officials often bear Greek names.¹³⁵

Yet, one wonders, how many Jews in Rome entertained ideas similar to those of the Palestinian rabbis? Even when there is rabbinic evidence for Rome, as in the case of Todos, it is extremely difficult to evaluate it historically.¹³⁶

CONCLUSION

Although many complex questions remain unanswered as to how the different Jewish communities in third- and fourth-century Rome defined their boundaries, the archaeological and literary evidence presented in this article cumulatively suggests that the concept "isolation" hardly does justice to them. Clearly, during the fourth century, societal changes took place only gradually; Jews, Christians, and pagans probably were on speaking terms for most of the time. I agree completely with Simon's statement that "c'est dans le philo-judaïsme populaire que réside

¹²⁷ Mart. *Epigr.* 1.86.

¹²⁸ And the same holds true for other areas of Jewish settlement in Rome such as the Subura, where the population density was likewise high, and the Campus Martius; see Leon 145 to which add *CIL* XV, 3552; see, in general, Lampe (supra n. 47). Elsewhere in the Roman Empire the situation was not much different; see H.J.W. Drijvers, "Syrian Christianity and Judaism," in T. Rajak, J. North, and J. Lieu eds., *The Jews in the Religious Life of the Roman World* (forthcoming). I would like to thank H.J.W. Drijvers for permitting me to read his manuscript.

¹²⁹ See W.S. Green, "Otherness Within: Towards a Theory of Difference in Rabbinic Judaism," in J. Neusner and E.S. Frerichs (supra n. 119) 57.

¹³⁰ Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* 58.1.21–22 (CC 39.744). For Syrians see Solin 720.

¹³¹ See E. Toaff, "Matia ben Cheresch e la sua accademia

rabbinnica di Roma," *Annuario di studi ebraici* 2 (1964) 69–80.

¹³² Contra Reynolds and Tannenbaum (supra n. 64) 78–79 and 82 and contra Solin 716 and n. 286b. See also Linder 133.

¹³³ *BT*Babba Qamma 83a. On Elisha ben Abuja, see among other passages *BTH*agigah 15b.

¹³⁴ See D. Sperber, *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan 1984) and R. Katzoff, "Sperber's Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature—A Review Essay," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 20 (1989) 195–206. Cf. also S. Krauss, *Synagogale Altertümer* (Vienna 1922).

¹³⁵ For Rome see Frey I, LXXXII–CI and Leon 167–95.

¹³⁶ See discussion in B. Bokser, "Todos and Rabbinic Authority in Rome," in J. Neusner et al. eds., *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* 1 (London 1987) 117–29.

l'explication véritable de l'antisémitisme chrétien."¹³⁷ But, sympathy to others did not per se equal a wish to convert. Just as most Jews did not change their religion, only a few of the many Christians that for various reasons felt attracted to Judaism took such a definitive step.¹³⁸

It is in such occurrences as having oneself circumcised, while still designating oneself a Christian, or in

calling Jews *serpentes*, yet consulting the rabbis about the interpretation of difficult Scriptural verses, that lies the uniqueness of the social and religious life of the fourth century.¹³⁹

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¹³⁷ Simon 273.

¹³⁸ The evidence for Jews that converted is scarce: cf. Frey I, no. 77* (to paganism); *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* IV, 12262; for Isaacus (later fourth century), see W. Smith and H. Wace, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography* 3 (London 1882) 293 no. 26. Even if Jews converted to Christianity, some of them stuck to old practices according to

Jerome, *Ep.* 112.15 (*CSEL* 55.384). See also S.J.D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTHR* 82 (1989) 13–33 (mostly based on material predating the period discussed in this article).

¹³⁹ Circumcision: see Chrysostom, *Hom.* 2 (*PG* 48.858). Other sources in Simon 271.