

PANDERA & STADA AND JEHOSHUA BAR PERAHYA

I. PANDERA & STADA

Peter Schäfer's book on Jesus in the Talmud¹ is presented by its author as an expanded essay. Nevertheless, the investigation of the subject is extensive and thoroughgoing,² except for philological and linguistic matters, and for textual criticism. Now, the historical value of Talmudic traditions about the family of Jesus, discussed by Schäfer in the first chapter of his monograph, depends on the correct spelling and on the meaning of the two alleged patronymics of Jesus, namely Pandera and Stada.

1. PANDERA

Origen (A.D. 185/6-254/5) reports that Celsus, an eclectic Platonist of the 2nd century A.D., heard from a Jew that Mary had been divorced by her husband who suspected her of adultery, and that Jesus was born as the result of her secret affair with a Roman soldier, called Πανθηρα.³ Celsus is the author of the first comprehensive philosophical polemic against Christianity, the Ἀληθὴς λόγος "The True Word". On internal evidence the work seems to be of Alexandrian origin and to date from *ca.* A.D. 178-180. Its greater part is quoted in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, that gave it new life by replying to Celsus' arguments point by point. Origen's work, composed *ca.* A.D. 249, survives and thus preserves an opinion of the mid-2nd century A.D., as well as the earliest Greek spelling of the name Pandera, perhaps influenced by πανθήρα, which was a large net. Its pronunciation was *Pantīra*, since at that time *ēta* was articulated as a long vowel *ī*. This form of the

¹ P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, Princeton–Oxford 2007.

² See the review by M. Tomal, "Palamedes" 2 (2007), p. 223-235.

³ Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 28. 32. Critical edition: P. Koetschau (ed.), *Origenes: Werke I. Die Schrift vom Martyrium. – Buch I-IV gegen Celsus* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte), Leipzig 1899. Text with French translation: Origène, *Contre Celse* I (Sources chrétiennes 132), Paris 2005.

name is preserved also by Epiphanius (*ca.* A.D. 313-403), bishop of Salamis (Cyprus), born in Eleutheropolis (Beth-Guvrin) and witnessing Palestinian traditions. In his work *Panarion*, “Medicine-chest”, also known under the title *Adversus haereses*, he reports that Pantīra was another name of Jacob, the father of Joseph, father of Jesus.⁴

Now *Pantīra* is no personal name, neither Semitic, nor Greek or Latin. From the linguistic point of view it is quite clear that this is the substantivized feminine adjective *paṭṭīrā* with four possible connotations: a dismissed or sold servant, a divorced wife, a departed (dead) wife or mother, a freedwoman. In *paṭṭīrā*, the correct Talmudic form corresponding to the Greek transcription, the geminated *ṭṭ* of *paṭṭīrā* is dissimilated to *nt*,⁵ what can happen easily in spoken Aramaic. This kind of change is attested from the 7th century B.C. on by Assyro-Babylonian⁶ and Greek transcriptions⁷ of Aramaic and Hebrew names. It is rarely indicated by Aramaic or Jewish scribes, who usually follow correct or ‘historical’ spellings. This is the case, for instance, of two Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions referring to the children of a “dismissed” or “departed (dead)” woman, *pṭrt*. In both instances the word is used in the emphatic state, as it refers to well determined persons.

The first inscription, engraved on a cippus, is dated in A.D. 219. It is dedicated to the God “whose name is blessed for ever, the merciful, the good, the compassionate one”. The dedication was made by “‘Attenūrī, son of Tayma ‘ā’ Halā’, son of ‘Attenūrī, for his life and for the life of his children, and in honour of the children of the departed (wife) (*wlyqr bny pṭrt*)”.⁸ The inscription seems

⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78, 7. Critical edition: K. Holl (ed.), *Epiphanius III. Panarion haer.* 65-80. – *De fide* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 37), Leipzig 1933.

⁵ For the dissimilation of geminated consonants by *n*, see E. Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (OLA 80), Leuven ²2001, §23.7; Idem, “Dissimilation of Geminatio”, in: P.G. Borbone, A. Mengozzi, M. Tosco (eds), *Loquentes linguis. Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, Wiesbaden 2006, p. 437-446 (see p. 438-439, 441, 442).

⁶ One of the oldest examples is provided by the proper name *Haddiy*, “Rejoicing”, written *Hdy* in Aramaic, but *Ḥa-an-di-i* in Assyrian and *Ḥa-an-di-ia* in Babylonian. Cf. H.D. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* II/1, Helsinki 2000, p. 452. See further R. Zadok, *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods. An Onomastic Study*, Jerusalem ²1978, p. 260-261, §4233.

⁷ For instance, Σαββαταῖος or Σαββαταῖος for *Šabbatay*; cf. S.M. Ruozzi Sala, *Lexicon nominum Semiticorum quae in papyris Graecis in Aegypto repertis ab anno 323 a.Ch.n. usque ad annum 70 p.Ch.n. laudata reperiuntur*, Milano 1974, p. 34-37.

⁸ The inscription was published by J. Cantineau, *Tadmorea II*, “Syria” 17 (1936), p. 267-355 (see p. 348, No. 22). The word *pṭrt* is not translated by the editor. The inscription was published again by D.R. Hillers, E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, Baltimore-London 1996, No. 2771.

to distinguish the children of ‘Attenūrī from the children which his apparently deceased wife had from a previous marriage. The use of the phrase *lyqr* implies that her grown up sons occupied high positions at the time when the dedication was made. Any comments are hazardous in the case of the second inscription, which is badly damaged.⁹ Its preserved part records that “these children of the dismissed / departed (mother) / freedwoman made (*’bdw bny p̄rt’ ’ln*)” it ... “for the divine Lord”.

The adjective *paṭṭīr* signifies a conclusive or definitive departure, as shown by contracts of slave sales with the phrase *paṭṭīr wē ’āṭīr min ḥ^arūrē*,¹⁰ “given away and exempt from any claims of liberation”. This is why *paṭṭīr* could designate a divorced wife and a deceased person, just like the feminine derivative *p̄ṭīrā* meant “dismissal” or “departure” in the sense of “death”, for instance in *bš’t p̄tyrtw*, “at the hour of his death”.¹¹ The masculine plural *p̄tyrn* and the suffixed feminine plural *p̄tyrk 2* appear in broken contexts on an Aramaic papyrus from Saqqāra, going back to the 5th century B.C. J.B. Segal translated them by “are released” and “your freedwomen 2”.¹² These translations are plausible and express another connotation of the same root, while the meaning “to divorce” appears in a fragmentary Aramaic marriage contract from Wādī Murabba‘āt, dating from the 1st century A.D.: [... *h)n ’p̄t[rnk ...*], “If I dismiss you...”.¹³ This use of the verb, although somewhat uncertain, is important for the understanding of *paṭṭīrā*, and it confirms the Targumic and Talmudic connotation of *p̄tr* in the juridical sense of “divorcing”, for instance *p̄tr wtryk*, “he dismissed and sent away”.¹⁴ The “writ of divorce” was called *gt p̄twryn*¹⁵ or *’grt p̄twryn*.¹⁶

The story heard by Celsus from his Jewish informant still echoes the correct meaning of *paṭṭīrā*, since Mary has supposedly been divorced by her husband,

⁹ It was published by M. Gawlikowski, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Camp de Dioclétien, “Syria”* 47 (1970), p. 313-325, Pls. XVIII-XIX (see p. 316-317 and Pl. XVIII, 3); Idem, *Recueil d’inscriptions palmyréniennes provenant de fouilles syriennes et polonaises récentes à Palmyre*, Paris 1974, No. 154. It was published again by D.R. Hillers, E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, No. 1939, with a printing mistake.

¹⁰ Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 86a.

¹¹ Jerusalem Talmud, *Kilaim* IX, 32a bottom.

¹² J.B. Segal (ed.), *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqāra*, London 1983, Nos. 52a, 6 and 52b, II, 7.

¹³ J.T. Milik, in: P. Benoit, J.T. Milik, R. de Vaux (eds), *Les Grottes de Murabba‘āt* (DJD 2), Oxford 1961, Texte, No. 21, 9, p. 115; E. Koffmahn, *Die Doppelurkunden aus der Wüste Juda* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 5), Leiden 1968, p. 120.

¹⁴ Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 85b.

¹⁵ Mishnah, *Gittin* IX, 3; Targum Onqelos to Deut. 24, 1,3 (A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* I, Leiden 1959, p. 330).

¹⁶ Targum Jonathan to Is. 50, 1 and Jer. 3, 8 (A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* III, Leiden 1962, p. 102 and 140).

but the popular spelling *panṭīrā* with *nt*, a dissimilated *tt*, and a final *aleph* instead of *hē*¹⁷ had obliterated the meaning of the word, which was no longer recognizable by the 2nd century A.D., at the time of Celsus. This led to the creation of the story of a secret affair between Mary and a Roman soldier. One should thus assume that Jesus' qualification as "son of a divorcee" goes back to the spoken Galilean Aramaic of the 1st century A.D. The somewhat surprising variant *Yšw' pntīry* in the Tosefta, *Hullin* II, 24, can possibly confirm the Galilean origin of the epithet, since the final *yōd* may indicate *ē*, while the vocalization found occasionally in fragmentary manuscripts indicates that *e* can appear in Galilean Aramaic as a variant of *a*. The possibility of the change *ā* > *ē* should be taken into account especially after *r*, like in *panṭīrā* > *panṭīrē*. Instead, the spelling *pnd(y)r*' results from a scribal mistake, easily explainable when the meaning of *panṭīrā* was no longer understood.

It is by no means evident that the qualification *ben/bar paṭṭīrā* implies an illegitimate birth, since the basis for divorce, according to the Hillelite School, can be any fault found in the wife; according to the Shammaite School, fornication only.¹⁸ *Ben/bar paṭṭīrā* can be, at the very outset, a simple disparaging appellative. It may signify – in the case of Jesus – the rejection of his messianic title "Son of David" (Rom. 1, 3). It can also refer to particular family conditions. As well known, the halakhic scholars laid down that boys below the age of six years should be in the custody of their mother,¹⁹ while the father's legal obligation to maintain his children ends when they reach the age of six full years.²⁰ Although Jesus was regarded at Nazareth as a carpenter's son (Matthew 13, 55), the absence of Joseph from his public life, as recorded in the Gospels, could suggest a mono-parental situation and foster the idea that Mary had been divorced by her husband. True, the uncensored passage *Shabbath* 104a of the Babylonian Talmud in the Codex Munich 95 ascribes the status of *mamzer* to Jesus, just like Celsus' tale does, but this passage is a late compilation of several stories concerning Pendera and Stada. It brings us down to the 3rd century A.D., while the qualification *ben/bar paṭṭīrā* goes probably back to the 1st century. The account of the Gospel

¹⁷ The *aleph* is used quite often to indicate the feminine ending in Qumran Aramaic (Genesis Apocryphon, Targum to Job), in documents from Wādī Murabba'āt, also on an ossuary from Jerusalem, dated about 50 C.E. (K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, Göttingen 1984, p. 342, yJE 17). The Qumran Copper Scroll 3Q15 usually follows the same spelling to indicate the final vowel *-a*, as noticed already by J.T. Milik, in: M. Baillet, J.T. Milik, R. de Vaux (eds), *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumrân* (DJD 3), Oxford 1962, p. 227, §3a. See also P. Muchowski, *Zwój miedziany (3Q15). Implikacje spornych kwestii lingwistycznych*, Poznań 1993, p. 73.

¹⁸ Mishnah, *Gittin* IX, 10; Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 90a.

¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 102b, 103a.

²⁰ Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 49b, 65b.

of St. Matthew 1, 20, written about 80/85 A.D., already contains an early reply to this statement and a rejection of the suspicion of Mary's adultery: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home with you. It is by the Holy Spirit, that she has conceived a child". The claim that Jesus was "the son of a divorcee" and no "son of David" was thus older, but no echoes of similar statements are found in authentic Pauline epistles, dated between 50 and 60 A.D.

2. STADA

The case of Ben Stada, mentioned in the Tosefta,²¹ in the Jerusalem Talmud,²² and in the Babylonian Talmud,²³ is quite different. Considering the practically identical shape of handwritten *d* and *r*, the name should be read *Str'* with almost all the parallel passages in the Tosefta and in the Jerusalem Talmud, which undoubtedly read *ben Str'*.²⁴ The spelling *Swtd/r'* in the treatise *Sanhedrin* VII, 25d of the Jerusalem Talmud, as read in the Scaliger Codex 3 housed in the Library of Leiden University, witnesses the presence of an important *mater lectionis* indicating a long *ō* vowel. This codex, achieved in 1334, is thus based on a manuscript preserving the correct pronunciation of the name that could only be *Sōterā*, a Christian Aramaic transcription of Greek Σωτήρ, "Saviour", with the Aramaic ending *a* that could still have its original emphatic function and signify "The Saviour". Did Aramaic need such a loanword? Beside the name of Jesus, written *Yšw(')* in the Talmud, usually without the final '*ayin*,²⁵ Aramaic and Hebrew had no adequate noun expressing the idea of "Saviour". Greek Σωτήρ has thus been borrowed and the misunderstanding of this word in Talmudic circles, which have heard it in the speech of Christian Jews, led to its interpretation as a patronymic. In regions where Greek was not spoken, Judeo-Christians have used the Hebrew participle '*ōzēr*, "helper". This word still appears with the connotation "Saviour" in the Qur'ān IX, 30: "The Jews said: 'The Saviour ('*zyr*) is the Son of Allah'. The Christians said: 'The Messiah is the Son of Allah'. This is what they say". It is certain that in Medina Mohammed had opportunities of becoming acquainted with Jews of some culture, and there is linguistic as well as literary evidence for

²¹ *Shabbath* XI (XII), 15.

²² *Shabbath* XII, 4.13d; *Sanhedrin* VII, 25d. The tractate *Shabbath* emanates from Tiberias, while *Sanhedrin* represents the school of Caesarea, where it was compiled in the mid-4th century C.E., half a century before the compilation of the texts to the orders *Zera'im*, *Mo'ed*, and *Nashim*.

²³ *Shabbath* 104b; *Sanhedrin* 67a.

²⁴ See S. Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fešūta* I, New York 1955, p. 179-180, followed by Tomal, "Palamedes" 2 (2007), p. 225-226.

²⁵ The '*ayin* was no longer pronounced: P. E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford ²1959, p. 167-168; E.Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic*, Ramat-Gan 1976, p. 80-81.

his indebtedness to Syrian clergymen, like the monk Baḥīrā from Bozrah, in whose monastery Mohammed is said to have lodged on his visits there.²⁶ The passage just quoted witnesses some confusion between Jews and Judeo-Christians, what could happen easily since Mohammed's information depended largely on conversation with Jews and Christians, not on a study of the Old and New Testament.

The epithet *Swtr* 'can go back to the 1st century, since the New Testament already ascribes this title to Jesus,²⁷ but the usually quoted statements of the Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 104b, are attributed to R. Ḥisda, a third-century Babylonian *amora*, whose comments cannot be regarded as reliable. Ben Stada is first characterized there as the man "who brought witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches upon his flesh". Then follow attempts at identifying him: "'Was he then the son of Stada? Surely, he was the son of Pandira'. R. Ḥisda said: 'The husband was Stada; the paramour was Pandira'. 'Was not the husband Pappos ben Jehudah, and his mother, Stada?' 'His mother was Miriam, a woman's hairdresser. As they say in Pumbedita: 'This one has been unfaithful (*saṭat da*) to her husband'". The mention of Pappos ben Jehuda, a tanna active in the early 2nd century A.D., shows that the text is an unreliable mixture of stories from various periods.

The similar passage of *Sanhedrin* 67b in the Babylonian Talmud has nevertheless an introduction, which suggests an explanation of the epithet "son of the Saviour" given to the man, who was hanged at Lydda on the eve of Passover. This passage reads: "And thus they did to Ben Stada at Lydda and hanged him on the eve of Passover". There is no basis in tannaitic literature for the identification of this figure with Jesus, despite the later expansions of the story.²⁸ Jesus was executed by the Romans in Jerusalem, not in Lydda, where the Acts of the Apostles 9, 32-35 attest the early existence of a Christian community. Considering the intensive expectation of the *Parousia*, the return of Christ, expressed also in the Gospels,²⁹ one could assume that the "son of the Saviour" was one of the thaumaturgists and preachers announcing that "The Day is upon us" (Luke 21, 8). But it is quite possible that, at the outset, *ben/bar Soṭerā* simply designated an unnamed "disciple of the Saviour". His death "on the eve of Passover" may be a historical record, just as a presentation of the event by his followers. It was misinterpreted

²⁶ The presumed site of this monastery, called Deir Baḥīrā, has been recently excavated. For a summary, see R. al-Muqdad, R. Farioli Campanati, *Bosra*, in: *Syrian-European Archaeology Exhibition*, Damas 1996, p. 167-170, in particular p. 169, Fig. 1, left.

²⁷ Philip. 3, 20; II Tim. 1, 10; Tit. 1, 4; 3, 6; II Pet. 1, 1.11; 2, 20; 3, 2.18.

²⁸ In particular, the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a, accuses Jesus of practicing witchcraft: "They hanged Jesus on the eve of Passover. Forty days earlier a proclamation was issued that he was to be stoned for practicing witchcraft and for enticing and leading Israel astray". The latter accusation is found also in *bSanhedrin* 107a and *bSotah* 47b.

²⁹ Matthew 24, 4-5; Marc 13, 5-6; Luke 21, 8.

in later times, still in the 12th century, when Jacob ben Meir Tam identified Ben Stada with Jesus despite the contradictions of the Talmudic statements.

The proper name *Swtr* occurs in the Jerusalem Talmud³⁰ and *swtryh/swtr* is used in the sense of “savings” or “wages” in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Ex. 22, 30; Lev. 19, 13; Deut. 34, 14-15, but the religious connotation “Saviour” or “salvation” of the Greek loanword is not attested in the Jewish Aramaic literature. Therefore, the “son of the Saviour” executed at Lydda can hardly be connected with a Jewish uprising, in particular with the Gallus revolt in 351-352, in which Lydda was one of the focal points.³¹ Nor is there any direct evidence that “the son” or “disciple of the Saviour” is St. George, an early martyr, probably at Lydda, Roman Diospolis,³² where a church was built in his honour about the 5th century³³ and

³⁰ *Berakoth* I, 2c top.

³¹ An updated account of the historical sources is given by M. Mor, *The Events of 351-352 in Palestine – The Last Revolt against Rome?*, in: D.H. French, C.S. Lightfoot (eds), *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire* (BAR International Series 553/II), Oxford 1989, p. 335-353. See also G. Bijovski, *Numismatic Evidence for the Gallus Revolt: The Hoard from Lod*, “Israel Exploration Journal” 57 (2007), p. 187-203.

³² This is stated explicitly by Theodosius, *De situ Terrae Sanctae* IV, 5-7, who visited Lydda in the first half of the 6th century and reports that “St. George was martyred there. There is also his body and many miracles happen there”. More details are given by the *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini* A, 25 and by Adamnanus, *De locis sanctis* III, 4, who reports stories about St. George told by the Frankish bishop Arculf, who ca. 680 visited Constantinople and the Holy Land. Cf. *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCCM 175), Turnhout 1965, p. 116, 142, 229-233. Instead, there is no particular reason to suppose that St. George is referred to, unnamed, in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* VIII, 5. According to another legend, St. George suffered martyrdom in Bithynia, at Nicomedia, that was the Oriental capital of the emperor Diocletian (281-305). His remains would have been brought to Lydda, his birthplace. This account has hardly any historical value, while the story of St. George rescuing a maiden from a dragon may owe something to the fact that the Classical tale of Perseus and Andromeda was localized at Jaffa, not far from Lydda. Cf. H. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, Bruxelles 1909, p. 45-76. The feast of St. George on April 23, in both eastern and western Churches, may have some connection with the period of Passover.

³³ According to William of Tyre, *Chronicon* VII, 22, 50-60, the church was built by Justinian I (483-565); cf. R.B.C. Huygens (ed.), *Guillaume de Tyr: Chronique* (CCCM 63-63A), Turnhout 1986, p. 373. However, Procopius, *On Justinian’s Buildings* III, 4, does not list it among Justinian’s constructions in the Holy Land. The church is assumed therefore to be older. In the 10th century, Muqaddasi, *Description of Syria* (translation by G. Le Strange, London 1896, p. 22-23, 59), regarded it as one of the most prestigious churches of the Near East with the Holy Sepulchre and the cathedral of Edessa, described by him as one of the four wonders of the world. The church appears in the city vignette of Diospolis on the mosaic floor dated 756 C.E. at Umm er-Rasas, Jordan (N. Duval, in: M. Piccirillo, E. Alliata, *Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano*, Jerusalem 1994, p. 165-230), and it might be represented on the Byzantine mosaic at Ma’in (Jordan): R. de Vaux, *Une mosaïque byzantine à Ma’in (Transjordanie)*, “Revue Biblique” 47 (1938), p. 227-258, Pls. XI-XVI (see p. 245 and Pl. XIII, 1). Its site is now occupied by a mosque.

where his alleged tomb is still shown, while the town was named Georgiopolis in late Byzantine times.

The execution of the “son of the Saviour” at Lydda may have taken place in the 2nd century A.D., as suggested by the mention of Pappos ben Jehudah, possibly before the revolt of Bar Kokhba, the “Son of the Star”. Lydda flourished between the First and Second Jewish Wars and among its synagogues was one specially maintained by a community of flax-weavers, possibly native from Tarsus,³⁴ the chief-town of Cilicia and the birthplace of the apostle Paul. The Second epistle of Peter, written probably in the first half of the 2nd century, possibly in Anatolia,³⁵ still aims at keeping up the eschatological expectations. It refers to Jesus as “our God and Saviour”, what seems to be echoed by the title “son of the Saviour”. Unfortunately, there is too little known about the Christian Jews of that time to permit an accurate identification of the historical context of the figure thus called.

II. JEHOSHUA BAR PERAHYA

Jehoshua bar Perahya was a co-chairman of the Sanhedrin with Nittai of Arbela, a town in Lower Galilee. Both had been pupils of Jose bar Joezer of Zereda and of Jose bar Johanan of Jerusalem,³⁶ and were presiding the Sanhedrin in the second half of the 2nd century B.C., under the reign of John Hyrcanus I. The Mishnah preserved only a few sayings of Jehoshua. One concerns a wise way of life: “Provide yourself a teacher and get you a fellow”, who could support a testimony. Another one is addressed to judges or refers to social relations in general: “When you judge any man, incline the balance in his favour”, literally “in the scale of guiltlessness”, in other words: assume that he is innocent.³⁷ These two sayings recall “The Words of Simeon ben Jeshua, who is called Ben Sira”, the Hebrew title of the Wisdom of Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus, as given in the subscription of the work. The latter goes back to the early 2nd century B.C. and one might assume that the unrecorded sayings of Jehoshua bar Perahya could have provided more wise words of the kind.

The Mishnah preserved the souvenir of a difference of opinion between Jehoshua bar Perahya and Nittai of Arbela concerning the ritual laying of hands upon the animal before it is slaughtered. Jehoshua’s view was that one may not lay on the hands, while Nittai of Arbela permitted this ritual gesture.³⁸ According

³⁴ Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 26a; *Nazir* 52a; Jerusalem Talmud, *Shekalim* II, 6.27a.

³⁵ The earliest attestations of the Second epistle of Peter, the papyrus P⁷² and the Coptic translation, come from Egypt, but this does not prove that the Epistle has been written there. The preservation of texts written on papyrus depends on the climate.

³⁶ Mishnah, *Aboth* I, 4-6.

³⁷ Mishnah, *Aboth* I, 6.

³⁸ Mishnah, *Hagigah* I, 2.

to the biblical Law, the offerer was supposed to perform the symbolic act of laying his hand on the offering: “He shall lay his hand on the head of the victim and slaughter it” (Lev. 3, 2.8; 4, 4; etc.). The disaccord concerned the succession of the ritual acts. In fact, the symbolic gesture of laying the hand on the head of the animal is mentioned first, but the latter is called *qorbān*, “offering”, in Lev. 3, 2.8, what may imply that a slaughtered victim is intended by the Law. Such disputations had a sense when sacrifices were offered in the Temple, but they were mere historical records at the time of the redaction of the Mishnah, around 200 A.D.

The Tosefta still records a *halakha* established by Jehoshua bar Perahya concerning laws on food regarded as impure: “Jehoshua bar Perahya said: Wheat coming from Alexandria is impure because of their bilge (ἀντλία)”. Wheat was imported from Alexandria by ship and, if it was just piled up at the ship’s bottom, it could be infected by sea-water, sand, and dirt. When the shipping conditions of wheat had changed and jars were used, a later generation of sages thus abolished this *halakha*: “The sages said: If so, it shall be impure for Jehoshua bar Perahya, but pure for all Israel”.³⁹

A legendary story attributed Jehoshua bar Perahya a role in magic incantations against demons that might harm the family members and their possessions. This is known from inscriptions on Aramaic incantation bowls, found in Babylonia. They have been described by Cyrus H. Gordon as follows:

The texts under discussion come from Sasanian Babylonia before and after 600 A.D. These inscriptions are written spirally on terra-cotta bowls; usually on the inside of the bowl, sometimes on the outside, and sometimes on both sides.⁴⁰

Some three hundred texts have been published so far and more bowls of the kind are still piled up in museums or kept in private collections. Most numerous are the Jewish Aramaic bowls, but there are also similar bowls with Mandaic and Syriac Christian or Manichaean⁴¹ inscriptions, all dating from the same period, which extends from the 5th to the 8th century A.D. The most recent bowl from controlled excavations, found by the Polish archaeological mission on the island Bidjān on the Euphrates, has been uncovered in the earliest Abbasid stratum and can be dated therefore from the 8th century.⁴² These inscriptions are important from the linguistic point of view, because they provide texts not corrupted by later copyists and written in a period when Jewish Babylonian Aramaic was still

³⁹ Tosefta, *Makshirin* III, 4.

⁴⁰ C.H. Gordon, *Adventures in the Near East*, London 1957, p. 161.

⁴¹ Sh. Shaked, *Manichaean Incantation Bowls in Syriac*, “Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam” 24 (2000), p. 58-92.

⁴² M. Gawlikowski, *Une coupe magique araméenne*, “Semitica” 38 (1990 = *Hommages à Maurice Szyner* I), p. 137-143 and Pls. XXIV-XXV.

a spoken language, just as Mandaic and Syriac. They also reveal the popular religion, recurring to magical practices but also preserving, for instance, the entire divine name *Yhw'ł*, regarded as the name of an angel.⁴³

Only a small percentage of such bowls comes from regular excavations, the largest group having been found in 1888 and 1889 by the archaeological mission of Pennsylvania University at the site of Nippur. The forty bowls attributed to the University Museum at Philadelphia have been published in 1913 by James A. Montgomery:⁴⁴ thirty of them are written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, seven in Syriac, and three in Mandaic. Jehoshua bar Perahya intervenes here in two Jewish Aramaic texts, namely in Nos. 8 and 17 of Montgomery's edition,⁴⁵ in both cases in connection with a deed of divorce sent "from across the sea" to the demoness Lilith, supposed to be expelled not to harm the family. Its members are mentioned by name, just like the supposed parents of the demons. For instance, the Liliths (in plural) are fiercely addressed as follows in Bowl No. 8:

It is announced to you, whose father's name is Palhas and whose mother's name is Palahdad. Hear, obey, and come forth from the house and from the dwelling of this Geyonai, the son of Mamai, and from Rašnoi, his wife, the daughter of Marat. And again, you will not appear to them either in his house or in their dwelling or in [their] bedroom (lines 3-5).⁴⁶

Lilith was an ancient Mesopotamian demon, recognized by H. Frankfort in an Old Babylonian figure of a supernatural being.⁴⁷ Lilith belonged very likely to

⁴³ Bowl No. 25, line 4, ed. by J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia 1913, with the reading corrected by J.C. Greenfield, *Notes on Some Aramaic and Mandaic Magic Bowls*, "Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University" 5 (1973 = *Gaster Festschrift*), p. 149-156 (see p. 156, n. 40); Bowl No. 5, line 8, ed. by J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1985 (Jerusalem³1998), p. 160 and 163.

⁴⁴ J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts* (n. 8). Although Montgomery's readings are generally reliable, the book contains a number of incorrect readings and mistaken interpretations. Many of these have been corrected by J.N. Epstein, *Gloses babylo-araméennes*, "Revue des Études Juives" 73 (1921), p. 27-58; 74 (1922), p. 40-72.

⁴⁵ See also Ch.D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (SBL Dissertation Series 17), Missoula 1975, Nos. 12 and 13. Jehoshua bar Perahya appears also in two Syriac bowl inscriptions published by J.A. Montgomery, Nos. 32 and 33; cf. here below.

⁴⁶ One can notice that matronymics are used here to identify the persons protected by the incantation. The proper names occurring in the incantation bowls are included in the onomasticon of Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity IV. The Eastern Diaspora: 330 BCE-650 CE* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism), Tübingen 2011.

⁴⁷ H. Frankfort, *The Burney Relief*, "Archiv für Orientforschung" 12 (1938), p. 128-135.



Fot. 1. Lilith according to H. Frankfort (British Museum)

the category of evil spirits rising from the netherworld.⁴⁸ This characteristic may be quite important for the understanding of the practice attested by the bowls discovered under the corners of homes in controlled excavations. Most bowls found in their original position were in fact placed upside down, with the magical incantation facing the demons rising from the netherworld. Other opinions explaining this practice are hardly convincing. Some scholars have assumed that the bowls served as traps for demons, imprisoning them inside the bowl. Now, the purpose of the incantation was instead to get rid of the evil spirits. Another theory assumes that the bowl was filled with some liquid and that the person drinking it was cured or protected against demons causing harm. There is, however, no evidence of such a practice in ancient Mesopotamia.⁴⁹

Jehoshua bar Perahya is associated with the idea of a divorce letter or *geṭ*, which is sent across the sea to the female demon Lilith. The idea seems to have originated from incantations protecting men against demoniac seductresses, what apparently was a characteristic of Lilith.⁵⁰ According to the Babylonian Talmud, she appears with a woman's face, long hair, and wings.⁵¹ A man sleeping in a house alone may be seized by her.⁵² It is not clear why Jehoshua bar Perahya is associated with this idea in a particular way. It is also remarkable, in any case, that he occurs even in two Syriac bowls, viz. Nos. 32 and 33 of Montgomery's edition, but the Jewish term *geṭ* is replaced there by the Persian word *dastabīra*.⁵³ Instead, the *geṭ* written for a demoness is mentioned in Mandaic incantations of magic bowls, but without the intervention of Jehoshua bar Perahya.⁵⁴ The idea that the divorce letter is sent "across the sea" implies its validity despite the great distance and the long time needed to reach the addressee.

⁴⁸ E. Porada, *Lilī, Lilītu, Ardat-lilī*, "Reallexikon der Assyriologie" VII, Berlin 1987-90, p. 24-25 (see p. 25a).

⁴⁹ A survey of these opinions can be found in Ch.D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (n. 45), p. 3-15; J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (n. 43), p. 15-19.

⁵⁰ Cf. M. Hutter, *Lilith*, in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. van der Horst (eds), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Leiden-Grand Rapids 1999, p. 520-521, to read with a sceptical smile. One can also see M.-A. Marios Casquero, *Lilith. Evolución histórica de un arquetipo femenino*, León 2009.

⁵¹ Babylonian Talmud, *Erubin* 100b; *Niddah* 24b.

⁵² Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 151b.

⁵³ Sh. Shaked, *Bagdāna, King of the Demons, and Other Iranian Terms in Babylonian Aramaic Magic*, in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce II* (Acta Iranica 25), Leiden 1985, p. 511-525 (see p. 512-513).

⁵⁴ A.O. 2629, lines 10, 11, 22, published by M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* I, Giessen 1902, p. 102-106, reproduced in E.M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (American Oriental Series 49), New Haven 1967, No. 21, p. 230-233.



Fot. 2. Magic bowl mentioning Jehoshua bar Perahya (Israel Museum)

The story told in the inscription of the magical bowl No. 80.1.1, housed in the Israel Museum, introduces a legal complication and compares it to the case of Jehoshua bar Perahya sending a *geṭ* without knowing the name of the demoness. This is rectified by the divine powers who add her name in the blank space, making the exorcism valid in all cases, “both when I know the name, when I do not know the name”.⁵⁵ This particular situation occurs in the bowl of the Israel

⁵⁵ Line 4 of Bowl No. 5, ed. by J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, (n. 43), p. 158. The name of the repudiated woman must appear in the text. Cf. L. Vana, *Le geṭ et les formulaires du geṭ (lettre de divorce) en droit rabbinique*, in: S. Démare-Lafont and A. Lemaire (eds), *Trois millénaires de formulaires juridiques* (Hautes Études Orientales 48), Genève 2010, p. 357-389, in particular p. 368-369.

Museum, but the general description of the magical practice is similar to that of Bowls Nos. 8 and 17 in Montgomery's edition. Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked translate the passage in question as follows:⁵⁶

Just as there was Lilith who strangled human beings, and Rabbi Jehoshua bar Perahya sent a ban against her, but she did not accept it because he did not know her name; and her name was written in the deed of divorce and an announcement was made against her in heaven by a deed of divorce that came here from across the sea (lines 6-7).

Jehoshua bar Perahya is generally called Rabbi in these incantations, but Bowl No. 17 of Montgomery's edition specifies that a divorce letter was sealed "with the signet-ring of Jehoshua bar Perahya, the healer ('sy')"⁵⁷ (line 12). This qualification is important, because 'sy' related to magical practices like the sending of a divorce letter to demons suggests the connotations "magician" or "thaumaturg", and probably explains why Jehoshua bar Perahya is associated to Jesus of Nazareth in some Aramaic fragments⁵⁷ and in a late cabbalistic text.⁵⁸ The reason cannot be the similitude of the names Jehoshua and Jesus, because *Yšw* is the phonetic spelling of the name *Yšw'*, well attested in the Second Temple period and used in Syriac as Jesus' name from Tatian's *Diatessaron* on, i.e. from the third quarter of the second century A.D. Initial *yōd* caused the vocalic change *ā* > *ē* in open syllable⁵⁹ and final *'ayin* was no longer pronounced. The name does not mean "Yahweh Saviour", as often assumed,⁶⁰ but "Saved", like *Bārūk*, "Blessed", *Šā'ul*, "Requested", etc. Its meaning was apparently known to the author of the Acts of the Apostles, since the cripple man is said there to have been cured "by

⁵⁶ J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (n. 43), p. 159-161.

⁵⁷ S. Krauss, *Fragments araméens du Toldot Yéshou*, "Revue des Études Juives" 62 (1911), p. 28-37, correcting E.N. Adler, *Un fragment araméen du Toldot Yéshou*, "Revue des Études Juives" 61 (1911), p. 126-130, and Z. Falk, *A New Fragment of Tōl'dōt Yeshū*, "Tarbiz" 46 (1976-77), p. 319-322 (in Hebrew), cf. D. Boyarin, "Tarbiz" 47 (1977-78), p. 249-252 (in Hebrew). The mediaeval, uncomplimentary and folkloristic account of the life of Jesus, known as *Toledoth Yeshu*, is attested by fragments discovered over the years among the Cairo Genizah texts (ca. 11th-12th centuries). New Judaeo-Arabic fragments have been identified in 1983 with Jesus' alleged statement: "I am the Messiah and revive the dead"; cf. *Genizah Fragments* 6 (1983), p. 3.

⁵⁸ S. Krauss, *Un texte cabbalistique sur Jésus*, "Revue des Études Juives" 62 (1911), p. 240-247.

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Lipiński, *Semitic Language. Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (OLA 80), Leuven 2001, §22.14

⁶⁰ Jehoshua is a name the original meaning of which was "has saved", with an omitted theophorous element. Its older spelling *Yhwš'* should in fact be related to the prefixed hiph'il *yhwšy'* in I Sam. 17, 47. The verbal form of the name was no imperfect, but the old preterite corresponding to Akkadian *iprus/ušapris*.

the name of Jesus” (Acts 4, 10), meaning “saved”: an obvious example of *nomen omen*.

The best known text associating Jehoshua bar Perahya to Jesus is an *aggadah* of the Babylonian Talmud,⁶¹ describing him as the teacher of Jesus. The story tells that they fled to Alexandria before Alexander Yannai, but on their return from Egypt Jehoshua found Jesus guilty of a sin. The incident took place in an inn, appreciated by Jehoshua. Jesus, named at the end of the story, apparently misunderstood his master’s compliments and thought that he had praised the female innkeeper. Jehoshua was horrified by his pupil’s frivolous thoughts and excommunicated him, being finally responsible for the latter’s failure to repent. The disciple thus became idolater and started practicing magic. This strange *aggadah* cannot be based on a historical souvenir, since Jehoshua bar Perahya was active in the time of John Hyrcanus I (134-104 B.C.), not under the reign of Alexander Yannai (104-76 B.C.), thus about one hundred and fifty years before Jesus’ time. The Babylonian rabbis were obviously not aware of the time of Jesus’ activity in Palestine.

The reference to Alexander Yannai seems to indicate that the *aggadah* of the Babylonian Talmud is merely a later and enlarged account of an incident that happened to Judah bar Tabbar (1st century B.C.), a disciple of Jehoshua bar Perahya, and to one of his pupils of unknown name, when they were about to return from Alexandria to Jerusalem, as reported in the Palestinian Talmud.⁶² A similar confusion occurs in the treatise *Menahoth* 109b of the Babylonian Talmud, that attributes to Jehoshua bar Perahya a statement appearing in *Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan* in the name of Judah bar Tabbar,⁶³ while the Palestinian Talmud, in general more reliable, ascribes the same saying to Jehoshua bar Kabs.⁶⁴ Another chronological mistake concerning Jehoshua bar Perahya occurs in the halakhic midrash *Sifrei Zuta* 19, 3, where Hillel the Elder is said to have witnessed the preparation of the ashes of a red heifer at the time of Jehoshua bar Perahya, who was active a century before Hillel’s time.

In the Middle Ages, Jehiel ben Joseph of Paris (13th century), being aware of these chronological discrepancies, claimed that there was no connection between Jesus, the pupil of Jehoshua bar Perahya, and Jesus of Nazareth. However, this statement was made in the famous Disputation of Paris held in 1240 at the court of Louis IX and Jehiel, who was its leading Jewish protagonist, had to refute the charges of the apostate, Nicholas Donin, that the Talmud reviles Christianity. He

⁶¹ Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 47a ; cf. *Sanhedrin* 107b.

⁶² Palestinian Talmud, *Hagigah* II, 2, p. 77d.

⁶³ S. Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, edited from Manuscripts with an Introduction, Notes, and Apendices*, Wien 1887, reprint: New York 1967, Version I, 10, 43; Version II, 20, 43. The date of the work is uncertain, but its flavour is Tannaitic.

⁶⁴ Palestinian Talmud, *Pesahim* VI, 1.

could obviously not admit that the Babylonian Talmud contained mistakes, but this was indeed the case. The account of the Disputation has been preserved in *Vikku'ah Rabbenu Yehiel mi-Paris*,⁶⁵ “And our Rabbi Yehiel of Paris was present”.

Seven hundred years elapsed between the time of Jehoshua bar Perahya and his mentions in the magic bowls. Seven centuries separate him also from the date of the texts associating him to Jesus of Nazareth. In both cases, some informative link is needed in order to reach a proper understanding of the appearance of those accounts in Babylonia around the 6th-7th centuries A.D.⁶⁶

PANDERA I STADA ORAZ JEHOZUA BAR PERACHJA

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano krytyce literacko-historycznej teksty talmudyczne, w których występują imiona Pandera, Stada i Jehoszua bar Perachja. Imiona Pandera i Stada, przypisane ojcu Jezusa w późniejszej tradycji talmudycznej, są przekazane niepoprawnie w pewnych manuskryptach i opartych na nich drukowanych tekstach. Wyrazy te brzmiały pierwotnie *panṭīrā* – oboczna forma aramejskiego żeńskiego przymiotnika, *paṭṭīrā* „odesłana” – i *sōterā*, co jest zaramaizowanym słowem greckim „Zbawiciel”. Określenie *ben-panṭīrā* sugerowało zatem, że Jezus był synem niewiasty odesłanej przez męża. Opinię tę odrzuca już Ewangelia Mateusza 1,20 pod koniec I wieku n.e. Określenie *ben sōterā*, „syn/uczeń Zbawiciela”, musiało się natomiast odnosić do bliżej nieznanego Judeo-chrześcijanina, zamęczonego w Lyddzie, prawdopodobnie na początku II wieku n.e. Pisownia i sens obu określeń uległy zniekształceniu z biegiem lat, zwłaszcza w Talmudzie babilońskim. Natomiast Jehoszua bar Perachja był współprzewodniczącym sanhedrynu w drugiej połowie II wieku p.n.e. Mimo wysokiego stanowiska rzadkie są jego wypowiedzi lub opinie wspomniane w Misznie, zredagowanej w latach 200 n.e. Spotyka się go natomiast w zaklęciach aramejskich, zapisanych na tzw. miskach magicznych z VI-VII wieku n.e., znalezionych w Babilonii. Występuje on tam jako nadawca listów rozwodowych, przeznaczonych dla żeńskiego demona Lilit i jej współtowarzyszy. Miały one na celu oddalić od domu złe duchy i zabezpieczyć rodzinę przed chorobami i różnego rodzaju nieszczęściami. Jehoszua bar Perachja jest tam nawet nazwany „uzdrowicielem”, co zapewne wyjaśnia jego powiązanie z Jezusem z Nazaretu, podanym za jego ucznia w Talmudzie babilońskim, zredagowanym właśnie w tym samym okresie. Chodzi tu jednak o przeróbkę starszego opowiadania, zachowanego w Talmudzie palestyńskim i nie mającego nic wspólnego z Jezusem. Opowiadanie dotyczy bowiem Judy bar Tabbaja, uczonego żyjącego w I wieku p.n.e. Dla pełnego zrozumienia roli Jehoszuy bar Perachji w zaklęciach aramejskich i jego rzekomych powiązaniach z Jezusem, żyjącym 150 lat później, brak informacji z wielowiekowego okresu dzielącego Jehoszuę od tekstów z VI-VII wieku n.e., tj. okresu, gdy zapisano te zaklęcia i zredagowano Talmud babiloński.

⁶⁵ *Vikku'ah Rabbenu Yehiel mi-Paris*, Toruń 1873, re-edited with an introduction by Ruben Margalio in 1928, p. 16-17.

⁶⁶ Speculations like those of J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts* (n. 43), p. 226 ff., are not helpful.