

Chapter 1:

Daughters

The Birth of a Daughter

Various traditions testify to the fact that parents were often disappointed when a daughter was born to them. In *Ben Sira* we read: “It is a disgrace to be the father of an undisciplined son, and the birth of a daughter is a loss” (22.3).¹ The *tannaitic* tradition expresses the same thing in opposite terms: “Anyone who does not have a son is as if dead” (*Gen. R.* 45.2, p. 448 ed. Theodor-Albeck).

Tannaitic tradition counts the sex of an unborn child among the seven secrets concealed from man, along with the day of his death and the date when the Wicked Kingdom (i.e. Rome) will fall (*Gen. R.* 65.12, p. 722–3 ed. Theodor-Albeck). The rabbis discussed what measures could be taken to ensure the birth of sons. R. Joshua gave two different answers: “He shall marry a wife that is worthy of him and conduct himself in modesty [lit., sanctify himself] at the time of marital intercourse” (*bNidd.* 70b–71a); and “He should make his wife glad to perform the commandment (to be fruitful and multiply?)” (*bBB* 10b, where R. Eliezer offers the advice: “he should give generously to the poor”). In both places, R. Joshua’s answer provokes the response: “many have done so without results.”² But the *tannaim* knew enough biology to be aware of the fact that the sex of a child was determined at the time of conception, for they warn: “If a

¹ This is based on the Greek. The Hebrew version of this verse has not been preserved. On *Ben Sira* and his attitude towards girls, see W.C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View on Women: A Literary Analysis = Brown Judaic Studies XXXVIII* (Chico CA 1982), 129–65.

² Elsewhere, a *baraita* expresses the opinion, based on what were understood to be biological facts, that “if a woman emits her semen first she bears a male child; if the man emits his semen first she bears a female child” (*bNidd.* 31a). But there and in a parallel at *bBer.* 60a we find the same teaching transmitted by R. Isaac in the name of R. Ammi, and this seems to be the correct version, see *Dikdukei Soferim, ad loc.* Thus the tradition is *amoraic*. A scientific evaluation of this belief can be found in Tirzah Z. Meachem, *Mishnah Tractate Niddah with Introduction: A Critical Edition with Notes on Variants, Commentary, Redaction and Chapters in Legal History and Realia* (Ph.D. diss. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989), 166–8 [Hebrew]; also Y. Levy, “When a Woman Emits Semen,” *Koroth* 5 (1970–2), 716–7. [Hebrew], who claims that the belief does have a scientific basis but argues also that the word we have translated as “emits semen” (מזרע) actually refers to ovulation and not to orgasm.

man's wife has become pregnant and he says, May it be Thy will that my wife shall bear a male, this prayer is in vain" (*m Ber.* 9.3).

The birth of sons is considered by the rabbis to be a blessing. The passage "she shall be free and conceive children" (*Num.* 5.29), referring to the *sotah* or suspected adulteress, is interpreted by R. Ishmael as follows: "if she used to give birth to females she now gives birth to males" (*Sifre Num.* 19, p. 23 ed. Horovitz; *tSot.* 2.3; *ySot.* 3.4, 18d). In a discussion about the good tidings over which one should say the blessing "Who is good and does good," the *amoraim* cite the *baraita*: "It has been taught: If a man is told that his wife has borne a son, he says: Blessed is He that is good and does good" (*bBer.* 59b).³ R. Meir taught that Abraham was blessed in the fact that he did *not* have daughters (*tQidd.* 5.17; cf. *Gen. R.* 59.7, p. 635 ed. Theodor-Albeck, where R. Nehemiah says it).⁴ Another *baraita* transmitted in the name of Tahlifa declares that in the days of King David, the entire people was blessed in that only males were born to all (*bMQ* 9a).

Further illustrations are found in other *aggadot*. When the wife of R. Shimeon b. Rabbi gave birth to a daughter, R. Hiyya comforted him: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has begun to bless you. What is the proof? he inquired. Because it is written: 'And it came to pass, when man began to multiply and daughters were born to them' (*Gen.* 6.1)" (*Gen. R.* 26.4, p. 246–7 ed. Theodor-Albeck); that is, daughters were considered a sign of fertility and increase, portending the birth of sons. But in the same passage, Rabbi pours cold water on his son's enthusiasm: "He asked him: Did the Babylonian congratulate you? Yes, he answered, and he said thus to me. Nevertheless, he observed, both wine and vinegar are needed, yet wine is more needed than vinegar; both wheat and barley are needed, yet wheat is more needed than barley". In other words, if sons are compared to wine, then daughters are vinegar, and so forth. This story is an important indication of how the rabbis explained the essential need for daughters in the world, as opposed to sons.

Another question which stimulated a debate in that period was why the *Torah* specified that a woman who gave birth to a girl should remain ritually unclean twice as long as a woman who gave birth to a boy (two weeks as opposed to one: *Lev.* 12.1–5). *The Book of Jubilees* found an answer in the story of the Garden of Eden: woman was created in the second week, and thus the period of uncleanness for a female is two weeks; Adam was brought to the Garden of Eden after 40 days, and Eve only after 80 days, thus a woman's period of purification for a son

³ This reading is absent from many MSS, which have an entirely different text; see *Dikdukei Soferim*, *ad loc.*

⁴ S. Lieberman discusses this *midrash* in "Quotations in Light of their Sources," in *Studies in Memory of Moses Shorr*, edd. L. Ginzberg and A. Weiss (New York 1944), 186–8 [Hebrew] emphasizing its connection to Job and the *haftarah* to the weekly *Torah* portion containing the episode of Isaac's birth.

is 40 days and for a daughter 80 (3.8–9). This interpretation does not view the doubly long period for purification after the birth of a daughter as punishment.⁵ The sages tried to explain the law in a more scientific way, as it were: a son is formed on the 40th day of pregnancy whereas a daughter is formed only on the 80th (*tNidd.* 4.7; *bNidd.* 30b). The students of R. Ishmael (or alternatively R. Ishmael himself), tried to test this pseudo-scientific explanation by considering the results of an experiment, supposedly carried out in Alexandria, about which they had heard without knowing the full details. “A story is told of Cleopatra the queen of Alexandrus (*scil.* Alexandria) that when her maidservants were sentenced to death by royal decree they were subjected to a test and they found both [a male and a female embryo]” (*bNidd.* 30b); that is, two women who had been condemned to death were sequestered with men who were to impregnate them, and 40 days later, after the women had been executed, the embryos were taken from their wombs, and it was discovered that one was carrying a boy and the other a girl. This is at least one version of the experiment, but there is another version: “A story is told of Cleopatra the Greek queen that when her maidservants were sentenced to death under a government order they were subjected to a test and it was found that a male embryo was fully fashioned on the forty-first day and a female embryo on the eighty-first day” (*ibid.*). This source also does not view a woman’s longer period of uncleanness after the birth of a daughter as punishment.

In sum: every source views the birth of a daughter as a disappointment. Yet at the same time, we hear of no practical instruction or theory recommending steps to reduce the number of daughters in a family. In contrast to Hellenistic and Roman sources, which abound with discussions about getting rid of unwanted infants, in particular daughters, the Jewish sources do not even raise this possibility. The only source which even mentions the matter is Josephus (*CA* 2.202), who does so in order to clarify for his non-Jewish readers the extent to which the

⁵ On this see: G. Anderson, “Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989) 29. In contrast, modern scholarship does view this demand as a punishment to and a degradation of women. See L. J. Swidler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism* (Metuchen NJ 1976), 132; Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women’s Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York 1984), 152, (who relies on Rachel Adler, “Tumah and Taharah: Ends and Beginnings,” in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Koltun [New York 1976], 63–71, although Adler does not claim that the doubly long purification period after the birth of a daughter was punishment); Léonie Archer, *Her Price is Beyond Rubies: The Jewish Woman in Graeco-Roman Palestine = Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series LX* (Sheffield 1990), 37–8. For a different view, see Meachem (above, n. 2), 168, who suggests that a woman’s menstrual blood was considered to be her seed, and the bleeding that accompanies birth was held to impart the same level of impurity as semen; but no support is offered for this opinion.

whole idea is foreign to Judaism. Non-Jewish sources as well confirm that Jews accepted and raised all children born to them, without exception.⁶

Can we examine whether these claims are reliable? Statistical studies have shown that as a rule 105 males are born for every 100 females in human societies, but boys die at a greater rate than girls from childhood diseases. While death in childbirth is a danger to which only women are exposed, war takes its toll primarily on the male population. Generally more females than males survive to old age.⁷ In light of this we would expect to find the Jewish population more or less evenly balanced statistically between males and females.

Yet even those statistics which are available to the social historian – namely, personal names – create the mistaken impression that men were far more numerous than women in ancient Jewish society. The number of Jewish women known by name from Palestinian sources is 261,⁸ which, given the corresponding sum

⁶ Cf. Hecataeus of Abdera, in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* I (Jerusalem 1976), 27, 33. On the custom of exposing infants, especially girls, and their fate, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York 1975), 140; and *eadem*. “Infanticide in Hellenistic Greece,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, edd. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (Detroit 1985), 207–22. Also Marcia Guttentag and P. F. Secord, *Too Many Women? The Sex Ratio Question* (London 1985), 49–52. See also: D. Engels, “The Problem of Female Infanticide in the Greco-Roman World,” *Classical Philology* 75 (1980), 112–20, who argues that this was rare in Greece as well, and M. Golden, “Demography and the Exposure of Girls at Athens,” *Phoenix* 35 (1981) 316–31, who maintains that it was not.

⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica* 25 (1985), 1040; yet according to Guttentag et al. *ibid.* 84–111, statistical studies carried out at the end of the previous century among orthodox Jews in Russia found 130 males born for every 100 females. Guttentag attributed this huge deviation to the Jews’ sexual habits, which in her opinion had not changed from *talmudic* times to the modern period, even during assimilation. But since reliable statistics are not available from earlier periods, data from Tsarist Russia can be of little use for the purpose of this study.

⁸ These numbers are partly taken from my “Notes on the Distribution of Jewish Women’s Names in Palestine in the Second Temple and *Mishnaic* Period,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989), 200, but are corrected in accordance with G. Mayer, *Die jüdische Frau in der hellenistisch-römischen Antike* (Stuttgart 1987), 104–27. I am persuaded by Mayer’s identification of the name לִיאָהוּן in a document from the Judaean Desert, since the name appears quite frequently (even if fragmentarily) in her *ketubbah* (P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, *Les grottes de Murabâ’at = Discoveries in the Judaean Desert II* [Oxford 1961], 114–5). I also accept his suggestion that this is an Aramaic name. I am further persuaded that the names Φούλεια Ἀφρευιανὰ (CII 1227), Κοτόλλα (CII 1234), Πρωτᾶ (CII 1252), Κύθηρα (CII 1326), Ἀνδρώ (CII 1272), and Μόσχα (CII 1329), which I originally identified as male names, are female names by virtue of their feminine endings. But I do not accept Mayer’s identification of the name Κρόκος and its Hebrew form קרקס (“crocus”: CII 1212, 1312) as female, since there is at least one clear attribution of this name to a male: see the letter by the apostolic father Ignatius to the Christian community in Rome, § 10. After my article had been sent to the printer, new women’s names from Masada were published: Y. Yadin and J. Naveh, *Masada I: The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca and Jar Inscriptions from Masada* (Jerusalem 1989), 22: “שִׁלּוּם הַגְּלִי לִיָּהוּן”; Hannah

of about 2300 men's names, amounts to only 11.3 % of the total. This is of course no indication that Jews abandoned daughters immediately after birth,⁹ but at least one historian has allowed himself to be fooled by the evidence. Mayer has tabulated the numbers of children in families, based on information from Josephus,¹⁰ and has used it to justify rather strange conclusions. He argues from his tabulations that twice as many boys as girls were raised in Jewish society, and, relying on Pomeroy,¹¹ he compares this to the similar situation in Rome and implies that Jews, just like non-Jews, disposed of unwanted daughters. Yet it seems to me that until a Jewish source is discovered which deals with this matter, or until it can be proved from existing Jewish sources that Jews did in fact abandon daughters, we have to trust what the sources themselves say and reject Mayer's suggestion as a mistaken interpretation of the evidence.

Relations between Father and Daughter

A girl was brought up in her father's house until she was married. The longest comment on father-daughter relations can be found in *Ben Sira*:

"Do you have daughters? Be concerned with their chastity / and do not show yourself too indulgent with them. (7.24)

"A daughter is a snare of falsehood to her father / and worry over her robs him of sleep /

"When she is young, for fear she may not appeal (to men) / in her virginity, for fear she may be disliked;

"While a virgin, for fear she may be seduced / or having a husband, for fear she may go astray.

"When in her father's house, lest she conceive / or when married, for fear she may be barren.

"My son, keep strict watch over a daughter / or she may make you a laughingstock to your enemies

"A byword in the city and assembly of the people / and put you to shame in public gatherings.

M. Cotton and J. Geiger, *Masada II: The Latin and Greek Documents* (Jerusalem 1989), 118: Σαλώμη; 124: Μαριάμ. And from other Judaeon Desert locations N. Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri* (Jerusalem 1989), 67: Θαμαρή; 131: Σαλώμη. Another addition is the name Ψυχή, published a while ago by E. Peuch, "Inscriptions funéraires Palestiniennes: tombeau de Jason et ossuaires," *Revue Biblique* 90 (1983), 524, which I at first understood, following the author, as "funerary monument (נִסְבָּה)", and only later realized that this was a woman's name just as it was the name of a female figure in Greek mythology. I should also mention in my inventory an unpublished ossuary inscription containing the name "שפירא בת רובנא", which is displayed in the Israel Museum.

⁹ On the reasons for the imbalance, see my article, *ibid.* 187–90.

¹⁰ Although he did not exhaust all available material in Josephus and has also included data from the Diaspora, see above (n. 8), 72–3.

¹¹ Above, n. 6. Mayer referred his reader to p. 251 in Pomeroy (1975); apparently he meant p. 228, since there is no p. 251 in the book.

“See that there is no lattice in her room / no spot that overlooks the approaches to the house.” (42.9–11)¹²

Thus in *Ben Sira*’s eyes a daughter is a constant aggravation to her father, especially as a source of sexual temptation. Accordingly he cannot treat her with affection but locks her up behind bars. *Ben Sira*’s continual fears point to a rather impersonal, loveless relationship between father and daughter.

A slightly different picture emerges from parables in rabbinic literature. Clearly the fathers and daughters in these parables are usually allegorical representations of God and Israel, but still the authors were describing reality as they saw it when they depicted mutual feelings of love and respect between father and daughter, the daughter is obligated to obey her father but the father is attached to his daughter by his love for her. The *tannaim* told stories of the king redeeming his daughter from captivity (*Song of Songs R.* 1.9.5); speaking with her in public, in an alleyway and in a courtyard (*ibid.* 3.7.1); proud of her beauty (*ibid.* 3.8.2); recognizing his daughter even when she is dressed in rags (*ibid.* 6.12); and trying to conceal his own suffering from her during her wedding by not stopping the joyous festivities (*Lev. R.* 20.10, p. 468 ed. Margulies).¹³ But note that the father’s love for his daughter is presented in this last parable as exceptional.

The *halakhah*, too, exhibits a double standard regarding boys and girls, imposing many obligations on a father in connection with his son but awarding rights and benefits in the case of a daughter: “The father has control over his daughter as touching her betrothal ... and he has the right to anything found by her and to the work of her hands” (*mKet.* 4.4).¹⁴ There is economic profit in all these rights. It is true that certain legal restrictions, as we will see, were applied to the profits a man could expect from the betrothal of his daughter, but her handiwork and the things she found could also be valuable.

¹² This passage from *Ben Sira* is cited in the *Babylonian Talmud*: “A daughter is a vain treasure to her father; through anxiety on her account he cannot sleep at night. As a minor, lest she be seduced; in her majority, lest she play the harlot; as an adult, lest she not be married; if she marries, lest she bear no children; when she grows old, lest she engage in witchcraft” (*bSanh.* 100b). The fact that this passage from *Ben Sira*, which was not included in the Hebrew Bible, is quoted in the *Talmud* with considerable precision so long afterwards indicates that these opinions were still cherished. And see further, Trenchard (above, n. 1), 146–56. *Ben Sira*’s hostile attitude to daughters has been commented on not only by Trenchard, *ibid.* 163–5, who sees *Ben Sira* as a particularly vociferous enemy of women, but also M. Z. Segal *The Complete Book of Ben Sira* (Jerusalem 1972), 285 [Hebrew].

¹³ On wedding parables see Ofra Meir, “The Wedding in Kings’ Parables (in the *Aggadah*),” in *Studies in Marriage Customs = Folklore Research Center Studies IV*, edd. D. Noy and I. Ben-Ami (Jerusalem 1974) 9–51 [Hebrew].

¹⁴ On the *Mishnah*’s legal positions regarding women, see Judith R. Wegner, *Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (Oxford 1988), 20–39. Wegner demonstrates that the *Mishnah* treats daughters before sexual maturity merely as property with economic value.

A similar picture arises from the *halakhic* discussion of whether a father is required to provide for his daughters: “The father is not liable for his daughter’s maintenance. This is the *midrash* R. Eleazar b. Azariah expounded before the Sages in the vineyard at Yavneh: ‘The sons inherit and the daughters receive maintenance’¹⁵ – but just as the sons inherit only after the death of their father so the daughters receive maintenance only after the death of their father” (*mKet.* 4.6). We may suppose, as this *baraita* states, that R. Eleazar offered his remarks only as an intellectual exercise and not as a practical teaching, but his view would have gained support as the economic situation deteriorated and it became harder to feed hungry mouths. Thus we find in the reforms of Usha, which generally speaking were promulgated in response to the state of emergency that prevailed after the Bar Kokhba revolt: “In Usha it was ordained that a man must maintain both his sons and his daughters while they are still minors” (*bKet.* 49b, cf. *tKet.* 4.8; *yKet.* 4.8, 28b).¹⁶

In sum, the various sources treated affection between a father and daughter as exceptional and worthy of note.¹⁷ Even the *halakhah* treated daughters as less valuable than sons. But the propounders of the *halakhah* changed their minds on this matter, at least in one place where it seemed to them that the standard *halakhic* attitude was liable to endanger the lives of daughters.

The Daughter as Only Child

We know of at least seven daughters (and perhaps more) without siblings from the period under study. 1) In the Hasmonean dynasty, Alexandra appears to have been the only child of Hyrcanus II. Four more cases of a daughter as only child are known in the Herodian dynasty: 2) Salome, the daughter of Herodias and her first husband, Herod (son of King Herod and Mariamme the daughter of Boethus). So far as our sources go, no children are known from her mother’s second marriage, to Herod Antipas, although Josephus did not pay much attention to Antipas’ branch of the family.¹⁸ 3) Cyprus, the granddaughter of Salome,

¹⁵ A condition in a *ketubbah*: see *mKet.* 4.10–1.

¹⁶ Archer (above, n. 5), 63 takes R. Eleazar b. Azariah’s *midrash* very seriously and claims, using fine *talmudic* reasoning, that a father is not responsible for his daughter’s maintenance because, in contrast with a husband, he has no control over her handiwork and the property she finds. But the *halakhah* makes no such point-by-point comparison, nor, therefore, should modern scholars.

¹⁷ Father-daughter relations in Judaism – if our sources present a true picture – are quite the opposite of father-daughter relations pictured by Roman sources of the same period, at least as presented by Judith P. Hallet, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton 1984).

¹⁸ In the New Testament the name of Herodias’ daughter who danced her famous dance before the assembled guests is not mentioned. Josephus is the one who names Herodias’

sister of Herod, and daughter of her son, Antipater, is mentioned as an only child (*AJ* 18.138). It is true that women in the Herodian house are often mentioned only by virtue of their having married into the family, but the fact that Cyprus was married to Helkias, a son of Salome's husband, who himself is not known in any other context, suggests that she was not mentioned because of her connection to the Herodian house and that if she had had siblings they would have been mentioned, too. 4) The same considerations hold for Cyprus' daughter, Cyprus (*ibid.*). 5) Jotape, the deaf daughter of Aristobulus, Agrippa's brother, was also an only child (*AJ* 18.135).¹⁹ Other descendants of this Aristobulus, who was the king's brother and the son-in-law of the king of Emesa, would surely have been mentioned.²⁰

6) According to Yadin,²¹ Babatha, whose archive of documents was found in Nahal Hever, was the only child of her parents, Shimeon and Mariamme, for after their death she inherited all their property. 7) Babatha's second husband, Judah, left an only daughter, Shelamzion, who inherited not only the property of her father but also part of that of her cousins.²²

only child, a daughter from her previous marriage (*AJ* 18.136) - Salome, but scholars have found chronological problems in the information about her life: a) if she was still a child (χορῴσιον) when she danced in front of Antipas in the year 30 (the earliest suggested date for the death of John the Baptist), how could she have been married to Philip, her uncle on her father's side, who died in 34 CE? b) If she was married to someone who was old enough to have been her grandfather, how could she then have been married afterwards to her young cousin Aristobulus, who was too young in 49 to inherit the kingdom of Chalcis from his father and became king of Armenia Minor only in 54? Regarding this latter problem, W. Lillie, "Salome or Herodias?" *Expository Times* 65 (1953-4), 251 has claimed, on the basis of manuscript variants, that a certain Herodias, the daughter of Herod Antipas, is the one who did the dance; N. Kokkinos, "Which Salome did Aristobulus Marry?" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 118 (1986), 33-50, has argued that the Salome whom Aristobulus married was the daughter of Antipas and his Arab wife, the daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas.

¹⁹ On Jotape and her family see Grace H. Macurdy, "Iotape," *Journal of Roman Studies* 26 (1936), 40-2.

²⁰ Berenice, the daughter of Mariamme, King Agrippa's daughter, is mentioned as the only daughter of her father, Julius Archelaus, but her mother had children afterwards from a different marriage (*AJ* 20.140; 147); we cannot know whether her father had other children from other marriages. Mariamme, the daughter of Joseph the son of Joseph (Herod's brother) and Salome (Herod's daughter), who was married eventually to Herod of Chalcis, the brother of King Agrippa, is also mentioned as an only child, but in this case it is likely that the sources bothered to mention only her because she married into Agrippa's immediate family, without which even she would not even have been noticed. Thus she may have had siblings. Two of Herod's wives also had only daughters: Roxane, daughter of Phaedra, and Salome, daughter of Elpis (*AJ* 17.21), but they were only two of Herod's many children.

²¹ Y. Yadin, *Bar Kokhba: Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (London 1971) 233.

²² The New Testament contains the story of Jesus' resurrection of the daughter of the

Mayer²³ noted the prevalence of only children, daughters as well as sons, in Jewish families of the period. The reasons for this phenomenon he explained as a result of infant deaths and the deaths of mothers during their first delivery. This explanation seems to me comprehensive and satisfactory, and I would note further only that the phenomenon indicates that the problem of inheritance by an only daughter (or only daughters) was certainly a real problem and not merely a subject for theoretical discussion, as we will see.

leader of the synagogue, Jairus ("Talitha Kumi": *Matt.* 9.8; 23–6; *Mark* 5.22–4; 35–44; *Luke* 8.41–2; 49–56). Only *Luke* 8.41, which is certainly not the original source of the story, indicates that the girl was an only child, and this point could be based on the parallel story of the resurrection of the only son of the widow from Nain (*Luke* 7.12). This is an example of a phenomenon which scholars have noted frequently in *Luke*, namely, that the author relates parallel stories whose central figure is once male and once female: L. J. Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia 1979), 164–5; Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary R. Ruether (New York 1974), 138–40; B. Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Church* (Cambridge 1988), 129–30. In my opinion, the historical kernel in the story, if there is one at all, is the presence of a daughter, rather than a son; but it is difficult to know how sick the girl actually was, if she in fact had died and what Jesus actually did. Many New Testament scholars have made a special point of stressing that only Jesus is said to have performed miracles which benefited women: Swidler, *ibid.* 180; B. Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge 1982), 67. But this claim may be interpreted in two contradictory ways: a) as proof that the stories have an historical kernel, for otherwise stories with male heroes would have been chosen; or b) as proof that the stories have no historical kernel, for in order to convey Jesus' feminist social message, the New Testament authors deliberately made females an integral part of stories. Yet in any case either claim appears on its face to neglect the similar story of the rescue of the daughter of Nehonia the well-digger by R. Hanina b. Dosa: "It once happened that the daughter of Nehonia the well-digger fell into a large cistern, and people went and reported [the accident] to R. Hanina b. Dosa. During the first hour he said to them: All is well. In the second hour he again said: All is well. In the third he said to them: She is saved" (*bYeb.* 121b; *bBQ* 50a). The story of the rescue of the daughter of a pious well- and cave-digger by Pinhas b. Yair (*ySheq.* 5.2, 48d), which is constructed on the same model, is in fact the same story with different surface details and does not require a separate discussion; and see Rachel Nissim, "The Figure of the Hasid: A Confrontation between R. Hanina b. Dose and R. Pinhas b. Yair in View of the Rabbinic Position on Retribution," *Alei Siah* 12–13–14 (1982), 135–54 [Hebrew]. In this story, as in that of the rescue of the daughter of the leader of the synagogue in the New Testament, the plot of the story does not require that the child be female; Hanina b. Dosa, who was a popular miracle-worker like Jesus, could just as easily have saved the son of Nehonia, thus the daughter is likely part of the historical kernel of the story.

²³ Above, n. 8.

Naming a Daughter

Sons as well as daughters almost always received their personal names from their parents at the time of birth; there was no difference in this practice for boys and girls. Certain patterns emerge from an inspection of the inventory of personal names from the Second Temple period, which reveals the tendency to adhere conservatively to tradition. Hebrew names are generally biblical, not original, while the remainder of names are Greek, Aramaic, and more rarely Latin or Persian. What, then, were the criteria for naming a child? The rabbis were aware of conservatism in naming practices in their time, as they explained by comparison with the biblical period: “The ancients, since they knew their genealogy, named themselves in reference to the events of their times; but we who do not know our genealogy name ourselves after our fathers” (*Gen. R.* 37.7, p. 349 ed. Theodor-Albeck). In other words, boys were named after their fathers or grandfathers while daughters were named after their mothers or grandmothers. This practice may have been influenced by other peoples of the region, for we have no examples from the biblical period of members of the same family being given the same names, in contrast to the Hellenistic practice – especially among royal families, which were the objects of imitation by all strata of society – whereby the same names were used in successive generations. Thus the Jewish practice of naming children after ancestors may be a sign of Hellenistic influence.

So far as it is possible to trace women’s names in the same family, we find that the practice of naming daughters after their grandmothers was indeed followed. The two granddaughters of Queen Shelamzion (Alexandra) bore her Greek name; Agrippa I named his daughter Berenice after his own mother and his second daughter, Mariamme, after his grandmother, after whom Agrippa’s sister Mariamme was also named; Antipater son of Salome (Herod’s sister) named his daughter Cyprus after his grandmother. This same Cyprus named her own daughter Cyprus perhaps after herself. The wife of Agrippa I, also Cyprus, was named after her great-grandmother.

A Roman influence can also be found in the naming of daughters among Jews. As is well-known, Romans were accustomed, principally in the Republican period, to give daughters their fathers’ name with a feminine ending.²⁴ Sometimes Roman sisters would have the same name.²⁵ The Greeks also gave daughters the

²⁴ E.g. Agrippa-Agrippina, Octavius-Octavia, etc. See Hallet (above, n. 17), 77–81 plus bibliography listed in n. 22.

²⁵ Hallet, *ibid.* *John* 19.25 – “standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene” – can be interpreted to mean that the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus was also named Mary, but the sentence can also be understood as saying that four different women – the mother, the sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene – stood at the foot of the cross.

feminine forms of their fathers' names, and this practice can be found already in the Hasmonean dynasty – for example, Alexandra, after Alexander.²⁶ Another example can be found in the Herodian dynasty: Herodias, derived of course from Herod. The name Yohanna-Joanna (יהוחנה) which is the feminine form of the male name Yohanan, also became very popular in this period, as it is represented by eight examples;²⁷ a similar case is that of the biblical name Judith (*Gen.* 26.36), the feminine form of Judah, of which three examples survive.²⁸ In the same vein, it is interesting to note Berenicianus (*AJ* 20.104; *BJ* 2.221), named after his mother, Queen Berenice, daughter of Agrippa I.²⁹

The Roman practice of naming girls, which required very little creativity or special attention, led to a striking monotony in women's names during the period under study. The same quality indeed characterizes men's names as well,³⁰ but is even more prominent among women. Three names only (Salome, Shelamzion³¹

²⁶ In my estimation, Queen Shelamzion Alexandra was not the relative of Shimeon b. Shetah but a descendant of the Hasmoneans, and see S. Safrai, "Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the *Babylonian Talmud*," in *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature = Scripta Hierosolymitana XXII*, edd. J. Heinemann and D. Noy (Jerusalem 1971), 229–32; for a different opinion about Alexandra's background, see J. Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period* (Leiden 1987), 152. Alexandra's name probably derives from the Hasmonean Alexander, perhaps even her father; it is reasonable to assume that she was the niece or cousin of Yannai himself.

²⁷ See my article (above, n. 8), 195.

²⁸ *Ibid.* and cf. the figure Judith in the book Apocryphal book bearing her name; this Judith might have been so named in order to equate her accomplishments with those of Judah the Maccabee. In the *Palestinian Talmud*, the sister of R. Judah Nasia (not to be mistaken with Judah the Patriarch, his grandfather) is named Yehudinei (יהודיני) (*yNaz.* 4.1, 56a).

²⁹ On which see my: "Julia Crispina, Daughter of Berenicianus, A Herodian Princess in the Babatha Archive: A Case Study in Historical Identification," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82 (1992), 374–7.

³⁰ See my "The Names of the Hasmoneans in the Second Temple Period," *Eretz-Israel* 19 (1987), 238–41 [Hebrew].

³¹ We may also note here the utter rarity of original Jewish names from the Second Temple period, even though the names Shelamzion and Salome are themselves innovations of the same period. According to Mayer (above, n. 8), 106–7, 109–10, Salome is a Hebrew name whereas Shelamzion is Aramaic. The Hebrew form of Salome (שלום) is the same as that for a male, Shalom (or "Shallum"), which appears in *2 Kings* 15.10; 22.14; *Jer.* 22.11; 32.7; 35.4; and see also the many instances in *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, although in the Second Temple period the name is solely female. There may be exceptions, however: a) the brother of Joseph the son of Tobias was named Σολέμιος, Σόλυμος; his Hebrew name is uncertain, either שלום or שלמה (Solomon); but Solomon appears as Σολομών in Josephus and Σολομών or Σαλωμών in the Septuagint. b) An ossuary bearing the inscription שלום (Shalom) contains the remains only of a male; J. Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20 (1970), 36 suggested that the word was either a male's name or a blessing for the deceased, but neither need be the case, for the ossuary could have been prepared for a female and then used for a male.

and Mariamme-Maria³²) account for 122, or 46.5 % (almost half) of all the Palestinian women whose names are known.³³ We can be certain that this is no accident or illusion, for the same frequency of these names is to be found in all the varied sources: they account for 13 out of the 40 women's names in Josephus (32.5 %), 6 out of 16 in the New Testament (37.5 %), 9 out of 25 in *tannaitic* literature (36 %), 75 out of 157 in funerary inscriptions (47 %), and 20 out of 27 in documents from the Judaean Desert (74 %). Thus any deviation which these statistics represent can only be marginal.

The choice of the names Mariamme-Maria and Salome-Shelamzion must in any case be explained. I have already demonstrated elsewhere³⁴ that Hasmonean names – Mattitياهو (Matthias) and the names of his five sons – became very popular for sons after the successful Hasmonean revolt. Do the popularity of the names Shelamzion and Mariamme also reflect Hasmonean influence? While the two prominent Hasmoneans who had these names – the queen and Herod's wife, respectively – were not connected to any meaningful historical event on the level of the Hasmonean revolt, and both were active after the Hasmonean dynasty had become loathsome to its Jewish subjects, it is likely that both these figures were named after Hasmonean women from the time of the rebellion who remain unrecorded in the sources. If this theory is correct, then names in the Second Temple period did indeed bear some connection to crucial historical events, although in a different manner from that of the biblical period.

Identifying a Daughter by her Father

Most daughters were identified in the Second Temple period by the father, both in inscriptions and in other documents such as marriage contracts, writs of divorce and deeds of sale. A woman was known as X the daughter of Y.³⁵ In this light, an ossuary inscription found in a burial-cave in Dominus Flevit on the

³² The popularity of this name was noticed also by J. Luis Diez Merino, "'Maria' en la onomastica Aramea Judia intertestamental (s. II a.C. – s. II d.C.)," *Scripta de Maria* 6 (1983), 29–37, although his sample was much smaller than the one I assembled, and his theological conclusions are irrelevant to our purpose. On the two forms of this name and the Roman influence on its use, see Naomi G. Cohen, "The Personal Name 'Miriam' and its Latin and Greek Transliterations," *Lešonenu* 38 (1974), 170–80 [Hebrew].

³³ A second group of women's names which enjoyed extraordinary popularity includes the Aramaic names Martha (15 examples) and Shapira (11 examples), and the Hebrew name Joanna (8 examples).

³⁴ Above, n. 30.

³⁵ Archer (above, n. 5), 267–70 argues that women identified in funerary monuments by the name of their father and not their husband were either divorced or widowed and had returned to their father's house, but the great number of women known by their patronyms makes this explanation statistically improbable.

Mount of Olives, which identifies a father by the name of his daughter, stands out as a rare exception.³⁶ According to the inscription, the ossuary contained the remains of three people, two women and one man. The women are identified by personal names without mention of any male relative, while the male, Chresimos (Χρησιμος), is identified as the father of Demarchia (πατήρ Δημαρχ[ία]ς). This latter name might have been restored in the male form Δημαρχος had another ossuary bearing the name Δημαρχίας not also been found in the same cave, supporting the assumption that both names belonged to the same woman. This exceptional inscription would indicate that visitors to the burial-cave would have been more familiar with the daughter than with the father.³⁷

³⁶ P. B. Bagatti and J. T. Milik, *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit = Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum XIII* (Jerusalem 1958), p. 99, no. 41.

³⁷ On the general phenomenon of men identified by the mothers' names, see my article, "'Man Born of Woman ...' (*Job* 14.1): The Phenomenon of Men Bearing Metronymes at the Time of Jesus," *Novum Testamentum* 34 (1992), 23–45.