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SOZOUSA: YET MORE EVIDENCE OF THE USE OF ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΜΟΝΟΣ FORMULA
INSCRIPTIONS AMONG THE SAMARITANS

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A BILINGUAL GREEK-SAMARITAN INSCRIPTION
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In the framework of the 23rd season of excavation at the site of Apollonia-Arsuf (summer 2014), excavations in Area P1 in the southern part of the site uncovered a bilingual Greek-Samaritan inscription (fig. 1).² The inscription was unearthed set in a mosaic pavement consisting of medium to small white *tesserae* (1–1.5 cm on average) in a later room whose floor and walls were plastered (L6226) (fig. 2). Hence the mosaic and the inscription that adorned it are only partially preserved.

The plastered room seems to belong to a structure whose character is yet to be defined. It is trapezoid-shaped, ca. 7.5 × 6.5 m, with three pier bases crossing it in the center from east to west. An opening (ca. 2.7 m wide) is visible on the north; there may have been another opening on the east (ca. 1.5 m wide). A semicircular plastered niche (ca. 0.75 m long) is apparent on the south. While the height of its walls is somewhat unified (0.5 m), their thickness is uneven (0.3–1.0 m). The reason for this seems to be the reuse of earlier walls (contemporaneous with the mosaic pavement?) especially in its southern part, where a plastered room (L6235) was unearthed whose construction and plastering is similar to that of the trapezoidal room on its north. These two rooms were likely to have been part of the same building.³

The mosaic was uncovered in the room's southern half with the inscription close to its center. It is rectangular, and double-framed with black *tesserae* (reconstructed dimensions are 1.3 × 1.4 m). It is aligned in an east-west orientation, that is, the person reading it would face east toward Mount Gerizim. Surrounding the single black frame around the inscription itself is a partially preserved tri-color (black, red and white) guilloche-patterned frame (fig. 3).⁴ It seems that the double-framed rectangular panel with the inscription in its center and the surrounding guilloche were encircled by a round medallion of which only a small part has survived on the west. Our measurements show that neither the double-framed black rectangular panel nor the lines of the inscription are totally aligned; hence we cannot exclude the possibility that parts

¹ I am indebted to L. Di Segni and R. Zadok for their valuable comments on aspects related to this study, and to the anonymous reader of ZPE. Responsibility for the ideas expressed below is mine alone.

² The excavation season was conducted from July 20 to August 26, 2014. This season was mostly confined to our ongoing (2012–2015) project funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (GZ: SCHO 520/14–2), “Die kreuzfahrerzeitliche Stadt Apollonia/Arsuf in Israel: Struktur – Kulturadaption – Stadt-Umland-Beziehungen”, co-headed by B. Scholkmann of the University of Tübingen and O. Tal, Tel Aviv University. Still, excavations in Area P1 during this season formed part of a “dig for a day” project operated jointly by our team and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. H. Yohanan was the area supervisor and T. Harpak was the registrar. S. Pirsky and S. Alon drew the plans and S. Pirsky drew the mosaic inscription. Photographer: P. Shrago. For an overview of the site and the history of its excavations, see I. Roll, Introduction: History of the Site, Its Research and Excavations, *Apollonia-Arsuf: Final Report of the Excavations*, vol. 1: *The Persian and Hellenistic Periods (with Appendices on the Chalcolithic and Iron Age II Remains)*, I. Roll and O. Tal, Tel Aviv 1999, 1–62. A more updated overview is to be found in K. Galor, I. Roll and O. Tal, Apollonia-Arsuf between Past and Future, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 72/1, 2009, 4–27; and in O. Tal and I. Roll, Arsuf: the Site, Settlement and Crusader Castle, and the Material Manifestation of Their Destruction, *The Last Supper at Apollonia: The Final Days of the Crusader Castle in Herzliya*, ed. O. Tal, Tel Aviv 2011, [8]–[51] in the English section.

³ Area P (and its new extension Area P1) are located on the inside and adjacent to the medieval town walls. Its proximity to the town wall, particularly to the point where a breach 21 m long can be seen (where we believe the Mamluk army destroyed the fortifications during the fighting in March 1265), as well as its elevation, are of importance. Area P's main discovery was a formidable platform built into earlier strata and dated to the end of the Crusader period, assumed to have served Crusader artillery; see in this respect, Tal and Roll (note 2 above, [37]–[38] in the English section). Area P1's upper level is mostly characterized by thick white mortar surfaces (to facilitate Crusader maneuvering), in which many 13th-century arrowheads were found, similar to those unearthed in the Crusader castle, attesting to the fierce fight with the Mamluks. On the latter, see D. Ashkenazi, O. Golan and O. Tal, An Archaeometallurgical Study of 13th-Century Arrowheads and Bolts from the Crusader Castle of Arsuf/Arsur, *Archaeometry* 55/2, 2013, 235–257.

⁴ The motif as depicted around the inscription can be defined as a shaded, four-strand guilloche on a white ground, see e.g. C. Balmelle ed., *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine*, vol. 1: *Répertoire graphique et descriptif des compositions linéaires et isotropes*, Paris 1985, pl. 73c. It is more familiar in 5th- and 6th-century CE mosaic pavements in the region; see for example R. Ovadia and O. Ovadia, *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, Rome 1987, 202, motif B4.

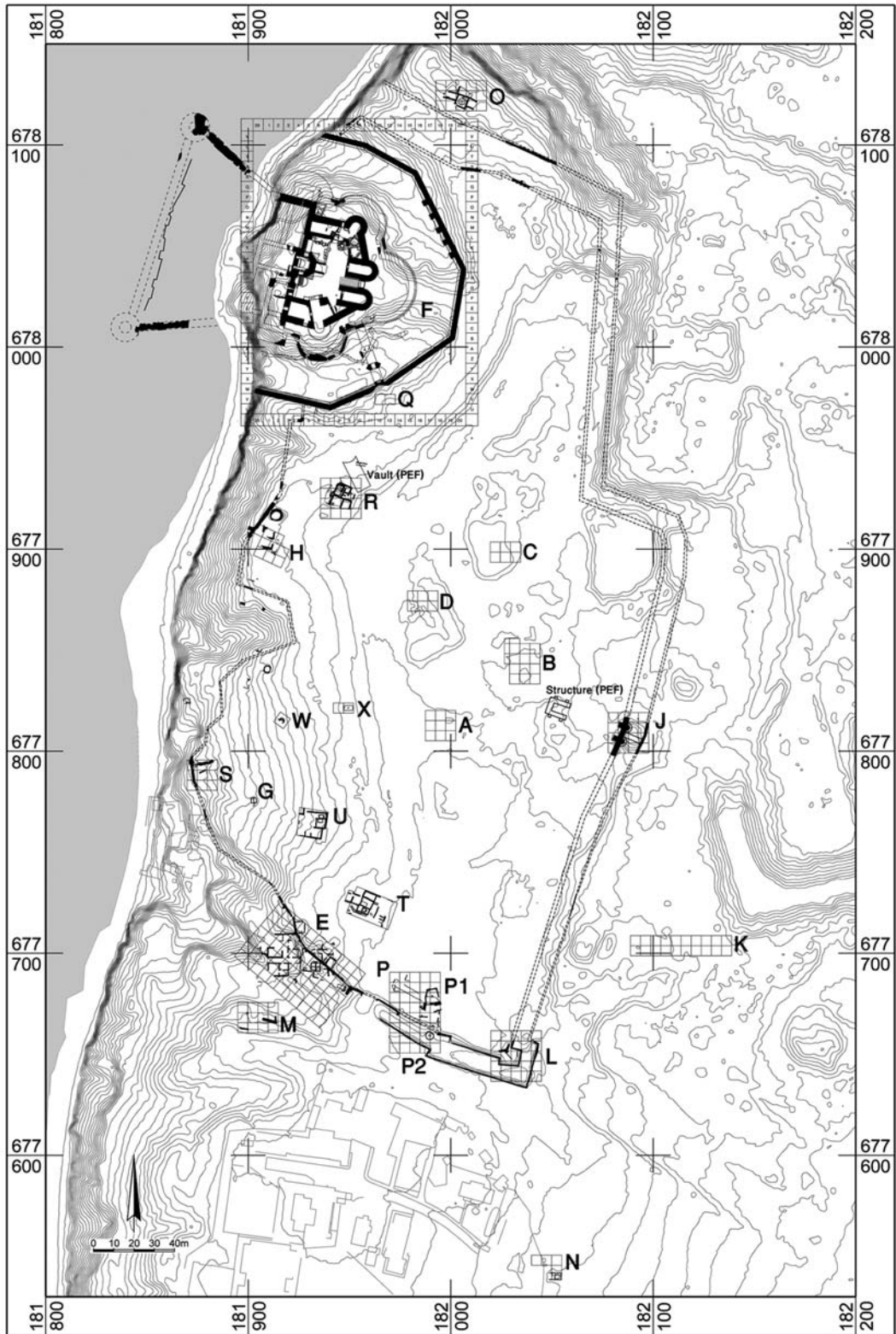


Fig. 1. Site plan

of the mosaic pavement have slightly moved over the years. Moreover, small parts of the inscription were extracted from the floor in later periods and over time it was covered by whitewash that accumulated on the floor (unconnected to the later plastering). Nonetheless, the inscription itself was found almost complete. The Greek letters were made of red *tesserae* and those of the Samaritan inscription were made of black *tesserae*. While the Greek inscription is composed of five rows (and an uneven additional row with the suffix of the last word) that of the Samaritan inscription has one row. Based on the division of the letters of both the Greek and the Samaritan, it seems that the craftsman who made the inscription was not highly skilled and its wording may have been changed (that is, expanded) while the work was underway.

As the inscription's preservation is quite good and, as noted, it was found almost complete, we were able to transcribe the letters in the following manner:

ΕΙCΘΕΟ ...
 COBOHΘ ...
 ΓΑΔΙΩΝΑΝ
 Κ/ΙΟΥΛΙΑΝΩ
 Κ/ΠΙACΙΝΤΟΙCΑΞ
 ΙΟΙC
 𐤒𐤓𐤕 𐤓𐤕

Hence, the transliterated and restored version of the inscription may be read as follows:

Εἷς θεὸς [μόνο-]
 ς ὁ βοηθ[ῶν]
 Γαδιωναν
 κ(αὶ) Ἰουλιανῶ
 κ(αὶ) πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀξ-
 ίοις
 פ ע ל ה ב ד ה

While the translation of the Greek is “One only god/who helps/Gadiona/and Iulianus/and all who deserve it”, that of the Aramaic (written in Samaritan script) may be translated as “(made it from his) possession in this place”.

The combination of Aramaic and Latin names as dedicators is interesting. The name Gadiona would apparently be the Greek transcription of the Semitic name **gdwyn*⁵. Hence it would represent an Aramaic form,⁵ known to have been used among Jews (and other ethnic groups) despite its theophoric (Ba^cal Gad) connotation.⁶ Iulianus was a common Latin name that was used among the different populations of Byzantine Palestine. Thus recovering these names in Samaritan contexts is not surprising.⁷

As for the Aramaic part, the third Samaritan letter from right may be read as *-gimmel-* but the root פעה has no meaning and would make no sense. The second Samaritan letter from left can be read as *-resh-* hence בדה – *in this place* – can also be read as ברה – *his son* but this seems less probable, given the Greek content of the inscription, where two private names are in the dative form as well as “all the righteous ones”.

⁵ Like Sergonas from Sergius/Sergas. In Byzantine-period contexts *-gd-* means luck, hence the personal name Gadiona may represent the manifestation of a good fortune. On the etymology of the name Gad, see e.g. E. Friedheim, *The Names “Gad”, “Gadda” and “Gadya” among Palestinians and Babylonian Sages, and the Rabbinic Struggle against Pagan Influences, These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, vol. 3, ed. A. Demsky, Ramat-Gan 2002, 117–126 (Hebrew, English summary 147); Z. U. Ma^coz, Baniyas and Baal-Gad “below Mt Hermon” (Josh 11:17), *Transeuphratène* 39, 2010, 113–119; idem, *Interpretatio Graeca: The Case of Gad and Tyché*, Qazrin 2010.

⁶ For comparison, see e.g. R. Zadok, *Zur Struktur der nachbiblischen jüdischen Personennamen semitischen Ursprungs*, *Trumah* 1, 1987, 280, §2.1.10.4.1 and 300, §2.2.6.2 (with non-Greek bases, viz. Semitic, Iranian and Latin); T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, part I (*Palestine 330 BCE – 200 CE*), Tübingen 2002, 366–367; part II (*Palestine 200–650 CE*), Tübingen 2012, 334; part III (*The Western Diaspora 330 BCE – 650 CE*), Tübingen 2008, 668; part IV (*The Eastern Diaspora 330 BCE – 650 CE*), Tübingen 2011, 341–342.

⁷ The two καί are written in abbreviated form, the first is apparently *-κ-* with an abbreviation mark in the form of a diagonal stroke; the second may have been similar or had a shallow *-c-* sign. Alternatively, it may have been written as *-καε-*, with a round-backed epsilon.

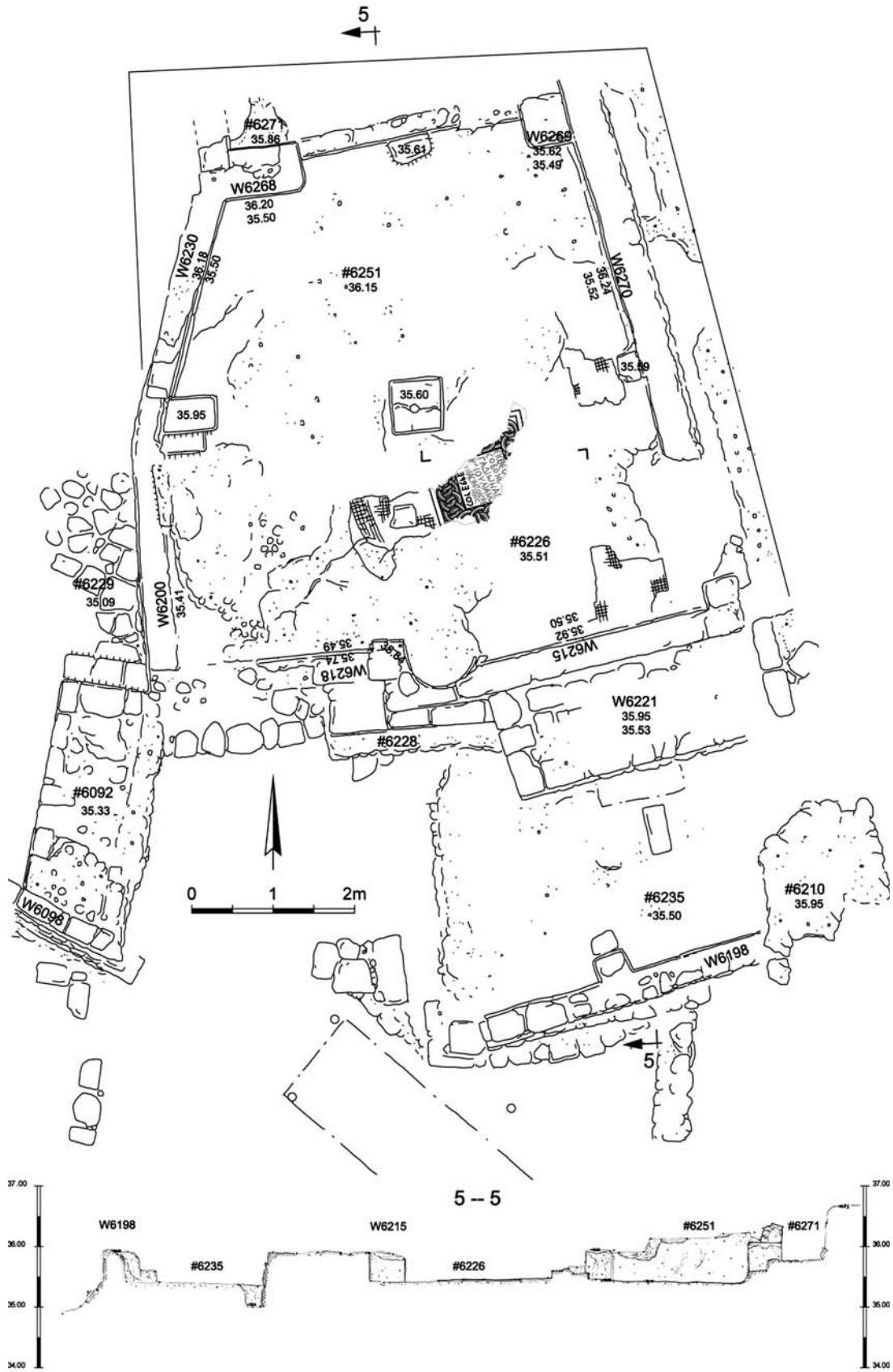


Fig. 2. Area plan



Fig. 3. The inscription: Photo and drawing

Jewish, Christian or Samaritan adherence”.¹⁵ Ameling refers to Peterson’s work on Εἰς θεός ,¹⁶ for intensification of the formula with pagan examples, where $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ is not an indication for monotheism but rather the god’s unique quality. He further argues against a Samaritan adherence: “Actually, there are three instances of εἰς θεός μόνος in Samaria, one of them certainly Christian (Di Segni 100 no. 16 [note 14 above]); one of the other two, *SEG* 40, 1503, was found in the context of a church – which leaves only one: Di Segni 101 no. 20 – not enough to indicate this formula as Samaritan.” Ameling’s arguments suffer from inaccuracies. Peterson’s own discussion of the $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ “neben” Εἰς θεός mentions manuscripts, a gemstone and a stele of not only non-Palestinian milieu but rather a different formulation.¹⁷ Moreover, the ΧΜΓ in Di Segni 100 no. 16 has no clear Christian adherence and cannot be regarded as “certainly Christian”. It is most likely a $\psi\eta\phi\omicron\varsigma$, the number (643) corresponding to a formula,¹⁸ rather than the initials of Christ and its epithets. Furthermore, several inscriptions in the Mount Gerizim Theotokos Church are engraved on reused stone slabs (most probably originated from an earlier Samaritan cultic place); many are fragmentary, among them the formula $\text{Εἰς θεός/Εἰς θεός μόνος}$ is apparent or can be safely reconstructed; from the latter, two such instances were published,¹⁹ but other are known as well. Thus, it is safe to say that there are more than three instances of the use of this formula in Samaria. Still, Ameling omitted examples from Apollonia-Arsuf and Raqit (Carmel),²⁰ which are definitely Samaritan according to their context.²¹

The recently found inscription from Apollonia/Sozousa is unique, as there are not many examples of bilingual Greek-Samaritan dedicatory inscriptions.²² The ones that we do know of are normally from synagogues (or assumed to have come from synagogues). The earliest evidence we have is the debased Ionic-style column capital from Emmaus-Nicopolis, found in secondary use in the floor of the northern

¹⁵ *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae Palaestinae. Volume II: Caesarea and the Middle Coast 1121–2160*, Berlin 2011, no. 1342. He also adds that Patrich (note 14 above, 2001, 81) “misses a cross and therefore believes it possible that this inscription is Samaritan”. But this has no actual basis.

¹⁶ E. Peterson, *Εἰς θεός: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Göttingen 1926, 256.

¹⁷ Peterson (note 16 above), 196.

¹⁸ See in this respect M. Avi-Yonah, Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions (The Near East, 200 B.C. – A.D. 1100), *Supplement to the Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 9, 1940, 111.

¹⁹ *SEG* 40, nos. 1502, 1503; Di Segni (note 14 above), 101, no. 20a.

²⁰ Notes 13 and 14 above, respectively.

²¹ One of the papers in which the example from Apollonia-Arsuf was published (Tal, note 13 above) was cited in the introduction of the site entry in the same *CIIP* II volume (Caesarea and the Middle Coast), but oddly enough is omitted from the list of Apollonia’s inscriptions.

²² There are of course many bilingual amulets but these are beyond the scope of this paper.

aisle of the Crusader-period church, with the Εἰς θεός inscription on one side and ברוך שם ולעולם (his name is blessed forever) on the opposite side within a *tabula ansata*.²³ Another instance of Greek and Samaritan inscriptions written together is the mosaic pavement of the synagogue at Sha'alvim (Salbit); here the Greek and Samaritan inscriptions were separated from one another yet appear on the same mosaic pavement.²⁴ While the Samaritan inscription (יהוה/ימלוך/לעולם/ועד) – *the Lord will reign forever and ever more*; Exod. 15:18) was discovered in the central section of the northern part of the hall, in front of the place where the *bemah* and the Ark of the Law must have been, the two written in Greek were found in the center of the hall (a medallion) and more to the rear of it. A similar phenomenon of separated Greek and Samaritan inscriptions on the same mosaic pavement is also known from the Samaritan synagogue at Tell Qasile.²⁵ Only one-third of the building survived. The Samaritan inscription was discovered in the central section of the southern aisle,²⁶ while the two written in Greek were found close to the entrance.²⁷ In this context, the inscription in Samaritan script from the room adjoining the synagogue of Beth-She'an/Scythopolis should be mentioned.²⁸ Naveh has shown, however, that the text of this medallion inscription although written in Samaritan script is in the Greek language (קהריה/בוטה/אפרי/קהיענג) – *God help Ephrai[m] and Anan*).²⁹

Given the comparative evidence at hand, it would be logical to assume that the newly discovered inscription from Apollonia/Sozousa also belongs to a Samaritan synagogue that was at a certain stage dismantled and occupied by later remains.³⁰ The alignment of the inscription, toward Mount Gerizim, lends support to such a conclusion. As we have similar phenomena of abandoning (or deactivating) Samaritan elements in the northern part of the site where a wine press featuring a dedicatory Samaritan inscription written in Greek on its treading floor was found intentionally filled with refuse probably in the context of the 529 CE rebellion,³¹ one can assume a similar fate for the current building. Still, as excavations are limited and partial in the area of discovery, and well-secured dating material of the remains that cover the mosaic is almost absent, the date of the reoccupation of the building where the inscription was found, as well as the character of the earlier and later (Early Islamic) remains, is left to be discovered in the future.

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²³ As published by C. Clermont-Ganneau, Note II, Expedition to Amwas (Emmaus-Nicopolis), *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement* 14, 1882, 24–33; and more recently D. Barag, Samaritan Writing and Writings, *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. H. M. Cotton, R. G. Hoyland, J. A. Price and D. J. Wasserstein, Cambridge 2009, 311–314 for its history of research and revised dating in the 5th–6th centuries CE.

²⁴ E. L. Sukenik, The Samaritan Synagogue at Salbit, Preliminary Report, *Bulletin of the L. M. Rabinowitz Fund for the Exploration of Ancient Synagogues* 3, 1949, 25–30; esp. 29, pl. XV; see also R. Reich, The Plan of the Samaritan Synagogue at Sha'alvim, *Israel Exploration Journal* 44, 1994, 228–233; and I. Magen, *The Good Samaritan Museum*, Jerusalem 2010, 164–165.

²⁵ H. Kaplan, A Samaritan Church on the Premises of 'Museum Haaretz', *Qadmoniot* 42–43, 1978, 78–80 (Hebrew).

²⁶ It reads: תכיר דקר / פרקסנה / תכיר דקר / מכסימ – *Maximus/ona is/will be remembered for he/she donated/is honored. Proxena/Priscianus is/will be remembered for she/he donated/is honored*; after A. Yardeni's compromise translation in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae. Volume III: South Coast 2161–2648*, no. 2168. The date of the inscriptions discovered in the building on the same mosaic pavement is incoherent. On the one hand, the editors apparently accepted the excavator's later dating, and accordingly dated one of the two Greek inscriptions to the 6th–7th centuries (no. 2167 [by J. J. Price]), while the other Greek inscription was left undated (no. 2166 [by W. Eck]). On the other hand, A. Yardeni dated the Samaritan inscription to the 5th century (no. 2168). In any case the decoration of the mosaic pavement agrees more with the earlier dating. An earlier dating is also supported by the finds that came from the foundations of the synagogue, see O. Tal and I. Taxel, *Samaritan Cemeteries and Tombs in the Southern Coastal Plain: The Archaeology and History of the Samaritan Settlement outside Samaria (ca. 300–700 CE)*, Münster 2015, Appendix I.3.

²⁷ Interestingly, the color of the Samaritan letters in all mosaic pavements that exhibit Samaritan and Greek inscriptions is normally black (or dark gray) while that of the Greek letters is normally red.

²⁸ N. Zori, The Ancient Synagogue at Beth-Shean, *Eretz-Israel* 8, 1967, 149–167 (Hebrew, English summary 73*).

²⁹ J. Naveh, A Greek Dedication in Samaritan Letters, *Israel Exploration Journal* 31, 1981, 220–222.

³⁰ It is tempting to suggest that the semicircular plastered niche excavated on its south side (see above, fig. 2) served as a *mihrab* (a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the direction of the *qibla*). In such a case, a cult place (a Samaritan synagogue) would have been transformed into another cult place (a mosque).

³¹ Tal (note 13 above).