Digging up Common Judaism in Galilee: Miqva’ot at Sepphoris as a test case

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ABSTRACT
The identification of the stepped pools in Sepphoris as ritual baths or miqva’ot is one of the pillars in describing the cultural identity of the Sepphorians in particular (and Galileans in general) in the late Second Temple Period. Besides the scholarly disagreement about what a miqveh is, it is argued that assumptions about common Judaism as the appropriate setting for dealing with the cultural identity of Galileans together with specific definitions of Jews and Jewishness are some of the stumbling blocks in the debate. An acknowledgement of the different meanings of the term loudaios as well as an alternative portrayal of Second Temple Judaism (as consisting of a variety of Judaisms), provide the archaeologist with a new setting for framing the archaeological data. It is argued that the digging up of common Judaism in Galilee (also by means of the many stepped pools) is jeopardised by such a framework.

1 INTRODUCTION
Viewpoints about the cultural and religious identity of Galileans in the first century has far-reaching implications for understanding several aspects of early Christian research. They describe the religious setting of first-century Palestine and therefore also of Galilee. They are instrumental in determining the position of Jesus of Nazareth as historical figure within that setting. As Freyne (1997a:132) says: 'The issue of the religious and cultural affiliations of the Galilean population in the first century is central to historical Jesus research'. Furthermore, these viewpoints play a fundamental role in establishing the point and process of the separation of church and synagogue. In this study it will be indicated that claims about the cultural identity of Galileans, and specifically that of Sepphorians, play an important role in archaeological research as well.

One of the remarkable points of agreements in much of Galilean archaeology is the consistency with which material evidence confirms a specific picture of Second Temple Judaism. During Jesus' time, Chancey and Meyers (2000:27) claim, 'Sepphoris was home to a significant Jewish community'. In fact, Meyers often argues that the whole of 'Galilee in the early Roman period...was Jewish ethnically and religiously'.

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(Meyers 1995:18; see also Meyers 1997:58–59, 64) while Freyne (see 1992:898; 1997c: 53, 55) in a number of studies makes it clear that Galilee in the first century was thoroughly Jewish. What if Galilee was not as Jewish or at least not Jewish in the way they assume?

In this study I will focus on one aspect of this debate only, namely the way in which stepped pools are used to identify the cultural identity of the inhabitants of Sepphoris. Together with stone fragments and the paucity of pig bones, it is especially the identification of numerous stepped pools in Sepphoris as ritual baths or miquva'ot that provides evidence of a strong Jewish presence (see Chancey & Meyers 2000:25). The widespread distribution of this viewpoint and its importance in so many aspects of research into the beginnings of Christianity, make it imperative that it be subjected to critical scrutiny. As will become apparent, it is nowadays also part of archaeological scholarship to question the assumptions of researchers about the cultural system and social setting of the period dealt with. Since there is such a wide and thorough debate going on about Judaism and Jewishness in this period, it seems opportune to engage in this enquiry.

It is, however, with some hesitation that I engage in this study. I am no field archaeologist who can claim 25 years of experience in the field and I do fear the possible accusation of being disloyal to the guild in questioning their interpretations. I nevertheless offer this study in an honest attempt to engage in archaeological scholarship. We only have to remind ourselves of the power of rhetorical questions and provocative statements in this field of research in order to engage in a critical discussion of some of the taken for granted (and dominating) viewpoints which play a role in what we see and what we find in the dust.

1 Although this is not the place to add all the other arguments in support of Galilee’s Jewishness, it can be mentioned that archaeologically, evidence of typical Jewish burial practices are added as a fourth marker or pillar (see Reed 1999:95–102).

2 It is difficult to escape the impression that often at crucial points in the debate about miquva’ot in particular and Galilean archaeology in general, the insinuation is made that if you do not have field experience you cannot participate (or at least be right in your claims). Chancey and Meyers (see 2000:20) say that after more than 15 years of excavation at Sepphoris, they believe that the city was largely Jewish. In another publication Meyers (see 1995:21) emphasises that after 25 years of excavations they are finally on the verge of identifying the ethnographic make-up of Sepphoris. My point simply is that if (and I say ‘if’) they are wrong about their conception of Judaism in the Second Temple Period, it means that for 15 or more years they have looked at the data, structures and artifacts from an incorrect angle and many more years of excavations are not guaranteed to reveal that.

3 In a recent article, Meyers accuses Eshel (in what I see as a healthy and necessary attempt at critical discussion) of trying to ‘discredit the identification of miquva’ot at Sepphoris’ (2000:46).

4 We are all familiar with the power of rhetorical questions like ‘The synagogue where Jesus preached?’ or ‘The house of Peter where Jesus stayed?’ It is often assumed in Jesus research that the synagogue where Jesus preached or the house of Peter in Capernaum has indeed been excavated (see, e.g. Theissen & Merz 1998:167). Such remarks undoubtedly have a special func-
The first step will be to give some information on the excavation of stepped pools and on the great *miqveḥ* debate. That will be followed by the suggestion of shifting the debate away from only the material remains (stepped pools) to the assumptions about *miqvaḥ* which operate behind the screens. Finally, the focus will shift to the presentation of Judaism in the archaeological scholarship of Galilee.

2 MIQVA'OT IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The *miqveḥ* (plural, *miqva'ot*) is a man-made water installation which enabled an observant Jew to purify him or herself without having access to a natural spring, running water (e.g. from a river or stream) or an adequate concentration of rainwater (see Reich 1988:104). It was used for religious reasons, called ritual cleansing or purification and has nothing to do with hygienic cleansing (see La Sor 1987:52; Sanders 1990:214). General requirements were that such a pool should be big enough for total immersion of the body (a volume set by the rabbinic literature at 40 *se'ah*; see Sanders 1990:215) and it should be filled with ritually clean water (see Rousseau & Arav 1995:237).

Already in 1993 Reich (see 1993:52) claimed that more than 300 stepped-and-plastered water installations had been excavated and identified in Eretz Israel. Today the figure must be much higher since that figure excludes the more than thirty stepped-and-plastered pools uncovered in Sepphoris (see Eshel 2000a:42; Meyers, Netzer & Meyers 1992:28). As already said, the identification of most of these pools as ritual pools (*miqvaḥ*) provides strong support for the viewpoint that *common Judaism* was widely distributed in Eretz Israel in general and Galilee (specifically Sepphoris) in particular.

2.1 Before stepped pools were *miqvaḥ*

The identification of stepped pools as *miqvaḥ* has an interesting history. The first ancient *miqveḥ* to be identified as such (which received widespread recognition) was done by Yadin while digging at Masada in the early sixties (see La Sor 1987:52; Eshel 1997:131). It was only after the identification of these pools as *miqvaḥ* that stepped pools uncovered much earlier (e.g. those found at Qumran in the fifties and in Sepphoris by Watermann in 1931; see Meyers, Netzer & Meyers 1992:28) were identified as *miqva'ot*. But all this did not happen immediately. For example, when the stepped pools were first uncovered in Sepphoris during the excavations of the eighties, 'we

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5 Estimates of the volume of 40 *se'ah* range from 250 to 1000 liters (see Sanders 1990:215).
were puzzled by these pools and could not fathom their purpose', the excavators say (Meyers, Netzer & Meyers 1992:28).

An important question which will keep haunting this aspect of archaeological research is how one can determine whether any particular stepped pool was used for ritual or secular purposes (see Wright 1997:195). In other words, how do stepped pools become miqva'ot?

2.2 How stepped pools become miqva'ot

There is no single answer to the question as to how a stepped pool is recognised as a miqveh. In a debate between the 'minimalists' and the 'maximalists', there is no agreement about exactly what makes a stepped pool a miqveh. According to the maximalists, who take all stepped pools as miqva'ot, the two central criteria are the steps and the size—it should have steps and should be big enough for total immersion. Based on the analysis of Wright (1997:203), these are, for example, the main criteria in Reich's judgment: 'It appears that if a stepped pool is large enough to immerse a human body, then it is to be considered a potential miqveh'.

The two main objections of the minimalists are that a stepped pool should also contain a separating line or partition or should have a double door and an adjacent reservoir providing ritually clean water.

On the first of these characteristics Eshel (2000a:44) says, a 'telltale sign of a miqveh is a low partition that divides the stairs into two staircases'. The function of the line or separator is to distinguish between the clean and unclean persons who use the pool.

It is interesting that where dividers of some kind appear, they are used to support the identification of the pool as a ritual bath by the maximalists as well (see La Sor 1987:56). However, since the minority of stepped pools have a dividing line or separation wall on the steps (or two separate doors), the lack of these do not, to them, disqualify the pool from being identified as a miqveh (see Meyers 2000:47). In other words, when it is there, it supports the idea of a ritual pool and when it is not there, it does not disqualify the pool from being declared a miqveh.

The second feature functions equally inconsistently. Minimalists insist that stepped pools can only be miqva'ot when they contain 'living water'. According to the rabbinic requirements immersion should take place in running or rain water. Where there is no

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6 Strange (see 1992a:345 n 12) mentions that some of these stepped pools (what they called miqva'ot) were already described in the preliminary report of the 1931 excavations.

7 Perhaps there is some lesson to be learnt from the story told by Meyers when he first took Rabbi Muntzberg to look at a stepped-pool at Khirbet Shema. He says (2000:49): 'Rabbi Muntzberg cogitated, then looked up and declared, “Kosher”'.

8 Wood, for example, insists that pools for ritual purposes can be distinguished from others by means of steps (see La Sor 1987:56). This is basically also the criterion of Sanders (1990:217): 'Once one identifies stepped pools as miqva'ot, they can be found more-or-less everywhere'.
aqueduct from the spring feeding directly into the stepped pool, an alternative has to be found. One solution to meet the requirement is to have a pool of living water (an *otzar*) next to the stepped pool with a pipe leading into the stepped pool. The logic is that once the water of the *otzar* comes into contact with the water in the stepped pool (which can be drawn water) it is all purified. Again, most stepped pools do not have an *otzar* (see Reich 1993:52) but when it is present, it is used to confirm the identification as a *miqveh* (see Meyers 2000:48).

Although the study of *miqva'ot* is still in its infancy, there is another feature of the archaeological record which needs to be mentioned. All these stepped pools do not have the same morphology. The typology of stepped pools indicates that some are dug as pools into floors of rooms and are entered from the top while others are carved as caves into bedrock and are entered from the side (see Meyers, Netzer & Meyers 1992:29). Referring to their water supply, Sanders (see 1990:217-219) indicates that there were at least three different kinds of pools: those built below a spring which receive running water via an aqueduct, those with *otzarim* next to them and numerous pools with no *otzar* or source of running water next to them. The significant challenge which is generated by these differences is that those scholars who want to identify all stepped pools as *miqva'ot*, have to admit that a significant number of people had ritual pools but they did not or could not keep to strict (pharisaic or rabbinic) prescriptions about the water provision. It is, for example, significant, as Sanders (see 1990:222-223) points out, that many of the stepped pools in the upper city of Jerusalem (if they were indeed *miqva'ot*), probably occupied by the aristocratic priests, did not comply with the strict regulations (if they existed at the time).

Finally, Reich (see 1993:52) maintains that a large number of stepped pools were indeed *miqva'ot* and founds his argument on two points. If these installations are not the *miqva'ot* described in the literature, where are they, he asks and secondly, if they are not *miqva'ot*, what are they? The answer to the last question is easy, Eshel says (see 2000a:45): they could have been bathtubs—as is the case with stepped pools found in pagan settings. The existence of up to five stepped pools in some houses in Sepphoris (where there are also other washing facilities), however, puts into question the theory of these stepped pools as either *miqva'ot* or as bathtubs. Therefore, although the idea of bathtubs is not necessarily a satisfactory answer, my point merely is that the lack of some other satisfactory explanation can only be suggestive and not conclusive in identifying the pools as *miqva'ot*. On the first point, one should ask, why is there a lack of references to *miqva'ot* in contemporary Second Temple Period literature? Wright (1997:208) points out that a claim about immersion in a special pool for removing impurities cannot be made based on Second Temple Greek literature; 'In contrast to rabbinic literature, there is little indication of where these ritual ablations were performed, and there is no discussion in this literature at all of the criteria for valid water for immersion'. If there were so many ritual baths, why so few descriptions of them?
In concluding this section, it seems clear to me that the way in which these plastered stepped pools becomes accepted as *miqva'ot* in archaeological studies, calls for further reflection.

### 2.3 The *miqva'ot* in Sepphoris-debate

In what I take to be a healthy critical discussion of the stepped pools uncovered in Sepphoris, Eshel (1997:132) raises four points for evaluating them: they are significantly smaller than the *miqva'ot* in Judea, they never contain a separating line or double door, they do not have the adjacent reservoir and in the houses where they were found there were no other bathing facilities. He later adds that since most of these pools are situated in the upper city of Sepphoris, they were situated higher than the aqueduct which provided spring water to the city (see 2000a:45).

In his reaction to Eshel, Meyers (2000:46–49), to my mind, follows a significant strategy. He starts off by confirming the viewpoint that ‘Sepphoris was overwhelmingly Jewish’. Given this setting, he then refutes each of the initial four arguments mentioned above. Despite their rather small size, they still contain the minimum required capacity of 40 se'ahs. Most *miqva'ot* according to the definition of the maximalists, do not have a dividing line or separator and can therefore not be disqualified by this criterion. On the absence of other washing facilities in some houses where stepped pools were found, he argues that some do have other washing facilities, or at least have ample space for it. Although these stepped pools are large enough for immersion, he claims they were not convenient enough for hygienic washing. On the issue of the provision of clear water, he argues that it is still not known how water was transported to the upper parts of the city, but the presence of ceramic and lead pipes suggests that it was. He mentions the solution of rooftop catchment reservoirs which did not survive time’s destruction.

Two specific problems can be identified in this debate. The first is that it gives a clear example of how different sets of criteria are used for deciding what a *miqveh* was. If they were first to agree on the criteria (e.g., a dividing line can or cannot determine whether it was or was not a *miqveh*) they would at least differ (or agree) about the same thing. But it seems to me as if there is more to the debate. The criteria are not cut and dried; they are, so to speak, extracted from and read into the actual instances. Therefore, when Eshel (see 2000b:49) argues that we need more data (*i.e.*, more stepped pools) in order to affirm their identification, he is missing the point.

In principle, nobody will dispute that more information is better than less. However, the debate whether a particular stepped pool is indeed a *miqveh* or not cannot be settled by finding more such pools. Furthermore, the maximalists who see common Judaism everywhere will identify such pools as *miqva'ot* while others will remain skeptical. I want to suggest that in this case it is not so much new data as a new look at the available data which can bring a change. New results will not come with
more data, but from an alternative way of looking at it because more pools will be subjected to the same interpretive constraints.

The second problem, which to me is even more serious, is what I will call the problem of digging up common Judaism. The point has been made, but needs to be repeated here: there is a circular argument between identifying stepped pools as miqva’ot and describing the cultural identity of the Galileans (and Sepphorians). Meyers shows that besides the features of the pools themselves, the Jewish setting of Galilee supports his viewpoint about the nature of the stepped pools. One of the main arguments in identifying the stepped pools as miqvaot is the viewpoint that ‘Sepphoris was overwhelmingly Jewish’ (Meyers 2000:46). However, when arguing about the cultural identity of Galilee, one of the three pillars in the argument for its Jewishness is the existence of miqvaot (see Chancey & Meyers 2000:22). How, however, can the stepped pools point to ‘a Torah-true population’ (Meyers 1992:325) if their identity themselves is in dispute? And how can the Jewishness of Sepphoris help in the identification of these pools if its Jewishness is (partly) dependent on those pools being ritual pools?

In fact, I want to suggest that the more stepped pools are discovered, the greater the variety is going to become with more features to account for. The features themselves are insufficient in clinching the decision. The challenge is to look wider. One needs to admit that any archaeologist provides some additional information—in fact essential information from his or her own frame of reference to that which is found in the dust—in order to identify any of these pools as belonging to a specific category.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AS FRAMING THE DATA

In an interesting study on the search for gender and class in the archaeological record, Marianne Sawicki (see 1994:333–338) suggests that in addition to the physical site, three other kinds of sites must be re-excavated. Besides the physical site, often referred to as the ‘archaeological record’, archaeological scholarship has to deal with the theories behind the record, with the received cultural interpretations of the past and with the construction of archaeology itself as a discipline. She suggests a ‘rereading’ of these sites in order to uncover that which was overlooked in the process. In other words, it is not only the archaeological record and what is uncovered, but a combination of the whole process of archaeological scholarship which determines what we see: how archaeological discoveries are framed is as important as the data as such (see Horsley 1996:13).

If it can be shown that the stepped pools were miqvaot, it can be concluded that most or many of the Jews of the period were keeping the purity laws of Leviticus and used these baths for ritual cleansing (see Avigad 1980:139; Wright 1997:190). However, this argument also works the other way round. If one accepts like Sanders (see 1992:47) does, that most inhabitants of Palestine in the late Second Temple Period were Jews (adhered to common Judaism), then it goes without saying that the stepped pools must have been ritual baths.
All this is not new to someone familiar with the world of *New Archaeology*. Elsewhere I (see Craffert 1998:352-356) have suggested that we see in the dirt what we are sensitised to see and such sensitising is, amongst others, the result of literary study and cross-cultural awareness. 'New archaeology' brings into practice the insight that prior familiarity with ethnographic information is necessary for inferences about archaeological findings. What we call that which is found in the dirt is as much determined by presuppositions as by the artifacts or structures themselves. Archaeologists have begun to see that 'goals (explanations), investigative techniques, and collecting of data are not independent variables' (Martin 1971:3).

But if 'material culture is a product of the conceptual and symbolic world from which it springs, as Strange (1992b:29) formulates it, then constructing that world is as important in the archaeologist's tasks as uncovering the material culture. As it is also the case that one can make archaeology prove or confirm many things—the example of Qumran archaeology, Davies says (see 1988), is a case in point—a constant debate about the framework supplied by the archaeologist becomes imperative. Given the intense debate about Judaism and Jewishness in the Second Temple Period, it is surprising that it is almost lacking in both the miqu'eh debate and the debate about Galilean identity. The most important presuppositions which play a role in this case are contained in the terms, Judaism, Jew or Jewish. My suggestion is that at the very least, what is needed in this debate about miqu'at is a rethinking (or at least justification within the debate) of what is meant by the terms 'Jew' and 'Jewishness' and the Jewishness of Galilee.

4 THE FRAMING OF GALILEAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

At this point I want to return to what has been called the problem of *digging up common Judaism* in Sepphoris. It has been indicated that a popular assumption in Galilean archaeology is that ethnically and religiously, the population was Jewish. It is important to get a clearer grasp of what is meant by this viewpoint.

4.1 'Jews' in Galilee

In an important contribution to the debate about Galilean cultural and religious identity, Horsley (see 1996:8, 182) warns that 'essentialist categories' (meaning, dichotomies like 'Jewish' and 'Hellenistic'), still dominate the debate about Galilean identity and Galilean archaeology in general. One of these essentialist terms is common Judaism. Despite Meyers's (see 1995:18) objection that the last presupposition which his team brought to the field is such essentialist categories, the evidence argues against it. Common Judaism is in fact an essentialist depiction of late Second Temple Judaism and using the term 'Jew' or 'Jewish' without further qualification, also reflects an essentialist picture of their identity. The first aspect to turn to is 'Jew' and 'Jewish'.

One of the stock phrases, for example, in Meyers’s work is that of 'significant
Jewish minorities' (see, e.g. Meyers 1997:58; Chancey & Meyers 2000:24), while he even says that with regard to Sepphoris, the 'overwhelming majority or virtually all of the inhabitants...in the first century C.E. were Jewish' (1992:324). What are the arguments in support of this viewpoint?

A mixture of historical and religious arguments is available. The historical arguments include the following: Meyers (see 1992:325–326) states that the Jewish population had been in Sepphoris since Hellenistic times. He seems to ground his assertion on the fact that Sepphoris was indeed, as testified by Josephus, a Hasmonean stronghold during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (ca. 100 BCE). The second argument is that shortly after Pompey conquered Syro-Palestine in 63 BCE, the Syrian proconsul divided Palestine into five districts and established Jewish councils. Sepphoris was selected as the only Galilean city to be assigned a Jewish council (see Meyers 1992:323; Chancey & Meyers 2000:22). Implicit in these arguments is the assumption that Jewish ethnicity is determined by religious affiliation or religious convictions. Perhaps the strongest and most popular of the arguments about the ethnic Jewish identity of the Galileans is that they shared in the religious customs of the Jews. 'Galileans, insofar as they share in the customs—especially the religious ones—relating to worship in the single Temple in Jerusalem, are naturally designated Ioudaioi' (Freyne 1999:54). The basis of this viewpoint includes aspects like the following: regular pilgrimages to the temple, paying of annual temple tax, acceptance of the temple tithing system, and adherence to ritual purity (see Freyne 1980:244). It would be necessary to evaluate each of these arguments separately. Although that cannot be done here, it will be shown that the picture is much more complex than this.

It is only recently that the proposal has been put forward that Galilee underwent an aggressive Jewish colonisation under the Hasmoneans (see Freyne 1997c:53; Reed 1999:90–95). The implication is that the population therefore by definition was Jewish and was not forcefully 'converted' under the Hasmonean government. Whoever they were, the assumption remains the same: the 'Jewishness' of Galileans can best be described by the phrase 'adherents to common Judaism'. Even when not consciously acknowledged, the portrayal of Judaism in much of Galilean archaeology is most often done from the perspective of 'common Judaism'—as can be seen in the descriptions of the identity of Galilean (and Sepphoran) inhabitants.

This perspective has at least four focus points. The first and most pertinent feature of 'common Judaism' is that it is constituted from a centre dominated viewpoint. Within Palestine, "normal" or "common" Judaism was what the priests and the people agreed on', Sanders says (1992:47). This portrayal of late Second Temple

10 See, for example, the criticism of Horsley (1996:33) on some of these issues and the doubt expressed by others; for example, Sanders (1992:127, 130) on regular pilgrimages to the temple.

11 Meyers (see 1995:18), for example, explicitly argues that Galilean scholars should just accept 'common Judaism' as the true picture of late Second Temple Judaism. This is also supported by Freyne (see 1997b:71–72) and Reed (see 1999:103).
Judaism depicts it as having mostly common convictions and forms of expression (which Sepphorians and other Galileans shared): monotheism and covenantal nomism, temple and synagogue, sacrifices and liturgy of the word, and holy scriptures and tradition (such as circumcision, purity regulations and food laws).

The second feature flows from this description: this portrayal of Judaism is done from the point of view of the official Jerusalem cult perspective. What Van der Toorn (1996:1) argues about the study of religion in the ancient Near East is also true of the presentation of common Judaism: ‘scholars have generally limited themselves to studies of the state cult and its theology’. As said above, ‘common Judaism’ represents that which the people and the priests agreed on.

The third feature is that this perspective operates with a limited definition of religion. Sanders (1992:190) emphasises that his description of common Judaism ‘is in part intended to correct most portrayals of Judaism, which focus either on politics or on theology’ in that it goes far beyond beliefs and ideas. That is indeed true since he freely allows beliefs and practices into the description. However, ‘common Judaism’ is still characterised by religious activities of a limited scope: primarily temple worship and Torah obedience. The point is not to deny that these aspects played a role in Israelite religion, but to show that the scope of religious activities portrayed in common Judaism remains temple and cult dominated.

The fourth feature of this perspective is that there was some variety within Judaism. While admitting that there was some form of pluralism as well as a variety of Jewish groups, the overall gist of this perspective is, to use the words of Neusner (1993:297), that there was a ‘single, unitary, harmonious, incremental Judaism’ in the first century. There was no variety of Judaisms and all the writings we have from Jews speaks for one and the same Judaism. To be sure, saying with common Judaism that there ‘were numerous differences within “normal Judaism”’ (Sanders 1992:48; see also

12 Portrayals of first-century Judaism in both Jesus research and New Testament studies in general follow this pattern fairly closely. There are, however, several variations to this general trend of portraying Second Temple Judaism as constituted by an allegiance to some fixed components. ‘Three symbols were absolutely central for all religious Jews of the period—those of temple, torah and land—even though a concentration on one or another element of this triad to the point of subordinating the other two, could and did produce a new configuration...’ (Freyne 1988:177). For Freyne (see 1997b:72) there is no doubt that in Galilee there was deep attachment to all of these. The following references simply give an indication of the widespread and persistent belief in this picture: Sanders (1993:33–39); Stegemann and Stegemann (1997:128); Theissen & Merz (1998:126–127); Wright (1999:31–35, 42–47).

13 The following examples should suffice to demonstrate the generality of this trend: Jews believed that there was only one true God...Jews were to worship or serve God...This meant, above all, worshipping him at the Temple in Jerusalem’ (Sanders 1993:33–35); ‘Jews kept the Torah and revered the temple’ (Wright 1999:43 ); ‘Judaism at the time of Jesus was a temple religion...God allows himself to be worshipped only in one place, namely in Jerusalem...’ (Theissen & Merz 1998:127); Meyers (see 1995:18) claims that even Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews (with the exception of temple worship) shared the general pattern of common Judaism.
Sandel's 1990:223; Reed 1999:87) is different from saying that there were various Judaism.

4.2 The changing face of the scholarly study of Second Temple Judaism

As said, it is impossible in this study to deal with all the arguments supporting this viewpoint. I want to focus briefly on two aspects only in showing that the above set of assumptions about common Judaism needs to be reconsidered, if not rejected. The one has to do with the meaning of the term Ioudaios and the second with the scholarly construction of Judaism.

First of all, we have to develop a sense for the historical development of the term Ioudaios.

4.2.1 Ioudaios: a term with a history

A distinction should be made between the meaning of the term Ioudaios/Jew in antiquity and in modern scholarly discourses. In this study some remarks about the term in antiquity will have to suffice. Furthermore, in itself it is significant to note that the term had different meanings and that a development of these meanings can be indicated.

I first turn to the basic meanings of the term. Cohen (see 1999:70ff) shows that in the Hellenistic period the word Ioudaios had three basic meanings:

1. A Judaean (a function of birth and/or geography). An Ioudaios was a member of the Judaean people or nation who lived in the homeland Judaea. In this usage it is, however, more ambiguous than other terms like Egyptian or Phrygian because Judaea was both a Roman province and a country—sometimes it was used for the entire Eretz Israel, including its districts as well as for a specific district. Because of this ambiguity, it could be used in more than one sense when referring in a legal sense to the inhabitants. All the inhabitants of Eretz Israel could be treated as Ioudaioi (especially from a Roman state perspective) or the term could be used for the inhabitants of Judea only.

2. A Jew (a function of religion or culture). An Ioudaios can have the meaning of a Jew as someone who worships the God whose temple is in Jerusalem and who lives the way of life of the Jews.

\[\text{Differentiating Judaism from Christianity or Islam is easier than defining Judaism, Neusner (see 1989:3–17 for following discussion) points out. Judaism encompasses a variety of closely related religions, past and present. Today there are a variety of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed) or a variety of religious systems within the single religious tradition, each seeing itself as the final and logical outcome of the history of Judaism. Then there are secular Jews and defining the term has also a strong political connotation (who can become a citizen of the modern Jewish state.}\]
3. A citizen or ally of the Judaean state (a function of politics). Any person who lived in Judaea or an allied country, could be referred to as an Ioudaios. For example, ethnically the Idumaeans were not Judaeans but they became known as such after their incorporation into the Hasmonean state. In this sense Herod the Great, who was an Idumaean by birth, was also an Ioudaios. 'The historical Herod certainly was Jewish—that is, a member of the community of those who revered the God whose temple is in Jerusalem' (Cohen 1999:23). There is a little irony in this Hasmonean history: in becoming more nationalistic and in presenting themselves as the great champions of the way of the 'Jews', more outsiders were allowed into the Jewish commonwealth than at any other point in time. Judaism became universalist in allowing non-Jews to 'convert' to Judaism.

It is, secondly, also possible to show that the term went through a specific development process. At first the term Ioudaios was primarily an ethnic-geographic term (meaning 1 above), designating the inhabitants of the land Ioudaea. It was not before the middle or end of the second century BCE that it was first used in the sense of Jew, the followers of a certain way of life or 'religion' (meaning 2 above). Cohen (see 1996:219) argues that this turning point in the history of the term can be pinpointed to Second Maccabees (6:6 and 9:17) where the term should no longer be translated as 'Judaean' but as 'Jew'. It was also in this period that it was first used as a political term (meaning 3 above).

Cohen shows that before the turning point which is reflected in Second Maccabees, all authors who used the term were speaking of 'Judaens' and not 'Jews'. It was therefore also not until the end of the first century CE that Greek and Roman writers recognised that one could become a Jew by changing one's beliefs and practices and by the third to fourth centuries that the word came to mean almost exclusively 'an adherent of the Jewish religion' (see 1999:96, 99 and Davies 1995:181).

4.2.2 Judaism(s) as scholarly constructions

The above picture of common Judaism which gains its rationale for almost every element from the official temple cult, is seriously challenged today. In fact, Neusner (1993:300-301) shows that for the last forty years or so there developed a critical tradition in the study of Judaism which no longer accepts the notion of an orthodox, single, unitary or common Judaism; 'there was no Judaism, but only Judaisms...documents adumbrate religious systems, each with its own worldview, way of life and account of the social entity, "Israel"'. Instead of the conception that all Judaisms come from one Judaism or find underlying unity in one Judaism (the temple cult), this insight champions a model of multiple Judaisms, each presenting a discrete system and program (see Neusner 1986:18 n 7; Overman & Green 1992:1038).
Perhaps more significant than the growing consensus\(^\text{16}\) about a variety of Judaism, is the insight that such variety characterises Israelite religion from the beginning. Scholars of the Hebrew Bible over a wide spectrum agree that we can no longer think about religion in Syro-Palestine as unified or monolithic. It has to be acknowledged that Israelite religion has always covered a wide spectrum of practices (some of which were not official or approved by all members).

The existence of different levels of religion in ancient Syro-Palestine has to be acknowledged and respected. A differentiation must be made between the state cult (official religion) of the temple in the capital, the local religion of sanctuaries all over the country and the private religion of each family. These levels were clearly distinct from one another, so that it is impossible to speak of "the" Judahite or Israelite religion (Niehr 1995:51).

This variety exists right from the beginning and characterises Israelite religion throughout.

What Brettler (1999:442) says about the Hebrew Bible, is equally true of all other periods of Israelite history:

The Hebrew Bible offers us *small windows* through which we can look into the changes that transpired and suggests (1) that an amazing diversity of opinions, laws or norms could and did exist within the community at the same time, and (2) that within subcommunities changes did occur throughout time, some of them connected to historical events that were watersheds, such as the exile, while others were not.

For this reason it is also no longer accepted that in each of these Judaism they had the same understanding of what is often taken as central aspects of Jewish religion; aspects such as scripture or Torah. It is indeed possible to identify certain common denominators (e.g. that the Torah was given by God—but not what constitutes the Torah; or the unity of God—but not how He can be experienced) but no unified or single view on any of these (see Neusner 1993:297 n 13). As Overman and Green (1992:1039) say, "the components *temple, scripture, and tradition* are empty categories that were filled in differently by different Judaism's".

If it is accepted that in Israelite history in general and in the first century in particular, religious experiences and expressions can be seen as varied, the main issues to be addressed are what to call these religious systems and how to describe the dis/similarities between them. In other words, which options were available for Second Temple or specifically first-century people in Galilee for access to religious

\(^{16}\) This is also the position of PR Davies (1995:145) who admits that Judaism of the Second Temple period "... is now frequently represented as a pluralist phenomenon; indeed, so much so that it has become commonplace to speak of the existence not only of various forms or types but even of several "Judaism" before rabbinic Judaism emerged as the authorized (though still not the only) form". Grabbe (1992:527) maintains that a description of the religious situation in Palestine from the Maccabees to the fall of Jerusalem should contain such terms as "pluralistic," "diverse," "complex," "great variety," "not monolithic," and "many-sided"...There were many Jewish religious systems ("Judaisms") extant in the Land of Israel before 70."
experiences and practices? None of these could or have been dealt with in this article. The aim is simply to show that a whole body of research points towards a picture of Second Temple Judaism totally different from that assumed in the portrayal of common Judaism.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS: OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 'JEW(S)', 'JUDAISM(S)' AND GALILEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

This study belongs to what Jamieson-Drake (1989:463) calls the 'real dirty work' of archaeology. It is specifically concerned with the assumption of common Judaism as a proper description of the late Second Temple Galilean religious landscape. It has been suggested that much of Galilean archaeology nowadays take common Judaism for granted and therefore also finds structures, like miquv'ot, which confirm that assumption. However, from this very brief overview of the terms Ioudaios and portrayals of Judaism, a number of observations relevant to the identity of Galileans and Sephoreans and important to the miquveh-debate can be made.

Firstly, when it is realised that the term Ioudaios was ambiguous in the ancient world, it is immediately apparent that in a large part of the scholarly literature (also on Sepphoris) the meaning of the term Ioudaios is either transported from one instance to another (from a political function to a religious function), or worse, all references to Ioudaioi have the same meaning everywhere. When applying this to arguments about Galilean Jewishness it becomes interesting. If Galileans were colonised by the Hasmoneans they were at best Ioudaioi in the third sense described above (‘Jews' as a function of politics). Then it cannot simply be assumed that they were also effectively resocialised into the Jewish temple system. Under such conditions, Horsley's (see 1996:28) questions about the effective integration of these Ioudaioi into the Judean temple community cannot that easily be brushed aside. Even if the Galileans were resettled Judeans (as is nowadays argued),18 it is unlikely, as I have argued, that they were necessarily adherents of common Judaism.19

Secondly, perhaps the most significant result of the unwillingness to acknowledge the ambiguity of the term Ioudaios can be felt in translations. Whenever the term Jew(s) is used in scholarly literature, it almost always has the normative (religious) meaning. This can be seen where Ioudaios is translated as Jew and not Judaean.20 In the words of Cohen (1999:104):

17 Besides the assumption of a serious program of resocialisation from the side of the Hasmonean state, one, for example, has to assume the means for such a secondary socialisation, as Horsley (see 1996:28) points out.
18 See, however, the cautionary remarks by Horsley (see 1995:26) in this regard.
19 As said earlier, each of the individual arguments on the 'Jewishness' of these people will have to be evaluated individually. For example, the assumption about regular and common pilgrimages and contact with the Jerusalem temple. None of these can be performed here.
20 Cohen (see 1994) has, for example, convincingly argued that all instance of Ioudaios tou genos in Josephus's writings (which are all translated as Jews by birth) should all be translated as
Greek loudaios, Latin Iudaeus, and Hebrew Yehudi are almost always translated as “Jew,” but in all occurrences of the term before the end of the second century B.C.E. this translation is wrong, because before that point these words always and everywhere mean “Judaean,” not “Jew.” “Judaean” is an ethnic-geographic term: a Judaean is a member of the Judaean people (ethnos) and hails from Judaea, the ethnic homeland.

Thirdly, what this overview also shows is that it is no longer possible to simply assume common Judaism as the proper setting for dealing with the archaeological record of Palestine. If it is correct to say, as has been argued, that archaeological findings are dependent on both the archaeological record and the archaeologist’s assumptions, it follows that the above distinction between different meanings of the term loudaios together with the realisation of a variety of Judaisms should make a difference to archaeological scholarship. If Second Temple Judaism was less like the portrayal of common Judaism and more like that of the new consensus of a variety of Judaisms, then it is remarkable (and disconcerting) that Galilean archaeology keeps on finding common Judaism in the field.

When the scope of vision is limited to temple related religion, it is not surprising that all that is found and uncovered in the archaeological record confirms that picture. I am not suggesting that temple religiosity was not one, in fact probably the most important, version of Judaism at the time. I am suggesting that the religious landscape cannot be limited to the scholarly construction of common Judaism. And when the field of vision is enlarged to include other forms of Judaism (or as I would prefer to say, the broad spectrum of Israelite religious systems), it might just be that we can discover that which has been overlooked. As Sawicki has demonstrated with the excavation of class and gender, what is needed is both a re-excavation of existing ‘sites’ as well as an adjustment of perspective when digging the material sites.

All this is not very helpful in suggesting an appropriate explanation for all the stepped pools in Sepphoris. It does, however, show that the assumed picture of common Judaism which allows all stepped pools to become miqu'ot, does not apply that easily. It might just be that an exploration of the religious landscape of first-century Galilee will open new ways of looking at the archaeological record and consequently provide alternative suggestions for dealing with the numerous stepped pools.

**WORKS CONSULTED**


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Judeans by birth. I am also convinced that the 70 instances of the term in the Gospel of John as well as the instances in the synoptic gospels (5 times in Matthew, 6 times in Mark and 5 times in Luke) could be translated as Judaean and not as Jew.
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