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## OLD INSCRIPTIONS ON 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TOMBS AND NEW TESTAMENT RELATIONS

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(Received 5 May 2007, revised 15 May 2007)

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### Abstract

Scholars in Science or in Theology are shocked about the connections revealed in ‘The Jesus Family Tomb’ documentary film, which points marital relations between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, unveiled in the canonical Gospels of New Testament. After 27 years of their discoveries, the ossuaries, with cryptically inscriptions and bones with DNA partial results, deconstruct the same major themes of Christianity: the resurrection and the ascension with his body of Jesus Christ. This paper makes a linguistic search on 3 tombs inscriptions, searching in epigraphy the scientific truth by linking the dates with biblical texts.

*Keywords:* inscriptions, ossuary, apocryphal writing, forgery, son, brother

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### 1. Archaeological discovery on Jerusalem underground

In 1980, a tomb was discovered in Talpiot, a southern suburb of Jerusalem, during the construction of an apartment complex. Archaeologists arrived at the scene, but not before children were found playing with skulls they had found inside. In accordance with the established archaeological protocol in Israel, a salvage excavation was undertaken, and the content of the tomb was removed. Specialists drew plans of the tomb, catalogued the human and artefact remains, stored the artefacts for later research, and then reburied the bones elsewhere. The excavation report, written by archaeologist Amos Kloner, was not published until 1996 [1]. In the excavation report, Kloner estimated that there were remains of about seventeen people found in the ten ossuaries, so some boxes were shared. He suggested that about eighteen others were interred in the tomb outside the ossuaries (conveniently not discussed by Jacobovici and Pellegrino) [2].

The tomb is typical for many other Palestinian Jewish tombs from the first century AD. It contains a square central room (about 8 x 8 feet) with an entrance on one side and two body-length burial niches cut perpendicularly into each of the three other sides. Horizontal benches are found in the main room on two of the sides. In Jesus day, the dead were wrapped in burial shrouds and placed on the benches or in the niches. Some were interred on the floor as well. Space considerations often led to the practice of secondary burials in ossuaries — stone boxes in which the bones were placed after the tissues had disintegrated, usually

in about a year. The ossuaries needed to be only as long as the longest bone in the body, and thus they allowed the space in the tomb to be used more efficiently. Many ossuaries eventually contained the bones of several people. On about 25% of the ossuaries, names were inscribed identifying the deceased.

Ten ossuaries were found in the tomb, yet only nine were placed in the storage facility of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The authors attempt to create a mystery over the absence of the tenth box and suggest that it was the one that is now owned privately and bears the inscription ‘James son of Joseph brother of Jesus’. That ossuary created sensation when it surfaced in 2002. Scientists have identified the James inscription as a modern forgery carved into an authentic ancient ossuary [3].

In a recent book were showed the profiles for the Jesus and Mariamene ossuaries from the tomb and also for the James ossuary [4]. Spectroscopic analyses revealed some discrepancies:

1. The James ossuary has a small copper peak that is completely missing in both Jesus and Mariamene ossuaries.
2. The silicon peak in the James ossuary is substantially lower than the silicon peak in the Jesus and Mariamene ossuaries.
3. The aluminium peak in the James ossuary appears to be quite a bit smaller than the aluminium peak in the Jesus and Mariamene ossuaries.

The archaeologists who excavated the tomb have stated that the tenth ossuary was plain, with neither decoration nor inscription, so it was not stored for research but placed with other plain boxes in the courtyard of Jerusalem’s Rockefeller Museum.

The inscriptions on the ossuaries found in the Talpiot Tomb are:

1. Ossuary 80/500: ‘Mariamene e Mara’ – ‘Mariamne, also called Master’;
2. Ossuary 80/501: ‘Yehuda bar Yeshua’ – ‘Judah, son of Jesus’;
3. Ossuary 80/502: ‘Matia’ – ‘Matthew’;
4. Ossuary 80/503: ‘Yeshua bar Yehosef’ – ‘Jesus, Son of Joseph’;
5. Ossuary 80/504: ‘Yose’ or ‘Yosa’ – a nickname for ‘Joseph’;
6. Ossuary 80/505: ‘Maria’ – a Latinized version of the Hebrew ‘Miriam’;
7. Ossuaries 80/506-508 were plain, with no inscriptions.

Of the ten ossuaries pulled from the niches of the burial chamber, inscriptions were recorded as occurring on six. No one knows anything really about Ossuary 80/509. It *disappeared* before it could be checked for inscriptions or ornamentation.

The fact that these names appear together is purely coincidental. The names of Joseph, Mary and Yeshua (Jesus) were common names of Jewish people living during the II Temple Period. Dr. Rahmani’s catalogue lists some 895 ossuaries. Of these, 19 contain the name Joseph, 20 have Mary and 11 Yeshua/Jesus in one form or another in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek or Latin.

According to early tradition, Joseph was buried in Nazareth [5, 6], possibly the ‘tomb of the saints’ on the property of the Sisters of Nazareth [7]. Early tradition also places Mary’s burial in Nazareth [6].

## **2. Yeshua bar Yehosef**

In those days, family members were normally buried in their hometowns. In Jesus' case, this would be Galilee, not Jerusalem. So if Jesus was not resurrected, we should be looking for his ossuary in Galilee. But if Jesus was resurrected, we might expect to hear of traditions of burial in Jerusalem where the Christian Church was centred. And that is what we find.

The traditional site of Jesus' tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre predates since the 4th century. Eusebius reported that a stone marked the burial spot of James, Jesus' brother, by the Temple Sanctuary in Jerusalem. The Talpiot tomb now being postulated is some distance away from where that spot would have been. According to tradition that goes back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, there are two possible sites for Mary's burial in Jerusalem, and the Talpiot tomb isn't one of them. It is also interesting to note that the traditional burial spots of Jesus, James and Mary were all in different locations.

In John 1.45 "Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the man whom Moses wrote about in his teachings and whom the prophets wrote about. He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from the city of Nazareth.'" Philip thought, not knowing he was born in Bethlehem. See also John 6.42.

Saint Joseph, also referred to as *Joseph the Betrothed* and as *Joseph of Nazareth*, was the legal father of Jesus, according to the New Testament (Matthew 1.16, Luke 3.23). Not much is known of Joseph except that he was 'of the House of David' and lived in the town of Nazareth. His date of death is unknown, though he was still living when Jesus was 12 years old. He is the patron saint of workers and has several feast days

He was betrothed to Mary at the time that Mary conceived Jesus. Saint Luke says that he lived at Nazareth in Galilee (Luke 2.4); however, according to Matthew, it was only after the return from Egypt that he settled in Nazareth (Matthew 2.23). He is called a 'just man'. He was by tradition a carpenter (Matthew 13.55). He is last mentioned in connection with the journey to Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve years old. It is probable that Joseph died before Jesus entered on his public ministry because only Mary was present at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, and he is not described at the crucifixion along with Mary (John 19.25). In addition Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus, a duty that would have fallen to Saint Joseph had he been alive.

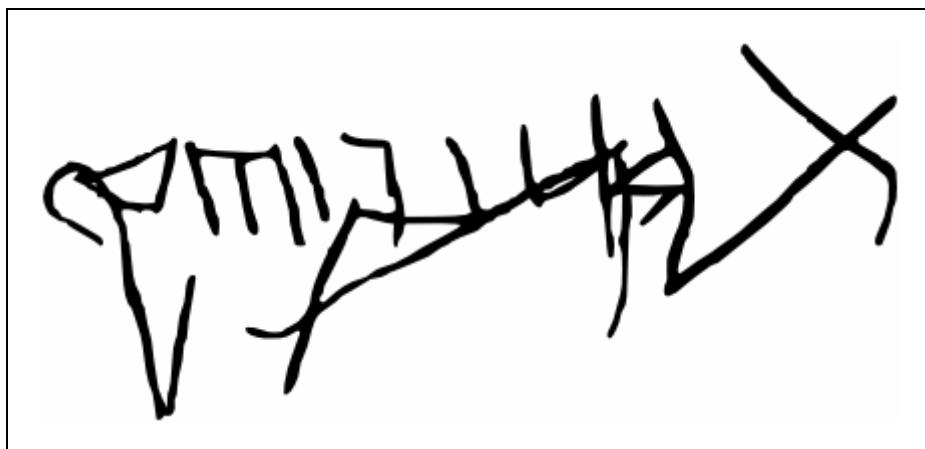
No early Christian would call Jesus the 'son of Joseph'. Fundamental to the Christian message from the beginning was the belief that Jesus was the son of God. For the sake of argument, even if Joseph was Jesus father, Jesus followers would not write that on his bone box, because it contradicted the story that they were telling publicly. For the same reason, early Christians would not put Jesus name on a bone box at all while they were announcing far and wide that his dead body had risen from the grave and ascended to heaven.

The Gospel accounts describe Jesus as having been laid to rest in a rock-cut tomb. Rock-cut tombs consisted of one or more burial chambers hewn into the bedrock slopes surrounding the city of Jerusalem. Burial chambers were lined by single rows of burial niches (called *loculi*), with each niche cut into the walls about the length of a person's body. Each rock-cut tomb belonged to a family and was used by the members of a family over the course of several generations [8]. When a member of the family died, his/her body was wrapped in a shroud and placed in a *loculus*. The opening to the *loculus* was sealed with a stone slab, and the entrance to the rock-cut tomb was also sealed with a stone. Eventually, over the course of generations, the *loculi* became filled with burials [9]. When this happened and it was necessary to make space for new burials, the earlier remains (consisting of bones and burial gifts) were cleared out of the *loculi* and placed in small boxes (ossuaries) [10]. Sometimes the relatives scribbled the name(s) of the deceased on the outside of the ossuary when they placed the remains in the box.

The Gospel accounts provide an accurate description of Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus' body in a *loculus* in his family's rock-cut tomb [11].

The New Testament reflects the culture of ancient Jerusalem by identifying Jews from elsewhere by their hometown. Thus we have Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15.43), Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27.32), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9.11), Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala; Matthew 27.56), and Jesus of Nazareth (John 19.19 and sixteen other passages). Rahmani points out that ossuary inscriptions follow this same practice, identifying non-Jerusalemites by their home of origin [12].

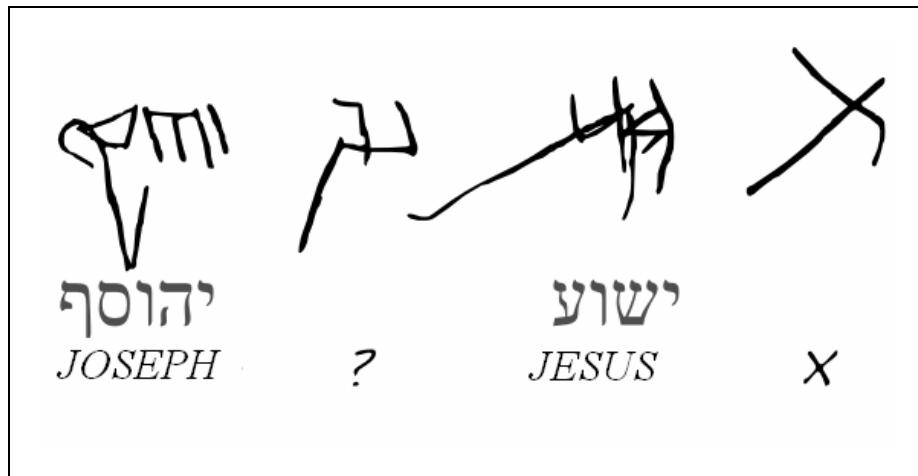
The inscription on the Yeshua ossuary presents problems. Some names inscribed on ancient ossuaries were written with a careful hand, but the Yeshua inscription is extraordinarily sloppy and chaotic, carelessly and thoughtlessly written amidst apparently random scratches (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Inscription on the ossuary 80/503.

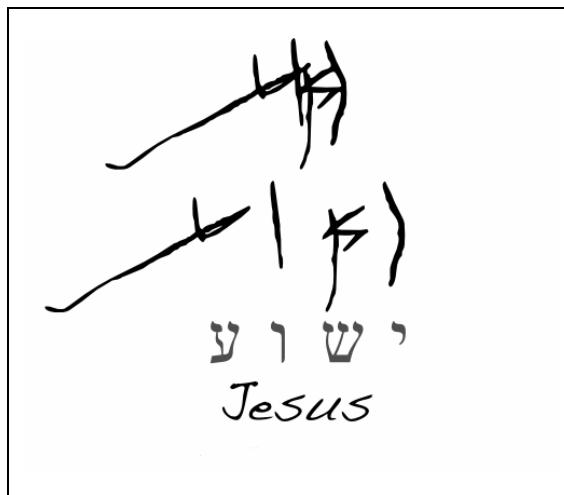
Rahmani's catalogue lists the ossuaries with the name 'Jesus', with the numbers 9, 63, 121, 140, and 704 [12]. The name 'Jesus' is found on the Ossuary 80/501 from the Talpiot tomb, which reads 'Judah, son of Jesus'. Therefore, there are at least four other ossuaries whose occupant was a 'Jesus'. When Rahmani read the inscription, he reconstructed the first and second letters, *y* and *s* (sh), as conjectures. He did so based on the fact that there was another Yeshua inscription in the same family tomb. From Rahmani's drawing, it appears that the letters of Yeshua (transliterated *yšw'*) are probably present, written in some cases partially on top of each other. But I do not rule out that later on-site examinations may suggest a different name.

Out of all of the inscriptions, the one attributed to Jesus is the most difficult to make out, and as a result the most difficult to interpret. Using the photographs released by the Israeli Antiquities Authority and double-checking my work with that of Rahmani, I was able to piece together a line drawing of the deepest lines carved into the ossuary. From that, mulled over the drawing for a full day, trying my best to visualize how the inscription was originally translated as "a cross preceding 'Jesus, son of Joseph'" and was able to break the inscription down into the following pieces (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Decoding Jesus son of Joseph inscription.

From my knowledge of the language and the particular script this phrase was written in, I could easily make out the 'cross' at the beginning (but more on that in a bit) and יְהוֹסֵף 'Yehosef' or 'Joseph' at the end. I honestly could see how בֶּן 'Bar' or "son (of)" was implied, but it was not at all clear or coherent. With ישׁׁׁעָ 'Yeshua' or "Jesus," however, I had a great amount of difficulty seeing, and only after picking things apart from my computer I was able to visualize how this initial reading was made (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Deconstruction of Jesus ossuary inscription.

In informal scripts from this period, the letters ו (waw) and י (yod) are notoriously difficult to tell apart. They are much easier to discern with the more formal scripts that were found on the ossuaries for Joseph, Judah and the authentic portion of James, but then again that is the point: those scripts are much more formal and the scribe/mason took the time to write them with serifs and proper proportions (which is no easy task). The ו (shin) is a textbook form, and the י ('ayin), given the long tail, appears to indicate the end of a word Figure 4).

However, there are still some unanswered questions. Given the angle and tilt of the strokes, the ‘cross’ shape at the beginning of the inscription looks more like an א (alef), which would mean that it would be part of the name. Furthermore, the downwards stroke of the י ('ayin) looks like it overlaps a stroke that is already there. This particular stroke, looks like it could also be interpreted as part of the stroke in front of it, forming a ד (dalet), the large swash to the lower left possibly a scratch or damage sustained after the carving.

Furthermore, the portion that is assumed to read בֶן Bar (son of) may, in fact, also be part of the name, but given how it is garbled I cannot make sense of it. Dr. Stephen Pfann has suggested an alternate hypothesis that the name reads as ‘Hanun’ or ‘Hanin’ [13]. Even with the ambiguities, given the prominence of the ו (shin), I cannot agree with his conclusion on that specific name (as no form of Hanun contains a shin); however, as I've mentioned earlier, I can readily see the first glyph that was ignored in the ‘Yeshua’ interpretation as an א (alef), which can open things up to other interpretations. As such, overall it is a very strong possibility that this inscription is not “Yeshua` bar Yehosef”. I only hope that others can use the multimedia I've generated for further analysis, and that the letter ambiguities (especially how the cross/alef can alter the translation) are put under further critical examination.



**Figure 4.** (a) Rahmani no. 140; (b) Rahmani no. 702 (also in Talpiot Tomb IAA-80/503).

### 3. Mariamēnou (ē) Mara

The book of Jacobovici and Pellegrino builds a great part of its claim on the argument that Mary Magdalene was buried in one of the ossuaries. Mary was the most common name among Palestinian Jewish women in Jesus days, a fact reflected in all the Mary's in the New Testament [14]. The name usually appeared in one of two forms: The Hebrew form *Maryam* (*Mariam* or *Mariamē* in Greek) or the Hebrew form *Marya* (*Maria* in Greek). Noting that one of the ossuaries bears the name *Marya*, they argue (apparently from Latin Christian tradition) that the mother of Jesus was always known as Maria, thus confirming that Jesus's mother was in the box bearing the name *Marya*. But in the Greek text of the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke always calls Jesus's mother *Mariam*, whereas the Gospel of Matthew calls her *Maria* in every case but one.

The Hebrew name *Mariam* was very popular among Palestinian Jews at this period, though hardly used at all in the diaspora. It could, of course, be simply written as *Mariam* in Greek characters (and this is the practice of the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, when referring to *Mariam* the sister of Moses, called *Miriam* in English Bibles). But we know only four cases in which this was done with reference to a living person of the early Jewish period. (One of these is Luke 10.39-42, referring to Mary the sister of Martha, though there is a variant reading *Maria*). Much more popular were the forms *Maria* (the form used everywhere in the New Testament, except Luke 10.39, 40, for all the various Maries it refers to) and *Mariamme/Mariame* (used, for example, by Josephus). Both give the name a more Greek form than the simple transliteration *Mariam*. Palestinian Jewish women who themselves used a Greek form of their name as well as a Semitic form (a common practice) would be likely to have used *Maria* or *Mariamme*. This accounts for the fact that the Greek form *Maria* is often found on ossuaries transliterated back into Hebrew characters as *Mariah*.

Drawing from fanciful biblical geography and late apocryphal texts (the Gospel of Mary and the Acts of Philip), the authors conclude that Mary Magdalene was an apostle, spoke Greek, and went by the name Mariamne. But in the Greek New Testament, she is called *Maria* ten times, *Mariam* three times, and never *Mariamne* [15]. In the excavation report, one of the ossuary inscriptions, the only one written in Greek, was read as ‘*Mariamēnou (ē) Mara*’, with the translation “of Mariamene, [also called] Mara.” [16] *Mara* (not related to the name Mary) was another common Jewish name in Jesus’s day, but Jacobovici and his team interpret it as the Aramaic word for ‘master’. Thus they have “Mariamene the Master.” They argue that the presence of the name Mariamene is evidence that it was Mary Magdalene in the box. And the presence of her ossuary in the Jesus family tomb is evidence that she and Jesus were married. The original epigrapher, L.Y. Rahmani, misread the inscription. It actually reads *Mariamē kai Mara* - “Mariame and Mara.” The first name is the original inscription, perhaps placed on the box when the remains of one Mariame were placed in it, although we have no way of knowing if she was the box’s first occupant.

In the Gospels Mary Magdalene’s name is always given in the Greek form *Maria*, which is the New Testament’s standard practice for rendering *Mariam* into Greek, except for Luke 10:39-42. As we have noted it is standard Greek form of *Mariam*. However, from probably the mid-second century onwards we find some references to Mary Magdalene (often identified with Mary of Bethany and/or other Gospel Maries) that use the alternative standard Greek form *Mariamme* (or *Mariame*). These references are all either in Gnostic works or in writers referring to Gnostic usage.

We find the form *Mariamme* in Celsus, the second-century pagan critic of Christianity, who lists Christian sectarian groups, including some who follow Mary (apo *Mariammes*). These may well be the group who used the Gospel of Mary (late 2nd century?), a Greek fragment of which calls Mary Magdalene *Mariamme*. This form of her name also appears in the Coptic (a translation from Greek) of the Gnostic Work the Sophia of Jesus Christ [CG III, 4]. The usage may have been more widespread in Gnostic literature, but the fact that we have most Gnostic works only in Coptic makes it hard to tell.

This tradition of using the form *Mariamme* for Mary Magdalene must have been an alternative tradition of rendering her name in Greek. It most likely goes back to a usage within the orbit of Jewish Palestine (since the name Mary in any form was very rare in the diasporas and Gentile Christians would not be familiar with the name *Mariamme* ordinarily). But so does the usage of *Maria* in the New Testament Gospels, at least one of which is at least a century earlier than any evidence we have for giving her the name *Mariamme*. It would be hazardous to suppose that *Mariamme* was the Greek form of her name used by Mary Magdalene herself or the earliest disciples of Jesus.

The Gnostic use of Mariamme is also reported by Hippolytus in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (written between 228 and 233). He says that the Naassenes claimed to have a secret teaching that James the brother of Jesus had transmitted to Mary [5.7.1; 10.9.3]. What is especially significant is that the manuscript evidence is divided between two forms of the name: Mariamme and Mariamne (note the ‘n’!). Since it occurs in Hippolytus as a variant of Mariamme, and since the latter is well attested in Jewish usage back to the first century CE, it seems clear that the form Mariamne is not really an independent version of the name Mariam (independent of Mariamme, that is). But a late deformation of the form Mariamme, a deformation made by Greek speakers not familiarised with the name. This must also then explain the usage in the apocryphal Acts of Philip (late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century), where Mariamne is consistently and frequently used for the sister of the apostle Philip, apparently identified with both Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany.



**Figure 5.** The IAA-80/500 tomb inscription ‘Mariamēnou (ē) Mara’ or ‘Mariamē kai Mara’ can be translated as ‘Mariamene, [also called] Mara’ or ‘Mariame and Mara’.

We can now turn to the inscription on the ossuary, which has, in Greek: MARIAMENOU MARA (Figure 5). The two words Mariamenou and Mara are written consecutively with no space between. This makes it rather unlikely that two women are named here. But Rahmani takes a small stroke between the last letter of Mariamenou and the first of Mara to be a Greek letter eta (long e). He takes this to be the relative pronoun he (eta with a rough breathing), reading: “Mariamnenou who [is also called] Mara.” There are parallels (I gather from Rahmani) to this abbreviated way of indicating two names for the same person. The form of the name on the ossuary in question is Mariamenou. This is a Greek genitive case, used to indicate that the ossuary belongs to Mary (it means ‘Mary’s’ or ‘belonging to Mary’). The nominative would be Mariamenon like a diminutive form. The neuter gender is normal in diminutives used for women. This diminutive, Mariamenon, would seem to have been formed from the name Mariamene, a name which is attested twice elsewhere (in the Babatha archive and in the Jewish catacombs at Beth She’arim). Mariamene is an unusual Greek

form of Mariam, presumably invented because it has a rather elegant Hellenised form.

We know that Mara was used as an abbreviated form of Martha; in this context of names on an ossuary it is much more plausible to read it as a name. This woman had two names: Mariamenon and Mara. It could be that the latter in this case was used as an abbreviation of Mariamenou, or it could be that the woman was known by Mariamenon, treated as a Greek name, and the Aramaic name Mara, conforming to the common practice of being known by two names, Greek and Semitic.

The Discovery Channel film proposes to read Mara as the Aramaic word ‘the master’ (as in 1 Corinthians 16.22 – ‘Maranatha’).

The most common Jewish symbol of the 1<sup>st</sup> century was the menorah candlestick. But along the centre of the Mary ossuary are not Jewish or early Christian symbols, but two sets of strange, vertical circles, in sets of three. The central thing to note about these circles is that they all contain a point within them. The point in a circle is a classic Gnostic symbol. This is what decorates the Mary ossuary. However, the circle standing by itself is perfectly consistent with the other symbols. The circle is also a Pythagorean emblem of sacred geometry and describes the unending nature of eternity. In its full form, it is a serpent eating its own tail. Called Ouroboros, it is also used, as the others, in esoteric Gnosticism. The chevron may merely be an architectural devise to highlight and protect the circle motif. These ossuaries are mysteriously devoid of anything related to early Christianity or even Judaism for that matter. Already in the later years of the first century one begins to find the formation of early symbolism being created by Christians. These symbols revolve around the anchor, the lamb, a figure holding a lamb, and eventually a fish. These can be more fully viewed by a cursory study of early catacomb art in Rome.

#### **4. Yaqov bar Yosef a khui d'Yeshua (James ossuary)**

There are three separate periods of ossuary use. The first ended with the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The second runs from 70 CE to 135 CE and is marked by the extension of ossuaries into the Galilee. The third period runs from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

The great majority of ossuaries for the first period (30/20 BCE - 70 CE) are decorated around the edges with the centre left clear [17]. Almost without exception, the inscriptions are just scratched into the boxes with anything handy - a nail, a piece of glass - and scrawled all over the box any which way by the relative(s) who collected the bones and deposited them in the boxes. Some are painted with ink and brush. There is one bone-box that the grieving family scratched the name on four or five times - on the side, on the top. People were not concerned with the placement of the ‘inscriptions’.

Biblical dictionary tells us that the name James, derived from Jacob is used 60 times in the New Testament for up to eight different people. The first three are generally not in dispute by scholars:

1. Jacob the patriarch for the Hebrew Bible,
2. Jacob the father of Joseph (husband of Mary, Matthew 1.16) and
3. James the son of Zebedee, brother of John the fisherman.

The remaining five are unclear, however:

4. James the son of Alphaeus (one of the Twelve),
5. James the less, son of Mary and Clophas,
6. James the brother of Joses/Joseph,
7. James, the father of Judas (one of the Twelve Luke 6.16), and finally
8. James the brother of Jesus.

Contrary to popular belief, it has been argued that James, the brother of Jesus, was the first bishop/leader of the Jerusalem Church. In order to evaluate and give credit to such a theory, one must examine the texts of the New Testament to be able to form one's own opinion on the subject. The first item to be discussed in answering this question will be the text of Acts, followed by Galatians, and finally I Corinthians (the letters of St. Paul). Acts 12.17 is the first time James is mentioned by the author. Leading up to this verse is the story of Peter being captured by Herod Agrippa in the late 30's CE and subsequently being set free by an angel/messenger of the Lord. Upon his release, Peter went to the house of Mary, mother of John, and instructed them that they should "Tell this to James and to the believers/brothers" (Acts 12.17). This is our first indication of the leadership role James has assumed in the early Jerusalem Church. Acts 15.13 is the second mentioning of James in the book of Acts. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas are addressing the council of Jerusalem on matters concerning their mission to the Gentiles. This dominant leadership position is clearly seen in Acts 15.13, 19. Acts 21.18 is the third occasion James is mentioned. In verse 18, Paul goes to see James and all the elders are present. It gives the impression that James, being the leader of the Jerusalem Church, was surrounded by the prominent figures essential to the movement. The three occasions James is mentioned in Acts relate a clear and vivid picture that James indeed held a dominant leadership position in the early Christian community.

Next, the discussion will investigate further evidence contained in Galatians and I Corinthians (the letters of St. Paul). Galatians 1.19 is the first of three verses to be examined in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Paul is on one of his visitations to Jerusalem, probably sometime before 36 CE, and is staying with Cephas/Peter for fifteen days. While he is there, Paul makes note that he "sees no other apostle except James the Lord's brother". James is being afforded the status of an apostle by Paul. One of the more important pieces of evidence contained in Galatians relating to James's leadership position comes from 2.9. Paul is on another visit to Jerusalem, this time to discuss his mission to the Gentiles so that the leaders may know he is not running in vain. One important note to make is that in 2.2, Paul says, "then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders)..." Later, in 2.9 he says, "...and

when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars...they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship". Two key points are exhibited in this passage. Firstly, the reference Paul makes to James as being one of the acknowledged pillars, naming him first no less, of the Jerusalem Church. Galatians 2.12 is the last verse in Galatians dealing directly with the authority of James. Paul confronts Peter because he is being hypocritical in his ways. While with the Gentiles, Peter does not keep a strict observance of Judaism, but when "certain people came from James", he drew back. At this point in the story there exist two separate missions of the Church. On the one hand, James is the leader and head of the circumcision branch and Paul is the leading advocate of the uncircumcision mission. James has authority, as the head of the movement, to send messengers/people to check on Peter and Paul in their mission to the Gentiles. It is one of his administrative duties to check on the progress of his missionaries and see that the message is spread accordingly.

Finally, the focus will shift to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. I Corinthians 15.7 is a verse not specifically showing the leadership position James held, but rather showing the significant relationship to Jesus that lead to his acquisition of such a leading role in the Jerusalem Church. Jesus made personal appearances to three key individuals in Peter, James, and Paul. For Jesus to make a personal appearance to someone, they must have held some type of important position in his life. See also Eusebius, *Historian Ecclesiae*, Book 1, Chapter 12 (1.12) (available on [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)); next reference to Yaqov emerges in Book 2, Chapter 1 (2.1.2-5) of The History of the Church. Eusebius asserts James was the first bishop of Jerusalem and was so appointed at/after the martyrdom of Stephen (2.2.1). The last reference to James in The History of the Church comes in Book 7, Chapter 19 (7.19.1). Here lies a discussion about the throne of James. The passage continues to state James was the first to receive the episcopacy of the Jerusalem Church from the Saviour and His apostles.

There is nothing to suggest he converted following the resurrection of his brother. It is however more logical to suggest he was a close follower of the movement and shared the ideals of Jesus. A clear portrait of the authority and dominant leadership position of James in the early Christian community is painted when one turns an investigative eye towards the works of the New Testament.

When the Nag Hammadi texts were discovered on the eastern side of the Nile in 1946, there came to light many references to James and helped reinforce some of the traditions we have come to know before their discovery. Each of the texts is from a time when Gnosticism was flourishing 150-350 C.E.

The major texts from the Nag Hammadi library under study are *The Apocryphon of James* ('Secret book of James'), *The First Apocalypse of James*, *The Second Apocalypse*, and *The Gospel of Thomas* (Gospel of Judas). *The Apocryphon of James* is an account of James and Peter receiving knowledge, but stressing James is on a higher level. It has been argued that this text could be referring to James the fisherman, but such an argument is flawed. The fisherman is dead in 41 C.E. and we have no parallel sources to corroborate such a claim.

We do have extra sources that would corroborate such a story of the brother of Jesus - James the Just.

*The Apocryphon* reinforcing the notion that James is even higher than the group and Peter in that he receives two secret books. *The Apocryphon* attempts to insert James into Peter's place when discussing conversations between Jesus and himself. An example of this is when James tells the Lord "we have forsaken our fathers and our mothers and our villages and followed you". It is very similar to what we would find in Mark 10.28. Another example is where Jesus is telling the guys to remember his cross and his death, James (not Peter) comes up and says "Lord, do not mention to us the cross and death, for they are far from you." We can see a correlation in Matthew 16.22.

*The First Apocalypse* of James is dated as having been written at the beginning of the third century. It contains a set of dialogues between the Lord and James before the passion (Tuesday) and after the resurrection, plus his own death is foretold. With the first dialogue, Jesus is speaking with James and calls him my brother. He goes on further to say "For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother materially." This is a reflection of the values and belief of the author. He is showing he does not believe James is a true, 'material' brother of the Lord. We can date this conversation as being before the passion because Jesus says "For they will seize me the day after tomorrow." Twice in the material, Jesus embraces and kisses his brother. It is not so much a point for James as it is for stressing the risen Lord is not a spirit because a spirit has no flesh and bones to embrace and kiss.

*The Second Apocalypse* of James is an extension of the first apocalypse, picking up at the point where the first left off. Why are there two apocalypses? By having two, it increases the weight of James being revered as a central figure in the early Jerusalem Church. Here exists the discourse that James the Just spoke in Jerusalem. Two major themes emerge through the reading of this text, one is the emphasis of James's relationship to Jesus and the other is James as a Messiah-like individual. While James is speaking to the crowd, he is reminded of a time when Jesus came while James was deliberating. Jesus called to James, saying "hail, my brother; my brother hail". James raises his face and noticing a sign of uneasiness on his face, tells James not to be frightened because Jesus called you brother. It continues to declare they both were "nourished with the same milk". Finally, it tells James Jesus is not a stranger to us, but instead he is your stepbrother. As with the first apocalypse, the author is reflecting his own beliefs through the writing - calling James and Jesus stepbrothers instead of brothers. Later in the text, Jesus kisses James and calls him "my beloved!"

The texts sustain the idea of James as a Messiah-like individual. He is giving a discourse to crowds in Jerusalem, striving to teach this mindless generation the path to righteousness. He communicates the knowledge passed to him by Jesus, telling them of the things Jesus had told him. James was told that he was an "illuminator and a redeemer of those who are mine" and then of he will be taken and judged just as Jesus before him had been.

*The Gospel of Thomas* (Judas) makes reference to James in logion 12. It reads as follows: “The disciples said to Jesus, ‘We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?’ Jesus said to them, ‘No matter where you are you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.’” Presented here is a signal to the reader. We are to understand that James was chosen by Jesus himself before the passion.

Eusebius makes certain, his audience understands James dies by the hands of the wicked, but the manner in which he is killed vary somewhat. Josephus' account of the martyrdom records James being stoned to death. Hegesippus also has James being stoned by the crowd but adds one blow of the fullers club to finish him off. Clement records James as being hit repeatedly about the head area with a fullers club. Last but not least, in The Second Apocalypse of James account, the crowd seizes and strikes James, they place a rock on his abdomen, and since he was still alive, made him dig a hole and bury himself up to his waistline. Then they commence to stone him to death while he is helpless and cannot move.

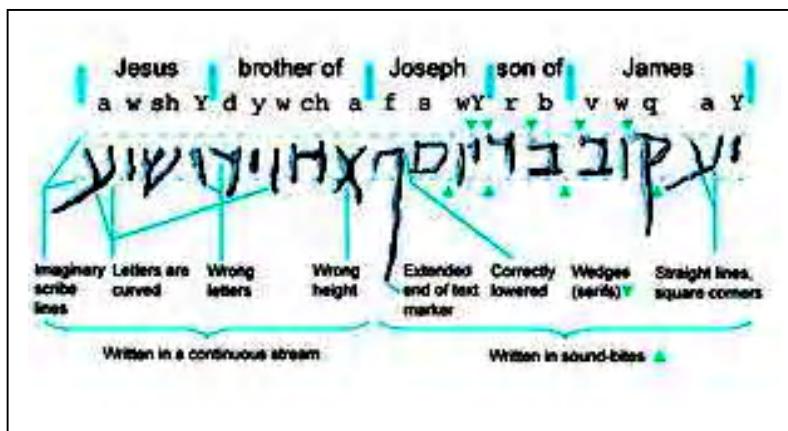


Figure 6. Graphologist analysis on James inscription.

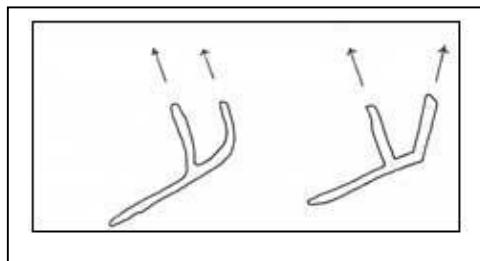
The box is custom-made. It is 20 inches in length; the shape is a trapezoid: 10 inches in width at one end and 12 inches at the other. The shape is not convenient for either stacking or side-by-side storage. Its dimensions suggest that the box was intended for one-person storage only. The trapezoidal shape would reduce the amount of room. As the bones were arranged in a specific order, the skull would have been at the 12 inches end. The leg bones are long and the angle would reduce the amount of space. The inscription on the James ossuary is placed to the right hand side of the box [18].

The combination of the original eleven letter inscription and the nine letter forged addition make a twenty letter phrase supposedly reading (in King James English) “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” (Figure 6). If it could be authenticated in its entirety, the impact of such a find would be spectacular. The discovery of a genuine first century written reference to Jesus of Nazareth and

two other New Testament personalities would be of unprecedented significance in evaluating the historicity of Christian origins [19]. But upon close physical examination, or even from the excellent photographs which appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review* [20], two things are evident:

1. The pointed instrument that scratched the last nine Aramaic letters onto the ossuary was not the tool that carved the first eleven, and
2. The hands that formed the letters identified as *ahui d'Yeshua* or “brother of Jesus” were not the same ancient hands that carefully engraved *Yaqov bar Yosef*.

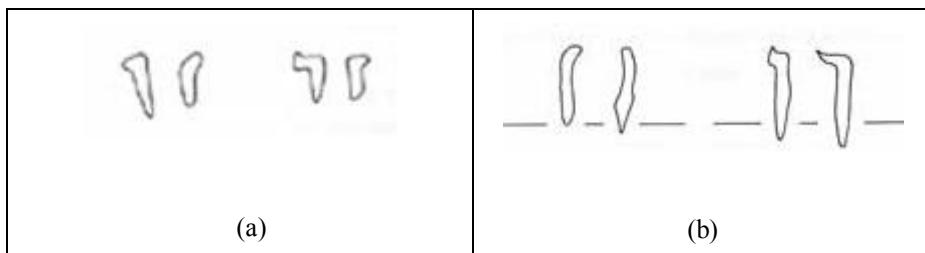
Part two, Brother of Yeshua, could not be more different. The script is a poorly-executed, mostly commercial cursive without any sign of wedges. Mostly, commercial cursive is correct; the  $\aleph$  (aleph) and  $\beth$  (he) are both archaic forms. In Paleo-Hebraic the het ( $\beth$ ) was ‘eared’. In cursive square script, the het ( $\beth$ ) retained its ‘ears’ until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and then disappeared from standard use [12]. The third questionable graph is the one referred to as an ‘angular dalet’ ( $\daleth$ ). The shape of this graph is exactly that of an archaic 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE Greek cursive upsilon. At no point did a dalet ( $\daleth$ ), whether in cursive Paleo-Hebraic or cursive square, not have a ‘cup’ at the top [21].



**Figure 7.** Two different *Ayn* in James inscription.

The ayin ( $\aleph$ ) in the second part is completely different from the ayin ( $\aleph$ ) in the first part (Figure 7). When we compare the two yod ( $\beth$ ) graphs in the first part with the yods ( $\beth$ ) in the second part, we immediately can see that this is a different person writing. One yod ( $\beth$ ) is distorted by a slip on the part of the carver and has no sign of a wedge. In each case, the ancient engraver made the second occurrence of these letters look similar to the first. The yod that is the first letter of the name Yaqov (far right in Figure 8a) is same size as the yod that is the first letter of the name Yosef (second from right in Figure 8a). Though the down strokes of both yods are perfectly vertical, the two letters are only half the vertical height of other letters in the name phrase, and there is a visible attempt at a serif at the top of each. By comparison, the *yods* in the “brother of Jesus” addition are quite dissimilar.

The *yod* of *Yeshua* (far left in Figure 8a), while handsomely created, is acutely diagonal rather than vertical, and extends well below the halfway point at which the *yods* of *Yaqov* and *Yosef* end. The *yod* (second from left – Figure 8a) in the word Lemaire identifies as “*ahui*” or “brother of” is also somewhat longer than the *yods* of *Yaqov bar Yosef*, shows no attempt at a serif, and is indeed as different from the *yod* of *Yeshua* as it is from the *yods* of both *Yaqov* and *Yosef*. In a short inscription of only twenty letters, for there to be no continuity of shape between the *yods* of the first part of the inscription and the *yods* of the second part of the inscription must be regarded with suspicion.



**Figure 8.** Graphical variety in James inscription on: yod (a); vav (b).

Consider also the four *vavs* of the inscription. The *vav* that serves as the ‘o’ of *Yaqov* (far right in Figure 8b) and the *vav* that serves as the ‘o’ of *Yosef* (second from right) are both perfectly vertical, with serifs at their tops, and both extend slightly below the baseline of other letters in the phrase. By contrast, the *vavs* of “*ahui*” and *Yeshua* are notably different.

The shin (*w*) in the second part is wedgeless, does not belong to this script design, and certainly does not belong to the formal design of the first part. In the script design of the first part, the shin (*w*) would have a small wedge on each arm, and both the left-hand and central strokes of the shin would be curved. The carving on the second part was executed by a competent, but not expert carver.

The person who wrote the second part may have been literate, but it is doubtful that he was literate in Aramaic or Hebrew scripts. The script of the second part is a conglomeration of unrelated graphs from across the centuries and not a coherent script design. This peculiar diversity suggests that the writer chose graphs from examples on other ossuaries and/or documents stored in a tomb-cave or other dug-out family ‘mausoleum’. (Ossuaries in Greek-Hebrew and Greek-Aramaic have been found. Perhaps the questionable upsilon/dalet is the result of imitating the inscription on one of these dual language ossuaries.)

The ossuary is made of chalk of the Mt. Scopus Group, which is widespread in Jerusalem and over large areas of the country (Figure 9). This is the rock type from which Second Temple period ossuaries were hewn [22]. On the front (the side bearing the rosettes) and the lower back (the side of the inscription) we found signs of erosion in the form of small craters, probably as the result of water activity. The outer surface is covered almost entirely with a

thin film of brown-ochre matter, presumably ‘rock varnish’ caused by biological activity of bacteria or algae. On various areas of the front (including on the rosettes), the sides and the back, the varnish is covered by calcitic patina. This indicates a process of slow and continuous crystallization.



**Figure 9.** Original stone with inscription on James ossuary.

The patina is hard (scratched by scalpel) and adheres strongly to the rock surface. Only in the inscription area on this ossuary does an additional greyish coating material appear. It was not found on any other ossuary examined by us in the Israel National Collections in the Rockefeller Museum storerooms. The original silicate patina exists on the reverse side of the tablet, hard and firmly attached to the stone. The engraved letters did not appear to have undergone any corrosive process as would be expected from an ancient inscription.

The inscription coating has a different composition than that of the patina on the back of the stone, and appears to be an artificial mixture of clay, crumbled chalk, carbon, and microscopic granules of inert metal. It appears that this mixture was dissolved in hot water before being spread on the inscribed side, after which the stone was heated to a temperature of no higher than 400°C in order to harden the new coating and give it the appearance of patina. The inscription coating is very soft (can be easily removed with a toothpick), it is sometimes gritty but generally homogeneous and usually fills the low areas of the inscription and around it. The inscription, throughout its entire length is etched into the varnish.

The sediment inside the ossuary is brown soil, enriched by approximately 50% microscopic bone particles. The reason for this phenomenon is yet undetermined [23].

## 5. Conclusions

At first glance these three names have a striking similarity to the names of people from the New Testament. In order for interpretation of this evidence to be true we must assume three things about the occupants of the tomb.

1. We must assume that Mariamne is Mary Magdalene. The statistical case for the Talpiot tomb being Jesus' family tomb almost totally hinges on this assumption. The evidence to support this assumption is a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Gnostic text entitled 'The Acts of Philip'. But is absolutely no chance that the Mariamne in the Talpiot tomb is Mary Magdalene.
2. We must also assume that Jesus of Nazareth was married to Mariamne and together they had a son named Judah. Again there are no credible 1<sup>st</sup> century documents that support this assumption. This assumption is more akin to the da Vinci Code than sound historical and archaeological scholarship. "Maraimne e Mara" not means Mary the Master. The only way they could make this claim is if they mix languages. „Mara” means „master” in Aramaic, but the ossuary inscription is written in Greek.
3. We have to assume that the James ossuary originated from this tomb even though there is no solid evidence that links it to this site. This is critical because if this tomb is Jesus' family tomb, then three of Jesus' brothers are inexplicably missing from this site. They are James, Judas and Simon.
4. The ossuary is authentic, based on its typology and patination. The accumulation of rock varnish is considered a very lengthy process. It appears that the deposition of the patina was also considerably prolonged. The inscription was engraved (or at least, completely cleaned) in modern times. The inscription coating is not natural. It was made by grinding and dissolving chalk in hot water (possibly the powder resulting from the newly carved inscription), and spilling the paste onto the inscription and surrounding area, in order to blur the freshly engraved signs.

That Jesus was buried with his 'father' (also no references to Joseph after Jesus in the temple at approximately 12) and brothers (let alone wife and kid), it is ridiculous.

In fact, the ancestral home of Joseph was Bethlehem, and his adult home was Nazareth, and assuming he died years before Christ, it doesn't make sense that Joseph would be buried in Jerusalem. Why would he have a tomb there? Jesus was buried alone in a tomb outside Jerusalem but all accounts historical and eyewitnesses report the tomb being empty.

There are a few hundred ossuaries with inscribed names; there is in fact another ossuary with the inscription "Jesus son of Joseph". Apparently this was not at all a rare combination of names, and in any case, as I have said Jesus of Nazareth is never called "son of Joseph" by his family, or by his disciples. Notice how Luke pours cold water on that theory in Luke 3.21 – "Now Jesus himself was about 30 when he began his ministry, he was the son, so it was supposed/thought, of Joseph". Supposed by whom? Clearly not by Luke or the family whom Luke has just shown knew about the virginal conception of Jesus.

Even the cousins knew about this miracle when Mary told Elizabeth. There can be no good reason Luke would put it this way if he knew the earliest followers of Jesus or members of his family had thought that Jesus was son of Joseph. No doubt, if the inscription is a fake, we must carefully examine all the new discoveries on tombs ossuaries. Perhaps the statistical and medical test of bones will reveal the age of persons not their identity or acts. Here we need the dialogue between Science and Theology.

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