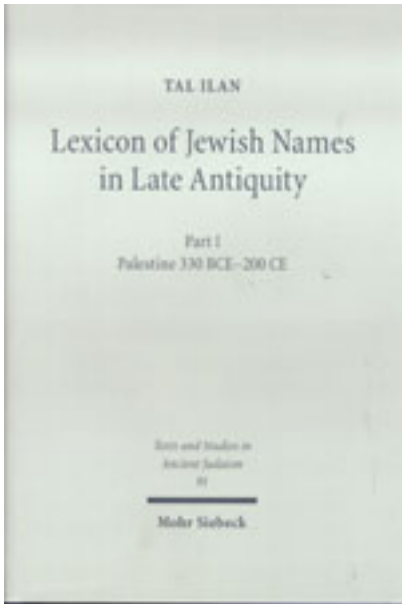


RBL 01/2005



**Ilan, Tal**

***Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I:  
Palestine 330 BCE–200CE***

Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 91

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002. Pp. xxvi + 484.  
Hardcover. EUR 159.00. ISBN 3161476168.

Rivka B. Kern-Ulmer  
Bucknell University  
Lewisburg, PA 17837

*Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* is a more than welcome reference tool for the scholar of ancient Judaism and a superb addition to the literature on Judaism in the crucial period of its formation. The real scope of this lexicon becomes evident when the reader is informed that it took twenty years to collect the data; this shows not only the extensive nature of any such a project but also the enormous size of available primary sources related to Judaism in late antiquity. This lexicon replaces other onomastica or shorter collections, such as the names of women as synagogue leaders, as well as the scattered information in Zunz's nineteenth-century work on Jewish names and the slim pickings in articles, dictionaries, and notes, which we, the scholars of ancient Judaism, have relied upon for so many years. The book under review is designated as volume 1; however, only by reading through the personalized *Entstehungsgeschichte* or elaborate "birth narrative" of the book, from a seminar paper to the present volume, are we informed that the second volume is a desideratum.

In her lexicon of Jewish names, definitions of Jewishness are painstakingly avoided by Ilan; the author takes the more inclusive approach of listing the names of those people that have some Jewish background, function, or identity, including non-halakic Jews. Ilan thus avoids the pitfalls of uncertain backgrounds or patronyms. Useful statistics provide

information about the occurrences of names in different languages as well as the division of the population according to languages. We gather from these tables the surprising fact that Greek and Semitic-Hebrew names have similar scores, which is another piece of evidence that emphasizes the profound influence of Greco-Roman culture upon Judaism. Additionally, the data collected by Ilan point to the rich and extremely diverse cultural identification of the Jewish population in the Land of Israel at this time period. The sources utilized to compile the lexicon and the statistical data are impressive: the author searched apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Greek and Roman historians, as well as rabbinic sources and inscriptional evidence found in the rich material cultural artifacts from this time period. The names are in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Coptic, Persian, and several other languages; for example, Ilan refers to the possible Egyptian origins of several names, such as “Ani” (361–62) and “Totefet” (385). The names are systematically categorized as either male or female, as biblical or relating to the above-mentioned linguistic and cultural groups. Rarely do we encounter names that are used for males and females, as for example the Persian name “Pazatas” refers either to the daughter of R. Hiyya or to an Amora. Similarly, a name could change its gender specification from a Persian male name to a Semitic name of a queen, Sadain.

If we focus upon a familiar Hebrew name, Jacob, we find forty-five different males with this name who made it into Hebrew literature or inscriptions, such as on an ostrakon from Masada. The eighty-nine footnotes to these forty-five people named Jacob include several short discussions of agreements or disagreements with other scholars. There are eighty women with the name Mariam, among them Maria, as found in the New Testament. We gather from this massive evidence that Mariam was a popular female name under the Hasmoneans. In the Latin category of names, the Roman general Antonius, who ruled over Palestine from Egypt (40–30 B.C.E.), is referred to by the English form of the name, Anthony (327). Common biblical names utilized in the period of 330 B.C.E.–200 C.E. include Ishmael (177–78), which is surprising, because, as the author notes, the rejected firstborn son of the biblical Abraham would have been an unlikely role model for naming children. Nevertheless, there are thirty-one individuals named Ishmael. Tal Ilan also differentiates between names and nicknames, for example in reference to such names as “Kushi” and “Dwarf.” Among the rare names mentioned in this lexicon we may refer to Holiqopri; there is only one person with this name in the corpus of texts investigated by Ilan. Mishnah *Makš.* 1:3 reads: “If one shook a tree and it fell on another tree, or a branch and it fell on another branch, and there were seeds under them or vegetables connected to the ground, the School of Shammai said: This falls under the law of ‘if water be put [upon the seed],’ but the School of Hillel said: It does not fall under that law ‘if water be put [upon the seed].’ R. Joshua said in the name of Abba Jose Holiqofri, a resident of Tivon. . . .” The name Holiqopri remains somewhat of a mystery. Ilan has to rely upon

the information contained in the dictionaries, which relates this name to Cyprus; additional information could not be found in spite of the daunting task she undertook. Another singular name that we find in the lists compiled by Ilan is Likhluhit, which is found in the Babylonian Talmud, *Ned.* 66b. Ilan writes: “This name is invented only for the purpose of the story in which she appears and explains itself” (422). This name means “repulsive” and “thick nauseating substance,” or, in the extreme, it could imply “being soiled.” The talmudic passage gives the following explanation: “She is fittingly called Likhluhit, since she is repulsive through her defects.” This name and the woman connected to it—the perpetual underdog, victimized female—have somewhat of an afterlife in the haggadah (see the collection of classical Jewish folktales by M. J. Gorion), the Brother Grimm’s fairy tales, and the Walt Disney character Cinderella.

The lexicon has an indispensable orthographical index of names that contains variant spellings for some of the names that previously led to confusion. Ilan presents the reader with a clear, systematic approach to the sources and the categorizations of the Jewish names that she established. Reading the entries under each name has a certain entertainment value, because the author provides rich and varied information about the names and about the people who were given these names. Most of the name bearers were real people, although some names are fictitious, due to the fact that they were inventions of the authors, especially the names in the Christian apocrypha. Some tighter editing of the English passages would have benefited this book. Above all, this book will replace the other available onomastica; it is an indispensable tool that enlightens the researcher in respect to Jewish names in the Land of Israel during the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. The *Lexicon of Jewish Names* belongs in every Judaic research library.