

## Did The Jews of 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel speak Greek or Aramaic ?

כתבא דכתיב לעל מנה יונאית ורהומאית ועבראית הנו מלכא דיהודיא  
אית הוא דין אף Lu 23:38

Lu 23:38 (MUR) And there was likewise a superscription over him, written in **Greek**, and **Latin**, and **Hebrew**: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Lu 23:38 (BYZ) ην δε και επιγραφη γεγραμμενη επ αυτω γραμμασιν  
**ελληνικοις** και **ρωμαιοις** και **εβραιοις** ουτος εστιν ο βασιλευς  
των ιουδαιων

Lu 23:38 (WH) ην δε και επιγραφη επ αυτω ο βασιλευς των ιουδαιων  
ουτος

Lu 23:38 (TR) ην δε και επιγραφη γεγραμμενη επ αυτω γραμμασιν  
ελληνικοις και ρωμαιοις και εβραιοις ουτος εστιν ο βασιλευς  
των ιουδαιων

Lu 23:38 (ASV) And there was also a superscription over him, THIS IS THE  
KING OF THE JEWS.

ועאל הוא עמהון ונפק באורשלים 28 (Peshitta)

28 (MUR) And he went in and out with them, at Jerusalem.

28 (BYZ) και ην μετ αυτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εις  
ιερουσαλημ και παρρησιαζομενος εν τω ονοματι του κυριου  
ιησου

28 (WH) και ην μετ αυτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εις  
ιερουσαλημ παρρησιαζομενος εν τω ονοματι του κυριου

28 (TR) και ην μετ αυτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εν  
ιερουσαλημ

28 (ASV) And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem,

הוא עם יהודיא אילין דידעין הוו יונאית הנון דין צבין הוו למקטלה  
וממלל הוא בשמה דישוע עין בגלא ודרש 29 (Peshitta)

29 (MUR) And he spoke openly in the name of Jesus and disputed with **those  
Jews who understood Greek**. But they wished to kill him:

- 29 (BYZ) ελαλει τε και συνεζητει προς τους ελληνιστας οι δε επεχειρουν αυτον ανελειν
- 29 (WH) ελαλει τε και συνεζητει προς τους ελληνιστας οι δε επεχειρουν ανελειν αυτον
- 29 (TR) και παρρησιαζομενος εν τω ονοματι του κυριου ιησου (:#:#) ελαλει τε και συνεζητει προς τους ελληνιστας οι δε επεχειρουν αυτον ανελειν
- 29 (ASV) preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against [the Grecian Jews](#); but they were seeking to kill him.

**Apparently from this and Acts 21:37, we may conclude that Paul the Apostle spoke Greek fluently. Hellenists, like Philo, did not speak Aramaic or Hebrew, hence, Paul would have singled them out as a group, since he knew the language.**

[Thayer's Greek –English Lexicon](#) has for [ελληνιστης](#) (“Hellenist”):  
1675 [ελληνιστης](#) Hellenistes *hel-lay-nis-tace'*

from a derivative of [1672](#); TDNT-2:504,227; n m

AV-Grecians 3; 3

1) a Hellenist

1a) one who imitates the manners and customs or the worship of the Greeks, and uses the Greek tongue

1b) used in the NT of Jews born in foreign lands and speaking Greek

**So the Greek NT refers to some Hellenists in Jerusalem who had come from other countries speaking Greek. This is a far cry from the claim that all Jews in Israel were Hellenists ! Many, however, would have us believe just that claim!**

לכלירכא אן מפס אנת לי אמלל עמך הו דין אמר לה [יונאית](#) ידע אנת  
וכד מטי למעל למשריתא הו פולוס אמר Ac 21:37

Ac 21:37 (MUR) And when he came near to entering the castle, Paul said to the Chiliarch: Wilt thou permit me to speak with thee? And he said to him: Dost thou know Greek?

Ac 21:37 (BYZ) μελλων τε εισαγεσθαι εις την παρεμβολην ο παυλος λεγει τω χιλιαρχω ει εξεστιν μοι ειπειν προς σε ο δε εφη [ελληνιστι](#) γινωσκεις

Ac 21:37 (WH) μελλων τε εισαγεσθαι εις την παρεμβολην ο παυλος λεγει τω χιλιαρχω ει εξεστιν μοι ειπειν τι προς σε ο δε εφη **ελληνιστι** γινωσκεις

Ac 21:37 (TR) μελλων τε εισαγεσθαι εις την παρεμβολην ο παυλος λεγει τω χιλιαρχω ει εξεστιν μοι ειπειν τι προς σε ο δε εφη **ελληνιστι** γινωσκεις

Ac 21:37 (ASV) And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know **Greek**?

### **And now, let's zero in on the central question: What language did the Jews of first century Israel speak ?**

Ac 1:19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, **Acelandama**, that is to say, The field of blood.

קרייתא הי בלשנה דאתרא חקל דמא דאיתוהי תורגמה קורית דם ויהי הדא אטידעת לכלהון דעמרין באורשלים והכנא אתקריית (Peshitta) Ac 1:19

Ac 1:19 (BYZ) και γνωστον εγενετο πασιν τοις κατοικουσιν ιερουσαλημ ωστε κληθηναι το χωριον εκεινο τη ιδια διαλεκτω αυτων **ακελδαμα** τουτ εστιν χωριον αιματος

Ac 1:19 (WH) και γνωστον εγενετο πασιν τοις κατοικουσιν ιερουσαλημ ωστε κληθηναι το χωριον εκεινο τη διαλεκτω αυτων ακελδαμαχ τουτ εστιν χωριον αιματος

Ac 1:19 (ASV) And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch that **in their language** that field was called Akeldama, that is, The field of blood.)

184 **Ακελδαμα** Akeldama *ak-el-dam-ah'*

of **Aramaic origin**, corresponding to 02506 and 01818 דמא חקל; ; n pr loc

AV-Acelandama 1; 1

Acelandama = " Field of Blood"

1) a field purchased with Judas's betrayal money, located near Jerusalem

**The answer is to the question at the heading is, “Yes”.**  
**Seriously, there were some Greek speaking Jews in Jerusalem.**  
**The Greek NT refers to them as ελληνισται -“Hellenists”. Acts 1:19 in the Greek makes plain however that the language of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was Aramaic.**  
**The fact that the NT points out there were Greek speaking Jews actually confirms that most of the Jews did not speak Greek. It was pointed out that there were some who did because they were the exception, and as we have all heard, “The exception proves the rule.”**  
**Acts 1:19 settles the matter of the language of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews in Palestine .**

Ac 21:40 επιτρεψαντος δε αυτου ο παυλος εστωσ επι των αναβαθμων κατεσεισεν τη χειρι τω λαω πολλης δε σιγης γενομενης προσεφωνει τη **εβραιδι διαλεκτω** λεγων

Ac 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto [them] **in the Hebrew tongue**, saying, דרגא ואזיע הוא להון אידה וכד בהלו מלל עמהון **עבראית** ואמר להון **ל** וכד אפס לה קם פולוס על Ac 21:40

Ac 22:2 ακουσαντες δε οτι τη **εβραιδι διαλεκτω** προσεφωνει αυτοις μαλλον παρεσχον ησυχιαν και φησιν

Ac 22:2 (And when they heard that he spake in **the Hebrew tongue** to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) וכד שמעו דעבראית ממלל הוא עמהון יתיראית בהלו ואמר להון Ac 22:2

Ac 26:14 παντων δε καταπεσοντων ημων εις την γην ηκουσα φωνην λαλουσαν προς με και λεγουσαν τη **εβραιδι διαλεκτω** σαουλ σαουλ τι με διωκεις σκληρον σοι προς κεντρα λακτιζειν

Ac 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in **the Hebrew tongue**, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

לי עבראית שאול שאול מנא רדף אנת לי קשא הו לך למבעטו לעוקסא ונפלן כלן על ארעא ושמעת קלא כד אמר Ac 26:14

[Thayers NT Greek Lexicon](#) has the following entry for ἑβραϊς (translated “Hebrew”):

1446 ἑβραϊς Hebrais *heb-rah-is*’

from [1443](#); TDNT-3:356,372; n f

AV-Hebrew 3; 3

- 1) Hebrew, the Hebrew language, not that however in which the OT was written but [the Chaldee](#) , which at the time of Jesus and the apostles had long superseded it in Palestine .

**“Chaldee” is Aramaic !**

**The last three references in Acts show that Paul understood Aramaic and that [our Lord in Heaven spoke Aramaic](#) to Paul, most likely because it was the tongue common to both of them as Palestinian Jews.**

**Naturally, this signifies the God-breathed language of The New Covenant to be Aramaic ! Please find a reference to Deity speaking Greek and we shall all listen reverently at your feet.**

**So we have seen at least six references in [The Greek New Testament](#) that testify that the Jews of first century Jerusalem spoke Aramaic as their proper language and that a relative few , called Hellenists, spoke Greek.**

Josephus , born A.D. 37, confirms this in his works also, having written them in Aramaic and having them translated into Greek. He specifically addressed the issue of Jews speaking Greek in the negative, saying that he himself, who had studied Greek, was neither fluent in it nor able to converse in Greek. He also said he knew of only two or three Jews who were fluent in Greek.

Another bit of interesting evidence:

## John 1:42

(Jesus) וְהָרָא (to) יֵשׁוּעַ (Jesus) וְהָרָא (& gazed)  
וְאֵתָהּ  
(Jesus) וְאָמַר (& He said) אַתָּה (you) הוּא (are) שִׁמְעוֹן (Simeon)  
בְּהַ (at him) יֵשׁוּעַ  
(son of) אַתָּה (you) תִּתְקַרָּא (shall be called) כַּפָּא (Kapha)  
(Jonah) בְּרֵהֲדֵיּוֹנָא

And he brought him to Jesus and Jesus gazed at him and He said: “You are Simeon, Son of Jonah; You shall be called Kapha” (“a Stone”).

\* שִׁמְעוֹן - “Simeon” occurs 165 times in the Peshitta NT. The Greek equivalents “Σίμων” & “Σιμεων” (“Simon” & “Simeon”) occur only 82 times ! Often the Greek Name, “Πετρος”- “Petros” is used instead. The Greek of this verse, however, retains the Aramaic “Simeon” and “Kapha”, which it then explains with the words : “κηφας ο ερμηνευεται πετρος” – “Cephas, which is translated Petros.” Here the Greek text declares that the name “Petros” is a translation of the Aramaic name “Kapha”. We here find hard evidence, and in 160 other places where this Greek name occurs, that the Greek NT is translated from Aramaic ! Naturally, the Peshitta has no similar translation from Greek to Aramaic, here or anywhere else. Repeat the above statement several times and ponder it: The Greek text declares itself to be translated from Aramaic !