

PREFACE

This work represents a revised version of my doctoral dissertation which was originally completed under the direction of Professors F. E. Peters, B. A. Levine and L. H. Schiffman at New York University in October, 1980. I first conceived the idea of working on a Galilean city in Professor Peters' seminar on Greco-Roman cities of the Near East. I am grateful to Professor Peters for his continued interest in my research and, most of all, for introducing me to the history and cultures of the Greco-Roman Near East. Professor Levine, with whom I studied Bible and Aramaic, was an enthusiastic adviser throughout my undergraduate and graduate days at New York University. His interest in the cult of Ancient Israel played at least a subconscious role in my selection of "The Priests" as one of the studies which appear below. Professor Levine's enthusiasm for a subject obviously carried over to this student as it must to all others. Professor Schiffman directed each step of my doctoral research and offered many helpful suggestions towards the revision and preparation of this work for publication. It was in his Talmud seminars that I began to develop a systematic approach to rabbinic literature. Professor Schiffman's own scholarship and learning continue to be a constant source of inspiration.

I would like to thank Professor J. N. Neusner of Brown University for agreeing to publish this volume in his series *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* and for his advice on the final editing of the manuscript.

Needless to say, whatever faults remain in this work are my responsibility.

The transliteration systems for Hebrew and Greek used throughout this volume are based on those suggested in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1 (1971-2), pp. 90 and 92. Although an attempt has been made to be as consistent as possible, popular spellings have sometimes been preferred to the more scientific renderings. In many instances, these spellings correspond to those used in the entries of the *Encyclopaedia* (e.g., *amora*, *baraita*).

Unless otherwise indicated, the rabbinic and Greek texts presented herein have been translated by the author. Biblical verses have been rendered in accordance with the new translation series of the Jewish Publication Society. The older (1915) translation of the Society was resorted to for those books of the Bible which have not yet appeared in the new series.

Several institutions provided financial assistance in support of my research. These include the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. The Lane Cooper Fund should also be acknowledged for sponsoring my visit of relevant sites in Galilee and Golan during the Spring of 1979.

In connection with my research in Israel, I would like to thank Dr. Y. Meshorer, curator of archeology at the Israel Museum and Senior Lecturer in

Numismatics at Hebrew University for providing me with advance copies of his monographs on the coins of Sepphoris. I also gained much from my conversations with Dr. D. Urman of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

I am grateful to Natanel Tefillin, *zikhrono li-verakhah*, of Moshav Meron, who unfortunately did not live to see the fruition of my research. I gained much from Mr. Tefillin's knowledge of both Galilee and the Talmud and am thankful that I had the opportunity to meet him and benefit from his insight before his untimely passing.

I would like to acknowledge my in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. B. Nelson, and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. I. Miller for their assistance and support. My parents deserve special recognition for fostering my early academic interests.

Ms. S. Tiller of Rutgers University typed and helped edit the early versions of my manuscript.

Many of the ideas in the following pages were first shared with my wife, Laura, to whom this volume is dedicated in appreciation for her constant encouragement and support of my research. Indeed, this work is as much the product of her love as it is of my labor.

November 25, 1981
28 *Heshvan*, 5742

Stuart S. Miller