

THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE MILESTONES FROM THE BET NEṬOFA VALLEY

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Three inscribed milestones were found in the excavations in the Bet Neṭofa Valley (see Tepper, this volume).

Milestone 1

Description: Total height: 2.6 m, column height: 1.9 m, upper diam.: 0.5 m, lower diam.: 0.6 m, base: 0.65 × 0.79 m, 0.7 m high. Latin inscription, five rows, letter height: 5–6 mm (see Tepper, this volume: Fig. 9).

Transliteration:

IMP. CAESAR DIVI
TRAIANI PARTHICI
FIL. DI]VI NERVAE NEPOS
HADR]IANVS AUG.
PONT] MAX. TRIB.
POTES]TAS [IIII] COS.
III FEÇIT

Reading: Imp(erator) Caesar Divi/Traiani Parthici/[Fil(ius) Di]vi Nervae Nepos/[Hadr]ianus Aug(ustus)/[Pont](ifex)/Max(imus) trib(unicia)/[potes]tas [iii]i co(n)s(ul)/iii feçit

Translation: Emperor Caesar, son of the divine Traianus Parthicus, grandson of the divine Nerva, Hadrianus Augustus, High Priest, holder of the tribunician power for the fourth time, consul three times, made (this road)

Date: 120 CE.

Discussion: There are two parallels for this inscription. One is a milestone found 5 m from Legio, on the road from Legio to Diocaesarea (Hecker and read by Lifshitz). The reading of the inscription was corrected and republished by Isaac and Roll (1998a). This milestone marked the fifth mile from Legio, in Latin, and the eleventh mile from Diocaesarea (Sepphoris), in Greek (Isaac and Roll 1998a). The other inscription was found on the 'Akko–Diocaesarea road. It marked the ninth mile from 'Akko; the date is the same, i.e., 120 CE. Here we suggested to read “LĒG II” instead of “FEÇIT”; however, this is controversial (Isaac and

Roll 1998b). The milestone from Bet Neṭofa cannot aid in solving this problem, therefore the uncontroversial reading ‘fecit’ is offered.

Milestone 2

Description: Total height: 1.55 m, column height: 0.9 m, upper diam. 0.5 m, lower diam.: 0.55 m, base: 0.75 × 0.80 m, 0.75 m high; pillar fragment height c. 0.4 m. Latin inscription, three rows, letter height: 4–5 mm.

Transliteration:

---]ANO[---

---]AX[---

---]XIV[---

Tentative Reading: [Imp(eratori) Caesari Divi Traiani Parthici f. Divi Nervae n(epoti) Traiano Hadri]ano[Aug(usto) Pontif(ici) M]ax(imo)[Trib(unicia) potest(ate)] XIV [co(n) s(uli) iii p(atri) p(atriae)]

Translation: To Emperor Caesar, son of the Divine Traianus Parthicus, grandson of the Divine Nerva, Traianus Hadrianus Augustus, High Priest, holder of the tribunician power for the fourteenth time, three times consul, father of the fatherland.

Date: 130 CE.

Discussion: Names ending in –ano (in the dative) and the number XIV most certainly refer to the Emperor’s tribunician power. Two milestones in Judea mention the names of emperors that end in “–anus”: Vespasian and Hadrian. Vespasian appears on one milestone from 69 CE, his first year as emperor, and on two others found in Jerusalem (Gichon and Isaac 1974 = Isaac 1998; Reich and Billig 2003). Emperors, who are not mentioned on milestones, but otherwise might have been considered, are Titus, Domitian, Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and the two Gordiani. A number of later emperors, such as Tribonianus Gallus and Valerianus, may similarly be excluded. The number XIV would suit Hadrian’s fourteenth year, 130 CE. Parallels from Judea were found on the Aelia–Eleutheropolis road (Thomsen 1917: No. 282) and the Aelia–Hebron road (Thomsen 1917: No. 296). Two other milestones of Hadrian were found on the Legio–Scythopolis road, dated to 129 CE (Isaac and Roll 1982: 7, No. 2), and another, found by Hecker on the Legio–Diocaesarea road (Isaac and Roll 1998a: 184–186), is not dated, but its formula resembles that on Milestone 2, and therefore, almost certainly dated to 129 or 130 CE.

The two newly discovered milestones (Nos. 1, 2) reinforce our knowledge concerning road-organization under the reign of Hadrian. Two stages were realized. The first stage, represented by a road and three milestones in Judea, took place in 120 CE, three years after Hadrian’s accession and following the turbulent years of Trajan’s Parthian war. This stage was followed by the addition of a second legion to the garrison of Judea. The second stage, far better represented, coincides with Hadrian’s visit to the region. One stone is dated 129 CE and several others, to 130 CE.

Milestone 3

Description: Total height: 2 m, column height: 1.5 m, upper diam.: 0.5 m, lower diam.: 0.55 m, base: 0.55 × 0.52 m, 0.5 m high. Latin inscription, five rows, letter height: 5–7 mm (see Tepper, this volume: Figs. 6:2; 8; 10).

Transliteration:

DOM NOSTRIS
FL CONSTANTINO
MAX P F INV AVG ET
CONSTANTINO
ET CONSTANTIO ET
CONSTANTE

Reading: Dom(inis) Nostris/Fl(avio) Constantino/Max(imo) P(io) F(elici) inv(icto) Aug(usto) et/Constantino/Et Constantio et/Constante

Translation: To our Lords Flavius Constantinus Maximus, Pious, Fortunate, invincible Augustus and Constantinus and Constantius and Constans.

Date: 333–337 CE.

Discussion: The inscription renders the names and titles of Constantine the Great and his three sons. Constantius, the youngest son, received the title of Caesar in 333 and Constantine died in 337. This dates the inscription between the years 333 and 337.

In Judea, three other milestones of these years have been found: on the Legio–Diocaesarea road (Avi-Yonah 1946: 97, No. 16), along the Emmaus–Bet Ḥoron Road (Fischer, Isaac and Roll 1996:294–295), and on the ‘Akko–Diocaesarea road (unpublished). Many milestones of these years have been found in the provinces of Syria and Arabia (Thomsen 1917:93; Goodchild 1948–1949:127). Milestone inscriptions which can be assigned with certainty to a date later than 337 are rare throughout the Near East.

The milestones from the Bet Neṭofa Valley have thus added important evidence concerning the earliest and the last recorded stages of systematic road-organization in Judea-Palestina.

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