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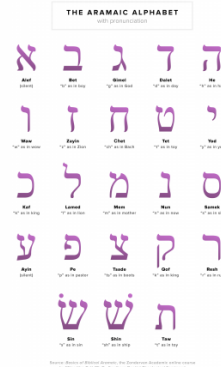
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This view of the Aramaic alphabet is by Miles Van Pelt, PhD., as part of his “Basics of Biblical Aramaic,” the Zondervan Academic online course via Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Copyright, Dr. Van Pelt, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Although Rome ruled first-century Judea, the Jewish people were allowed to manage their own internal affairs before Jerusalem fell in 70 AD.

Their high court, called the Sanhedrin, consisted of 71 members. The man at the top was the high priest. Caiaphus held that position at the time of Jesus’ death.

Jews focused their religious life on two institutions: the temple (in Jerusalem) and synagogues (centers of worship and instruction throughout Judea). Jewish boys were educated in synagogues where their studies (in Hebrew) were mostly religious.

Pilate, during his years as Procurator, lived on the Mediterranean shore in the city of Caesarea. Caiaphus, during his time as high priest, lived in Jerusalem. But when important religious events—like the Passover—took place, Pilate also stayed in Jerusalem. While there, he spent his time at the Antonia Fortress (built by Herod the Great and named for the famous Roman, Marc Antony).

What language did most first-century Jews use when they spoke to each other? It was Aramaic, a language which is still spoken in parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel and Lebanon (as well as places where native speakers have emigrated). For a thousand years, Aramaic was as popular to the ancient Near-East world as English is now to the modern.

Because it had been widely used in the Persian Empire, Aramaic spread throughout the area of Persian influence and control—including Judea.

What does Aramaic sound like?

Although the language would have changed from the time of Christ to now, we can still hear the closest thing to his language by listening to modern-day Aramaic speakers:

- The name of “Jesus” in Aramaic
- The “Lord’s Prayer” spoken in Aramaic

First-century Judea was thus a kind of melting pot which combined Roman rule, Greek thought and Jewish tradition. It was into this world that Jesus of Nazareth was born. And it was because of this world that he was crucified.

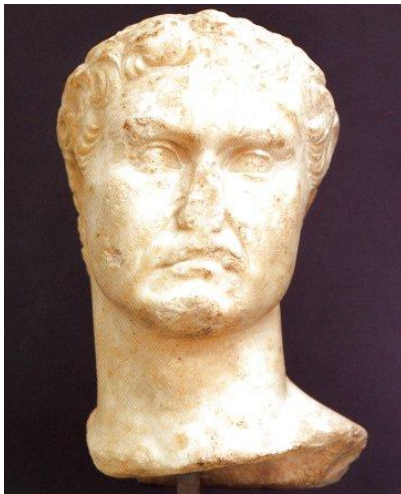
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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ARAMAIC-LANGUAGE-Passion-of-the-Christ>

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Media Stream



Marc Antony

Image online, courtesy the britannica.com website.

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