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The Agricultural Background of the Harvest Logion in Matthew 9.37–8 and Luke (Q) 10.2

Llewellyn Howes 

Department of Languages, Cultural Studies and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities,
University of Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: llewellynh@uj.ac.za

Abstract

The saying in Matthew 9.37–8 and Luke (Q) 10.2 reads as follows: ‘He said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to dispatch workers into his harvest’. The present study attempts to illuminate this logion by considering its setting in first-century Palestine. The focus here is not on the logion’s possible metaphorical application, but on the literal saying, which involves ancient agriculture.

Keywords: harvest; Jesus; agriculture; Palestine; ancient; background; saying

1. Introduction

A while ago, Crossan bemoaned the trend in scholarship that interpreters are often unable to distinguish between the literal and metaphorical sides to the parables of Jesus.¹ In his view, interpreters should first devote all their attention to the literal or ‘image’ side of a parable and only thereafter consider the metaphorical or ‘meaning’ side of the same parable.² If one wants to hear and understand a parable as it was heard and understood by its first listeners, one has to be intimately familiar with the parable’s socio-historical background and narrative world.³ The parables of Jesus typically take for granted that the audience is familiar with this background, which is usually unknown to modern interpreters unless they make an effort to become familiar with it.⁴ The same is true for Q.⁵ Although most scholars would not regard the harvest saying in Matthew 9.37–8 and

¹ J. D. Crossan, ‘Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus’, *Semeia* 1 (1974) 63–104, at 86–8; cf. R. Zimmermann, ‘How to Understand the Parables of Jesus: A Paradigm Shift in Parable Exegesis’, *Acta Theologica* 29/1 (2009) 157–82, at 172.

² Cf. A. M. Hunter, *The Parables Then and Now* (London: SCM, 1971) 11–12; J. Ukpong, ‘The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25.14–30): Commendation or Critique of Exploitation? A Social-Historical and Theological Reading’, *Neotestamentica* 46/1 (2012) 190–207, at 190–91, 195.

³ D. O. Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 91; See E. van Eck, ‘Die gelykenisse van Jesus: Allegorieë of simbole van sosiale transformasie?’, *HTS Theological Studies* (2015) 71/3, 10 pages: http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/3030/pdf_1.

⁴ Via, *The Parables*, 18; cf. J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (WUNT 195; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 140, 279; R. A. Horsley, *The Prophet Jesus and the Renewal of Israel: Moving Beyond a Diversionary Debate* (Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2012) 111.

⁵ W. E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Augsburg: Fortress, 2001) 97.

Luke 10.2 to be a parable,⁶ I am yet to come across a scholar who does not regard this logion as intrinsically metaphorical. If this consensus is correct, the same observations as above would apply to this saying as well. The present study focuses exclusively on the literal or ‘image’ part of the harvest logion in Matthew 9.37–8 and Luke 10.2. To my knowledge, there has not been any thoroughgoing investigation of the first-century Palestinian background to the harvesting imagery in Q 10.2. Apart from one or two side comments about harvesting in ancient Palestine or the ancient world generally, the focus is always on the metaphorical or ‘meaning’ side of the logion. The current article attempts to address this lacuna. In order to understand the literal side of this logion, it is crucial to become familiar with its socio-historical background, which involves agriculture in this particular case.⁷ The focus of this study will therefore be on first-century Palestinian agriculture, especially harvesting.

There is widespread agreement that the harvest logion in Matthew 9.37–8 and Luke 10.2 belongs in the Sayings Gospel Q.⁸ The International Q Project provides the following reconstruction and translation of Q 10.2 in their *Critical Edition of Q*:

[..]λεγε[...]. τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολὺς, οἱ δὲ ἔργαται ὀλίγοι· δεήθητε οὖν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ ὅπως ἐκβάλλῃ ἔργατας εἰς τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ.

He said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So, ask the Lord of the harvest to dispatch workers into his harvest.⁹

Although the focus will be on first-century Palestine, other sources and periods will also be considered. On the one hand, this comparative approach is *necessary* because we have very little information about harvesting and harvest workers in the ancient world,

⁶ Some exceptions of scholars who do indeed regard Q 10.2 as a parable include: D. T. Roth, ‘“Master” as Character in the Q Parables’, *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q (Dedicated to Dieter Zeller on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday)* (ed. D. T. Roth, R. Zimmermann and Michael Labahn; WUNT 315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 371–96, at 391; D. T. Roth, *The Parables in Q (LNTS 582)* (London: T&T Clark, 2018) 274–86; L. Thurén, *Parables Unplugged: Reading the Lukan Parables in Their Rhetorical Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014) 186–7, 190 n. 27, 192, 210; R. Zimmermann ‘Metaphorology and Narratology in Q Exegesis: Literary Methodology as an Aid to Understanding the Q Text’, *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q (Dedicated to Dieter Zeller on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday)* (ed. D. T. Roth, R. Zimmermann, and Michael Labahn; WUNT 315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 27; R. Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015) 187, 202, 365.

⁷ R. Valantasis, *The New Q: A Fresh Translation with Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) 95; D. Dormeyer, ‘Q 7,1.3.6b–9.710? Der Hauptmann von Kafarnaum: Narrative Strategie mit Chrie, Wundergeschichte und Gleichnis’, *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q (Dedicated to Dieter Zeller on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday)* (ed. D. T. Roth, R. Zimmermann and Michael Labahn; WUNT 315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 189–206, at 205; Thurén, *Parables Unplugged*, 210.

⁸ E.g. R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, 2nd ed. 1968) 145, 325; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, Volume II: Commentary on Matthew VIII–XVIII* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1991) 143–4, 148; U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 61–2, 64; H. T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary* (Biblical Tools and Studies 1; Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 403, 404; J. M. Robinson, *Jesus: According to the Earliest Witness* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 21; G. B. Bazzana, *Kingdom of Bureaucracy: The Political Theology of Village Scribes in the Sayings Gospel Q* (BETL 274; Leuven: Peeters, 2015) 86; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 274.

⁹ J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, and J. S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 160–1; J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann and J. S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English with Parallels from the Gospels of Mark and Thomas* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 30; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 96–7.

including Palestine.¹⁰ On the other hand, this comparative approach is *valid* not only because agricultural practices and customs tended to change very little over extended periods of time, but also because the same or very similar agricultural practices tended to be diffused over large areas, like the Mediterranean.¹¹ Even (quite) modern descriptions of agriculture in the same geographical area as ancient Palestine have value in this regard, since many agricultural practices have changed little since biblical times.¹² A good example is terracing, which ‘has been practised continuously from its introduction by the Israelites at the beginning of the Iron Age till the present day’.¹³ As long as the known distinctive aspects of first-century Palestinian agriculture are not lost out of sight,¹⁴ there should be no problem drawing on information outside of these geographic and temporal boundaries to collect information about agricultural practices and customs that they most likely shared in common with other groups and that remained stable over long periods.

2. The Farm of Q 10:2

In a separate publication, I argued that Q 10.2 deals with a *hypothetical* farm (not an *actual* farm) as representative of Palestinian agriculture more generally.¹⁵ Even if Q 10.2 does not use the word ‘farm’, it does reveal quite a bit about this hypothetical farm. The mentioning of a ‘large’ (πολύς) harvest assumes a large farm, probably larger than the typical smallholding.¹⁶ This is confirmed by the use of an impersonal word like ‘workers’ (ἐργάται) to describe the harvesters. Smallholders typically relied on family and assisted one another when bringing in the harvest, which means that the ‘workers’ would have been one or more of the following: members of the extended family, neighbours, members from the same tribe or clan, friends, fellow villagers, and, on very rare occasions, locally hired workers, typically paid in kind.¹⁷ Varro makes mention of this: ‘All agriculture is carried on by men — slaves, or freemen, or both; by freemen, when they till the ground themselves, as many poor people do with the help of their families’.¹⁸ Family was central to Judean-Israelite society, especially the village peasantry.¹⁹

¹⁰ See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2002) xx–xxi; B. D. Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves: Economy and Metaphor in the Roman World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) 10–11.

¹¹ Cf. Borowski, *Agriculture*, xxi; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 11.

¹² E. Grant, *The People of Palestine: An Enlarged Edition of ‘The Peasantry of Palestine, Life, Manners and Customs of the Village’* (Philadelphia/London: J. B. Lippincott, 1921), 45; Borowski, *Agriculture*, xxi.

¹³ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 17.

¹⁴ P. A. Brunt, ‘Labour’, *The Roman World, Volume II* (ed. John Wachter; London: Routledge, 1990) 701–16, at 708–9.

¹⁵ See L. Howes, ‘“The Harvest Is Plentiful but the Workers Few”: Reflecting on the Verisimilitude of Q 10.2’, *HTS Theological Studies* (forthcoming).

¹⁶ R. A. Horsley (with J. A. Draper), *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999) 243.

¹⁷ M. Aberbach, *Labor, Crafts and Commerce in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994) 4; E. W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (transl. O. C. Dean; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 28–9; R. Boer and C. Petterson, *Time of Troubles: A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017) 67, 71; Brunt, ‘Labour’, 707; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 18, 20, 81; Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86; cf. Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.2.

¹⁸ Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.2, translation from https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Varro/de_Re_Rustica/1*.html.

¹⁹ See K. C. Hanson and D. E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 5, 21; D. E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants* (Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 4; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2008) 248–9; W. G. Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 186–7, 203–5.

Tenant farmers would in all likelihood have made more use of hired workers and less use of neighbours, friends, and fellow villagers than smallholders, although members of the extended family would still have done their part.²⁰ Some of the workers hired by tenant farmers included fellow smallholders and tenant farmers in the area who survived by hiring themselves out when not tending to their own fields.²¹ Other hired hands were the poor generally, including former smallholders who had lost their lands.²² These workers were commonly ‘part of the native population and of its social structure’.²³ Many of these people lived in caves and other natural shelters outside the village.²⁴ The point of all this is to show that smallholders and tenant farmers personally knew most or all of the workers helping them to bring in the harvest. As such, the repeated use of the impersonal word ‘workers’ in Q 10.2, instead of terms like ‘family’, ‘village’, ‘brothers’,²⁵ ‘friends’, or ‘neighbours’, and without once identifying these workers as such, suggests a larger operation than a mere smallholding. This is especially true in the context of Q, where the idea of ‘family’, whether biological or symbolic, is front and centre.²⁶ In contrast to the use of family and friends on smallholdings, large estates supplemented their workforce during harvest time largely or exclusively with hired workers and day-labourers.²⁷ Stegemann and Stegemann explicitly confirm this general portrayal: ‘Wage earners were apparently needed only in larger agricultural units. In the smaller rural household, the

²⁰ Cf. Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 8; Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86; cf. *P.Giss.Bibl.* 1.5, lines 9–10.

²¹ See P. Garnsey, ‘Non-Slave Labour in the Roman World’, *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980) 34–47, at 37–9.

²² See O. Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (ABS 5; Atlanta: SBL, 2003) 114–15.

²³ A. Burford, *Land and Labor in the Greek World* (Ancient Society and History; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 186.

²⁴ Borowski, *Daily Life*, 115.

²⁵ Q often uses non-inclusive patriarchal language by referencing ‘brothers’ and ‘sons’ without ‘sisters’ and ‘daughters’ when discussing both biological families and the symbolic family of God that the Q people represents: e.g. A.-J. Levine, ‘Women in the Q Communit(ies) and Traditions’, *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D’Angelo; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 150–70, at 156; cf. Q 6.35, 41–2; 10.6; 11.19, 48; 17.3–4. At the same time, Q often features female characters as well as male–female gender pairs: e.g. A. J. Batten, ‘More Queries for Q: Women and Christian Origins’, *BTB* 24 (1994) 44–51, at 47–9; cf. Q 7.35; 11.31–2; 12.53; 13.18–21, 34; 14.26; 16.18; 15.4–5, 7, [8–10]; 17.27, 34–5. The latter should not be overemphasised, since Q both recognises (positively) and reinforces (negatively) traditional gender roles: Levine, ‘Women’, 156, 162–4.

²⁶ See esp. A. D. Jacobson, ‘Divided Families and Christian Origins’, *The Gospel behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q* (ed. R. A. Piper; NovTSup 75; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 361–380; H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) 54–5, 115–21, 152; I. Park, ‘Oral Metonymy in Q: Mothering Images of God from the Daily Lives of Women’, presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 2014: 11 pages, at 7–9; L. Howes, ‘“Your Father Knows that You Need All of This”: Divine Fatherhood as Socio-Ethical Impetus in Q’s Formative Stratum’, *Neotestamentica* 50/1 (2016) 9–33; L. Howes, *Judging Q and Saving Jesus: Q’s Contribution to the Wisdom-Apocalypticism Debate in Historical Jesus Studies* (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2015) 144–50; cf. Q 3.8; 4.3, 9; 6.35, 41–2; 7.3, 7, 28, 35; 9.59–60; 10.21, 22; 11.2, 11–13, 19, 48; 12.6–7, 30, 42, 53; 13.34; 14.26; 16.18; 17.3–4, 27, 34–5.

²⁷ J. Toutain, *The Economic Life of the Ancient World* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951) 278; P. Garnsey, ‘Introduction’, *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 6, 1980) 3; P. Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity: Essays in Social and Economic History* (ed. Walter Scheidel; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 137; D. A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land Is Mine* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 20; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1991) 76; Garnsey, ‘Non-Slave Labour’, 36, 42; Brunt, ‘Labour’, 713; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 28; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 288, 289, 292; Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86; Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 93. Consider, for example, this account written in 250 BCE to Zenon, manager of Apollonios’ large estate in ancient Philadelphia, Egypt: ‘And under your name I wrote [to pay] the workers: to [...]chas, 2 dragmas, 1 obol; to Panes, 2 dragmas 2.25 obol; and to his son, 2 dragmas 2.25 obol; to Horos, 3 obol’ (*P.Cair.Zen.* 59827, my translation; cf. also *P.Cair.Zen.* 4.59748; *P.Mich.* 3.200; Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.2–3).

division of work was determined by the organization of households'.²⁸ Rollens understands the term ἐργάτης in Q 10.2 as denoting day-labourers specifically, including struggling and dispossessed peasants.²⁹ If this is correct, it adds further support to our case that the imagined farm should be understood as a large estate.

The most compelling proof, however, comes from the title 'master of the harvest' (κύριος τοῦ θερισμοῦ), which clearly stands for someone greater than a mere *paterfamilias* who owned a small plot of land.³⁰ This term probably refers to the owner or manager of a large estate.³¹ According to Crook, non-servile farm workers in the Roman world had to obey the orders of either the landowner or the farm manager.³² These and other possibilities will be considered in more detail in a forthcoming publication. For our current purposes, it is sufficient to note that the 'master of the harvest' is highly unlikely to be a mere smallholder. In addition to being called 'master' (κύριος), the hierarchical superiority of the 'master of the harvest' in Q 10.2 is indicated both by his ability to 'send' (ἐκβάλλω) the workers into his harvest, and by the fact that people have to 'beseech' (δέομαι) him to send workers into his harvest. Bazzana and Roth note that the use of ἐκβάλλω is odd here.³³ On the (presumed) metaphorical level of the saying, a verb like ἀποστέλλω would be more fitting. This oddity is even more noticeable when considering that the rest of the mission discourse features ἀποστέλλω.³⁴ On the literal level, the verb μισθώω ('hire (workers)') might have been expected.³⁵ The verb ἐκβάλλω has a wide range of lexical meanings, most of which are decidedly negative.³⁶ These semantic possibilities all revolve around the central and most straightforward meaning of the word, which is to 'throw out' or 'cast out'.³⁷ Whatever the reason might be for choosing this verb here, it fits much better with the idea of a social superior commanding his workforce than a smallholder rounding up peers in the village to help with the harvest. Whereas the verb ἐκβάλλω reveals the superior position of the 'master of the harvest' towards his workers, the verb δέομαι reveals the inferiority of others towards this individual.

Although δέομαι is typically translated as 'ask', it literally means to beg or plead for something.³⁸ Whoever is tasked in this logion with approaching the 'master of the harvest', they are not portrayed as making a polite suggestion to a peer, but as speaking in a way more at home with social inferiors addressing a superior. What is more, the notion that the 'master of the harvest' needs to be reminded to send workers into his harvest certainly does not point to a smallholder, who was dependent on the harvest for survival and would have watched his field like a hawk.³⁹ Instead, such inattentive indifference

²⁸ Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 28.

²⁹ S. E. Rollens, *Framing Social Criticism in the Jesus Movement: The Ideological Project in the Sayings Gospel Q* (WUNT 374; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 156.

³⁰ Cf. Valantasis, *The New Q*, 96; Robinson, *Jesus*, x; Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86–7, 95.

³¹ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86–7.

³² J. A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London: Cornell University Press, 1967) 196; cf. K. D. White, *Roman Farming* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; London: Thames & Hudson, 1970) 347, 350, 404; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 77.

³³ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 88; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 275 n. 252; cf. e.g. Matt 20:2.

³⁴ I.e., Q 10:3, 16.

³⁵ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 88.

³⁶ See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott 1996. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., revised and augmented by H. Stuart Jones and R. McKenzie; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 501.

³⁷ Cf. W. E. Arnal, 'Redactional Fabrication and Group Legitimation', *Conflict and Invention: Literary, Rhetorical and Social Studies on the Sayings Gospel Q* (ed. J. S. Kloppenborg; Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995) 165–80, at 172.

³⁸ R. Brannan, *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Lexham Bible Reference Series; Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2011) s.v. δέομαι; Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 383.

³⁹ Cf. Borowski, *Daily Life*, 22; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 276.

points to an absent landowner or a lazy estate manager, both of whom, incidentally, appear in Q 12.42–6.⁴⁰ Finally, although one should be careful not to read too much into the singular grammar of the noun ‘harvest’ (θερισμός), it does seem to assume a context of monocropping typical of large estates, over against the polycropping of traditional smallholdings in ancient Palestine.⁴¹ All these factors point in the direction of the hypothetical farm being a large estate, perhaps with a sizable workforce, even if insufficient during harvest time, as was generally the case.⁴²

This goes against the assumption by some scholars that Q 10.2 alludes to a peasant’s smallholding. One example is Bazzana, who answers the verisimilitude question in the affirmative, but does so while assuming that the farm is a smallholding and the workers are peasants:

The short saying [in Q 10.2] envisages a situation that would have been quite common in the Land of Israel as well as in Egypt and other Mediterranean regions in antiquity. Come harvest time, the crop is plentiful and the peasants working on it need help immediately and for the short time during which it is possible to collect the product in order to avoid the risk of ruining the entire fruit of their labor.⁴³

Against this view, and in line with the argument outlined above, Horsley states: ‘The model on which this harvest [of Q 10.2 and 2 Cor 11.13] is conceived is a large estate of a “master/lord” who hires and sends out laborers, as portrayed in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20.1–16).’⁴⁴ To be fair, Bazzana does consider the possibility that Q 10.2 might also have in mind ‘farmers managing the fields of a landowner’ – a phrase that could denote either tenant farmers or estate managers.⁴⁵ Bazzana then goes on to remark: ‘It is commonly observed by commentators that Q 10.2 presupposes the second option [i.e. “farmers managing the fields of a landowner”].’⁴⁶ At any rate, it is accepted here, based on the evidence presented, that Q 10.2 has a large estate in mind.

3. Estates and Labourers in Ancient Palestine

Although Palestinian estates were not nearly as large as the *latifundia* of Rome,⁴⁷ there were certainly large estates in first-century Palestine.⁴⁸ Papyrological evidence from Roman Egypt shows that large estates were a feature of the Roman provinces during this period.⁴⁹ A few of these papyri actually make mention of the large estates in

⁴⁰ Cf. R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) 5–6; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 78; C. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 85; J. A. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) 103–5; Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 102–3; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 8; Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86–7; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 279; pace Roth, ‘“Master” as Character’, 392; cf. *P.Giss.Bibl.* 1.5, lines 9–10.

⁴¹ Cf. Aberbach, *Labor*, 170; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 287, 290.

⁴² Cf. Horsley, *Whoever Hears You*, 243.

⁴³ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86.

⁴⁴ Horsley, *Whoever Hears You*, 243.

⁴⁵ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86.

⁴⁶ Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 86.

⁴⁷ C. Chandezon, ‘Some Aspects of Large Estate Management in the Greek World during Classical and Hellenistic Times’, *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies, Third to First Centuries BC* (ed. Z. H. Archibald, J. K. Davies, and V. Gabrielsen; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 96–121, at 96.

⁴⁸ Aberbach, *Labor*, 171.

⁴⁹ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 284.

Palestine, including Galilee, from as early as the third century BCE.⁵⁰ For example, Glaukias, who managed Apollonios' estates in Palestine, writes the following in 257 BCE to Apollonios: 'But when I arrived at Baitanota [that is, Beth Anath in Galilee], I took Melas with...'.⁵¹ These papyri are correct to trace the existence of large estates back to earlier periods, although the number of large estates increased dramatically during the Roman period. King David certainly had a number of large farms with estate managers, all of whom were mentioned by name.⁵² Back to the first century, Josephus recounts that he himself owned large estates in Judea and the coastal plain, and that the same was true for many others, including Ptolemy, a friend of Herod, in Samaria; Costobar, a governor of Herod, in Idumaea; Crispus, an *eparch* of Agrippa, in the Transjordan; and Philip, a lieutenant of Agrippa, near Gamla.⁵³ Although Philo trivialises the institution of slavery by subordinating it to Stoic paradigms, he does recount that some wealthy Jewish landowners utilised both Jewish and gentile slaves on their farming estates.⁵⁴ In addition, the existence of large farming estates in Palestine is both assumed and described by the canonical Gospels.⁵⁵ Although archaeological evidence seems to suggest that large estates were not a feature of the area between Nazareth and the tip of the Galilean Sea, literary evidence supports archaeology in showing that large farming estates did exist on the great plain directly south of Nazareth.⁵⁶ At the end of the day, Fiensy has argued persuasively and decisively that large farming estates did exist in Palestine during the Herodian period.⁵⁷ In addition to large estates, some wealthy landholders owned multiple smaller plots scattered throughout the region.⁵⁸ As such, the size of a smallholding is not necessarily an indication of the affluence or poverty of its owner, with many smallholdings belonging to larger conglomerates farmed by tenants or supervised by managers.⁵⁹

For a variety of reasons, including chiefly military and political success, there were far more slaves on Roman farms than on the farms of the Roman provinces and other nations of the first century.⁶⁰ Even in Rome, slaves were not used as much for agricultural labour during the first century as in earlier times.⁶¹ During all periods, slaves represented a minority of the agricultural workforce in Italy as a whole, while non-servile peasants and labourers represented the majority.⁶² This was true to a much greater extent in

⁵⁰ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 285, 297.

⁵¹ *P.Lond.* 7.1948, my translation; cf., e.g., also *Papiri Greci e Latini* 6.554.

⁵² See 1 Chr 27.25–31; cf. 1 Sam 8.12; 2 Sam 9.10; cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965) 167.

⁵³ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 286–7; cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 15.264; 17.289; *BJ.* 2.69; *Vita* 33, 47, 422, 429.

⁵⁴ See P. DuBois, *Slavery: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 63–6.

⁵⁵ Cf. D. A. Fiensy, 'Ancient Economy and the New Testament', *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (ed. D. Neufeld and R. E. DeMaris; London: Routledge, 2010) 194–206, at 197; Fiensy, *The Social History*, 55–6; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 111; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 136, 279.

⁵⁶ Fiensy, 'Ancient Economy', 196.

⁵⁷ Fiensy, *The Social History*, 21–73.

⁵⁸ Cf. J. E. Skydsgaard, 'Non-Slave Labour in Rural Italy during the Late Republic', *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 6, 1980) 65–72, at 68; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 111.

⁵⁹ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 299.

⁶⁰ C. R. Whittaker, 'Rural Labour in Three Roman Provinces', *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 6, 1980) 73; see S. R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 8, 53–6, 65–9; Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 95–6; De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 80, 84; White, *Roman Farming*, 411; Hezser *Jewish Slavery*, 85.

⁶¹ Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 136; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 28; Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 122.

⁶² Brunt, 'Labour', 707.

the Roman provinces.⁶³ Unlike Roman Italy, mass slavery was simply not a feature of Roman Palestine, especially the countryside.⁶⁴ Although there were undoubtedly a few large estates in Palestine run entirely by slaves,⁶⁵ it was much more common for these Palestinian estates to be worked by resident (contract) labourers, headed by a tenant farmer or estate manager, who hired additional workers during laborious periods.⁶⁶ When it came to farming in the Roman provinces generally, it was commonplace to make use of indigenous non-servile labour rather than slave labour.⁶⁷ Even in Italy, landowners were sometimes forced to hire contract labourers when slaves were unavailable.⁶⁸ If a farm did have slaves, wage earners would work alongside these slaves, and sometimes even under the supervision of a servile manager or foreman.⁶⁹ Generally speaking, non-servile workers could hire themselves out for different durations of service, from the day-labourer who typically worked for one day and had to find new work each morning, to the wage earners who signed contracts with their employers for lengthy periods, to the political administrators who earned annual salaries.⁷⁰ Many ancient examples of lengthy contracts exist, like the one between non-servile labourer, Memmius Asclepi, and his temporary employer, Aurelius Adiutor, to work in the goldmines of Transylvania for six months in exchange for 70 *denarii* plus accommodation.⁷¹ Bazzana rightly notes that when it comes to Egyptian documentary papyri, 'we possess several contracts, in which laborers [...] set down the amount of work they are going to perform and the payment they are going to receive in exchange'.⁷² Here is a fragment of one such contract dating from the first-to-second century CE:

[... ...] the 4 reapers to [T... /... and] to Metokos, both sons of Eudemos. Greetings! We a[gree...] (to reap) the wheat fields seeded in (the district of) Pa[... / ...] the arourai on the kleros of Ptolemaios [of those arourai where the crops] have grown ripe, in the [year ... x ... of Our] Lord Caesar.

The pay of two-thirds of an artaba [... the reaping? For ea]ch aroura of wheat, making two-thirds of an artaba [...] per aroura of grain reaped. When we finish there we will receive from you sixteen [silver] dragmai making a total of 16 silver dragmai.⁷³

All non-servile workers who hired out their labour, including struggling peasants, dispossessed peasants, tenant farmers, and the poor in general, were collectively known in the Roman world as *mercennarii*.⁷⁴ In *De re rustica* 1.17.2, Varro distinguishes between three

⁶³ Brunt, 'Labour', 707.

⁶⁴ See J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London: SCM, 1969) 110–11; cf. Brunt, 'Labour', 703; Aberbach, *Labor*, 38, 170; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 104; Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 85, 295, 300.

⁶⁵ Aberbach, *Labor*, 171, 173; see De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 167; cf. 1 Sam. 8.12; 2 Sam 9.10.

⁶⁶ Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 110–11; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 136, 279; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 8.

⁶⁷ Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 35, 41; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 135–6.

⁶⁸ White, *Roman Farming*, 375; Brunt, 'Labour', 714.

⁶⁹ K. R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Key Themes in Ancient History; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 65, 72.

⁷⁰ S. M. Treggiari, 'Urban Labour in Rome: *Mercennarii* and *Tabernarii*', in Peter Garnsey (ed.), *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980) 52.

⁷¹ Treggiari, 'Urban Labour', 51.

⁷² Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 87.

⁷³ PSI 289; translation from Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 273.

⁷⁴ White, *Roman Farming*, 347; Joshel, *Slavery*, 166; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 46, 80; see Treggiari, 'Urban Labour'.

categories of non-servile agricultural workers, namely smallholders, hired labourers (*mercennarii*), and debt-labourers (*obaeratii*).⁷⁵ An important sub-category under hired labourers (*mercennarii*) is of course day-labourers (*laboriosi, operarii, operae*).⁷⁶ The Greeks referred to a non-servile (agricultural) worker as πένης ('one who works for his living, day-labourer, poor man'); μισθουργός ('hired workman'); μισθωτός ('hireling, hired servant'); μίσθιος ('hired labourer, servant, mercenary'); ἔριθος ('day-labourer, hired servant, mower, reaper'); θής ('serf, bondsman, hired labourer'); σύργαστρος ('day-labourer'); or χερνητικός ('day-labourer, the proletariat').⁷⁷ The Hebrew word for a day-labourer or hired worker was שכיר.⁷⁸ Such a worker could also be hired for periods longer than a day, and was known as a שכיר שנה when hired for a full year.⁷⁹ It was not uncommon in ancient Palestine for workers to hire themselves out for a three-year period.⁸⁰ Even so, it seems that in ancient Palestine hired agricultural workers consisted mostly of day-labourers.⁸¹ Another Hebrew word for an agricultural labourer was אכר, usually translated as 'ploughman' or 'husbandman'.⁸² The exact position and status of the latter group of workers is uncertain, but they seem to have worked both for others and in a semi-feudal capacity for their employers.⁸³

The services of dispossessed peasants, *obaeratii*, day-labourers, and other 'freelancing' workers were typically required on large estates during laborious periods, especially at harvest time.⁸⁴ Hiring non-servile workers for harvesting work, especially reaping, was common practice and an accepted fact throughout the Roman Empire, including first-century Palestine.⁸⁵ In the fourth century, Greco-Roman authors typically presume that reapers were non-servile workers. Discussing the Roman world in general, Garnsey writes: 'freeholders, tenant-farmers, and the landless poor of the rural and urban centres all made major contributions of [agricultural] labour, and in all cases on a temporary basis'.⁸⁶ The distinction between these different categories was fluid.⁸⁷ Again, it is worth quoting Garnsey: 'It can be agreed that tenant-farmers, freedmen employees and hired labourers were heterogeneous groups who occupy no fixed point on the continuum [...] the several categories which make up the free [i.e. non-servile] rural labour force were

⁷⁵ Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 41; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 143.

⁷⁶ E. van Eck, *The Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet* (Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016) 27; Aberbach, *Labor*, 166; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 80, 263.

⁷⁷ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 688, 800, 1136, 1137, 1359, 1731, 1988.

⁷⁸ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 969; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 25.

⁷⁹ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 25; cf. Lev 25.50, 53; Isa 16.14; 21.16.

⁸⁰ Aberbach, *Labor*, 169.

⁸¹ Aberbach, *Labor*, 166; cf. Van Eck, *The Parables*, 27.

⁸² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Enhanced Lexicon*, 38.

⁸³ See Aberbach, *Labor*, 168–9; cf. Isa 61:5.

⁸⁴ J.-J. Aubert, *Business Managers in Ancient Rome: A Social and Economic Study of Institores, 200 B.C. – A.D. 250* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 21; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 163; Toutain, *The Economic Life*, 278; Burford, *Land and Labor*, 183, 191; Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 136; Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 85; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 288, 289; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 79; Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 93; cf. Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.2–3; *P.Cair.Zen.* 4.59748, 59827; *P.Mich.* 3.200.

⁸⁵ Brunt, 'Labour', 713; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 84; cf. John 4:36.

⁸⁶ Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 43; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 145; cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 7, 8, 28, 51; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 25; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 289, 292.

⁸⁷ E. C. Welskopf, 'Free Labour in the City of Athens', *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980) 23; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 92.

separated by fluid boundaries which were frequently crossed.⁸⁸ In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Latin word *colonus* can mean either ‘farmer’ or ‘tenant’.⁸⁹ One can imagine, for example, the same individual acting as a tenant on his appropriated plot, helping a neighbouring peasant reap his harvest, and occasionally working as a day-labourer on a large estate.

4. Harvests in Ancient Palestine

The emphasis in Q 10.2 is on the harvest, given that the word ‘harvest’ (θερισμός) is repeated no less than three times in this short saying.⁹⁰ All three occurrences of θερισμός in Q 10.2 can reference either the crop being harvested or the process of harvesting that crop.⁹¹ It is further possible to understand the logion as intending both meanings simultaneously. Let us first consider the crop being harvested, before turning to the process of harvesting. Most commonly, θερισμός refers to the harvesting of grain, that is, the seeds of wheat and other cereals.⁹² However, it can also refer to any crop being harvested, including fruit.⁹³ Deuteronomy 8.8 describes Canaan, which corresponds geographically to later Palestine, as ‘a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey’.⁹⁴ Wheat and barley, to which one may add millet, are mentioned first because cereals were the primary field crops in Palestine.⁹⁵ Out of these, wheat constituted the staple food, while barley was known as the food of animals and the poor.⁹⁶ In Galilee, adequate rainfall made barley unnecessary, which is why they mainly cultivated wheat.⁹⁷

Some of the species of wheat favoured in Palestine included *triticum monococcum* (einkorn), *triticum dicoccum* (emmer or kussemet), *triticum durum* (hard wheat), and *triticum aestivum* (bread wheat).⁹⁸ These cereals were used to bake bread, cook porridge or gruel, and make beer.⁹⁹ Grain was the most common produce to be stored in peasant houses, as well as the large storehouses of the political and socio-economic elite.¹⁰⁰ In addition to eating grain raw or parched, the grain could be ground using either a mortar and pestle to

⁸⁸ Garnsey, ‘Non-Slave Labour’, 34, 38; cf. *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 135, 139.

⁸⁹ Garnsey, ‘Non-Slave Labour’, 38; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 139.

⁹⁰ Horsley, *Whoever Hears You*, 242; Fleddermann, Q, 429; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 281.

⁹¹ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1978) 416; Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 281; see J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains, Volume 1: Introduction & Domains* (2nd ed., New York: United Bible Societies, 1996) 516, domains 43.14 and 43.15.

⁹² Cf. J. Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed., Oak Harbor: Logos, 1997) domain 2546; Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 516, domain 43.14.

⁹³ Cf. W. A. Williams, ‘Agriculture’, *Lexham Theological Wordbook* (ed. D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, and R. Hurst; Bellingham: Lexham, 2014) s.v. agriculture; Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 793; Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, domain 2546.

⁹⁴ ESV; see also Ezek 27:17.

⁹⁵ See Borowski, *Daily Life*, 28–9.

⁹⁶ P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (LAI; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 94, 95; cf. 1 Kgs 4.28 (MT 5.8); Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 103, 107, 114. It is important to note that barley was more important than wheat during earlier periods (Borowski, *Agriculture*, 7).

⁹⁷ Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 103.

⁹⁸ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 94.

⁹⁹ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 7, 89, 92; *Daily Life*, 28; Dever, *The Lives*, 170; cf. Deut 8.9.

¹⁰⁰ See Borowski, *Agriculture*, 71–83; *Daily Life*, 72, 111; cf. Q 12.24, 33–4.

produce a pulp that was used for various dishes, or grinding stones to produce flour for baking bread.¹⁰¹ Grinding grain to produce flour was a daily activity commonly performed by women and slaves.¹⁰²

Olives and grapes share the second position when it comes to the popularity of produce in ancient Palestine.¹⁰³ Grain, wine, and oil are commonly associated in the Hebrew Scriptures, probably because they were the most popular produce.¹⁰⁴ Olive trees were cultivated in olive groves, mainly for oil, and grapevines were grown in vineyards, mainly for wine.¹⁰⁵ Grapes and olives were usually cultivated on mountains and hills, which meant that arable land remained available for the cultivation of cereals.¹⁰⁶ The hilly terrain of Palestine necessitated agricultural innovation. The valleys might have been suitable for field crops, but the hills were less than ideal.¹⁰⁷ The slopes of these hills were put to effective use by constructing terraces with levelled ground (or strips that elevate gradually) and planting fruit trees on these artificial plots, including olives and grapes.¹⁰⁸ Some grapevines were planted in mixed orchards with other trees, although vineyards were much more common.¹⁰⁹ Olive oil had multiple uses, including culinary, medicinal, cosmetic, fuelling lamps, anointing kings, and offering libation.¹¹⁰ Wine was the most common beverage in Palestine, sometimes even outperforming water, which was often contaminated.¹¹¹ Together with cereals, wine and olive oil were produced in bulk by wealthier and elite landowners, exported, and sold to foreigners.¹¹² In addition to making wine, grapes could be eaten as they were, pressed to make grape juice, used to make vinegar, and dried to make raisins.¹¹³ In modern Palestine, wealthier peasant families tend to also prepare grape molasses, jam, and marmalade for the winter.¹¹⁴ Olives were initially only used to make oil, but started being eaten raw when pickling or salting was introduced during the Greco-Roman period.¹¹⁵

Other fruit trees were often combined in the same terrace or in an orchard near the house and included trees of pomegranate, apple, fig, sycamore, apricot, carob, date, blackberry and black mulberry.¹¹⁶ Apart from being eaten or squeezed for juice, these fruits were also used to make dried fruit (which was sometimes pressed into cakes),

¹⁰¹ Aberbach, *Labor*, 4; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 93; Dever, *The Lives*, 170; cf. Lev 23.14; 1 Sam 17.17; 2 Kgs 4.42; Q 17.2.

¹⁰² Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 108; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 94; Borowski, *Daily Life*, 73, 124; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 102; cf. Isa 47.1–2.

¹⁰³ Cf. Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 99; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 105; Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 108, 110, 114; Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Deut 11.14; Hos 2.24; cf. M. Silver, *Prophets and Markets: The Political Economy of Ancient Israel* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983) 23; Dever, *The Lives*, 170.

¹⁰⁵ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 7, 103, 118, 119; *Daily Life*, 29, 71; see King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 95–101.

¹⁰⁶ Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 107, 109; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 95, 98.

¹⁰⁷ Borowski, *Daily Life*, 70.

¹⁰⁸ Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 107, 109, 111–12; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 17; *Daily Life*, 70, 109. Rising strips were much more common in Galilee than terracing (Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 107–8).

¹⁰⁹ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 103.

¹¹⁰ Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 39, 80; Silver, *Prophets and Markets*, 16–17; cf. Exod 25.6; Lev 2.4–7; Num 6.15; 1 Kgs 17.12–13; 1 Chr 12.40–1; Eccl 10.1; Isa 1.6; Ezek 16.13; Mic 6.15.

¹¹¹ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 101.

¹¹² King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 194; see Silver, *Prophets and Markets*, 13, 16–17, 23–4; cf. 1 Kgs 5.20–5; 2 Chr 2.9; Ezra 3.7; Ezek 27.17; Hos 12.2.

¹¹³ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 113.

¹¹⁴ Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 81.

¹¹⁵ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 123.

¹¹⁶ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 7, 101, 103, 114–17, 126–131; *Daily Life*, 29, 70, 71, 109, 118; see King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 94, 103–6.

marmalade-like products, honey-like syrup, and even alcoholic drinks.¹¹⁷ Quite often, the groves of fruit trees also included nut trees, like pistachio, walnut, pine nut, and almond.¹¹⁸ A very popular category of field crops was legumes, which included fenugreek, lentils, peas, fava beans, broad beans, chickpeas, bitter vetch, and grass-peas.¹¹⁹ Besides legumes, other vegetables were also grown, often in the same groves as the fruit trees or in vegetable gardens near the house, including melons, carrots, gourds, cucumbers, garlic, musk, onions, and leeks.¹²⁰ Other agricultural produce included sesame and flax seeds, as well as spices like cumin, coriander, and dill.¹²¹ This general picture is confirmed by the account of Sinuhe, an Egyptian official who settled in Yaa (probably Canaan) around 2000–1900 BCE: ‘Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more wine than water. Plentiful was its honey, abundant its olives. Every (kind of) fruit was on its trees. Barley was there, and emmer [a species of wheat]’.¹²² For the most part, the need for additional help during harvest time applied only to olives, grapes, and cereals, especially wheat. Given that *θερισμός* most commonly refers to the harvesting of grain (see above), it is likely that a cereal harvest would have been foremost in the minds of those listening to Q 10.2. However, the capacity of *θερισμός* to reference the harvesting of any produce (see above) means that a few of these listeners might also have called to mind grape and olive harvests.

The Israelite-Judean people longed for a time when agricultural produce would be harvested throughout the year, so that ‘the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed’.¹²³ In reality, however, there were months when nothing was harvested, due mainly to the rainfall patterns.¹²⁴ According to King and Stager, ‘Palestine has only two seasons – the dry season in summer, from May-June through September, when there is usually no rain; and the wet season from mid-October through March, with most of Palestine’s rainfall occurring between November and February’.¹²⁵ Since rainfall increased moving north, Galilee received much more rain than Judea, with Upper Galilee receiving the most rain.¹²⁶

Within the wet season, different types of rain predictably fell during certain times of the year, which determined the agricultural calendar.¹²⁷ As a result, different types of produce were harvested at different times, as the Gezer Calendar, discovered in Judea and dating to the time of Solomon, indicates:

- 1 two months of ingathering (olives)/ two months
- 2 of sowing (cereals)/ two months of late sowing (legumes and vegetables)
- 3 a month of hoeing weeds (for hay)
- 4 a month of harvesting barley
- 5 a month of harvesting (wheat) and measuring (grain)

¹¹⁷ Borowski, *Daily Life*, 29, 70.

¹¹⁸ Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 86; see Borowski, *Agriculture*, 131–3; *Daily Life*, 29, 71; cf. Gen 43.11.

¹¹⁹ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 93–7; *Daily Life*, 28.

¹²⁰ J. I. Packer, M. C. Tenney, and W. White, *Daily Life in Bible Times* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980) 107; see Borowski, *Agriculture*, 135–9; *Daily Life*, 29, 71, 109, 118, 124.

¹²¹ See King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 106–7; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 97–9; *Daily Life*, 28; cf. Isa 28.27.

¹²² J. A. Wilson, ‘Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts’, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed. with supplement; ed. J. B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 3–36, at 19; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 85.

¹²³ Amos 9.13, ESV; cf. Lev 26.5.

¹²⁴ Cf. Deut 11.14.

¹²⁵ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 86; cf. Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 22–3; Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 99.

¹²⁶ Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 103; Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 99.

¹²⁷ See King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 86–9; cf. Deut 11:14.

- 6 two months of grape harvesting
 7 a month of ingathering summer fruit¹²⁸

The months listed here add up to twelve, constituting a full calendar year.¹²⁹ According to this calendar, seven months of the year were spent harvesting and gathering produce, including two months for olives, one month for barley, one month for wheat, two months for grapes, and one month for fruit. With the help of other sources, including Israel's feast calendar celebrating specific harvests, these periods can be determined more precisely as follows: spring equinox to late April harvesting barley; late April to late May harvesting wheat; June and July harvesting grapes; late July to late August collecting summer fruit; and late August to late October gathering in olives.¹³⁰ Within these window periods, the same crops might ripen at different times on separate farms, depending on the weather and when they were planted.¹³¹ Differences in climate throughout ancient Palestine also accounted for regional variations to the agricultural calendar.¹³² Since different produce ripens in different months of the year, and the same produce often ripens at different times in different regions and on separate farms during those months, non-servile farm workers could potentially find work and food throughout the seven-month harvesting season.¹³³ In the Roman world generally, workers could earn enough during the harvesting season to survive during the off season.¹³⁴ They could also make ends meet during the off season by performing other tasks, like weeding and hoeing, especially on vineyards, which required a lot of additional labour at certain times during the off season.¹³⁵ Despite these opportunities, the precariousness of being a hired agricultural labourer was amplified by the seasonality and availability of work.¹³⁶ It was customary at the time to calculate the size of the return in relation to the amount of seed that had been sown in the first place.¹³⁷ For example, Columella hardly recalls any harvest greater than a four-fold yield in most of Italy.¹³⁸ According to Oakman, first-century Palestine on average produced a fivefold yield, compared to modern yields of thirty to fortyfold.¹³⁹ Biblical returns of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold are probably exaggerations.¹⁴⁰

5. Harvesting Work in Ancient Palestine

Let us turn now to the process of harvesting, that is, the actual work of securing the harvest. This harvesting process involved several different activities. In the case of cereals, for example, these activities included reaping, binding, collecting, transporting, threshing, and winnowing.¹⁴¹ In the case of grapes and olives, threshing and winnowing would be

¹²⁸ Translation from Borowski, *Daily Life*, 27; see King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 87–8; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 32–44.

¹²⁹ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 87–8; Borowski, *Daily Life*, 28.

¹³⁰ Borowski, *Daily Life*, 28.

¹³¹ Cf. Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 25, 40; Skydsgaard, 'Non-Slave Labour', 69.

¹³² Borowski, *Agriculture*, 57, 110.

¹³³ Cf. Arnal, *Village Scribes*, 110; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 69–70, 73–4, 77.

¹³⁴ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 77, 88.

¹³⁵ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 288.

¹³⁶ Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 42; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 144; Aberbach, *Labor*, 166.

¹³⁷ Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 281.

¹³⁸ Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 281 n. 275; cf. Columella, *Rust.* 3.3.4.

¹³⁹ Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 100.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., Gen 26:12; Matt 13:23; cf. Roth, *The Parables in Q*, 281 n. 275.

¹⁴¹ See Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 135–8.

replaced by other activities, including primarily pressing.¹⁴² In economic terms, agricultural tasks can be broadly divided into front-end activities, like ploughing and reaping, and back-end activities, like binding, transporting, pressing, threshing, and winnowing.¹⁴³ Out of these activities, the word *θερισμός* denotes reaping in particular, which sometimes included gathering the wheat in bundles as well.¹⁴⁴ Reaping activities were further categorised based on whether the stalks were cut near the top, just below the heads of grain, or near the bottom, just above the ground, and whether there were one or two rounds of cutting.¹⁴⁵ A second round of cutting was sometimes necessary to collect the stalks, which were often used as fodder. With high cutting, the grain heads were often carried away in baskets, and the stalks that were left over in the field had to be cut during a second round, which was not at all urgent and earned much less wages.¹⁴⁶ With low cutting, the grain heads could be separated from the stalks in the field during a second round of cutting, but it was much more common to transport whole sheaves to the threshing floor, sometimes using pack animals like donkeys, mules, and camels.¹⁴⁷ Low cutting was probably more popular in ancient Palestine.¹⁴⁸ Small fields could be harvested without any tools by simply uprooting the whole plant, but more commonly a sickle was used.¹⁴⁹ Depending on the skill of the worker and the conditions of the field, one reaper could reap between one-third and three-quarters of a Roman *iugerum* per day, with one *iugerum* being roughly equivalent to a quarter hectare.¹⁵⁰ Timing was very important when it came to harvesting. On the one hand, waiting too long could lead to loss, either due to birds and animals eating the crops, or due to the produce spoiling or falling from the stalks or trees.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, harvesting could happen prematurely when the produce was not ripe yet, which likewise resulted in significant losses.¹⁵² Inclement weather was also a constant threat, leading some agronomists to advise reaping earlier rather than later, allowing some ripening to happen after the harvest.¹⁵³

Reaping was extremely hard physical labour.¹⁵⁴ For hours on end, the reaper had to swing hard with a hand-held sickle to cut the stalks, which required being constantly bent over with an arched back.¹⁵⁵ The replacement of the sickle with the scythe in later periods meant that physical strength was a requirement for reaping.¹⁵⁶ Even if men were almost exclusively responsible for reaping in antiquity, there is evidence that at least some women in the Mediterranean and elsewhere also partook in this back-breaking work.¹⁵⁷ More typically, however, women would focus their attention on the back-end of the harvesting process.¹⁵⁸ In addition, women were typically involved in

¹⁴² See Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 109–110; cf. Jer 48.33.

¹⁴³ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 11, 102.

¹⁴⁴ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 793; Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 516, domain 43.14; Swanson 1997, domain 2546.

¹⁴⁵ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 103–4.

¹⁴⁶ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 104.

¹⁴⁷ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 103–4, 106–7.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 136.

¹⁴⁹ Borowski, *Agriculture*, 58, 59; Dever, *The Lives*, 199.

¹⁵⁰ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 14–15, 76; cf. Varro, *Rust.* 1.16.5.

¹⁵¹ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 288; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 25.

¹⁵² Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 25–6.

¹⁵³ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 27, 28, 33–4.

¹⁵⁴ N. Fisher, 'Work and Leisure', *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Ancient Greece* (ed. P. Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 193–218, at 193; see Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 3–4, 10, 14, 35, 79.

¹⁵⁵ Dever, *The Lives*, 199; Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 38, 102, 136.

¹⁵⁶ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 136.

¹⁵⁷ Dever, *The Lives*, 199; see Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 38–40.

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 102, 136.

'service' activities like cooking and weaving, meaning that they were effectively employed as support staff for labourers, who needed to be housed, fed, and clothed.¹⁵⁹ If measured by modern and ancient servile practices, peasant children started helping out with farming activities at a young age.¹⁶⁰ The physical toll of the labour was not made any easier by the horrid conditions, especially the heat of the sun and the hindrance of insects, like the swarms of gnats in Palestine, as well as flies, mosquitoes, and wasps.¹⁶¹ Even in modern Palestine, sunstroke is not uncommon among villagers.¹⁶² Roman mosaics, frescoes, and coins typically depict harvest workers with wide-brimmed hats and traditional headgear as protection against the sun, and a mosaic of a harvester wearing a hat was discovered at a synagogue in Sepphoris, Galilee.¹⁶³

For the most part, estate owners and managers treated non-servile workers and day-labourers far worse than slaves, regarding their position as inferior to that of slaves.¹⁶⁴ Hired workers tended to get the heavy and unhealthy work, since slaves were more valuable as the landowner's acquired property.¹⁶⁵ Varro writes: 'With regard to these [referring to *obaerarii*] in general this is my opinion: it is more profitable to work unwholesome lands with hired hands than with slaves; and even in wholesome places it is more profitable thus to carry out the heavier farm operations, such as storing the products of the vintage or harvest.'¹⁶⁶ On the upside, Roman agronomists emphasise the importance of providing adequate food, clothing, and accommodation to slaves in order to keep them content and thereby maximise productivity.¹⁶⁷ Yet hired workers were easily let go when circumstances like bad weather interfered with harvesting.¹⁶⁸ The day-labourer would customarily not get any payment if the work for that day was cancelled.¹⁶⁹ In fact, there is evidence that hired workers would at times simply get paid less than the agreed wage or not get paid at all after completing their work.¹⁷⁰ Such practices made regulations like the one in Deuteronomy 24.14–15 necessary: 'Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it'.¹⁷¹ The need for this directive indicates that hired workers were exploited, even in earlier times, but probably much more so in the first century CE. The same is indicated by a number of Egyptian

¹⁵⁹ See R. Saller, 'Women, Slaves, and the Economy of the Roman Household', *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (ed. D. L. Balch and C. Osiek; Religion, Marriage, and Family; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003) 185–204, at 192–3, 196, 199.

¹⁶⁰ Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 68, 91; Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 68.

¹⁶¹ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 4, 33–8, 101; Borowski, *Agriculture*, 61; *Daily Life*, 115.

¹⁶² Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 95.

¹⁶³ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 35–6.

¹⁶⁴ White, *Roman Farming*, 348, 352.

¹⁶⁵ White, *Roman Farming*, 359–360, 368; Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 41; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 143; Fiensy, *The Social History*, 77, 91; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 28; Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 85; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 307; Rollens, *Framing Social Criticism*, 156.

¹⁶⁶ Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.3, translation from https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Varro/de_Re_Rustica/1*.html.

¹⁶⁷ E. Dal Lago and C. Katsari 'Ideal Models of Slave Management in the Roman World and in the Ante-Bellum American South', *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern* (ed. E. Dal Lago and C. Katsari; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 187–213, at 190, 204.

¹⁶⁸ White, *Roman Farming*, 348, 372.

¹⁶⁹ Treggiari, 'Urban Labour', 52.

¹⁷⁰ G. Glotz, *Ancient Greece at Work: An Economic History of Greece from the Homeric Period to the Roman Conquest* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1926) 32, 33; De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 76; see Aberbach, *Labor*, 167, 169–170; cf. Jer 22.13; Mal 3.5; Sir 7.20–1; 34.22.

¹⁷¹ NIV; cf. Lev 19.13; Matt 20.8.

papyri, like the letter written around 250 BCE to Zenon, manager of Apollonios' large estates, by a vinedresser named Menon: 'Three dr(agmas) are still owed me for the [month] of Hathyr as wages. Therefore, please give orders that [the wages] be paid to me. For you know that I do not, as others do, have [other income] – neither a vegetable garden nor anything else, but rely solely on my wages'.¹⁷² Shaw comments as follows about harvesting work in the ancient world as a whole: 'The erratic nature of the labour demands created uncertainties about employment, wages, and work conditions that led to serious contentions between employers and those seeking employment'.¹⁷³ What Garnsey refers to as 'the seasonality and irregularity of agricultural work' must have been the cause of some anxiety for these labourers, who would have received at least some comfort from the message of Jesus in Q 12.22–31.¹⁷⁴

On large estates, the manager and resident staff would often live on the property itself, which meant that the house and barracks were usually very close to the field.¹⁷⁵ First-century Roman agronomist, Columella, who farmed with olives, grapes, and grain, resided in a comfortable home apart from the farmhouse that held his slaves, together with facilities like a threshing floor, press rooms, stalls, pens, a mill, and bakery ovens.¹⁷⁶ Such a farmhouse had more than enough space to house a sizable group of day-labourers during harvest. Columella further recommended building a sizable kitchen with a high ceiling and enough natural light so that the slave household could rest and sleep there.¹⁷⁷ Archaeological excavations in western Samaria have uncovered farmsteads that clearly separate the owner or manager's dwelling from accommodation for labourers.¹⁷⁸ There is also some evidence of towers standing in the fields of ancient Palestine, where entire families could live and work during harvest time.¹⁷⁹ These towers were particularly popular in vineyards and were used to store farming equipment, but also functioned as housing for workers during the harvest season, when they were expected to guard the harvest against pilfering.¹⁸⁰ Sometimes, non-servile, non-resident workers were also allowed to stay on the premises for the duration of the harvest, especially on large estates.¹⁸¹ For workers who were homeless, this would have been a very welcome supplementary benefit.¹⁸² Agricultural workers who entered into longer contracts were customarily provided with lodging.¹⁸³ These individuals were sometimes left to do as they pleased on the farm and only paid at the end of these contracts.¹⁸⁴

Whether provided with shelter or not, workers were expected to keep the same hours that a traditional peasant would, meaning that they had to be at the field at daybreak and

¹⁷² PSI 4.414; translation from Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 402; cf., e.g., also *P.Cair.Zen.* 3.59317; *P.Zen.Pestm.* 37; *P.Lond.* 7.2061; *PSI* 4.421.

¹⁷³ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 35; cf. Glotz, *Ancient Greece at Work*, 33; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 111; Rollens, *Framing Social Criticism*, 156.

¹⁷⁴ Garnsey, 'Non-Slave Labour', 42; *Cities, Peasants and Food*, 144; cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 51; Aberbach, *Labor*, 166; Fisher, 'Work and Leisure', 201.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Treggiari, 'Urban Labour', 50, 51; Brunt, 'Labour', 709; Aubert, *Business Managers*, 175, 181; Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 287; Joshel, *Slavery*, 124, 136–40, 176; cf. Columella, *Rust.* 1.6.7–8; Varro, *Rust.* 1.13.2.

¹⁷⁶ Joshel, *Slavery*, 173.

¹⁷⁷ Columella, *Rust.* 1.6.3; Dal Lago and Katsari, 'Ideal Models', 190.

¹⁷⁸ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 287.

¹⁷⁹ Dever, *The Lives*, 196; cf. Isa 5:1–7.

¹⁸⁰ Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 155, 287, 296, 321.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 111; Aubert, *Business Managers*, 175, 181.

¹⁸² Cf. Burford, *Land and Labor*, 187; Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 91.

¹⁸³ Aberbach, *Labor*, 169.

¹⁸⁴ Aberbach, *Labor*, 169.

could only leave at twilight.¹⁸⁵ It was common, especially at harvest time, for hired workers to be provided with lunch (or brunch) during the day, sometimes followed by a brief siesta.¹⁸⁶ Lunch could be eaten at the associated dwelling or in the relevant field, under the shade of a tree if one was available, and would typically include foodstuff like bread, pulse, yoghurt, grain, cheese, (dried) fruit, vegetables, and water.¹⁸⁷ Food and water were often specified as an expectation to be provided by the estate manager or landowner in harvesting contracts, together with beer or wine on the last day of work.¹⁸⁸ Consider, for example, this excerpt from a contract that was discovered at Hermopolis, Egypt, and dates to 125 CE:

54 arourai, 6 arourai to each. As the wages for reaping, you will give to [each of] us 5/6ths of an artaba [i.e., about 3.75 modii] of wheat for each aroura [i.e., about a iugerum]; and after the harvest you will measure out the above-mentioned wage for the above-mentioned aroura, on the condition that you, Eudaimon [i.e., the landowner], are responsible for gathering the sheaves of wheat. You will also supply us with drinking water until we finish the reaping of the said arourai of land. [...] The above-mentioned wheat you will pay to us according to the Athenian sixth-part measure, and in addition you will give us a *keramion* of beer on the last day.¹⁸⁹

This corresponds to the portrayal in Ruth 2.8–9, 14, where workers have ready access to food and water:

Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn. [...] And at mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.’ So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.¹⁹⁰

Workers were also typically allowed to eat from the produce being harvested.¹⁹¹ Consider, for example, this ruling from the Mishnah: ‘One who brought his workers into the field, when he is not obligated to provide for them, they may eat and be exempt from tithes. If, however, he is obligated to provide for them they may eat of the figs one at a time, but not from the basket, nor from the large basket, nor from the storage yard’.¹⁹² On the other hand, harvesting contracts from Roman Egypt commonly specified that workers were not allowed to steal from the produce, and that thievery would result in deductions from their final payment.¹⁹³ If they were not allowed to eat from the crops, the estate manager or landowner was expected in these contracts to provide food.¹⁹⁴ In fact, it was a ubiquitous expectation during different periods and regions that the estate manager, tenant farmer, or landowner would provide food, drink, and temporary shelter to

¹⁸⁵ White, *Roman Farming*, 362; Aberbach, *Labor*, 57, 174; cf. B. Meş 83a.

¹⁸⁶ White, *Roman Farming*, 363; Borowski, *Daily Life*, 115; cf. Cato, *Agr.* 56–9.

¹⁸⁷ See Borowski, *Daily Life*, 72–4, 115–6.

¹⁸⁸ See Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 74, 77, 83, 217–19.

¹⁸⁹ P.Sarap 51; translation from Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 74.

¹⁹⁰ ESV.

¹⁹¹ Aberbach, *Labor*, 101, 167.

¹⁹² m. Ma’as. 3.2, translation from www.sefaria.org; cf. Deut 23.25; B. Meş 83a.

¹⁹³ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 74.

¹⁹⁴ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 77.

hired harvesters.¹⁹⁵ Contracted harvesters could be paid in kind or in cash.¹⁹⁶ Shaw writes: ‘A harvester’s entire reimbursement was usually a per diem payment that was an amalgam of money, payments in kind of the produce itself, and living arrangements during the harvest that included shelter, food, and drink.’¹⁹⁷ Harvesting contracts from Roman Egypt show that labourers received between one-and-a-half and three times more money or crops for reaping than they did for other agricultural work.¹⁹⁸ In Syria-Palestine, day-labourers could earn up to four times the typical daily fee of one denarius for reaping and harvesting work, especially during periods when such labour was in high demand due to shortages of available temporary farm workers.¹⁹⁹ It is likely, however, that day-labourers received less payment than contract workers.²⁰⁰ It was much more common for estate managers or other responsible parties (like *procuratores* or *actores*) to enter into these contracts with seasonal workers than for landowners to do so.²⁰¹

Slaves and other resident workers were typically provided with clothing and shoes in addition to food.²⁰² Some wage earners were also lucky enough to receive clothing and shoes, especially on large estates.²⁰³ Cato the Elder, for example, writes: ‘Clothing allowance for the [farm]hands: A tunic 3½ feet long and a blanket every other year. When you issue the tunic or the blanket, first take up the old one and have patchwork made of it. A stout pair of wooden shoes should be issued every other year’.²⁰⁴

6. Findings

The aim of this study was to illuminate the literal or ‘image’ side of Q 10.2 by considering its setting in first-century Palestine. After arguing that the imagined farm of Q 10.2 is a large agricultural estate, it was determined that such estates were a prominent feature of first-century Palestine. It was common to use non-servile labourers on these estates during harvest time, especially for reaping. These wage earners consisted mainly of struggling peasants, dispossessed peasants, tenant farmers, and the poor in general. Although Q 10.2 primarily calls the grain harvest to mind, it does not prevent the audience from imagining a grape or olive harvest. Since different produce ripened in different months of the year in ancient Palestine, and the same produce often ripened at different times in different regions, non-servile farm workers could potentially find harvesting work and food throughout Palestine’s seven-month harvesting season. Yet harvesting work was essentially seasonal, irregular, and unpredictable. From among the different harvesting activities in antiquity, Q 10.2 is about reaping. Reaping was extremely hard physical labour that lasted from sunrise to sunset under very unpleasant conditions. What is more, these workers were often treated worse than slaves and were vulnerable to

¹⁹⁵ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 83, 219; e.g. *P.Sarap* 51.

¹⁹⁶ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 76, 77, 82.

¹⁹⁷ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 84.

¹⁹⁸ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 83, 88, 90.

¹⁹⁹ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 83; cf. m. ‘Abot 2.15. Aberbach (*Labor*, 167) claims that the pay of day-labourers was low, but fails to elaborate.

²⁰⁰ See Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 87–8; cf. Egyptian ostrakon BGU 7 1536.

²⁰¹ Shaw, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 77.

²⁰² M. Massey and P. Moreland, *Slavery in Ancient Rome* (Inside the Ancient World; Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1992) 29; Joshel, *Slavery*, 57, 123–4, 132–6, 173, 175, 177; see Saller, ‘Women, Slaves’, 192–3, 196, 199; Harrill, *Slaves*, 109–10; cf. Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.9, 16; 11.1.21; Cato, *Agr.* 5.2; 56–9; Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.7; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.34–7.

²⁰³ Cf. Burford, *Land and Labor*, 187, 198; Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 89; Joshel, *Slavery*, 57, 173.

²⁰⁴ Cato, *Agr.* 59, translation from https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De_Agricultura/B*.html; cf. also Homer, *Od.* 18.357–61.

exploitation by owners and managers. On the upside, the non-servile farmhands of large estates were typically provided with food, drink, shelter, and sometimes even clothing and shoes. These benefits were in addition to their wages, which could be paid in cash or in kind, or a combination of both. The wages for reaping were typically much higher than the usual fee for other occasional work performed by wage earners.

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