Did The Jews of 1st century Israel speak Greek or Aramaic?

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) ἤν δὲ καὶ επιγραφὴ γεγραμμένη ἐπ αὐτῷ γραμμασίν ελληνικοίς καὶ ρωμαϊκοίς καὶ εβραϊκοῖς οὔτος ἐστίν ο βασιλέως τῶν Ιουδαίων

Lu 23:38 (WH) ἤν δὲ καὶ επιγραφὴ ἐπ αὐτῷ ο βασιλεὺς τῶν Ιουδαίων οὔτος

Lu 23:38 (TR) ἤν δὲ καὶ επιγραφὴ γεγραμμένη ἐπ αὐτῷ γραμμασίν ελληνικοίς καὶ ρωμαϊκοίς καὶ εβραϊκοῖς οὔτος ἐστίν ο βασιλεὺς τῶν Ιουδαίων

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

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

28 (BYZ) καὶ ην μετ αὐτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εις ἱεροσαλημ και παρρησιαζομενος εν τω ονοματι του κυριου ησου

28 (WH) καὶ ην μετ αὐτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εις ἱεροσαλημ παρρησιαζομενος εν τω ονοματι του κυριου

28 (TR) καὶ ην μετ αὐτων εισπορευομενος και εκπορευομενος εν ἱεροσαλημ

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

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:
"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 Ἕλληνιστῆς (“Hellenist”):
1675 Ἕλληνιστῆς 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!

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) μελλὼν τε εισαγεσθαι εἰς τὴν παρεμβολὴν ὁ παύλος λέγει τῷ χιλιαρχῷ εἰ εξεστίν μοι εἰπεῖν πρὸς σε ὅ ὁ δὲ εφη Ἕλληνιστὶ γινώσκεις
Ac 21:37 (WH) μελλὼν τε εἰσαγεσθαι εἰς τὴν παρεμβολὴν ὁ παύλος λέγει
to χιλιαρχῳ εἰ εξέστιν μοι εἰπεῖν τι πρὸς σέ ο ὃς ἐφη ἐλληνιστὶ
gινοσκεῖς
Ac 21:37 (TR) μελλὼν τε εἰσαγεσθαι εἰς τὴν παρεμβολὴν ὁ παύλος λέγει
to χιλιαρχῳ εἰ εξέστιν μοι εἰπεῖν τι πρὸς σέ ο ὃς ἐφη ἐλληνιστὶ
gινοσκεῖς
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, Aceldama, that is to say, The field
of blood.

κρήτη δὲ διαπρεπής ἡ ἡγεμόνας ἡ ἄρα διαπρεπής ἡ ὁρισμένη κορίτες
dέν δὲ δεῖ χαρίστα παλαιός διαπρεπής βαρκάστρωμα ἡμῶν κορίτες
(Peshitta)
Ac 1:19 (BYZ) καὶ γνωστὸν ἐγενέτο πασίν τοῖς κατοίκοι σιν ἱεροσαλήμ
ωστε κλήθηναι το χώριον εκεῖνο τη ἱδία διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν
akeldama tout estin χωριον αιματος
Ac 1:19 (WH) καὶ γνωστὸν ἐγενέτο πασίν τοῖς κατοίκοι σιν ἱεροσαλήμ
ωστε κλήθηναι το χώριον εκεῖνο τη διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν akeldamaχ
tout estin 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 Akeldama Akeldama ak-el-dam-ah’

of Aramaic origin, corresponding to 02506 and 01818 הַכְּלֶדָּם; ; n pr loc
AV-Aceldama 1; 1

Aceldama =" 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 ἐλληνισταί - “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 1st century Jews in Palestine.

Ac 21:40 επιτρεψαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ οἶκος εστῶς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν κατεστάνεν τῇ χείρι τῷ λαῷ πολλῆς δὲ σιγής γενομένης προσέφωνε τῇ εβραΐδι διάλεκτῳ λέγων

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,

Ac 22:2 ἀκουσάντες δὲ οὗτοι τῇ εβραΐδι διάλεκτῳ προσέφωνε αὐτοῖς μᾶλλον παρεσχον ἡσυχιαν καὶ φήσιν

Ac 22:2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Ac 26:14 παντῶν δὲ καταπεσόντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἡκοῦσα φωνὴν λαλοῦσαν πρὸς μὲ καὶ λεγοῦσαν τῇ εβραΐδι διάλεκτῳ σαουλ σαουλ τι με διώκεις σκληρον σοι πρὸς κεντρά λακτίζειν

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.
Thayers NT Greek Lexicon has the following entry for εβραῖς (translated “Hebrew”):

1446 εβραῖς 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

(& gazed) (Jesus) (to) (Simeon) (are) (you) (at him) (shall be called) (you) (son of Jonah)

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”).

* “Simeon” occurs 165 times in the Peshitta NT. The Greek equivalents “Σίμων” & “Σίμεων” (“Simon” & “Simeon”) occur only 82 times! Often the Greek Name, “Πέτρος”- “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 ερμηνευται 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!