**Hatred and Contempt: On the Historical Background of the Rivalry between Palestinian and Babylonian Jewry in the 3rd Century CE**

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It is through the prism of the Talmud that historians of early Judaism can cautiously shed light on certain phenomena in the social history of the Jewish community during the first centuries of the Common Era. Researchers have long emphasized the reciprocal nature of relations between Jews in Roman Palestine and those in Parthian and later in Sassanian Babylonia (that is, during the periods of the Mishna and the Talmud).[[1]](#footnote-1) While usually congenial and abundant,[[2]](#footnote-2) these relations also reveal the existence of strong tensions,[[3]](#footnote-3) which intensified during the second half of the 3rd century CE.

The deterioration of social relations at a given time generally suggests an historical context as at the source of the trouble. Our research therefore aims to identify several Talmudic and Midrashic texts that shed light on the differences between these two Jewish societies, in order to gain insights into their complexities. Although not exhaustive, our study will nevertheless consider some of the cardinal points of the subject,[[4]](#footnote-4) while suggesting a new line of research.

I

Most of the invective between these Babylonian and Palestinian Jews originated in the Land of Israel. As a number of sources indicate, most of the acrimony was usually directed towards the Babylonian Jews and rarely the reverse. Rav Kahana, a disciple of Rav [Abba bar Aïbou], the founder of the Babylonian rabbinical academy of Sura, left Babylonia on his master’s advice after inadvertently killing a Jewish informer.[[5]](#footnote-5) Historical research has shown that the Babylonian account of the events unfolding in Roman Palestine is biased, unlike the Jerusalem Talmud, which reconstructs the course of events with greater historical accuracy.[[6]](#footnote-6) This latter source recounts Rav Kahana’s wanderings in Galilee during which he had several altercations with ordinary Galilean Jews. According to the text, these Jews died after mocking Rav Kahana.[[7]](#footnote-7) He then decided to return to Babylonia, but not without first obtaining the permission of R. Yohanan, the greatest sage of his time [who died in 279] who was sitting in Tiberias. Presumably knowing that R. Yohanan would not allow him to leave the Land of Israel, Rav Kahana used resorted to a trick, posing the following question: ‘“A man who is hated by his mother, but whose father’s wife, who is not his mother, respects him, with whom should he reside?’ R. Yohanan replied, ‘He will go where he is respected.’ Rav Kahana immediately left [the Land of Israel]. R. Yohanan was then told that Kahana had returned to Babylonia.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The “mother” was none other than the Land of Israel, where Rav Kahana was very poorly received, while his “mother-in-law” represented the Jewish community of Babylonia, which was much more appreciative of him. The Jerusalem Talmud then recounts anecdote of R. Zeira,[[9]](#footnote-9) who was manhandled for no apparent reason by a Galilean butcher when he tried to buy some meat.[[10]](#footnote-10) The same passage continues by describing the misadventures of R. Yassa, who was beaten by a Galilean Jew while bathing in the Tiberias baths.[[11]](#footnote-11) It should be noted that in all three stories, the victims were Babylonian sages passing through the Land of Israel, and that it was clear that they were assaulted by their Galilean co-religionists because of their Babylonian origin.[[12]](#footnote-12) In the 3rd century, when R. Simlai, of Judean origin, went to Galilee to learn biblical hermeneutics and its art from R. Yonathan, the latter retorted: “I hold a tradition from my ancestors not to teach exegesis, neither to a Babylonian nor to a Southerner [Judean], for they are vulgar and poor in Torah.”[[13]](#footnote-13) R. Jeremiah, a native of Babylonia, working in the Land of Israel in the 4th century CE, considered Babylonian Jews inept (בבלאי טפשאי).[[14]](#footnote-14) This same sage was of the opinion that the verse in the Book of Lamentations (3:6) averring, “He has relegated me to dark regions like the dead, [asleep] forever,” refers to Babylonian study.[[15]](#footnote-15) According to R. Osh’aya and R. Itzhak, amoraim of the Land of Israel, the Palestinian sages are mutually affable, while those of Babylonia are mutually detrimental.[[16]](#footnote-16) R. Simon b. Laquish [Resh Laquish], who was swimming in the Jordan, refused Rabba bar bar Hanna the Babylonian’s outstretched hand to come out, exclaiming, “God, [that] I hate you [אלהא סנינא לכו].”[[17]](#footnote-17) Some Midrashic sources from Eretz Israel claim that it is the “pestilential” waters of the Euphrates which irrigate the Babylonian lands, leading them to represent only mourning and lamentation.[[18]](#footnote-18) According to R. Yohanan and Resh Laquish, Babylonia is none other than the vault of the dead from the Deluge, a place that relentlessly scorns the sages of the Torah.[[19]](#footnote-19) Resh Laquish is said to have exhorted a group of Babylonian Jews scouring the Tiberias market to disperse, while R. Yohanan pitied them.[[20]](#footnote-20)

II

We believe that the root of these reactions lies in several factors that were present in a specific historical context. First, it should be noted that texts of Judean/Galilean origin from the 3rd–4th centuries blame the Babylonian Jews for the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Thus, in the examples mentioned above, Resh Laquish justifies his enmity toward Rabba bar bar Hanna by claiming that if his Babylonian ancestors had all rallied to the movement to return to Zion during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Persian era (6th–5th centuries B.C.E. ), they would have been seen as silver that never decays. However, because they were only a tiny minority who left Babylonia, they are compared to cedar subject to putrefaction.[[21]](#footnote-21) Resh Laquish invoked a similar motif when forcing them to disperse in the Tiberias market, declaring: “When you came [lit: ascended/ascended in Persian times] you were not like a wall, whereas here you have become one!”[[22]](#footnote-22) The Jerusalem Talmud’s account of R. Zeira’s difficulties with the Galilean butcher[[23]](#footnote-23) has a variant in *Cant. Rabba,*[[24]](#footnote-24) in which the story of the very same event is related differently:

If the Jews [in the text: Israel] had gone up like a wall of Babylonia, the Temple would not have been destroyed [at this moment] a second time. R. Zeira went [lit: went out] to the market to buy an object/good [מק(ו)מא].[[25]](#footnote-25) He said to the shopkeeper: “weigh up, evaluate accurately.” The latter then retorted: “‘Will you not go from here, Babylonian, whose ancestors destroyed [the Temple] [לית את אזיל לן מן הכא בבליי די חרבון אבהתי],” at which point R. Zeira wondered: “How do my ancestors differ [overall] from his own”? He then went to the study house and heard R. Shila’s voice interpreting the verse '‘if it be a wall’ (*Cant.* 8) by saying: ‘If the Jews [in the text: Israel] had come up from exile [Gola/Babylonia] the Temple would not have been destroyed a second time.” R. Zeira then says: ‘a beautiful teaching delivered me this uncultivated merchant [in the text: עם הארץ]].”[[26]](#footnote-26)

This eloquent passage suggests that the accusation that Galilean Judaism levelled at the Babylonians concerning their share of responsibility for the destruction of the Second Temple was shared by both the rabbinical class and the popular strata. The very likely possibility that the general populace based their position on an identical teaching frequently given by the Sages reveals a great deal about the deep cleavages dividing the Galilean Jewish community from its Babylonian counterpart. We are inclined to refute the proposition because the factual historicity of the Galilean Jews' claim is also questionable. There are two main reasons why it is hard to detect an ounce of authenticity in it. First, how could the Babylonian Jewish community of the second half of the 3rd century be incriminated and slandered for the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE? Second, assuming that the Jewish community of Babylonia had indeed joined their counterparts in the Land of Israel *en masse* during the Second Temple period, it is unclear whether the outcome of the 66–73 conflict against Rome really have been any different,[[27]](#footnote-27) There seems to be no evidence to the contrary, as this question is more a matter of slander than of scientifically sound history.

Despite the fact that such an indictment is chimerical and historically implausible, the historian must verify any assertion by giving exclusive priority to contemporaneous sources. These sources reflect an ancient mentality that is both singular and bygone. Consequently, we need to examine in greater depth the question of how the factual political history of the Judeans was interwoven during the great Jewish revolt against Rome (66–73/4 CE). We will try to demonstrate that the specific quotidian difficulties of the 3rd century likely fueled an amplified history of mentalities over the centuries, radicalizing positions.

III

It is plausible that during the great revolt against Rome, the Jewish insurgents hoped that their co-religionists in Babylonia would come to their aid. Indeed, a text by Flavius Josephus recounts the famous speech made in the year 66 CE by King Agrippa II (27–92 CE), who did his utmost to dissuade the Jews from rising up against Rome. The Jewish monarch, a vassal of Rome, invoked numerous theological, military, political, and historical arguments. For example:[[28]](#footnote-28)

What allies do you hope for in this war? Will you draw them from uninhabitable lands? *For on the habitable earth, everything is Roman*, *unless your hopes extend beyond the Euphrates, and you hope to obtain help from the Adiabenians, who are of your race[[29]](#footnote-29) (οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης πάντες εἰσὶν Ῥωμαῖοι, εἰ μή τις ὑπὲρ Εὐφράτην ἐκτείνει τὰς ἐλπίδας καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς ὁμοφύλους οἴεται προσαμυνεῖν);* but they will not engage in such a great war for vain motives, and if they meditated such folly, Parthia would not allow them; for it is careful to maintain the truce concluded with Rome, and it would believe it was violating treaties if it allowed one of its tributaries to march against the Romans.

This text demonstrates that the Jews of Palestine, in particular the insurgents, were eager to open a second front against Rome. This would be possible thanks to the potential support of the Babylonian Jewish myriads,[[30]](#footnote-30) in particular the extremely numerous Jews of Adiabene,[[31]](#footnote-31) who were likely to jeopardize, or at least destabilize, Roman hegemony in the Levant. According to A. Schalit and many other researchers, the Roman Emperor Nero (54–68) believed that, by *imitatio Alexandri*, he was reincarnating the Hellenic conqueror.[[32]](#footnote-32) It was in Alexander’s footsteps – and in contravention of the peace signed by convenience with Tiridates in the spring of 63 CE[[33]](#footnote-33) – that Nero was preparing an all-out war to take over Armenia[[34]](#footnote-34) and, most likely, the entire Parthian kingdom.[[35]](#footnote-35) According to Schalit, the main factor hampering Nero’s plans for conquest was the outbreak of hostilities in Judea in 66 CE,[[36]](#footnote-36) including the famous debacle of the *Legio XII Fulminata* under the command of the Syrian legate Cestius Gallus on October/November 13.[[37]](#footnote-37) In fact, this defeat was a serious military setback for Rome.[[38]](#footnote-38) Unlike Nero, who failed to realize his invasion plans, Trajan was able to carry out his Parthian expedition on October 27, 113 CE. Like Nero, Trajan was afflicted by a “passion for glory” [to quote the Roman historian Cassius Dio], and claimed to be the son of Alexander of Macedon.[[39]](#footnote-39) Marie-Louise Chaumont has written on this subject:

Trajan’s exploits were crowned with the title of *Parthicus*. He still had to descend the Tigris towards the sea. On the way, he imposed his law on the Mesene and Characene rivers. But the Persian Gulf was to mark the extreme limit of his conquests, as age no longer allowed him to carry his arms all the way to India, like a new Alexander.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Should Trajan, in turn, have feared an uprising in Judea, which would have had a major impact on the course of military events? The answer to this question is probably negative, because from the time of Nero until the destruction of the Second Temple, no legions were encamped in the province of Judea,[[41]](#footnote-41) where only auxiliary cohorts made up the Roman forces present.[[42]](#footnote-42) The Roman province of Judea’s military vulnerability was rooted in this shortcoming, which forced Rome to hastily dispatch the *Legio XII Fulminata* from the province of Syria in an attempt to quell the Jewish uprising. The disastrous outcome of this military operation has already been mentioned. It was only after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE that the Romans, learning from this military failure, revised the deployment of their troops in Judea, positioning the *Legio X Fretensis* permanently in Jerusalem.[[43]](#footnote-43) M. Ulpius Traianus, Trajan's father, was ordered by Vespasian to lead the legion in 66 CE to suppress the Jewish revolt in Perea, now Jordan. In 73/74 CE, Trajan was also consul of the senatorial province of Syria, where he fought against Parthian incursions by amassing formidable troops along the border.[[44]](#footnote-44) Trajan’s son even served for many months as *tribunus militum on the* banks of the Euphrates.[[45]](#footnote-45) It was therefore as an experienced connoisseur of geostrategic issues, well aware of the military capacity of the Jews of Palestine to hinder a possible Roman military campaign against the Arsacid Parthians, that Trajan dealt with the problem once he became emperor. With the *Legio X Fretensis* stationed in Jerusalem since 70 CE, Trajan thought he had protected himself from a Jewish diversion. However, this time, a Jewish revolt of far greater geographical and strategic scope for Rome broke out in 115 CE, in Egypt, Cyrenaica, spreading to Cyprus and ending in 117 CE in Mesopotamia [Adiabene, Osroene], including Babylonia. These were precisely the regions from which Trajan seems to have recruited the army for his military campaign. This revolt of the essentially Hellenistic Jewish diaspora against Roman hegemony has merited the attention of many scholars,[[46]](#footnote-46) and it is not our intention to dwell on it here. On the other hand, Schalit’s subtle suggestion that the Jewish revolt of 115–117 CE played a decisive role in Trajan’s decision to disengage from the Parthian empire, and then to abandon his conquests relatively quickly, is worth noting.[[47]](#footnote-47) concludes with the policy of his successor, Hadrian (117–138 CE), who was anxious to negotiate an end to hostilities in order to re-establish concord with the Parthians as soon as possible. [[48]](#footnote-48)

According to Schalit:

The haste with which Trajan retreated after the fall of Ctesiphon, and the suspension of his conquests in the Iranian *hinterland*, are first and foremost and directly attributable to the Jewish revolt. The role played by the Jews in the time of Nero was repeated in the time of Trajan, but this time with greater firmness. The insurrections of this little people sabotaged the foundation of a Roman state in the Far East, and in so doing, succeeded in stemming the Romanization of these regions. The Jewish uprising at the time of Trajan [much more than that of 66 CE] must therefore be attributed a universal historical significance, the consequences of which are felt to this day... The Messianic [Jewish] impulse not only fertilized the West with the birth of Christianity, but also unwittingly determined the future development of the Levant. [[49]](#footnote-49)

Schalit’s thesis is more of avisionary suggestion than a deduced historical certitude, and thus constitutes an unreliable ground for the belief that the Jews’ action was so decisive as to alter the universal course of history. That said, once the emphatic allure of this work has been filtered out, it is clear that it demonstrates several points directly linked to the dialectic of the Jews of Eretz Israelat thetime of the Talmud. These are:

1. The Jews of Judea, who rose up against Rome in 66 CE prevented Nero‘s campaign to conquer Parthian Babylonia, thus sparing Babylonia‘s extremely numerous Jewish communities from Roman domination.
2. The Jews of Judea who revolted against Rome in 66 CE eagerly awaited the opening of a second eastern front, both by the Parthians and by the Jews of Babylonia, which, had it had come to pass, would probably have improved the chances of the Jewish insurrection against Rome. But this was not to be.
3. The Jews of Judea were hoping for the arrival of Babylonian Jewish reinforcements to prevent the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, or at least to act as a diversion. However, apart from a small number from Adiabene, the majority of Jews from Babylonia did not get involved in the armed conflict,[[50]](#footnote-50) being perhaps already perceived by their brothers in Judea as indirectly responsible for the destruction of the Second Temple.
4. The revolt of the Diaspora between 115–117 CE and the massacres of Jewish communities in Egypt (notably the annihilation of the flourishing Alexandrian community), Cyrenaica, and Cyprus provided a diversion. This spared the Jewish communities of Parthian Babylonia from a Roman conquest, which appeared inevitable given the increasing weakness of the Arsacid defenses against the Trajan legions, at least in the first months of the campaign.
5. Judea was devastated following the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE) against Hadrian’s legions. According to Cassius Dio, there were 580,000 victims, most of them believed to be Jewish.[[51]](#footnote-51) Did the Jews of Babylonia come to the aid of their Judean brothers? There is no confirmation of this based on current sources and historical research. The Jews of Judea were again desperately awaiting the opening of this long-awaited eastern front. This is clear from a midrashic text reporting the words of R. Shimon b. Yohai (generation of Usha in Galilee after 135 CE), condemned to death for criticizing Rome and its culture.[[52]](#footnote-52) He stated: “If you see a Persian stallion tied to the tombs of the Land of Israel, prepare to observe the footsteps of the King-Messiah.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Essentially, for the Jews of the Land of Israel, the Persian/Parthian cavalry – the only power capable of defying their sworn enemy Rome – would have been the source of this messianic impulse to liberate them from the Roman oppressor.[[54]](#footnote-54)

IV

These deeply painful historical antecedents must have shaped a discursive dialectic within rabbinic Judaism and among the rest of the Jewish population, aimed at identifying the agents responsible for the catastrophe of the three revolts. It is not improbable that from 70 CE until the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt, a heavy resentment towards the Jewish community of Babylonia was forged in the consciousness of the distressed Jewish populations of Roman Palestine. It seems fair to conclude that the former was, intentionally or unintentionally, spared from the Roman yoke by the successive uprisings of the Jews inhabiting the *imperium*. In addition, the Jews of Babylonia always remained outside the circle of conflict, most of them declining to participate in military activities in Roman Palestine.

This resentment appears to turn into open hatred precisely in the second half of the 3rd century. To explain this, an important element that must be considered is the economic crisis that the Jewish population of Roman Palestine time was enduring at the time. We know that in the second half of this century, the Empire was afflicted by a security and economic crisis unprecedented in the history of Rome.[[55]](#footnote-55) The Palestinian Jewish population was by no means spared this crisis.[[56]](#footnote-56) Let us briefly outline the economic context which prevailed in the cities of Palestine during this period of general slump. Economic difficulties were at the root of Patriarch R. Judah II’s (235–260) decision to commercialize magistrature appointments.[[57]](#footnote-57) Note the plea this patriarch made to R. Shimon b. Laquish, usually one of his fiercest opponents, to pray for him, as the Romans were demanding too much of him.[[58]](#footnote-58) In the second half of the 3rd century, the Roman authorities reformed the tax system with the aim, among other things, of identifying the wealth of large senatorial and local landowners. These people were then called upon to contribute more.[[59]](#footnote-59) Like other provincials, the Jews of Palestine were in no way exempt from these oppressive budgetary measures. In fact, R. Yohanan invited those newly appointed to the city council, now unlucky ones, to abandon the Land of Israel.[[60]](#footnote-60) This position clearly demonstrates the importance of the contributions required from individuals who were forced to take public positions. Rabbinic literature repeatedly depicts the abandonment of property in the face of such heavy.[[61]](#footnote-61) Examples include the Jews of Tiberias, who were no longer able to pay the *Aurum Coronarium*,[[62]](#footnote-62) and the Jews of Paneas/Banias, at the foot of the Golan Heights, who threatened the emperor Diocletian (284–307) with flight at the very moment when they were being extorted *en masse*.[[63]](#footnote-63) According to R. Levi (3rd–4th century), the Jews of Palestine no longer even had the strength to study *Halakhah* because of the financial challenges they had to face.[[64]](#footnote-64) Economic precariousness disturbed the peace of mind, an indispensable condition for the study of halakhic texts.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we should recall the circumstances surrounding R. Zeira the Babylonian’s quest to buy a kilogram of meat. This was a common task in Babylonia, where the experience of droughts were exceptional due to the location of Jewish populations on the banks of the Euphrates and its tributaries. However, in the Land of Israel, where droughts succeeded one another in the 3rd century, meat was a rare and expensive commodity.[[65]](#footnote-65) The complexity of the situation, with the high cost combined with the extremely heavy tax burden imposed by the Roman administration on the Jews of Palestine, very probably contributed to exacerbating resentment towards these Jews who did not reside in the economically and politically conflicted circle of the Lower Empire, since they lived in the Parthian and later Sassanid empires. This context of general antagonism may well reflect a latent historical fact, submerged and repressed over the centuries, but now fully resurfacing, namely the ingratitude of these Babylonian Jews towards their brothers in Palestine, whose insurrections twice indirectly stopped the otherwise inevitable subjugation of Babylonian Jewry under Rome. In contrast, the Babylonian Jews never lent a helping hand to their Judean brethren in 66 CE or 132 CE. From then on, they were probably seen as bearing a heavy share of responsibility for the Jewish catastrophes, culminating in the loss of Jerusalem and its sanctuary, and the capture and ruin of Bethar in 135 CE. The intertwining of all these wounds, arising from painful historical contexts accumulating over the centuries and with the evolution of mentalities, can likely help explain the hatred and contempt felt by both the Galilean Sages and the various movements of this Common Judaismtowards their co-religionists from Babylonia.[[66]](#footnote-66)

1. M. Beer, *The Sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud – Teachings, Activities and Leadership,* E. Friedheim, D. Sperber & R. Yankelevitch (eds.), Ramat Gan, 2011, pp. 10–27, 107–329. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. Schwartz, ‘Tension between Palestinian Scholars and Babylonian Olim in Amoraic Palestine,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period,* 11/1 (1980), p. 93: “There are of course countless sources in which Babylonians and Palestinians study in harmony and no tension or hatred is recorded”; See also: E. Friedheim, “Quelques remarques sur le regard de la diaspora babylonienne vis-à-vis d’*Eretz Israël* à l’époque talmudique,” *Tsafon - Revue d’études juives du Nord,* 65 (2013), pp. 31–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rabbinic sources seem to show that it was already in the second century of the Common Era, after the Bar Kokhba debacle (132–135) that some Rabbis openly displayed their repulsion for Babylonian Jewry, notably R. Rabbi] Yossi, a native of the Galilean city of Sepphoris, working in Usha, cf. *Babylonian Talmud* [*BT*] *Menahot,* 100a: “ומתוך ששונאין בבליים" [And since the Babylonian [Jews] are hated...]. It should be noted, however, that the idea of aversion appears neither in the parallel Babylonian occurrence [cf. *BT Yoma* 66a] nor even in the Galilean-origin tannaitic source of this tradition, cf. *Tosefta Kipurim,* 3 (4 according to the Erfurt manuscript), 13 [ed. Lieberman, p. 245]. Perhaps this is just a late Babylonian interpretation (4th century) of R. Yossi’s words, and there is no evidence that in his time (2nd century) the Jews of Babylonia were already abhorred in Galilee. That said, S. Lieberman was of the opinion that these tensions were contemporary with the Tannaim, [cf. Idem *Studies in Palestinian Talmudic Literature,* D. Rosenthal (ed.), Jerusalem 1991, p. 336. [Hebrew]: “As was explicitly stated at the time of the Tannaim: ‘for we hate the Babylonians.’”] and according to Schwartz, they probably began even earlier, cf. Idem, *Tension between Palestinian Scholars*, pp. 80–81: ‘In any event, we see that there was an animosity which existed quite early. An anti-Babylonian pathos was also evident in the teachings of Palestinian scholars during the Tannaitic period...” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. S. Lieberman, “Jewish Life in Eretz Yisraelas Reflected in the Palestinian Talmud,” in: Idem., *Text and Studies,* New York 1974, p. 180: “An attempt to portray life in Eretz Yisraelin any given period in a short paper, is attempting to teach the whole Torah while standing on one leg. I shall therefore limit myself to a brief glimpse into certain phases of Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael during the first centuries after the fall of the Second Commonwealth.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *BT Baba Qama,* 117a. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Yerushalmi* [*Y.*] *Berakhot,* II, 8 (5c); D. Sperber, “On the Unfortunate Adventures of Rav Kahana – A Passage of Saboraic Polemic from Sassanian Persia,” in: S. Shaked (ed.), *Irano-Judaica I: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages,* Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 83–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid.: “כהנא הוה עולם סגין כד סליק להכא חמתיה חד בר פחין. א”ל מה קלא בשמיא. א”ל גזר דיניה דההוא גברא מיחתם וכן הוות ליה. ומתפגע ביה חמתיה חד חרן א”ל מה קלא בשמיא א”ל גזר דיניה דההוא גברא מיחתם וכן הוות ליה. אמר מה סליקית מזכי ואנא איחטי מה סליקית למיקטלה בני ארעא דישראל ניזול וניחות לי מן הן דסליקית.” [Kahana was very young, when he came here [to the Land of Israel], he met a vile character, who said to him [mocking Rav Kahana probably because of his great height, EF], “What voice [do you hear] in heaven? He replied: “This man’s fate has been sealed [in other words, he will die] and so it was. He came across another scoundrel who said to him, ‘What voice do you hear in the sky?” he replied, “This man’s fate has been sealed [in other words: he will die] and so it was.” He then said: I went up [into the Land of Israel] to merit and behold, I am at fault, did I go up to kill the inhabitants of the Land of Israel? [He said] Let us depart and leave this land [and return to Babylonia].” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid.: “אתא לגבי ר’ יוחנן א”ל בר נש דאימיה מבסרא ליה ואיתתיה דאבוהי מוקרא להן ייזול ליה א”ל ייזול להן דמוקרין ליה. נחת ליה כהנא מן הן דסלק. אתון אמרין ליה לר’ יוחנן הא נחית כהנא לבבל.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On the primordial place occupied by Eretz Israelin the doctrinal vision of Judaism advocated by R. Zeira, cf. for example: *BT Baba Metsia,* 5a; *Y. Ta’aniot,* II, 13, 66a; *BT Shabbat,* 41a; *BT Ketubot,* 110b–111a; *BT Baba Metsia,* 85a; *BT Baba Bathra,* 158b; *Leviticus Rabba,* 34, 7 (ed. Margulies, p. 783 & n. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. *Supra,* n. 6 :

    “ר’ זעירא כד סלק להכא אזל אקיז דם אזל בעי מיזבון חדא ליטרא דקופד מן טבחא. א”ל בכמה הדין ליטרתא א”ל בחמשין מניי וחד קורסם. א”ל סב לך שיתין ולא קביל עילוי. סב לך ע’ ולא קביל עילוי. סב לך פ’ סב לך צ’ עד דמטא מאה ולא קביל עילוי. א”ל עביד כמנהגך. ברומשא נחית לבית וועדא. אמר לון רבנן מה ביש מנהגא דהכא דלא אכיל בר נש ליטרא דקופד עד דמחו ליה חד קורסם אמרין ליה ומה הוא דין אמר לון פלן טבחא. שלחון בעיי מייתיתיה ואשכחון ארוניה נפקא.” “R. Zeira, once he arrived here [in the Land of Israel], went off to bleed. He went to buy a kilogram of meat from the butcher. He said to him: ‘How much is the kilogram?’ He replied: ‘50 pieces and a beating [with a metal instrument, as explained in the commentary: *Pene Moshe*].’ He then said to him: ‘I’ll give you 60 coins but without receiving the blow in question.’ [The butcher refused and raised the bid.] ‘I will give you 70 [coins] but without receiving a blow, I will pay you 80 coins, I will give you 90 coins until he reaches 100 coins so as not to receive the correction.’ R. Zeira told him: ‘Do as you please’ [i.e., R. Zeira finally paid 100 coins, double the original price, while being manhandled, EF]. He went to the house of study in the evening and said to the Sages: ‘What infamous custom do you have here, according to which one cannot consume a kilogram of meat without first being brutalized?’ They said to him: ‘But who has behaved in this way?’ He said to them: ‘This butcher *So-and-so*, the Sages sent for him [and when they arrived], they found the coffin of the butcher being taken out…’” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is despite the fact that their Babylonian origin was not mentioned in any of the altercations. That said, it seems clear that these were foreigners passing through Galilee, with the text of the Jerusalem Talmud explicitly stating about each of them: “ד סליק,” thus suggesting that they came from elsewhere, obviously Babylonia, to which, incidentally, Rav Kahana returned (נחית כהנא לבבל). According to Lieberman, the attire of these Sages (especially their shoes), the Babylonian Aramaic, which differed from the Galilean Aramaic of these rabbis, as well as the general attitude of these transients, especially that of R. Zeira, who was eager to acquire a large portion of meat to offset his physical weakness caused by bloodletting, at a time in the 3rd century when the Jewish population of Roman Palestine was suffering from great economic precariousness [see *below*], prove that Babylonian economic and cultural characteristics were the main factors giving rise to discord with the Galileans, cf. S. Lieberman, *Studies in Palestinian Talmudic Literature,* D. Rosenthal (ed.), Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 331–32. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Y. Pessahim,* V, 3 (32a). In the Babylonian narrative in *BT Pessahim,* 62b the tradition is reversed, cf. Schwartz’s commentary, *Tension between Palestinian Scholars,* p. 83 n. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *BT Ketuboth,* 75a. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *BT Sanhedrin,* 24a. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *BT Yoma,* 9b. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Lamentations Rabba - Petih’ata,* 19 (ed. S. Buber, p. 15). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid*.* 23 (ed. S. Buber, p. 17). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Cant. Rabba,* 8 (Vilna edition). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *BT Yoma,* 9b. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Cant. Rabba,* 8 (Vilna edition). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Supra,* n. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Cant. Rabba,* 8, 11 (ed. S. Dunsky, p. 174). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period,* Jerusalem, 1990, p. 327, s. v. מקמה. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid*.* And in the text: “אילו ישראל העלו חומה מבבל לא חרב בית המקדש בההיא שעתא פעם שנית”. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This is the opinion of R. Yohanan in *BT Yoma,* 9b: “Even if they [the Babylonian Jews] had gone up en masse in Ezra’s time, the divine presence would not have remained in the sanctuary.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Flavius Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico,* II, 16, 4 [388] (Translation: Théodore Reinach & R. Harmand, Paris, 1904, revised and annotated by S. Reinach, J. Weill, E. Leroux, publications de la société des études juives, Paris, 1900–1932). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. Reinach et al. n. 216: “More precisely: whose dynasty (Helen and her sons) had converted to Judaism (cf. *Antiquitates Iudaicarum,* 20, 1, 2). Adiabene was a vassal of the Parthians and, as such, had fought with them in Armenia against the Romans under Nero.” (Translation from French is mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicarum,* XI, 133: “this is why only two tribes in Asia and Europe are subject to the Romans; the other ten tribes remained beyond the Euphrates*, numbering an infinite number of members that it has been impossible to determine*.”; Idem, *Contra Apionem,* I, 22 [194]: “He [Hecataeus of Abdera] also says how populous our race is. “*Many myriads of Jews, he says, were first taken to Babylon by the Persians (Λέγει δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ πολυανθρωπότατον γεγονέναι ἡμῶν τὸ ἔθνος- πολλὰς μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν, φησίν, ἀνασπάστους εἰς Βαβυλῶνα Πέρσαι πρότερον αὐτῶν ἐποίησαν μυριάδας)*. During the affair of the imperial statue that the emperor Gaius Caligula (37–41 CE) ordered to be placed in the Temple in Jerusalem, the Roman legate in Syria, Petronius, was frightened at the thought that hordes of Babylonian Jews might come to open an eastern front against Roman Syria at a time when he was also facing similar opposition from Roman Palestine, cf. Philo of Alexandria, *Legatio ad Caium,* 216–17: “*Petronius also feared troops from beyond the Euphrates; Babylon and many other satrapies had colonies of Jews. He knew this from the testimony of his eyes as well as his ears.... [Ἐφόβουν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ αἱ πέραν Εὐφράτου δυνάμεις- ᾔδει γὰρ Βαβυλῶνα καὶ πολλὰς ἄλλας τῶν σατραπειῶν ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων κατεχομένας, οὐκ ἀκοῇ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πείρᾳ]* Petronius rightly feared that the news of this unheard-of dedication would drive them to a sudden expedition and that, rising up on all sides, they would enclose, as if in a circle, the Roman troops, to cut them to pieces.” 282: **IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT THIS 282 REFERS TO** “And it’s not only the mainland provinces that are dotted with numerous Jewish colonies, but also the most famous islands, Euboea, Cyprus and Crete. *I’m not talking about those beyond the Euphrates: apart from a small fraction of Babylonia and a few other satrapies, all the towns in these regions, which have fertile soil, are inhabited by Jews*. *(Καὶ σιωπῶ τὰς πέραν Εὐφράτου- πᾶσαι γὰρ ἔξω μέρους βραχέος, Βαβυλὼν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων σατραπειῶν αἱ ἀρετῶσαν ἔχουσαι τὴν ἐκ κύκλῳ γῆν Ἰουδαίους ἔχουσιν οἰκήτορας)*”. See also: E. M. Smallwood, *Legatio ad Caium,* Leiden, 19702, p. 272. It was after his victory over the insurgents that Titus reproached them “for having contacted the Jews beyond the Euphrates to concoct the revolt” (cf. Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico,* VI, 343); N. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia,* Chicago, 1938, pp. 93–95; R. Ghirshman, *Iran,* Harmondsworth, 1954, p. 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. It is indeed well known that the princes of Adiabene, notably Queen Helena and her son Izates, enthusiastically and fervently converted to Judaism in the 1st century, shortly before the destruction of the Jewish sanctuary in 70 CE, cf. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicarum,* XX, 17–96; I. M. Gafni, *Babylonian Jewry and its Institutions in the Period of the Talmud,* Jerusalem 1976, pp. 28–33 [Hebrew]; Idem, *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era – A Social and Cultural History,* Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 64–68. [Hebrew] On the importance of the involvement of the royal family of Adiabene in the daily life of the Hierosolomites, within the Temple and for the entire Judean community facing the years of drought, we refer to the following sources: *Mishna Yoma,* 3, 10; *Tosefta Kipurim,* 2, 3 (ed. Lieberman, p. 230); *Y. Yoma,* 3 (41a); *BT Yoma* 37b; *Tosefta Peah,* 4, 18 (ed. Lieberman, p. 60); *Tosefta Meguila,* 3 (4) 30 (ed. Lieberman, p. 362); *Mishna Nazir,* 3, 6; *Tosefta Sukkah,* 1, 1 (ed. Lieberman, p. 256). Et al. **THIS ET AL. APPEARS TO BE A FRAGMENT – TO WHAT DOES IT APPLY**? It is important to note that at the time of the Talmud (3rd century) many Jews probably still resided in Adiabene, cf. *BT Quidoushin* 72a; *Yevamot* 16b–17a; *Mo’ed Qatan,* 28a; *Nida* 21b; *Baba Bathra* 26b, cf. A. Oppenheimer [in collaboration with B. Isaac & M. Lecker], *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period,* Wiesbaden, 1983, pp. 21–24. These Adiabenite Jews, converted out of devotion, were clearly concerned by the fate of Jerusalem and the Temple during the great revolt of 66 CE, and gave themselves a blank check to support the Judeans in their insurrection against Rome. Josephus indeed reports the military support of two relatives of King Monabazus of Adiabene with the help of Niger from Perea and Shila (Silas) the Babylonian (Σίλας ὁ Βαβυλώνιος), who previously served under Agrippa II before switching to the insurgent camp, cf. Flavius Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico,* II, 520; VI, 356: “On that day, the sons and brothers of King Izates, who were joined by a large number of distinguished citizens, begged Caesar [Titus] to accept their submission.”; S. C. Mimouni, *Le judaïsme ancien du VIe siècle avant notre ère au IIIe siècle de notre ère : Des prêtres aux rabbins,* Paris, 2012, p. 472. That said, the contribution of Babylonian Jewish regiments to the Judean revolt remained extremely limited, as no source mentions the conflagration of the eastern front (Rome/Adiabene-Parthia/Jewish population) or even a consequent deployment of Babylonian Jewish battalions opening a new front line against Rome, cf. J. Neusner, ‘The Jews East of the Euphrates and the Roman Empire I. 1st–3rd Centuries A. D.’, in: H. Temporini (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* [*ANRW*]*,* II, 9/1, Berlin; New York, 1976, pp. 52–53: “Babylonian Jewry did not participate in the war of 66–73... The only support the rebels received was from Adiabene”; M. Truschel, ‘Le royaume d’Adiabène et la guerre juive de 66’, *Histoire antique et médiévale,* 43 (2009), pp. 40–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Suetonius, *Nero,* XIX, 2; Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis,* VI, 15, 40; A. Schalit, “Roman Policy in the Orient from Nero to Trajan,” *Tarbiz - A Quarterly Review of the Humanities,* 7/2 (1936), pp. 159–80. [Hebrew] According to A. Brühl, Nero was a “fanatical admirer” of Alexander the Great, cf. A. Brühl, ‘Le souvenir d’Alexandre le Grand et les Romains’, *Mélanges de l’école française de Rome,* 47 (1930), pp. 211–12; E. M. Sanford, ‘Nero and the East’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* 48 (1937), pp. 75–103; A. Aiardi, ‘Interessi neroniani in Oriente e in Africa. L’idea di Alessandro Magno’, *Atti del Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti,* 138 (1979–1980), pp. 563–72; J. L. Voisin, *‘Exoriente sole* (Suétone, *Ner.,* 6) – D’Alexandrie à la *Domus* Aurea’, *L’Urbs : Espace urbain et histoire (Ier siècle av. J. C. - IIIe ap. J. C.),* Rome, 1987, pp. 509–43; S. A. Alcock, “Nero at Play? The Emperor’s Grecian Odyssey,” in: J. Elsner & J. Masters (eds.), *Reflections of Nero – Culture, History & Representation,* London, 1994, p. 104: “Nero seemingly demonstrates an interest in natural phenomena deliberately reminiscent of Alexander the Great, a ruler whose powerful image drew Nero, as other Roman leaders, to emulation.”; For a far more nuanced, even skeptical statement, cf. E. S. Gruen, “Rome and the Myth of Alexander,” in: T. W. Hillard et al. (eds.), *Ancient History in a Modern University,* I: *The Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome,* Grand Rapids, 1998, pp. 178–91; E. Champlin, *Nero,* Cambridge, MA, 2003, p. 111: “There were other models which he [Nero] *could* imitate, the most obvious being Augustus and Alexander”; Ibid*.* p. 307 n. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. M. Amit, *A History of the Roman Empire,* Jerusalem, 2003, p. 327 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The Armenians were, so to speak, Parthians, as can be seen from a passage in Tacitus, *Annales,* XIII, 34, 5: “Ad hoc Armenii ambigua fide utraque arma inuitabant, situ terrarum, similitudine morum Parthis propiores conubiisque permixti ac libertate ignota illuc magis ad servitium inclinantes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Schalit, *Roman Policy*; J. Kolendo, ‘Le projet d’expédition de Néron dans le Caucase’, in: J.-M. Croisille & P.-M. Fauchère (eds.), *Neronia 1977* – *Actes du 2e colloque de la société internationale d’études néroniennes, Clermont-Ferrand, May 27*–*28 1977,* Clermont-Ferrand 1982, pp. 23–30; B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire - The Roman Army in the East,* Oxford, 1992,2 pp. 41, 44: “It is, however, obvious that control of the Caucasus would serve no purpose for the defence of Syria, but might be useful in moves against Armenia and, particularly, Media. The plan was obviously expansionist in intention rather than defensive.” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Schalit, *Roman Policy,* p. 169: “The fact that the Jewish people thwarted Rome’s enslavement of the East at a crucial moment... requires us to explain the actions of the Zealots in 66 CE in terms other than a narrow event with strictly reduced national objectives. It is incumbent upon us to conceive of the event as having historical and global significance.” [translation from Hebrew]; For a more nuanced approach, cf. M. T. Griffin, *Nero - The End of a Dynasty,* New Haven; London, 1984, p. 233: “The Jewish War remained a serious military commitment through 67 and would have necessitated the postponement of Nero’s venture.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* I, G. Vermes, F. Millar & M. Black (revised & edited by), Edinburgh, 1973, p. 488: “In a gorge near Beth-Horon through which his route led, he [Cestius Gallus] suddenly found himself surrounded on all sides by Jews, and was attacked with such force that his retirement developed into a rout. It was only by leaving behind a great quantity of his equipment, in particular valuable war material which later proved useful to the Jews that he was able to escape to Antioch with the nucleus of his army. With great jubilation the returning victors entered Jerusalem...” [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Flavius Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico,* II, 499–555; E. Ritterling, ‘Legio XII Fulminata’, in: G. Wissowa (ed.), *Reallencyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumwissenschaft,* Stuttgart 1925, cols. 1705–10; G. Bertrandy & B. Rémy, ‘Legio XII Fulminata’, in: Y. Le Bohec (ed.), *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire,* Lyon 2000, pp. 253–57; J. B. Campbell, “Legion,” in: S. Hornblower & A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* Oxford 20033, p. 841b: **WHY IS THERE A SUPERSCRIPT 3 ON THE DATE**? “... it fought in the Jewish War and may have temporarily lost its eagle in the retreat of Cestius Gallus from Jerusalem in AD 66.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Schalit, *Roman Policy,* pp. 175–89 [Hebrew]; Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana,* LXVIII, 17,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. M.-L. Chaumont, ‘L’Arménie entre Rome et l’Iran I. De l’avènement d’Auguste à l’avènement de Dioclétien’, in H. Temporini (ed.), *ANRW* II, 9/2, Berlin; New York, 1976, p. 140. (Translation from French is mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The rank of Roman Judea was not consular, thus explaining the absence of legions, cf. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People* p. 362: “Normally, only auxiliary troops were stationed in provinces administered by a prefect or a procurator, and they served under his command. This was the case also in Judaea.” [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. R. Yankelevitch, ‘The Auxiliary Troops from Caesarea and Sebaste – A Decisive Factor in the Rebellion Against Rome’, *Tarbiz,* 49 (1980), pp. 33–42. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. D. Bar, “Aelia Capitolina and the Location of the Camp of the Tenth Legion,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly,* 130 (1998), pp. 8–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Sh. Applebaum, *Greeks and Jews in Ancient Cyrene,* Jerusalem, 1969, p. 225 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. M. Pucci, *La rivolta ebraica al tempo di Traiano,* Pisa 1981; D. Rokeach (ed.), *The Revolts of the Jews in the Days of Trajan (115*–*117 CE),* Jerusalem, 1978 [Hebrew]; Applebaum, *Greeks and Jews*; Mimouni, *Le Judaïsme ancien,* pp. 503–05; M. Sartre, *L’orient romain – Provinces et sociétés provinciales en Méditerranée orientale d’Auguste aux Sévères,* Paris 1991, pp. 404–06. Et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Chaumont, L’*Arménie entre Rome et l’Iran,* pp. 140–41: “However, the peoples so quickly subjugated reluctantly accepted a domination that had been imposed on them by force, all the more so as they had to endure the exactions of the Roman tax authorities. On his return to Babylon, Trajan learned that all the conquered countries had gone into rebellion, driving out or massacring the Roman garrisons.” (Translation from French is mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid*.,* p. 143: “Even if we admit that, in the last months of his reign, Trajan took certain initiatives in the East that went against his policy and in his mind were probably all provisional, it is difficult to dispute that the definitive abandonment of the annexed territories beyond the Euphrates was the work of his successor.” (Translation from French is mine) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Schalit, *Roman Policy,* pp. 179–80 [translation from Hebrew]; Cf. also: Chaumont, *L’Arménie entre Rome et l’Iran,* p. 141: “This rebellion [Armenian] probably originated in Greater Armenia, where opposition to the Romans had always been very strong. In Mesopotamia, it was reinforced by the apparently independent uprising of the numerous and influential Jewish communities.” (Translation from French is mine); Sartre, *L’orient romain,* p. 406: “The Roman counter-offensive took time to organize. The army of Mesopotamia mobilized most of the available manpower in the East and was itself faced with the revolt of the Mesopotamian Jews and the offensive return of the Parthians. In 116, however, Trajan entrusted Q. Marcius Turbo, who was to mate the revolt in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus.” (Translation from French is mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. According to Neusner, Babylonian Jewry did not intervene in 66 CE, not because of a hypothetical Parthian ban, since the Parthians allowed the Adiabenites to support the Jewish insurrection against Rome, but because Babylonian Jewry could not imagine that the Second Temple might be destroyed. Once the sanctuary had been devastated, the Babylonian Jewish community would have been helpless, hence Neusner’s conclusion: “Babylonian Jewry would have fought to prevent the destruction of the Temple, but, not anticipating it, saw no reason to participate in the Palestinian rebellion,” cf. Idem, *The Jews East of the Euphrates and the Roman Empire*, p. 54. Insofar as Neusner is accurate, it is unlikely that this would have lessened the Palestine Jews’ conviction that their Babylonian brethren had abandoned, or even betrayed them. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana,* LXIX, 14, 3; Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People,* p. 553. Et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *BT Shabbat,* 33b; *Avoda Zara,* 2b. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Lam. Rabba,* 1 (ed. S. Buber, p. 77); *Cant. Rabba,* 8, 10 (Vilna edition). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. E. Friedheim, ‘Des Juifs et des Chevaux’, *L’arche – le mensuel du judaïsme français,* 569 (2005), p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. I. Severi, *La crisi dell’impero nel III secolo,* Bologna, 1949; M. Le Glay, *Rome – Grandeur et chute de l’empire,* Paris 1992, pp. 245–325. On the invasions of the Roman Empire by barbarian peoples and the military crisis that hit the empire, cf. X. Loriot, “Les premières années de la grande crise du IIIe siècle’, W. Haase & H. Temporini (eds.), *ANRW* II, 2, Berlin; New York, 1975, pp. 657–788. On the complex economic situation of this period, cf. A Banardi, ‘The Economic Problems of the Roman Empire at the Time of its Decline,” in: *Decline of Empires,* London, 1990, pp. 16–83. On the depreciation of monetary value, see: S. Bolin, *State and Currency in the Roman Empire to 300 A. D.,* Stockholm, 1958, p. 357ff. On inflation, see: Le Glay, Ibid*.,* pp. 278–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On Talmudic sources, especially Palestinian ones, which bear witness to the evils of the 3rd century crisis, both in security and economic terms, see : L. I. Levine, “Palestine in the Third Century,” in: Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafrir & M. Stern (eds.), Eretz Israel *from the Destruction of the Second Temple to The Muslim Conquest,* I, *Political, Social & Cultural History,* Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 122–35. [Hebrew] According to a recently published study, the crisis was not felt in Palestine, where prosperity would not have been affected, cf. D. Bar, “The 3rd Century in the Roman Empire and its Relevance to Palestine during the Late Roman Period,” *Zion* 66, 2 (2001), pp. 143–70. [Hebrew], XIII: “Not only were the signs of the crisis not very evident in the settlements of Palestine, but the Late Roman Period, including the 3rd century, witnessed a period of growth in population numbers as well as in the number of settlements and even economic prosperity.” Idem. **YOU ARE USING IDEM HERE THIS CAN BE USED IF YOU ARE REFERRING TO D. BAR. , “**Was There a 3rd -c. Economic Crisis in Palestine?,” J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East,* III, (*Journal of Roman Archaeology supplement),* Portsmouth, RI, 2002, pp. 43–54. It is indeed possible that certain sectors of activity were unaffected by the crisis, but this author’s study of Jewish sources from the period is unconvincing. Indeed, rabbinic sources explicitly addressing the economic difficulties faced by the Jewish people at the time cannot be refuted out of hand solely on the grounds that Talmudic literature is inadmissible as a historical source, or that the Rabbis of earlier periods had already denounced the difficulties of their time, which according to the author would remove all credibility from similar words by the Sages of the 3rd century. Such generalizations should not be made. Indeed, the difficult economic situation of the Sages working in the aftermath of the Great Revolt (66–73 CE) and that of Bar Kokhba (132–35 CE), prompted them to discuss these problems, but this does not imply that the rabbinic invectives of the thirdcentury were not linked to the difficulties of their time. It is unquestionable that during the prosperous period of Patriarch R. Judah I (180–222), the Rabbis rarely discussed the much improved economic situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. On the venality of public positions at this period among the urban Jewish population, especially of Tiberias cf. *Y. Bikkurim,* 3, 3 (65d); A. Marmorstein, “opposition contre le patriarche R. Juda II,” *Revue des études juives* [*REJ*] 64 (1912), pp. 64–65; L. I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class in Palestine during the Talmudic Period,* Jerusalem, 1985, p. 100 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *Gen. Rabba,* 78 (ed: T. Albeck, p. 931): “צלי עלי דהדא מלכותא בישא סגין"”. And Resh Laquish’s scathing reply: “If you don’t take anything from anyone, you’ll have nothing to give to the (Roman) power,” and in the text: “לא תיסב מן בר נש [כלום] ולית את יהיב כלום”; S. Lieberman, “Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries,” *Jewish Quarterly Review,* 36 (1946), p. 359: “... it is certain that the Patriarch had to pay vast sums to the government and offer gifts to the officials.” To illustrate the singularity of Jewish relations with the Romans in this period, let us recall that it was within the framework of the good Jewish-Roman relations of the time of R. Judah I (180–222) that, in a law of 196 or 198, Septimius Severus authorized Jews to access positions (*necessitas)* that did not run counter to Judaism, and this apparently without any financial constraint, cf. *Digesta,* 50, 2, 3; A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation,* Detroit; Jerusalem, 1987, p. 103. That said, the rabbinical sources cited above refer to a much later situation, pertaining to the crisis of the 3rd century, where liturgies (λειτουργία) were imposed and forcibly monetized in order to cope, at least partially, with the budgetary tribulations encountered by the cities. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. J. M. Carrié & A. Rousselle, *L’empire romain en mutation des Sévères à Constantin (192*–*337),* Nouvelles histoire de l’antiquité, 10, Paris, 1999, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Y. Mo’ed Qatan,* 2, 3 (18b); *Y. Sanhedrin,* 8, 2 (26b). As for the rabbinic lament about the Romans robbing the rich by appointing them, without their approval, to the office of bouleute, cf. *Gen. Rabba,* 76 (ed: T. Albeck, p. 904): “.זו מלכות הרשעה שמכנסת עין רעה בממונו של אדם ... פלן עתיר נעבדיניה בולויטיס” [“It is the miscreant kingdom [Rome] that puts the evil eye in man’s money... *So-and-so* is rich we’ll call him *bouleute...*”]. And parallel traditions, see also: Lieberman, *Palestine in Third and Fourth Centuries*: “The burden of *leitourgiai* of the third century is also well mirrored in rabbinic literature.” [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. D. Sperber, *Roman Palestine : 200*–*400 – The Land, Crisis and Change in Agrarian Society as Reflected in Rabbinic Sources,* Ramat Gan, 1978, p. 132 : “We have seen how frequently well-to-do people were forced to take flight in order to escape the burdens of liturgy and taxation, and that their estates might be confiscated. This precariousness was... well recognized by the Rabbis.” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *BT Baba Bathra,* 8a. Certainly to be compared with *Gen. Rabba,* 24 (ed. T. Albeck, pp. 229–30); Ibid*.,* 31, 2 (ed. T. Albeck, p. 283). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Y. Shevi’it,* 9, 2 (38d). This is a kind of ἀναχώρησις, reaching many provincials in the Roman Empire [cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire,*2 Oxford, 1957, s. v. “Flight”], to be compared with the assertions of Lactantius (260–325 c.), *De mart. Pers.* 7: “enormitate indictionum consumptis viribus colonorum deserentur agri”; F. Heichelheim, “Roman Syria,” in: *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome,* IV, Baltimore, 1938, p. 234; M. Hadas-Lebel, ‘La fiscalité romaine dans la littérature rabbinique jusqu’à la fin du IIIème siècle’, *REJ* 143 (1984), p. 18ff; P. Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Graeco-Roman World – The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest,* London 2003, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Cant. Rabba,* 1 [5] (Vilna edition); See also: *BT Sota* 40a. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Lieberman, *Studies in Palestinian Talmudic Literature,* pp. 331–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. In his study, Schwartz did not take into account the arguments we have just put forward. According to him, four main factors explain the climate of tension: 1) Visiting Babylonians were an easy object of hate in the absence of other victims. 2) The Babylonians in the Land of Israel kept to themselves and did not integrate into the surrounding society, thus arousing disapproval. 3) The atmosphere of misunderstanding was created by social competition and jealousy. 4) The Babylonians who came to the Land of Israel had left behind their families, thus provoking enmity and suspicion, cf. Idem, *Tension between Palestinian Scholars,* p. 93. All this is undoubtedly true and can only add to and reinforce the factors we have mentioned in explaining this atmosphere of discord. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)