THE *MAGISTER MILITUM* URSICINUS IN THE JERUSALEM TALMUD

If there is one work that is still insufficiently exploited by specialists in Roman history, it is certainly the Talmud. Daniel Sperber’s fine study of the economic data that can be gleaned from it has shown what a mine of information it can be if one knows how to use and interpret it.[[1]](#footnote-1) On a minor and slightly lighter topic, our colleague Roger Hanoune has recently been able to shed light on how certain aspects of Roman civilization were understood in rabbinic circles and to demonstrate the value of comparing Talmudic and Greco-Roman sources.[[2]](#footnote-2) It is true that non-Hebrew speaking historians are often restricted by their inability to use the original text and their need to rely on translations of dubious fidelity, especially when it comes to technical terms. For the Jerusalem Talmud, we are lucky enough to have a standard and easy-to-use French translation;[[3]](#footnote-3) a careful search of that work for passages relating to the fourth century brought to my attention a problem that has already been addressed in several studies but that would, I feel, be worth revisiting in its entirety: that of the *magister militum* Ursicinus, a well-known figure of the fourth century whose name appears six times in the text. This fact is in itself remarkable: other than various emperors, there are almost no Romans mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud (Lusius Quietus, Tineius Rufus, and Proclus once each). The six mentions of Ursicinus are thus a notable exception that deserves further study. The relevant passages are hardly obscure: they are cited by numerous historians of ancient Palestine, with varying amounts of commentary,[[4]](#footnote-4) but they seem curiously to have escaped the notice both of Adolf Lippold, who makes no mention of them in his article devoted to Ursicinus in Pauly and Wissowa’s *Realencyclopädie*, and of the authors of the PLRE, who also pass over them in silence.[[5]](#footnote-5) I would, therefore, like to revisit these passages in order to show how they relate to Ursicinus’s career and character as described by Ammianus Marcellinus in his *Res Gestae*, but also to point out the problems and questions they raise, and finally to demonstrate the difficulty of relying on a translation (in this case that of Moïse Schwab), however useful it might be, when using the Jerusalem Talmud for anything more than a brief overview.[[6]](#footnote-6)

I – Berakhot V 1 / 9a (trans. Schwab I, p. 96):

“Rabbi Jonah et Rabbi Yosé se rendirent auprès d’Ursicinus (gouverneur) de la ville d’Antioche qui se leva à leur rencontre dès qu’il les vit. Quoi, lui dit-on aussi, tu te lèves devant ces Juifs? J’ai vu, dit-il, la face de ces gens au combat et j’ai été victorieux.”

(Rabbi Jonah and Rabbi Yose went before Ursicinus (governor) of the city of Antioch. Upon seeing them, he stood up. What, they said to him, are you standing up for these Jews? He said, I saw the face of these people in battle and I was victorious.)

Schwab’s translation requires two corrections. The first involves the use of the word “gouverneur” (governor) to describe Ursicinus, who was a military commander with the title of *magister equitum* *per Orient* (master of cavalry in Orient) but was neither consul of Syria nor Count of the Orient, offices to which the term “governor” would be more suited. The translation should, therefore, run: “…went before Ursicinus.” Moreover, the comment placed in Ursicinus’s mouth and translated as such does not fit the context: it is surrounded by other similar anecdotes in which the non-Jew is struck by the appearance of the Jew with whom he is conversing and expresses amazement. The text literally reads: “he says that he sees their faces in battle and he is defeated.” The passage should thus be translated, following Avi-Yonah, as “I have seen their faces as victors in the War.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

II – Shevi’it IV 2 / 35a (trans. Schwab II, first part, p. 356):

“Rabbi Jonab et Rabbi Yosé décident qu’il est permis de cuire du pain pour Ursicinus le samedi.”

(Rabbi Jonab and Rabbi Yose decide that it is permitted to bake bread for Ursicinus on Saturdays.)

III – Beitza I 6 / 60c (trans. Schwab IV, first part, p. 110–111):

“Un jour, Rabbi Eleazar, Rabbi Abba Mari et Rabbi Mattaniah professèrent aussi qu’il est permis le Samedi d’apporter des mets au gouverneur Ursicinus, car peut-être l’ensemble des habitants aura besoin de recourir à lui.”

(One day, Rabbi Eleazar, Rabbi Abba Mari, and Rabbi Mattaniah declared that it is also permitted to bring food to the governor Ursicinus on Saturdays, because it may happen that all the inhabitants will need to turn to him.”

As in the first passage, the term “gouverneur” (governor) is incorrect and should be replaced by “leader” or “commander.”

IV – Megillah III 1 / 74a (trans. Schwab IV, first part, p. 236):

“Or lorsqu’Ursicinus fit brûler les rouleaux de la loi à Cennabaris, on demanda à Rabbi Jonah et Rabbi Yosé s’il est permis de faire la lecture officielle dans un rouleau mutilé par le feu. Ils répondirent que non.”

(When Ursicinus was having the scrolls of the law burnt in Cennabaris, Rabbi Jonah and Rabbi Yosé were asked if it is permitted to perform an official reading of a scroll that has been damaged by fire. They responded that it is not.)

V – Yevamot XVI 2 / 15c (trans. Schwab IV, second part, p. 213):

“Ainsi un jour, sous le consulat d’Ursicinus, les habitants de Sepphoris étaient effrayés du gouverneur. Ils se mirent des emplâtres sur le nez et on ne les reconnut plus. A la fin, une méchante langue les dénonça et ils furent tous pris.”

(One day, under the consulate of Ursicinus, the inhabitants of Sepphoris were frightened of the governor. They placed plaster on their noses and could no longer be recognized. In the end, a mischievous tongue reported them and they were all taken.)

V – Sotah IX 3 / 23c (trans. Schwab IV, second part, p. 237):

“Ainsi au temps du gouverneur Ursicinus, les gens de Cipporis étaient recherchés par ordre du gouvernement; pour se soustraire à cette enquête, ils se mirent des emplâtres sur le nez et on ne les reconnut plus. A la fin une dénonciation fut lancée contre eux et aussitôt ils furent tous pris.”

(In the time of governor Ursicinus, the people of Cipporis were sought by order of the government; to escape this investigation, they placed plaster on their noses and could no longer be recognized. In the end a denunciation was made against them and they were all taken.)

Again, we find the incorrect translation of Ursicinus’s position by the words “gouverneur” (governor) and “gouvernement” (government). The translation is particularly inaccurate in assigning Ursicinus a consulate that was never his.[[8]](#footnote-8) The original text uses the word *malka*, which means “king”; the passage should thus be translated literally as “during the reign of Ursicinus,” although it is clear that in this context the word includes the idea of powerful leadership and so means “commander” rather than sovereign in the strict sense of the word.

Ursicinus’s career is known to us—as mentioned above—thanks to Ammianus Marcellinus, who served under him and accompanied him on his travels. After a military career that began under Constantine,[[9]](#footnote-9) he was appointed by Constantius II as *magister equitum* in Orient in around 350 (18, 6, 2). In 354 he was guarding the Persian border at Nisibis (14, 2, 20) when Gallus recalled him to Antioch under suspicion of conspiracy (14, 9, 1). When Gallus was himself recalled and executed by Constantius in the fall of 354, Ursicinus was also taken to court and accused of plotting to have his sons gain power (14, 11, 2–5; 15, 2, lsq). The emperor decided to kill him but then changed his mind (15, 2, 5–6). In August 355 Ursicinus was sent to Cologne to suppress Silvanus’s rebellion, which he did rapidly by killing the usurper (15, 5, 18–31) and was then appointed as *magister equitum* in Gaul in 355–356 (15, 13, 3; 16, 2, 8). In the fall of 357 he was summoned to court in Sirmium and then sent back to Orient as *magister militum* (16, 10, 21).[[10]](#footnote-10) Summoned to the emperor once more in 359 as *magister peditum* (master of the infantry), he left Orient to the general regret of the population (18, 4, 2; 18, 5, 4–5; 18, 6, 1) but was still on his way when Constantius ordered him to return to Syria, where the Persians had just crossed the border (18, 6, 3 ff). Having failed to prevent the fall of Amida, he won Antioch back in October 359 and then set off for Constantinople to assume his post as *magister peditum*, but was soon dismissed following new intrigues and retired from public life (20, 2, 2–5). His date of death is unknown because Ammianus never mentions him again and he does not seem to have been active after 360.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The Talmud passages allow us to supplement Ursicinus’s biography for the period before 354, the date at which the surviving section of Ammianus’s manuscript begins. These passages involve two crucial points:

1. Ursicinus fought against the Jews, set fire to Sennabris, and pursued the people of Sepphoris who had compromised themselves.
2. The rabbis authorized the baking and delivery of bread to Ursicinus on the Sabbath.

It has long been proven that the events in question were part of the revolt that shook Palestine under Gallus (see note 4). According to Aurelius Victor, the Jews proclaimed a man named Patricius as king, but the rebellion was brutally put down and ended in the destruction of Diospolis (Lydda), Tiberias, and Diocaesarea (Sepphoris) as well as several other small towns.[[12]](#footnote-12) The rebellion is generally dated to 352, but Avi-Yonah has suggested dating it to 351 instead.[[13]](#footnote-13) This amendment seems incorrect when we examine the chronological data provided by ancient authors:

* In his *Chronicle*, Saint Jerome gives the date as: 15th year of the reign of Constantius = 2368anno Abrahami = 282nd Olympiad. The text arranges the events of the time in the following order:

282nd Olympiad, Constantius year 13: rebellion of Magnentius (January 350)

Year 14: proclamation of Gallus (March 351), Battle of Mursa (September 351)

Year 15: Jewish revolt

283rd Olympiad, year 16: death of Magnentius (August 353)

Year 17 (=2370anno Abrahami): Gallus is recalled (summer/fall 354).

The text thus points towards 352 for the revolt, corresponding to the fourth year of the Olympiad (July 352/July 353)

and 2368 anno Abrahami (352/353; 2370 aAbrencompasses the events of 354/355). Year 15 of Constantius’s reign should be calculated not from the death of Constantine (May 337) but from the proclamation of his son as Augustus (September 337); doing so keeps the Battle of Mursa in year 14and the death of Magnentius in year 16.

* Cedrenus gives:

Constantius year 14: Gallus is sent to Orient (spring 351)

Year 15: Jewish revolt

Year 16: death of Gallus (fall 354)

Despite some errors (Constantius’s death and Magnentius’s rebellion are placed in year 21), Cedrenus also places the revolt in the year following Gallus’s arrival. The regnal years should also be calculated starting from September 337.

* Without giving a precise date, Victor states that the fall of Gallus occurred shortly after the Jewish revolt: *neque multo post.*
* Theophanes dates it to the year 5843 in the Alexandrian era, which corresponds to the period between March 351 and March 352[[14]](#footnote-14) and thus confirms the date proposed by Avi-Yonah. However, besides the fact that Theophanes is the only one to suggest this date, it should be noted that his chronology in general is far from faultless: he places the revolt a year after the nomination of Gallus (year 5842), but also at the same time as the exile of Pope Liberius, which took place in 355 or 356, before the apparition of the cross in Jerusalem, which he dates to 5847 (in fact it took place in 351), and before Magnentius’s rebellion, which he places in 5849. Moreover, when we scrutinize Theophanes’s dates more closely, it is striking that his calculations are often out by one Alexandrian year, particularly for events that took place between March 25 (the date from which the Alexandrian era was counted) and September 1 (the date from which the indiction was counted and the beginning of the Egyptian new year). To give a few examples: the abdication of Diocletian on May 1, 305 (5796 or March 304-March 305); the Council of Nicaea and the Vicennalia of Constantine in May and July 325 (5816 or March 324–March 325); the dedication of Constantinople in May 330 (5821 or March 329­­–March 330); the Tricennalia of Constantine in July 335 (5826 or March 334–March 335); etc. We should, therefore, treat his dates as an approximation rather than an absolutely precise chronology. The year 5843 could equally well refer to the period between March 351 and March 352 as to the months following that period, as shown by the above examples.
* Finally, Agapius places the revolt three years after the death of Constantius (January 350) and in the third year of Gallus’s reign, which brings us closer to 353 than 351.

On that basis, there does not seem to be any reason to bring the revolt forward to 351; on the contrary, the texts all place it in the year following Gallus’s arrival in Orient, whilst all the chroniclers agree that the end of the revolt occurred shortly before Gallus’s slide into tyranny, which led to his recall in 354. The war must, then, have broken out in the summer of 352 and the revolt been suppressed by the beginning of 353, perhaps after Easter (April 353) if we can take into account an unfortunately rather vague text that we will examine further on.

To return to the Talmud, the relevant passages tell us that Ursicinus, now *magister equitum* in Orient, personally

took part in the fighting and certainly directed it.[[15]](#footnote-15) Texts V and VI confirm the information given by Socrates, who names Sepphoris (Diocaesarea) as the origin of the revolt. This is unsurprising given that the city was the spiritual and intellectual capital of the Jewish world at that time. Text IV shows that Sennabris should be added to the locations destroyed by the Romans. The suppression seems to have been essentially directed against Galilee, which must have been the principal hotbed of insurrection;[[16]](#footnote-16) the fact that the scrolls of the law were damaged but still usable shows that Ursicinus did not have them thrown onto the fire but rather set fire to the city or to the synagogue, from where it was possible to save various objects. The story about the people of Sepphoris demonstrates that proscriptions were imposed and that the ringleaders or those who were most compromised were hunted down; their denunciation is proof that the revolt was not unanimously approved among the inhabitants of Palestine. The chroniclers also relate that Greeks and Samaritans were put to death by the Jews at the beginning of the revolt. The story of the two rabbis of Tiberias and Antioch approaching Ursicinus (text 1) must be from after the revolt: Lieberman dated it to 353, Avi-Yonah to winter 351, both justifiably interpreting it as a delegation sent to request a relaxation of the conditions of the military occupation in the Tiberias region. The season suggested by Avi-Yonah is not impossible: the *magister equitum* was generally on the Persian border during the summer (in Nisibis in 354; in Samosata in 359: Ammianus 14, 2, 20 and 18, 4, 7) but he may well have returned to Antioch for the winter. Admittedly, the context is uncertain; we cannot rule out a courtesy call or a visit to express thanks after the events—although not during the period from early 354 to late 357, when Ursicinus returned from Nisibis to Antioch, was accused, departed for the west, and remained there, nor during the period from early 359 to 360, when he was in Cilicia and then on the Persian front and only returned to Antioch to leave for Constantinople. We cannot even a priori rule out a later date after Ursicinus’s retirement, given that we know he had a house in Antioch (Ammianus 18, 4, 3). But this last hypothesis seems impossible given that the text implies an official approach and can only be understand in the context of an important official function exercised by Ursicinus. The mark of respect he displays by standing up for the rabbi would only be surprising, even shocking, for his entourage if he held some high office.[[17]](#footnote-17) It thus seems plausible that two rabbis from

Tiberias came to Antioch to appeal to the *magister equitum* in the winter of 353, after the failed revolt, during the suppression, and before Ursicinus left for the Persian front.

The story about the bread (texts II and III) is also related to the occupation of Palestine; it is not a matter of personally feeding the “governor,” as Schwab’s translation implies, but of baking bread for the army or *excoctio annonarum*, to which two laws in the Theodosian Code were devoted (7, 5, 1–2).[[18]](#footnote-18) We have evidence for the task of baking bread for the army from the end of the third century in the form of the requisition of bakers,[[19]](#footnote-19) but the legislation recorded in the Theodosian Code reveals a different system in place in the fourth century: soldiers on campaign took with them rations of hardtack (*buccellatum*) and bread (CT 7, 4, 4–6: 360)[[20]](#footnote-20) provided by the *praepositi pistorum* (CT 7, 4, 28: 406) at the request of the *opinatores*, or provisions agents (CT 7, 5, 1: 399). All inhabitants were required to contribute, as shown by a law of 404 (CT 7, 5, 2): “No person shall be exempted from the baking of hardtack, which must be prepared for our loyal soldiers, […]. Indeed, not even the estates of the imperial household shall be considered immune from these duties.”

Nevertheless, the task fell into the category of *munera sordida* and a certain number of dignitaries were exempt as a result (CT 11, 16, 15 and 18: 382 and 390). On the other hand, the obligation did not just apply to the areas where the army was stationed, as demonstrated by the abuses denounced in a law of 399 (CT 7, 5, 1) as well as some examples reported during the reign of Anastasius, when the officials in charge of supplies for the war against the Persians arranged to have bread baked for the army in Edessa and Alexandria, despite the latter city being very far from the theater of operations.[[21]](#footnote-21) We could, at a pinch, interpret the Talmud as evidence of a general obligation imposed on the cities of Palestine with no connection to the war in 352, if the Talmudic text itself did not rule out that hypothesis with the following comment on Ursicinus’s decision to demand provisions on the Sabbath: “The commander’s purpose in imposing this requirement was not to make Israel renounce its faith, but to be sure of having fresh bread.” This remark makes perfect sense in the case of an occupying army in Palestine, but not in that of levies for an army stationed at the Persian border: bread baked in Palestine would certainly not have been fresh by the time it was distributed there. The imposition of the duty on the Sabbath was exceptional; since the time of Augustus, emperors had always granted Jews the right to respect the Sabbath rules, in particular in relation to court appearances and duties imposed by the state.[[22]](#footnote-22) This tolerance was reiterated in the third century (in the *Digest*, 50, 2, 3, 3) and in a law of 412 that referred to

“ancient customs” (CT 2, 8, 6 + 8, 8, 8 + 16, 8, 20). Ursicinus’s demand was thus the product of exceptional circumstances rather than a generally valid rule. The Talmud only mentions one other similar case involving this kind of obligation, in SanhedrinIII 5/21b, which reads: “When Proclus arrived at Sepphoris, Rabbi Mani allowed the bakers to carry bread in the street. The rabbis of Naweh allowed the baking of leavened bread at Easter under the same conditions.” One could argue that this text refers to the same event as that involving Ursicinus and that Proclus was a lieutenant of Ursicinus;[[23]](#footnote-23) in that case we would have proof that the occupation in Palestine lasted until April 353 and extended into the area east of the Sea of Galilee, where the city of Naweh is situated. But this interpretation runs into difficulties:

* Why would Proclus have been blamed instead of Ursicinus, whom the Talmudists considered as the true author of these events?
* The city of Sepphoris was destroyed during the suppression according to all the chroniclers.
* Rabbi Mani, son of Rabbi Jonah, only took over as director of the school in Sepphoris after the death of his father (Pesachim VI, 1 + Ma’aser Sheni IV, 12), in other words when the revolt of 352 had ended. He was active during the time of Patriarch Judah IV, i.e. 380/400 (Berakhot III, 1).

The context of Sanhedrin III, 5 shows that Rabbi Mani was amazed by the tolerance shown to Ursicinus in 352/353 by his father and Rabbi Yose. The text then moves on to the authorization he himself granted to Sepphoris for Proclus’s army. I believe, therefore, that the two events must have taken place at different times, with Rabbi Mani having been opposed to the tolerance shown in 352/353 but later compelled to act in the same way. In these circumstances, the name of Proclus immediately brings to mind Proculus, the son of Fl. Eutolmius Tatianus, who was governor of Palestine around 380[[24]](#footnote-24) before becoming Count of the Orient and Prefect of Constantinople in 388–392. Proculus’s visit to Sepphoris would thus have taken place when Rabbi Mani was at the height of his teaching career in Sepphoris and would have been included in the governor’s round of visits accompanied by his office..

The passages in the Talmud raise another question: what were the respective roles of Gallus and Ursicinus during the revolt and how can their policies be described? The authors of the nineteenth century saw them as fierce persecutors of the Jews.[[25]](#footnote-25) Leiberman and Avi-Yonah contest this view: there seem to have been no “martyrs,” little destruction, and no systematic suppression, and the rabbis were able to continue their teaching without being troubled.[[26]](#footnote-26) Ursicinus is never described as impious or as a tyrant, as Hadrian is, and the revolt does not seem to have inspired any new laws against the Jews except a measure confiscating the goods of Christians who converted to Judaism (CT 16, 8, 7).

There is a certain amount of flexibility in the rabbis’ position vis-à-vis Ursicinus, and the *magister equitum* is depicted as a man with whom it was possible to negotiate, or even as a possible protector. On the other hand, we get a rather different story from Saint Jerome, who describes thousands of deaths, including innocent people (“*Gallus Judaeos… oppressit, caesis multis hominum millibus usque ad innoxiam aetatem”*). We should, therefore, imagine the supression as brutal but confined to the guiltiest cities, particularly in Galilee, with the people of Sepphoris, the birthplace of the revolt, as the principal victims. Another contradiction between the texts concerns the role of Gallus: the Talmud only mentions Ursicinus and portrays him as the absolute master (“during the reign of Ursicinus”), while the Roman and Greek authors describe Gallus as the director of operations. According to Socrates and Sozomen, Gallus sent an army (Socrates: δύναμιν άποστείλας; Sozomen: πέμψας στρατΐαν), which does not suggest that he led it in person. Jerome blames Gallus for the suppression. The latter’s role cannot have been passive; paradoxically, there are hints of it in the omission of the revolt from Julian’s panegyric in honor of Constantius in 355: Julian, desperate to find victories to celebrate, would surely not have overlooked this one if the abhorred name of Gallus had not been connected to it. Finally, it is no coincidence that all the chroniclers draw a link between this victory and the excesses committed by Gallus in Antioch, excesses portrayed by the chroniclers as the consequence of the pride he felt at his success against the Jews. Several passages in Ammianus Marcellinus demonstrate that Gallus had the armies of Orient at his disposal (14, 7, 9), that he sent the commanders to various theaters of operations (14, 2, 20), and that he himself participated in expeditions (14, 7, 2).[[27]](#footnote-27) Gallus must have had overall charge of the war while Ursicinus was responsible for actual operations on the ground, the only level recorded by the Talmudists. Moreover, the Talmud passages confirm the popularity the *magister militum* enjoyed in Orient as well as the fear and respect he inspired in his friends and his enemies, as Ammianus repeatedly emphasizes—to the point of being a veritable partisan of Ursicinus (Ammianus 18, 6, 2 and 8, 5). As Ursicinus did not share Gallus’s fervent Christian faith, he saw the Jews simply as his current enemies rather than inherently despicable people: this may have exacerbated the rivalry between the Caesar, inflated by his first success, and the overly important and influential *magister equitum*. Hence the growing hostility, the suspicion (Ammianus 14, 11, 2–3), the charge of ambitious scheming, and the subsequent accusation that Ursicinus was a “revolutionary” (Ammianus 18, 5, 5: *rerum novarum avidus concitor*).

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1. Daniel Sperber, *Roman Palestine, 200–400, Money and Prices* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1974). Also worthy of note is the interesting use made of the text by Saul Lieberman: “Roman Legal Institutions in Early Rabbinics and in the Acta Martyrum,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 35 (1944-5), 1–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Roger Hanoune, “Thermes romains et Talmud,” *Colloque Histoire et Historiographie, Clio* (coll. *Caesarodunum* XV bis, 1980), 255–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Le Talmud de Jérusalem*, translated by Moïse Schwab in six volumes. I used the 1960 edition for this article. I would particularly like to thank Jean-Marie Delmaire, supplementary lecturer in Hebrew at the University of Lille III, who kindly reviewed the text, checked the translations, and suggested some crucial corrections. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden IV* (1866), 339–42; Saul Lieberman, “Palestine in the third and fourth century,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*36 (1945–46), 336–40; Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest*, 187–81 (I used the 1976 English translation of this work, which was published previously in Hebrew and German). Several articles in the *Encyclopaedia Judaïca* also cite these texts (IX, 256; XV, 775 and 1132; XVI, 281…). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *RE* 2nd series, IX, col. 1058–1063; Jones, Martindale, and Morris: *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire I* (1971), 985 s.v. Ursicinus 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The transcription of proper names follows those used by the *Encyclopaedia Judaïca*. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf Ammianus Marcellinus 15, 5, 28: *aegre ferebat Silvanus, ad consulatum potestatesque sublimes elatis indignis, se et Ursicinum solos, post exsudatos magnos pro re publica labores et crebros ita fuisse despectos…* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ammianus 15, 5, 19. Some have tried to correct Constantine to Constantius, but Ursicinus already had a long career behind him in 355, as shown by the text cited in the previous note. There is nothing particularly exceptional about reaching the rank of *magister equitum* after more than fifteen years of service: Saturninus was an officer under Constantius around 350 and *magister equitum* by 377 (Themistius, Oration 16, 200, and Ammianus 31, 8, 3 ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. On the date, see Seeck, *Regesten*, 204; Constantius was still in Italy at the end of July and he visited the Danubian provinces before returning to his winter quarters in Sirmium in October. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ammianus only mentions his name again in connection with the death of his son in 378 at the Battle of Adrianople (31, 13, 18). A Count Ursicinus who is mentioned in a law of 364 concerning army supplies (CT 7, 4, 12) could be our Ursicinus given that the *magister equitum* customarily received the title of count and retained it after leaving office (Ammianus 8, 8, 6; 29, 5, 46), unless we accept that Ursicinus became a count of the consistory. Nevertheless, in that case we would expect to see Ursicinus referred to as the former *magister equitum* rather than simply as count. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Aurelius Victor: *De Caesaribus* 42, 11. The revolt is recorded in Jerome: *Chronicle* ed. Helm, 238; Socrates: *Historia ecclesiastica* II, 33 and Sozomen: *Historia ecclesiastica* IV, 7, 5, which are the source for Cassiodorus: *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* V, 11 and Nicephorus Callistus: *Historia ecclesiastica* IX, 32; Cedrenus I, 524 B; Theophanes: *Chronography* year 5843, ed. De Boor, 40; Theodorus Lector §90; Michael the Syrian: *Chronicle* VII, 4 (ed. J. B. Chabot I, 268); Agapius of Manbij: *Kitab al-‘Unwan (Patrologia orientalis* VII, 4), 572. Perhaps we should also add a passage in John Chrysostom: *Adversus Judaeos* V, 11, which concerns a revolt under Constantine described as a long-ago event (ἀρχαῖα καὶ παλαὶα) but one that was remembered by the Ancients. The speech dates from 387 (VI, 6) and may refer either to the revolt that had occurred 35 years previously or to an uprising under Constantine that is only mentioned elsewhere by Cedrenus I, 499 B, who is simply following John Chrysostom, and by the Syrian Chronicle of 846 (*CSCO Scr. Syri, Versio III, 4 = Chronica minora II*, 148); in the absence of a critical edition of the text we cannot reach a definite conclusion (Avi-Yonah accepts the factuality of the revolt under Constantine (*The Jews of* Palestine, 173)). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 176–81. The traditional date is accepted by Graetz, *Geschichte*, 339 ff; Lieberman, “Palestine…” 337; Félix-Marie Abel, *Histoire de la Palestine* II, 273; Ernst Stein and Jean-Rémy Palanque, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* I, 141; André Piganiol, *L’Empire chrétien*, 2nd ed. 103. Avi-Yonah wrongly places the 4th year of the 282nd Olympiad in 351, but it was actually 352/353 (see Venance Grumel, *Traité d’études byzantines, I: La Chronologie*, 212 and 241). Likewise, he places 2368 anno Abrahami in 351, but counting from 2016 BC it actually corresponds to 352 (Grumel, *Traité*, 222). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. On the era used, see Venance Grumel, “L’année du monde dans la Chronographie de Théophane,” *Echos d’Orient* 33 (1934): 396–408, and Grumel, *Traité*, 95 ff, which proves that the starting point should be fixed on March 25, 5492 BC. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The response to the revolts in Palestine in the fifth and sixth centuries was generally led by the dux of Palestine: Malalas, 382 B; Choricius of Gaza, *Encomium to Aratius* and *Encomium to Summus*, ed. Foerster and Rechsteig: *Orat.* III, 48 and IV, 69. But the *magister militum* of Orient may have been required to combat the revolts: Malalas, 345 B; Ammianus 14, 2, 20: Gallus wants to send Ursicinus to fight the Isaurian looters; Theodosius also sent the *magister militum* of Orient, in that case Ellebichus, to suppress Antioch after the riots in 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Sennabris is on the Sea of Galilee, 30 stadia south of Tiberias (Josephus: *Bel. Jud.* 3, 9, 7); on its location, see Neubauer: *Geographie du Talmud*, 215, and Honigmann, art. Sennabris, *RE* 2nd series, II, col. 1466–7. On the sites that were destroyed or abandoned at this time, see Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Standing up was a mark of respect towards superiors: Suetonius, *Augustus* 56, *Claudius* 6, *Vespasian* 13; *SHA Maximin* 28,1; Ambrose: *Enarrationes in Psalmos* I, 27. For a person of high rank to stand before an inferior was therefore an exceptional sign of deference: Mamertinus: *Panegyric to Julian* 28.4; Sulpicius Severus: *Dialogues* 2, 5, 8; Ambrose: *Letters* 24, 3; Mark the Deacon: *Life of Porphyry* 38 and 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 181; Liebermman, “Palestine,” 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *P. Beatty Panopolis* I, col. 7, ed. Skeat, 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Robert Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Theophanes year 5997 (ed. De Boor, 146 and 148) supplemented by the Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysios (*Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysiacum vulgo dictum* ed. J. B. Chabot, 217 and 221 = CSCO 121/Scr. Syri 66); Joshua the Stylite §70 and 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Josephus: *Ant. Jud.* 16, 6, 2. On this topic, see Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l’empire romain* I, 354–6 and II, 288. On the prohibitions against baking and transportation on the Sabbath, see the Shabbat chapter in the Talmud. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. This is what Avi-Yonah suggests (*The Jews of Palestine*, 181). Against him, Lieberman (“Palestine,” 352–3) proposes a date after 360 and compares the text to Pesachim IV 9, which refers to a *numerus* stationed in Sepphoris to raise recruits (Schwab’s translation of this passage is completely inaccurate and must be reassessed). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Libanius, *Oratio* XLII, 41–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Graetz, *Geschichte*; Schwab refers to Ursicinus in a note as “legate of Gallus [sic]…who behaved very cruelly towards the Jews” (II, 2nd part, 336). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Lieberman, “Palestine,” 336–8; Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 180–1. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Gallus’s military ability was emphasized by the Arian historians, Philostorgius (3..28), and the author of the *Passio Artemii* (§12 ed. Bidez, 53): but the only significant military achievement during Gallus’s caesarship was the Jewish revolt. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)