**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 Talmudic prism that historians of early Judaism can cautiously shed light on certain phenomena in the social history of the Jewish community in 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 then Sassanian Babylonia, in other words, during the period of the Mishna and the Talmud.[[1]](#footnote-1) Usually convivial and abundant,[[2]](#footnote-2) these relations also reveal the existence of strong tensions,[[3]](#footnote-3) intensifying during the second half of the 3rd century CE.

The aggravation of a social reality at a given time generally presupposes the existence of a historical context that is at the origin of the redoubling of the exacerbation. The aim of our research is therefore to historically identify several Talmudic and Midrashic texts that shed light on the dissensions between these two Jewish societies, in order to explain their ins and outs. Far from being exhaustive, our study will nevertheless retrace 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 two social groups originated in the land of Israel towards the Babylonian Jews, and almost never vice versa. A number of sources point in this direction. It was after 224 CE that 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 variant of the Babylonian Talmud's account of the events taking place 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, resulting in several altercations with ordinary Galilean Jews, who, according to this text, died after mocking him.[[7]](#footnote-7) Rav Kahana 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], sitting in Tiberias. Presumably knowing that the latter would not allow him to leave the Land of Israel, Rav Kahana used the following trick: "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 relates the anecdote of R. Zeira,[[9]](#footnote-9) who, wanting to buy a piece of meat, was manhandled for no apparent reason by a Galilean butcher.[[10]](#footnote-10) The same Talmudic passage goes on to relate 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 clearly because of their Babylonian origin that they were roughed up by their Galilean co-religionists.[[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 (III, 6) stipulating, "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] 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) According to some midrashic sources from *Eretz-Israel*, the "pestilential" waters of the Euphrates irrigate the Babylonian lands, which 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 summoned a group of Babylonian Jews scouring the Tiberias market to disperse, while R. Yohanan pitied them.[[20]](#footnote-20)

II

It seems to us that a historical context combining several factors was at the root of these outraged reactions. Firstly, 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 with Rabba bar bar-Hanna by asserting 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, but since they were only a tiny minority who left Babylonia, they are compared to cedar subject to putrefaction.[[21]](#footnote-21) In forcing them to disperse in the Tiberias market, Resh Laquish invoked a similar motif, saying: "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 is told in a different way, even if it is in fact the same event. It reads as follows:

"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. It is even conceivable that the commoners took their stand on the basis of an identical teaching frequently given by the Sages, which says a great deal about the deep cleavages dividing the Galilean Jewish community from its Babylonian counterpart. As for the factual historicity of the dialectic put forward by these Galilean Jews, we are inclined to refute the proposed argument. In fact, it's hard to detect an ounce of authenticity in the reprobation expressed, for two main reasons. Firstly, 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? Secondly, assuming that the Jewish community of Babylonia really did join en masse during the Second Temple period with their counterparts in the land of Israel, would 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.

In spite of the chimerical and historically implausible nature of such an indictment, the historian's duty is to verify any assertion by giving exclusive priority to contemporary sources, reflecting an ancient mentality that is both singular and bygone. We therefore 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). A reality likely to fuel an amplified history of mentalities over the centuries, radicalizing positions in the light of the day-to-day difficulties specific to the 3rd century, as we shall attempt to demonstrate.

III

It's plausible that the Jewish insurgents during the great revolt against Rome hoped that their co-religionists in Babylonia would come to their aid. Indeed, a text by Flavius Josephus recounts the famous speech made by King Agrippa II (27-92 CE) in the year 66 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 proves that the Jews of Palestine, in particular the insurgents, were eager to open a second front against Rome thanks to the possible support of the Babylonian Jewish myriads,[[30]](#footnote-30) in particular the extremely numerous Jews of Adiabene,[[31]](#footnote-31) likely to jeopardize, or at least destabilize, Roman hegemony in the Levant. According to A. Schalit and many other researchers, Roman Emperor Nero (54-68) believed that, by *imitatio Alexandri*, he was reincarnating the Hellenic conqueror,[[32]](#footnote-32) in whose footsteps - and contrary to the peace signed by convenience with Tiridates when he submitted in the spring of 63 CE at Rhandeia to Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo[[33]](#footnote-33) - 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 the year 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, 66 CE.[[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 also 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) This shortcoming, which was at the root of the Roman province of Judea's military vulnerability, forced Rome to hastily dispatch the *Legio XII Fulminata* from the province of Syria in an attempt to quell the Jewish uprising, a military operation whose disastrous outcome 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) Trajan's father, M. Ulpius Traianus, commanded this legion in 66 CE under the orders of Vespasian to put down the Jewish revolt in Perea [now Jordan]. In 73/74 CE, he was also consul of the senatorial province of Syria, where he fought against Parthian incursions by massing solid troops along the border.[[44]](#footnote-44) Trajan-son himself 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, he thought he had protected himself from a Jewish diversion; except that 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, precisely from these regions, where Trajan seems to have recruited his army to launch his military campaign. This revolt of the essentially Hellenistic Jewish diaspora against Roman hegemony has merited the attention of many scholars,[[46]](#footnote-46). 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 could be considered *a priori* visionary, so it would be risky to rely on such a conjectural restitution to admit 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, we have to admit that it demonstrates several points directly linked to the dialectic of the Jews of *Eretz-Israel at the* time of the Talmud.

1. The Jews of Judea, who rose up against Rome in 66 CE, aborted 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 - if it came to pass - would probably have counterbalanced the balance of power 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 minority from Adiabene, the majority of Jews from Babylonia did not get involved in the armed conflict,[[50]](#footnote-50) being perhaps already perceived as indirectly responsible for the destruction of the second temple by their brothers in Judea!
4. The revolt of the Diaspora between 115-117 CE and the massacres of Jewish communities in Egypt (notably the annihilation of the flourishing community of Alexandria), Cyrenaica and Cyprus provided a diversion, sparing the Jewish communities of Parthian Babylonia from a Roman conquest, the outcome of which was in no doubt, given the increasing weakness of the Arsacid defenses against the Trajan legions, at least in the first months of the campaign.
5. Following the Bar-Kokhba revolt (132-135 CE) against Hadrian's legions, Judea was devastated. According to Cassius Dio, there were 580,000 victims, most of them were probably Jewish[[51]](#footnote-51). Did the Jews of Babylonia come to the aid of their Judean brothers? Given the current state of sources and historical research, there's nothing to confirm this. As for the Jews of Judea, here again they were desperately awaiting the opening of this long-awaited eastern front, as 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) stating as follows: "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) In other words, for the Jews of the land of Israel, the Persian/Parthian cavalry - the only power capable of defying Rome, their sworn enemy - 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's 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 exacerbated Jewish populations of Roman Palestine. It seems fair to admit that the latter was, intentionally or unintentionally, spared from the Roman yoke by the successive uprisings of the Jews inhabiting the *imperium*. What's more, the Jews of Babylonia always remained outside the circle of conflict, most of them refusing to get involved militarily in Roman Palestine!

This contempt seems to turn into open hatred, precisely in the second half of the 3rd century. Why is this? It seems to us that we need to combine this reconstruction with an important element: the economic crisis that hit the Jewish population of Roman Palestine.

We know that in the second half of this century, the Roman Empire was affected by a security and economic crisis unprecedented in the history of Rome.[[55]](#footnote-55) The Palestinian Jewish population was by no means spared by this crisis.[[56]](#footnote-56) Let's briefly outline the economic context prevailing in the cities of Palestine during this period of general slump. Economic difficulties were at the root of Patriarch R. Judah II (235-260) to commercialize magistrature appointments.[[57]](#footnote-57) Note in passing, 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, one of the aims of which was to identify the wealth of large senatorial and local landowners, who were called upon to contribute more.[[59]](#footnote-59) Like other provincials, the Jews of Palestine were in no way spared by these oppressive budgetary measures, so much so that R. Yohanan invited the unlucky ones, newly appointed to the city council, to abandon the land of Israel.[[60]](#footnote-60) An excessive stance that clearly testifies to the weight of the contributions demanded of individuals forcibly assigned to public positions. The abandonment of property in the face of such heavy taxation appears time and again in rabbinic literature.[[61]](#footnote-61) For example, the Jews of Tiberias, who were no longer able to pay the *Aurum Coronarium*,[[62]](#footnote-62) or 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 courage to study *Halakhah* because of the financial concerns they had to face.[[64]](#footnote-64) Economic precariousness disturbed the peace of mind, an indispensable condition for the complex study of halakhic texts.

To conclude, R. Zeira the Babylonian asked to buy a kilogram of meat, something common in Babylonia where droughts are exceptional due to the location of Jewish populations on the banks of the Euphrates and its tributaries, whereas in the land of Israel, where drought succeeded one another in the 3rd century, this commodity was extremely rare and therefore expensive.[[65]](#footnote-65) Combined with the extremely heavy tax burden imposed by the Roman administration on the Jews of Palestine, the complexity of the situation 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 annoyance may well have recalled 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, who twice indirectly stopped the inevitable subjugation of Babylonian Jewry to the power of Rome through their insurrections, had the empire's legions prevailed. Incidentally, 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 debacles, 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 the evolution of mentalities, is likely to 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 2nd 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 babyonians' "] 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 Yisrael* as Reflected in the Palestinian Talmud', in: Idem, *Text and Studies,* New York 1974, p. 180: "An attempt to portray life in *Eretz Yisrael* in 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-Israel* in 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 Ketoubot,* 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, which is clearly demonstrable since the text of the Jerusalem Talmud explicitly states about each of them:"כד סליק להכא" , 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, anxious to acquire a large share of meat to compensate for a physical weakness caused by bloodletting, at a time when the Jewish population of Roman Palestine was suffering from great economic precariousness in the 3rd century [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. 331-332. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Y. Pessahim,* V, 3 (32a). In the Babylonian occurrence 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,* 216-217: "*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: "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. 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. 159-180. [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. 211-212; 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. 563-572; 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. 509-543; 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 als (eds.), *Ancient History in a Modern University,* I: *The Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome,* Grand Rapids 1998, pp. 178-191; E. Champlin, *Nero,* Cambridge (Mass.) 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 19922 , 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. 1705-1710; G. Bertrandy & B. Rémy, 'Legio XII Fulminata', in: Y. Le Bohec (ed.), *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire,* Lyon 2000, pp. 253-257; J. B. Campbell, 'Legion', in: S. Hornblower & A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* Oxford 20033 , p. 841b: "... 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. 175-189 [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. 503-505; M. Sartre, *L'orient romain - Provinces et sociétés provinciales en Méditerranée orientale d'Auguste aux Sévères,* Paris 1991, pp. 404-406. Et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Chaumont, L'*Arménie entre Rome et l'Iran,* pp. 140-141: "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. 179-180 [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 could 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 these considerations correspond to the convictions of the Jews of Babylonia in 66 CE, it is conceivable that this dialectic was perceived by the Jews of Palestine as an obvious red herring, an evasion that only served to reinforce a feeling of massive abandonment of their Babylonian brethren, and even of high treason. [↑](#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 at 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 values, 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. 278-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On Talmudic sources, especially Palestinian ones, which bear witness to the evils of the crisis of the IIIe century, 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. 122-135. [Hebrew] According to a recently published study, the crisis that hit the Roman Empire in the 3rd century 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. 143-170. [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, '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, R. I. 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, on the sole grounds that Talmudic literature is inadmissible as a historical source, and 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 concerning the economic problems of their time. However, generalizations cannot be made. Moreover, the difficult economic situation of the Sages working in the aftermath of the Great Revolt (66-73 CE) and that of Ben-Kosba (132-135 CE), indeed prompted them to denounce these problems, but this does not imply that the rabbinic invectives of the thirdcentury, were not linked to the difficulties of their time. It's a fact that during the prosperous period of Patriarch R. Judah Ist (180-222), the Rabbis hardly ever denounced the much-improved economic situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. On the venality of public positions at this period among the Jewish people residing in the cities, especially in Tiberias cf. *Y. Bikkurim,* 3, 3 (65d); A. Marmorstein, 'L'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: Theodor-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 Ist (180-222) that Septimius Severus authorized, in a law of 196 or 198, 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 monetized by force, 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: Theodor-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. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 229-230); *Ibid,* 31, 2 (ed. Theodor-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. 331-332. [↑](#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 easy prey to 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 a disapproving gaze. 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 reinforce and add to the factors we have mentioned to try and explain this atmosphere of discord. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)