

Aspects of the Situation of the Jews and Implicitly of the Christians after the Roman Conquest of Jerusalem

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ABSTRACT: During the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Roman armies, many Jews lost their lives, while others were caught up in the war. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple, a masterpiece of art, was looted and burned. The Romans seized holy objects, including the seven-armed chandelier of solid gold, the golden table on which the 12 loaves of bread were placed, the embroidered curtain, the golden vessels and a Torah scroll later donated by the emperors Vespasian and Titus to the temple of the goddess of peace. The triumphal arch erected in the Forum in honor of Titus was decorated with relief reproductions of these trophies and depictions of scenes from the war in which the Jews had been so cruelly defeated. As testimony to this tragic event, there are also medals on which a woman's hands were tied and on which the inscriptions can be read: *Iudeaea devicta*, i.e., Judaea defeated, and *Iudeea capta*, i.e. Judaea captive. This article aims to provide an overview of the historical significance and impact of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

KEYWORDS: Jews, Christians, Romans, conquest, persecution, rebellion, consequences

Introduction

In 70 AD, Jerusalem was conquered and fell to the Romans (Westwood 2017, 189–193; Maclean Rogers 2021, 3-5), and the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed (Ben-Ami and Tchekhanovets 2011, 61-85). In fact, the temple was looted by the Romans, and among the war trophies, which were part of the triumphal procession, were the precious objects taken from the temple in Jerusalem (Baker 2015, 361-362), including the seven-armed chandelier of solid gold, the golden table on which the 12 loaves of bread were placed, the embroidered curtain, the golden vessels and a scroll from the Torah, later donated by the emperors Vespasian (Coarelli 2009) and Titus to the temple of the goddess of peace. The triumphal arch erected in the Forum in honor of Titus was decorated with relief reproductions of these trophies and depictions of scenes from the war in which the Jews had been so cruelly defeated (Alföldy 1995, 195-226). The medals on which a woman's hands are bound and on which the inscriptions: *Iudeaea Devicta*, i.e., *Judaea defeated*, and *Iudeea Capta*, i.e., *Judaea captive* (Moresino-Zipper 2009, 61, 64-67; Hoenig 1981, 2), have survived as testimony. Thousands of Jewish captives were sold into slavery. In the fairs the Jewish slave had become a common commodity.

The premises of Bar Kohba's uprising

Of the three smaller cities still in Jewish hands after the destruction of Jerusalem, only Masada on the rocky shore of the Dead Sea still resisted the Romans. Masada, written with ss or s, comes from the Hebrew *mitsada* and means "city" (Zerubavel 1994, 72-100; Gilbert, 2008; Cohen 1982: 385-405; Vidal-Naquet 1978, 3-21; Nachman 1995; Magness 2019; Vidal-Naquet 2005). Defended by the difficult-to-reach height, the defenders of Masada led by Eleazar ben Ya'ir (Elazar ben Ya'ir), a

descendant of the famous Judah the Galilean, the first great leader of the Zealots, who had been crucified by the Romans, vowed to fight to the last drop of blood. When at last the walls of Masada fell under the blows of the Roman assault machines and there was no hope of retaining the city, Eleazar is said to have said to the fighters: Let our women die unharmed, our children without having tasted slavery, let our shroud be our glory. Convinced that they could not hold out any longer, with the heroism of despair, the fighters killed their wives and children, killed each other, and the last one committed suicide.

When they finally managed to penetrate Masada, the Romans found only the bodies of these last heroes of Judah. The final act of the drama was over. According to estimates, the war cost more than a million lives. The population of Judea was largely wiped out. It was a crueller destruction than that of Nebuchadnezzar's time (Neusner 1969, 352-353). Again Zion mourned for her sons who had been killed or dragged into slavery. Judea was more wretched than after her first fall, but she had foreseen what was to follow, but refused to listen. The Lord had deplored her disobedience, when he told Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34). Or when he prophesied in the hearing of the disciples, looking towards the greatness of the temple: „As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Luke 21:6). All respect for the brave spirit of this wonderful people, but unfortunately they did not understand the purpose for which the Lord had brought them into existence and did not understand the mission to which they had been called.

With the fall of Masada in 73 AD, Masada, this last bastion of Jewish resistance (Sasson, Kelner and Sasson 2008, 146-163; Siliato 2018), the Jewish state was turned into a Roman province, and the Romans after the Bar Kohba uprising changed the name of the country from Judea to Palestine. At first Emperor Hadrian changed the name of the province of Judea to Syria-Palestine (Ben-Sasson 1976, 334), and later just Palestine (Feldman 1990, 1-23; Jacobson 2001, 3). This name had first been used in his writings by the Greek historian Herodotus (Lewin 2005, 33) in the 1st century. V BC to designate the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Syrian desert. The name Palestine derives from the name of the Philistines, a population of Indo-European origin, with a Mycenaean culture, who had settled in the 1st century BC, 13th-11th BC, on the southern coast of the Mediterranean (Krämer 2002, 14-15; Finkelstein and Silberman 2004, 16, 42, 52). The Philistines had been extinct since the 6th century BC, in fact the last mention of them is in 720 BC when the Philistines were forced to pay tribute to King Sargon of Assyria. After this date, the historical sources no longer mention them. The Romans, however, changed the name of the country from Judea to Palestine with an anti-Jewish bias in their attempt to erase the memory of the Jews' historical connection to Israel.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, a large number of the people and a significant number of scholars who had escaped with their lives fled to Jamnia and established an academic school there on the initiative of Yohanan ben Zakkai (Hezser 1997, 64). This place and this school were to become the spiritual center of Judaism in place of the destroyed one. Here in Jamnia, Yohanan ben Zakkai gathered together scholars and scholars who created a new system of religious law that was later applied in all the countries where Jews were scattered. Here, civil laws were drawn up, curricula were drawn up, prayers were established, and holiday ceremonies were set, which were later adopted by all Jews in the Diaspora. Judaism (Picard 1990) was reorganizing itself around the thinking of the Pharisees, but with the destruction of the Temple, the Sadducees had ceased their role and were out of history.

At this time, economically, Israel's situation was catastrophic because the war years had destroyed agriculture, industry, crafts, trade, and the specter of poverty had gripped the entire country. The remaining Jews were deliberately kept in a state of abject slavery. Demoralization and despair reigned throughout the land. A sense of helplessness gripped the entire Jewish population. At such a juncture, unable to change their hopeless state, the people told themselves that only supernatural forces could help them. Unfortunately, however, they chose the path of mysticism (Patai 2012, 287; Scholem 2007, 587; Parpola 1993, 161-208; Ashlag 2008, 12; Kaplan 1978; Scholem 1941; 1990), which in later centuries would give rise to the Kabbalah.

So the Sanhedrin (Much 2011, 25; Newman and Sivan 1992) was re-established in Jamnia as the supreme legislative body. Autonomous legislation gave access to this people, left stateless, the strength of its spiritual treasury, and the eyes of the whole nation now scattered all over the world continued to be turned towards Judaea. The academic school of jurists was attempting to replace the destroyed Temple, and the Sanhedrin, which had previously been a state institution, now became the supreme organ of Jewish autonomy and law-making.

Since the temple priesthood had ceased to exist, the jurists of today are the descendants of the scribes and Pharisees and remain without rivals in the spiritual realm. The rule of law, the *nomocracy*, now becomes the main unifying factor of the Jewish people. On this basis the spiritual leaders of the nation, who remain in Judea, maintain internal order in the land and the bond between the scattered segments of the Jewish people.

The situation of the Jews in the country was desolate. In war-torn Judea, the Romans had introduced a military administration. The office of procurator in Jesus' day was now taken over by a military commander, and his residence was in the maritime Caesarea on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There were now no Jews living in Caesarea, and the emperor Flavius Vespasianus had turned it into a Roman imperial colony. Jerusalem was so destroyed that it was hard to believe these places had ever been inhabited. The prophecy had been fulfilled that not one stone would be left upon another. In other towns in Judea and Galilee that had escaped the devastating effects of the war, Jewish communities continued to exist. In the mentality of the time, and especially in Roman law, the notions of nation and state were closely linked. Although the Jews had been denied statehood all the more so because the name of the state had also been changed, and precisely in order to erase this membership, the Romans could not refuse to use the title of nation for the Jews. The Jews had a well-defined identity and individuality in the ancient world, and therefore even after the destruction and disappearance of Judaism as a state, they would be referred to in official documents as *natio* and *populos*. Against this background it was possible to restore, little by little, the autonomy of the communities of Judea and Galilee. Not ten years after the fall of Jerusalem, a patriarch was already at the head of the indigenous Jewish communities, whom the Roman administration recognized as their rightful leader.

Emperor Vespasian (*Caesar Vespasianus Augustus* or *Titus Flavius Vespasianus* b.9-d.79 AD) (Bilde 1988; Pelletier 1975; Cohen 2002; Feldman and Mason 1999) and his son Titus in their activities neglected the Jews who were loyal to the Romans and persecuted those in Israel whom they suspected of revolutionary intentions. Among other things, they confiscated their agricultural land and assigned it to settlers from Judaea.

Roman rule was strongly felt and especially offensive in the area of taxation. The Roman administration forced all Jews throughout the empire to pay tithes for the temple of Jupiter the Capitoline, the tithes they had previously contributed to the upkeep of the temple in Jerusalem. This special tax was called *Fiscus Judaicus* (Bourgel 2015, 105-125; Goodman 2007; Douglas 1996; Feldman 1993; Radin 1915; Schäfer 1998; Stern 1997; Heemstra, 2010, 9; Goodman 1989, 40-44), and it made the Jews feel that they were being demeaned as a nation.

The tithe, which until the destruction of the temple had been the symbol of the nation's connection with Jerusalem and the measure of their respect for Yahweh and the law, with which they contributed to the upkeep of the temple, had now become the symbol of the Romans' silence. Berenice, sister of King Agrippa II, had become Titus' mistress (Crook 1951, 162-175). It was King Agrippa and Berenice who listened to the Apostle Paul in Caesarea during the time of Festus the procurator. Through their influence the situation of the Jews in Judea improved, but their influence was temporary. After a short time the relationship between the son of the emperor and the Jewish princess had to end because neither Emperor Vespasian nor the Roman aristocracy looked kindly on it. An emperor's son, who had been co-regent of the empire since 71 AD and was to become emperor in 79 AD, could not ignore all these signs, so Titus repudiated his mistress. Disappointed and unable to stay in Rome, Berenice returned to Israel to stay with her brother (Tal 2022; Boccaccini 1992). Her and Agrippa's end remains shrouded in mystery. After Agrippa's death, his property in Israel reverted to the Roman province of Syria. Berenice and Agrippa II were the last representatives of the Herodian dynasty, so alien to Jewish national interests. The friend of the Romans, Marcus Julius Agrippa and the great queen Berenice, as recorded in the Greek documents of the time, thus disappeared unnoticed from the scene of history (Balch and Osiek 2003. 133-137; Schwentzel 2011, 47, 225, 231-232, 240-278; Akermann 1978; Yordan 1974; Tal 1992, 361-381; Macurdy 1935, 246-253).

Titus Flavius Domitianus (51-96 AD, known as Domitian, was a Roman emperor of the Flavian dynasty from 81-96 AD), Titus' brother and successor, treated the Jews with great harshness. Those who refused to pay the tax to support the temple of Jupiter were condemned to death by Capitolinus. Romans who showed sympathy for Judaism or for Christianity, which was then considered a form of Judaism, were severely punished. History records that when Domitian learned that his cousin, Consul Flavius Clemens, and his wife, Flavia Domitila, sympathized with the Jews, he sentenced the consul to death and sent his wife into exile. In fact the consul and his wife had become Christians, only at that time the Romans could not yet distinguish between Jews and Christians. It was only after Domitian's violent death, with the accession of Emperor Nerva to the throne, that the situation for Jews and Christians relaxed somewhat. Even more so, Emperor Nerva ordered the abolition of the *fiscus iudaicus*, a tax that Jews were obliged to pay to the Roman state. In Judea, the spiritual-religious restoration that Yohanan ben Zakkai began in Jamnia was progressing. After the destruction of Jerusalem, it was necessary to reorganize the structures and institutions in the new circumstances. Order had to be restored to the surviving communities and their autonomy had to be ensured even in a more restricted form. The only survivor of the Old Jerusalem Sanhedrin was Yohanan (Yochanan) ben Zakkai. Under his direct leadership a court was established in Jamnia to take the place of the former Sanhedrin in Jewish religious cultural life. As the supreme law-making, jurisdictional and administrative body. The Roman rulers had confidence in the peaceful character of this new Sanhedrin and did not obstruct in any way the work of restoration which Yohanan (Yochanan) ben Zakkai had undertaken. The most important reforms that the Sanhedrin of Jamnia carried out were: the new organization of religious services in the absence of the temple and the compilation of the Mosaic calendar. A special role was played by the academic school in Yamnia, which aimed to ensure Israelite religious spiritual hegemony over the Jewish communities in the Diaspora. The new Sanhedrin installed in Jamnia had the task of informing all Jewish communities, including those in the Diaspora, about the days on which the holidays were to be celebrated. The Court of Justice restored by Yohanan (Yochanan) ben Zakkai also had an educational section, which trained specialists not only to appropriate at the highest level the biblical prescriptions, but also to derive new laws appropriate to the new circumstances and conditions of Jewish life, based on the biblical prescriptions.

In 80 AD, Gamaliel II became president of the Sanhedrin of Jamnia. But his attitude to events was more political than mystical. He was convinced that only through dialogue, through constant contact with the Roman authorities, could the situation in the country be improved, which is why he did not oppose the study of Helleno-Roman culture or collaboration with the Romans in the administration of the country. As a result he allowed the baths of Tveria, where a statue of the goddess of beauty, Aphrodite, had been erected. He told the Orthodox Jews that the statues erected by the Romans were mere ornaments without sacred content. This liberal attitude drew the enmity of fanatical Jews, who succeeded in briefly removing Gamaliel II from office. Thus Gamaliel II's conviction that dialogue with the Roman authorities could relieve oppression proved true. During the reign of Domitian, when persecution of the Jews was the order of the day, Gamaliel II went to Rome, where he succeeded in having some anti-Jewish measures abolished.

As for the Christians, their fate was very much after the reign of Domitian. Here is what Eusebius of Caesarea writes about it in his work Church History: "Having shown his cruelty to many, by killing without just cause a very great number of nobles and prominent men in Rome, and having sent many of them into exile across the frontier, confiscating their possessions, the emperor Domitian proved himself a true follower of Nero, by the hatred and strife which he bore against God, for he was the second of those who set up the persecution against us, whereas Vespasian never had any evil in his mind against us" (Eusebius 1987, 118). It is interesting to note, however, that among the acts issued by Domitian there is no decree of persecution. Which is the reality. Domitian was annoyed that the Jewish Christians refused to pay that tax imposed on the Jews, called *fiscus iudaicus* (Latin for "Jewish tax"), claiming that they did not belong to this people (Whittaker 1984, 105; Heemstra 2010, 9; Feldman 2001; Moussaieff 2010).

The Christian historian Lactantius gives us some details about the persecution undertaken by Domitian and from the poor information he gives us, a general picture can be drawn. He tells us that Domitian punished the Christians who evaded paying the tax, claiming that they were not Jews, and then the emperor, irritated by their attitude, punished the Christians in Rome with death, even going as far as the members of his own family (Agachi 2013). During this period, the Roman administration forced all Jews and Christians throughout the Roman Empire to pay the *Fiscus Judaicus*, and against all those who resisted paying this tax, Domitian took extraordinarily harsh measures (Eusebius 1987, 120), in most cases punishable by death, a period that has gone down in history as the Domitian Persecution. It is true that the Romans could not yet distinguish between Jews and Christians at that time. In 96 AD, after the assassination of Domitian (Puiu 2002), the provisions for the improvement of the regime applied to the Jews were emphasized by provisions issued from Rome. The reduction in persecution resulted in an increase in the number of organized communities and school centers under the patronage of the Jewish center at Jamnia.

The sources of the time mention new communities at Aco, Jericho, Tveria, Ashkelon and others. The Jewish community in Rome was in constant contact with Jamnia, intervening whenever it was deemed necessary with the Senate on behalf of the Jews of Judea. After the destruction of the political center in Judea, the Jewish diaspora spread far beyond the borders of the Roman Empire, even to the distant empire of the Parthians (The Parthian Empire (247 BC-224 AD) was the third Persian Empire to dominate the Iranian plateau), and became the focal point of the political will of the Jewish people.

Jewish fighters rebelling against their brothers in Roman bondage instilled a new national spirit in Jewish communities in the Diaspora and awakened a sense of rebellion against the persecution of Roman rule. Feelings of anger against the Roman conquerors were to erupt in the form of bloody uprisings organized by Jews in Egypt, Syria, Cyrenaica and Cyprus. When Trajan undertook his campaign in the East, and the Roman legions, after the conquest of Armenia, headed

for Babylon, where the Jews lived in compact masses and enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, unwilling to submit to Roman rule, which had destroyed Jerusalem and condemned their brethren to a degrading slavery, the Babylonian Jews also took up arms, along with the population of the country. At the same time, a Jewish army was formed behind the Roman army in the Principality of Adiabene (Neusner 1964, 60-66), located on the middle Tigris River (It is a river in Asia, flowing through Turkey, Syria and Iraq (1950 km) and ruled by a ruling house that had converted to Judaism a century earlier. Adiabene is a historical region located in northern Mesopotamia. The name originated in the Hellenistic period and refers to the area east of the Tigris River between the large and small Zabab rivers. The term later came to designate the entire Assyrian region. The kingdom of Adiabene was vassal to the Seleucid kingdom, then vassal to the Parthian sovereigns, and then disappeared as a political entity at the beginning of Sasanian rule in the 3rd century AD. The Roman emperor transformed the Adiabene region into the Roman province of Assyria in 115-117 AD. The small kingdom was of some importance, thanks to its kings, in the 1st century AD. In when Izates converted to Judaism and became a Jew before ascending the throne. With Izates, his mother Helena also converted. It is hard to say how the people of Adiabene followed their king's example and embraced Judaism. Josephus Flavius refers to the Adiabeneans as Jews. The sons of Izates were educated in Jerusalem. The king and his mother sent annual gifts to the temple, and when they died, their remains were sent for burial in Jerusalem. There is no doubt that Adiabene Jews also fought in the war against the Romans. Josephus Flavius even mentions names, as well as the fact that the sons and brothers of Izates were bound and taken to Rome to make them hostages. Adiabene's king, Maharaspes, was Trajan's main opponent in Mesopotamia. He fought bravely against Trajan, but was eventually forced to submit to Roman rule, and was the last monarch of the Kingdom of Adiabene.

It should be noted that the Jews of Alexandria, like those of Babylon, had devised a daring plan to shake off the Roman yoke. But the Jewish revolt was put down. The city of Alexandria was devastated and the Jewish rebels were slaughtered (Eusebius 1987, 145). By this time, the anti-Roman movement was spreading rapidly among Jews in the Asian and North African provinces of the Roman Empire. The revolutionary wave in Egypt swept into neighboring Cyrenaica and the island of Cyprus in 116 AD. Initially victorious, the uprising was soon suppressed by Trajan's army. The Jewish population of Cyprus was completely wiped out and in Egypt the uprising was suppressed. The venerable synagogue in Alexandria, an architectural masterpiece, was completely destroyed. Most of Trajan's forces made their way through the rebellious region of Mesopotamia. The emperor appointed General Cuius as governor of Palestine, a province where signs of a great uprising were beginning to emerge. Roman legions poured into Judaea, killing men, women and children and stifling any hint of revolt in blood.

Aspects of the Bar Kohba uprising and its consequences

After the death of Emperor Trajan (53-117AD) (Barnes 1967, 65-69; Syme 1964 142-149; Gray 1919, 151-209; Syme 1991, 346-357; Syme 1988, 159-170), Aelius Hadrianus (76-138 AD) ascended to the throne of the Roman Empire. At the beginning of his reign, Hadrianus was benevolent towards the Jews, because he had to restore peace and order in the imperial provinces, which had been overrun by his predecessor's expeditions, and therefore dismissed Cuius, the cruel governor of Judea. Word spread that the emperor intended to rebuild Jerusalem and even erect the temple. In fact his plan was to rebuild the former capital of Judea, but not as a Jewish city, but as a Roman city, as a symbol of the victory of Rome's state religion over the Mosaic one. A temple to

Jupiter was to be built on the site of the temple. Construction work began but proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

The fire of the rebellion for the defence of the faith of the ancestors (Oppenheimer, 2003; Yadin 1971; Goodman 1987; Mildenberg 1984), for the defence of the national being, which had been smouldering for half a century, broke out in full force and soon became a real fire. The soul of that insurrectionary movement was the scholar Rabbi Akiva, and the military commander was Simon Ben Kosiba (Eshel 2003, 95-96; Eck 1999, 76ff), nicknamed Bar Kohba (Ancient Jewish sources record him as Ben Kosva or Ben Koziva, for example in Talmud, *Treaty Sanhedrin* 93b, *Baba Kama* 97b, *Eikha Rabba* chapter 2), meaning in Aramaic the Son of the Stars. The persecution intensified in 127 AD (Kanael 1971, 39-46; Skolnik and Berenbaum 2007, 156–157; Yadin 1971, 258; Yardeni 2000, 155-159). A number of schools were closed and religious life was increasingly suppressed. As a result of these measures, a group of Jewish scholars, led by Rabbi Akiva (Holtz 2017, Gherghel 2019), began to prepare a popular uprising to oppose Roman rule. This preparation lasted several years. Caves were set up for shelter and storage. Contact tunnels were dug, weapons were stored and young men trained in military exercises in underground movement conditions. Rabbi Akiva, the most illustrious scholar of the time and an analyst of contemporary historical events, guided his disciples, both in the knowledge of Jewish teaching and in the handling of weapons. In the year 132 AD, young people from all corners of Judea responded to the call to revolt. Without question, Rabbi Akiva took the credit, and Bar Kohba raised the banner of the struggle against Roman domination in an attempt to regain independence and sovereignty of the Jewish state.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Akiva (50-135 AD) and Bar Kohba, the War of Independence won several victories against the Romans (Faulkner 2004; Tropper 2016, 92; Eshel, Zissu and Barkay 2009, 91-97). The initial success was considerable. To defeat the Jews, Rome initially sent three legions, or about 50,000 soldiers, into battle to put down the rebellion. Thus a Roman army that came from Syria, the 22nd Dioterian legion, was destroyed and Jerusalem was liberated. In a single year, the insurgents conquered 50 fortified cities and nearly 1000 villages and towns. At one point they even managed to take over the entire country. Bar Kohba was proclaimed king of Judea (Schoenberg n.d.). Coins minted during the uprising bore inscriptions such as: For the *Liberation of Jerusalem*, or For the *Liberation of Israel*. For three years Judea was a free country. According to tradition, the name Bar Kohba, or son of the stars, is due to Rabbi Akiva, who in 132 identified the maker of his plans to shake off the Roman yoke from two verses in the book of Moses: „I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth” (Number 24: 17-18).

Well, through this, Rabbi Akiva identified Shimon Bar Kohba (Shimon ben Kosba, Simon Barchosiva) as the expected Messiah, which is why after the defeat of the revolt, some scholars changed his name from the *son of the star* to the *son of lies* (Horsley 2000, 126-127; Marks 1994). About Bar Kohba, legends and traditions were created that presented him as a superman. Thus, Jewish tradition says that Bar Kohba caught between his knees the boulders thrown by Roman catapults and that his fighters easily pulled up the cedars of Lebanon from their roots. In the Jewish mindset, the age-old dream of a Messiah as a great military commander, an earthly Messiah with superhuman powers, was being fulfilled. At the heart of the Bar Kohba legends was the desire to fulfil this dream.

In despair at the course of the events Quintus Tinnelius Rufus (132-135 AD) (Appelbaum 1984, 147-152; Smallwood 2001, 550; Applebaum 1989, 118-119; Eusebiu 1987, 147-148), governor of that part of the East, reports to Rome and asks for reinforcements to deal with the

situation. Emperor Hadrian sends one of his most famous and cruel generals, Julius Severus, who had defeated the British rebels. Severus manages to defeat Bar Kohba's army with great difficulty. The fighting lasted until the summer of 135 AD. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of Roman units, Bar Kohba's army was swept away in two years of war attrition. A point of heroic resistance became the fortress of Betar (Ussishkin 1993, 66ff), near Jerusalem (today Bittir, about 3 hours west of Jerusalem), where Bar Kohba and his most chosen fighters lost their lives defending the city to the last. According to Dio Cassius, "during the revolt 589,000 Jews were killed throughout the land, and 50 fortified towns and 985 villages were razed to the ground. An unknown number of people perished from hunger, plagues and fires" (Dio Cassius, *Epitoma*, cap. 49, 14, 1-2).

The Roman victory itself cost as much as possible, for in announcing it before the Senate, the emperor abandoned the wording with which he usually began such a report. If you and your children are healthy all is well, for I and my army are, well, healthy. Much of Judea was plundered and desolate. After the suppression of the uprising, an era of great repression against the Jews begins. Studying the Torah and observing its prescriptions are forbidden. Rabbi Akiva, against the constraints imposed by the conquerors, continued studying the Torah, justifying his choice thus. If we are exposed to dangers by observing the Torah, which is written to be our life and the length of our days, then what will become of us if we let go of this saving anchor. And soon he was caught and arrested. By order of Governor Quintus Tinnelius Rufus his skin was flayed with iron hooks. After defeating the revolt, the Romans unleashed terror against Jews everywhere, especially those in Judea. The Romans expelled the Jews from Judea and sold many of them into slavery. So many Jews were sold into slavery that this inflation caused the price to fall. It came to the point where a slave was sold for the same price as a horse. Jerusalem was turned into a pagan city named Aelia Capitolina (Weksler-Bdolah 2019, 3), built in honor of the god Jupiter, and the Jews were forbidden to enter it in pain of death. During the revolt, the Christians refused to fight and according to the Christian writer Justin, they were condemned to be severely punished if they did not deny Jesus as Messiah and curse his name.

The Romans, who hunted Jews throughout the empire, still couldn't tell the difference between Jews and Christians, and it was hard to do since so many Christians were actually Jews. Both observed the Sabbath as a day of worship, and therefore Christians then shared the same fate as Jews. But as early as 60 years before, when the first Jewish war had taken place, the idea of visible estrangement from the Jews had begun to take root in the minds of some Christians, and when we say visible we mean what the Gentiles could see in them. Thus was born the idea of abandoning the Sabbath observance in order not to be identified with the Jews and replacing the sanctification of the seventh day of the week, Saturday, with the first day, Sunday. They also immediately found biblical arguments. Jesus rose on Sunday, God at creation on the first day created light, and Christ Jesus is the light of the world. Obviously the transition was slow, but pushed from behind by the Christians' need not to be identified with the Jews, especially after 135 AD, i.e., the defeat of Bar Kohba's revolt. In 132 AD, the Emperor Hadrian had forbidden Sabbath-keeping under threat of death for those who dared to break his command, but most Christians remained steadfast and continued to observe the Sabbath at the risk of loss of life, confiscation of property and all sorts of persecution.

The seeds of change had already sprouted. As Christianity spread throughout the empire, Christians gradually distanced themselves from Judaism and categorically opposed the pagan religion, which was the state religion and binding on all the people of the empire. They refused to worship the gods in front of the emperor's statue, to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods, to avoid theatre, circuses, empty performances, etc.

Another reason for persecution was the refusal of Christians to participate in pagan religious ceremonies, which were part of the duties of every citizen of the empire. Christians also preached that their faith was true, and this made them all the more hated by god-worshippers.

Another cause of persecution was the refusal of Christians to participate in the ceremonies of the emperor's worship, motivated by the fact that their emperor was Jesus Christ, who unlike the gods had comforted people's sufferings, treated the sick, helped the poor, was a real person who was to return to establish equality among men. A particularly important cause, which became more and more pronounced from the 2nd century onwards, was the refusal of Christians to join the imperial army, which could not fail to generate a hostile attitude towards them on the part of the administration, as barbarians increasingly attacked the borders of the empire. For this reason they were hated by the population. When various cataclysms took place, the opponents of Christianity blamed the Christians for all the misfortunes on the grounds that by refusing to honor them they had angered the gods, who were now taking revenge on the people. Referring to these unfounded accusations, Tertullian writes: "If the Tiber pours over the banks, if the Nile does not pour over the fields, if the sky does not send rain, if the earth trembles, if there is famine, if any plague breaks out, immediately they cry out: To the lions with the Christians!" (*Apologeticum* XL, 2-3, P.S.B. 3, III, 95,148).

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