

Object Lessons #3

Romans and Jews

Timeline

Circa 2000 BCE Tel Dan and Ashkelon arches built by Canaanites

5th century BCE Temple of Jupiter built on Capitoline Hill in Rome

70 CE Temple destroyed by Titus

117 Hadrian becomes emperor

130 Hadrian visits Judea

132-135 Bar Kokhba Revolt

Aelia Capitolina – before or after? Jews banned from Jerusalem

527 – 565 Emperor Justinian

Bet Alfa mosaic made

1928 Discovery of the Bet Alfa synagogue by kibbutz members

Judea to Palestine, Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina

CO. AEL. CAP. D. D.

Colonia Aelia Capitolina Decreto Decurionum

The colony of Aelia Capitolina was decreed by the ten chosen ones (heads of the city)

Aelia : Hadrian's family name

Capitolina: Capitoline Hill, one of the seven hills of Rome, temple to Jupiter is there. The other two Capitoline gods are Juno and Minerva

The Power of Rome

Rabbi Yoḥanan says: This empire that will devour the earth is the wicked Roman Empire, whose name spread throughout the world. (Avoda Zara 2b)

The assembly of Israel were gathered together in the Beit Rimon valley. When those missives arrived, they began weeping. They wanted to rebel against the empire. They said: 'Let one Sage enter and calm the assembly.' They said: 'Let Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ḥananya, who is the greatest Torah scholar, enter.' He entered and expounded: 'A lion mauled prey and a bone was stuck in its throat. He [the lion] said: Anyone who extracts it, I will give him a reward. An Egyptian

heron with a long beak inserted its beak and extracted it. It said to it [the lion]: Give me my reward. It [the lion] said to it: Go, boast, and say that you entered the mouth of a lion in peace and emerged in peace. So, it is sufficient that we entered into dealings with this nation in peace, and emerged in peace (Bereshit Rabba 64:10)

Hadrian and Judea

To the Emperor Caesar Traianus Hadrianus Augustus, son of the deified Traianus Parthicus, grandson of the deified Nerva, high priest, invested with the tribunician power for the 14th time, consul for the third time, father of the country [dedicated by] the 10th legion Fretensis (second hand) Antoniniana,

Preparing for Battle

At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. . . . To be sure, they did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed and might meet together unobserved under ground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light. (Dio Cassius Roman historian, circa 200CE)

Heavenly but nor Earthly Jerusalem

Hadrian's Year 18 (AD 134) The Jewish War that was conducted in Palestine reached its conclusion, all Jewish problems having been completely suppressed. From that time on, the permission was denied them even to enter Jerusalem, first and foremost because of the commandment of God as the prophets had prophesied, and secondly by authority of the interdictions of the Romans. (Eusebius of Caesaria 3rd-4th century Christian writer)

לִכֵּן בְּגִלְלָכֶם צִיּוֹן שָׂדֶה תִּחְרַשׁ וִירוּשָׁלַם עֵינֵי תְהִיָּה וְהָר הַבַּיִת לְבָמוֹת יַעַר:

Assuredly, because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field,
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins And the Temple Mount a shrine in the woods. (Micha 3:12)

In the prophecy of Uriah it is written: "Therefore, for your sake Zion shall be plowed as a field, (Micah 3:12). In Zechariah it is written: "There shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 8:4). Until the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled I was afraid that the prophecy of Zechariah would not be fulfilled,. Now that the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled, it is

evident that the prophecy of Zechariah remains valid. The Sages said to him, employing this formulation: Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us. (Makkot 24)

Abarbanel to Micha: וכבר העידו חז"ל שאחרי שהחריב טיטוס את ירושלים ימים נשאר כותלי המקדש והבנין וטורנוסורופוס הרשע נתן כל הבנין עד עפר הגיע וחרש את ההיכל ואת סביבותיו לקיים מה שנאמר (ירמיה כו, יח) ציון שדה תחרש,

What's Your Legion?

"As long as they occupy themselves with the Temple service, they will not be delivered into your hands. The next day they lowered down money in a box as usual, but this time they sent up to them a pig. When the pig reached to the midpoint of the Temple wall it stuck its hooves into the wall, and Eretz Yisrael quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs by four hundred parasangs." (Bava Kama 82b)

Where Are You Hadrian? And Where Are We?

"נעמדתי לפני עיניו הכבדות של אדריאנוס ואמרתי לו: אדריאנוס אדריאנוס, אתה שרצית לקרוא למקום זה איליה קאפיטולינה ולארכך זו פלשתינה, פקח את עיניך וראה - היכן אתה נמצא? במוזיאון ישראל - בירושלים!" ישראל אלדד

"I stood in front of the lifeless eyes of Hadrian and I said to him: Hadrian, Hadrian, you who wanted to call this place Aelia Capitolina and this land Palestine, open your eyes and see: where are you? In the Israel Museum in Jerusalem!" Yisrael Eldad

Jews and Art

שמות כ (ג) לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה אשר בשמים ממעל ואשר בארץ מתחת ואשר במים מתחת לארץ:

Mishnah Avoda Zara 3:1 Rabbi Meir states: all statues are forbidden since they are worshipped once a year. The rabbis say the only ones that are forbidden are those with a staff in their hands, or a bird or a ball, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says, if it is holding anything in its hand (it is forbidden).

Mishnah Avoda Zara 3:4 Proklos the son of Plosfos asked Rabban Gamliel at Aphrodite's bathhouse in Akko: it says in your Torah "do not allow anything forbidden to touch you," how can you bathe in Aphrodite's bathhouse? Rabban Gamliel said, we do not speak [Torah] in a bathhouse. When he exited, he said: I have not come into her space, she has come into mine. We don't say let us make a bathhouse to beautify Aphrodite, but rather let us make Aphrodite as a way to beautify the bathhouse. Another answer: if I were to give you a lot of money, you still would not go into your house of idolatry naked and impure and urinate in front of her, and this one stands by the urinals and everyone urinates in front of

her! It says “their gods,” if you behave towards them as gods, it is forbidden, if you do not behave towards them as gods, it is permitted.

Tosefta Avoda Zara 5:2 Rabbi Elazar ben Zadok said all faces were in Jerusalem excepting only a human face.

Shabbat 149a: Our Rabbis taught: The writing under a painting or an image may not be read on the Sabbath. And as for the image itself, one must not look at it even on weekdays, because it is said, Turn ye not unto idols (elilim)(Vayikra 19).

Rashi: writing under a painting or an image: as when people draw on a wall unusual creatures or images of people doing things, like the battle of David and Goliath, and they write underneath what it is.

Tosefot: the image itself, one must not look at it even on weekdays: it seems that if it is for idolatry you may not, but for beauty you may.

Jews and the Zodiac

“his carriage is purple” (argaman): this is the sun that is placed above and rides in a chariot and lights up the world, as it is said “and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,” and from the power of the sun the rain falls and from the power of the sun the earth gives fruit and therefore it is called ‘argaman,’ that God made it to weave (laarog) manna (man) for the world and manna is fruit and food. (Bamidbar Rabba 12:4)

How Do You Show God’s Power in the World?

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו. אלהי אברהם. אלהי יצחק. ואלהי יעקב. האל הגדול הגבור והנורא אל עליון. גומל חסדים טובים. וקונה הכל. וזוכר חסדי אבות. ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה:

Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob; **the great, mighty and awesome God, the most high God**, Who bestows loving kindness and goodness and is master/creator of all, **Who remembers the good deeds of the fathers**, and **brings a redeemer to their children**, in love and for the sake of His name. (First blessing of the amida prayer)

How Comfortable Were the Rabbis in the Synagogue?

“The synagogue, more than any other Jewish institution of antiquity, demonstrates a fascinating synthesis of Jewish and non-Jewish elements within a single framework. The integration of these elements in every aspect of the institution – from the physical dimensions of art and architecture to the spiritual dimension of liturgy, offers a glimpse into the diverse and dynamic nature of Jewish life at the time, socially, religiously and culturally.” (Israel Levine, The Ancient Synagogue)