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OUT OF FOCUS: THE PERCEPTION OF JEWS IN LATE FLAVIAN ROME

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SUMMARY: 1.- Introduction; 2.- The End of *Iudaea Capta*; 3.- The Increase in the Levy of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*; 4.- The Triumphal Arch of Titus on the Velia: A Dynastic Monument?; 5.- The Literary Evidence: Quintilian and Martial, Xenophobia or Judeophobia?; 6.- Flavius Josephus in Rome; 7.- Conclusion.

1.- Introduction.

There are many studies on the general perception of Jews and Judaism in the Flavian period. Most scholars paint a picture of how Jews were perceived in Rome during this time, which spans more than a quarter of a century. The image that emerges, however, does not leave any place for nuance. For the Flavians, the Jewish War was the event that led to their rise from obscure Italic origins to Rome's second ruling dynasty. At the root of the Flavian narrative was the brutal repression of the rebellion of Judea. Through the transformation of a relatively small intervention into a full-fledged war with a highly symbolic and extremely valuable amount of booty, the Jewish War was presented as a Roma triumph over a powerful foreign enemy.

The celebration of a victorious war against the “other” served imperial propaganda by emphasizing the triumphators' heroic service to Rome while obscuring the true nature of their rise to power—victory in a brutal civil war that led to the destruction of Vespasian's political rivals and the foundation of a new autocratic dynasty. J. Andrew Overman argues that the suppression of the Jewish Revolt, which the Flavians widely celebrated, transformed the perception of Jews in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem from being an unknown group to a prominent and dangerous threat, one that was strategically defeated by Vespasian and his son Titus¹. Scholarship tends to present the Flavian period, the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, as a unified period. Therefore, this image of the Jews as the main focus of imperial propaganda seems to dominate the whole period. But were the Jews victims of imperial propaganda for such a long period, or it is possible to identify a shift in the imperial policy toward Jews and Judaism?

In the spring of 71 CE, Vespasian and Titus celebrated their triumph over the Jews in Rome. The ceremony is described in detail by Josephus at the end of the *Jewish War* and immortalized in the reliefs of the Arch of Titus erected on the Velia². The Flavians used this sumptuous ceremony as a political and ideological platform to legitimize their new dynasty. The procession left a deep mark and was evoked in a vast range of images placed on coins and monuments, both key instruments of Roman propaganda. The fact that Jews were by now the main focus of imperial propaganda was mirrored by the minting of the *Iudaea Capta* series shortly after the victory, which celebrates the Flavian victory. The series was minted almost without interruption during the rule of Vespasian and his son Titus from 71 to 80–81 CE.

¹ J. A. Overman, “The First Revolt and Flavian Politics,” in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology*, ed. A. M. Berlin and J. A. Overman (London: Routledge, 2002), 213–220.

² S. Rocca, “Vespasian and Titus Came Out Crowned with Laurel, and Clothed in Those Ancient Purple Habits (Josephus, *War* VII.124),” in *The Arch of Titus: From Rome to Jerusalem—and Back*, ed. S. Fine (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 43–54. See also, on the triumph of the Flavians, S. N. Mason, *A History of the Jewish War: AD 66–74* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 3–59; M. Beard, “The Triumph of Flavius Josephus,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 543–558, here 550; T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 216–218; S. Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars: Jewish Life in Roman Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 241–277.

The issues, which included golden *aurei*, silver *denarii*, and bronze *sestertii*, were produced mainly in the mint of Rome and in the provincial mints of Lugdunum and Tarraco. However, this coinage was minted under the rule of the first two Flavians, so one wonders what happened under Domitian's rule³.

In the wake of the Jewish War, the Flavians instituted the *fiscus Iudaicus*. This tax, whose institution is attested by Josephus and Cassius Dio, was a distinctive annual tribute imposed on the Jews living in the Roman Empire collected for the rebuilding the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. An inscription, which mentions T. Flavius Euschemon, imperial *libertus*, *procurator ad capitularia Iudaeorum*, points to the possibility that the *fiscus Iudaicus* was an independent branch of the imperial *fiscus* and under the control of a *procurator*. This discriminatory tax applied to all Jews, including those who were Roman citizens, and was collected from the Flavian period until sometime in the third or fourth century. The *fiscus Iudaicus* became one of the characteristics of life in the Diaspora, setting Jews apart from their neighbors⁴. It seems that under Domitian the levy of the Jewish tax was intensified. Is this a demonstration that the last of the Flavians continued the policy of his predecessors vis-à-vis the Jews?

A look at the public monuments erected by the Flavians demonstrates that their public image dominated the city of Rome, successfully challenging that of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians. Many of these monuments, such as the *Forum Pacis*, the two triumphal arches erected by Domitian, and the Colosseum, financed from the plunder (*spolia*) taken during the Jewish War, celebrated their achievements in Judea. Others, however, such as the huge palatial mansion erected by Domitian on the Palatine Hill, and the Stadium of Domitian bear no association at all to the Jewish War. Looking more closely at the “monumental chronology,” as it were, it becomes clear that most of the monuments associated with the Jewish War were mostly erected or planned during the rule of Vespasian and Titus. But then, the two triumphal arches, erected by Domitian on the Velia and in the Circus Maximus, point to the possibility that Domitian continued to celebrate the achievements of his father and brother. But what stood behind this celebration? Did the erection of these two arches mirror a continuation of policy, or a link to justify Domitian's rule⁵? To complicate matters, a close look at such literary sources as

³ On the *Iudaea Capta* series, see Y. Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins: From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2001), 185–191; and M. Cody, “Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins,” in *Flavian Rome, Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 103–124; see also S. Ranucci, “La monetazione dei Flavi: Caratteri generali ed aspetti tipologici,” in *Divus Vespasianus: Il bimillenario dei Flavi*, ed. F. Coarelli (Rome: Electa, 2009), 358–367, here 359–360; and Overman, “The First Revolt and Flavian Politics,” 215–216.

⁴ Josephus, *BJ* VII.216–218; Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* LXVI.7.2. Nevertheless, according to some scholars the *fiscus Iudaicus* was part of the *aerarium* and not of the imperial *fiscus*; Suetonius, *Dom.* XII.12.2; CIL VI.8604 (ILS 1519). An additional witness to the levy of this tax can be found in various ostraca and papyri found in Roman Egypt. On the ostraca found at Apollinopolis Magna, see V. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. II: *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), nos. 160–229 [hereafter, CPJ]. On the papyrus found at Arsinoe, see CPJ II, no. 421, and on the papyrus found at Karanis, see CPJ II, no. 460. On the *fiscus Iudaicus* in Flavian Rome, see M. Goodman, “The ‘Fiscus Iudaicus’ and Gentile Attitudes to Judaism in Flavian Rome,” in J. Edmondson, S. N. Mason, and J. Rives, ed. *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167–177; S. Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome: From the Second Century BC to the Third Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 101–106; and M. Heemstra, *The Fiscus Iudaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). Similar taxes were paid by other *ethne* or cities, making the *fiscus Iudaicus* an ethnic boundary, such as the *fiscus Alexandrinus* and the *fiscus Asiaticus*; see A. Momigliano, “Saggi e note precedenti l'esilio: L'organizzazione della Giudea sotto il dominio romano,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Pisa* 3 (1934): 227–323; A. H. M. Jones, “The Aerarium and the Fiscus,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 40, no. 1–2 (1950): 22–29; Jones argues that Vespasian established four new *fisci*, *Iudaicus*, *frumentarius*, *Asiaticus*, *Alexandrinus*, and probably also the *fiscus castrensis*; see also C. Salles, *La Rome des Flaviens: Vespasien, Titus, Domitien* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 232–234.

⁵ F. Millar, “Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. Edmondson, S. N. Mason, and J. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101–128; P. L. Tucci, “Nuove osservazioni sull'architettura del Templum Pacis,” in *Divus Vespasianus: Il bimillenario dei Flavi*, ed. F. Coarelli (Rome: Electa, 2009), 158–167; M. Gaggiotti, “Templum Pacis: una nuova lettura,” in *Divus Vespasianus: Il bimillenario dei Flavi*, ed. F. Coarelli (Rome: Electa, 2009), 168–176. On the Flavian's building program, see F. Coarelli, “I Flavi e Roma,” in *Divus Vespasianus: Il bimillenario dei Flavi*, ed. F. Coarelli (Rome: Electa, 2009), 68–97; see also F. Zevi, “Il volto dell'urbe: i monumenti e la

Quintilian and Martial as most of Josephus's output, including the *Jewish Antiquities* as well as *Against Apion*, reveals that they ought to be dated to Domitian's long reign and thus can hardly be useful to understand the perception of the Jews under the first two Flavians.

And yet there is some evidence that directly points to things getting worse, not better, for the Jews under Domitian. The first is the story of Titus Flavius Clemens and the forced exile of his wife Domitilla. This episode is recorded in Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and Eusebius. According to Cassius Dio, the accusation brought against the couple was that of atheism, or disrespect for the Roman gods, including Domitian's divinity. Cassius Dio explains the charge of atheism as one "on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned." Eusebius, writing more than two hundred years after the event, cannot be trusted. Initially, he describes Flavia Domitilla as the niece rather than the wife of Flavius Clemens. Then, he quite implausibly narrates that Domitian decreed that all the Jews must be killed, a decree that does not appear any other extant Roman, Jewish, or Christian source. Some scholars have been convinced that Flavius Clemens and his wife were sympathizers of Judaism, or perhaps even converts if not to Judaism, then at least to Christianity, as suggested by Eusebius. However, quite recently Martin Goodman and John Curran have pointed out that the term *asebeia*, "Jewish ways," occurring in Cassius Dio's account, was part of the rhetoric used by the Flavian regime to attack its political enemies. And while he addresses the possibility that, as in Roman law, "atheism" was not recognized as a crime, it looks like some individuals might have proclaimed themselves as Judaizers as a symbol of opposition to the Flavians. It therefore does not seem like Domitilla or her husband Flavius Clemens could be categorized as Judaizers⁶. This episode, then, in no way hints at Domitian's personal attitude toward Judaism or Jews. It rather shows what can happen to his outspoken political enemies.

The execution of Titus Flavius Clemens is not the only episode related to the reign of Domitian that could suggest a worsening of the situation of the Jews. According to most scholars, Domitian intensified the collection of the *fiscus Iudaicus*. The most important source is a well-known passage of Suetonius, which narrates that "I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised"⁷. Some scholars date the episode to the beginning of Domitian's reign, around 85 CE, as Suetonius mentions that these exactions took place when he was in his youth. Other scholars argue that it should be dated seven years later on the basis of economic and fiscal reforms promoted to relieve the economy, as well as on one of the epigrams of Martial, both of which are dated to 92 CE⁸. This episode is especially significant, as it probably occurred in Rome.

Harry J. Leon as well as Mary Smallwood use this episode to argue that Domitian's pursuit of the *fiscus Iudaicus* was especially vigorous in Rome. Moreover, the same passage of Suetonius enables us to identify the people who would from this point on be subject to the payment of the *fiscus Iudaicus* and who were possibly previously exempted from it. Domitian levied the tax on "those were prosecuted who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people." Goodman, who studied the impact of the *fiscus Iudaicus* on the Jews of Rome during Domitian's reign, describes the tax as a payment made in exchange for a degree of tolerance. He argues that Domitian focused on two groups of Jews: those who

presenza ebraica a Roma," in *Ebrei, una storia italiana: I primi mille anni*, ed. A. Foa, G. Lacerenza, and D. Jalla (Milan: Electa, 2018), 65–66.

⁶ On Flavius Clemens, see Quintilian, *Inst.* IV.1.2. See Suetonius, *Dom.* XII.12.2; 15; and Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* LXVII.14.1–3. In later Christian literature, Flavius Clemens somehow became identified as Pope Clemens I, who was a martyr of the church. See Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* III.18.4. See also Jerome, *Epist.* CVIII.7; Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome*, 130–136; M. Goodman, "The *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Gentile Attitudes to Judaism in Flavian Rome," 167–177, mainly 174–177; and J. Curran, "Flavius Josephus in Rome," in *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History*, ed. J. Pastor, P. Stern, and M. Mor (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 65–86, here 69–70.

⁷ Suetonius, *Dom.* XII.12.2.

⁸ On the dating of Domitian's policy, see Suetonius, *Nero* 57.2; Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.55.7–8; and Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome*, 128–130. This episode seems to contradict the general view, based on documentary evidence from Egypt, that the obligation to pay this tax was terminated when a Jew reached the age of sixty-two.

were undeclared (*improfessi*) but lived *a iudaicam vitam*, and those who concealed their ethnic origin (*dissimulata origine*). According to Goodman, those most affected by Domitian's harsh policies were ethnic Jews who had abandoned public identification with their religion, either by hiding their Jewish practices or by pretending their customs were unrelated to Judaism. Silvia Cappelletti offers a slightly different theory, suggesting that Domitian imposed the tax based on ethnic background—specifically, birth, rather than religious affiliation. Prior to this, Jews who were not observant or part of the Jewish community could avoid taxation. Additionally, Cappelletti believes the first group mentioned by Suetonius may have included both Jews and Gentile Judaizers, while the second group more clearly consists of Jews who concealed their faith to avoid the tax (possibly including Jewish-Christians)⁹. However, were assimilated Jews the only, or perhaps the primary, victims of Domitian's increased enforcement of the Jewish tax?

It seems that the Jewish War was only occasionally celebrated by poets who thrived at the Flavian court. In the early Flavian period, Valerius Flaccus, in his *Argonautica*, written shortly after 70 CE, refers to the “overthrow of Idumea” and to the “dust of Solyma.” On the other hand, under the rule of Domitian, Silius Italicus composed the *Punica*, between 83 and 101 CE. The poet praises Titus, who “yet a youth, ... shall put an end to war with the fierce people of Palestine.” That is not much. It is a far cry from the celebration of Octavian's victory over Cleopatra¹⁰. However, a discussion of the literary sources, first and foremost the *Epigrams* of Martial, written during the rule of Domitian, necessitates a short discussion of Roman “antisemitism”.

The terms “antisemitic” and “Judeophobic,” commonly used by modern scholars to describe the anti-Jewish prejudices held by some members of the Roman elite, don't align with contemporary definitions of these terms¹¹. John G. Gager already argued that Judaism prompted mixed reactions among pagans. On the other hand, Gideon Bohak, who claimed that Greco-Roman literature includes many ethnic stereotypes, stated that Jews were not singled out. Benjamin Isaac contended that Roman antisemitism wasn't proto-racism but rather a set of ethnic and religious prejudices visible in social interactions¹². Therefore, the term “Judeophobia,” coined by Peter Schäfer and Zvi Yavetz, may be a useful way to describe the distaste for Jews found in some writings of the Roman elite. This model is also applicable in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, where there were only three major ethnic groups: Greco-Macedonians, native Egyptians, and Jews. However, this concept doesn't fit well within the framework of Roman society in Italy, especially in Rome, which had a multiethnic, multireligious, and multiracial population, where foreigners made up at least half of the population. In this context, Judeophobia should be understood as a form of xenophobia, which evolved due to the fluctuating patterns of immigration to Rome, meaning that the main target of xenophobia constantly shifted. To better understand Roman views on Jews and Judaism, it's essential to explore the characteristics that impressed contemporaries and shaped the perception of Jews as a distinct ethnic and religious group. These characteristics can be divided into two categories: those based on firsthand observations and

⁹ H. J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, updated ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 33; E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 376; M. Goodman, “Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989): 40–44, here 40; Goodman, “The *Fiscus Judaicus* and Gentile Attitudes,” 167–178; Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome*, 123–128, here 125; Heemstra, *Parting of the Ways*.

¹⁰ Valerius Flaccus, *Argon.* I.1–20; Silius Italicus, *Pun.* III.597–606; S. Rocca, “Not So Bleak: Being Jewish in Flavian Rome,” *Rivista Zakhor: Rivista di storia degli ebrei d'Italia, Nuova Serie* 2 (2019): 53–100.

¹¹ There are many definitions, for example, of “antisemitism.” For an example that has been recently adopted by several countries and institutions, I refer the reader to the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition at <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism> (accessed February 2, 2025).

¹² J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); P. Schäfer, *Judaophobia: Attitudes towards Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); G. Bohak, “The Ibis and the Jewish Question: Ancient ‘Anti-Semitism’ in Historical Perspective,” in *Jews and Gentiles in the Holy Land in the Days of the Second Temple, Mishnah, and Talmud*, ed. M. Mor et al. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2003), 27–43; B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); E. S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

those interpreted through familiar paradigms. The first category includes Jewish practices like abstaining from pork, observing the Sabbath, circumcision, and converting to Judaism. The second category encompasses the Jewish understanding of God as unique, omnipotent, and aniconic; Abraham as the founder of Judaism and the father of astrology; the Exodus and the subsequent conquest of Canaan; and Moses as a lawgiver. By closely examining how Jews were represented in comparison to other groups, especially in the works of Martial and Quintilian, we can determine whether there was a deep-seated, specific enmity toward Jews or if Roman elite views of Jews were temporarily influenced by the events of the Jewish War, associating them with the rebellion.

Last but not least, we need to look at what Josephus has to say, as he remains the most important witness to Domitian's attitude toward Judaism and Jews. The possibility that the audience of Josephus's *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* included Gentiles can point to the possibility that there was a part of the Roman elite that was interested in learning about Judaism and Jews from a sympathetic source. However, the relationship between Josephus and Domitian and the identity of his audience have been sources of disagreement among scholars. Goodman for example, is convinced that there was no sincere interest in Judaism. Josephus's apology of Judaism, evident in the above texts, was completely antithetical to the "anti-Jewish ethos" of the Flavians. John M. G. Barclay and James McLaren, however, both perceive Flavian Rome as a hostile location for Jews such as Josephus who strove to depict Judaism in a positive way. While most scholars grudgingly accept Josephus's statement that he enjoyed the favor of the Flavian dynasty, Steve Mason argues that Josephus had a negative relationship with Domitian, which is mirrored in a few of the passages of the *Antiquities*, which can be read as a veiled critique of Domitian's absolutist government. Moreover, the attitude of Josephus toward Domitian and his involvement in Roman politics influenced his audience, which would have included members of the senatorial and equestrian elite. On the other hand, Jonathan Price, Hannah M. Cotton, and Werner Eck persuasively argue that Josephus was a lonely man and an isolated man. Josephus's audience for *Antiquities* did not include members of the senatorial and equestrian elite unless they had a direct interest to hear it. The only dissenting voice is that of John Curran, who argues that while Domitian propounded an anti-Jewish policy, Josephus "was not alone," as was claimed by Eusebius three hundred years later, arguing that "Josephus was the most famous Jew of his time, not only amongst his fellow countrymen but also amongst the Romans"¹³.

2.- The End of *Iudaea Capta*

A close look at the coinage minted by Domitian makes it clear not only that the Jewish War was out of focus but that the imperial government was beginning a policy of pacification in Judea. A close look at the numismatic output of the last of the Flavians, always an important source of imperial propaganda, does not reflect a policy of marked hostility toward Jews and Judaism. Domitian did not take part in the Jewish War as his father and brother had. The last of the Flavians wished therefore to celebrate victories of his own. Soon after his accession to the throne, Domitian ceased the minting of the *Iudaea Capta* series, and instead minted coins that celebrated his achievements, such as his campaign in Germany. The consensus is that the *Iudaea Capta* series was minted almost without interruption during the rules of Vespasian and Titus from 71 to 80–81 CE. According to Samuele Ranucci, Domitian continued to mint the series only during his first year of rule in 81–82 CE, continuing the policy of his predecessors. Yet, by 82 CE the coins minted at Rome reflected a new policy. New iconographic types dominated by now the Roman mint. Imperial propaganda focused now on the celebration of the young emperor's

¹³ Goodman, "The *Fiscus Iudaicus* and Gentile Attitudes," 172–173; S. N. Mason, "Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome: Reading on and between the Lines," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 566–588; S. N. Mason, "Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience," in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond*, ed. J. Sievers and G. Lembi (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 71–100; H. M. Cotton and W. Eck, "Josephus' Roman Audience: Josephus and the Roman Elites," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. Edmondson, S. N. Mason, and J. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37–52.

triumphs in Germany and in the West¹⁴.

After Domitian ascended the throne, the focus of imperial propaganda shifted quite dramatically. Domitian, contrary to the previous Flavian emperors, had an agenda of his own, and it was focused on the West. In late 82 CE or at the beginning of 83 CE, Domitian did lead a series of successful campaigns on the Rhine against the Chatti, a Germanic tribe. By the end of that year, Domitian was back in Rome, where a triumph was celebrated and Domitian was honored with the title of *Germanicus*¹⁵. The celebration of the victories over the Chatti resulted in the minting of coins, which was an effective vehicle of imperial propaganda. Germany, albeit central, was not alone in drawing the attention of the last of the Flavians. Thus, the Roman armies conducted a campaign under the command of Agricola in Britannia. On this occasion, the emperor was acclaimed with the title of *Imperator* for the seventh time. Coins celebrating the victorious campaign were minted in 84 CE. Once more in 89 CE, Domitian celebrated with a triumph for victories on the Germans, this time the Quadi and Marcomanni, who were defeated on the Rhine and Danube frontier.

Getting back to the coins that celebrated the defeat of the Chatti in 83 CE, once can see they were minted in Rome, in the provinces, and even in the kingdom of Agrippa II. The iconography of these coins is quite similar to that of the *Iudaea Capta* series. Another example is the inscription on some of the *sestertii*, which reads *Germania Capta*, or “Germany Vanquished.” Jane M. Cody emphasizes the similarity between the typology of *Iudaea Capta* and that celebrating Domitian’s triumph over the Chatti in Germany. Jerzy Ciecielag makes a similar point. The coins issued in the mid-80s, which celebrated Domitian’s victories in Germany, essentially reproduced earlier Flavian *Iudaea Capta* types. The main purpose in minting coins so similar to the *Iudaea Capta* issues was to emphasize his association with the victorious war that brought the Flavians to the throne. For Domitian, it was very important to remind his subjects of his father and brother’s victory in Judea as a way to capitalize their glory. Therefore, his coins remind us so much of the *Iudaea Capta* series. And yet, Judea actually meant little to Domitian, as he shifted his own agenda of political propaganda from the Near East to the area of the Rhine and Danube, where the Roman army fought against the Germans and the Dacians. The emperor placed the emphasis of imperial propaganda on his victories he achieved there¹⁶. Thus, the similarity of the issues celebrating Domitian’s victories in Germany and the previous *Iudaea Capta* series is probably not coincidental. It is clear that Domitian wished to replace the image of the vanquished Jews with that of the vanquished Germans.

At this juncture, two notes on the coinage struck in the Province of Judea under Domitian are necessary. First, according to Adolf Reifenberg, the coins minted by Domitian at Caesarea Maritima were considered to be the final coins of the *Iudaea Capta* series. This conclusion is shared by David Hendin. However, by the 1960s new interpretations were offered. Weisbrem, rightly in my view, maintained that these coins, minted many years after the Jewish War, were struck by a ruler who “had no particular interest in that victory and was not concerned to glorify it.” In 1983, Ian Carradice, who classified the coins chronologically, emphasized that they must be recognized as a separate series. Also, Ya’akov Meshorer arrived at the same conclusion. Thus, while some of the coins celebrated the colonial status of Caesarea Maritima, others celebrated Domitian’s victory on the Chatti, with an iconography similar to that of the coinage minted in Rome¹⁷.

¹⁴ On the *Iudaea Capta* series, see Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 185–191; D. Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 6th ed. (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2021), 372–374, 377–379, 379–382; Cody, “Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins,” 103–124; and Ranucci, “La monetazione dei Flavi,” 358–367.

¹⁵ B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge, 1992), 128–131. Suetonius calls the triumph over the Chatti “uncalled for”; see Suetonius, *Dom.* 6. Tacitus refers to it as a “mock triumph”; see Tacitus, *Agr.* 24.

¹⁶ C. Foss, *Roman Historical Coins* (London: Seaby, 1990), 91, nos. 19, 20a/b; Cody, “Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins,” 103–124; J. Ciecielag, “Anti-Jewish Policy of the Roman Empire from Vespasian until Hadrian, in the Light of Numismatic Sources—Fact or Myth?” *Israel Numismatic Research* 1 (2006): 105–106.

¹⁷ See Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*; M. Weisbrem, “Do the Coins of Domitian Minted in Palestine Belong to the ‘Iudaea Capta’ Series?” *Israel Numismatic Bulletin* 1 (1962): 6–7; I. Carradice, “Coinage in Iudaea in the Flavian Period, AD 70–96,” *Israel Numismatic Journal* 6–7 (1982–1983): 14–21; A. Burnett, M. Amandry, and I. Carradice, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, vol. II: *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96)* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), 303; and D.

Second, Carradice and Meshorer classify three series of coins. The first series, minted before 84 CE, after Diocletian's victories in Germany, celebrated the foundation of Caesarea Maritima as a Roman colony, a title that was bestowed to that city by Vespasian, thankful for its aid during the Jewish War. The depiction of Nike Victoria, however, ought to be associated with Domitian's Germanic wars and not to the Jewish War. The second series, minted after 83 CE according to Meshorer, and between 86 and 92 CE, according to Carradice, ought to be associated with the victorious conclusion of the campaigns in Germany as their iconography closely mirrors that of the various coins minted in Rome to celebrate Domitian's victory over the Germans. The third series, dated by Carradice to 92–93 CE, depicts on the reverse a palm tree with seven branches and two clusters of dates as well as Nike Victoria, probably referring to his victories in Germany. The palm tree could indeed mirror a policy of pacification vis-à-vis the Jews and associated with the *provincia restituta* typology. The fact that the administration depicted the palm tree, a symbol, and not personification of the province, and therefore a human figure, possibly shows a certain sensibility to the dictates of Jewish law, which forbid the depiction of human figures¹⁸. Thus, a close look at the numismatic evidence demonstrates that during Domitian's rule the Jews were no longer the prime target of imperial propaganda. The German tribes had taken their place. More than that, a close look at the coinage minted in the Province of Judea raises the possibility that Domitian, as persuasively argued by Meshorer, wished to improve the relationship with the Jews and that Judea was assuming the status of provincial *restituta*.

3.- The Increase in the Levy of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*

But then, what about the intensifying of the Jewish tax, which was recorded by Suetonius? There is no doubt that under the rule of Domitian the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* had become a characteristic feature associated with Jews. And yet, while the passage of Suetonius is generally used to explain Domitian's policy, the mention of the *fiscus Iudaicus* in the seventh book of Martial's *Epigrams* deserves a closer look because it can help us better understand just how the collection of the Jewish tax under Domitian was intensified. The book was probably published in 92 CE, and, according to Christopher Zeichmann, one of its main features characteristics is its focus on Jews. Three times Martial in his *Epigrams* associates the Jewish tax with circumcision, in his eyes possibly the main distinguishing feature of the Jews. In the first epigram (*Epigrammata* VII.35), addressed to a certain Laecania, Martial's Jewish slave is distinguished by "the burden that the Jews bear," a sentence that indicates not only his male organ but also the *fiscus Iudaicus*. In the second epigram (*Epigram* VII.55), which focuses on a certain Chrestus, once more the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* is discussed through the depiction of Martial's Jewish slave. His identity is revealed by the fact that the poet has to pay the slave's "damned prick's tax," that is, the *fiscus Iudaicus* and because he originated in Jerusalem destroyed by fire. The epigram therefore hints that it is the owner of the slave, not the slave, who has to pay the Jewish tax. The last epigram (*Epigrammata* VII.85), which focuses on Menophilus, probably a comic actor, who used to cover his phallus with a sheath when at the public baths, possibly because the actor tried to conceal his sexual organ to evade payment of the *fiscus Iudaicus*, which, however, is not explicitly mentioned¹⁹.

Hendin, "Echoes of 'Judaea Capta': The Nature of Domitian's Coinage of Judaea and Vicinity," *Israel Numismatic Research* 2 (2007): 123–130. Hendin argues that coins minted in the Province of Judaea under Domitian bear a similar iconography to those minted by Pella in the Decapolis and by Agrippa II during Domitian's reign.

¹⁸ Carradice, "Coinage in Judaea in the Flavian Period," 18–19; Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 267, pl. 80, nos. 386–395; Hendin, "Echoes of 'Judaea Capta,'" 128. According to Cody, the relationship between Rome and the defeated population was recorded on the numismatic output in four steps, *capta*, *supplicatio/adoratio*, *restituta*, and *fidelis*. These four steps recorded the development of the relationship between Rome and the defeated population, from the former's conquest to the legal status of their territory as an official Roman province; Cody, "Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins," 103–123.

¹⁹ On the seventh book of Martial's epigrams, see C. B. Zeichmann, "Martial and the *Fiscus Iudaicus* Once More," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 25, no. 2 (2015): 111–117, here 115; on Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.35, see D. Gilula, "Did Martial Have a Jewish Slave?" *Classical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1987): 532–533; S. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Appendix A, 352–357; on

Thus, in the light of these three epigrams, the passage of Suetonius, and Goodman's classification, it is possible to reconstruct not three but four groups of Jews who were subject to the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus*. First and foremost, there were the Jews who were members of the various Jewish communities, which were officially recognized as having a legal standing similar to that of the *collegia licita*: they likely paid the tax through local officials. As such, these Jews publicly acknowledged their faith. This category, probably the most widespread, was subject to the payment of the new tax from the beginning, when Vespasian sanctioned it. This group of Jews, subject to the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* and easily identifiable, was the most conspicuous. Because of that, Suetonius does not mention them. Then, there are two other categories mentioned in the passage of Suetonius and recognized as such by Goodman. First, there were the Jews who were undeclared but who lived as Jews (*improfessi ... a iudaicam vitam*). This group probably consisted of Jews associated with the Jewish communities recognized by Roman law without being formal members. These Jews were probably circumcised and kept the Sabbath. Second, there were those Jews who completely hid their ethnic origin (*origine dissimulata*), who had no association whatsoever with the Jewish communities. Menophilus (*Epigrammata* VII.85), the comic actor mentioned by Martial, would fit quite well in this category as well as the anonymous Jewish poet mentioned in the last epigram referring to circumcision (*Epigrammata* XI.94). And then, there is a fourth category not mentioned by Suetonius, those Jews who were slaves of other Jews or of Gentiles. Martial's Jewish slave would perfectly fit in this category.

But whence this fourth category? A careful reading of sources from Roman Egypt related to the collection of the *fiscus Iudaicus*, such as sixty-nine ostraca found at Apollinopolis Magna and the papyri found at Arsinoe and Karanis, can confirm the existence of this group. In Roman Egypt, during the reign of Vespasian and Titus, a slave had the same fiscal status as his owner. A Jewish slave-owner was obliged to pay the "Jewish tax" for his slaves, whether or not they were Jews. On the other hand, a Gentile slave-owner was exempted from paying the *fiscus Iudaicus* for his Jewish slaves. With Domitian, the situation completely changed. According to a papyrus analyzed by Hannah Cotton, dated to 92/93 CE, Gentile owners had to pay the *fiscus Iudaicus* on behalf of their own Jewish slaves. It seems that Domitian obliged the latter to pay the *fiscus Iudaicus* as a means of collecting arrears from the reigns of his brother and father. This situation probably created various abuses, as there was need of informers for the implementation of this policy. Suetonius emphasizes that informers were needed to denounce the two categories that he mentioned. Gentiles who owned Jewish slaves were not eager to pay the Jewish tax annually for their slaves. Therefore, it seems that the most noticeable victims of Domitian's intensification of the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* were Gentiles who owned Jews, or Jews who lived at the borders of the Jewish communities, but not those Jews who were part of communities recognized by Roman law. For them, the situation did not change. Thus, the increase of the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* under Domitian cannot be perceived as a worsening of the condition of most Jews who lived in the Diaspora, the "mainstream," as it were. The real victims of the taxation increase were Gentiles²⁰.

Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.55, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I: *From Herodotus to Plutarch, Fontes Ad Res Judaicas Spectantes* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976), 526, no. 242; on Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.82, see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. I, 526–527, no. 243; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 100–101, and 251, nn. 69, 72; and Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 358–359.

²⁰ An additional corroboration to the levy of this tax comes from various ostraca and papyri found in Roman Egypt, such as sixty-nine ostraca found at Apollinopolis Magna. On the ostraca found at Apollinopolis Magna, see Tcherikover and Fuks, *CPJ* II, nos. 160–229. On the papyrus found at Arsinoe, see *CPJ* II, no. 421, and on the papyrus found at Karanis, see *CPJ* II, no. 460; a good example is Ostrakon Edfu 159=*CPJ* II, 229. This ostrakon is the last receipt for the Jewish tax and dates from May 18, 116; J. Méléze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Roman Egypt: From Ramses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 214–222. The papyrus analyzed by Hannah Cotton, dated from 92/93 CE, mentions the assessment and levy of the arrears of the huge debts of a Gentile slave owner, whose slaves included Jews, and who did not pay the arrears for his Jewish slaves. See H. M. Cotton, "Menachem Stern, a Classical Philologist and Editor of Texts," in *Menachem Stern's Contribution to Research Twenty Years after His Death, Plenary Section, in the Fifteenth Congress of Jewish Studies*, Lecture held on April 8, 2009 [in Hebrew], <http://www.jewish-studies.org/imgs/uploads/Congress/Program.pdf>. See Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome*, 125.

4.- The Triumphal Arch of Titus on the Velia: A Dynastic Monument?

And yet Domitian erected arches of Titus on the Velia and in the Circus Maximus that celebrated his brother's achievement in the Jewish War. In fact, with the accession of Domitian in 81 CE, the center of Rome presented an image quite different from that of the city that had welcomed Vespasian more than ten years earlier. In 81, most of the damage caused by the civil war had been repaired with the exception of the Capitoline Temple, rebuilt in 75 CE, which burned once again in 80 CE. The first two Flavian dynasts had by then completely changed the urban image of the city center through the erection of many buildings, such as the *Forum Pacis*, the Baths of Titus, and the Flavian Amphitheatre²¹. However, it was Domitian who, during his long rule, completed the transformation of the entire *urbs* with the erection of many spectacular buildings such as the new imperial palace on the Palatine Hill, the site of the Domus Augusta and Temple of Apollo Palatinus, and the Stadium of Domitian, whose outline is still recognizable in Piazza Navona. And these buildings cannot in any way be associated with the Jewish War.

On the other hand, the two triumphal arches built by Domitian on the Velia and in the Circus Maximus, closely tied to the Jewish War, reveal that Domitian viewed the conflict as a means to bolster his legitimacy—a point Josephus clearly observes²². As the successor to his brother Titus, Domitian sought to emphasize their close relationship and to honor his brother's "triumph" by constructing these arches. This celebration of Titus as *imperator*, or military commander, was aimed at reinforcing Domitian's legitimacy as the heir and continuator of the Flavian dynasty. These structures thus served to firmly link Domitian to his deified brother, strengthening his dynastic claim. Fergus Millar argues that the arches at the Velia and Circus Maximus were the only monuments directly commemorating the Jewish War. They were strategically placed to highlight the military achievements of the Flavian dynasty. Along with the Temple of Peace and the Flavian Amphitheatre, built by Vespasian and Titus, these arches ensured that the Jewish War—the Flavians' most significant military victory—was always present in the public consciousness, underscoring its successful outcome and the benefits it brought to Rome. At the same time, these monuments linked the victory to Domitian, bolstering his position.

The Arch of Titus, erected by Domitian in 81–82 CE on the Velia, stood at the edge of the Roman Forum, commanding a view of the lower valley at the intersection of the Caelian, Esquiline, and Palatine Hills, where the Colosseum was located. This arch was a prominent reminder of the military achievements of Vespasian and Titus, visible from the Colosseum, the Forum, and the northeastern edge of the imperial palace. Although construction likely began during Titus's reign, the arch was completed after his death, as evidenced by the relief of Titus's apotheosis in the ceiling and the inscription on the western attic referring to "*Divus Titus*". While some scholars suggest the arch was completed under Trajan, the arch's location and the prominent depiction of Domitian with his patron goddess Minerva argue against this theory. His connection to the deified Titus and Minerva reinforced Domitian's status as the rightful heir to the Flavian legacy. The reliefs on the arch, such as the winged Victories on the spandrels, the personifications of Roma, the *Genius Senatus*, the *Genius Populi Romani*, *Bonus Eventus*,

²¹ On the Flavians' building program, see Coarelli, "I Flavi e Roma," 68–69; Zevi, "Il volto dell'urbe," 65–66; Overman, "The First Revolt and Flavian Politics," 213–220; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 267–270.

²² Josephus, *BJ* VII.152. The need for legitimacy becomes evident in the description of the triumphal procession of the Flavians in the *War*. Domitian, "mounted on a steed that was itself a sight ... made a glorious appearance" and "was worthy of admiration, surpassing his father and brother, riding on a chariot." Josephus probably enhanced Domitian's part in the triumph with the purpose of emphasizing his legitimacy as heir and closely associated him to his father and brother, the victorious protagonists of the Jewish War. This interpretation is supported by the discovery of a large bronze equestrian statue, which originally belonged to Domitian and was reworked as a statue of the emperor Nerva, discovered inside the College of the Augustales of Misenum; S. L. Tuck, "The Origins of Roman Imperial Hunting Imagery: Domitian and the Redefinition of Virtus under the Principate," *Greece & Rome* 52, no. 2 (2005): 221–245; Rocca, "Vespasian and Titus Came Out," 43–53.

as well as the grand reliefs inside the arch depicting the triumphal procession, are closely associated with Titus. The south panel, showing victorious soldiers bearing the spoils from the Jerusalem Temple, and the north panel, depicting Titus in a quadriga with a winged *Victoria* crowning him, both celebrate Titus as the central figure of the triumph. Thus, the Jewish War is commemorated not solely for its propagandistic value as a victory over an external enemy, but because it served as a means of legitimizing Domitian's rule. The arch was erected early in Domitian's reign, before he began his campaigns in Germany, during a time of uncertainty when his position as emperor was not yet secure, making it a crucial effort to affirm his legitimacy²³.

No less prominent was the second triumphal arch by the Circus Maximus, the most important of all the entertainment buildings of Rome until the construction of the Flavian Amphitheatre. The arch, on the eastern edge of the Circus Maximus, a location that highlighted its importance, was probably even grander than its Velian counterpart. The existence of this arch has been known since the Middle Ages. It was completed in 81 CE. Located in the Circus Maximus, it reminded thousands of Romans, every time chariot races were held, that the emperor was associated with the glorious Jewish War. Once more, this arch, as the one on the Velia, completed before the campaign against the Chatti, served Domitian's need for legitimacy, lest another civil war break out²⁴.

5.- The Literary Evidence: Quintilian and Martial, Xenophobia or Judeophobia?

However, only an in-depth analysis of the writings of Quintilian and Martial can help us understand how the Jews were perceived in Rome beyond the imperial court and whether the Jewish War and the triumph over the Jews modified the perceptions that most of the population had of Jews. However, as Martial as well as Quintilian wrote during the reign of Domitian, more than ten years after the end of the Jewish War, it is legitimate to ask whether the image of the Jews that one can constrict from their writings reflects that of the Jews during the whole Flavian period or only during the reign of Domitian. If so, it seems that by then Judaism and Jews were “out of focus”.

The Epigrams of Martial, as previously mentioned, provide insight into how the Roman elite during Domitian's reign viewed practices such as the Sabbath, conversion, and circumcision. These epigrams may also, indirectly, reveal that the traditional perception of Jews was influenced by the aftermath of the Jewish War. Martial briefly references the Sabbath in an epigram that criticizes a woman named Bassa for her odor (*Epigrammata* IV.4). It's unclear whether the poet is referring to a Jewish woman or a convert to Judaism. Schäfer suggests that Martial is referring to the Day of Atonement rather than the Sabbath itself. However, Ranon Katzoff's theory that Martial is describing a Jew fasting on the Sabbath, someone he observed in real life, also warrants consideration. Menachem Stern argues that Martial is referring to a convert to Judaism. It's hard to accuse the poet of expressing Judeophobia in this poem, since his depiction of the Sabbath-observing woman likely stems from his personal observations of reality²⁵. In other poems, specifically in the seventh book of Epigrams, Martial

²³ On the Arch of Titus erected on the Velia, see Martial, *De Spec.* 2; J. Henderson, “*Par Operi Sedes: Mrs. Arthur Strong and Flavian Style, the Arch of Titus and the Cancelleria Reliefs*,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 229–254; J. Magness, “The Arch of Titus and the Fate of the God of Israel,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59, no. 2 (2008): 201–217; and D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 183–189. See Millar, “Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome,” 101–128. See also *CIL* VI.945; *ILS* I.265.83; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 258–267. For more on the Arch of Titus in the Circus, see T. Leoni, “*Urbem Hierusolymam delavit: The Arch of Titus in the Circus Maximus in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*” (PhD diss., York University, 2021).

²⁴ Millar, “Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome,” 101–128. See *CIL* VI.944; *ILS* I.264.83 (translation: <https://armyofromanpalestine.com/0384-2>); and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 258–267.

²⁵ Martial, *Epigrammata* IV.4; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. I, 523–524, no. 239; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 90. In Rabbinic literature, the Sabbath can be treated as a fast day: for Torah study probably being associated with fasting, see BT Pesachim 68b; JT Shabbat 15, 5(4); R. Katzoff, “Eccentric Jews in Ancient Rome,” Lecture delivered at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Edinburgh, July 2–6, 2006; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*,

emphasizes circumcision as a key identifying characteristic of Jews. This theme appears in no fewer than four epigrams in his seventh book, three of which we've already discussed. One epigram (*Epigrammata* VII.30), which has heteroerotic and misogynistic undertones, focuses on a woman named Caelia, who freely offers her favors to a variety of people—Parthians, Germans, Dacians, Cilicians, Cappadocians, Egyptians, Jews, Indians, Alans, and Sarmatians—but not to Romans. This epigram serves as a striking compilation of xenophobic prejudices aimed at foreigners. Galán Vioque notes that Martial intentionally chose these foreign groups, many of whom Rome had defeated and conquered. However, only Egyptians, from Memphis, and Jews are depicted with a distinct sexual nature. This is the first epigram in Martial's works to associate circumcision, a key Jewish trait, with sexual desire. Schäfer underscores that circumcision not only sets Jews apart from other peoples but also carries a clear sexual connotation. Similarly, Pierre Cordier argues that Jews are characterized through a focus on their sexual organ. Yet, because Jews are grouped with other peoples, the passage leans more toward xenophobia than Judeophobia²⁶.

In a second epigram (*Epigrammata* VII.35), directed at Laecania, Martial contrasts his Jewish slave with Laecania's Gentile slave. Martial implies to the sex-obsessed Laecania that his circumcised Jewish servant can provide her with far more pleasure than her own slave or the various men she takes as lovers. According to Stern and Shaye Cohen, circumcision and sexual potency are often linked. Schäfer, based on various manuscripts, argues that the central point of the epigram is that Martial's Jewish slave is better endowed than Laecania's slave²⁷. There is no indication that the Jewish War influenced the poet's view of circumcision as a symbol of sexual potency. While it is possible that without the devastating outcome of the Jewish War, Martial may not have been able to afford a Jewish slave, this point is not central to the current discussion. The following three epigrams (VII.55, 85, and 94) also connect circumcision with lust or immoral behavior. The third epigram mentions a Jewish poet accused not only of stealing Martial's poems but also of attempting to seduce Martial's young male lover. The association between circumcision and lust or immoral conduct also appears in Tacitus. Like Martial, Tacitus subtly links circumcision with lust, presenting it as another negative trait attributed to Jews, although he does not dwell on the subject²⁸.

On the other hand, it is clear that Quintilian's attitude toward Jews, which appears rather negative, centers on Moses as a lawgiver. In his *Institutio Oratoria*, written in 95 CE, in a chapter on *De Laude et Vituperatione*, Quintilian portrays Moses as an example of someone who incites meanness. He singles Moses out as the founder of the Jewish superstition and the lawgiver of a "pernicious people." Isaac argues that the phrase *perniciosa gens*, which suggests a hostile attitude, can be compared to similar expressions like *sceleratissima gens* used by Seneca and *taeterrima gens* found in Tacitus. Quintilian does not need to mention Moses by name, as he assumes his readers are familiar with him.

162; E. Will and C. Orieux, "Prosélytisme juif?" *Histoire d'une erreur* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992); E. S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 46–48; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271–278.

²⁶ Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.30; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. I, 524–525, no. 240; G. Galán Vioque, *Martial, Book VII: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 215; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 99–100; P. Cordier, "Les Romains et la circoncision," *Revue des Études Juives* 160, no. 3–4 (2001): 337–355. Together with *recutitus*, Martial makes use of the adjective *verpus*; Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.82, XI.94; Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271–278.

²⁷ Gilula, "Did Martial Have a Jewish Slave?" 532–533; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 100–101, n. 64–68, 250–251. Shaye Cohen's interpretation stands against that of Alfred E. Housman; see Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, Appendix A, 352–357; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271–278.

²⁸ Martial, *Epigrammata* VII.55; 82; XI.94; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. I, 526, no. 242; 526–527, no. 243; 527–528, no. 245; J. Pollini, "Slave-Boys for Sexual and Religious Service: Images of Pleasure and Devotion," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 149–166; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 100–102, 251, n. 69, 72; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 358–359. According to Tacitus, although the Jews abstain from "intercourse with foreign women," they are "singularly prone to lust." Although, according to Isaac, Tacitus associates circumcision first and foremost with separateness, circumcision is also connected to lust, thus bringing together the concepts of unsociability and immorality. Tacitus therefore makes his own the Roman assertion that peoples characterized by a religion unworthy of respect also possessed disgraceful morals; Tacitus, *Hist.* V.1.4–5; see also Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 472–474; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271–278.

It's difficult to determine whether Quintilian is expressing Judeophobia or if his references to Moses and the Jews, alongside other negative examples like the Persians, simply reflect xenophobia. Quintilian's portrayal of the Jewish leader aligns with the negative views expressed by Manetho and Lysimachus, who were likely his primary sources. In his description of Judaism, Quintilian uses the term *superstitio*, which was previously employed by Cicero in reference to the Jews and later adopted by Tacitus²⁹. However, did Quintilian's negative attitude stem from the Jewish War? It seems unlikely, as his views resemble those of early Roman intellectuals. Moreover, in another passage from the *Institutio Oratoria*, when discussing how to influence a judge in the exordium of a speech, Quintilian mentions that he once pleaded on behalf of Queen Berenice of Judea, who was also the judge, sometime between 75 and 79 CE³⁰. Although Berenice was a Roman citizen, like her brother Agrippa II, she was clearly not a legal judge, and Quintilian is likely exaggerating. What is striking here is that Quintilian, who condemned Moses as the founder of Jewish superstition, now proudly recounts that he acted as a lawyer on Berenice's behalf. He was undoubtedly aware that Berenice was a Jewess, from the same *perniciosa gens* as Moses, and that she was often likened to Cleopatra due to her affair with Titus. Yet, to please his imperial patrons, Quintilian was willing to represent Berenice.

6.- Flavius Josephus in Rome

However, it is Josephus's literary output that demonstrates that the atmosphere in Rome was not so hostile toward Jews by the of Domitian's reign. While his writings were directed primarily to a Jewish public, the choice of Epaphroditus as his patron points to the possibility that he tried to reach a wider, Gentile public. Moreover, a close look at *Life* demonstrates that Domitian did not try to hinder him. On the contrary, it looks like that Josephus, an apologist of the Jews and Judaism, enjoyed the tacit support of the emperor³¹.

In fact, all of Josephus's literary output can be dated to the long reign of Domitian. First, the final redaction of the *War*, was published in 84 CE. Then, Josephus published in 93/94 CE the first edition of *Antiquities*, and *Against Apion* was also most probably published in the last years of Domitian's reign³². In both *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, Josephus shifts the topics of his apologetic writings. In *Antiquities*, Josephus offers to his audience a history of the Jewish people from "the Creation of the world" to the eve of the Jewish War. *Against Apion* is a overtly apologetic work. Josephus therefore attacks the anti-Jewish opinions current in pagan intellectual circles in late first-century Rome and Alexandria, and he concludes with a staunch defense of Jewish law.

The selection of new topics reflects a shift in Josephus's self-awareness. This change occurred at a time when he realized he was no longer a provincial aristocrat of priestly lineage from Judea, but rather a Diaspora Jew living in Rome, a major center of the Jewish Diaspora and the Roman Empire. In fact, in the final book of the *Jewish War*, Josephus portrays himself as a Roman Jew, adopting a new identity. By the time he wrote the *Antiquities*, Josephus felt a genuine need to serve as an apologist for Judaism. The topics he chose seem to reflect his intention to primarily address the Jewish community. At the same time, Josephus needed a new patron. However, this shift does not imply that he had fallen out of favor with the imperial family. After the death of Titus in 81 CE, Josephus's role as an imperial

²⁹ Quintilian, *Inst.* III.7.11; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I, 513, no. 230; M. Pucci Ben Ze'ev, "Cosa pensavano i Romani degli Ebrei?" *Athenaeum* 75, no. 3-4 (1987): 335-359, here 350; Schäfer, *Judaeophobia*, 187-188; Tacitus, *Hist.* V.1.4; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 480; Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271-278.

³⁰ Quintilian, *Inst.* IV.1.19; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. I, 513-514, no. 231; on Berenice in Rome, see Tacitus, *Hist.* II.2; Suetonius, *Div. Tit.* XI.7.2; Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* LXV.15.3-4; *Epit. de Caes.* X.4.7; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 271-278.

³¹ For more on Josephus in Rome, see W. den Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors, and the City of Rome: From Hostage to Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

³² Rajak, *Josephus*, 13, 236-237; see also S. Schwartz, *Josephus and Judaeon Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 19-21; and S. N. Mason, ed., *Life of Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), i-xx. On the date of publication of *Against Apion*, see J. M. G. Barclay, ed., *Against Apion* (Leiden Brill, 2013), xxxvi-xxviii; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 164-172.

propagandist came to an end. Furthermore, since Domitian had no involvement in the Jewish War, additional works focusing on Judaism and Jews would not have served Domitian's propagandistic interests. This shift was not driven by financial needs, as Josephus owned estates in Judea that secured his income; rather, patronage was essential for ensuring an audience. Josephus found his new patron in Epaphroditus, who would continue to support him in publishing both the *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*. The *Antiquities* includes a dedication at the beginning of the book, and a second, likely later, dedication appears in the autobiographical *Vita* (Life) Josephus added as an appendix. Josephus also mentions Epaphroditus in his final work, *Against Apion*. Several scholars have identified this Epaphroditus with the well-known *libertus* of Nero, who also served as his secretary (*a libellis*) and was the owner of the *horti Epaphroditiani* in Region V in Rome. Epaphroditus was exiled under Domitian in 90 and executed around 94–95 CE, with his large tomb located in the Esquiline Gardens. However, the question arises: was this fallen figure from the regime really Josephus's patron? Chronologically, this identification doesn't fit well. Laqueur had previously suggested that Josephus's patron might have been M. Mettius Epaphroditus. This Epaphroditus, a *libertus* born in Chaeronea, Achaea, was first purchased by Archias, an Alexandrian *grammaticus*, and then by M. Mettius Modestus, the *praefectus Aegypti*, who employed him as a tutor to his son. After gaining his freedom, Epaphroditus lived in Rome and worked as a teacher. He likely arrived there during Nero's reign and was still active, or at least alive, during Nerva's reign. According to the *Suda*, he owned no less than 30,000 scrolls, and fragments of his works focus on Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus. While he was not part of the political elite, either senatorial or equestrian, Epaphroditus could have introduced Josephus to an audience from the Greek East, or to Greek-speaking Easterners interested in learning about Judaism and Jewish history³³.

It is challenging to fully understand the composition of Josephus's audience for both *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*. This audience likely included people who had shown interest in the *Jewish War*, so it wasn't necessarily limited to individuals connected with Epaphroditus, but rather those known to Josephus. Tessa Rajak convincingly suggests that Josephus may have targeted an Eastern, Greek-speaking audience of both Jews and Gentiles. The *Antiquities* was written in Greek, making it accessible to a broad audience in Rome, especially since the work focused on an Eastern ethnic group—the Jews. As such, the primary audience for *Antiquities* likely consisted of Jews, as well as educated members of the plebeian elite with an interest in Judaism, alongside a few intellectuals and Greek-speaking immigrants to Rome. According to Mason, Josephus wrote *Antiquities* for a non-Jewish, Greek-speaking audience eager to learn about Judaism³⁴. Unlike Alexandria or other Jewish centers in the Greek East, Rome had not experienced open conflicts between its Jewish minority and the Greek majority. Therefore, the relationship between Jews and Greek-speaking immigrants in Rome was likely amicable—they were all foreigners, or *peregrini*, living side by side in neighborhoods like Trastevere. Greek-speaking members of the plebs, who Josephus could connect with through Epaphroditus, may have formed part of his audience. Regarding the audience for *Against Apion*, Josephus specifically states that the work is intended for those interested in learning about the core principles of Judaism. According to Barclay, the "intended" audience would have come to hear a public reading of the treatise, already sympathetic to or curious about Josephus's defense of Judaism. However, it's unclear if the "intended" audience overlaps with the "implied" audience, which may have been primarily fellow Jews. Nevertheless, through Epaphroditus, Josephus could have reached an Eastern Greek-speaking audience similar to that of *Antiquities*, who would have been interested in hearing the treatise. While Josephus expresses strong antagonism toward Greek historians, he also respects Greek culture. Additionally, Romans who spoke Greek might have been intrigued. As Barclay notes, *Against Apion* is a "subtly

³³ Josephus, *AJ* I.8; V.430; *C. Ap.* I.1; II.1; Schwartz, *Josephus and Judaeae Politics*, 17.

³⁴ See Mason, *Life of Josephus*, i–xx; on the Gentile Greek-speaking audience, see Josephus, *AJ* I.5; XX.262; *BJ* I.3; VI.16; on Josephus seeking to explain Jewish traditions to a Gentile audience, see *AJ* I.33; I.128–129; III.317; XIV.3; XVII.254; Mason, "Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome," 566–588; T. Rajak, "Flavius Josephus in the Diaspora," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. Edmondson, S. N. Mason, and J. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79–100; and Rajak, *Josephus*, 177–178, 225–226, 228.

Romanized piece of argumentation" defending Judaism, clearly aimed at a Roman audience, albeit one that spoke Greek. Josephus presents Jewish traditions, values, and beliefs as aligning with the Roman ideal of *mos maiorum* ("ancestral way"), as well as with the norms of contemporary Roman society. This comparison is indirect, as Josephus contrasts the Jewish constitution with those of the Greeks and Egyptians, but not with the Romans. The similarity between Judaism and Roman *mos maiorum* may also have been a subtle nod to Domitian, the emperor who portrayed himself as the restorer and defender of the *mos maiorum*, which was central to the imperial propaganda of the last Flavians. Finally, it's important to note that, due to the limited availability of manuscripts, Josephus's audience would have included anyone who heard his texts read aloud, not just those who could read the written versions.

As Josephus reveals in his *Vita*, he maintained a privileged position at court and may have continued to serve in the imperial administration, enjoying Domitian's favor. While Seth Schwartz suggests that Domitian was unsympathetic toward Titus's associates, including Josephus, it appears that Josephus's situation did not worsen. In *Vita*, Josephus mentions that Domitian, who succeeded Titus, "still augmented his respects to me." Furthermore, Domitian exempted Josephus's country estates in Judea from taxes. Josephus also recounts an incident where he was accused of disloyalty by some Jews, along with two of his servants—a eunuch and another slave who was his son's tutor. Domitian rejected the slander and punished the Jewish accusers.

It seems unlikely that Josephus was involved in the conflict between Domitian and the senatorial class. Moreover, there's no reason to believe that Josephus would have sided with the senatorial faction over Domitian, especially considering the benefits he received from the emperor. Not only did Domitian favor Josephus, but his wife Domitia also showed kindness to the Jewish historian. This suggests that Josephus survived the reign of terror under Domitian just as he had endured difficult situations in the past. A passage toward the end of *Vita*, "Domitia, the wife of Caesar, continued to do me kindnesses," may indicate that Josephus's client-patron relationship with Domitian's wife persisted after her husband's death. Domitia lived well into the second century CE, and her mention alone suggests that Josephus is referring to her after Domitian's murder. The fact that Josephus emphasizes his close ties to Domitian and the Flavian household could imply that, even after Domitian's reign, the emperor's protection, rather than just his patronage, continued to extend to Josephus. Nowhere does Josephus claim that his public readings were obstructed by imperial authorities³⁵.

7.- Conclusion

So, how did Jews fare in Domitian's Rome? A close look at the coins minted under the last of the Flavians demonstrates that the series *Iudaea Capta* came to an end. The place of the Jews as the focus of Roman imperial propaganda was taken by Germanic tribesmen. Domitian minted a new series, *Germania Capta*. While the iconography was similar to that of the *Iudaea Capta* series, the purpose of Domitian was different, as he distanced himself from Vespasian and Titus's victorious campaign in Judea, in which he had played no part whatsoever, celebrating his own new victories over a new foe. More than that, the motives depicted on the coinage struck in the Province of Judea, such as the palm tree alone, mirrors a policy of pacification vis-à-vis the Jews and could associate these coins with the *provincia restituta* typology. A close look at the increase of the levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus* demonstrates

³⁵ J. M. G. Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. Edmondson, S. N. Mason, and J. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 315–332; J. M. G. Barclay, "Judaism in Roman Dress: Flavius Josephus's Tactics in the *Contra Apionem*," in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium, Brüssel 1998*, ed. J. U. Kalms and F. Siegert (Münster: Lit, 1999), 231–245. Josephus does not explicitly criticize either Roman contemporary policy toward the Jews or Roman culture. Besides, Josephus successfully manipulates Roman cultural norms, values, and beliefs to the advantage of his own Jewish cultural traditions. Third, by using Roman rhetorical norms and manipulating Roman cultural values, Josephus is able, albeit in a cryptic way, to argue for the superiority of Judaism due to its antiquity and customs, and the originality of Moses's constitution. See Barclay, *Against Apion*, xxvi–li, 362–369; and Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars*, 164–172.

that in the main the Jewish communities scattered throughout Italy were not among its “victims.” The main target was those Jews who were *improfessi*, who were not formal members of the Jewish communities, those of *origine dissimulate*, who completely hid their ethnic origin, as well as the Gentile owners of Jewish slaves, who till then were probably exempted from the payment of the Jewish tax: hardly a measure that could be perceived as hostile to Jews. In terms of Domitian’s building policy, it is evident that at the beginning of his rule Domitian chose to emphasize his close association with his brother, Titus, and thus the Jewish War, to enhance his legitimacy. However, almost immediately after Domitian’s succession, the building of monumental structures celebrating the Jewish War came to a sudden end. From then onward, Domitian concentrated his energies on buildings that enhanced his power and majesty, such as his palace, which in no way can be related to the Jewish War. A close reading of the works of the two main intellectuals who thrived in Domitian’s Rome, Martial and Quintilian, demonstrates that the Jews were no longer perceived as the main adversary of Rome. In the *Epigrammata*, Jews were perceived as one of the many foreigner groups that settled in Rome. Jewish slaves, beggars, but also actors and poets, depicted by Martial, were just one of the numerous types of people defeated and dominated by Rome. As previously, well before the Jewish War, the depiction of Jews by Martial fell into well-defined categories, such as those having to do with the Sabbath or circumcision. Also, the writings of Quintilian, who presents quite a negative image of Judaism, embodied in the figure of Moses, answering to the worst canons of the Judeophobic prejudice, are no more vitriolic and aggressive than those of Seneca, who wrote before the Jewish War. Thus, a close look at Roman literary sources gives the impression that for the Jews living in Rome the Jewish War did not result in a rise of the Judeophobic prejudice and, notwithstanding the imperial propaganda of the first two Flavians, the Jews remained in the Roman imagination one of the numerous people defeated and dominated by Rome. Finally, the literary output of Josephus written during Domitian’s reign, the *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, presents a strong apologetic view of Judaism. Even if Josephus no longer had the emperor’s direct patronage, which was lost with the death of Titus, it looks like he continued to enjoy imperial protection. And he used it to write the most important apology of Judaism even conceived in the classical world. Further, through the patronage of Epaphroditus, Josephus could successfully reach a wider audience, not just Jews. Thus, by the end of the Flavian period, at least in Rome, Jews were once more out of focus, perceived as one of the many foreigner groups that had settled in Rome.

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Abstract

In this article, I examine the condition of Jews and Judaism during Domitian’s rule. A close look at the numismatic, archaeological, and literary evidence, including the writings of Josephus, demonstrates that the latter were “out of focus” during this period. The numismatic evidence demonstrates that Domitian effectively ceased to mint the *Judaea Capta* series one year after his accession to the throne. In Roman imperial propaganda, the defeated German tribes took the place of the Jews. And levy of the *fiscus Iudaicus*, which was intensified under the reign of Domitian, seems to point to the fact that the main victims of Domitian’s policies were the Gentile owners of Jewish slaves, who till then were probably exempted from this tax. Domitian renewed the monumental façade of the *urbs aeterna*, part of which was the building of the two most important monuments associated with the Jewish War, the Arch of Titus on the Velia and the Arch of Titus in the Circus Maximus, which commemorated Titus’s triumph over the Jews. However, a look at the evidence of Martial, Quintilian, and Josephus—and especially an

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analysis of the latter's status at Rome—shows that the main purpose of these monuments was to associate Domitian with his brother as a means of enhancing his dynastic legitimacy. By the end of the Flavian period, the Jews had receded into the background, no longer to be singled out among other foreign communities in the city.

Keywords

Arch of Titus, Domitian, *fiscus Iudaicus*, Jewish Diaspora, Josephus, Martial, Quintilian, Rome