

The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture I

Edited by
PETER SCHÄFER

*Texte und Studien zum
Antiken Judentum*
71

Mohr Siebeck

Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

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Preface

This volume offers the first fruits of a research project conducted at the Institut für Judaistik of the Freie Universität Berlin and made possible by the Leibniz Prize of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The team consisted of Hans-Jürgen Becker (now Professor at the University of Göttingen), Catherine Hezser, Martin Jacobs, Peter Schäfer, and Giuseppe Veltri (now Professor at the University of Halle).

In October 1996 we invited Yerushalmi specialists from several countries to supplement our research program and to discuss with us the results of our project. The conference, "Text and Context: The Talmud Yerushalmi in its Graeco-Roman Environment," took place at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences. Some of the papers delivered during the conference are published here together with the more extensive essays of the research project; others will follow in due course.

My thanks go to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and to the publisher for their continuous support, to Klaus Herrmann and Sabine Kößling for exercising their editorial skills also on this volume, and to Johanna Hoornweg for correcting the English of several articles and translating the Introduction completely from German into English.

Berlin, Dezember 1997

Peter Schäfer

Table of Contents

Preface	V
PETER SCHÄFER	
Introduction	1

Literature

MARTIN S. JAFFEE	
The Oral-Cultural Context of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Greco-Roman rhetorical paideia, discipleship, and the concept of Oral Torah	27
GÜNTER STEMBERGER	
Narrative Baraitot in the Yerushalmi	63
LEIB MOSCOVITZ	
Double Readings in the Yerushalmi	83

History

PETER SCHÄFER	
“From Jerusalem the Great to Alexandria the Small”: The Relationship between Palestine and Egypt in the Graeco-Roman Period	129
SHAYE J.D. COHEN	
The Conversion of Antoninus	141
DAVID GOODBLATT	
From History to Story to History: The Rimmon Valley Seven	173

Everyday Life

SETH SCHWARTZ	
Gamaliel in Aphrodite’s Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries	203

MARTIN JACOBS	
Römische Thermenkultur im Spiegel des Talmud Yerushalmi	219
JOSHUA SCHWARTZ	
Aspects of Leisure-Time Activities in Roman Period Palestine: The Evidence of the Talmud Yerushalmi	313
MARTIN JACOBS	
Theatres and Performances as Reflected in the Talmud Yerushalmi	327
TESSA RAJAK	
The Rabbinic Dead and the Diaspora Dead at Beth She'arim	349

Philosophy and Law

RICHARD KALMIN	
Attitudes toward Biblical Heroes in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity	369
HANS-JÜRGEN BECKER	
Earthquakes, Insects, Miracles, and the Order of Nature	387
HANS-JÜRGEN BECKER	
„Epikureer“ im Talmud Yerushalmi	397
CATHERINE HEZSER	
„Privat“ und „öffentlich“ im Talmud Yerushalmi und in der griechisch-römischen Antike	423
CATHERINE HEZSER	
The Codification of Legal Knowledge in Late Antiquity: The Talmud Yerushalmi and Roman Law Codes	581
CHRISTINE HAYES	
The Abrogation of Torah Law: Rabbinic Taqqanah and Praetorian Edict . .	643
Index of Sources	675
Index of Names and Subjects	685

Introduction

by

Peter Schäfer

I

The world of the Palestinian Jews bears the deep imprint of Graeco-Roman culture. The earliest contacts between Jewish and Greek culture reach back to the period before Alexander; certainly by the third century B.C.E. no description of Palestinian Jewry, its intellectual, cultural and also religious life, is complete without recourse to the concept commonly known as "Hellenism."¹ If the classical use of *Hellênismos* and *hellênizein* was almost exclusively limited to the correct mastery of the Greek language, drawing the line between those with this mastery and the uneducated and the barbarians,² J.G. Herder³ and, above all, J.G. Droysen extended the concept to embrace the general intellectual and cultural sphere: to Droysen Hellenism designates an epoch during which the West mingled with the East, Greeks with Orientals.⁴ In this newly emerging mixture, the "modern period of antiquity,"⁵ as Droysen termed it, he relegated the Jews to a rather passive or, more precisely, obsolete role: the Hellenism "in which the paganism of Asia and Greece, indeed antiquity itself, was destined to be absorbed,"⁶ attained its goal, according to him, in Christianity.⁷

¹ See M. Hengel's pioneering *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Tübingen 1968, ²1973. English translation: *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols., Minneapolis 1974 (one-volume edition 1981, ²1991).

² Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *hellênizô* and *hellênismos*; Ernst Vogt, "Hellenismus," in *Kleines Wörterbuch des Hellenismus*, eds. H.H. Schmidt and E. Vogt, Wiesbaden, 1988, p. 1.

³ *Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament aus einer neueröffneten [sic] Morgenländischen Quelle*, in id., *Sämtliche Werke in 33 Bänden*, ed. B. Suphan, Berlin 1884, vol. 7, pp. 335–471 (p. 339): mixing of Greek language and Oriental ideas.

⁴ Introduction to vol. 2 of his *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, Hamburg 1836, p. 4.

⁵ Preface to the first edition of *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, neue durchgesehene Auflage, ed. E. Bayer, 3 vols., Tübingen 1953, vol. 3, p. XXII. See now A. Demandt, "Hellenismus – die moderne Zeit des Altertums?," in *Hellenismus*, ed. B. Funck, Tübingen 1996, pp. 17–27.

⁶ Introduction to vol. 2 of his *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, Hamburg 1836, p. 5.

⁷ J.G. Droysen, "Antrittsrede in der Berliner Akademie," in id., *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. R. Hübner, Munich ⁴1960, pp. 425–429 (p. 425).

Just as the view that the Christian metamorphosis of Hellenism marks the historical end of Hellenism is problematic, from the point of view of both Judaism and paganism, so it is likewise inappropriate to make any attempt at all to compress Hellenism into an exact time frame.⁸ More helpful than the division into periods with uncertain caesurae, which would anyway have to be drawn differently for political history, on the one hand, and for cultural and intellectual history, on the other, is the English usage of “Hellenism” to denote the complex fabric of linguistic and, in the broadest sense, cultural characteristics of the Greeks,

“in which peoples of the most diverse kind could participate. ... Hellenism, which is a genuine Greek word for Greek culture (*Hellênismos*), represented language, thought, mythology, and images that constituted an extraordinarily flexible medium of both cultural and religious expression. It was a medium not necessarily antithetical to local or indigenous traditions. On the contrary, it provided a new and more eloquent way of giving voice to them.”⁹

Once Hellenism is defined in this manner, one may also subsume the era of Imperial Rome (in both its pagan and Christian forms), indeed all of late antiquity including early Islam,¹⁰ under the banner of “Hellenism.” Such a notion of Hellenism is doubtless more suited to Judaism than one which draws an artificial caesura between the Hellenistic period in its narrower sense and the Roman period. Rabbinic Judaism of Palestine with its literary output is a child of Hellenism, too.

2

The reconstruction of the Graeco-Roman world of Rabbinic Judaism began with Israel Lewy’s programmatic essay, “Ueber die Spuren des griechischen und römischen Alterthums im talmudischen Schriftthum.”¹¹ For learned philologists and schoolmasters Lewy first explains the nature of Rabbinic literature and then arranges the “traces” of Graeco-Roman antiquity that he finds in this literature under the following headings: the study of profane Greek literature, “Greek wisdom,” and the instruction of the Greek language (widely practiced, but forbidden); Greek and Latin loan-words as well as whole sentences in Rabbinic Literature; discussion of pagan cult forms and customs (Sarapis, Isis and Horus, Osiris, Merkur, Priapus, festivals, sacrifices, myths, the so-called

⁸ Cf. also Vogt, “Hellenismus,” pp. 3 f.

⁹ G.W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge etc. 1990, p. 7.

¹⁰ “Hellenism and Islam” is the title of the last essay in Bowersock’s *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*.

¹¹ In *Verhandlungen der Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner* 33, Leipzig 1878, pp. 77–88.

“customs of the Amorites,” bathhouses, theaters, circusses, racecourses). Lewy’s unequivocal summation: the “influence of Greece and Rome on Judaea” was “in cultural-historical respects significant,” so much so that some institutions were even directly borrowed and adapted to the “Jewish spirit” – “even originally pagan ideas managed here and there to slip in, albeit disguised”!¹² A more detailed study of the relations between Jews and Greeks/Romans was therefore needed and, if carried out, would bear twofold fruit: it would first of all “promote a better understanding of the Talmud” but also “contribute inestimably to providing better insights into certain details in late Greek and Roman literature, and definitely to a better appreciation of the cultural-historical significance of Hellas and Rome.”¹³

Both the investigative fields pointed out by Lewy and the direction indicated by their twofold benefit for the internal study of Rabbinic literature as well as for the study of Graeco-Roman antiquity were pursued further by his successors. By far the most prolific and the most consistent of the latter was Samuel Krauss (1866–1948), the great Austro-Hungarian scholar and professor at the Israelitisch-Theologische Lehranstalt in Vienna, whose erudite standard works have yet to be surpassed. The first of these are his *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum*,¹⁴ which are presented in two sections, namely in the form of a grammar analysis and as a dictionary, the latter being the much more influential part.¹⁵ Krauss demonstrates that a “victorious advance of the Greek language”¹⁶ had taken place ever since Alexander; this he describes more exactly as the “invasion (*Einwanderung*) of Greek expressions into the language of Palestinian Jews.”¹⁷ The Maccabbean revolt, this “high tide of nationalist current,” in which there was “no room for foreign elements,” could not really halt the continuous advance of “Hellenization” (*Graecisierung*): “In the long run, however, the Greek element could not be held back, as the new political position of the small nation only made its dependence on the ruling culture more necessary than ever.”¹⁸ Because of the

¹² Ibid., p. 87.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 87f.

¹⁴ *Mit Bemerkungen von Immanuel Löw*, Berlin 1898–1899. Immediately after its publication the first part of the work was vehemently criticized by S. Fraenkel (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 52, 1898, pp. 290–300); a devastating modern critique of the second part of the book was presented by a classical Greek scholar, G. Zuntz (*Journal of Semitic Studies* 1, 1956, pp. 129–140).

¹⁵ Only lately have supplements appeared in certain subject areas: see, e.g., D. Sperber, *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature*, Bar-Ilan 1984; id., *Nautica Talmudica*, Leiden 1986; id., *Material Culture in Eretz-Israel during the Talmudic Period*, Jerusalem 1993 (in Hebrew).

¹⁶ *Lehnwörter*, p. XVII.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. XVIII.

¹⁸ Ibid.

altered political situation Latin came to be added to Greek, but, in contrast to the latter, was less highly esteemed:

“The Jews as the defeated party had simply no reason to judge favorably an enemy’s language which rivaled their own; nevertheless we find their scholars and sages voicing with surprising frankness their recognition of the advantages of the Greek language, and in view of this high estimation it is all the more striking that the language of the Romans, by contrast, comes off so badly.”¹⁹

However, with the emergence of Christianity the high regard for Greek sank somewhat. Already the Mishnah forbids the instruction of youth in Greek,²⁰ but Krauss ascertains, as Lewy before him, that the enforcement of this prohibition was very problematic, and cites, as Lewy had done, the famous dictum of R. Yehuda the Patriarch,²¹ according to which people in Palestine were supposed to use, instead of Syrian, either Hebrew or Greek: “A restriction of the use of the Greek language is not perceptible; on the contrary, it maintains its prevalence among the Jews throughout the whole so-called Talmudic age, which extends almost until the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs.”²²

Besides language, the realia of this age constituted Krauss’ second great focus of research, as demonstrated in his monumental *Talmudische Archäologie*,²³ in which he describes the daily life of the Palestinian Jews. Surprisingly, in contrast to his attitude with respect to the linguistic influences, he detects a much closer connection here between the biblical and the Talmudic periods, regarding the latter “as the custodian of traditional goods”: “Thus even the strong Greek and Roman element cannot turn the oriental culture of Palestine into civilized western behaviour, just as little as the pagan influence of the surrounding countries, the blossoming national traditions of Syria and Egypt, the powerful development of Neo-Parsism in Babylonia can reshape Jewish life.”²⁴ The striking emphasis on the continuity and the “unadulterated life of the Orient” may be due to the fact that Krauss, as he himself points out,²⁵ had travelled through Palestine, Egypt and Italy to get a picture of “the land and its people”:

“And if the researcher’s scouting eye today is still able to perceive some features of biblical and even pre-biblical antiquity in the same countries [i.e., Palestine and Babylonia], how much more must this have been the case in the Talmudic age, as the Jewish nation

¹⁹ Ibid., p. XIX.

²⁰ Sot 9:16.

²¹ b Sot 49b.

²² *Lehnwörter*, p. XXII.

²³ 3 vols., Leipzig 1910–1912.

²⁴ *Talmudische Archäologie*, vol. 1, p. VII. In the original text the words “pagan” and “Jewish” are printed with the letters spaced.

²⁵ Ibid., p. IX.

clung uninterruptedly to the soil, and precisely this nation, even in the stable Orient (!), distinguished itself in an unsurpassed manner through the peculiar steadfastness of its way of life and through its peculiarly tenacious observance of traditional customs.”²⁶

The companion piece to the daily life of *Talmudische Archäologie* is *Synagogale Altertümer*,²⁷ which appeared ten years later and is likewise almost exclusively concerned with realia, not with prayer, rites or liturgy. Nevertheless, Krauss emphasizes that he delved more thoroughly into “Hellenistic and patristic sources” here than in the previous volume.²⁸ The opportunity to write the third work – to be entitled *Politische Altertümer* – which he viewed as a logical continuation of *Talmudische Archäologie* and *Synagogale Altertümer*, was ultimately denied him, although he had noted in *Synagogale Altertümer* that to a large extent he had already gathered the material for it.²⁹ Krauss’ work of editing, translating and commenting in detail on the Talmudic sources of Graeco-Roman history, published already in 1914 as the fifth (and only) volume of *Monumenta Talmudica*,³⁰ may be regarded as preparation for the contemplated volume. In the preface to this volume he deals with the methodological implications of his work: He claims not to be contributing only to an explanation of Rabbinic literature, but for the first time to be “studying the Greeks and Romans for their own sakes as recorded in Rabbinic sources”;³¹ i.e., as Lewy had postulated it, Rabbinic literature is indeed being taken seriously here and evaluated as a primary source for the study of classical antiquity.

The apologetic tone of these efforts is unmistakable, for the hope was that Rabbinic literature would finally be conceded its proper place in the study of antiquity. Absorbing and apologetically inverting the prejudices of his contemporaries against the “scholarly in-jokes,” the “unbearable hairsplitting” and the “insipidly pointed aphorisms (*abgeschmackte pointierte Sentenzen*)” in Rabbinic literature, Krauss finds a “system in these eccentricities (*Verkehrtheiten*)”³² and quotes in detail and with enthusiasm a certain R. Stübe:

“If one just seriously positions the material offered by the Talmudic sources in the context of the great cultural movements which have led from Orientalism and Hellenism to Islam, on the one hand, and to the theology of the Christian Middle Ages, on the other; if one, by means of such historical observation, liberates the Talmud from the narrowness of the cheder (*Studierstube*), and if one nevertheless feels the life-flow of its

²⁶ Ibid., p. VII.

²⁷ Vienna 1922.

²⁸ *Synagogale Altertümer*, p. VI.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Monumenta Hebraica: Monumenta Talmudica*, eds. K. Albrecht, S. Funk and N. Schlögl, vol. 5: *Geschichte*, part I: *Griechen und Römer*, compiled, transl. and ed. by S. Krauss, Vienna and Leipzig 1914.

³¹ Ibid., p. VII.

³² Ibid., p. VIII.

times in it – despite all its exclusive Jewishness – then one can draw from it a sheer inexhaustible source of cultural knowledge.”³³

The Talmud, which had been undervalued and despised, and not only in the (Christian) study of classical antiquity – the railings of a Zunz against “*Talmudismus*” and “*vulgo-Rabbinismus*”³⁴ serve as an example – now becomes socially acceptable. And as if more proof would have been needed, Krauss points triumphantly to the coincidence of views between the rabbis and the Church Fathers in their aversion to Roman institutions like the markets, the bathing culture, circusses and the theater, as well as to the military power of the legions and the secular state.³⁵

Because of the more wide-ranging nature of the tasks he set for himself, Krauss explicitly claims to stand out among his colleagues and associates who preferred to limit themselves to the (mere) exegesis of Rabbinic texts from the rich treasure trove of Graeco-Roman culture. Thus I. Ziegler collected every bit of material on the Roman emperors that could be obtained from the Talmud and Midrash³⁶ (Krauss is quite critical of him),³⁷ and, after the publication of Krauss’ *Lehnwörter*, E. Schürer, too, couldn’t resist presenting a new compilation of the Greek and Latin loan-words in the Mishnah, whereby he set great store on mentioning that these came “for the most part from my own collection.”³⁸ Also other realia materials were collected and analyzed – and the respective Greek and Latin or Syrian and Arabic parallels were always taken into account – above all, medical items by J. Preuss³⁹ and flora by the Hungarian Rabbi I. Löw,⁴⁰ who had contributed, not inconsiderably, to Krauss’ *Lehnwörter* and also to his *Talmudische Archäologie*.⁴¹

In the 1940s and 1950s Krauss’ tradition was carried on by no less a figure than the great Talmudist Saul Lieberman. Whereas in *Greek in Jewish Palestine*⁴² he

³³ *Die Erde*, 1914, p. 175 (as quoted by Krauss).

³⁴ L. Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur*, Berlin 1818; repr. in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, Berlin 1875, p. 29, note 1.

³⁵ *Monumenta Talmudica*, p. IX.

³⁶ *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit*, Breslau 1903.

³⁷ *Monumenta Talmudica*, p. VII.

³⁸ *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1907, p. 58, note 139.

³⁹ *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt*, Berlin 1911.

⁴⁰ *Die Flora der Juden*, 4 vols., Vienna and Leipzig 1924–1934. Cf. also I. Löw, *Fauna und Mineralien der Juden*, A. Schreiber (ed.), Hildesheim 1969 and, long before him, Y.L. Lewysohn, *Die Zoologie des Talmuds*, Frankfurt a.M. 1858.

⁴¹ Preuss, too, expressly thanks Chief Rabbi Dr. Ritter in Rotterdam and Dr. Löw in Szeged for the “revision of a large part of the manuscript” (Preface to *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin*).

⁴² New York 1942, ²1965.

had examined the Greek origins of individual words and phrases in Rabbinic literature, in *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*⁴³ he is concerned with the Hellenistic influence “in the behavior, rites, practices, conceptions and literary methods of the Jews.”⁴⁴ Among other things, he treats questions regarding the text of the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic hermeneutics, the publication of the Mishnah, the alleged ban against Greek wisdom, idolatry, pagan and Rabbinic sacrificial customs, Rabbinic knowledge of the natural sciences etc. – a collection of quite heterogeneous themes, albeit all motivated by the same goal: knowledge of classical antiquity contributes to a better understanding of Rabbinic literature or, vice versa, Rabbinic literature contains many still unexcavated treasures about living conditions in Graeco-Roman antiquity.⁴⁵

This is the same program established by Lewy and Krauss before him, only that it was carried out by Lieberman on another (more modern) methodological level. Instead of sporadic hints and explanations we now find thematically unified essays which analyze the respective themes in a larger context, using richer comparative references. Without a doubt this represents an enormous step forward. However, Lieberman retains a premiss that we found particularly pronounced in Krauss’ work. Although Lieberman was very reserved about making generalized statements, the conclusion of his Introduction to *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* makes clear enough the purpose of the whole exercise: “The Jews of Palestine were by no means isolated from the ancient Mediterranean civilized (!) world. They shared many of its general beliefs, conceptions and patterns of behavior.”⁴⁶ The participation of the Jews in a commonly shared Graeco-Roman culture releases them (and their literature) from isolation and the constraints of a minority existence.

In numerous studies H. A. Fischel focused on an independent subtopic of research about the Talmudic age that had received scant attention in older works, namely the relationship between Rabbinic Judaism and Graeco-Roman philosophy.⁴⁷ Fischel sees himself in accord with the present scholarly tendency that maintains that “no further defense has to be made for the assumption that Greco-Roman situations were well-known to the creators of the Midrash.” All that is needed today would be to clarify “how far this knowledge went,” and here Fischel claims to point out for the first time “parallels to Greco-Roman

⁴³ New York 1950, ²1962.

⁴⁴ *Hellenism*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19: “Rabbinic literature is replete with valuable information about the life, manners and customs of the ancients. Many passages in it can be properly understood only in the general frame of its environment.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy. A Study of Epicurea and Rhetorica in Early Midrashic Writings*, Leiden 1973; cf. also id. (ed.), *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature*, New York 1977.

orations and important rhetorical *topoi*.” He is concerned above all with the influences of popular Epicurean philosophy, but also with other rhetorical genres:

“The use of the philosopher biography in its popular rhetorical garb is claimed for the portrayal of leading Tannaim, as is the use of the Sage anecdote or *chria*, the parody, and a number of shorter forms and coinages, all vehicles of philosophical polemic and satire. Perhaps for the first time, the entire midrashic output of a specific Tanna⁴⁸ is shown to be of Greco-Roman rhetorical provenance.”⁴⁹

This is, without any doubt, an optimistic program: although its claim as a whole could not gain acceptance, it cannot be denied that it provides important insights and occasionally acceptable results. Here again, what strikes one, is its unmistakably apologetic tendency. The ideal figure of antiquity reconstructed by Fischel is the

“*sophos* – *sapiens* – *hakham*, the Sage, i.e., this special brand of scholar-believer-bureaucrat, who under the precarious and often tragic developments of late antiquity strove mightily to uphold rational and emotionally balanced positions in many aspects of civilized life, who was loyal to native aspirations and traditions, yet also devoted to an intercultural context which had its own momentum and its own ethos.”⁵⁰

What is at stake here is no longer the acknowledgement of a scientific discipline as belonging to the canon of respectable university subjects, for in the interim this has been achieved, but the determining of a position for Judaism and its leaders – have professors replaced the *sophos* – *sapiens* – *hakham* of antiquity? – in the struggle between tradition and modernity.

Most recently G. Stemberger has followed in the footsteps of Krauss and Lieberman. In his survey of *Das klassische Judentum*⁵¹ he summarizes the previous research, bringing it up to date in a clear fashion: even for Palestinian Jews “there was no area of life left untouched by the influences of the universal culture of Hellenism.”⁵² The areas named include: the Greek language; baths, theaters and circusses; inscriptions on graves and ossuaries, and those referring to donors; “Greek wisdom,” i.e., the philosophy, above all, of Epicureanism, but also popular Hellenistic philosophy in general; exegesis of Homer and Rabbinic hermeneutics. Krauss’ approach undergoes an interesting metamorphosis in Stemberger’s *Die römische Herrschaft im Urteil der Juden*.⁵³ All the mate-

⁴⁸ The reference is to Ben Zoma; Fischel also finds numerous “*Epicurea* and *Rhetorica*” in the dicta of Ben Azzai.

⁴⁹ *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy*, p. XI.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. XII.

⁵¹ *Kultur und Geschichte der rabbinischen Zeit*, Munich 1979.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵³ Darmstadt 1983; an earlier shorter version entitled “Die Beurteilung Roms in der rabbinischen Literatur,” appeared in *ANRW* II, 19.2, Berlin and New York 1979, pp. 338–396.

rial on Roman rule to be found in Rabbinic literature is laid out and subjected to a critical analysis, but Stemberger explicitly objects to Krauss' claim in *Monumenta Talmudica*, to "study the Greeks and Romans for their own sakes as recorded in Rabbinic sources."⁵⁴ This claim, he feels, has become obsolete: "For this purpose the sources are largely unsuitable. It is not a question here of offering a contribution to Roman factual history, or of the much discussed events which have determined the history of the Jewish people's relations to Rome, but of Judaism's *subjective experience of history* (*das subjektive Geschichtserleben*)."⁵⁵ But, as we have seen, Krauss was not concerned with merely contributing to Roman factual history; he wanted to secure for Rabbinic sources the place that they deserve in the study of classical antiquity. Stemberger reduces this apologetic aim to its positivistic core and instead steers towards the seemingly safe harbor of a "subjective experience of history." No doubt, this is a legitimate enterprise, for the question of how the rabbis *assimilated* historical events makes more sense than the question of the actual facts, whatever they might be (the rabbis' answer to this was *mai de-hawah hawah*).⁵⁶ But Stemberger himself does not really fulfil his claim to depict the subjective experience of history. Extensive stretches of his book are indeed a balancing act between what could have been historically possible and what could be explained with other motivations. Does this mean that it is only possible to investigate a "subjective experience of history" against the background of "facts" which can be indeed checked, i.e., is there no getting around the facts?

3

That the two great entities, "Judaism" and "Hellenism," encountered each other in Palestine, that Judaism was "stamped" or "influenced" by Hellenism – what is the concrete significance of all this? Martin Hengel has pointed out that the first evidence of the confrontation of *Ioudaïsmos* and *Hellênismos* is found in 2 Maccabees, i.e., in the account of the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes which was originally recorded by the Jewish historian Jason of Cyrene. The concept of *Ioudaïsmos* appears for the first time in the preface of the epitomist, where he speaks of the wars against Antiochus and his son Eupator, as well as of the "heavenly phenomena which have been vouchsafed to those fighting with so much zeal and bravery for the Jewish cause (*tou Ioudaïsmou*), so that despite their small numbers they devastated the whole land and hunted down the masses of barbarians (*ta barbara plêthê*)" (2 Macc 2:21).

⁵⁴ See above, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Die römische Herrschaft im Urteil der Juden*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ See b Pes 108a; Yom 5b; Nazir 23a; Git 80a; Mak 5b; Zev 100b etc.

Thus the antithesis of the Maccabees, who fought for the Jewish cause, are the “barbarians,” i.e., the Greeks or the pagans in the Greeks’ cultural sphere of influence – a remarkable reversal of Greek linguistic usage! In his struggle against these “barbarians,” Judas the Maccabee naturally leaned on his kinsmen and those who had held on to Judaism (*en tô Ioudaïsmô*, 2 Macc 8:1); and Razis, the opponent of the Jerusalem Hellenists who was persecuted by Nicanor, was “subjected to severe trials for practicing his Jewish way of life (*krisin eisenênegmenos Ioudaïsmou*), and had risked body and soul with the greatest endurance for the Jewish cause (*tou Ioudaïsmou*)” (2 Macc 14:38).⁵⁷

Hellênismos, the counterforce to *Ioudaïsmos*, is mentioned only once in 2 Maccabees, namely at the climax of the Hellenistic reform, after Jason was appointed High Priest because of his promise to erect a *gymnasium* and to establish lists of Jerusalem citizens; he immediately set about to make his fellow Jews conform “to the Greek way (*pros ton Hellênikon charaktêra*).” The author of 2 Maccabees summarizes these events as the “zenith of Hellenism (*akmê tis Hellênismou*)”⁵⁸ and the “access to foreign customs (*prosbasis allophylismou*)”⁵⁹ (4:13); i.e., *Hellênismos* is defined more closely by the term *allophylismos*: those who turn to Hellenism take up customs which are foreign to Judaism, and thus betray the Jewish way of life and consequently Judaism itself. The prime example are the priests who, instead of performing their altar duties, rush off to the competitions in the *gymnasium* (4:14).

Thus the author of 2 Maccabees or Jason of Cyrene characterizes *Ioudaïsmos* and *Hellênismos* unequivocally as two antithetical concepts, two mutually exclusive worlds warring against each other. “Judaism” and “Hellenism” are two distinctly defined cultural entities, irreconcilably opposed to each other. The attempt of the reformers in Jerusalem to bring the two forces together was a betrayal of the Jewish cause and therefore from the outset condemned to failure. Happily the Maccabees put an end to this dastardly business and therefore saved the Jews and Judaism. It is an irony of history that not only did precisely these very Maccabees all too soon succumb to *Hellênismos*, but also, as again Hengel has pointed out, that Jason, a Jew, presents “his defence of *Ioudaïsmos* in the highly rhetorical garb of solemn *Hellenistic* historiography, of which his work is one of the best preserved examples.”⁶⁰

Jason of Cyrene’s interpretation of *Hellênismos* and his view of history is unique and contradicts the usual linguistic usage. It is all the more striking and

⁵⁷ The translation from 2 Maccabees uses the German translation by Ch. Habicht, in *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, vol. 1: *Historische und legendarische Erzählungen: 2. Makkabäerbuch*, Gütersloh 1979.

⁵⁸ Hengel translates this as “a climax of Hellenizing tendencies” (*Judaism and Hellenism*, p. 2).

⁵⁹ Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *allophylismos*: “adoption of foreign customs” (with 2 Macc. 4:13 as the only reference).

⁶⁰ *Judaism and Hellenism*, p. 2.

Index of Sources

1. Bible

Gen		17:19	469
39:7–9	532	19:6	575
		22:22	571
Ex		25:10	471
16:29	439		
21:19	573	Josh	
22:1	573, 574	1:8	469
22:1–2	572, 573		
22:2	573	2 Sam	
		16:21	370
Lev		17:1–2	370
18:3	336	17:23	370
20:10	571		
		Jer	
Num		17:21–22	439
16: 28–30	395		
16: 28–33	408	Ps	
25:1–5	285	1:1	336
		1:1–2	332
Deut		1:2	336
4:21–22	531	84:11	530
5:10–11	459	116:19	530
6:4–9	509		
13:18	264	Dan	
11:13–21	509	3:14	293
15:9	647	3:28	293

2. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

LetAris		4:13	10
126	458	4:14	10
		8:1	10
2 Mac		14:38	10
2:16–18	139		
2:21	9		

3. New Testament

Mt		12:36	512
10:14	465	12:39	568
12:25	465	13:25	512
15:26	518		
24:37–44	512	Acts	
24:43	568	4:13	465
		12:13 f	519
Mk		20:20	465
7:27	518		
13:33–37	512	1 Cor	
		14:16	465
Lk			
11:5–8	513, 538	2 Cor	
12:35–40	512	11:6	465

4. Rabbinic Literature

<i>Mishna</i>		10:3	441, 442
Ber		10:5	439
2:6	281	10:9	511
9:3	390	Pes	
Pea		1:1	605
3:7	671	3:1	599
Kil		Yom	
1:9	599	4:6	40
		7:5	468
Shev		Bez	
3:5	541, 543	2:10	322
4:2	321	RH	
5:2	540	4:1	659
8:11	266, 267	4:3a	661
10:3	647	Meg	
Bik		2:2	550
1:1	486	3:1	435
Shab		MQ	
1:1	441, 446	1:8	471
1:2	272	Yev	
1:4	540	10:1	658
3:4	276	12:1	468, 470, 471
6:1	439	Ket	
6:5	439	4:7	536
9:7	320	5:5	542
11:1	439	Ned	
19:4	606	4:4	538
Er		5:5	436, 468
6:6	533		
8:6	541		
9:2	442		

Sot		3:3	467
9:15	474	3:8	474
Git		Ohai	
1:5	468	15:4	533
4:2	656	Toh	
4:9	340	6:1–6	440
8:5	658, 659	6:4	440
BQ		6:6	449, 450
2:4	322	6:6–9	449, 450
3:1	440	6:7–9	449
BM		7:7	242
2:1	440	Nid	
4:12	322	9:4	539
10:2	539	Makh	
BB		2:5	283
1:1	543	<i>Tosefta</i>	
1:4	543	Ber	
1:6	543	1:2	480
2:2	492, 495	2:20	247
2:3	492, 495, 496, 504, 541	5:12	554
2:4	498	6:17	545
2:12	486, 487	6:25	249
2:13	482	Ter	
3:5	541	7:16	535
3:7	501, 539	Maas	
4:6	237	3:9	540
6:5–6	492	Shab	
San		1:1–4	443, 446, 448
10:1	400	1:6	444
10:2	374, 376, 409	1:16	540
2:6	469	3:3	278, 281
6:2	600	3:4	274
7:6	208	7:18	468
7:10	472, 600	10:10	315, 317
8:5	572	15:10	606
8:6	572, 573	Er	
Ed		7:8	533
7:7	182	Yom	
AZ		2:11	41
1:7	210, 259	Suk	
3:1	258, 259	3:16	75
3:4	210, 260, 285	Bez	
4:4	269, 270	1:10	540
Av		Taan	
2:2	480	4:12	472
4:16	531, 532	Ket	
5:6	392	7:6	254
Hor			
3:1–4	467		

Ned		4:1, 7d	550
2:7	538	4:3, 8a	371
Sot		4:5, 8c	85
4:19	376	5:1, 8d	481
6:6	321	5:1, 9a	114
7:16	73	5:3, 9c	114
Git		6:1, 9d	102
1:4	468	6:5, 10c	554, 562
BQ		7:1, 11a	108
8:11	539	7:3, 11b–c	561
8:12	539	7:3, 11c	562
8:13	539	8:2, 12a	561
BB		8:5, 12b	561
1:4	496	9:3, 13c	390, 391, 392, 392
3:3	239, 240, 243	9:6, 14b	293, 545
San		9:8, 14b	110
5:2	319	Pea	
12:9	402	1:1, 15c	387
AZ		1:1, 15d	510
2:5	336	1:1, 16a	94, 374
2:6	332, 336	1:1, 16b	401
2:7	333, 336, 338, 339	3:7, 17d	564
Hor		3:8, 17d	568
2:8	474	4:6, 18c	100, 116
2:8–9	472	7:2, 20a	98
Ohal		7:3, 20b	438
15:4	533	7:6, 20b	104
Toh		8:6, 21a	480
7:1	447	8:9, 21b	306, 559
Miq		Kil	
6:14	488	1:9, 27a	599
Nid		9:3, 32a	250
6:15	253	9:4, 32b	286
7:5	539	Shevi	
<i>Talmud Yerushalmi</i>		4:2, 35a	540
Ber		5:9, 36a	90
1:1, 2a	113	6:4, 37a	562
1:1, 2b	89	7:4, 37d	319
1:5, 3c	91	8:2, 38a	256
2:3, 4c	244, 246, 248	8:11, 38b	266, 267, 268
2:8, 5b	99	10:3, 39c	648
2:8, 5c	304	Ter	
2:9, 5d	488	5:9, 43d	88
3:1, 6a	99, 564	8:5, 45c	564, 566
3:5, 6d	535	8:7, 46a	518
4:1, 7c	99	8:10, 46b–c	289
		11:5, 48a	101
		11:7, 48a	125
		Maas	
		2:4, 49d	51
		4:2, 51b	322

Orl		Suk	
1:1, 60d	119	3:13, 54a	662
Bik		Bez	
1:2, 63d	106	1:6, 60c	438
2:5, 65b	95	2:1, 61a–b	652
3:3, 65c	480	2:10, 61d	322
Shab		5:2, 63a	519
1:1, 2d	448	5:8, 63b	544
1:1, 2d–3a	446	RH	
1:2, 3a	273	1:1, 65b	470
3:1, 5c	562	1:2, 57a	96
3:1, 5d	474, 562	1:9, 57c	319
3:1, 6a	276, 280	4:1, 59b	659
3:3, 6a	98	4:2, 59b	536
6:1, 8a	511	Taan	
6:10, 8c	545	1:4, 64b	100, 256, 341
7:1, 9b	286	1:6, 64c	92, 566
7:2, 10b	94	2:1, 65b	112
9:7, 12b	321	2:14, 66a	125
12:3, 13c	548	4:2, 68a	549
19:4, 17b	606	4:5, 68c	381
Er		4:5, 69a	317
4:5, 22a	438	4:6, 69c	381
6:6, 23c	533	Meg	
8:6, 25a	541	1:11, 71d	324
8:8, 25b	450	1:12, 72b	142f
Pes		2:2, 73a	550
1:1, 27a	605	2:3, 73b	344
3:1, 29d	599	3:1, 73d	435, 436, 437
3:3, 30b	94	3:2, 74a	161
3:7, 30b	540	4:1, 47d	46
4:1, 30d	49, 257	4:12, 75c	438
6:6–7, 33d	606	MQ	
10:1, 37b	560	1:5, 80d	88
Sheq		1:8, 80d	472
1:4, 46a	434	2:3, 81b	479
7:3, 50d	651	3:7, 83c	408
Yom		Hag	
1:1, 38c	65	1:7, 76c	540
1:1, 38d	69, 70, 72	1:8, 76c	478
1:5, 39a	74	2:1, 77b	555, 562
1:6, 39b	75	2:1, 77c	100
2:2, 39d	76	2:2, 77d	129
3:7, 40d	73	3:1, 78d	173
3:8, 41a	77	Yev	
4:6, 41d	40	7:3, 8b	652
5:3, 42c	77, 133	10:1, 10c	659
6:3, 43c	78, 79f	12:6, 13a	477
6:3, 43c–d	67, 133		

Ket		2:2, 13b	492
2:1, 26a	115	2:3, 13b	477, 493, 496, 498, 504,
2:3, 26b	112		541
4:7, 28d	536	2:4, 13c	498
4:12, 29b	653	3:2, 14a	539
7:4, 31b	255	3:5, 14a–b	541
7:6, 31c	254	3:7, 14b	501, 503
11:3, 34b	565	4:6, 14c	239
Ned		5:1, 15a	488
4:10, 38a	477	8:1, 16a	473
5:4, 39b	320	9:3, 17a	592
5:5, 39b	436	9:4, 16d	537
6:15, 40a	562	9:4, 17a	479
		9:6, 17a	590
Sot		San	
1:8, 17b	371	1:2, 18c	184
5:5, 20b	535	2:6, 20c	257, 469
9:17, 24c	540	2:6, 20d	344
Git		3:6, 21a	319
4:2, 45c	656	6:8, 23c	129
4:3, 45d	94	7:10, 25a	600
4:4, 45d	657	7:11, 25d	535
4:7, 46a	657	7:19, 25d	298, 323
4:9, 46b	340	8:1, 26a–b	479
5:3, 45d–47a	655	8:8, 26c	572, 573
5:5, 47a	658	10:1, 27b	400
6:7, 48b	564	10:1, 27c	400
7:1, 48c	102	10:1, 27d–28a	395, 396, 399, 404
9:1, 50a	105	10:1, 28a	438
Qid		10:6, 29c	145 f
3:12, 64d	287	11:8, 30c	536
4:3, 65d	539	17:1, 28a	316
4:12, 66d	311	10:2, 28d	381
BQ		10:2, 29a	372
1:2, 2c	120	10:2, 29a–b	371
2:5, 3a	98	10:2, 29b	373
2:6, 2d	322	AZ	
6:7, 5c	593	1:7, 40a	332
8:6, 6c	479	2:3, 41a	564
10:3, 7c	658	3:1, 42b	259
BM		3:1, 42c	206, 540
2:2, 8b	448	3:4, 42d	283, 284, 285
2:12–13, 8d	438	4:4, 43d	269
4:2, 9d	653	4:4, 43d–44a	270
4:7, 9c	323	Hor	
5:6, 10c	590	1:1, 45d	94
10:2, 12b	539	3:3, 47c	103
10:2, 12c	491	3:7, 48c	548
BB		Talmud Bavli	
1:1, 12d	502, 503	Ber	
1:7, 13a	542	17a–b	375

63b	380	SifBam	
Yom		46	376
45a	42	131	66
RH		SifDev	
29b	660	29	531, 532
30a	663	31	321
Hag		96	212
15b	374	309	479
Yev		BerR	
89a–90b	663	5:2	535
90b	657	52:5	533
Sot		53:11	321
9a–b	375	63:8	289
21a	374, 375	80:1	345
47a	131	81:2	477
Git		87:5	532
36a	650	ShemR	
San		33:1	535
17b	311	48:1	536
25b	319	WaR	
69b	374	1:13	533
77b	316	5:8	511, 518
101b	375	9:3	559
106b	376	21:9	66
107b	131	BamR	
AZ		8:9	157
10b	165	EkhaR	
Men		2:4	317
109b	133	QohR	
<i>Midrashim</i>		5:11	164
ARNA		7:1	536
38	517	12:11	316
Sifra		MTeh	
Nedaba 4	73	10:1	514
Tzaw 2:11	42	16:3	530, 532

5. Ancient Authors

Aetius	43.27.7	484
<i>De placitis philosophorum</i>	47.7.6.2	487
1.7.7	416	
Apuleius	3.25–26	427
<i>Metamorphoses</i>	23.206–208	428
9.20	512	
Cicero		
<i>De legibus</i>		
2.19.47	631	
<i>De natura Deorum</i>		
2.121–133	392	
Clemens Alexandrinus		
<i>Paidagogos</i>		
3.5 (32.1–3)	252	
Codex Theodosianus		
16.8.21	636	
16.8.22	636	
Corpus iuris civilis		
1.17.1	611	
1.17.1.5	615	
1.17.1.8	637	
1.17.1.12	637	
1.17.2.1	615	
1.17.2.10	608	
8.2.41	491	
8.5.8.5	494	
8.5.8.6	494	
8.5.17.2	432	
8.6.14.1	489	
9.2.52.1	592	
13.1.12.2	605	
13.1.18	603, 605, 606	
13.1.19	602, 605	
13.3.2	603, 606	
13.3.3	603, 607	
13.4.2.7	604	
19.2.61.1	588	
21.2.11	588	
24.3.66	591	
39.2.25	499	
43.27.1	484, 486	
Demosthenes		
	3.25–26	427
	23.206–208	428
Epicure		
<i>Epistula ad Herodotum</i>		
39	417	
<i>Ratae sententiae (kyriai doxai)</i>		
1	415	
11	418	
Epiphanius of Salamis		
<i>Panarion</i>		
30.7.2	303	
30.24.1–5	301	
Eunapios of Sardes		
<i>Vitae sophistarum</i>		
5.2.2.459	231	
5.2.2–6.459	262	
5.2.3–6.459	295	
Hippolytus		
<i>Philosophumena</i>		
22.3	417	
Historia Augusta		
<i>Alexander Severus</i>		
42.1	251	
42.4	252	
<i>Hadrian</i>		
16.6–7	307	
Irenaeus		
<i>Contra omnes haereses</i>		
3.3.4	300	
Isokrates		
<i>Antidosis</i>		
282	452	
285	452	

Josephus

Antiquitates

3.274	461
4.3.11	414
10.11.7	412
12.157f	68
12.237	135
12.387	135
13.372	75
13.5.9	406
13.67	135
13.70	135
13.71	135
14.151	461
15.274f	339
15.367	463
16.38–39	461
17.165f	69
18.34f	70
19.213	463
20.231	67

Bellum

1.74	462
1.209	462
1.387	463
1.432	461
1.665	461
2.8.14	406
6.293–6	80
7.37f	340
7.260	461
7.420–436	68
7.423ff	135
7.431f	135

Contra Apionem

2.19.2	413
--------	-----

Lactantius

De ira Dei

4.11	420
13.19	416

Livius

44.16.10	430
----------	-----

Lucretius

De rerum natura

5.1218	389
--------	-----

Martial

7.82	250
9.68	505

Ovid

Ars amatoria

3.361–369	318
-----------	-----

Fasti

5.282–286	430
-----------	-----

Petronius

Satyricon

27	251
----	-----

Philo

De congressu eruditionis gratia

12	459
----	-----

De fuga et inventione

31	459
----	-----

De Iosepho

8	460
---	-----

Legatio ad Caium

29	460
----	-----

Legum allegoriae

3.1	459
-----	-----

De migratione Abrahami

16	459
----	-----

De providentia

1.46f	390
-------	-----

De specialibus legibus

1.7	459
-----	-----

De vita contemplativa

7	461
---	-----

De vita Mosis

185	392
-----	-----

De virtutibus (de fortitudine)

1	461
---	-----

Pliny the Younger

Epistula

1.8.10	337
9.6	337

Plutarch

Contra Epicuri beatitudinem

8 420

Seneca

De clementia

1.14.1 389

1.21 389

Epistulae morales

7.3 340

Naturales quaestiones

6.1.5 430

Tertullian

Apologeticum

15.1–3 338

De spectaculis

8.9 337

Vitruv

De architectura

1.6.1 445

1.6.7 445

5.1–12 428

5.5 219

5.10.5 234

5.11.1f 233

Index of Names and Subjects

- Adultery 254, 335, 461, 570–572, 576
 Aetius 416
 Ahitofel 369–379, 409
 Akko 192, 211f., 260, 262–266, 283, 562
 Alexander of Tralles 241
 Alexandria 13, 21, 36, 67f., 77, 129–140, 203f., 252, 272, 387, 418, 420, 435, 673
alveus 234, 243
 Amalek 381
 Amphitheatre 327–330, 336, 345
 Anecdote 8, 21, 147–153, 159–163, 166, 178–184, 189, 191f., 197–199, 343f.
 Antioch 192, 203f., 338, 343, 359
 Antoninus 141–171, 211, 228, 253, 264, 345f.
 Aphrodite 203–217, 260–266, 283, 294
apodyterium 229, 232–235, 238, 241–243, 245–247, 273f., 279, 297
 Apuleius 512, 516, 518, 571
archisynagogos 358f.
archon 114, 453
 Army 66, 225, 322, 330
 Arrangement 74, 613, 615, 618–623, 625, 628, 632
ashgara 93, 95, 120
 Atargatis 294
atellana 333, 335
atrium 506, 521, 523f., 526, 532f., 538–540, 546
 Augustus 291, 335, 338, 499, 547, 579, 584, 670
avoda zara 217, 332
 Babylonia 4, 57, 94, 184, 205, 360, 362, 370, 377f., 382–385, 613, 628, 634, 638, 648, 674
balan 237, 243, 250
 Ball play 314–318, 325
balnea mixta 253, 255
balnearis vestis 251
 Banquet 512, 519, 551–553, 555–560, 562f., 575
 Bar Kokhva 175–177, 193, 198
 Baraita 63–81, 89, 94f., 183f., 187, 191, 239f., 246f., 275, 311, 435, 443f., 446, 488f., 491, 535, 544f., 554, 573f., 609
 Bath 8, 64, 203–217, 219–311, 320, 329, 337, 428, 431, 433, 436, 497, 503, 527f., 545, 569
 – Bathhouse 224, 230, 233, 237–239, 244–250, 252, 254–258, 260–263, 265–268, 272–274, 276–280, 283f., 286, 290, 292f., 295, 297, 299–302, 306–309, 341f., 496–498
 – Ritual bath 221f., 224f., 254, 265
 – Roman bath 220–223, 225f., 229, 235, 277, 279
 Bathing 224, 244, 248–250, 252–258, 262, 267, 272, 274, 276–282, 286, 289, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 433
 – Bathing story 289, 294, 296, 298f., 307
 Beth Shean 228, 329, 324, 610
 Beth Shearim 349–365, 619
 Bosra 235, 241, 252, 266f., 329f., 343, 477
boule 453f., 478f.
bouleutes 479
 Burglary 515, 544, 573–576
 Burial 108, 207, 349f., 353f., 356f., 359–365, 619
 Caesarea 17f., 22, 203f., 207, 225f., 228, 328–330, 338, 340, 343, 353f., 357, 359, 361–363, 561, 616, 640, 673
caldarium 228, 233–235, 238, 241, 243, 247, 277f., 297
chreia 36–38, 44, 53
 Cicero 258, 392, 398, 407, 416, 429, 431, 456, 462, 501, 524f., 552, 631, 665, 667
 Circumcision 143, 145–147, 149–154, 159–162, 167–171, 207, 249f., 606
 Circus 8, 334, 392
 Citation formula 191
 Citizen 346, 427–431, 451, 461
 City 12, 17f., 50, 66, 131, 133f., 139, 203–208, 210, 212, 215f., 328f., 331–334, 337, 353, 362, 666
 Clemens Alexandrinus 252

- Codex Gregorianus* 582, 612f.
Codex Hermogenianus 582, 612f.
Codex Theodosianus 17, 612, 614, 619, 630, 634
 Codification 17, 23, 581–641
collegia 54, 56f., 332, 436
 Colonnade 259, 428, 443, 446–449, 558
 Commentary 29f., 37, 50, 52, 57f., 186f., 190, 199, 369, 377f., 382–385, 594, 596f., 600–605, 607, 609, 611, 613f., 620, 622, 624
 Compilation 21f., 46, 60, 211, 376, 581f., 608f., 611–614, 618–621, 624f., 629f., 632–634, 636–638
 Completion 19, 32, 393, 625
 Conflation 87–92, 94, 96–108, 111, 113, 116, 119f., 122
consultatio 586
 Conversion 21, 54, 56, 141–171
Corpus Iuris Civilis 22, 432f., 483, 489, 491, 493, 495, 499, 582, 629f.
 Cosmos 388–390, 392–394, 413–416
 Court 79, 129, 167, 196, 210, 378, 528, 534, 541, 593, 598, 611, 647f., 651, 656, 659
cubiculum 524–527
 Cultic action 209

 Damage 250, 293, 349, 377, 426, 432, 439f., 444, 485–487, 489, 492, 494, 496–499, 502–504, 570, 591, 598, 651
 Day of Atonement 50, 69f., 75, 77, 79, 143, 145–150, 160f., 169
 Death 53, 68–70, 78f., 136f., 168, 170, 176, 180, 193, 206, 339f., 352, 373, 375, 380, 383, 395, 564, 592, 600, 604, 635, 667, 671f.
 Decree 64, 652, 671
 Demon 289f., 293–298
 Demosthenes 35, 39, 427f., 452–454
 Diaspora 22, 140, 349f., 356–358, 360, 365f.
diatagma 670f., 674
 Dicer 319f.
 Diocletian 180, 226, 290f., 612
 Discipleship 27, 31f., 47, 53–59, 61
 Doublet 85, 87–91, 95–98, 101, 103, 108, 114, 118–120, 122, 124

 Edict 170, 581, 595–598, 601–604, 607, 611–614, 620–623, 636, 665–673, 668f.
edictum perpetuum 596, 667
 Egypt 4, 21, 67f., 129–140, 194, 291, 638, 670

 Elder 164, 470f., 473, 476, 478, 511, 540, 567, 590, 647
 Elijah 390–394, 396
 Emendation 94f., 102, 106, 109f., 114, 117f., 144, 406, 536
 Enactment 644, 647–652, 655, 657, 662, 665, 669, 673
 Ephesus 204, 297, 300f., 465
 Epicure 397f., 414–421
 – Epicurean 8, 22, 388f., 395–400, 402–412, 414, 416, 419, 421
 – Epicurean philosophy 8, 22, 389
 – Epicureanism 8, 388
 Epiphanius of Salamis 301, 303
 Equity 667–669
 Equivalent 33, 88, 90, 93, 96, 100, 105, 107f., 112f., 196, 209, 363, 614, 617, 670
 Eretz-Israel 353f., 356f., 365
 Essenes 56, 74, 406–408
 Etiquette 249, 257f., 294f., 311, 558, 560
 Eunapios of Sardes 231, 262, 295
exedra 353

 Fetish 210
 Fiction 21, 179f., 186, 197, 211, 365
forum 219, 428–430, 446, 449–501, 515, 528, 569, 584, 593
 Friend 141, 150, 161, 163, 167, 267, 429, 513, 538, 546, 565f.
frigidarium 224f., 232–235, 241, 247, 265, 279, 297, 527

 Galen 234, 241, 383
 Galilee 17f., 31–34, 50, 176, 185f., 194, 207, 291, 349, 357, 361f.
 Gambling 318–320, 323
 Game 315–317, 320–322, 324f.
 Gentile 100, 117, 143, 145, 150–153, 155f., 158f., 163f., 166–171, 377
 Gerasa 331, 337
gezera 645, 661, 668
 Gladiator 35, 337, 339–342, 570
 Gloss 89, 101, 106, 111–116, 118–121, 151, 164, 167, 354, 362, 610, 667
 God-Fearer 158, 163
 Golan 231, 361
 Gregor of Nyssa 296f.
 Gregorian 581

 Hadrian 154, 176, 192f., 206, 253, 307f., 398, 585, 596, 667
 Hammat Gader 230–232, 241, 253, 262f., 272, 287f., 295, 299, 303, 310, 337

- heimarmene* 407, 413, 418
 Hellenism 1f., 5, 7–10, 12–14, 16, 640
herem 211f.
 Heresy 398, 403, 411, 421
 Heretic 298, 300f., 376f., 383f., 396, 421
 Hermogenes of Tarsus 38
 Hermogenian 581, 616
 Hero 37, 129, 132, 369–385
 Herod 17, 53, 136, 223–225, 227, 327–330, 336, 338f., 461–463, 470
 Hippodrome 327–329, 335
 Hippolytus 417
Historia Augusta 251–253, 291, 307–309, 345f., 458
 Historicity 141, 178–180, 186, 193, 356, 608
 History 2, 5, 9–11, 13, 17, 19–23, 69, 129, 134, 42, 68, 173–199, 314f., 317, 352, 395, 581, 627, 663
 Hospitality 513, 517, 525
 House of Study 324, 437f., 474, 511
 Hypocaust 217, 236, 277, 293, 295, 297

idios 452, 459, 466
 Idol 208–210, 212, 214, 217, 381
 Idolatry 7, 174, 207–210, 212, 321, 333, 336–338, 346
 Immersion 55, 152, 154
 Impurity 265, 440, 447–451
 Innovation 29, 185, 648, 656
insula 433, 503, 506, 508, 517, 528f., 533, 538, 540f., 543, 545, 563, 567, 578
 Intercalation 176, 178f., 181–183, 185–187, 189, 195–197
 Interpolation 76, 123–125
 Introductory formula 80, 91
 Invention 179, 186, 340
iocus balnearis 299, 304, 307
ir hanidahat 211f.
 Isokrates 452f., 453, 457
ius 494, 500, 582, 584f., 587, 596f., 611, 615f., 620f., 631–633, 640, 666–668, 670
 – *ius civile* 582, 596f., 620f., 623, 631, 667f.
 – *ius respondendi* 584f., 611, 615

 Jaffa 77, 360f.
 Jericho 221, 223f., 238, 241, 328f., 540
 Jerusalem 10, 13, 21, 66, 68, 77, 129–140, 151, 157, 163, 225, 362, 376, 435, 439, 451, 465, 530, 544, 554, 557f., 568
 Jezreel Valley 349, 353, 357, 361
 Josephus Flavius 65f., 70, 72, 75, 79, 80, 129, 135, 339f., 406f., 412–414, 461–646
 Judge 4, 152, 393, 453, 468, 470f. 473, 476f., 496, 525, 527, 583, 585, 632
 Jurisprudence 582–585, 595, 597, 607, 630, 644, 647

karmelit 443, 446f.
 Kitchen 527f., 533, 544
koinos 452, 459, 466
 Korah 315, 324, 375f., 381, 395f., 404f., 408–414, 419

 Lactantius 398, 416, 420
 Law 22, 34, 58, 116, 135, 139, 143, 148, 153f., 157, 205, 209, 212, 217, 255, 262, 266, 275, 316, 319, 367, 376, 384f., 390, 407, 424f., 432f., 438, 445f., 449, 454, 469f., 481–483, 485, 487–501, 504–506, 513, 515, 517f., 546, 563, 565, 570–577, 581–638, 643–674
 – Biblical law 23, 643–662, 664, 674
 – Civil law 205, 494, 596f., 631, 665–669, 672–674
 – Law reform 666, 668
 – Private law 582, 612f., 621, 637, 665
 – Roman law 22, 432, 481, 542, 581–583, 594f., 607–610, 624f., 665f., 671–674
 – Twelve Table Law 485, 581
 Learning 31–33, 47f., 51, 53f., 59f., 151, 474, 631
 Leda 355
 Legal authority 47, 668, 672–674
 – Legal commentary 596, 600
 – Legal creativity 644, 672
 – Legal tradition 21, 583f., 599, 605, 609, 633, 664, 674
 Legend 168, 178, 193
 Leisure time 313–325
 Leontopolis 21, 67–69, 133f., 136, 138–140
 Libation 75, 208f., 212, 217, 266f., 269
 Livius 429–431, 457, 499, 515
locus privatus 432, 438, 445
locus publicus 219, 431f., 438, 446
 Lucretius 389, 391, 398, 416

ma'ase 64, 66, 69f., 74–77, 80f.
 Martial 228, 250, 253, 288, 310, 505f., 551f., 557f.
 Meal 267, 273, 288, 340, 525, 553f., 557, 559–561, 564, 654

- Memorization 29, 31, 35, 37, 39, 48f.
 Menstrual blood 254, 539
 Metonymic reference 51
metropolis 204, 330, 343
mimus 334f., 342, 345
 Miracle 179, 181f., 185, 190, 205, 289f.,
 292, 394–396, 411, 568
 Mnemonic pattern 40, 43, 45
 – Mnemonic practice 31
 – Mnemonic program 44
 Modification 650, 652, 669, 671f.
 Moses 32, 46, 57f., 66, 148, 254, 316,
 324, 369, 379f., 394–396, 408f., 410–
 412, 414, 461, 530f.

 Nablus 329f.
Nailed Rock 175, 181f., 190, 195, 197
nasi 129–133, 257, 262, 282, 289, 291,
 303, 344f., 349–353, 356, 467f., 471, 473f.,
 549, 551, 578, cf. also Patriarch
 Necropolis 349–355, 359, 362
 Neutralization 643, 646, 653, 656f., 659,
 663
 New Testament 465f.
 Nicanor 10, 76f.

 Office 65–68, 70f., 75, 133–135, 137–
 139, 180, 183, 198, 352, 359, 426, 428,
 437, 453f., 456, 458, 467f., 471, 473f.,
 477, 479f., 548, 578, 635f., 670
oikos 452, 459, 466
olearius 242–247, 257, 301
 Onias III 68, 134f.
 Onias IV 68, 133–137, 140
 Oral culture 27–61
 Order 29, 145, 405, 411, 414, 416, 549,
 595, 621
 – Divine order 392
 – Order of nature 387f., 394–396, 419
 Ornament 211, 214, 511
 Oven 492f., 544
 Ovid 318, 335, 430f.

 Paganism 1f., 206, 207f., 210, 212, 214–
 216, 369
 – Pagan symbol 213
 – Pagan temple 207, 213
paideia 27–61
palaestra 229, 231, 233f., 241, 251, 253,
 279, 310
 Palestine 2, 4, 7, 9, 13, 15–18, 21f., 129–
 140, 150, 177, 194, 215, 221, 226, 228,
 291, 313–325, 327f., 330, 332, 335–
 337, 339, 346, 349f., 353, 357, 359f.,
 365, 377f., 381–385, 473, 478, 503,
 617, 634, 636–638, 644, 664, 669, 672
 Palestinian Judaism 12, 14, 203–217, 361,
 637
 Palmyra 358
 Paneas 289, 291f., 294, 296
parnas 476, 480
 Patriarch 4, 17, 30, 129, 133, 141, 150,
 176, 178–185, 257, 287, 292, 303,
 344f., 549, 564, 635f. cf. also *nasi*
 Pentekaka 256, 341–344
 Petronius 251, 305, 431, 515–517, 519,
 525, 527, 553, 557
 Pharisees 12f., 129, 132f., 139, 406f.,
 440
 Philo of Alexandria 55, 150, 379, 390,
 394, 396, 398, 418–420, 428, 458–461,
 571f., 578
 Philonides of Laodicea 397
 Philosopher 8, 38, 260, 388, 392, 394f.,
 455, 466
 Philosophy 7, 8, 22, 33, 54, 387–389, 393,
 396–399, 406, 415, 418, 457, 548,
 608f., 626
 Pigeon-flyer 319f.
 Play 22, 41, 51, 313–318, 320–325, 601
 Pliny the Younger 336f.
 Plutarch 206, 258, 416, 419f., 520, 537,
 548, 552f., 557f., 566
 Polemic 8, 132, 180f., 185, 384
polis 18, 134, 306, 428, 436, 451–453,
 458–460, 466, 478
 Possession 36, 137, 424, 427, 430, 434f.,
 437, 468, 490, 492, 518, 537f., 577,
 603, 667
praetor 596–598, 666–668, 670
 Praetorian Edict 484, 581, 595–598, 601–
 604, 612–614, 620, 622, 643–674
 Praise 38, 131, 161, 344, 346, 381
 Prayer 5, 78, 164, 244, 246–248, 272–
 274, 343, 371, 382, 416, 473, 481, 559f.
 Precedent 581, 583–588, 591, 593
 Priest 10, 21, 34, 41, 65–76, 78, 133–140,
 183, 404, 406, 468, 562
 – High Priest 10, 21, 65–71, 73–75, 78,
 133–140, 183, 221, 381, 405, 408, 411,
 434, 458, 462, 464, 467f., 472, 474,
 578, 643, 654
 Private 22, 212, 227, 243, 259, 268, 334f.,
 354, 423–579, 582, 598, 612f., 621,
 637, 665
 – Private property 426, 481, 493, 505
privatus 428, 432, 436–438, 445, 451,
 456–458, 466

- progymnasmata* 33, 36, 38, 40, 43–45, 48, 60
- pronoia* 388, 407, 413f., 417f., 420
- Proqlos b. Philosophos 211–213, 261, 264, 284
- Proselyte 157f., 168, 459
- prostagma* 670
- Prostitute 154, 256, 571
- Providence 12, 388, 390, 392, 394, 396
- providentia* 389f., 398, 417f., 420
- prozbul* 646–652, 668
- Public 22, 29, 34–39, 46, 61, 176, 206f., 212f., 216f., 228, 243, 315, 327, 333–339, 341f., 345–347, 352, 354, 365, 371, 377f., 400, 404, 423–579, 582, 598, 655, 661, 667, 671
- publicus* 428, 431f., 436–438, 446, 457f., 466
- Purity 72, 157, 224, 251, 302, 439, 475, 566
- Purity of lineage 138, 378
 - Rules of purity 440
- Rabban Gamaliel 71, 96, 176, 178, 180, 183–186, 198, 203, 210f., 213, 261, 284, 351f.
- Rabbi Juda ha-Nasi 141, 143f., 146, 150, 153f., 161–169, 320, 351–353, 356, 473, 477f., 510f., 562, 590, 605, 656f.
- Reading 21, 52, 83f., 86–88, 90, 93, 97f., 103, 112, 116, 121f., 125, 163, 166, 187, 197, 333, 356f.
- Recreation 314, 318, 344
- Redaction 17f., 30, 111, 160, 327, 392, 581, 583, 607–611, 613f., 618, 622, 627–629, 634–636
- Redundancy 85, 91, 104f., 109
- Religiosity 207, 214f.
- responsum* 117, 585, 588f., 592
- Resurrection 155, 157, 168, 355f.
- Revision 624–629, 656
- Revisionism 646, 652–656, 660f., 663, 672
- Rhetorical education 31, 33, 35f., 40, 54
- Rhetorical school 34, 53
- Rimmon Valley 21, 173–199
- Rome 2f., 9, 11f., 20, 53, 65, 165f., 203–205, 233, 258, 296, 323f., 334, 363, 370, 378, 397, 429, 436, 444, 461, 510, 516, 535, 546f., 565, 666, 670, 674
- Sabbath 187, 249, 262, 272, 274–284, 289f., 292, 305, 311, 315, 320–323, 338, 394, 439–441, 444, 449f., 474f., 511, 518f., 533, 544f., 556, 560, 565, 573, 577, 606, 652, 660f.
- Sabbatical year 90, 647–649
- Sacrifice 75, 144f., 151–154, 169, 213, 215, 321, 333, 337f., 372, 606
- Sadducees 76, 406–408
- Sages 4, 20, 31, 48, 52, 55–58, 72, 74, 96, 130, 150, 152f., 166, 168, 178, 183, 186, 189, 323–325, 333, 336f., 372–374, 377f., 384, 606, 645, 656f., 659
- salutatio* 523, 547–550, 566, 578f.
- Salvation 379, 381–383
- Saturnalia 334
- Scribe 93–95, 97–99, 101, 146, 197, 592
- Sculpture 258–272
- senatus consultum* 665, 667
- Seneca 272, 288, 305, 316, 340, 389, 398, 430f., 457, 517, 523f., 527, 546–548, 551f., 558, 571
- Sepphoris 18, 69, 78, 204, 206, 230, 330f., 349, 353, 361f., 436–438, 474f., 478, 565
- Simeon the Just 65–69, 77–79, 133f.
- Sickness 400, 402, 461, 525, 561
- Sitz im Leben* 61, 185, 287f., 309, 477, 593, 607, 631
- Slave 53, 242, 305, 309, 429, 431, 511, 515, 558, 561, 570, 604, 657
- Sophistic 34f., 38f., 53, 60
- Stoa 397, 406f., 418f., 457
- Stoic 205, 388–390, 392–396
- Stoicism 388, 390, 392
- Symmachus 215
- Symposion 288, 541, 552–554, 558
- Synagogue 19, 32, 114, 161–163, 169, 223, 232, 310f., 349, 359–361, 363, 435–437, 465, 473–476, 578, 610
- syndeipnon* 552
- Synonym 88, 154, 407, 465
- taqqana* 643–674
- Tefillin 244–249, 273, 286
- Temple 21, 40, 65–69, 74, 76f., 79f., 129, 133–140, 144, 152f., 192, 204–207, 210f., 213f., 219, 261, 265, 268, 331, 372, 391f., 427, 434, 446, 459, 462, 465, 500, 660–662
- Destruction of the Temple 79, 144, 323, 392, 659, 661
 - Temple of Leontopolis 67–69, 133f., 136, 139, 659
- tepidarium* 233–236, 238, 241, 278
- Tertullian 260, 268, 302, 337f., 421, 509
- Theatre 6, 8, 22, 195, 219, 228, 256, 313, 327–347, 392, 428, 433, 446

- Theodosius 17, 582, 613, 631f., 635f.
 Theology 5, 215, 387, 407, 415, 417f., 608f.
 Theon of Alexandria 36
 Thermal spring 219–311, 446; cf. also Bath
 Threshold 511
 Tiberias 17–19, 204, 206f., 229–231, 241, 269, 274–277, 279–282, 289, 291f., 294, 298–300, 303–308, 310, 329, 353, 356f., 361, 365, 438, 450, 474f., 477, 565, 634
 Tithing 321f., 648, 652
 Toilet 527f., 544f.
 Tradent 44, 90, 180, 192, 198, 609
 Tradition 21, 28–30, 32–34, 36f., 40f., 43–48, 50–55, 57–61, 643, 647, 649f., 659, 661, 664, 671f., 674
 – *Traditionskette* 92
 Transmission 21, 27f., 32, 36, 39, 45f., 54, 57–61, 63f., 105, 109f., 122, 396, 581, 601–603, 605, 608–610, 614, 617f., 623, 627, 629, 633
triclinium 215, 524–526, 531–535, 537f.
trigon 305, 315
 Tur Shimon 317f., 324
 Urban culture 203–217, 346
varia lectio 99, 103, 109, 114, 237, 333f.
 Variant 86–89, 97, 99, 103, 109, 114, 184, 122, 356, 586, 593f., 640
 Visitor 235, 239, 241f., 246f., 265–268, 305, 508, 521, 523, 532, 541
 Vitruv 219, 233f., 236, 243, 252, 428, 445f., 448, 521f., 524, 533
 Zenon of Sidon 397

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Alphabetical Index

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