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# THE SCULPTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE ROMAN NEAR EAST

## Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power

EDITED BY

Yaron Z. Eliav, Elise A. Friedland,
and Sharon Herbert

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# THE DESOLATING SACRILEGE:[1] A JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE ON STATUARY, SPACE, AND SANCTITY

Yaron Z. Eliav

## Roman Statues in the Jerusalem Sanctuary: Reality and/or Ideology?

Sometime in the early 30s of the fourth century C.E., a devout Christian pilgrim arrived at the reinvigorated and rapidly changing city of Jerusalem. He (or perhaps she?) kept a journal that never discloses its author's name, although it indirectly informs us that the writer arrived from the city of Burdigalenses/Bordeaux in western Gaul (today's France). The text, which belongs to a genre since known in Christian circles as *Itinerarium*, resembles a tourist guide book and offers a vivid picture of the newly conceived Christian landscape that swiftly crystallized in Jerusalem.[2] In one of its central segments, the text leads the reader through the compound of the ruined Jewish Temple, enumerating the many "landmarks" that dot the area, noting the place where the shrine and the altar had stood, and finally arriving at a protruding hollow stone at which, according to the author, Jews of his era performed all sorts of rituals and ceremo-

[1] The title of this paper reflects my translation of the Hebrew *shiquts meshomem* (שיקוץ משומם; Dan 9:27, 11:31, 12:11, and later in the Gospels), which, as will be shown below, serves as the terminological device to communicate the ideas and notions discussed here. Many modern translators prefer the English "abomination" for *shiquts*, but I feel that this misses the desecrating aspect of the original — it is not only a filthy abhorrence but also one that contaminates the sacred, thus sacrilege. Also I understand *shamem* as an adjective, although the Greek translates it in one place as a genitive — τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως — leading to the common, though in my view less apt, English translation "abomination of desolation."

[2] Scholars debate many aspects of this text, including the question of whether the author and the pilgrim are one and the same or, alternatively, that a certain visitor conveyed the information to the writer who produced the itinerary. On these and others, see a good summary and discussion in Laurie Douglass, "A New Look at the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*," *JECS* 4 (1996): 313–33.

nies. Just before he gets to the stone, the pilgrim comes across two Roman statues. The text identifies them as representing the Emperor Hadrian (*Et in aede ipsa, ubi templum fuit, quem Solomon aedificauit... sunt ibi statuae duae Hadriani*; And in the same shrine, in the place where the Temple which Solomon built was... there are two statues of Hadrian).[3]

It seems hard to misread this positive assertion written in the present tense, which clearly indicates that the anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux (as scholars usually refer to him) is reporting what he witnessed — a common practice of tourists. Moreover, some two generations later, the church scholar Jerome, at the time a resident of the nearby town of Bethlehem, conveys almost identical information. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, written towards the end of the fourth century, he dwells on the expression "desolating sacrilege," whose advent is predicted by Jesus in the chapter known as "The Little Apocalypse."[4] Jerome lists a number of historical events that mark the fulfillment of this prophecy. One of them is "*De Adriani equestri statua quae in ipso sancto sanctorum loco usque in praesentem diem stetit*" (Regarding a statue of Hadrian on a horse, which stands till this very day in the very place of the holy of holies).[5] About ten years later, in his commentary on the book of Isaiah, Jerome offers a similar statement, although with certain changes (which are discussed below). He links the biblical vision, "So man is humbled and men are brought low" (Isaiah 2:9), to the concrete situation in which "*Ubi quondam erat templum et religio Dei ibi Adriani statua et Iovis idolum collocatum est*" (In the place where at one time was the temple and the worship of God was set a statue of Hadrian and an idol of Jupiter). Here too Jerome associates the statues with the prophetic prediction about the desolating sacrilege, but this time according to its version in the Gospel of Mark (13:14).[6]

The addition of a statue of Jupiter to the statue of Hadrian in Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, even though contradicting the

[3] *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 591:4 (CCSL 175, 16). The sentence about the statuary is missing from the Matritensis MS (Arc. Hist. Nac. 1279), D (1007) 254. All translations in this paper are mine, unless otherwise stated.

[4] Matt 24:15 and parallels.

[5] Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 4, 24:15 (CCSL 77, 226).

[6] Idem, *Comm. Isa.* 1, 2:9 (CCSL 73, 33). On the dates of these texts, see John N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 222, 299.

number he himself provided in his commentary on Matthew, where he mentioned only one sculptured piece, nevertheless corresponds to the number, if not the identity, of statues reported by the pilgrim from Bordeaux (two pieces, of Hadrian). Jerome states in his commentary on Matthew that the statue is standing "until this very day" (*usque in praesentem diem*), which fits his use of the verb *sisto* in the perfect tense. This correlates with the testimony of the pilgrim from Bordeaux that the statues remained in place during the Christian transformation of the city. As it does not seem reasonable that Christian authorities would erect or permit the setting up of the figures of Hadrian and Zeus, these sources appear to indicate that the statues remained at the site from the early days of the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina and sustained their position there for centuries. Indeed, modern historians of Jerusalem have endorsed this conclusion. Those who believe that, in the days of Aelia, the Roman authorities built a pagan sanctuary over the ruins of the Jewish Temple consider the statues to have been part of that pagan complex, or at least placed next to it.[7] Other scholars who doubt the existence of a Roman temple on the site nevertheless accept the testimony of Jerome and the pilgrim from Bordeaux, believing that two statues occupied the precinct of the ruined Jewish Temple during the Roman and Byzantine periods.[8]

[7] E.g.: J. Germer-Durand, "Aelia Capitolina," *RB* 1 (1892): 273 (map), 379–81; Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel, *Jérusalem: Recherches de topographie d'archéologie et d'histoire* (2 vols. in 4; Paris: Gabalda, 1912–1926), 1:15–18, 4:886; Emil Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (3 vols.; 3rd ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901); repr. as *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. & ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 1:554–5; Dan Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem* (trans. Shlomo Ketko; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 59 (map); Hillel Geva, "Jerusalem: The Roman Period," *NEAEHL*, 2:765; Hillel I. Newman, "Jerome and the Jews" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1997), 243 [Heb.].

[8] John Wilkinson, "Christian Pilgrims in Jerusalem during the Byzantine Period," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 77–79; Baruch Lifshitz, "Jérusalem sous la domination romaine: Histoire de la ville depuis la conquête de Pompée jusqu'à Constantin (63 a.C.–325 p.C.)," *ANRW* 2.8:484; Günter Stemberger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land: Palästina unter Konstantin und Theodosius* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987), 54; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Location of the Capitol in Aelia Capitolina," *RB* 101 (1994): 410–11; Nicole Belayche, "Du Mont du Temple au Golgotha: Le Capitole de la colonie d'*Aelia Capitolina*," *RHR* 214 (1997): 399–401; Mary T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton:

But the excessive, perhaps understandable, attention devoted to the physical remains — what existed in the compound, where exactly, and when precisely — distracted scholars from realizing the wider religious and cultural contexts in which these traditions function. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the so-called reports of Jerome and the pilgrim from Bordeaux do not stand on their own. Rather, they are part of a long, intricate, and at times elusive tradition about statues that contaminate — but paradoxically also demarcate (through their negative power) — the space of the Jewish Temple. Placed in this context, these texts contemplate and then articulate the meaning, relevance, and function of Roman statuary in the eyes of those who negated them, namely Jews and Christians. Surprisingly, these sources incorporate some of the basic, prevailing "truths" of the Roman sculptural environment, while rejecting, amending, and reconfiguring other traits of this cultural setting to fit their own idiosyncratic objectives. As I have argued and demonstrated in a previous study, Christian and Jewish authors operated within the contours of the cultural discourse about statues that took place throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean — not as outside observers, fraught with hostility, but rather as integral members of this milieu.[9] The current study expands this argument to the realm of spatial layout, sanctity, and identity.

## Christian Perspectives

A relatively unknown fragment from the commentary of the third-century Christian writer Hippolytus of Rome is preserved in an exegetical treatise by the twelfth-century bishop of the Jacobite Church

Princeton University Press, 2000), 201. For a middle-ground position (no temple but statues in an open-air sanctuary), see Yoram Tsafrir, "The Topography and Archaeology of Aelia Capitolina," in *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods, 70–638 CE* (ed. Yoram Tsafrir and Shmuel Safrai; Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1999), 157–8 [Heb.]. On the whole scholarly debate surrounding the existence of a Capitoline Temple on the grounds of the Jewish sanctuary, see Yaron Z. Eliav, "Hadrian's Actions in the Jerusalem Temple Mount According to Cassius Dio and *Xiphilini Manus*," *JSQ* 4 (1997): 125–44.

[9] Yaron Z. Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment; Shaping the Second Commandment," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III* (ed. Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 411–33.

in Syria, Dionysius Bar-Salibi. It deals with the before-mentioned verses in the Gospel of Matthew about the future arrival of the "desolating sacrilege," and states as follows:

> ואספאסינוס לא אקים בהיכלא פתכרא אלא לגיונא הי דסם טריאנוס קואנתוס אנש רישנא דרומיא אקים תמן פתכרא דמתקרא קורא.
>
> And Vespasian did not set in the shrine [of the Temple YZE] a statue but the legion which [was brought there by] Trayanus Quintus, a chief man of the Romans; he set there a statue which is called Kore.[10]

Another fragment of the same text, which preserved the passage in Coptic, incorporates some Greek words—*eikōn* in place of *patkara* and *kaisar* in place of *qoreh*.[11] Scholars struggling to make sense of these nebulous sentences focused on identifying "Trayanus Quietus." They presumed it to be a distortion that combines two names: "Quietus" they took to refer to legion commander Lusius Quietus, the commander who suppressed the 117 C.E. Jewish rebellion in Mesopotamia and then became governor of Judaea (Rabbinic literature also preserves his name in the epithet for this rebellion—*pulmus shel qitos*). Similarly they identified "Trayanus" as the emperor Trajan, who appointed Quietus.[12]

[10] The fragment was published by John Gwynn, "Hippolytus on St. Matthew XXIV 15–22," *Hermathena* 7 (1890): 148 line 28–31, and again (in German) in Hans Achelis, "'Kapitel gegen Gajus' aus dem Kommentar zur Johannes-Apokalypse des Dionysius Bar-Salibi," in *GCS* 1:2, 244–5. For a discussion of this passage, see Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (supp. to *VC* 31; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 167–9.

[11] Achelis, "Kapitel," 197.

[12] For example: E. Mary Smallwood, "Palestine c. A.D. 115–118," *Historia* 11 (1962): 506–7. I find it difficult to accept Smallwood's suggestion to read Hippolytus as referring to a statue of Hadrian and mistakenly calling Hadrian by the name of his adoptive father Trajan. First, even if this might explain the name "Trajan," it says nothing about the second component of the name, "Quietus." Second, the name cannot be detached from its context, where the author connects Trajan's reign with the calamities that occurred previously, during Vespasian's reign. A suggestion of this sort appeared much earlier, in Charles S. Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale* (8 vols.; Paris: E. Leroux, 1905), 6:194–6. Clermont-Ganneau made quite an effort to find a compromise between Hippolytus's testimony and the information found in the writings of the pilgrim from Bordeaux and Jerome. He changed *qoreh* to "Caesar" and applied it to Hadrian. He then divided the name of the perpetrator into two parts, ascribing the first part, "Quietus," to the person who erected the statue, and the second part, "Trajan," to the emperor

But beyond the historical details, Hippolytus transmits here an independent tradition, which differs from Jerome and the pilgrim from Bordeaux on both the identity of the statue and the time of its erection but agrees with them on the location — the space of the Jewish Temple. He too associates the statue's placement with the fulfillment of the same "desolating sacrilege" prophecy in the Gospels. Apparently, different "memories" circulated among the early Christians, all intending to prove that the sacrilege prophecy had materialized in the erection of a statue on the site of the devastated Temple during one of the upheavals that came upon the Jewish people. Hippolytus dismisses the possibility that it was Vespasian who had placed the statue in the Temple — an option that, as I shall show below, other writers have embraced — and offers his own historical moment, locating this event in the days of Trajan.

The multiplicity of situations that could accommodate the "desolating sacrilege" prophecy stands out even more clearly in the writings of a somewhat younger contemporary of Hippolytus, the biblical scholar Origen of Alexandria, who for many years was himself a resident of Palestine. In a series of exegetical fragments, which has come down to us in the Byzantine collection called *Catenae* ("chains" of interpretations), all discussing the interpretation of Matthew 24:15, the "desolating sacrilege" segment, Origen considers a variety of possible events that might have fulfilled this prediction of Jesus. Some of his suggestions remain indefinite, lacking any reference to a particular incident. One envisions the sacrilege as the advent of the antichrist, another associates it rather generally with the "Roman war machine," and yet a third connects it with a pig's head that was brought into the Temple but without supplying any details

who appointed Hadrian. But then, in order to complete this interpretive maneuver, he had to claim that even though Trajan appointed Quietus, the latter actually erected the statue during Hadrian's reign. Finally, he offered a tortuous explanation for why Quietus, whom Hadrian so disliked that he removed him from his post and eventually executed him, nevertheless reciprocated by erecting a statue in Hadrian's honor. The hermeneutic tendentiousness of this suggestion seems obvious. Clermont-Ganneau, who mentions only these three sources—Hippolytus, the pilgrim from Bordeaux, and Jerome—is apparently unaware of the rest of the evidence I present in this essay. He considers the fact that both Hippolytus and Jerome ascribe their stories to the prophecy of the "desolating sacrilege" a striking coincidence (coïncidence assez frappante!). He might well have changed his mind if he had seen all the sources.

that might shed light on this occurrence or its consequences. In other portions of this same text, however, Origen catalogues a rich array of sculpture that the Romans placed in and around the Temple that could be the fulfillment of the desolating sacrilege prophecy. These include an image of Caesar that Pilate admitted into the Temple, or statues of Gaius Caligula, Titus, and Hadrian, all of which, in some mysterious way, intruded on the hallowed confines of the sanctuary during the reigns of their respective emperors.[13] It is as if the space of the Temple is transformed in Origen's mind into an incessant, permanent display of Roman imperial statuary.

Eusebius, Church scholar and bishop of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine in the late third and early fourth century, articulates similar "memories" and operates within the same spatial orientation. He concludes his account of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–70 C.E. with the assertion that the "desolating sacrilege" mentioned by the prophets was set up at the very site of the ruined Temple (ἐν αὐτῷ κατέστη τῷ πάλαι τοῦ θεοῦ περιβοήτῳ νεῷ).[14] Although Eusebius refrains from divulging the nature of the "desolating sacrilege" or its actual identity,[15] his text's proximity to the beliefs and

[13] Origen, *Comm. Matt. (Fragments)* 469:I, III, IV (GCS 41:1, 193–4). Murphy-O'Connor translated the short version in Fragment 469:IV — τὸν ἀνδριάντα Ἀδρίανου ἤτοι Γαΐου — as "statues of Hadrian and Gaius" (my emphasis–YZE) and thus considered the fragment additional testimony for the existence of two statues on the Temple Mount; see Murphy-O'Connor, "The Location," 410–11. However, ἤτοι is in fact a disjunctive, and so the translation should read, "the statue of Hadrian or (the statue of) Gaius." It is also hard to accept the suggestion offered by Newman that the long version of this fragment, which associates the fulfillment of the prophecy with a statue of Titus, is a corruption of the short version; see Newman, "Jerome," 241, n. 86. The long version seems rather to be an independent formulation in that it does not begin with the names of the emperors and it provides different details about the place where the events took place. In order for Newman's proposal to be tenable, we would have to assume that the text had been corrupted twice — that the name "Hadrian" was omitted because of its resemblance to *andrinta*, and that "Gaius" was replaced by "Titus." A simpler explanation, I think, would hold this to be a different tradition for interpreting the "desolating sacrilege," locating its fulfillment at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. Hippolytus may well have been refuting precisely this kind of construal.

[14] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.4; also idem, *Dem. ev.* 8.2.112, 124.

[15] *Pace* Edgar D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312–460* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 97. Hunt identifies the statues in Eusebius with the two statues mentioned by the pilgrim from Bordeaux and Jerome. But by

symbolism of his predecessors strikes a clear note. The idea that the conflict between Jews and Romans culminated with the placement of a "desolating sacrilege" on the grounds of the Jewish Temple and that this is connected with the biblical prophecies reflects the same conceptual environment as Hippolytus, Origen, and later Jerome. In one place in the narrative Eusebius adds that this "desolating sacrilege," which stood in the Jewish Temple, remains there up to his own time (εἰς δεῦρο διέμεινεν).[16] Such an observation is patently similar to Jerome's phrase quoted above and further evaluated below — *usque in praesentem diem.*

Several decades later, the church orator and bishop of Antioch John Chrysostom offered a different historical moment, claiming that the prophecy materialized not during the 66–70 C.E. revolt but rather as a result of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132–135 C.E. In his fifth sermon "Against the Jews," which he delivered at Antioch in the 380s, Chrysostom cites the verse in Matthew that talks about the "desolating sacrilege" and explains that "ἅπαν εἴδωλον καὶ πᾶν τύπωμα ἀνθπώπου παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις βδέλυγμα ἐκαλεῖτο" (any idol or figure of a human being was called sacrilege among the Jews). A few sentences later he ends his description of the uncompromising blow that the Jews suffered when Hadrian crushed the Bar Kokhba revolt with the remark, "τὸν ἀνδριάντα ἔστησε τὸν ἑαυτοῦ" (he [Hadrian] set up a statue of himself).[17] Although these passages do not explicitly fix the location of the statue, Chrysostom's remarks undoubtedly belong to the same literary and ideological setting described above.

Traditions of this sort pervaded early Christian expression and gradually imprinted an image of a defiled Jewish sacred space vio-

doing so he neglects the crux of Eusebius's historical orientation, which focuses on the destruction of the Second Temple, making it likely that Eusebius "viewed" existing statuary accordingly.

[16] Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 8.2.124.

[17] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos orationes* 5:10–11 (PG 48, 899–900); trans. Maxwell C. Mervyn, "Chrysostom's Homilies against the Jews: An English Translation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1966), 155–7. I do not know the source for the addition "*in loco*" (in the place, i.e. of the Temple), which the Latin translation accompanying the Greek text in Migne's edition added after Hadrian's actions. Without a critical edition of this text, which has been preserved in nearly 120 manuscripts, it is impossible to definitively decide on the issue of specific wording.

lated by Roman idols. The "desolating sacrilege" passages in what eventually became the New Testament were popular references, leading preachers to frequently allude to them in their sermons and authors to incorporate them into their writings. As a result, the statuary-marked spatial layout of the Temple permeated the collective consciousness of Christian discourse and became part of its symbolic world. Theodore of Heraclea, for example, a little-known ecclesiastic commentator from the first half of the fourth century, copied the various possibilities that Origen offered for the fulfillment of this prophecy almost verbatim into his own commentary on Matthew.[18] A fifth-century homily ascribed (pseudonymously) to Basil of Seleucia, which is based entirely on the "desolating sacrilege" portion, maintains that this sacrilege "περὶ τοῦ ἀνδριάντος ὅνπερ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτῶν τῷ ἁγίῳ καθίδρυσε" ([this sacrilege] refers to the statue, the very same thing that was set in their holy shrine).[19] Although here too (as in Eusebius above) the writer fails to call the statue by name, its close ties with the other traditions are quite evident. Jerome's commentary on Matthew, a section of which was cited above, also belongs to the same literary and cultural sphere. It follows, like many others in this case, the lead of Origen both conceptually, by associating the statue to the space of the Jewish Temple, and hermeneutically, by tying it with the prophecy of the "desolating sacrilege." In addition to recognizing the statue as representing Hadrian, Jerome is also familiar with the general notion that the "desolating sacrilege" involves the antichrist, as well as the historically inaccurate link with the image of Caesar that Pilate supposedly placed in the Temple. All of these variations appear in exactly the same way in Origen.[20]

It looks as if nearly every confrontational incident between Jews and the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries resulted, according to some Christian commentator, in the erection of statues, usually of the reigning emperor, in the sacred space of the Jews. If all

[18] Joseph Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 61; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), 90–91, frag. 121. On the fragments of this commentator, see ibid., xxvi–xxix.

[19] *Basilii Seleuciensis, oratio* 38 (PG 85, 416). For more on this sermon and the claim that it should not be attributed to Basil, see Bernd Marx, "Der homiletische Nachlass des Basileios von Seleukeia," *OCP* 7 (1941): 329–69, esp. 333–43.

[20] As previously noted by Newman, "Jerome," 241.

Moreover, a version of this story in the fourth-century Palestinian Talmud reads "a statue (an idol) was placed" in the passive voice instead of the Mishnah's active "placed a statue (an idol)," which raises the possibility that originally the tradition about the statue may not have been associated with Posthumius at all. In fact, the Palestinian Talmud locates the event much farther back in time, associating it with the biblical King Manasseh of Judah.[24]

Even more significant for the current study is the discussion of this passage from the Mishnah in the fifth-century Babylonian Talmud. In this text the rabbinic scholars discussing the Mishnaic tradition invoke the same "desolating sacrilege" prophecy as the church fathers, but refer to its earlier literary appearance in the book of Daniel. They see it as a proof text supporting the Mishnah's assertion about the placement of the statue/idol in the Temple. In addition, when the Talmud questions the occurrence of the word "sacrilege" (שיקוץ) in Daniel — once in the singular and another time in the plural (שקוצים) — Rava, a fourth-century rabbinic scholar from Persia answers, "There were two of them," and adds the following anecdote: "One fell upon the other and broke its hand and upon it was found inscribed 'you desired to destroy his house [the Temple] but I have handed over/donated your hand to him'."[25]

The ties, both literary and conceptual, between this Talmudic extract and the church writers discussed above are evident. Not only do both groups associate the statue with the "desolating sacrilege" prophecy, but the number of statues mentioned in the Talmud corresponds to the number that appears in the writings of the pilgrim from Bordeaux as well as to one of the versions in Jerome. This is by no means to argue that the Talmudic story validates this number in

such proposals, see already Joseph Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867), 58–59, n. 2.

[24] *y. Ta'an.* 4 (8c–d). 2 Kgs 21:7 relates that king Manasseh "placed the statue (פסל) of the Ashera that he made" in the Temple. Various rabbinic sources refer to this event as "placing an idol (צלם) in the *hekhal* (the inner shrine of the Temple)"; see, e.g.: *y. Sanh.* 10 (28c); *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4; *b. Sanh.* 103b. See also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (6 vols.; 1928; repr., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 6.371, n. 96.

[25] *b. Ta'an.* 28b–29a. Translation based on Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud- Ta'anith: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* (London: Soncino, 1988), 152. For a different version of this anecdote that is in the first person, see *Tosafot* ad loc.

any way; on the contrary, it illustrates the elusive ways numbers of this sort can originate and what can happen to them subsequently. The appearance of the word "sacrilege" in the book of Daniel once in the singular and in another verse in the plural prompted Rava's answer that there must have been two statues. Jerome, famously proficient in Hebrew and erudite in the Hebrew version of the Bible, could easily have reached the same conclusion. Likewise, just as the number "two" here acquired a life of its own after being exegetically invented in the Babylonian Talmud, with legends evolving around it as if it were a real number, the same could have transpired in the early Christian traditions. All this is only speculative, to be sure, but it is based on the kind of creative dynamics that characterize literal and oral evolutions of this kind.

## "Desolating Sacrilege" — The History of the Image

From where did the Jewish and Christian traditions about the "desolating sacrilege" emerge? Everything points to the book of Daniel as the literary, if not the historical foundation for the discourse about statues defiling the Jewish Temple. The first person to combine the two terms — "sacrilege" (שיקוץ; *shiquts*) and "desolate" (שמם; *shamem*) — was the author of the apocalyptic visions that comprise the second half of the book of Daniel (chs. 7–12). The expression "desolating sacrilege" appears three times in this text. First, in the course of the prophecy about seventy weeks that will precede the redemption of Israel, during which an evil prince will carry out certain deeds in Jerusalem, the author includes the opaque remark, "וחצי שבוע ישבית זבח ומנחה ועל כנף שיקוצים משומם" (and for half a week he [the prince] shall impede the sacrifices and meal offerings and upon the wing of sacrileges [he shall bring/cause] desolation).[26] Less ambiguous, the other two references situate the "desolating sacrilege" within the grand scheme of the end of days; they envision a "northern king" whose "offspring shall stand and defile the fortified Temple, take away (=disrupt) the daily offerings, and introduce the desolating sacrilege (השיקוץ משמם)";[27] and similarly, a bit later when

[26] Dan 9:27
[27] Ibid. 11:31

the author calculates the various stages of the eschatological proceedings, "from the time the daily offerings were disrupted and the introduction of the desolating sacrilege (שקוץ שמם), one thousand two hundred and ninety days (shall pass)."[28] Like a typical oracle, the text is vague, and the expression "desolating sacrilege" remains unspecified, inviting various interpretations. In general, modern scholars agree that the passages in Daniel should be read vis-à-vis the persecutions of Antiochus IV, on the eve of the Maccabaean revolt (in 167 B.C.E.). Accordingly, scholars explain "the desolating sacrilege" in Daniel as referring to the introduction of the worship of Zeus into the Jerusalem Temple and the construction of an altar to this god on top of the Jewish sacrificial altar, as described in the first book of Maccabees.[29] To be sure, neither Daniel nor 1 Maccabees suggest in any way that the "sacrilege" refers to a statue.

Be that as it may, the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel, and in particular the passages about the "desolating sacrilege" in the Temple, considerably impacted the imagery of later generations.[30] Future authors utilized this trope to endow their texts with meaning and to empower their arguments by tying them to the divine predictions of Daniel. Such a process of symbolic revitalization is already evident in 1 Maccabees itself, written only a few decades after the final formulation of the book of Daniel.[31] In his account of Antiochus's defilement of the Jerusalem Temple, 1 Maccabees says "ᾠκοδόμησεν βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως ἐπι τὸ θυσιαστήριον" (he built [established] a desolating sacrilege on top of the burnt-offering altar).[32] Accordingly, when the author reports the desecration of the altar and then its purification by Judas and his people, he once again uses the same "desolating sacrilege" motif.[33] The Greek *bdelygma erēmōseōs* of 1 Maccabees represents the exact rendering of the Hebrew *shiquts meshomem* in Daniel, as already evident in the Septuagint (the Greek

[28] Ibid. 12:11

[29] 1 Macc 1:54–59; 6:7. For the various scholarly interpretations of the phrase "desolating sacrilege" in Daniel, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 357–8. Collins and those who made this point before him are correct in arguing against the view that Antiochus introduced an actual statue into the Temple. Such a conjecture remains baseless.

[30] Collins, *Daniel*, 72–123.

[31] On the dating of these texts, see Schürer, *History*, 3.1:180–3, 245–50.

[32] 1 Macc 1:54.

[33] Ibid. 6:7.

translation of the Hebrew Bible) of Daniel. It is hard to believe that the author of 1 Maccabees (or the person who translated it into Greek) coincidentally invented this phrase out of whole cloth. More likely, he borrowed it from Daniel and used it to present Antiochus's deeds as a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.

Surveying these events a century or so later, the Jewish historian Josephus establishes the connection between the two — Daniel's prophecy and Antiochus's actions — in clear, explicit terms when he comments, "the desolation of the Temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel."[34] It may very well be that the author of Daniel himself had already associated the expression "desolating sacrilege" with Antiochus' deeds. As mentioned, such a tie has been suggested by various scholars. Still, the fact that later authors return to this very rubric demonstrates its vitality and relevance for them. The harsh events that took place in the Temple during the reign of Antiochus registered in their minds as the introduction of a prophetic "desolating sacrilege" into the Temple.

But the factor that established more than any the status of Daniel's prophecy and the imagery associated with the "desolating sacrilege" in the minds of later generations is its use by the first-century C.E. author of "The Little Apocalypse." In this famous segment embedded in the Gospel of Mark and then transferred, with a few changes, to Matthew, Jesus enumerates the harsh events that await the Jews in the eschatological future. Among them, he mentions "the desolating sacrilege (βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως) set up where he ought not to be."[35] Undoubtedly, the expression "desolating sacrilege" reflects the author's wish to associate Jesus's prediction with the prophecy of Daniel — some textual witnesses of Mark and all existing manuscripts of the parallel version in Matthew say so explicitly ("So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel"). Modern commentators have attempted to elucidate the historical circumstances underlying this statement in the Gospel of Mark. Some claim that it refers to the statue that Caligula ordered to be placed in the Temple in 39/40 C.E.; others suggest that it relates to the standards of the tenth legion that were placed there after the destruction of the

[34] Josephus, *A.J.* 12:323 (Marcus, LCL).

[35] Mark 13:14 (RSV); Matt 24:15. In contrast, Luke 21:20 changes the subject completely, talking instead about Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

Temple in 70 C.E., and still others insist that it anticipates an event in the future that never really transpired.[36]

Without attempting to resolve this vexing historical issue, we can nevertheless delineate how the understanding of the expression "desolating sacrilege" developed and trace the multiple meanings associated with it over time. The Jewish authors of the Gospels, and to some degree also Josephus and the author of 1 Maccabees, appropriated this expression from the original text of the book of Daniel, thus detaching it from its immediate historical and ideological contexts on the eve of the Maccabaean revolt. In their writings, the "desolating sacrilege" emerges as an epithet for the evil that would befall the Temple in Jerusalem. From a specific abomination it developed into a symbol of all abominations. It did not, however, remain an abstract emblem. As I have pointed out previously, the author of Daniel does not offer the slightest indication that, when he conceived this phrase, he had a statue, or for that matter any three-dimensional object, in mind. In contrast to its original abstract connotation, the "desolating sacrilege" acquired a more tangible, specific meaning over the course of time — it came to be viewed as a pagan statue, an idol. The fact that the author of the Little Apocalypse used the perfect participle *hestēkota* ("set up") and conjugated it as masculine (in contrast to *bdelygma*, which is in the neuter) shows that he envisioned a palpable, three-dimensional entity that could be placed in the Temple ("[in the place] where it ought not to be").[37] Various scholars have pointed out the biblical etymology of the word "sacrilege" (*shiquts*) as a source for this interpretation.[38] But beyond the biblical association, the development in the meaning of the "desolating sacrilege" seems to reflect the basic mindset of Second Temple Jews, who believed there was an uncompromising contradiction between the sculpture that inhabited Greco-Roman temples

[36] For a concise summary of the main suggestions, see Adela Yarbo-Collins, "The Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13 in Historical Context," *BR* 41 (1996): 5–36.

[37] Understood in this way by Yarbo-Collins, "The Apocalyptic," 25.

[38] See, e.g.: George R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark Thirteen* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 55–56; Béda Rigaux, "BDELUGMA THS ERHMWSEUS," *Bib* 40 (1959): 675–80; Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (NovTSup 23; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 23–25.

(perceived by them as idols) and the space of the Temple of the God of Israel, which stood free of statuary. It was therefore natural that the Jews of that time would imagine the "sacrilege" that would be introduced into the Jewish Temple as a three-dimensional statue.

Once the author of the "the Little Apocalypse" cast the image of the "desolating sacrilege" in the shape of a statue, it was but a small step for subsequent Christian writers to associate this figure with a variety of Roman emperors and consequently to locate the event in which the statue was erected in different periods of time. Within this new theological framework, the placement of a Roman statue in the Jewish Temple announced the defeat of the Jewish religion, and such a statement gained its force from the prophecy in Daniel (in its new understanding) and from the way Jesus applied it in the Little Apocalypse. The only open question remained the identification of a particular statue, and it seems that any Roman emperor, as well as any conflict between the Romans and the Jews, was sufficient. For even though Christian texts disagree about the identity of the specific statues and the historical events that led to their erection in the Temple, they all concur about their very existence and the conceptual ties with both the prophecies in Daniel and the Little Apocalypse.

Of the numerous traditions concerning statues occupying the space of the Jewish Temple, the one that prevailed in the end centered on the statue of Hadrian. Many writers throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages embraced this tradition and used it to enliven their symbolic landscape of Jerusalem. Such an image enabled authors to anchor their theology, mainly the idea of Judaism's replacement by the new Israel, i.e. Christianity, in physical, tangible grounds. Identifying statues in Jerusalem with Hadrian, and in particular viewing these objects in the demolished precinct of the Jewish Temple, was a common practice of both locals and visitors to the city, such as the pilgrim from Bordeaux and Jerome, as well as church authors like John Chrysostom. Partial and admittedly nebulous shades of the same symbolic framework reverberate, for example, in a reference that Alexander Monachos, a Byzantine writer whose precise date is yet to be determined, makes about a pillar that was put up in the Temple in honor of Hadrian.[39] A similar tradition

[39] Alexander Monachos, *Inventio cruces* (PG 87:3, 4045). For a similar report in one of the Samaritan writings, see Newman, "Jerome," 241, n. 86. For more on

may also have inspired the strange tale transmitted in a Syrian letter attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (which is not repeated any place else) relating that in the turbulent days of the emperor Julian the Apostate (361–364 C.E.) the Jews knocked down a statue of Herod (! אדרינטא דאירודיס; perhaps a malapropism for Hadrian) in Jerusalem but that later it was returned to its place.[40]

## From Biblical Imagery to Historical Fact

A major development in the substance of the "desolating sacrilege" image occurred in the early Middle Ages. Beginning in the mid-ninth century Byzantine chronographers adopted this trope and incorporated it as an unquestioned historical fact in their account of the Bar Kokhba revolt. In presenting the affairs of this rebellion, authors of Chronicles (a popular historiographic genre at the time) made use of a wide array of sources: the Roman second-century C.E. historian Cassius Dio, the fourth-century church father and historian Eusebius and his fourth- and fifth-century followers, sixth- and seventh-century chronicles, and other writings of various church writers that relate to this event. From the assortment of information available to them, these authors concocted a variegated narrative, a seamless mixture of history and theology.[41] Nothing in this method

this source and its importance in transmitting various traditions about Jerusalem, see Yaron Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Space, and Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 269, n. 43. On the uncertainty regarding its dating, see Aleksander Petrovich Kazhdan, "'Constantine Imaginaire': Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great," *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 199–200.

[40] *Letter Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem* 9; Sebastian P. Brock, "A Letter Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem on the Rebuilding of the Temple," *BSOAS* 40 (1977): 271. Concerning the alternative interpretations offered by the editor of the letter, see his notes on p. 279. It is difficult to agree with Newman, who accepted one of Brock's hypothetical alternatives as a "probable" fact and then argued that the letter refers to exactly the same statue or statues mentioned by the traveler from Bordeaux and Jerome; see Newman, "Jerome," 243–4. Neither the identity, the site, nor the number of the statues is the same; and, even more importantly, the author's distance from the events and the context of the traditions about the statues that were prevalent in the Christian world, as described in detail here, lessens the historical value of this report.

[41] The Byzantine Chronicles and their depiction of events from the Jewish past

was new; actually it resembles the modus operandi of most, if not all, historians of the ancient world. The novelty introduced by the ninth-century chroniclers was that they detached the segment about the statue in the Jewish Temple from its original literary context in the biblical interpretations about the "desolating sacrilege" and the theological and polemical writings that used them. By doing so, the later Byzantine chroniclers transformed the story from a religious anecdote into a solid historical "fact."

None of the historical narratives that deal with the Bar Kokhba revolt before the ninth century ever mention any statue or statues that Hadrian had placed in the Temple — not Cassius Dio, not Eusebius, not any of the Christian historians of the fourth and fifth centuries who wrote about this rebellion, not even later chronicles, such as those of the sixth-century chronicler John Malalas, the anonymous seventh-century author of the Chronicon Paschale, or the early ninth-century Georgios Synkellos.[42] Even though the tradition about a statue (or two) of Hadrian standing in the place of the Jewish Temple found its way into various Christian writings — travel books, biblical commentaries, and apologetic sermons — it had not been embraced by historiographers. Only from the mid-ninth century, beginning with Georgios Hamartolos's (Monachos) chronological composition, does this item appear as an integral component of the Bar Kokhba story in a series of historical writings spanning some five centuries — Symeon Logothete (published under the name of Leo Grammatikos), Georgios Kedrenus, Nikephorus Kallistus, and others.[43]

require their own study. On the particular issue under discussion here, see Rivka Fishman-Duker, "The Bar-Kokhva Rebellion in Christian Sources," in *The Bar-Kokhva Revolt: A New Approach* (ed. Aharon Oppenheimer and Uriel Rappaport; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1984), 233–42 [Heb.]. For additional literature on the working methods of chronicle writers and the sources they relied on, see ibid., nn. 15, 25.

[42] On Cassius Dio, see Eliav, "Hadrian's Actions"; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.6; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11; John Malalas, *Chron.* 11:365; *Chronicon paschale* s.a. 132–135 (ed. Dindorf, CSHB 16:474); Georgios Synkellos, *Chron.* (ed. Dindorf, CSHB 12:660–1).

[43] Georgios Hamartolos, *Chron.* (ed. de Boor; rev. ed. Wirth, 415–16); Leo Grammatikos (ed. Bekker, CSHB 47:68–69); George Kedrenus, *Historiarum compendium* (ed. Bekker, CSHB 34:437–8); Nikephorus Kallistus, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.

The transition from a theological-exegetical setting to a historiographic account can be seen clearly in the first text that presents the tradition about the statue of Hadrian within a historical narrative: the Chronicle of Georgios Hamartolos. As Carl de Boor, the nineteenth-century editor of the critical edition of Georgios's text, remarked, Georgios based his description on the fifth sermon of John Chrysostom, "*Contra Ioudaios*" (discussed above), which he often cites almost verbatim. Regarding the "desolating sacrilege," Georgios quotes and paraphrases long portions of Chrysostom's discussion, but then he adds that this is the statue (ὁ ἀνδριάς) that "ἔστησεν Ἀδριανὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῷ ναῷ (Hadrian the Emperor set up in the shrine [of the Temple]).[44] Whereas Chrysostom, mainly occupied with the theological symbolism of the "desolating sacrilege" image, did not feel the need to specify its concrete location, Georgios did specify the exact location of the object. Later in his text, when Georgios discusses Hadrian's era and reaches the Bar Kokhba revolt, he again quotes Chrysostom and says that Hadrian erected an idol (τὸ εἴδωλον) of himself and again adds the location "in the shrine" (ἐν τῷ ναῷ).[45] The statue thus shifted from an apologetic trope to a historical item. All the historians who followed Georgios Hamartolos and made use of his work, whether directly or indirectly, simply repeated this information as if it were a historical fact.

## The Discourse on Statuary and Space: Between Polemics and Appropriation

Two sets of notions regarding Roman sculpture seem to be simultaneously at play in both Jewish and Christian circles, contradicting but at the same time informing and vitalizing each other. Quite expected and basic, at what we would call the theological level, is the issue of idolatry. Regarding some of the events mentioned by the Christian

[44] Georgios Hamartolos, *Chron.* (ed. de Boor; rev. ed. Wirth, 415, lines 16–18).

[45] Ibid., 451, lines 2–3. Not everything about this source is clear. Did Georgios add the identification of the exact location of the statue on his own, or did he find it in the copy of Chrysostom's text that he was using? Second, why did Georgios change the term for statue from *andrias* the first time he mentioned it to *eidōlon* on the second occasion? These questions raise the possibility that Georgios may have had more than one source on this issue at his disposal.

authors, historical sources attest to tension between the Romans and the Jews stemming from the latter's adherence to strict implementation of the biblical prohibition against human images and the Roman lack of sensitivity in this regard. This violation was even more serious if it involved worship of deities other than the Jewish God, as in the case of the imperial cult that the emperor Caligula (37–41 C.E.) ordered to be introduced into the Jerusalem Temple (which created much turmoil but was never fully carried out).[46] Josephus reports that similar confrontations broke out even earlier when the army brought the legion standards into Jerusalem during the governorship of Pontius Pilate (26–36 C.E.).[47] He also vividly portrays the degradation felt by many Jews when the victorious Roman soldiers placed their banners on the site of the ruined Temple in the summer of 70 C.E.[48] But in none of these cases was an idol actually set in the Temple. Writing centuries later, the ecclesiastic authors thus reshaped the events to fit the "desolating sacrilege" model, as they understood it. The fulfillment of a prediction about an idolatrous abomination that defiled the holiest place of the Jews played an important role in the worldview of the early Christians, and many stories were woven around it. Although framed around different historical events, the substance of these traditions remained the same — in almost every case the manifestation of the atrocity involved a Roman statue placed at the site of the Jewish Temple. The rabbinic sources articulate a similar set of notions when they list the erection of a statue as a manifestation of the disasters that befell the Jews on the ninth of Av.

These shared images, apparent in both Christian and Jewish texts, boil down to a rather typical anti-idolatry rhetoric. Such a rhetoric paints Roman sculpture in the harsh colors of profanity and considers its existence as diametrically opposed to the realm of sacredness that defines the space of the Jewish sanctuary. While Jewish texts lament the sacrilege, Christian authors use it in their apologetic scheme meant to announce the extinction of Judaism.

[46] For a summary of these events, see Schürer, *History*, 1:380–6; for a bibliographic survey, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937–1980* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 316–7.

[47] Josephus, *B.J.* 2.169–74; *A.J.* 18.55–59; Schürer, *History*, 1:394–6; Feldman, *Josephus* 326–31; For the events during the tenure of Pilate that could have provoked such views, see Carl H. Kraeling, "The Episode of the Roman Standards at Jerusalem," *HTR* 35 (1942): 263–89.

[48] Josephus, *B.J.* 6:316; Kraeling, "The Episode," 275.

But alongside such disapproving formulae emerges a second set of perceptions that runs counter to the first and finds its parallels in the shared cultural mores of the Roman Mediterranean. After all, the insistence of these writers on locating three-dimensional representations of imperial images on the grounds of the Jewish sanctuary echoes the standard conventions of the time. Beyond their aesthetics and their role in liturgical performance, statues functioned as what modern observers might call signs of orientation. As such, they delineated the divide between the nonsacred public arena, what Romans would see as pre (*pro*) holy place (*fanum*), and the confined hallowed grounds of sanctuaries, elevated to a status of *templum* (i.e., a painstakingly defined space, cut out from its worldly status and elevated to match its counterpart in the skies) by the well-defined process of *consecratio*. The physical divide was created easily enough, using walls, inscriptions, or other such means. Designating the spiritual separation posed a much greater challenge. Sacred statuary, themselves consecrated into *res sacra* (sacred objects) and consequently imbued with the *pneuma* (the divine power and will), and in this case the *numen* or *genius* (guardian spirit) of the emperor, demarcated this subtle spatial boundary between the sanctified and the profane.

One needs only to read the numerous depictions of ancient people walking into temple enclosures (known as τεμένη) — the *Periegesis Hellados* of Pausanias, the second-century Greek traveler, comes immediately to mind — to realize that the first element mentioned, signaling the passage from one realm to the other, is statuary. Consider, for example, Pausanias's description of the great sanctuary of the Olympian Zeus in the southeastern parts of Athens:

> Before the entrance to the sanctuary of Olympian Zeus, Hadrian the Roman emperor dedicated the temple and the statue, one worth seeing, which in size exceeds all other statues save the colossi at Rhodes and Rome, and is made of ivory and gold with an artistic skill which is remarkable when the size is taken into account. Before the entrance, I say, stand statues of Hadrian, two of Thasian stone, two of Egyptian. Before the pillars stand bronze statues which the Athenians call "colonies." The whole circumference of the precincts is about four stades, and they are full of statues.[49]

[49] Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.18.6 (Jones, LCL)

If we strip this text of its various ornamental minutiae and digressions, very common to Pausanias's travel-guide writing style, we are left with a skeletal map of sacred space as it was engraved in the writer's mind. Statues, here imperial sculpture (and thus very similar to the depiction of the Jerusalem sanctuary), signal in this spatial layout the move from one realm to the other, from the outside to the inside. In short, sculpture demarcated landscape. In the same vein, to mention a second example, when Pausanias wishes to mark certain mountains as sacred, he does so by depicting the statuary that stood on their tops.[50]

In this sense, not much has changed between the writings of Pliny the Elder in the first century C.E., Pausanias, and Lucian (or whoever wrote the treatise "on the Syrian Goddess") in the following century, all typical residents of the sculptural environment of the Roman world, and the narratives of the Christian pilgrim from Bordeaux in the fourth century C.E., who walks onto the grounds of the ruined Jewish Temple and sees there the familiar signs of sanctuaries — imperial statuary.[51] Paradoxically, and no less ironically, Greco-Roman conventions on how to denote temple sites allow both Jews and Christians (from opposing sides of the religious arena) to confirm and thus perpetuate the sacredness of the now long-gone sanctuary in Jerusalem. The pagan statues that on one level of the Jewish-Christian discourse are presented as defiling the space at the same time proclaim its holiness.

So, in the final analysis, did statues stand in the compound of the ruined Jewish Temple in Jerusalem? Perhaps. The long residence of the Tenth Legion in the city, as well as the establishment of a veteran colony, Aelia Capitolina, next to it, provided plenty of opportunities for the erection of sculpture. Indeed, archaeological and epigraphic findings clearly indicate that Roman Jerusalem was no different from any other urban setting throughout the Mediterranean world and that statues pervaded its landscape.[52] They could be found in the

[50] Ibid. 1.32.1–2

[51] In addition to the above-mentioned few examples from Pausanias, see, for example, Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 34:48, 54, 69–70; Lucian, *Syr. d.* 28, 39. On the statues that were placed outside the Temple of Allat in Palmyra, see Gawlikowski's article in this volume.

[52] See Yaron Z. Eliav, "The Urban Layout of Aelia Capitolina: A New View

city's squares, along its colonnaded streets, in the bathhouses, *fora* (municipal centers), and temples. Although, for reasons I plan to discuss elsewhere, I have my doubts about the reliability of the pilgrim from Bordeaux on such matters, and Jerome does not have his facts straight either, all this does not negate the possibility that someone initiated and then executed the task of positioning one or two sculptured pieces in the ruined compound of the Jewish Temple.

The current paper has attempted to extend the discussion beyond the practical question of whether or not there were actual statues standing in the *temenos* of the ruined Jewish Temple by examining the discourse that evolved around these pieces. In other words, I have striven to illuminate the meanings that people associated with statuary and the cultural trajectories that evolved around them. Unlike the one-dimensional rhetoric, fraught with anti-Roman/pagan sentiments, that often characterizes scholarly reconstruction of Jewish and Christian positions, I have tried to show the multiple layers that compose the Jewish-Christian discourse on statuary. Even in their oppositional stance these groups were first and foremost citizens of the Greco-Roman cultural milieu, and this informed and shaped their interaction with the sculptural environment.

from the Perspective of the Temple Mount," in *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (ed. Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 249.