

Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.162-178:  
Augustus and Agrippa on Judean customs

(vi. 1) Now the Jews of Asia<sup>a</sup> and those to be found in Cyrenaean Libya were being mistreated by the cities there, although the kings had formerly granted them equality of civic status (*isonomia*); and at this particular time the Greeks were persecuting them to the extent of taking their sacred monies away from them and doing them injury in their private concerns. And so, being mistreated and seeing no limit to the inhumanity of the Greeks, they sent envoys to Caesar about this state of affairs. And he granted them the same equality of taxation as before, and wrote to the provincial officials letters of which we subjoin copies as evidence of the (friendly) disposition which our former rulers had toward us.

(2)<sup>b</sup> "Caesar [Augustus], Pontifex Maximus with tribunician power, decrees as follows. Since the Jewish nation has been found well disposed to the monies, see Juster, i. 188 ff., 213-242, 377-385. Cf. § 27 note.

<sup>b</sup> §§ 162-165. On the decrees (not given in chronological order by Josephus) cf. Reinhold, *Agrippa*, pp. 118-121; Birkman, *Mélanges Isidore Lévy*, pp. 11-34; Juster, i. 149-151 notes; Viereck, pp. 91-116; Laqueur, p. 222.

Roman people not only at the present time but also in time past, and especially in the time of my father the emperor Caesar, as has their high priest (Hyr- canus,) it has been decided by me and my council under oath, with the consent of the Roman people, that the Jews may follow their own customs in accordance with the law of their fathers, just as they followed them in the time of Hyrcanus, high priest of the Most High God,<sup>a</sup> and that their (sacred monies) shall be inviolable and may be sent up to Jerusalem and delivered to the treasurers in Jerusalem, and that they need not give bond (to appear in court) on the Sabbath or on the day of preparation for it (Sabbath Eve) after the ninth hour.<sup>b</sup> And if anyone is caught stealing their sacred books or their sacred monies from a synagogue or an ark (of the Law),<sup>c</sup> he shall be regarded as sacrilegious, and his property shall be confiscated to the public treasury of the Romans. As for the resolution which was offered by them in my honour concerning the piety which I show to all men, and on behalf of (Gaius Marcius Censorinus,<sup>d</sup>) I order that it and the present edict<sup>e</sup> be set up in the most conspicuous (part of the temple) assigned to me by the

word παρασκευή but πρὸ σαββάτων, comp. *Ant.* 3. 10. 7 [=iii. 255]; *Judith* 8. 6; *II Macc.* 8. 26."

<sup>c</sup> Reading the conjecture (cf. critical note). Text: a banquetting hall or lounge. On ἀνδρῶν cf. Krauss, *Syn. Alt.* 25; Nock, *op. cit.* pp. 47-48. Casanowicz, *JE* ii. 109, followed by Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* iv. 116, suggests that 'arōn (ארון) was not used for a synagogue ark in rabbinic circles until the time of Maimonides.

<sup>d</sup> Consul in 8 B.C., proconsul of Asia in (A.D. 2-3.) For references cf. *Magie*, p. 1581. Horace dedicated his eighth Ode of Book IV to him.

<sup>e</sup> διάταγμα: cf. *Juster*, i. 161 n. 1. For Philo's account of the edict cf. *Leg. ad Gaium* 315 f.

federation (*koinon*) of Asia in Ancyra.<sup>a</sup> If anyone transgresses any of the above ordinances, he shall suffer severe punishment." This was inscribed upon a pillar in the temple of Cæsar.

(3) "Caesar to Norbanus Flaccus, greeting.<sup>b</sup> The Jews, however numerous they may be, who have been wont, according to their ancient custom, to bring sacred monies to send up to Jerusalem, may do this without interference." These were the edicts of Caesar.

(4) But Agrippa himself also wrote on behalf of the Jews in the following manner. "Agrippa to the magistrates, council and people of Ephesus, greeting. It is my will that the care and custody of the sacred monies belonging to the account of the temple in Jerusalem shall be given to the Jews in Asia in accordance with their ancestral customs. And if any men steal the sacred monies of the Jews and take refuge in places of asylum, it is my will that they be dragged away from them and turned over to the Jews under the same law by which temple-robbers are dragged away from asylum. I have also written to the praetor Silanus<sup>c</sup> that no one shall compel the Jews to give bond (to appear in court) on the Sabbath."

(5) "Marcus Agrippa<sup>d</sup> to the magistrates, council and people of Cyrene, greeting. The Jews in Cyrene, on whose behalf Augustus has already written to the former praetor of Libya, Flavius,<sup>e</sup> and to the other

*Cf. Magie, loc. cit.* These decrees apparently were issued in 14 B.C.; *cf. Reinhold, Agrippa*, p. 120 n. 84.

<sup>c</sup> Variant "Silvanus."

<sup>d</sup> *Cf. § 27 note.*

<sup>e</sup> Variant "Fabius" (preferred by Niese); the name is uncertain. *Cf. Groag, PW* vi. 1744; Reinhold, *Agrippa*, pp. 120 f.

officials of the province to the effect that the sacred monies may be sent up to Jerusalem<sup>a</sup> without interference, as is their ancestral custom, now complain to me that they are being threatened by certain informers and prevented (from sending these monies) on the pretext of their owing taxes, which are in fact not owed. I therefore order that these monies be restored to the Jews, who are in no way to be molested, and if sacred monies have been taken away from any cities, the persons in charge of these matters shall see that amends are made to the Jews there."

(6) "Gaius Norbanus Flaccus, proconsul, to the magistrates and council of Sardis, greeting. Caesar has written to me, ordering that the Jews shall not be prevented from collecting sums of money, however great they may be,<sup>b</sup> in accordance with their ancestral custom, and sending them up to Jerusalem. I have therefore written to you in order that you may know that Caesar and I wish this to be done."

(7) In no way differently did the proconsul Julius Antonius<sup>c</sup> write. "To the magistrates, council and people of Ephesus, greeting. When I was administering justice in Ephesus on the Ides of February, the Jews dwelling in Asia pointed out to me that Caesar Augustus and Agrippa have permitted them to follow their own laws and customs, and to bring the offerings, which each of them makes of his own free will and out

lem. *Cf. Ant.* xviii. 312; Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* i. 76 f.; Juster, i. 377-388; on rabbinic sources, Schürer, ii. 245-254.

<sup>b</sup> Conjectured by Niese; *cf.* critical note. Apparently he regards the ms. reading as an assimilation to § 166.

<sup>c</sup> Son of Mark Antony and Fulvia; consul in 10 B.C. He was put to death in 2 B.C. for an intrigue with the emperor's daughter Julia. Horace dedicated his second Ode of Book IV to him. The confirmatory decree is dated in 4 B.C.

of piety toward the Deity, travelling together under escort (to Jerusalem) without being impeded in any way. And they asked that I confirm by my own decision the rights granted by Augustus and Agrippa. I therefore wish you to know that in agreement with the will of Augustus and Agrippa I permit them to live and act in accordance with their ancestral customs without interference."

(8)<sup>a</sup> Now it was necessary for me to cite these decrees since this account of our history is chiefly meant to reach the Greeks in order to show them that in former times we were treated with all respect and were not prevented by our rulers from practising any of our ancestral customs but, on the contrary, even had their co-operation in preserving our religion and our way of honouring God. And if I frequently mention these decrees, it is to reconcile the other nations to us and to remove the causes for hatred which have taken root in thoughtless persons among us as well as among them. For there is no nation which always follows the same customs, and it also happens that there are great differences among cities. And it is most profitable for all men, Greeks and barbarians alike, to practise justice, about which our laws are most concerned and, if we sincerely abide by them, they make us well disposed and friendly to all men. We therefore have a right to expect this same attitude from them, for one should not consider foreignness a matter of differences in practice but of whether

<sup>a</sup> On §§ 174-178 cf. Laqueur, pp. 221-223.

<sup>4</sup> conieci: ἐπιτηδεύοντες codd.: studeatur Lat.: ἐπιτηδεύει ed. pr.: ἐπιτηδεύεται Cocceji.

<sup>5</sup> ἐμμένοιμεν PW.

<sup>6</sup> ἀπαντητέον con. Naber.

<sup>7</sup> Niese: καὶ codd.

+ κείσθαι Richards et Shutt.

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there is a proper attitude to goodness. For this is common to all men and alone enables society to endure. But I must once more resume the course of my narrative.