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Judea Captured

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JUDEA CAPTURED

JESSICA BAITY & JIMMY YANG

ABSTRACT

This coin is a part of the “Judea Captured” collection minted in Caesarea. Through thorough imaging and the decoding of Greek inscriptions we believe that we can prove the significance of the coin in correlation to the First Jewish War in battle against the Romans. We believe that it celebrates the victory of the Romans during the First Jewish War (66 – 69 AD), under the Emperor Vespasian (68 – 79 AD). But the question does arise about the significance of certain symbols; especially the palm tree and crown made of palm leaves and how they relate to the War as well.

INTRODUCTION

The coin is made of bronze. It weighs 7.29 grams and is 22 millimeters in length. On the front of the coin, we can clearly see a face of what we are confident is a Roman Emperor. The words beside the face are mostly unclear, but our research has discerned that what is visible is the Greek for Emperor of Caesarea. On the back of the coin is the goddess Nike by a palm tree. Her foot is on a helmet, and she is writing something on a shield supported by her knee. The words beside the image are again somewhat unclear; what is visible is the phrase, in Greek, “Judea captured.” Additionally, we believe the palm tree is meant to represent the land of Judea. Though it is not very clear that what Nike is writing on the shield, on similar coins we have found out that she is engraving either the letters S.P.Q.R or IMP.T CAES. S.P.Q.R stands for *senatus populus que romanus* which means “The Senate and the People of Rome.” IMP. T CAES means *Imperator Titus Caesar*. We wanted to find the importance and symbolism of the different images on the coin to ensure that it does in fact represent the Roman victory of the First Jewish War.

HYPOTHESIS

This coin was minted in Caesarea by the Romans as a symbol of their victory over the Jews in the First Jewish Rebellion, the war that resulted in the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple in 70 AD.

RESULTS

In the front image, we can clearly see the face of the Roman emperor, Vespasian. We are confident Vespasian is the man on the coin because he was the ruler of Rome during the time the victory was celebrated. The words beside the face are not clear, but we searched the information from books, and the meaning is Emperor of Caesarea. On the back of the coin is the goddess Nike. Her foot is on a helmet, and she is writing something on her shield supported by her knee at a palm tree.



Jewish people used palm trees as a symbol of their country on their own coins. In addition to growing in the region, the palm is the part of the Jews' festival of Sukkot. Therefore, it is a symbol easily associated with Jews. On similar coins, we noticed that the same image was shown, but on the right side of the tree there was either a Jewish man with his hands bound or a Jewish woman crying. By observing these other images we were able to assure ourselves that the coin has to do with Roman dominance over the Jews.

DISCUSSION

Vespasian was the Roman general during the first two or three years of the War against the Jews. He was elevated to the role of Emperor in 69 AD and his son Titus took over as general of the army. Vespasian is viewed on the front of the coin with a laurel leaf crown. The Palm Tree is a well known symbol of victory to Greeks and Romans for centuries. Many Jewish coins have palm trees on them; especially coins minted that celebrated Jewish independence during the Bar Kochba Rebellion. The Romans used the palm tree to celebrate their victory over the Jews. The goddess Nike is a symbol of victory in Greece and Rome, and she was also known as the Winged Goddess of Victory. Beside victory, Nike also represents speed and strength, and her image is commonly used during the war. The Romans believed that sport and fitness were really important; especially because they were famous for having a strong army and conquering other lands. Her foot is on a helmet, and she is writing something on her shield supported by her knee at a palm tree. The image shows how Nike has domination over the Palm Tree, just as the Romans had dominated the Jews. It was also very interesting that the words on the coin were written in Greek as opposed to the Romans' Latin. Greek was the common language throughout all the world at the time and the Romans wanted everyone to know of their dominance. By writing the inscriptions in Greek the Romans boasted about their accomplishments and hoped to implement fear in to the other nations. It is evident that our hypothesis accurately correlated with our hypothesis. We would still like to know what the inscriptions on the shield represent.

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