

THE
JEWISH REVOLTS
AGAINST ROME,
A.D. 66–135

A Military Analysis



JAMES J. BLOOM

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McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Jefferson, North Carolina, and London

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA


Bloom, James J., 1939–

The Jewish revolts against Rome, A.D. 66–135: a military analysis / James J. Bloom

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7864-4479-3

softcover : 50# alkaline paper 

1. Jews — History, Military. 2. Rome — History, Military.
3. Jews — History — Rebellion, 66–73. 4. Jews — History — Bar
Kokhba Rebellion, 132–135. 5. Josephus, Flavius. I. Title.
DS111.6.B56 2010
933'.05 — dc22 2010013727

British Library cataloguing data are available

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Front cover: Marble relief of Roman Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus, AD 9-79, Sevilla, Spain (Art Archive/Gianni Dagli Orti); background ©2010 Shutterstock

Manufactured in the United States of America

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640
www.mcfarlandpub.com

For Jake, Zach, Zoey, Charlie and Sammy,
with the hope they will eventually read
their grandpop's efforts.

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Preface and Introduction

Preface

“Peace was his real goal. He knew that Roman power was irresistible, but, when driven to provide for a state of war, he tried to ensure that, if they would not come to terms, the Jews should at least give a good account of themselves.”

Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* 4.320
(circa 75 C.E.), writing about Ananus,
the leader of the middle-of-the-road transitional
Judaean war council of Jerusalem, 66 A.D.

In the ninth year of the Christian era, the Teutonic warrior Arminius inflicted an appalling defeat on Roman legions guarding the empire’s Rhine frontier. While this was an astonishing blow to Roman self-confidence, it palls in comparison to the setbacks endured in quashing the three rebellions of the empire’s Jews in the first and second centuries A.D. The fight in the Teutoberger Wald has received a good deal of attention from military historians devoted to Roman imperial themes. The Jewish revolts, regrettably for those interested in ancient warfare, have been primarily tackled by historians exclusively involved with the religious implications — the birth pangs of Christianity, the death throes of Temple-based Judaism. It seems that this 70-year struggle is consigned to a backwater in the military history of the Roman Empire. This should not be so.

Rome’s hard-fought, brutal subjugation of the three Jewish revolts in the first and second centuries A.D. comprises an unaccountably blank chapter in the literature on early imperial Roman combat operations. This study should help redress that omission. My goal is to provide readers with a methodical review of the background, organized combat forces and armed bands, personalities, and military campaigns of the Jewish rebellions which, over the

course of two centuries, led to the destruction of the Second Temple, the loss of Jewish political control of (though not tenancy in) the Holy Land and their affects upon the Jewish Diaspora.

I have intended the treatment to be critical and analytic. While I have steered clear of superficial present-day analogies, where parallels appear apt and could improve the analysis, they are briefly pointed out. In fact, the final chapter of the text deals with the contemporary debate in Israel of the 1980s about policy implications of the “modern memory” of the Bar Kochba revolt. Likewise, whereas the period involved encompasses the establishment of Christianity, I have not entered into the arguments concerning the nature of Jesus, his ministry, his followers and the historicity of the events and people described in the Gospels. However, readers should know that I understand the Christians as comprising merely one of several Jewish splinter groups active during the era — one which apparently took little or no part in the violent resistance. This group distanced itself from the messianic intoxication of the Jewish rebels. After all, the *Christiani* had already found their Messiah, and, as a man of peace, Jesus (Yeshua ben Youssef) advocated submission to Rome on all but spiritual matters. Furthermore, Christianity was not developed as a completely separate religion from Judaism, with its assorted competing factions, until after the dust from the Bar Kochba rebellion had settled.

Regarding the First Revolt, Flavius Josephus’s uniquely detailed descriptions of Roman deployments, tactics, marching order, camp layouts, administrative procedures, weapons and uniform are often cited but seldom placed in their proper context. After all, the whole point of Josephus’s discussion of the Legions was to help him explain to his readers exactly how the Romans quelled a ferocious Jewish revolt in Palestine — and why the rebellion was, to him, an act of folly. In view of Josephus’s full account, that episode comprises an unaccountable caesura in the history of warfare. His tale must be taken with a heavy dose of salt, but isn’t this true of most ancient historians? Unfortunately, there was no Josephus to record the events of the two follow-on rebellions in the ensuing century. However, his descriptions are valuable in framing the subsequent violent outbreaks.

The “middle revolt,” the so-called Quietus Revolt of A.D. 115–117 — a region-wide conflagration — is hardly ever analyzed, most likely because of the scarcity and the patchy nature of the sources. The present work is an effort to overcome that deficit in scholarship. Unlike the treatment of the First Revolt, I do not take a strict chronological approach with this rebellion. This is so simply because few can agree on the order of events. I discuss features of this “Diaspora rebellion” in a thematic manner. This is due to the noted defects of source material and their mutually contradictory nature — unlike

the solitary and comprehensive source for A.D. 66–74. Likewise the intensively prepared and fought Bar Kochba rebellion of A.D. 133–135 is seldom discussed as a military (as opposed to a religious) affair, again due to the lack of material apart from parables and anecdotes buried amidst the ahistorical, mind-numbingly legalistic and liturgical rabbinical literature and a few scraps of Roman and Christian commentary, several of which are second- or third-hand redactions prepared many years after the events. This book is probably the first attempt to evaluate these two uprisings as military conflicts in combination with the better known First Revolt.

This study represents a complete revision and major expansion of my earlier more restricted book that concentrated on the First Revolt, *The Roman-Judaeo War, 66–74 A.D.: A Military Analysis* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Saga Publications, 2002). Saga was primarily a channel for people who play war games by manipulating miniature soldiers on a simulated battlefield; hence the book was to some extent pitched at that readership, including some minutiae of rules, game-play and set-up. The present work seeks to provide a broader view of the events which might attract readers curious about the military history of Rome or the Jews and is essentially a new work.

A word is appropriate here about how and why I became involved with this topic and why my treatment should interest a wide readership. I should divulge my qualifications as well. My bread and butter occupation was in charity, healthcare and higher education tax law consulting, from which career I have been retired since 1998. I have been a military history devotee since my college days in the late 1950s.

My informal interest in military history took a more focused turn in 1971 when I was introduced to the noted military analyst Trevor Dupuy and secured a consulting contract on his Arab-Israeli Wars database; this project evolved into my participation in *Elusive Victory*, a military textbook published in 1978. Working with Col. Dupuy's "Quantified Judgment" method of combat analysis has sharpened my ability to extrapolate scenarios from scanty or disjointed data. Col. Dupuy's work is valued in the war-gaming world, both the official governmental variety and the commercial, unclassified type.

Since my apprenticeship with Col. Dupuy's Historical Evaluation and Research Organization's projects in the early 1970s, I have written numerous articles on an eclectic spread of military and naval historical topics for military history journals, war-gaming magazines, various encyclopedias of warfare, and chapters in anthologies.

In particular, work on the Arab-Israeli wars led me to examine earlier conflicts in that part of the world. Needless to say, the Holy Land has been a cockpit of unholy warfare since the dawn of history. This pursuit, in turn,

pointed me to Flavius Josephus; I have since been fascinated with this enigmatic character. In the fall of 1999, I served for a month as a “volunteer for Israel” stationed at the Israeli Army base of Mishmar HaNegev. During long weekend furloughs, I visited the sites of ancient battles and campaigns and spoke with a number of Israelis familiar with the ongoing archaeological digs about Josephus’s veracity. Further, I attended two international seminars (Minneapolis 1999 and Toronto 2001) on Josephus and the First Jewish Revolt. My career in writing military history has allowed me to develop an aptitude for analyzing both ancient texts and modern pedantry in order to dig out the “military bits.”

I have to state, for the record, that I am an American Jew who applauds and supports the right of the State of Israel to remain a Jewish nation but also recognizes the grievances of the Palestinian Arabs and their right to a national state in some of the original Mandate territory without compromising the continued existence and security of the Jewish state. This statement is made not because these are extended analogies between ancient and modern Israel in this book (there are not). I simply state this viewpoint for the record in case a reader should be looking for subtly biased comparisons.

This book has been twenty years in the making. It was originally to be a military biography of Flavius Josephus (refer to the appendix for his perspective). However, that narrow focus distorts any account of the war he chronicles as a whole and overlooks the two related follow-on conflicts, which I consider to be integral parts of the earlier struggle; additionally Josephus’s military credentials are somewhat uncertain. After I compiled a book-length sheaf of notes for the profile of Josephus, the military publisher who had solicited the work advised me that a caucus of executives determined that Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar had done it for ancients. Besides, they opined, Josephus’s war was a bush league skirmish in an obscure corner of the empire. In other words, the combat history had never been written because readers were simply uninterested.

Obviously, I consider this verdict to be wrong-headed. It confirmed my conviction that the Jewish revolts were mistakenly sidelined and that a military appraisal of these uprisings would redress this neglect. So I decided to de-emphasize the life history of Josephus and focus on the conflict that he narrated, underscoring its significance as a key military challenge for the early empire, despite what the skeptical publishers had decided. It was certainly no walk in the park for the Romans, who expended an inordinate amount of blood and treasure for a so-called peripheral campaign. The result was the 2002 volume concentrating on the A.D. 66–74 insurrection.

In recasting my earlier book to meet the needs of a readership outside

of the war-gaming community, I welcomed the opportunity to expand the treatment to include all three rebellions.

A study of the First Revolt convinced me that the three uprisings actually comprised intensified phases of a connected, comprehensive confrontation between Rome and Jerusalem. In fact, the long war can be traced back to the second century B.C.—the Maccabean rebellion against the Seleucid Empire. That episode marks the inauguration of Judaea's complex relationship with Rome. The current work describes some aspects of that earlier conflict with Seleucid Syria, although it serves merely as a prologue.

The presentation is chronological. In presenting the events of A.D. 66–74, an effort has been made to work out the disorder inherent in Josephus's overlapping, rambling and contradictory passages. I have tried to sort out the sequence, but Josephus, even more so than is usual with the ancient historians, digresses and often doesn't adhere to a sequential presentation if it doesn't suit his theme of the moment. Besides reflecting the novelistic historiographical conventions of his epoch, Josephus's narrative had to consider the fact that texts were composed on parchment scrolls, which had to be unrolled and displayed to the reader in a very limited fashion that is alien to modern readers accustomed to flipping back and forth between pages. Footnotes were not invented, much less endnotes. Thus Josephus will often repeat episodes already covered, giving them a whole new spin. Anyone who has tried to make sense of his *Jewish War* will know what I mean.

The coverage of the First Revolt in this book has placed more emphasis upon the battles and campaigns leading up to the siege of Jerusalem than to the siege itself. This was done for several reasons. First, the blockade of and ultimate assault into Jerusalem has been covered in detail in a number of modern works that tend to present that dramatic episode as if it were the turning point of the war rather than a denouement. Secondly, although it has some very lurid details — the type that could be presented in gory computer-generated detail in a film dealing with the rebellion — the destruction of Jerusalem was a foregone conclusion, actually decided during the war's first campaign in Galilee. It was then that the coterie running the war from the relative serenity of the capital failed to make adequate provision for the defense of Galilee whilst the warlords in the north were running amok trying to win over the gang bosses to their particular fiefdoms. A succinct account of the taking of Jerusalem is presented to aid the reader in grasping the playing-out of the respective Roman and Jewish strategies, such as they were. For a similar reason, the vaunted siege of Masada has a very minor role in this narrative. It was not really a "last stand" of some national militia, as will be pointed out, nor was it integral with the other episodes of the war. However, the refugees of the extremist Sicarri movement who had defended that fortress

were able to attract adherents in the Jewish Diasporas of North Africa, Asia Minor and, later, in Mesopotamia.

I hope that my treatment of the two follow-on conflicts, carrying the account up through the middle of the second century A.D., will help to further distinguish this volume from some recent books dealing with the Jewish-Roman confrontation. I will here briefly mention these books in order to differentiate my own treatment of the subject.

In 2004, Tempus Books published *Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66–73* by Neil Faulkner. That book is useful in understanding the mindset of the Jewish revolutionaries and the ideologies involved, but is not on the whole devoted to the military aspects of the revolt. Jonathan Price's *Jerusalem Under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State, 66–70 C.E.* was published by Brill Academic Publications in 1997. This study was quite helpful in documenting the probable constituency of the Jewish forces in Jerusalem during the conflict of 66–73, but, as the title indicates, was mainly concerned with the battles and combat units in and around the Jewish capital; activities and armed forces outside of that locality were mentioned only briefly and simply to the extent that they influenced the outcome of the Jerusalem struggle. Neither of these books discuss the three Jewish revolts as a military continuum rather than three disconnected flare-ups. The reader is referred to the critical bibliography at the end of the book where I briefly discuss the usefulness of each work consulted.

The aim of the present work is to present a readable military history of all three Jewish revolts against Rome. It does not pretend to be a work of original classical scholarship. Thus, I have not done original research into ancient texts, etymology, epigraphy, the classification of archeological artifacts, or any of the related erudite disciplines. This book is for the well-informed and inquisitive reader who wants to know how the Jews continued to vex the militarily supreme Roman Empire at its zenith for 70 years. Every effort has been made to sift through the available specialist research into the epoch and to impart a reliable précis of the literature in these fields. Thus, there are no footnotes or endnotes offering digressions regarding points of academic controversy. Where I have quoted or borrowed ideas from other studies, I have indicated so in the text, referencing page numbers where direct quotes are employed. As the two bibliographies at the back of the book indicate, a broad spectrum of books, articles, reports and theses have been consulted. The critical bibliography preceding the full bibliography at the end of this book points out which books proved most useful in framing my story.

A Note about Appendix I. This exercise in “what if” embraces the parameters and possible elements of an “alternative” conflict between Jerusalem and Rome. It is not intended to be the full-fledged docu-fictional treatment

that irritates some. It is merely an effort to pursue the way in which the “might have beens” could have evolved and how the more promising developments in all three revolts might have combined to present Rome with a more challenging situation. The appendix is offered in the hope that readers will indulge the introduction of some conjectural weapons developments that might have aided the Jews; all were discussed in ancient texts on “artillery” armaments and ships of the period.

The reader should be aware of the nature of the use of the term “Talmud” when dealing with evidence gleaned from rabbinical writings of the late first to seventh centuries A.D. The word “Talmud” is used in the broadest sense — denoting the entire corpus of rabbinic literature left to us by the rabbis, who were the self-styled guardians of Judaism in the classical period. The literature thus embraced by a generic and imprecise designation “Talmud” includes the Mishnah and the Tosefta, which were early paired collections of legal decisions about the proper conduct of daily life, edited around A.D. 200, for the first named and in the third century for the second, and the “midrashim,” which were the rabbinic commentaries on the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, in various formats (anecdotal, legalistic, and literary-critical). The Talmud, in the broadest sense, is composed of the Palestinian Talmud, edited in the rabbinic academies of Palestine in the fifth century, and the Babylonian Talmud, redacted in the Babylonian rabbinic academies in the seventh century. It is difficult to determine exactly when these polemical tracts were referring to actual historical incidents, and if so, the actual time frame of the events used in allegorical example. However, I have tried to show, particularly with regard to the Diaspora rebellion and the Bar Kochba revolt, the relevance of passages from these problematic texts.

A word about numbers. The “father of modern military history” Hans Delbruck was properly suspicious of the numbers presented by Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius, but perhaps was too much of a debunker. Like his models, Josephus is loose with his sums, but it isn’t impossible to try to arrive at more reasonable figures where he uses ideal rather than real data.

Appendix G on numbers in the First Revolt goes into this a bit further. Army strengths, orders of battle, numbers and types of weapons, field equipment and protective coverings are important to military history enthusiasts. This appendix has presented details on these elements that are available only in erudite specialist studies. Regrettably, the inadequate documentation of the ensuing two rebellions does not lend itself to such detailed scrutiny, the usual wild exaggeration and tendencies of ancient historians to arbitrarily match strength against strength or round up strength figures to magical multiples being even more pronounced here. Nonetheless, I have tried to arrive at a reasonable estimate there as well.

In addition to the ancient sources mentioned in the bibliographical note, I had to rely on a widely scattered hodgepodge of essays published in scholarly journals. My proximity to the Library of Congress has been fortunate in this respect. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of an affable Australian war gaming and ancient history devotee, Steven James, whom I know only through the Internet. Steven has graciously sent me photocopies of articles I had otherwise been unable to locate or overlooked. Another valuable resource has been Gary Goldberg, editor of the Flavius Josephus Homepage. Gary's reconstruction of the revolt's chronology, reconciling the various versions of Josephus, has been very helpful to me in my own stab at applying what the renowned British military historian Alfred Burne called "inherent military probability" to the classical sources. Jonathan Roth, whose doctoral dissertation on the logistics of the Roman army in the Judaeian campaign provided insights, has likewise been most encouraging. E-correspondence with Adrian Goldsworthy, author of numerous books and articles on ancient warfare, furnished helpful advice.

The eminent academic authority on Josephus, Steve Mason, whom I met at several conclaves on Josephus, has kindly humored my inquiries and has encouraged my forays through the classical and archaeological minefields. His version of Josephus's *Life* (the Brill 2000 edition) has really helped me to sort out the many inconsistencies within that ancient source, as well as between *The Life* and *The Jewish War*. So far as the rebellions of the second century A.D. are concerned, one has to thread one's way through the inconsistent speculations of scholars, both well-informed and imaginative — most of whom are busy rebutting differing opinions or hedging their conclusions in massive footnotes and endnotes.

I would like to register my appreciation to the late Terry Gore, the publisher of my first book, whose untimely death in 2004 deprived military history, and war gaming, with a dedicated and scrupulous source of energy and expertise. But for his interest and support, I would have never completed the manuscript of the 2002 *Roman-Judaeo War*, which comprises the kernel of the present expanded work.

I also want to acknowledge the impetus provided to my work by the late Trevor Dupuy, a distinguished American military historian who encouraged and nurtured my earliest attempts to research and write military history.

Of course none of these obliging individuals and organizations bears responsibility for any defects of fact, organization or presentation, for which I am totally to blame.

Introduction

Anyone familiar with the writings of Flavius Josephus, that controversial chronicler of his tormented, beloved land of Judaea, might be surprised to find out that there has been no dedicated modern account emphasizing the military aspect of the A.D. 66–74 Jewish Revolt against Rome. Authors from various academic disciplines have attempted to decipher Josephus and penetrate his partisan agenda to find out just what was happening. But, as will be explained, Josephus is a slippery fellow. Perhaps too much has been made of Josephus's imputed character flaws and his alleged attempts to save his own hide. These finger-pointing texts ignore Josephus's dilemma. Josephus had a real concern about Roman suspicions over the lingering influence of the rebels. Apprehensive about further Roman retribution against his mutinous people, he downplayed their messianic passions; consequently, he portrayed the various insurgent groups as irreligious, rapacious scoundrels, unrepresentative of the genuine, pacifistic Jewish national culture. Since the rebels left no historical record and Josephus wrote his account from the vantage point of Rome, we don't have an independent means of determining to what extent Josephus may have misrepresented the insurrectionaries' motivation.

In varying degrees, everyone who has written on this subject has expressed frustration in utilizing Josephus as a source. Besides having his own ideological agenda—and what ancient historian did not?—Josephus was, in the opinion of many, not a very “lovable” fellow. Depending on which modern commentator you choose, he was a traitor, a weaselly coward, a guilt-ridden self-promoter, or any combination of the above. Love him or not, we are stuck with him. Perhaps this inability to trust Josephus's testimony, or even to reconstruct a coherent narrative from the diverse threads, explains why the military-operational attributes of the Jewish War of 66–74 have not received the attention they deserve.

Another reason might be that the literature on the revolt and its epoch is dominated by theological inquiries. The revolt and Josephus's accounts of it coincide with the birth and rise of Christianity, the loss of a uniquely Jewish political base (until 1948) and the profound transformation of Judaism into the rabbinical form we know today. Issues concerning Christ's milieu and the destruction of the high Temple in Jerusalem overshadow trifling questions about precisely how the legions subdued the Jewish uprising. When academics aren't winnowing Josephus for scriptural insights, they are parsing his sentences and his turns of phrase for lessons on the protocols of classical Greco-Roman discourse.

As a result, military historians, at least those writing in languages other

than Hebrew, have, by and large, ignored the conflict, preferring to concentrate on the Roman-Parthian struggle or contemporary operations in the West. A Caspian Sea of ink has been spilt over the comparatively small-scale Claudian invasion of Britannia, Agricola's conquest of the northern regions, and the rebellion led by the Druid Amazon Boudicca just five years before the outbreak of the Jewish revolt. The Dacian Campaign, of Trajan, merely thirty years later, gets its due share of attention, largely thanks to the wonderfully lucid images on Trajan's Column. Trajan's subsequent Parthian expedition, for which the evidence is quite fragmentary, has also been well covered by military historians. Indeed, writing in 1993, Fergus Millar, one of the leading modern authorities on the Roman Empire's Middle Eastern outposts concurs. Millar comments that "it remains curious that, with the exception of the ultimately disastrous campaign of Cestius Gallus and the legion XII Fulminata in the autumn of 66, no strictly military study has been devoted to this war [i.e., the First Revolt]. Yet it represents by far the best-attested series of operations by the Roman army in the entire history of the Empire" (*The Roman Near East*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, page 70).

However difficult it is to surmount Josephus's idiosyncrasies, the problems increase with respect to locating literary sources for the later rebellions, which had no Josephus to record them. Yet it is ludicrous to think that the sparse, albeit explicit, references to cataclysmic upheavals are figments of the imagination. Obviously there were some major, if outwardly unexpected, catastrophes afflicting the Jewish people in the second century. Thus we have the situation that after 20 centuries, there is little consensus on the character of the several Jewish revolts against the early Roman Empire in the first and second centuries A.D. To overlook the later two conflicts, which I argue were extensions or aftermath of the initial revolt, isolates and, consequently, distorts the significance of the initial flare-up.

We do know that from A.D. 66 to around 135 the Jews under Roman rule rebelled at least three times, on each occasion mounting a tenacious, savage resistance and incurring enormous losses. The ferocity and determination of these uprisings are unique in the annals of the Roman Empire. Clearly, the case of Judaea is exceptional: a Roman province in which the natives steadfastly refused to be assimilated into the Hellenistic culture of the occupying power after catastrophic defeats.

For the middle rebellion under Trajan, circa A.D. 115–117 — the so-called Quietus War — we have very little information apart from cryptic entries in Egyptian papyri and some anachronistic, enigmatic references in rabbinical exegesis and some quite biased comments by the Christian patriarch Eusebius.

The A.D. 132–135 revolt of Judaeans led by the mysterious messianic chieftain Shimeon bar Kosiba (or Bar Kochba) has, besides the usual spotty inexplicit allusion in the Talmudic literature, two paragraphs in Cassius Dio's fragmentary Roman History, some inscriptions on pottery shards (allegedly the commander's communiqués to his troops) and other material vestiges, including Jewish coins minted at the time. There have been some laudable efforts in recent times to arrive at a coherent sequential record of these latter two conflicts. I have made use of them in deriving my review of the likely military operations.

Thanks to the preservation of a detailed war diary from antiquity, in essence a campaign history, the first of the Jewish uprisings is amply documented. The book has come down to us as *Bellum Judaicum*, or "The Jewish War." Its author, the soldier-scholar Yossef ben Mattiyahu ha Kohen, better known to us as Flavius Josephus, was a Judaeen participant and was captured by (or defected to) the Romans. Thus, he was in a unique position to report the conflict from both sides of the hill. Inasmuch as he wrote while a pensioner of the conquering generals — by then emperors — his sincerity has been under suspicion.

The richness of Josephus's description is matched only by the commentaries of Julius Caesar and perhaps the histories of Polybius and Thucydides, all of whom were his literary models. Those familiar with the chariot races in the celebrated novel *Ben Hur* might find a Josephan counterpart in the title character, Judah ben-Hur, a patriotic Judaeen of noble birth quite at home in cosmopolitan Rome.

Rather than interrupt the description of the war with a lengthy excursus, I will deal with Josephus's credibility in an appendix. I will simply state here that, thanks to modern studies on Josephus's texts, it is possible to utilize his works without falling into the trap of simply rehashing them.

Josephus's combat history is supplemented by relevant material in his quasi-autobiography (so-called *Life*) and his grand tour of Jewish history from the earliest times, called *Antiquities of the Jews*, a kind of paraphrase of the Old Testament extended up to the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt. There are some apparent discrepancies where the accounts overlap. However, as I will show, this incongruity is less troublesome than some Josephus-bashers have made it out to be. Josephus's comprehensive literary portrait contrasts starkly to the sparse, mostly archaeological, evidence for the other struggles. For purposes of comparison, I will briefly discuss the nearly contemporary uprising in Britain led by the warrior princess Boudicca (or Boadicea).

Judaea/Palestine is unique among the Roman provinces: that province alone embraced a national identity intense enough to challenge Roman rule. That identity stemmed from a body of Hebrew religious writings, to some

extent historical but principally didactic, written with an eye towards reining in the pervasive contemporary backsliders. That body of moralizing literature comprises an explicit focal point for the development of staunchly uncompromising political and religious institutions. Both the locus and the institutions provided the setting for the three great rebellions that the Romans faced in Palestine (including the relatively unknown one in North Africa, Asia Minor, Cyprus and Mesopotamia) in the first and second centuries A.D. Messianic promise that was embodied in this sacred literature fused with misgovernment and Romanizing policy to provide the seedbed for mutiny.

It is exactly because these rebellions stemmed from a Jewish national identity that the Romans found them far more dangerous than any other revolt. Challenges to Roman authority usually were based on generalized resistance to Romanization, Hellenization, or paganism or on any particular formula for a new political and religious order. In fact, many such programs emerged from this remarkable region, but none were as worrisome as that maintained by the Jewish purists. Jewish resistance to Roman rule explains why the process of Romanization in Palestine had to involve more than the usual solutions: founding of colonies, other Greco-Roman cities and the co-opting of local patricians.

The Jewish threat demanded a measure unprecedented among the Roman rulers: forced migration — what we now call ethnic cleansing — on a scale unmatched since the ascendancy of the Assyrian conqueror Sennacherib eight centuries earlier and the permanent stationing of an unusually large legionary force. After the 130s Palestine lost much of its special and problematic features with respect to its position in the imperial system, and the large legionary occupation force moved elsewhere. This military challenge and Rome's response are the substance of my study.

In treating the rebellions as distinct phases of a two-century war, I evoke the fact that participants of the Thirty Years' War did not call it that, nor did they recognize it as a long war punctuated by peace treaties which were more in the nature of truces than settlements of differences. Certainly Rome had every reason to believe that, after each eruption of Jewish fanaticism, their vigorous counter-measures had quenched Jewish obduracy once and for all. It was only with the "Assyrian remedy" of 135 that they removed this constant thorn in their side. Even then, the Jews managed to challenge Roman control of Palestine at least twice more.

The persistence of the Jewish relationship to the lands formerly occupied by Judaea/Palestine is obvious to any student of modern history. Whether there was any surrender of the ancient Jewish birthright by an imposed exile of the bulk of the Jewish populace, and the validity of counter-claims made by subsequent occupants of the Holy Lands has vexed all great powers who

have tried to untie the Gordian Knot of Middle Eastern politics. The Ottomans, then the British and finally the United States have all been stumped in their efforts to referee the conflicting claims of Zionists and Palestinian Arabs to sovereignty over variously demarcated portions of the seat of the rebellions described in this book. My history of the events that transpired two millennia ago does not attempt to traverse this minefield, but only to lend some historical perspective.

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I : THE FIRST REVOLT, A.D. 66–74

1

The First Revolt: Causation and Inevitability

Neat linear progressions from “peace” to “war” do not hold water. There is no single cause for the outbreak of hostilities; that is, there is no distinct grievance, the alleviation of which would have brought about peaceful amity with Rome. Similarly, it is not certain that a war with Rome was self-evident, as some commentators would have it. This last mentioned position accepts uncritically Josephus’s rather formulaic picture of an unrelieved spiral of discontent relentlessly escalating from the death of Herod until the dam burst in 66. The *cassus belli* for the First Revolt are largely, though not exclusively, extracted from Josephus. The misunderstandings driving the antagonists towards open warfare should become evident throughout the consecutive recital of events in the historical chapters that follow. It might be useful to summarize them here.

1. **Folk memory of an idyllic locally ruled independent Jewish State.** Modern research has shown that the biblical and oral traditions probably magnified the extent to which there ever was a sovereign, unconditionally Jewish land of Israel prior to the Maccabean revolt. Before the seventh century B.C., great empires north and south, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, effectively held the Jewish entity hostage. The succeeding Seleucid and Ptolemaic superpowers habitually dominated the Jewish ruling hierarchy in order to employ the Levantine corridor as a buffer. Besides, it was a divided kingdom for much of that time. Furthermore, the allegorical Hebrew domain was perpetually honeycombed with pockets of backsliders, witness the recurring rebukes by Jehovah and His messengers. Nevertheless, fresh memories of the recent, well-documented, period of Hasmonean self-rule would create a longing for a restoration of utopian ancient Jewish realms exalted in scrip-

ture. Forgotten were the troublesome Hasmonean familial and party dissension and the consequent ill-advised alliances. The image of past glories, largely of a warlike nature, permeated the holy scrolls. Thus some of the rebels wore royal garb and tried to reinstate this cherished romanticized paragon. It was obvious that the grandeur of an unfettered Jewish empire resonated among the masses forced to witness the daily insults by the pagan occupier's troops, so contemptuous of Jewish pride (see cause #2).

2. **Roman misrule.** In the eyes of a Roman petty bourgeois, an appointment to maintain order in the hinterlands south of Antioch was a dead-end post; it was tantamount to being exiled to an unruly, unpleasant backwater. For that reason, it was considered as “easy pickings”—a place where an unscrupulous overlord could line his pockets with silver well nigh unnoticed by the imperial court in Rome. Sadly for the fate of Judaea, cosmopolitan noble Romans who were truly qualified for the difficult assignment wouldn't have it on a silver platter. Besides, Herod had left in place a highly complex “oriental” bureaucracy that was too “clerical” for the senatorial *hoi polloi* to administer. It was thus that, from about A.D. 30 to 66, Judaea was saddled with a series of incompetent, arrogant lowbrows as governors, overshadowing the earlier, generally effective, prefects. Rome was unwilling or unable to send her “best and brightest” to govern Judaea. This was particularly true of the period between 44 and 66. Pontius Pilate loomed large in the collective memory as a particularly insolent administrator from an earlier period. While it's true that Judaea was an exceptionally difficult province, this is all the more reason that it demanded a local authority figure with some tact and finesse; one who could meet Rome's need for tranquility while catering to the religious sensibilities of the common folk. Instead, Judaea had to put up with venal flunkies who had little know-how and less patience. That said, it would be wrong to characterize all, or even a majority, of the governors as corrupt louts. Even Pontius Pilate, who lives forever in infamy, will be seen to have occasionally shown some tact and diplomatic common sense.
3. **Financial burdens, the “socio-economic” interpretation.** Perhaps too much has been made of the economic stresses of the oppressed classes as a hair-trigger incentive to revolt. The tax burden under the Romans was not demonstrably more severe than it had been under Herod and his immediate Hasmonaean predecessors with their empire-building expense sheet. Tacitus makes much of the public entreaties to Tiberius to alleviate the burden of tribute, but the effect was cumulative rather

than sudden. A multi-layered taxation had been steadily increasing from the time of Herod. There was the poll tax, or capitation tax, the tax on property and personal possessions, and finally, the agricultural produce tax. The assessment and collection of the poll tax was entrusted to a Roman official, whereas the acquisition of other taxes, being variable and hence complicated, were hired out to local “tax farmers” working on commission. It goes without saying that the tax farmers were despotic in the assessment and aggressive in the collection. Think of the 1920s racketeers in Chicago and New York collecting “protection money” or the more recent example of the avaricious Afghani warlords who had to be bought off, in coin or turf, in the common struggle against the terrorist Al Qaeda network and its Taliban base. Add to this the tithing, or 10 percent “gross income” Temple Tax that every Jew was obliged to pay for the upkeep of the holy heart of Judaism along with its vast body of clergy and lay workers. It’s not hard to understand why the typical subsistence farmer, artisan or petty merchant was hard-pressed to keep even a fourth of his meager earnings for himself and his family. The greed of the tax collector was galling enough; how much more so the presence of robber barons among the high priesthood’s powerful patrons, driving subsistence tenant farmers off their tiny tracts of land into the welcoming caves of the bandit gangs.

4. **The messianic hope of God’s chosen people.** The faith of divine deliverance through a mortal descendant of King David, though practically ignored by Josephus for fear of arousing further Roman misgiving, resonated among the despondent rank and file. Although he sought to downplay this volatile element, even Josephus recorded a succession of wild-eyed mystics, perhaps including Jesus, who met their just desserts as Josephus saw it. His own elevation to Roman citizenship, as will be seen, was based on his particular application of the messianic ideal in a form that could not possibly offend his Roman patrons. The doctrine of apocalyptic deliverance, if too overtly broached, could arouse suspicions that the messianic sparks still flickered, scattered throughout the Diaspora from the pyre of the smoldering Temple. Its articulation in Josephus’s works would have been upsetting and possibly dangerous. The thread of this apocalyptic fervor can be traced back at least to the Book of Daniel, which even the best efforts of Josephus cannot transform from an eschatological sermon into a sober philosophical tract palatable to his Greco-Roman readership.
5. **Jewish-Pagan friction.** One element that is insufficiently appreciated in modern accounts of the revolt is the long-standing hostility that

existed between the Jewish and the large non-Jewish populations of the Greek settlements in Israel. The Jews viewed the Greeks as worshippers of idols (which was an abomination) and the successors of the Canaanites and Philistines who were to be wiped out according to the injunctions of the Torah. The Greeks viewed the Jews as brutal and barbarian (lacking an urbane tradition), haughtily rejecting the worship of widely honored gods, anti-social recluses, and the universal enemy. This mutual hostility was a central factor in the history of ancient Israel vis-à-vis the Greco-Roman world. Thanks to Josephus, we have a detailed account of a long tradition of malicious Hellenistic literature, largely originating during the conquests and enforced mass conversions under John Hyrcanus II, which was spread in the Roman world and inflamed Roman hostility towards Jews and Judaism. This, in turn, aroused Jewish anger and rebelliousness. The mutual hatred, beginning with the Hasmonean uprising and simmering under Roman control, boiled over during the revolt against Rome. This animosity was not only very significant as a catalyst for the outbreak of the war, as foreshadowed by the rioting in Alexandria a generation earlier, but, as will be shown, was an important determinant of the course of the fighting during the early phases of the conflict. It is not much of a stretch to compare this animosity to the present-day impasse between the Israelis and the Palestinian Arabs.

This constant friction and mutual abuse will be seen as one of the chief precipitating circumstances on the eve of the revolt. It has been commonly underplayed in most histories of the First Revolt. Roman mediation usually favored the Jews in the Diaspora communities, while it went against them in Judaea — as a kind of check on their assertiveness. This seems to have been a deliberate Roman policy ... a kind of balance of power gambit, foreshadowing the way that the British Empire at its height juggled loyalties and allies to maintain control of the local situation. Rome had no particular ill will towards Judaism, but the Greek-speaking provincial communities detested their haughty Jewish neighbors. When Rome lost its status as an impartial arbiter in these endemic disputes, then the Jews took matters in their own hands.

6. **Neglect of the condition of the common people by the indigenous ruling elite.** The Jewish multitude looked for leadership; they were accustomed to charismatic leaders. The upper classes from the time of Alexander Janneus onward seemed unable or reluctant to provide steady direction or remedy for the anti-Roman resistance; they proved unfit to serve as true representatives of their people's interests. The taint of gangsterism ultimately even tarnished the revered office of high priest

of the Holy Temple. The common people retained a reverence for the office and ideal of the High Priesthood, notwithstanding the personal failings of the transitory officeholders. For their part, the ruling class played an ultimately unmanageable balancing act: They wanted to retain the confidence of both the Roman overlords and their own people. By their inability to gauge the temperament of the willful masses, they lost the respect of both parties. Exacerbating this failing, each competing aristocratic clan sought to use the grievances fueling the rebellion to broaden its own power-base. The Priestly families hired thugs to attack their rivals. When it was obvious to them that they could not influence Rome, they desperately clung to power by playing off one rebel faction against another, hedging their bets that they could come out on top.

7. **Roman cultural naiveté.** As for the Romans, they were simply at a loss to cope with what they saw as unreasonable Jewish prickliness. This seeming ingratitude was especially perplexing in view of the fact that all other Near Eastern religious cults had been willing to accommodate Roman administrative requirements in return for the blessings of Roman good will. From their standpoint, the early emperors had, with a few notable exceptions, been quite tolerant and compliant with regard to the exacting Jewish religious stipulations requiring “special treatment.” In their view, they had been long-suffering arbitrators in the many disturbances between the uncompromising Jews and the Greek cities in their midst and had even made special allowances for Jewish privileges — concessions rarely granted to any other people. The Judaeian ruling elite, traditionally Rome’s partners and clients in colonial administration, floundered: The Roman governors, seeking calm and “order” perceived that these traditional leaders couldn’t control their people. Much as the current violence between the Arab Palestinians and the Jewish nation of Israel baffles the United States, Israel’s ally and sponsor, the Romans with bigger fish to fry, were irked by what they saw as straightforward Jewish inflexibility in Judaea. Finally, Roman patience had come to an end.

Jewish Perspective on Roman Power

Only a few religions have survived the constant challenge of how to strike a balance between the requirements of religious law and the often-conflicting demands of human government. In antiquity, cult leadership was subservient to kingship, or the monarch was proclaimed divine. For Israel,

however, God was king and the rule of God was the foundation of Jewish political thought. This sounds like a commonplace, but consider how the Greeks and Romans regarded deities as having human attributes — they were corporeal, had sex lives and senses of humor, etc. The Jewish God's rule was delegated to the offices of king, priest, and prophet.

After the Babylonian Exile the Jews resumed limited self-government without king or prophet, and developed an ideology of Empire. The new system of expressing loyalty to a king outside the old covenantal system became an ideology of authorization, the process of lending authority to power. The main question is "How legitimate was Roman rule for the Jews?"

A doctoral thesis by Leo Sandgren, "We Have No King But Caesar" (University of North Carolina, 1998), investigated the Jewish responses to Roman rule throughout in the entire corpora of Jewish literature in antiquity. Sandgren examined evidence from a wide range of sources, including the Pseudepigrapha of Palestine and of the Diaspora, Philo, Josephus, and the early rabbinical traditions. He evaluated each response to Rome on the basis of whether and why it is favorable or unfavorable, and how it reconciles Roman rule with the rule of God. The author concluded that the Jewish leadership consistently accepted Roman sovereignty as the legitimate rule for the Jews.

In order to sustain the foundation of the rule of God, Jewish political theory distinguished between spheres of authority: between the "affairs of God and the affairs of the king" — anticipating Jesus' famous "render unto Caesar" formulation in the Gospels. As might be expected, the response from the cosmopolitan Diaspora was more enthusiastic than that from Palestine. Philo and Josephus provide detailed arguments for legitimacy, and the early rabbinical tradition provides a lucid, if more dismal, exposé of obeisance to the political strongman of the moment. Other voices range from total acceptance to total rejection of Roman rule.

Most Jews probably emulated the attitude of the leaders. Possibly too much has been made of the quarrelsome nature of the Jews in antiquity, wrongly attributing to them a spirit of independence, based on their fussiness over minutiae of observance, etc. Like most plebian populations in the area, the Jews craved a strong leader and had an influential history of such leaders. The ideology of legitimization of Roman rule allowed them to be Jewish political subjects in a pagan religious world. The theological ramifications of this attitude have been argued at length but are not germane here. What is important is that Josephus was reflecting the *realpolitik* of Jews aspiring to some kind of religious autonomy in a world in which Roman domination was an uncomfortable, though inevitable, fact of life. There is evidence of this openness to foreign trappings in the very coins used to pay the Temple tithes,

which bore the likeness of a pagan, albeit regional, deity.

Josephus believed, like many of his class, that it was possible to achieve a *modus vivendi* with Rome's omnipotent albeit, at core, tolerant bureaucracy. It is difficult to say how much of this reflects Josephus's post-war hindsight rather than his attitude on the eve of the hostilities. However, it is not much of a stretch to liken the modern-day dilemma of anyone who would lead twenty-first century Israel to Josephus's patrician class. Today's wild-eyed fanatics are the settlers in the occupied territories and those among the religious right who support the settlers' prerogative to hold onto turf carved out of the proposed Palestinian state. The United States, and, to a lesser extent, European and Far Eastern powers, equate to the Romans in their influence over Israel's assertiveness. While the right wing of the Israeli polity seethes over the American determination for a two-state solution, it will not engineer a break with its domineering ally.

2

Foundation for the Roman Involvement in Judaeian Affairs

*Prologue: The Fateful Year 63 B.C.—Enter
Pompaius Magnus*

Rome's involvement with the lands northeast of the Mediterranean Sea's eastern terminus was gradual but unavoidable. It's unnecessary to recall the sobering encounter with the Carthaginian menace during the Punic Wars, personified by the diabolical (in Roman legend) Hannibal Barca. Notwithstanding these earlier flirtations, the turning point is the portentous moment when Pompey the Great conducted his sweep through Coele-Syria as part of his reordering of Rome's "desert frontier."

When Antiochus III, labeled "The Great," stepped out of line in Greece at the end of the third century B.C., Rome moved in and set up a protectorate, more or less, over the Greek possessions in Asia Minor. By the Peace of Apamea, in 188 B.C., the Seleucid Empire lost its primacy as a great Mediterranean hegemon, though it remained a potent land power in Asia and a nuisance. At the same time, exploiting mercantile footholds, Rome established neighborly relations with the Greek cities of Coele-Syria, with some of whom she had formed friendly independent alliances. At that point in her development, Rome had acquired a false sense of security — there didn't appear to be any imminent threat to her position. Accordingly, she lapsed into a kind of placid passivity over the next century. This indifference to ominous rumblings in Asia and at sea had nearly disastrous consequences.

Most alarmingly, her seaborne trade was harassed by a plague of pirates based on Cilicia in the eastern Mediterranean, who achieved virtual mastery of the sea-lanes in that region. By around 100 B.C., pressured by Italian traders, the Roman Senate realized the gravity of the problem — her food supplies, increasingly imported, were at risk. Together with this strangling of her mer-

cantile lifeline, the growing power of Mithridates VI of Pontus challenged Rome's position in Asia. Moreover, Mithridates cooperated with the troublesome pirates, one of his most useful tools against Rome's rather deficient naval capabilities. In the 80s, Sulla had pushed Mithridates back somewhat, but the latter continued to rally his allies, notably the opportunistic Aegean pirates. Next, Lucius Lucullus had tried to tame the Asian challenger, but the wily Mithridates took advantage of a mutiny in the Roman army in 68 B.C. to recoup much of his lost territory. By 67 B.C., Rome had determined to deal decisively with the obstructions to its freedom of navigation in the eastern Mediterranean. Beyond Asia Minor, there rose the burgeoning challenge of Parthia.

In order to remove the immediate threat from Mithridates VI and his predatory seafaring associates, Rome dispatched her triumvir, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, better known as Pompey. His victories in Africa and Spain had already established his military reputation. He scored quick success against the pirate fleets, attacking them in their lairs. On land, he forced the upstart Mithridates to flee Pontus. Pompey's mission to clean up the mess in the Near East included dealing with the recalcitrant son-in-law of Mithridates, Tigranes II the Great of Armenia, who was reduced to a docile thrall of Rome. This last was an effort to counterbalance the growing influence of Parthia, which was to become Rome's *bete noir* in the region. These achievements were the jewel in the crown of Pompey's illustrious military career. Having secured the land flank of the eastern Mediterranean, he sought to consolidate his gains by bringing the scrappy little Jewish enclave to the southwest of Damascus into his orbit. To this end he sent into Judaea his legate, Scaurus, who was immediately approached by one petty prince Aristobulus II, who offered bribes in return for the Roman general's support against his brother, John Hyrcanus II, the latter under the tutelage of an advisor, an Idumaeen named Antipater. The priestly aristocracy backed Aristobulus, while the lesser artisans and merchant class endorsed John.

Thus, the opportunity to consolidate his gains in Syria down to the borders of Egypt fairly fell into Pompey's lap. The affair was all too typical of the susceptible condition of the Jewish populace inhabiting Greater Jerusalem: a family quarrel, a succession struggle between brothers and an appeal to an avaricious outside power to intervene against the pretender. This episode marks the entry of Rome into the labyrinthine politics of Judaea. From that point on, Rome would strive in vain to reach some kind of *modus vivendi* with this most prickly of client states. In view of Rome's worries over the ambitions of Parthia, for which contingency Syria was the natural staging area, Judaea would have to be tamed.

It is hard to believe that such a divisive state of Judaeen affairs had evolved

a mere century after the magnificent nationalist revival in the victory of the Maccabees and the rise of the house of Asmon — to become known to posterity as the Hasmonean dynasty. The Jewish polity in Palestine had reached its high tide during the reign of the Hasmonean lineage. At this juncture, we should backtrack a bit from Pompey's march into Jerusalem. It's important to determine how the Jewish homeland had arrived at such a parlous condition and the impetus for its first tentative, ultimately fatal, contacts with the expanding Roman Republic. A short detour will set the stage for Pompey's settlement of affairs in the Roman Near East.

Prologue to Pompey: Development of a Jewish Power Base in Jerusalem and the Roman Opening in the Near East

It is unnecessary to restate the entire sacred/allegorical history of the Jewish people from the time of the Pharaohs in order to assess the place of Palestine in Roman strategic evolution. It is generally accepted that a Hebrew or Israelite theocracy of sorts held sway along the extreme eastern coastal strip of the Mediterranean Sea off and on after 1000 B.C. To the southwest and the northeast, great empires flanked this narrow seaboard conduit. Canaan had the misfortune of lying athwart the constricted land bridge where the contending armies often met, hence the celebrated distinction of Har-Megiddo, or Armageddon, as a battleground at the key chokepoint and a symbol for the epic final battle. Up until the time of the second century B.C. Maccabee rebellion, the Jewish presence fluctuated and was intermittently curtailed by conquest, exile, enforced servitude or out-and-out extermination. For argument's sake, we'll assume that some form of limited theocratic sovereignty existed at least from the eighth century B.C. Bear with me a while. Although I will try to simplify, the situation in and around the Jerusalemite kingdom is quite complex.

Alexander the Great conquered the area shortly after his victory over the Persian king Darius at Issus in 333 B.C., as a prelude to his subsequent campaigns into Afghanistan, Persia and India. Whether he actually subjugated the Jewish-controlled areas of Coele-Syria (as Palestine was then called) is conjectural and needn't bother us here. Alexander's command of the Phoenician coast south to Gaza and west to Alexandria was sufficient to ensure that "Hellenism" (the spread of Greek culture and institutions) would grow and prosper in that region, which had already been penetrated by Greek trading bases. There is a Jewish tradition, which we have no reason to doubt, that Alexander esteemed Jewish customs and honored its practitioners. This is reflected

in the protected position of the Jewish enclave of Alexandria, which grew and prospered exponentially following the visit of the conqueror, much to the everlasting chagrin of the pagan Greco-Egyptians comprising the principal community.

Following Alexander's death, the small Yahwistic-cult's domain, set up in Jerusalem and the surrounding hill country, was inevitably caught up in the dynastic struggles among the conqueror's successors, the so-called wars of the Diadochi. One of Alexander's Macedonian generals, Ptolemy I, became the ruler of the satrapy of Egypt, based on Alexandria. Discerning that his first line of defense was the Syro-Palestinian coastal strip, an axiom dating from the time of the Pharaohs, and that its port cities could fund his war chest, Ptolemy absorbed the sector into his jurisdiction. Ptolemy entrusted his familiar comrade-in-arms Seleucis I Nicator, who had secured the former Babylonian territories of Asia Minor for himself, with the defense of Palestine against yet another ambitious and proficient successor general, Antoginus one-eyed. The successful Seleucis was poorly rewarded for his efforts: Ptolemy, assuming the title of king, moved to reoccupy Palestine and Syria up to Damascus (named Coele-Syria or "Hollow Syria" from that time). Seleucis was allocated the northern belt surrounding Antioch, though he never relinquished the claim to the southern sector — a bone of contention handed down to his descendants, who continued to challenge the Ptolemaic title to Palestine.

Fast-forward a century. Palestine had passed from the Egypt-based Ptolemaic rule to that of the Syrian-oriented Seleucids after Antiochus III was first checked at battle of Raphia in 217 B.C., but then succeeded against his Egyptian foe at Panion in 198 B.C. Antiochus III's triumph in Palestine was to be short-lived, however, for his ambitions in Greece crossed the Roman dareline. The Romans thrashed the Syrian monarch in Thrace in two land battles and a naval campaign at Corycus that served notice that the Romans were now a factor to be considered on water as well as land. The Seleucid reverses resulted in the Peace of Apamea (188 B.C.). That settlement signaled that from then on Rome would be the arbiter of ambition throughout the Mediterranean seaboard. Thereafter the rising power of Rome circumscribed any overly ambitious Mediterranean upstarts. Thus it had impeded Antiochus IV (called Epiphanes) in his bid to take control of Egypt in 169–168 B.C. by a direct threat. Our understanding of the Maccabean rebellion is the result of much embellishment, extrapolating from the highly ideological accounts handed down to us from the anonymous authors of the two books of Maccabees, as further developed by Josephus. Rather than cater to the preoccupation with the "Hannukah Miracle," the epitome of the tale, we will examine the political ramifications.

Checked though not completely cowed by the Roman challenge, Epiphanes determined that he could only stand up to Roman pressure by solidifying support within his domain. His action program entailed urbanizing the backwater petty fiefdoms and homogenizing the disparate religious cults around worship of Olympian Zeus. His efforts found fertile ground in Palestine. Early in Antiochus IV's reign, a Jewish Hellenizing party in the priestly aristocracy was led by Jason who had usurped the high priesthood from his brother, Onias, by offering Antiochus more generous bribes than those tendered by his sibling. This ruling elite attempted to enhance Jewish international prestige — and not so incidentally their own — by establishing Jerusalem as a Greek city, or *polis*, thereby sustaining, for their own reasons, Epiphanes' cultural unification program.

The Jewish entity's aristocratic priests and patricians embraced the sophisticated but irreverent cultural trappings of Hellenism. This created internal dissension. A clique of obstinate pietistic Judaeans traditionalists, appealing to the benighted rank and file, defied the "Hellenizing" tendencies. Viewed through the tinted lenses of the authors of Maccabees I and II and Josephus, it is difficult to ascertain just who these puritans were and whether they were always the virtuous party, as hindsight colors them. It appears probable that the opposition was comprised of lesser clergy and their assistants. This shadowy group developed an interpretative scriptural framework that appealed to the benighted masses in their search for a meaningful guide to life's multiplying perils in those troubled times. The faction, known as *Hasidim*, or holy men, can best be characterized as a party of the scribes — scholarly interpreters of law to cover everyday situations. They were the forerunners of the Pharisees of biblical fame. Their societal stratum and aims remained fairly constant over the next two centuries until, after the failure of the Great Revolt, they were transfigured into the rabbinical sages — the redactors of the Talmud, the pristine guardians of the pure against the gentile defilers. The mischief stirred up by these gadflies provided the opening for Antiochus IV to intervene in a power struggle between rival high priests in Jerusalem.

In 167 B.C., the Seleucid king responded to the resulting disturbances by installing a garrison in Jerusalem to dedicate the Temple to Olympian Zeus; it was an attempt to suppress the recalcitrant faction of Judaism by converting their holy temple into a Greek cult. Epiphanes smashed through the Jewish capital, raided the Temple treasury, and decreed the abolition of Jewish separatism. He next converted the Temple into a pagan shrine, set up a fortress opposite to enforce the project, and forbade the hallowed practices of circumcision and Sabbath observance. From the standpoint of the disintegrating Seleucid Empire, this was not altogether a reckless or irrational decision.

Recent research reveals that Antiochus IV was a wiser statesman than is generally allowed; it questions whether he really did abruptly try to abolish the Jewish religion by fiat, as suggested by the anonymous authors of the two books of Maccabees, Josephus's probable source for the episode. It is more likely that Jason's upstart Jewish high priestly caste welcomed the strongman's urbanizing agenda as a way to have their little Jewish hinterland become integrated into the mercantile complex of the Near East. Not incidentally, the clique stood to gain some personal prestige in the bargain. Nonetheless, the appearance of pagan icons in the vicinity of the Holy Temple offended the religious sensibilities of the Hasidim's pious sages.

Epiphanes' action constituted a grossly offensive defilement of the Temple. It sparked a popular revolt, led by the renowned warrior Judas Maccabeus, eldest son of a defiant minor spiritual leader of the house of Hashmon or Asamon, and led to the emergence of the Hasidim into prominence. The Temple was rededicated to Yahweh in 164 B.C., but the Hellenizers remained in power, and the revolt continued. Note that the Maccabee clan had formed a regular army on the model of the Seleucid phalanx, adapted to local conditions. Much has been made of this force being a guerilla band, anachronistically compared to those employed in modern insurgencies. So-called guerilla tactics may have characterized the initial outbreak but is not the case for the familiar campaigns. The course of operations need not detain us here; suffice it to say that an embellished version of the military conduct of that struggle resonated in Jewish tradition under the yoke of a more formidable master a century later.

In the flush of early victories, Judah entered into an understanding of "amicia" (literally "friendship") with Rome when he dispatched Jason ben Eleazar and Eupolemus ben Johanan there as his envoys. It is likely that Judah did not believe he was formally acknowledging his nation's status as a Roman client state; nonetheless, it amounted to an invitation for Rome to become the ultimate arbiter of Judean affairs. Inasmuch as the Seleucids appeared to be more of a threat than did the "new guy on the block," Judah's appeal to the rising star to the west seemed natural. Notably, Rome was willing to deal with the insurgent forces as opposed to the regularly constituted Jerusalem assembly, or gerosia, made up of the Hellenized collaborationists. This recognition was based on Rome's "divide and rule" principle wherein they'd back anyone, preferably a dependent underdog, who could oppose the entrenched power, thereby creating an opening for Roman influence. Again, we can observe a foreshadowing of the strategy of the British Empire at its high tide.

The Maccabean revolt was entering a new phase, maturing from an assertion of religious privileges under Seleucid guardianship into a struggle for

political freedom, led after Judah's death in 160, by his brother Jonathan. Jonathan reorganized Judaeen resistance to Syrian forces. He not only eluded capture by the Syrian general who garrisoned Judaea, but shrewdly bargained with rival contestants for the Syrian throne. Alexander Balas, successor to Antiochus Epiphanes, appointed Jonathan high priest in 152 B.C., and governor of Judaea in 150 B.C. as a reward for his military help in defeating Demetrius II in 147 B.C. It is noteworthy that the civil wars that flared up on Alexander Balas's watch marked the beginning of the end of the Seleucid Empire.

After Balas's death in 145 B.C., Jonathan gained a foothold in Samaria by allying himself with Demetrius, who seemed to be a contender once more. When Demetrius was overthrown, Jonathan courted additional gentile patrons, notably Sparta, and tried to acquire more territory. Jonathan had clearly built up a considerable military force that he adroitly exploited in his diplomatic machinations. Thus, instead of a pawn, Jonathan became a prime mover in the Seleucid intrigues. He invaded southern Galilee, but through betrayal at Ptolemais (Akko), he was captured and killed by yet another pretender to Seleucid rule, Diodotus Trypho in 143 B.C. Despite spectacular external political gains, Jonathan's policies created religious discord among conservative Jews, many of whom viewed his claim to the high priesthood illegitimate. He left no male heirs, but the Jewish historian Josephus claimed descent from Jonathan's anonymous daughter.

Following Jonathan's demise, another Maccabee brother, Simon Thassis, rallied the dispirited Jews to defeat the treacherous Trypho. He next persuaded the victorious Demetrius II to exempt Jews from taxation or tribute. He expelled the Seleucid garrison from the Akra in Jerusalem in 142 B.C., thereby eliminating the last vestige of Syrian control. Due to his military and diplomatic successes, he was able to renew the important alliances that his brothers had negotiated with Rome and Sparta. A national assembly confirmed his powers until "an accredited prophet should arise," as attested by Judaeen coins that proclaimed him "High Priest, General and Ruler of the Jews." The concentration of religious and secular supremacy in one person was unique in Jewish history.

Simon lacked the ancestral credentials to the high priesthood, which holy writ limited to the descendants of Zadok. The separatists who opposed his appointment are believed to have formed the political refugee movement that camped in the Judaeen desert and wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. For the next 80 years the Jews were independent under the rule of the hereditary Hasmonean High Priests, except for a few years of subjection to Antiochus VII. Thus, the advent of an independent Jewish commonwealth properly dates from Simon's accession. Yet, his diplomatic triumphs were achieved at the

expense of renewed Hellenization of Judaea along with the inevitable discontent generated among the proto-Pharisees. As the only son of Mattathias who produced male heirs, he was the true forefather of the Hasmonean dynasty. But his own son-in-law, Ptolemy, who hoped to succeed him, assassinated him.

At this juncture, the Jewish regional hegemon had reached its zenith as a more or less independent actor, albeit under the watchful eye of ascendant Rome. Territorial expansion, begun under Jonathan and Simon, proceeded rapidly. Simon's son John Hyrcanus I (134–104 B.C.) conquered the Samaritans and Idumaeans, or Edomites, forcibly converting the latter to Judaism. Domestically, Jonathan committed the grave error of offending the party of the Pharisees, ideological descendants of the Hasidim. Jonathan sided with the competing party, the Sadducees, who, in their worldly sophistication, opposed the Pharisees' intellectual scriptural exegesis and relied on an undeviating, literal application of the written Word. Of course, the interpretation of holy writ was solely in their discretion. Jonathan seemed to have forgotten the revolutionary roots of his Maccabean forebears.

Johnathan's sons, Aristobulus (104–103 B.C.), who took the title of king, and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.), annexed and forcibly Judaized the southern Ituraeans, Galilee, and Peraea, and conquered many Greek cities in Transjordan and on the coast. Alexander's conquests marked the apogee of Jewish political power in the region (Herod the Great was a client king rather than a Jewish ruler *per se*). Significantly, Alexander's military power rested upon his use of foreign mercenaries, recruited from among the hill tribes of Pisidia and Cilicia. He had to make use of these hired guns to put down several popular risings. As the dynasty grew in military strength, it became secularized, relying more and more upon the lordly blue-blooded Sadducean party and as a result lost popular support; the commoners esteemed the more approachable and adaptable Pharisee religious teachers.

As noted, John Hyrcanus had previously quarreled with the Pharisees; his son Alexander Jannaeus faced a serious revolt. The most dangerous rebellion occurred when the orthodox scribes and their supporters from the masses had to call in the Seleucid king Demetrius Eucaerus to rescue them from their own king. At first Demetrius's success seemed certain, but the foreign king's pagan excesses caused revulsion among the Jews who had summoned him, and Alexander was able to re-establish his command. He celebrated his success at a banquet where the featured entertainment was the crucifixion of 800 Jewish opponents from among the Pharisee party.

Sensibly Jannaeus's successor, his widow Alexandra Salome (76–69 B.C.), heeded the deathbed advice of her late husband, regained the Pharisees' support and reigned peacefully. Salome is fondly remembered in Hebrew litera-

ture, wherein she is called Alexandra Shalom-Zion. She appointed her elder son, John Hyrcanus II, to the office of high priest, much to the dismay of her ambitious younger son, Aristobulus II, who vowed to right this wrong.

After Salome's death, her two sons quarreled. The younger, Aristobulus, supported by the discontented military leaders, expelled his brother Hyrcanus, who, incited by an Idumaeen nobleman, Antipater, fled to King Aretas III of Arabia. Aretas was besieging Aristobulus in Jerusalem in 63 B.C. This brings our story full circle back to Pompey's intervention — the point at which we began this chapter.

Rome Mixes In — Pompey's Resolution of the Eastern Situation and the Decline of the Hasmonean House

Having set the stage for the Roman entrée, we resume our account of Pompey the Great outlined in our prologue. Recall that Pompey had reaped the fruits of Lucius Lucullus's victories along the Parthian marchlands, and was thus able to turn his attention to Mithridates, evicting the latter from his gains in the Crimea and thence throughout Macedonia and the Peloponnesus. Having accomplished as much, he was then free to tidy up matters in the East. After creating a new united territory of Bythnia-Pontus, Pompey annexed Syria and organized it as a province with Judaea as a dependency nominally under the control of the high priests. If you thought the story was complicated before, now it gets worse. Rome's domination of the Coele-Syrian southern route was achieved in the following manner.

We have seen that by 67 B.C. a civil war between Janneus's two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, engulfed Palestine. Preoccupied with finishing off Mithridates and Tigranes in Asia, Pompey left the capture of Damascus to Scaurus, one of his generals. Delegations from both of the quarrelling Jewish princes were granted audiences with Pompey's legate for the east, Gabinius, at Damascus and both duly offered the Roman conqueror bribes of money and influence. At this juncture, Gabinius favored Aristobulus presumably because his antagonist, Hyrcanus, was allied with the Nabataean, "Arab" Aretas III, and the Romans were wary of Nabataean ascendancy in the region. Additionally, his more generous bribe was tempting. In the event, Scaurus ordered Aretas to pull his forces out of Judaea. The Nabataean complied because he could not risk war with Rome.

As Aretas's troops withdrew, Aristobulus took advantage of the situation and inflicted heavy losses on the Arab rearguard. By the time Pompey returned to Damascus, in 63 B.C., a commission representing the common people of Judaea joined the emissaries of the two local contenders. This new petitioner

asked that the Hasmonaean dynasty be broken and that Judaea revert to ancestral priestly rule, already reflecting popular despair with what monarchy had wrought. Incidentally, this request was to be repeated in the anarchy following the death of Herod the Great. Pompey promised to make his decision once he had driven the Nabataeans out of Judaea.

Aristobulus could see the handwriting on the wall; as a wily Eastern politico he knew Roman strategy well enough to realize that they would most likely back the weaker, hence more manageable, rival ... that being Hyrcanus. In order to preempt this unfavorable outcome, Aristobulus holed up with his troops in the Fortress of Alexandria in Jerusalem. This precipitous and defiant act exasperated Pompey; instead of pursuing the Nabataeans, he marched on Jerusalem via Pella and Jericho. Hyrcanus's supporters opened the city gate to Pompey's legate Piso. Next, Pompey took the disputed sector of Jerusalem after a three-month siege of Aristobulus's hold-outs on the Temple Mount.

Here follows an odd bit of impetuosity unbecoming a worldly nobleman. It's almost an act of boyish mischievousness. Pompey, despite the fact that it was clearly off limits to anyone but the High Priest during the high holiday season, entered the Temple's inner sanctum — the Holy of Holies. Tacitus tells us that Pompey poked his nose into the chamber merely out of curiosity. This impious insult would have no immediate repercussions but would be recalled over a century later when rebellion simmered and Rome became an abomination. There is no basis, however, for Tacitus's claim that Pompey looted the Temple's treasury and valuable artifacts, a charge that seems to have been imputed out of a personal aversion.

Pompey then appointed Hyrcanus II High Priest and ethnarch of Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peraea, although he deprived him of all the previously conquered Greek cities, ten of which were to become known as the Decapolis and placed under the jurisdiction of the newly created governor of Syria. Further, the title of "ethnarch" was considerably less than the dual powers of king and high priest vested in Hyrcanus's predecessors. Thereafter, over the next century Rome methodically stripped the Hasmonaean gains from Jewish control, excepting two notable experiments in reestablishing a Judaeian kingdom.

In 57 B.C. Gabinius further eroded Hyrcanus's authority by splitting the ethnarchy into five autonomous precincts, in effect leaving Hyrcanus only his spiritual powers. In diplomatic affairs, Hyrcanus relied heavily on his shrewd minister, an Idumaeian forced-convert to Judaism named Antipater, who in 48 B.C. provided meaningful military assistance to Caesar at Alexandria; as a reward Hyrcanus was reinstated as ethnarch and granted Joppa.

During Pompey's preoccupation with the civil wars against Julius Caesar (from 49 B.C.), the power of the crafty counselor Antipater and his fam-

ily greatly increased. Judaea was now to be treated as a prize of the competing interests.

When Gaius Julius Caesar was winning the contest, Hyrcanus II became a figurehead of no importance while Antipater, in return for services rendered to Caesar, received Roman citizenship and was awarded the title of “procurator of Judaea.” When Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C., Cassius, one of the assassins, went to Syria where he hoped to establish a power base in his conflict with Mark Antony. Cassius, posing as a liberator of Judaea, extorted money from that hard-pressed land to fund his war chest; Antipater, ever the opportunist, cooperated along with his well-tutored sons.

While not granting Judaea full autonomy, Caesar’s empowerment of Antipater’s family seemed like a step in that direction. Judaea was clearly under Rome’s thumb inasmuch as the oppressive tribute due Rome continued to be enforced. Antipater was murdered in 43 B.C. by a certain Malichus, who apparently was trying to co-opt Antipater’s power-base in Judaea. Shortly after this, Antipater’s son, Herod, hired some assassins to track down and kill his father’s murderers.

Throughout this turmoil, Antipater stood by the titular spiritual leader Hyrcanus II, not so much out of personal loyalty, but rather because he wisely perceived the ineffectual little guy as a means by which to achieve political power in Palestine for himself. During his brief authority over Roman interests in the Near East, Cassius set in motion a series of overtures to the Parthians, who were always eager for a chance to advance their own interests west of the Euphrates. Cassius and Brutus were defeated at Philippi by the forces led by the triumvirate Octavian, Marcus Antonius and Lepidus. Delegations sent to Antony complaining about the Idumaeen strongmen Phasael and Herod were to no avail. After the battle, Phasael and Herod secured from the victorious Mark Antony positions as tetrarchs, thereby made seemingly subordinate to Hyrcanus, who continued as ethnarch. In effect, Antipater’s sons became generals or *strategoï* of Jerusalem and Galilee, respectively. Thus the Antipater/Hyrcanus team trumped Antigonus’s own petition to Caesar for high office.

Initially, the Jews had reacted to the elevation of Antipater’s sons with rioting, and it was clear that Rome’s appointments could only be enforced with bloodshed. Mark Antony’s ascendancy was marked by a further increase in the Judaeen tax burden in order to finance his opulent lifestyle. The Parthian invasion of Judaea in 41/40 B.C., already set in motion through the late Cassius’s machinations, and the consequent installation of Antigonus as the Judaeen ruler temporarily rendered this matter moot. Parthia’s surprise move was to put everything on hold.

From the Roman perspective, Parthia’s march into Asia Minor, Syria,

and Judaea was quite abrupt. The most likely scenario, as viewed from Rome, would have been for the Parthians to occupy Armenia first, only then making a grab for Syria/Judaea. Next, the restive Scythians, Germans and Dacians could be expected to exploit the Roman preoccupation in the east to foment trouble in their neighboring provinces. The Jews of Judaea had earlier been emboldened by the thrashing Parthia had inflicted upon Crassus's at Carrhae to rebel against Roman authority. Antipater, who was looking out for Roman interests, had put down the revolt with customary "eastern" severity. That uprising was premature, but now Parthia came to the rebellious Jews' rescue.

3

Herod the Great: Judaea Becomes a Roman Client State

The Rise of Herod: The Fatal Attraction

When the invading Parthians had appointed Antigonus King over the gentile population and High Priest of the Jews, the latter welcomed his accession. In the aftermath, Phasaël was either killed or forced to commit suicide while in prison — a taboo in Jewish law and an act that reflected poorly on the piety of his brother, Herod. Antigonus marred Hyrcanus, thus rendering him unqualified to hold the High Priesthood, by cutting off his ears. Next, Antigonus sent Hyrcanus into exile in Babylon.

After placing his family atop the isolated impregnable rocky outcrop of Masada with a garrison for safekeeping, Herod, in early 40 B.C., fled to Rome, where he wisely perceived he might redeem his fortunes. It was an opportune moment. Herod's demonstrated talents had already endeared him to Rome in its program for Near Eastern "development." At the tender age of 25 in 48 B.C. Herod had acted briefly as governor of Galilee on Julius Caesar's behalf.

When in 43 B.C. Herod proceeded to hunt down and destroy his father's murderer and the assassin's supporters with the approval of Cassius, he ensured his role as Hyrcanus II's chief advisor. The triumvirs (particularly Antony, who had become the latest caretaker of the eastern provinces) saw Herod as their most promising instrument with which to restore Roman control, inasmuch as there was no male of the Hasmonean line who was available to be installed as Rome's puppet ruler. Moreover, Herod had established his political acumen, his loyalty to Rome and, it was assumed, his insights into Judaeian society and customs. Accordingly, in 39 B.C. the Senate and People of Rome, at the direction of Antony and Octavian, conferred upon Herod the kingship of Judaea.

As soon as he had been duly chosen, Herod immediately returned to Palestine. At about the same time, the fledgling minister married a niece of Antigonus, thus probably consoling those who remained loyal to the memory of the almost defunct Hasmonean house. Antigonus, when he fell into the hands of his enemies, was executed by order of Mark Antony. Execution was rather a drastic step when the victim repented and asked for clemency, as Antigonus had done. Shortly afterward Roman troops expelled the Parthians, whose popularity among many Jews in Palestine had been and subsequently remained considerable.

Herod's further progression towards the crown was brought about by the continuing chaos in the eastern Mediterranean before and after the Battle of Philippi. Cassius's "liberators" urgently needed funds and Herod dutifully raised considerable quantities, first in Galilee and later in Judaea and Syria. When some cities in Judaea refused to pay, he ruthlessly subjected them to slavery. Meanwhile, he had elevated his estimation in Hyrcanus's eyes when he routed the king's nephew Antigonus. When Cassius was defeated at Philippi, it did not, as might be expected, inhibit Herod's ascent. Antony was anxious to retain a powerful Roman ally in the region, so he went along with the fable that Hyrcanus's faction, in which Herod was a major player, had supported the Cassian Liberation unwillingly. It was on this account that Antony had promoted Herod and Phasael to the rank of tetrarchs before the Parthian cataclysm. The exact relationship between the two brothers and John, who, as we discussed, became ethnarch (dubbed John Hyrcanus II), is uncertain.

Lacking sufficient forces, it took Herod three years to fully liberate his appointed domain. It was not until 38 B.C. that Antony sent two legions under Sosius to assist his favorite contender to secure Jerusalem in July of that year, after a seven-month siege. Sosius wanted to celebrate the Roman victory by sacking the city and was barely restrained by Herod's pleas. Notwithstanding his accelerated marriage with the Hasmonean heiress Mariamne, Herod was unable to gain the allegiance of his putative subjects. As has been noted, Antony took the extraordinary step of executing Antigonus despite the latter's petition for mercy, a measure that must certainly have pleased Herod. The latter proved his loyalty to Antony, overcoming the taint of his earlier allegiance to Cassius, by his services during the Parthian campaign. In return Antony protected Herod against the demands of his mistress, Cleopatra, when she demanded Judaea be added to her dominions. She was only able to swipe Jericho and the balsam groves of the Dead Sea oases near En Geddi from Herod's domain. Even so, Herod cleverly manipulated the deal so that he leased these territories back from her and still turned a handsome profit.

Rome's Western Entanglement: The Judaeian Cat's-Paw

After the battle of Actium, the association with Antony would normally have made Herod a pariah. As it happened, Herod was busy campaigning against one of the warlords of Nabataea — at his future antagonist Cleopatra's behest — and fortunately was thus unavailable to directly assist Antony during the battle. Octavian, soon to become Augustus Caesar, affirmed Herod's authority and even enlarged his kingdom, which continued to grow along with their friendship. Thus it was that by 20 B.C., Herod not only ruled over the territory taken from Cleopatra and the fertile Judaeian coastal plain, but Trachonitis, Batanaea, Auranitis, Ulatha and Panias as well.

Herod's reign marks the apogee of Jewish regional influence, howbeit under a Roman nominee. Herod's tasks on behalf of Rome and his own, more local, security concerns gave rise to significant indigenous military know-how. His administration thus is quite relevant to the military situation in the first century A.D. According to Peter Richardson, author of the acclaimed study *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, "Herod is fascinating because of the complexity of his life and involvement with almost everyone who was anyone at that time — from Pompey and Julius Caesar through Augustus and Marcus Agrippa — all the great figures of late first century B.C. history." Notwithstanding Herod's bad press in Christian and Jewish theological writings, he transformed Judaea into a regional power unmatched in all the verifiable history of the Jewish state.

Herod the Great's rule lasted 35 years. As rulers of Judaea go, his was a stable and enduring reign. Herod was an able administrator and skillful financier. He developed the economic resources of the country, building a new port, Caesarea. Spiritual and temporal power henceforth was separated. The High Priesthood, now in Herod's control, ceased to be hereditary or lifelong, the Sanhedrin (judiciary committee of elders) lost much of its power to a royal council on Hellenistic lines, and the old aristocracy was replaced by a new nobility of office, including Greeks. As a secular king, Herod tried to promote Hellenization. Games were held even in Jerusalem; his sons received Greek education; the imperial cult was introduced among his non-Jewish subjects; several cities were founded or refounded along Greek lines within his kingdom; and lavish gifts, mostly of buildings, were bestowed on many cities outside of Judaea proper. This policy was unpopular with his Jewish subjects, and neither his championship of the rights of the Diaspora nor his magnificent new Temple won him their affection. Rather their hatred for their semi-foreign king steadily increased, and late in his reign there was opposition from the wary Pharisees, formerly relatively acquiescent.

Aside from his ambivalent stance towards his Jewish subjects, Herod was a very savvy statesman and highly influential throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. His regional prestige endured for centuries after his death. Historians note that the volatile issues of the first century B.C. Middle East can be connected with those of the twenty-first century. Richardson emphasizes, “Herod’s world has a lot of relevance to our own, ... he was 100 percent Arab by ethnicity and yet Jewish by religion.” Many Jews of the time disliked Herod because he was not Jewish by inheritance. From these early conflicts, you can draw clear comparisons to the conflicts in that part of the world today, though some historians are a bit too glib in making the Arab-Israeli analogy.

Most importantly for the nascent Jewish resistance against Roman rule was the fact that Rome depended on Herod to remove the growing “bandit” threat to the security of his territory. The whole point of setting up Herod as a client king, rather than ruling the district directly, was that Herod would police the area using his own resources, freeing up the empire’s central mobile reserve for major threats, such as presented by Parthia. Thus, one of Herod’s chief tasks as client king was to suppress the endemic banditry plaguing the region, including piracy.

Judaea, from Herod’s rise to power until the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt, witnessed the advent of groups that, for various reasons, refused to accept the formalities of submission that Rome expected of her clients. This phenomenon is worth examining in some detail because the outlaw groups formed the nucleus of what were later to become the rebel factions, and Herod’s response foreshadowed the more massive Roman denouement a century hence. I rely here on Steve Mason’s able commentary in the *Brill Life*.

Portentously, Herod’s first act as governor of Galilee in 47–46 B.C. was to attack on a bandit leader named Ezekias, who harassed Tyrian villages. Ezekia (Hezekiah) with his followers was waging a guerrilla war in the north of Galilee, bordering the territory which Herod was expected to pacify on Rome’s behalf. After a mock trial, Herod had this Ezekias put to death. The Syrians were pleased at Herod’s zeal and so was the governor of Syria Sextus Julius Caesar. Exactly what Ezekias had done in Galilee is a bit murky. Most likely, this brigand’s raids on Syrian hamlets gave Herod the rationale for finishing off a dangerous rival to first his father and now himself. Ezekias appears to have had important backers in Jerusalem as Herod was called before the synedriion or Sanhedrin — the Jewish ad-hoc tribunal — and accused of executing Jews without a giving them the benefit of a fair trial. It was not simply Ezekias’s connections, but Herod’s arrogance in this matter of punishing the powerful freebooter that irked the judiciary council in Jerusalem. It is also likely that another factor inspiring Herod’s judicial reprimand was his excesses in ransacking the towns while searching for the bandits’ support-

ers. Instead of responding to the summons to appear in customary penitential garb, he defiantly adorned himself in the royal purple.

Many of Ezekias's descendants had been active in the resistance to Rome before and during the First Revolt, all of them contemptuously called *lestai* (connoting mere criminals rather than political activists) by Josephus. They were possibly forerunners of those whom Josephus ambiguously labeled "zealots." The last of the line was Eleazar ben Yair, who was immortalized by Josephus as the commander of the defenders of Masada. Judas, the son of Ezekias, was active between 4 B.C. and A.D. 9. The sons of Judas, James and Simon, were crucified in the governorship of Tiberius Alexander A.D. 46–48. A relative, Menahem, likely Judas's grandson, was one of the leaders early in the First Jewish Revolt.

In 38 B.C., Herod also conducted a campaign against the highwaymen who dwelt in caves near Arbela in Galilee. Josephus here foreshadows his celebrated dramatic delineation of Masada when he describes an old man who cut down his family and jumped down the cliff "submitting to death rather than to slavery." Whereas Josephus describes all these groups as bands of robbers, rabbinical sources habitually describe representatives of the Roman government as bandits (*listim*), especially tax collectors and customs officials. This is a reflection of the free market extortion racketeering going on and helps to explain the prevalence of the robber bands, who are doing nothing more than stealing from the "official" thugs. The frequency of political banditry in this period both resulted from and increased instability. In the words of one rabbinical source writing in the second century A.D., "Wherever the empire takes over government, there appear bands and bands of *listim*" (Rabbi Acha). Bandits, tax farmers, absentee landlords, all could be described as "bandits" to some extent. The designation and the practice had many shades of meaning.

As noted above, in 23 B.C., Augustus showed his early favor towards Herod by supplementing his Judaeian realm with Trachonitis, Batanaea and Auranitis. As a prelate/client ruler, and a proven posse chieftain, one of Herod's most urgent tasks was to suppress the robber bands in Trachonitis. The sovereign Zendoros, who received a share of the profit, according to Josephus encouraged banditry in that district. Josephus explains that it was difficult to restrain folks who had made brigandage a habit and had no other means of making a living. These vagabonds had neither city nor field of their own but only underground shelters and caves where they lived together with their cattle, according to Josephus. Fourteen years later the people of Trachonitis are said to have revolted and resumed their practice of robbing their neighbors. Herod's generals suppressed them. Forty chieftains are said to have fled to Arabia, where they were received and provided with a base of operations.

This police action led to conflicts between Herod and the Nabataeans

during “hot pursuit,” calling to mind the American punitive expedition against Pancho Villa into Mexico. According to Josephus, the gangs operated both in Judaea (i.e., Galilee) and Coele-Syria — that is, the territory of Damascus. Herod first attacked the lesser homebase of the bandits in Trachonitis, which operation was ineffective, since they had their principal base of operations on Nabataean territory. There they “numbered about a thousand.” Herod attacked them there also. This is what provoked Nabataean intervention and resulting political problems for Herod. In an effort to suppress the banditry, Herod settled 3,000 Idumaeans, his own countrymen, in Trachonitis and attacked the Nabataeans.

Augustus, fearing a wider war in an area that he had hoped Herod would pacify, reprimanded his client king, following which both the inhabitants of Trachonitis and the Nabataeans resorted to brigandage. Herod, in the end, obviously failed to gain control of Trachonitis, for in the last years of his reign he planted settlers in a colony in Batanaea to serve as a buffer between Trachonitis and Galilee. These settlers were Jews from Babylonia, mounted archers who had crossed the Euphrates. These settlers are mentioned again in connection to events that took place later. Varus, administrator of Agrippa II, planned to cooperate with the people of Trachonitis in an attack on the “Babylonian Jews” as per Josephus in *Vita* (54–58) and *War* II.18.6 (481–483). This was a serious matter, for an important caravan route ran through this territory from Bostra to Damascus.

These problems of Herod in Trachonitis are significant because Josephus makes explicit statements about the causes of lawlessness in that region and because it can be seen how difficult it was to put a stop to this pillage without moving in with an army and establishing permanent centers of authority.

It was not until the period near the end of his life when Herod became suspicious (with some justification) that his heirs were restless and conspired to hasten his demise so they could arrange affairs in their favor that Herod became oppressive. It was during this pre-emptive “succession struggle” among his conniving wives and their respective offspring that Herod gained his reputation as a bloodthirsty, paranoid butcher. The extent to which Jewish Palestine suffered under Herod the Great seems to have been exaggerated.

One of the more notorious episodes occurred near the end of Herod’s life. In a rather remarkable act of religious naiveté, Herod sought to honor his imperial patron by erecting a golden eagle atop the entrance of the Second Temple that he was building. He felt that, after all, he was doing this wonderful thing for his Jewish subjects, there could not possibly be any objection if he were to add a minor embellishment to pay homage to Rome.

As should have been anticipated, two Pharisee sophists, rabbis (teachers) who had a following of young devotees (much in the manner of Jesus and

his disciples) in their seminary, protested and demanded that the eagle be removed. This objection was dismissed as overbearing impudence. Later, believing a rumor that Herod had died (he was in fact critically ill) the elderly rabbis had whipped up their students to such a frenzy that they tore the offensive eagle down from its perch and hacked it to pieces in front of a delighted, disorderly crowd.

The royal troops in the fortress Antonia at the edge of the temple compound rushed to the scene and were able to arrest 40 of the demonstrators. When word got back to Herod, lying in his sickbed, he had himself borne on a litter to the special assembly of elders (gerousa or sanhedrin) that was convened in Jericho to rule on the matter. Herod expressed outrage, advising the tribunal that all those arrested had been engaged in sedition and should be executed. The council asked Herod to forgive all those but the parties who had actually performed the vandalism. Herod agreed and had the onlookers released, but those students and professors who cut the eagle down were burnt alive, and the High Priest, who should have prevented this defacement, was demoted.

Herod's power was based on his strategic chain of fortresses (including the Antonia in Jerusalem), his chiefly gentile mercenary army, his secret police, and a centralized bureaucracy, with which he ruthlessly and effectively fulfilled a client king's function of maintaining order. By his steadfast loyalty to Rome, he retained Augustus's confidence for many years. However, Herod eventually lost this trust through his high-handed conduct in the noted dispute with Nabataea and his savagery towards his family, intrigues in which caused him to execute his favorite wife, Mariamne I, in 29 B.C., her two sons in 7 B.C., and his eldest son in 4 B.C. Serious disturbances, requiring Roman intervention followed his death, and his kingdom was divided between his sons, Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip.

Armies and Military Infrastructure of Herod: Military Foundations of the Revolt

Undoubtedly Herod made use of a select few of his Jewish subjects in his policing operations. It is also true that he utilized non-Jewish units, as there was a sizeable pagan population within his jurisdiction, as well as mercenary troops from bordering client kingdoms.

The army certainly constituted one of the main pillars of Herod's system of government. As had already been the case under the Hasmoneans, Jews served in his army alongside foreign mercenaries, but there were also non-Jewish mercenaries from the territories under his control. The gentiles were apparently given preference. It seems that Herod intentionally settled

the non-Jewish mercenaries in enclosed city centers to act as a counterbalance to the Jewish population, who were not very well disposed towards him. It is likely that he also preferred to recruit the civil service bureaucracy from these circles. The civil administration was conducted under the territorial construct of “toparchies” — districts defined by the economic and demographic domination of a metropolitan center.

The structure of Herod’s army, like that of his civil administration, was Hellenistic, principally composed of mercenaries — a habit common since the Hasmonean heyday when foreign mercenaries would often skirmish with their kinfolk in Jewish pay. The Palestinian Jews were not well represented in Herod’s guard, since their loyalty was suspect, for good reason. The majority of soldiers were Idumaeans, Celts, Thracians, Germans and the citizens of the various Greek cities, grouped in special units. Jews from the diaspora did augment Herodian ranks, reflecting the popularity of Herod among his co-religionists abroad. Herod founded military colonies for the defense of the frontiers: Esbon, or Heshbon in Peraea, another at Gaba in Galilee and two others in Batanaea and Trachonitis. These martial settlements were complemented by a chain of fortresses, some in the interior of the country, others on the borders. Masada was rebuilt, as were Machaerus and Alexandrium (near Jericho). Near Jerusalem, Herodium was founded and a like-named outpost was established on the Nabataean frontier. Herod had a new outer wall set up in Jericho and named it Cyprus, after his mother. In Jerusalem proper, there were further reinforcements to the citadel walls in addition to the Tower of Antonia.

Most of Herod’s palaces, built all over the country, were in fact fortresses. Besides the fortification program — largely for internal security but also against his enemies and enemies of Rome on his border — Herod built a number of Greek cities, in keeping with his cosmopolitan outlook as a regional superpower and representative of Roman as well as Jewish interests. Samaria was rebuilt in 27 B.C., renamed Sebaste, Stratonis Turris (Strato’s Tower) was renamed Caesarea Maritima and expanded into a major seaport after a labor of 12 years. It was larger than Piraeus and supplanted Joppa in handling the expanded maritime trade of the Levant. So well chosen was this site that it became the seat of the Roman procurator when Judaea became a colony in A.D. 6. Herod rebuilt Anthedon and named it Aggrippeum, while within Judaea proper two other Hellenistic cities were founded: Antipatris and Phasealis. The inhabitants of these new cities — or refounded cities — were non-Jews for the most part. Sebaste and Caesarea were principally viewed as military colonies and, in combination, furnished to the royal army a single corps of troops, each component named for the cities from whence its soldiers were drawn. The unit was based at Caesarea and officially given the cognomen *Sebasteni*.

Modern research has clarified the origins of the celebrated defense works generally imputed to Herod's reign. The Hasmoneans prior to the ascent of Herod in fact threw up many of these strongholds in Judaea. A well-placed ring of redoubts, had soundly fortified Jerusalem. Likewise, the Hasmoneans built several wilderness fortresses overlooking the Rift Valley: Masada to the south, Hyrcania near the Wadi Kidron, Docus and Threx overlooking Jericho, and Machaerus on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. This system was anchored in the north by Alexandrium and defended Judaea and Samaria both against the Nabateans and the cities of the Decapolis. Some authors presume an integrated set of forts constructed during Herod's reign, but, again, this work appears to have predated Herod, who reinforced existing posts and added a few more links in the chain. There may have been other, smaller outposts constructed along the southern frontier during the Maccabean conflicts. Nevertheless, as noted above, Herod substantially strengthened and augmented this system.

An unconventional element in Herod's armed forces, contrary to the usual Roman practice of recruiting additional troops for the Syrian legions from neighboring provinces, was the Parthian, Arasid, refugees and their retainers who settled in Syria. Notable among these is the Babylonian Jew Zamaris who arrived with his family and 500 archers circa 9–6 B.C. at Daphne, near Antioch. Zamaris's grandson, Philip ben Jacimus, became one of Agrippa II's trusted officers during the time of the Jewish Revolt. Silas the Babylonian, one of the first and most proficient Jewish generals in the revolt also derived from this area. Herod's situation is not unique if one considers the evidence of "Parthian" regiments and mercenaries in the Roman army during this period. What is striking is the fact that Zamaris was a Jew and brought a considerable number of trained warriors with him, presumably Jewish. His band of 500 archers, plus 100 male kinsmen were refugees from the feudal spats in which the Parthian warlords challenged the Parthian ruling house during that period. Herod resettled this group in the vicinity of Bashan (Batanaea), on the borders of Trachonitis as a means of combating the increasingly predatory bands of brigands from that region. During the Jewish Revolt, a descendant of this clan, the aforementioned Silas the Babylonian (or Batanaean), defected from Agrippa II's rule to the rebels, bringing along several of his troops.

Fall of the House of Herod: "The War of Varus" and Imposition of Direct Rule

When it became obvious to the religious separatists that they would get no relief under Herod's sons, revolts erupted in Judaea, Peraea, and Galilee.

Herod, in keeping with his paranoia about his potential heirs, had left several consecutive wills, further clouding the succession issue. The revolts had the character of popular uprisings and may have drawn their ideological support from Israel's ancient traditions of popular kingship. Ultimately, Varus, governor of Syria, crushed the revolts, and the Jews of Judaea endured ten years of Archelaus's cruelty. Varus had to assemble three legions for his effort to suppress the rioting in Judaea. Eventually even the Romans had to admit Archelaus's failure and began to rule Judaea directly through procurators. It's a tragic tale because Judaea under Herod had, whatever the failings in the eyes of the clerical literalists, become a viable "ally" of sorts of Rome, enjoying as much autonomy as the Romans generally allowed. Thanks to the virulent familial squabbling and fragmented body politic, it fell under Rome's naïve, uncomprehending, direct rule. Following is a summary of the secession debacle, and the onset of Roman direct rule.

Upon Herod's agonizing death from some unknown disease in 4 B.C., there was a wave of unrest surging through Palestine. Herod, thanks to his demented paranoia about whom he could trust among his potential heirs, had left several consecutive wills naming his successor. It was unclear whom, if anyone, among his sons had valid title to his throne. The nominal designee, Archelaus, quickly subdued the demonstrations with the aid of Roman troops. Next, the various sons arrived in Rome to put their respective claims before Augustus, who would be the ultimate arbiter of the succession controversy. While they cooled their heels in Augustus's court in Rome, awaiting an audience, unrest continued to simmer a while then broke into open revolt. The Roman army commander, Sabinus, had to summon help from the legions commanded by the imperial legate in Syria, Varus — the same man who a few years later suffered an inglorious fate as legate of the Rhine army when three legions under his command were ambushed and exterminated by Arminius in the Teutoberg forest. Varus had to assemble a large force for this effort — three legions.

Notwithstanding Josephus's pro forma labeling them as "bandits," some of the rebels were those who had apparent political motives, including several of the veterans of Herod's army. Others seem to have been inspired by religious motives, albeit with an inevitable political inclination.

Prominent among the latter was the Sepphoris-based Judas the Galilean, son of Ezechias, the brigand chief with whom Herod had to contend in pacifying Trachonitis. Judas raised a large body of adherents, broke open the royal arsenals, and once he armed his associates, attacked the other competitors for supremacy over Judaea. At the same time, in neighboring Peraea, a tall, imposing former slave named Simon made a bid for power by collecting a body of brigands, raiding royal palaces at Jericho and elsewhere for plunder. He was

put down by a local body of troops still loyal to the palace guard. Yet another upstart named Athronges, a shepherd, set up four subordinate commands comprised of other malcontents serving under each of his brothers and conducted widespread marauding expeditions throughout Herod's former domains.

Varus had thought he had the situation sufficiently under control to leave a single legion under Sabinus in Jerusalem to keep the peace while he attended the hearings on the Herodian succession in Augustus's court. However, things soon spun out of control again during Passover when many pilgrims thronged the Temple grounds and renewed agitation erupted, which Sabinus suppressed with great violence. He sent word to Varus in Rome that he needed reinforcements to deal with a situation that had escalated from rioting to rebellion. It was this brutal suppression, by the way, that invigorated some of the late Herod's former guardsmen to throw in their lot with the several groups of political "brigands."

Varus returned upon receiving Sabinus's urgent call for help. He marched southward with his two remaining legions and four regiments of horse, picking up 1,500 men from local levies at Berytus (Beirut) and another thousand similarly recruited at Ptolemais. Aretas of Arabia (Nabataea) contributed a large force, doubtlessly to prove his loyalty but also to get in his licks against the Jews. Varus detached a unit to round up the insurgents in Galilee and destroy Sepphoris, while he marched into Samareitus (Samaria) with the main body. At this point the Arab allies began to run amok and were thus sent back home. In reprisal for the slaughter of a Roman detachment by Athronges, Varus sacked Emmaus. Varus entered the capital and granted clemency to most of the citizens, who claimed that outsiders — the pilgrim crowds — had instigated the revolt. Next, he rounded up all the ringleaders of the various rebel bands and publicly crucified them along with 2,000 of the insurgents under their commands.

The anarchy that prevailed during Augustus's deliberations prompted some Jewish delegations to request that the monarchy be abolished and Judaea again be placed under the sole rule of the High Priest. Another emissary — representing the Greek cities of Gadara, Hippus and Gaza — asked that their toparchies be restored to the Roman province of Syria. Clearly, Judaea as we know it was not an option for any of the residents except the feuding heirs and their lackeys.

Augustus finally in essence decided to endorse the most recent of Herod's many testaments, but he only granted Archelaus the title of tetrarch with a kingdom embracing the restless core of Judaea — one considerably reduced from that of his father. Archelaus's brothers, Antipas and Philip, received the majority non-Jewish sectors. These latter comprised territories administered by their late father that lie outside the boundaries of diminished Judaea.

Philip's domain was largely composed of gentile areas in the detached area of Gaulanitis, which had isolated pockets of rather fanatical Jews — who could be kept in check — and the Babylonian-Jewish colonists of Batanaea, who did not object to his program of Hellenization. Herod Antipas, in contrast, had to administer a tetrarchy embracing mostly Jews of a nationalistic temperament in Peraea and Galilee. He founded a new city, Tiberias, after his emperor and populated it with a mixture of Galilean peasants, attracted by the offer of free land and houses, and the traditional nobility of the area. This mixture was to prove volatile when Galilee was caught up in the maelstrom of the Great Revolt.

The reign of Archelaus over “Judaea minor” was, in keeping with the conclusion of his father's incumbency, harsh and repressive. It is a mark of the suffering under his rule that two erstwhile mortal enemies, the Samaritans and the Jews, joined in making an embassy to the emperor in A.D. 6 to complain. Archelaus was summoned to Rome and banished to Vienna. It is from this date that Judaea resumed its pre-Herodian status as a Roman province, annexed to Syria.

4

Adding Insult to Injury: Roman Misrule and Escalating Disturbances in Judaea

Taming the Pesky New Colony

The legate of Syria, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, was ordered to take charge of the annexed territory. One of his first tasks was to conduct a census of Judaea in order to impose a head tax. This seems to be the census alluded to in Luke ii, 1–3, that sent Joseph and Mary to their birthplace to be counted and assessed.

The census aroused a well of popular resentment, as it was wrongly believed to be the harbinger of additional taxes, rather than the more efficient collection of existing taxes. The census initially proceeded with little opposition thanks to the efforts of the High Priest Joazar ben Boethus. However, the nobles seemed to be foremost in calling for cooperation. The merchant class and the plebeians fumed and were encouraged by a new party that was born from this episode: the Zealots. At least this is how Josephus identifies this new movement. The term is confusing because Josephus later uses it to specify only those rebels serving under the chieftains Simon bar Gioras, John of Gischala and Eleazar ben Simon — whose roots seem only to go back to the beginnings of the revolt (A.D. 66).

The fundamentally uncompromising Zealot movement has more properly been identified with the sicarii. Judas of Galilee (from Gamara) and a Pharisee named Sadduc, or Zaddok (also called “Saddek”), founded the party, which Herod expert A.H.M. Jones characterizes as rejecting the opportunist fatalism (i.e., *realpolitik*) of the conservative wing of the Pharisees. The new party, whom Jones equates with a Pharisee “left wing,” asserted that God would help only those whom helped themselves and it was the duty of every

Jew to fight for national independence. The party evolved into the powerful clandestine network to become known as the *sicarii* — for the *sica*, or dagger, they concealed within their robes — so that they could mingle in the crowds (sometimes disguised as women), get close to collaborationist Jews and stab them to death, rapidly escaping in the panic. There is little evidence that it was an all-out armed revolt or that it was widespread, but the embers from this terror campaign smoldered for a generation. The diverse elements of the bandit underground, which Herod the Great had tried to curb on behalf of his Roman sponsors, consolidated and expanded during this period.

For the following 35 years, Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea were under direct Roman rule. These districts, which we conveniently lump together under the designation “Judaea” when discussing the revolt, were not appended directly to the province of Syria because the way in which the local (city-state) governments were selected did not fit into the Syrian system. The governance of the new province was not, as per the usual custom, entrusted to men from the ranks of the senatorial Roman aristocracy but rather from the so-called equestrian order, or second order, consisting at this period of the Italian upper-middle class. From a practical standpoint, this was probably a wise decision because these men had a business/managerial background suited to run the complex bureaucratic machinery instituted by Herod. The upper classes would have been incapable of dealing with the administrative drudgery entailed in the Herodian system. But from a diplomatic standpoint, the decision was unfortunate. The Jews resented the fact that they were sent bureaucratic hacks as governors instead of the aristos they were used to. Further, the prefects did not have the habit of “easy authority” and so had to bully in order to cow the proud Jews. They also lacked the diplomatic tact that was a hallmark of the senatorial bluebloods.

The occupation army remained consistent. Only one fresh unit is known to have been created in Judaea, a cohort of Roman citizens called the *cohors Italica*. The regular garrison of Judaea consisted of the five infantry cohorts (roughly, regiments) and one cavalry “regiment” or *ala* drawn from the “Sabastenes”; this latter, although officered by Romans, continued to be recruited from the cities of Sebaste and Caesarea. This arrangement was highly provocative and volatile since the two cities were known for their rabid anti-Semitic sentiments, and the conduct of the troops in contact with Jews was openly belligerent. It was understood that if the “police force” stationed in Caesarea could not cope with the situation, then the legate of Syria would send down reinforcements from Antiochus.

In civil administration, the Herodian royal council was replaced by the Sanhedrin (an advisory board of Jewish notables), which informally advised the prefect on local custom and religious prohibitions and had limited pow-

ers as a court of law. The Sanhedrin could try and punish minor offenses, but they could only hear capital cases and present those whom they condemned to death to the prefect for execution. The prefect was not bound by the decision. He had full powers of life and death in these instances.

Whereas Herod had full control over the religious institutions of the Jews, which he generally respected with the notorious exception of the golden eagle erected over the arch of the Temple's main gate, the Romans usurped the power to appoint the high priests and control the Temple funds. This was quite rankling and called for extreme tact, a quality notably lacking in the petty bourgeois bookkeepers sent to administer the perplexing little theocratic territory. The prefect maintained a garrison in Fortress Antonia and patrolled near the Temple on walls directly overlooking the Temple courts during festivals. He also retained custody of the high priests' vestments, handing them over only during the pilgrimage holidays.

We know very little about the first four prefects — Coponius (6–9), Marcus Ambibulus (9–12), Annius Rufus (12–15) and Valerius Gratus (15–26). The only thing that can be said that they were neither tyrants nor bunglers, as Josephus would certainly have recorded these traits.

When we arrive at the administration of Pontius Pilatus, better known to us as Pilate, the picture changes for the worse. Pilate, of course, will forever be associated with the trial and execution of Jesus of Nazareth. In the words of A.H.M. Jones, "He seems in fact to have been a tactless and opinionated man, full of his own importance and the dignity of his office; but he probably was no more corrupt or brutal than the ordinary run of Roman governors. It seems improbable that Tiberius, who kept a watchful eye on his governors in the interest of the provincials, would have kept Pilate at his post for ten years if he had been such a monster [as Philo portrays him]." In fact, Pilate may have received an unduly unfavorable reputation as a result of his having the misfortune to rule during the ministry of Jesus. Later biographers feel that he was perhaps a more sensitive and nuanced administrator than is generally credited. He had to walk a line between seeming too compliant with the Jewish authorities, thereby alienating the jealous Greek population of the province, and meddling in matters of strict Jewish religious observance.

As far as the Jews are concerned, the available record of Pilate's rule is revealing in several aspects. The earliest of Pilate's known contretemps with respect to the Jewish community of Palestine involved the display of emblems borne atop the legionary standards. Since the time of the Hasmonean rule, the Romans had honored the Jewish religious taboo against presenting "graven images" within Jerusalem by removing any device from their standards that depicted animals or humans. Recall that the Jews had challenged Herod himself when he erected the golden eagle atop the Temple archway. Ignoring this

recognized prohibition, Pilate marched his troops into Jerusalem with their standards bearing the image of the emperor. A delegation hiked to the prefectorial seat in Caesarea Maritima and protested this violation of the Torah. At first Pilate insisted that the delegation's demand was an affront to the dignity of the emperor and surrounded them with soldiers, threatening to massacre them. The rabbis were unyielding; finally Pilate backed down and sent an order to his troops in Jerusalem to remove the images from their standards.

The second instance may demonstrate excessive fussiness on the part of the Jews. Pilate dedicated a set of golden shields in the royal palace in Jerusalem, which was his own official residence. From the reference in Philo (Josephus is silent about this case), the shields did not bear any image or emblem but simply his and the emperor's names. It is a matter of recent controversy whether or not the shields in fact contained a likeness of the emperor. In any event, the Jews were greatly agitated and sent an appeal, signed by four sons of Herod the Great, many other members of his family, and a large number of notables, directly to the emperor. Tiberius yielded to the public clamor and ordered Pilate to transfer the dedication ceremony to the imperial headquarters in Caesarea.

The third quarrel arose when Pilate, seeing that the repairs to the Temple were virtually completed, advised the Temple administration that he proposed to use some of the accumulating funds (from tithes requested of every Jew) to construct an aqueduct to tap a spring 24 miles away and bring the water to Jerusalem — which did suffer periodic water shortages. This proposal angered the crowds just then gathering in Jerusalem for one of the festival holidays. It was considered a sacrilege to divert the funds to anything other than maintenance of the Temple. A large number of Galileans were among the throng, and it is believed they were the chief instigators. A riot ensued. Pilate ordered the mob to disperse, and when they refused, he unleashed his troops on them, causing great bloodshed.

All these blunders must have had a cumulative effect on the patient Tiberius. What finally turned the emperor against Pilate was an incident that did not involve Jews but rather their ancient enemies, the Samaritans. A prophet among them gathered a huge crowd around him, many of whom were armed, and rallied them with the object of marching to Mount Gerizim, their holy site, where he claims to have discovered sacred urns that Moses allegedly buried there. Pilate, alarmed at the great excitement of the armed mob and the prospect of yet another volatile "messiah" movement, ordered them to disperse, attacking and evidently killing practically the entire throng. The Samaritan national council appealed to the legate of Syria, Vitellius, who was in Jerusalem at the time, to rebuke the prefect. Vitellius remanded the matter to the emperor, and Pilate was recalled to Rome to stand trial.

Rebellion Postponed: The Reign of Agrippa I and the “Statue” Crisis Under the Mad Caligula

By the 30s, the situation in Palestine had changed. In 33/34 Herod's son Philip died. In typically leisurely fashion, Tiberius ruled the territory “temporarily” through the governor of Syria until he decided what to do with it, which he never did. The man who eventually wound up with this territory and the rest of Herod's old kingdom was Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod (the name entered the family from Herod's friendship with Augustus's friend and son-in-law). Agrippa was raised in Rome in the imperial family and was a friend of Gaius (Caligula). At Gaius's accession, he was given a small territory to rule and then in 39 accused his uncle, Antipas, of treason. Antipas was executed, and Agrippa took over his territory as well.

It was thus that Claudius who succeeded his mad nephew Caligula to the purple after the latter's assassination in A.D. 41, attempted to preserve Roman influence in Judaea by restoring a king to the province, Herod Agrippa I, who was a direct heir of Herod the Great.

In the time sequence that follows, keep in mind that the transmission of information to Rome and return normally took two months. It occurred during Caligula's brief reign, just prior to the accession of Claudius.

In the wake of the Alexandrian pogroms, affray erupted in Judaea proper. In the coastal town of Jamnia, inhabited principally by Jews, some gentile residents set up an altar to Caesar near a synagogue. It was a deliberate provocation to the cheeky Jews, who would almost certainly take the bait. The agitators believed that the imperial power could support their action since it was done to show obeisance to the emperor, a sentiment notably lacking among the stiff-necked Jews. The Jews immediately destroyed the contemptible altar. The financial procurator residing in the city, one Herennius Capito, who had earlier tried to have Agrippa arrested, saw his chance for revenge against the haughty Jewish monarch. Herennius immediately reported this Jewish insult to the emperor, which drew a typically Caligulan response. Gaius Caligula became furious at this apparent display of Jewish irreverence to his divine status. He resolved to teach these haughty ingrates a lesson. He would force them to accept a likeness of himself in their High Temple, their sensitivities be damned.

Bear in mind that, in order to cope with Roman abuses, the Jews relied upon direct appeal to the procurator, the governor of Syria, or the emperor. While the scrapes tended to arise from a foolish gaffe on the part of the provincial garrison, this is one outstanding instance where the friction arose from the very center of the Empire. During the crisis over the statue of Gaius, the Jewish populace effectively conducted a peasant strike. The Syrian legate wisely pointed out to the self-deified mad Caligula that so long as the farmers remained

away from their fields, there would be no planting. Under these circumstances, the petitioners pointed out, enforced tax collection would lead to increased brigandage. The incident bears examining in some detail to illustrate the problem of timely communications with Rome; it may help explain why the local authorities in Judaea felt empowered to deal with crises as they saw fit.

In the winter of A.D. 39–40, the Syrian legate, Petronius, received an order from Caligula to erect his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem. In order to enforce this order, the legate proceeded to Palestine with two legions. During April and May of 40, there were negotiations with the Jews over this matter in Ptolemais. Petronius thereupon sent his first report on the issue back to Caligula. In June, Caligula received the report and replied that he should expedite matters to preempt any coordinated Jewish actions. In August, Petronius received the reply but hesitated to make a decision, faced with the prospect of sweeping passive resistance throughout the land, with the consequent (and most troubling) stoppage of the sowing season, thereby a reduction in tax revenues. Petronius was able to procrastinate by interpreting Caligula's order as requiring the creation of an effigy, which required a long time to arrange.

At the end of September A.D. 40, Agrippa I visited Caligula in Puteoli, learned about the tense situation in Judaea and asked for Caligula's forbearance. Caligula then sent instructions to Petronius to hold back on erecting the statue. In the beginning of November, Petronius negotiated with a delegation of prominent Jewish representatives in Tiberias at the commencement of the sowing season. Petronius next sent a request to the emperor begging him not to order construction and installation of the statues. By the end of November, Petronius received Caligula's instructions abandoning the project. However, Caligula received Petronius's petition by January 1, 41, and, changing his mind about the statue business, apparently planning to send a likeness of himself directly to Ptolemais for transport to Jerusalem, sent orders for the recalcitrant Petronius to commit suicide. However, on January 24, 41, Caligula was assassinated. At the beginning of March Petronius received the news about Caligula's death; it was only a month later, early April 41 that he received Caligula's order to kill himself.

Agrippa I was a ray of hope, a king who genuinely respected and honored Jewish customs and was an able diplomat. He knew how to balance homage to the Romans with a desire of his subjects for religious autonomy. Significantly, Agrippa I's coins minted in outlying areas contained taboo personal images, while those minted in Jerusalem did not.

Agrippa I lacked the haughty attitude towards his people that made his grandfather, Herod the Great, such a monster in the eyes of some. He had genuine charm. However, his fiscal policies seem to have been reckless, leaving the finances of his kingdom in disarray upon his death.

Portentously he had aroused the suspicions of Claudius when he engaged in an ambitious defense program by adding a third outer wall to the defenses of Jerusalem. His fortification of the New City, the quarter to the north of the Temple compound, would have rendered the entire city virtually impregnable. This program may have been intended purely for show or, more practically, to resolve the unemployment situation. But taken with Agrippa I's nationalist policy with respect to religion, these military preparations aroused the suspicion of Petronius's successor as legate of Syria, Vibius Marsus, who reported them to Claudius. This fortification alone may have been enough to create the impression that Agrippa I was planning a nationalist revival that threatened Rome's authority. Claudius ordered the construction to cease. Taken in conjunction with his Jewish friend's next move, there was reason to believe that Judaea was indeed preparing for a rebirth of the Maccabean/Hasmonean influence in the Near East. This predominance would directly clash with Rome's expectations that a new Herod would leave all foreign policy in the former's hands.

Agrippa I also maintained an aggressive policy towards his neighbors. He quarreled with the two great city republics of Tyre and Sidon. Instead of submitting his case to the judgment of the Roman government, as was expected, he threatened these neighboring states with an economic blockade. Since these regional powers relied on Agrippa I's corn exports for the sustenance of their dense populations, they were brought to heel.

When Agrippa I convened a council of Near Eastern rulers at Tiberias, it seemed that he was trying to establish himself as a regional power without the advice or consent of Rome. Four important kings, besides Agrippa I and his brother, attended this conference: Sampsigeramus of Emesa, Antiochus of Commagene, Polemo of Pontus and Cotys of Lesser Armenia. When Vibius Marsus learned of this meeting by accident, he was deeply affronted that such a conclave could be assembled without first checking with him. He was also reasonably alarmed that this secret conference among a number of kings who controlled the greater part of the empire's eastern frontier, may have heralded some kind of move to restore Judaea's regional autonomy. When he learned of this, Claudius again intervened against his old friend and had the Syrian governor break up the Congress of Tiberias as a threatening model of regional sovereignty.

Agrippa I's death in A.D. 44 removed the last effective mediator between an increasingly frustrated Roman imperial administration and the Jewish religious and political administrators. Thus ended the last hope of limited Judaeian autonomy, or at least a return to the relatively "good old days" of Herod the Great minus the despotism. Upon Agrippa I's demise in A.D. 44, inept Roman administration resumed with the appointment of Cuspius Fadus as procura-

tor, a typical blockhead instigator. There ensued a succession of venal, insensible local representatives whose brutish provocations encouraged the expansion of the zealot groups. Symptomatic of the general unrest was the rise of numerous avowed messiahs, or deliverers, along with a general expectation that the “end of days” was near, when scriptural prophecies of a world ruler emanating from Jerusalem hastened the day of the apocalypse.

Resumption of Direct Roman Rule: Descent to War

In view of Vibius Marsus’s reports, Claudius doubted the wisdom of his brief experiment in restoring the Kingdom of Judaea. It was obviously impossible to entrust the management of the Jewish kingdom to Agrippa’s sole heir, also named Agrippa, then a young man of seventeen, completing his aristocratic education at the imperial court. Thus, the kingdom was once more annexed and put in the charge of a procurator Cuspius Fadus. At the same time, Vibius Marsus, who seemed to harbor a remarked anti-Semitic bias, was replaced in the Syrian governorship with a new legate, Cassius Longinus. The latter was entrusted to supervise the annexation and, if necessary, lend Fadus armed support. As it happened, none was necessary.

Fadus, who governed from A.D. 44–46, took a hard line against brigandage. He succeeded in rounding up a notorious gang, under one Ptolemy, which had created havoc in Idumaea. Fadus also severely repressed an uprising in Peraea, which had erupted with a boundary dispute with neighboring Philadelphia. The Peraeans, led by three independent-minded ringleaders, had threatened the calm desired by Rome in that corner of their realm. The main rabble-rouser, Hannibal, was executed and the other two exiled.

Later Fadus was faced with a more serious disorder. A prophet named Theudas persuaded large numbers of followers to accompany him to the Jordan River, which, he claimed, would divide to permit their passage. Fadus dispatched a cavalry unit against them, dispersing the mob and capturing their leader, whose severed head was displayed in Jerusalem as a warning to any imitators. John the Baptist, the Samaritan prophet, Theudas, and the so-called “Egyptian Jew” are examples of eschatological prophets critical of the ruling aristocracy, expecting imminent divine relief. This kind of apocalyptic frenzy multiplied in the period following the crucifixion of Jesus. The severe exemplary punishment meted out to these seers and would-be saviors are indicative of just how seriously the Romans regarded these threats to public order. They were far more understanding with respect to the numerous seemingly trifling complaints and protests lodged by Jewish factions over Roman transgressions against their religious taboos. [Note: I have avoided

the events embraced in the life, execution and aftermath of Jesus Christ since we are here following Josephus's narrative, which may or may not have contained references to Jesus; if so, then latter-day forgeries and embellishments may have obscured or distorted what he most likely wrote in his *Antiquities* regarding the Christian episode — famously known by the Christian church fathers as the *Testimonium Flavianum*, the Flavian Testimony. The accuracy of the transcription of this and several accompanying passages are matters of great controversy.]

The blunders of the procurator Ventidius Cumanus [A.D. 48–52, following Cuspius Fadus] further aggravated the situation. One incident under Cumanus illustrates the haughty attitude of the pagan Greek locals constituting the *auxilia* that enforced the Pax Romana in Judaea. During the Passover season, when crowds flocked to Jerusalem and any little affront could spark pandemonium, the prefect would routinely post soldiers atop battlements commanding a clear view of the proceedings, alert for any sign of agitation. One of these soldiers, observing the scene below, showed his contempt by lifting his gown, bending over and “mooning” the crowds gathered beneath for the Passover rites, making an appropriate noise with his mouth. The infuriated mob began to stone the soldiers on the parapets, and Cumanus sent in reinforcements, panicking the mobs packed between the colonnades, who stampeded for the narrow exits, thousands being crushed in the commotion. There is no indication that the overexposed legionary was ever disciplined.

In another incident, highwaymen (possibly politically motivated dissenters) robbed a slave of the emperor's baggage train. Accusing the men in the neighboring villages of harboring the culprits, Cumanus had them bound in chains to his headquarters in Caesarea. One of the soldiers in the “cordon and search” operation contemptuously burned a Torah scroll in front of the distraught villagers. Hearing of this abuse, crowds of Jews from the entire province descended on Caesarea, where they demanded that the prefect punish the offender. In this instance, Cumanus appeased the mob by having the soldier arrested and marched through the gauntlet of his troops before he was executed.

The most serious occurrence under Cumanus cost him his post. Around A.D. 52, a conflict erupted between Galilean Jews and Samaritans when a Galilean was murdered in Samaria on his way to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. When Cumanus failed to do anything about this situation, the conflict spread. The various rebel groups all appear to have been armed. Those whom Josephus called bandit chieftains, but whom his subtext identifies as political insurrectionaries, entered the fray alongside the rampaging leaderless mobs from Jerusalem, the former mounting some highly organized attacks. Two of these men identified by Josephus as “Zealots,” Eleazar ben Dinaeus

(a notorious rebel commander of the period) and another known simply as Alexander, then undertook a punitive expedition, through the Acrabatene into Samaritan territory, along with their followers. Cumanus, when finally stirred into action, unleashed the “Sebastiani” cohort on the Jewish highwaymen — this unit was flagrantly anti-Semitic — killing many of them and ignoring appeals from representatives of the Sanhedrin to evenhandedly stop the violence. Claudius proclaimed the Samaritans as the guilty party and punished them, thanks in large part to the entreaties of the man who was eventually to become King Agrippa II. This action finally resolved the dangerously spiraling conflict. Cumanus was relieved of his office and exiled.

The famine of the mid-forties increased economic pressure on the peasants and their landlords and may have led to an increase in banditry. Organized, politically aware resistance emerged in the *sicarii* movement, aimed at terrorizing and rendering ineffective the local aristocracy. Growing Roman corruption and incompetence under the ensuing procurators — respectively Felix, Festus, Albinus, and Florus — brought things to the boiling point. Florus’s ruthless repression, described below, finally caused the eruption of open revolt.

Marcus Antonius Felix (reigning from A.D. 52–60) was a highly irregular appointment. He was a freedman. It is unlikely, however, that his low birth offended the Jews whose realm he managed. Tacitus has a very low opinion of Felix, claiming that “in every kind of brutality and profligacy, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave.” However, this reflects the prejudice of the Roman aristocracy against successful freedmen rather than anything exceptionally odious about Felix’s incumbency.

Felix was quite energetic in his policing of the brigand warlords proliferating at the time. Josephus records that a whole forest of crucifixes bearing the broken bodies of brigand chiefs surrounded Jerusalem. He treacherously seized Eleazar, the son of the outlaw Dinaeus, who had been prominent in the Samaritan troubles, on a false promise of safe conduct, sending him to Rome for trial.

It was on Felix’s watch that the infamous Egyptian Jew (known to us only by the designation “the Egyptian”) led some 30,000 disciples to the Mount of Olives, from which he promised they would witness the collapse of the walls of Jerusalem, which he would then enter as a messiah. Felix sent his troops against the crowd, killing some 400 and capturing 200. The Egyptian escaped.

Under Felix, the *sicarii* began their particular form of terrorist campaign. This was an extremist outgrowth of the nebulous “Zealot” factions who pursued their hastening of the kingdom come by assassination of all whom they perceived as collaborators with the Roman oppressor. The appellation came

from the hitman's favorite weapon, the concealed small curved dagger, or *sica*. One of the first victims of these counterparts to modern-day terrorists was the high priest Jonathan, a pro-Roman double-dealer who was cozy with Felix. The festival seasons were the favorite seasons for the sicarii, since the close-packed crowds in the Temple precincts afforded them the opportunity of closing in on their target unobserved, assisted by the distractions of their associates working the throng.

The more mercenary brigands did their part by plundering the estates of the well-to-do upper levels of the priesthood and their associates. In turn these higher orders of priests, despairing of protection from the Romans, tried to make up their losses by hiring thugs who strutted around the threshing-floors forcibly confiscating the tithes. This practice deprived the poorer lower orders of their sole livelihood, reducing them to penury.

Felix's inability to either calm or suppress the increasing disorder in Judaea led to his replacement by Nero with Porcius Festus. Festus appears to have been a relatively moderate, prudent governor. This is shown by the way in which he handled the situation pertaining to the voyeurism of Agrippa II. The latter was in the habit of standing at his window while eating and looking down on the inner court of the Temple while the priests were performing rites. This routine annoyed the priests who had a wall built to block his view. Agrippa told Festus that he planned to have the wall torn down so he could again view the proceedings below. Festus informed Agrippa he'd have to take this up with Nero and in due course allowed the priests to send a delegation to Rome to make their case with the emperor. Nero agreed with the priests, and the wall remained. The tempo of sicarii carnage increased during Festus's incumbency. Neither the Roman authorities nor the bodyguards of the wealthy class could stop the killing. Yet another prophet arose who gathered a large following and had to be bloodily suppressed.

The last two procurators Albinus (62–64) and Gessius Florus (64–66) are notorious for their corruption. Albinus was known for releasing prisoners for bribes and seemingly made the arrangements in advance. Upon taking office, Albinus vigorously arrested a large number of sicarii *en masse*. This show of force caused a change of tactics among the knife-wielders. This new program will also be familiar to students of contemporary terrorists. A gang of sicarii kidnapped the secretary of Eleazar, the captain, or chief administrator, of the Temple and threatened to kill him unless ten of their colleagues were released.

According to Jones in *The Herods of Judaea*, Eleazar, whose sympathies were — as revealed later — with the insurgents, collaborated with the terrorists in concocting the scheme. However, Eleazar's father, the ex-high priest Ananias (later to become leader of the moderate faction in the first Jerusalem

revolutionary council), used a combination of diplomacy (he was influential with Albinus) and bribery to secure the release of his son's secretary. This set a baneful precedent. The sicarii, perceiving a milk-cow, regularly kidnapped Ananias's relatives, thereby redeeming those among their commanders whom Albinus arrested and funding their war chest.

Making a virtue of necessity, Albinus changed his *modus operandi* and granted an amnesty to all prisoners not charged with capital offenses who could grease his palm. This was the equivalent of "protection money." This policy was seen by the sicarii as an admission of weakness and emboldened them and kindred dissidents to anticipate they could achieve their goals through violent means. This situation was already getting out of hand when Festus's death during his third term brought Gessius Florus to the scene as procurator. Festus's venality paled next to that of Florus, discussed below.

In the broad sweep of the events of the first century A.D., one can discern the fourfold cyclical pattern of injustice, protest, repression, and revolt. As injustices multiplied, so did protests, at first non-violent, then violent. As protests grew stronger, so did repression. As repression reached its peak under Florus, the population finally resorted to total renunciation of Roman rule and violent revolt. The upward spiral to culmination was perhaps not quite as neat and undeviating as Josephus's poetic license portrayed it. There was nonetheless enough of a dichotomy between the "civilized" purportedly broad-minded pagan ruler and the despondent Jewish parties to lead to an irrevocable rift. Before relating the climacteric reign of Gessius Florus, a note on a nearly contemporaneous aberrant, but ominous, revolt in Britain is in order.

While the security situation in Judaea grew ever more precarious, events at the other end of the Empire — the sunless realm of that other vexatious, stubborn race, the Britons — erupted in violence. A. Didius governed Britain (52–57) and reinstated the dethroned Queen Cartimandua. By the end of the decade a new Roman governor of Britain, Suetonius Paulinus, was suddenly faced with a serious uprising led by Queen Boudicca (more generally known as Boadicea). The Britons had been enraged by the high taxes imposed on them by their conquerors and by the encroachment on their lands by Roman settlers. In 59 Paulinus attacked the hostile Druid center at Mona. When Iceni king Prasutagus died, expropriation of land, flogging of his widow Boudicca, raping of his two daughters, and Roman exploitation by money-lenders like Seneca led to a revolt, as the offending imperial agent Catus Decianus withdrew to Gaul. The mutinous Britons attacked and burned the main Roman towns of Camulodunum, where all of the infantry in Rome's ninth legion were killed, while the cavalry fled. Londinium and Verulamium were sacked, and all the inhabitants, about 70,000, were slaughtered.

Nevertheless, the rebels' momentum was halted when the greatly out-

numbered but well disciplined troops of Paulinus managed near Lichfield to route the forces of Boudicca, who then took poison. In this climactic battle 80,000 Britons were reported killed but only 400 Roman soldiers. Paulinus took reprisals, but famine did even more damage as the Britons had neglected to sow their fields. The new imperial agent, Classicianus, disliked Paulinus and advised people to wait and surrender to a new governor, who would be more kind. The imperial freed slave, Polyclitus, arrived with an enormous escort to investigate, but the British scorned him. Finally Nero sent in the more conciliatory governor, Petronius Turpillianus.

Once Boudicca was killed, the rebellion petered out rapidly through lack of leadership. Taking advantage of their strength, the Romans then extended their control of Britain as far north as the Humber and the Dee. As serious a challenge as this was, it was put down within the space of a few months.

Although Josephus ignores the impact of this rebellion on his countrymen, it was obviously an object lesson for all who could see that Rome could be challenged, to those chafing under Roman rule, Boudicca's extraordinary early successes were more impressive than her ultimate defeat. Moreover, the religious scruples of the Druids irritated the Roman governors of Britain. Druidism was a religious practice that seemed wholly alien to the Roman pantheon of deities, which the Druids were unwilling or incapable of accommodating. This type of exclusiveness, most contrary to Roman eyes, was paralleled in Jerusalem.

Judaeian Gauntlet Hurled

By A.D. 66, it had become apparent that nobody among the so-called ruling class in Judaea was able to win the respect of the procurator as the country seemed to slide down the slippery slope to war. The long-standing tensions between the Jews and Greeks in the Roman headquarters city of Caesarea erupted in wide-scale fighting early in 66. This dispute had arisen under Felix but came to a head under Florus. The Jews, believing that they were the principal tax donors towards the city's upkeep, felt that this status entitled them to a majority representation in the *polis* council. They also argued that a "Jewish" king founded it. This last justification was a double-edged sword. The Greeks, not without some foundation, believed that their own claim to primacy was more solid, as the city had been founded by Herod specifically as a non-Jewish town, replete with pagan temples, so that the Jews were really not on their own turf there. Just as Nero had done when the matter was first raised in A.D. 60 (allegedly influenced by his counselor after the latter was bribed by the Greeks) the procurator, Florus, endorsed the Greek claim for preeminence.

The Greeks had been emboldened by this imperial endorsement to stick it to the arrogant Jews among them. This pattern would be repeated throughout the country as the rebellion gathered steam. One of the largest synagogues in Caesarea was soon deliberately ringed with pagan workshops, blocking access to the house of prayer. Gloating over this in-your-face insolence, another group of Greeks erected a makeshift altar near the entrance to the synagogue, where they performed a perverse, taboo sacrifice. Young, Jewish bruisers took matters into their own hands and attacked the pagan laborers building the facilities. Mobs of Greeks counterattacked the Jewish districts. This irritated the Jewish dignitaries who had bribed Florus to intervene to protect the outnumbered Jews during the intercommunal rioting.

Florus, true to form, took the money but then did nothing to safeguard the Jews. As if this blow weren't enough, Florus decided to collect delinquent tariffs from the Jews by confiscating 17 talents from the Temple treasury in Jerusalem "for Caesar's use," all the more maddening because it was on the pretext of making repairs caused by the communal brawls. There seems to be nothing to contradict the fact that the back payments were owed; in fact, the full amount was 40 talents. It was Florus's provocative manner of trying to collect them that rankled.

Coming so soon after the rebuff over the Caesarea issue, this raid on the sacred trust fund sparked general rioting in Jerusalem. More galling to Florus than the general mayhem were the defiant actions of a few young jokers in the crowd who conducted a mock alms-collection for the "poor Florus." Incensed by this insolent demonstration, Florus, after a general request for the Jews to turn over the jesters to him went unanswered, marched his bodyguard to Jerusalem and ravaged whole neighborhoods.

After exacting a suitable toll of lives to make his point, Florus summoned the Sanhedrin and repeated his demand that they hand over the culprits. The sages protested that the mass of the people was loyal subjects of the empire; the counselors even apologized for the disturbances. However, they protested that it was impossible for them to identify the individuals responsible for the mockery. Florus was unimpressed. He arraigned before his tribunal even the most affluent and high-placed Jews, crucifying many. He then had his rampaging cohorts clear the Upper Market. The Sanhedrin called the mob to an assembly, wherein they put on view the sacred objects of the Temple worship and begged them to restrain themselves to preserve these accoutrements and the Temple itself. This plea had a sobering effect, but Florus's next episode in his ongoing frenzy nullified this accomplishment.

After his reckless rampage, Florus demanded that the Jerusalemite populace turn out to submissively greet two cohorts of reinforcements sent from Caesarea. The Jewish authorities with some difficulty persuaded a large fol-

lowing to make this show of compliance while the legions marched past. However, when the legions refused to make the customary gesture of recognition and silently, flagrantly snubbed the Judaeans' salute, the mob became furious, forcing Florus to retreat to Caesarea, leaving only one cohort behind.

King Agrippa II, alarmed at the rising tide of emotionalism, addressed the angry crowds milling about the Temple area. Whether Josephus's rendition of this detailed and lengthy speech is a verbatim account or reflects more of Josephus's own position is beside the point. Clearly at this phase, Josephus's fears about the self-destructive frenzy of the mob were in synch with those of Agrippa II.

The speech can be taken as a fairly accurate summary of the perspective of those Judaeans nobles, notably including Josephus, who wanted the masses to stay calm until a petition for redress could be routed up to the Emperor, where the patricians felt confident it would receive a fair hearing. It contains a very comprehensive catalogue of the disposition and responsibilities of the legions throughout the Empire. This is doubtlessly based on an official index to which Josephus gained access after the war.

Agrippa II showed his naiveté about the depth of Jewish feeling by beseeching the upper echelon not to complain to Cestius's emissary but to cooperate with Florus to demonstrate their exceptional reasonableness. Elements of the crowd were pleased to find an "honorable" way out of the vexing situation. The 17 talents — arrears of tribute — were, after all, legitimate obligations, which Florus, in his incompetent, tactless way, had tried to confiscate from the Temple funds. In fact, the overdue fiscus was 40 talents; just how Florus arrived at the figure of 17 is uncertain. There is no question but that his high-handed method of attempted collection was unlawful.

Agrippa II's entreaty was reinforced by Berenice, who had been in Jerusalem to observe her 30-day Nazarite vow of penitence, head shaven, and ashes strewn on her body. Unlike her pompous brother Agrippa II, Berenice seems to have enjoyed some credibility among the Jewish "man in the street" notwithstanding Josephus's offhand remark that some thought that she had an incestuous relationship with her brother. She had fruitlessly appealed to Florus on bended knee to be reasonable and back off from his bullying acts. The crowd was asked to show its loyalty, *not* to the worthless Florus, but to the empire by paying 40 talents due and rebuilding the colonnades connecting the Roman outpost at Fortress Antonia with the Temple compound that were wrecked by the mobs in order to cut off the Roman garrison from access to the Temple.

Agrippa II and Berenice then led the throng to the destroyed arcades to begin the repair work while the Sanhedrin set up delegations to collect the tax arrears from among the various villages under their respective jurisdic-

tions. Had Agrippa II not continued to insist that the people show obeisance to the thoroughly discredited procurator, Florus, until a new procurator could be appointed, he might have succeeded in keeping the lid on the simmering revolt. However, this imprudent, inappropriate demand provided an opening for the war party, which was able to turn the masses against Agrippa II. The mob increasingly shouted down the king's speeches. Agrippa II soon realized that he could not outbid the jingoist element's popularity.

The crowd was unreceptive to his further appeals to reason, and Agrippa II gave up his efforts to inhibit the revolutionary movement. After arranging for the tax collectors in precincts outside of Jerusalem to deliver their share of the back-taxes collection to the procurator's delegates in Caesarea, Agrippa II abandoned Jerusalem post-haste and left the resolution of the crisis in the hands of the bungling predatory Florus. No sooner had he left than the extremists began to assert themselves and the war frenzy resumed. Agrippa II had perceived the gravity of the situation; however, neither Florus nor his boss, Gallus, seemed to notice or care what their negligence had wrought.

Simultaneously with Agrippa II's departure, the youthful captain (a sort of bureaucrat) of the Temple, Eleazar ben Ananias, and his coterie of younger priests convinced the more senior priests to cease the twice-daily sacrifices on behalf of the Roman emperor. This was the same Eleazar mentioned earlier in connection with the sicarii kidnapping and extortion plot. Here he turns his back on his father's crowd, deeming them a pack of turncoats. This action was not merely a ceremonial or symbolic act of defiance, nor was it an impetuous reaction. It was much more deliberate and ominous. A number of learned men among the higher orders of the priestly caste tried to impress upon the crowd the mutinous nature of this act and that the inevitable counterstroke from the emperor would spell the end of the Temple itself. This was to no avail. Eleazar, son of the ex-high priest Ananias — that Ananias who had arranged for Christ's brother James to be stoned to death — was able to persuade the temple staff — indigent, humble priests who bore a grudge against the rapacious higher order — to cease the special offerings.

The Romans had required all the other local religious cults in the Near East to incorporate the worship of the emperor into their hierarchy of gods. When the Jews had balked at adopting this convention, they were granted the generous concession (in Roman eyes) of making sacrifices "on behalf of" rather than to the emperor. To Rome, this ceremony embodied the submission of Judaea to Roman rule as well as a Jewish privilege. Josephus knew full well, as did the priests in Eleazar's camp, that cancellation of this rite was a virtual declaration of war.

One group of the elders, after a theological discussion, urged the restoration of the sacrifices. They put certain golden ceremonial artifacts that had

been gifts from Augustus and his wife Livia on display. They pointed out that the tradition of sacrificing on behalf of a pagan strongman was well established in the Jewish faith. Nonetheless the moderates also made a case against cessation of the offering on pragmatic grounds; they assured the mob that by avoiding provocation the storm would blow over and they could reassert their rights more prudently when calm prevailed. Eleazar's father, the deposed high-priest Ananus, and his uncle led the splinter group that urged resumption of the imperial sacrifices.

Although they had consistently preached compromise, the higher orders of priests were afraid that once the inevitable Roman counterstroke was delivered, they would be found guilty by association with the rebels and would be indiscriminately crucified along with them. Accordingly, they sent messengers to Florus, led by Simon, one of Ananias's sons, and another party to Agrippa II, this one led by the king's relatives, Saul, Costobar and Antipas.

Florus seems to have been paralyzed into inaction at this point. On the other hand, Agrippa II, although he must have realized that his writ in Judaea was ecclesiastical rather than civil, felt that his own standing with the Romans would be jeopardized if the "man on the spot" sat by idly. He dispatched a wing of 2,000 cavalry, emanating from the Hauran and adjacent territories under his control, commanded by Darius, his Master of the Horse, and Philip ben Jacimus, one of the king's most trusted provincial governors. Philip's grandfather was that Babylonian Jew Zamaris, mentioned earlier, whom Herod had imported to found the military colony of horse-archers in Batanaea. On his appointment as tetrarch of this province, Philip had found the settlers acting rather independently, but he succeeded in winning their allegiance for Agrippa II. This body of troops, steadfastly loyal to Agrippa II, thanks to Philip's efforts, had the advantage, vis-à-vis the rebels, of being Jews. They were familiar as "The Royals."

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, this force seized the upper city and engaged in a full week of skirmishing with the rebels, without driving them out. In the middle of this standoff came the Feast of the Woodgathering, in which firewood to maintain the sacred flame on the Altar of Sacrifice was brought in from wherever it could be found in the sparsely forested reaches of Judaea. Eleazar used this pilgrimage hiatus to weed out the moderates from his group and bring in a large number of reinforcements, largely sicarii, who would later be joined by their colleagues from the Judaeian desert. This gave Eleazar the opportunity to take the initiative. He ordered the radicals to burn the palace of Agrippa II and his sister, Berenice, moving on to the public archives.

The significance of destroying the public deeds was that this removed all records of loan contracts. Here we find the incontrovertible evidence, rare in Josephus's descriptions, that the rebellion was, if not initially then in due

course, a social revolution. For the objective of burning the loan deeds was to erase all records of debt on behalf of the harried rural poor and the proletariat. Thus was a large body of defaulting debtors brought over to the rebel cause, heretofore largely a matter of religious dissent. At this crucial period, those among the leading priests who had counseled negotiations — if not with Florus, at least with his immediate superior, the Syrian governor Cestius or even with Nero — took refuge in underground vaults and conduits. A large group of them escaped the mob's wrath and retreated to the upper palace, to which Agrippa II's officers, Darius and Philip, had removed their troops.

It was at this point that the Antonia fortress fell to the rebels. This was significant as a morale-buster to the pro-Roman combatants because the stronghold was designed to hold off a determined assault by well-armed besiegers for months. It took only two days for the ragtag mob of rebels to root out the resistance, burn the fortress and slaughter the garrison. A key factor in the Roman defeat was the destruction of the colonnades connecting the fort with defenders at the upper palace. Nonetheless, the fact that a yet disorganized swarm of terrorists could so easily overwhelm this stronghold is testimony to the torpor to which Florus had allowed his command to sink. Animated by this easy success, Eleazar's forces enveloped the upper palace and took it under siege.

5

Opening of the First Revolt

While this struggle between the moderates and the hawks tilted towards all-out resistance, the first *coup* by the rebels occurred a distance from the turmoil of the capital. One Menahem, a leader of an extremist group of sicarii, or dagger-men, now enters on the scene. Josephus identifies Menahem as the son of Judas the Galilean, the founder of the “fourth philosophy” and leader of the tax rebellion against the prelate Quirinius at the beginning of the first century. It seems more likely that, 60 years later, the man in question was the grandson rather than the son of the uncompromising rabbinical fanatic of A.D. 6 Menahem, apparently on his own authority led his band of terrorists on a mission deep in the bleak Judaeian desert flanking the Dead Sea. There is nothing to connect Menahem’s precipitate lunge into the wilderness with Eleazar’s equally headlong provocative act. No amount of reading between Josephus’s porous lines will justify collusion between these two men.

Why bother with Masada so isolated from the scene of the main action at Jerusalem? Anyone who has visited this Israeli tourist attraction will recall how the bleak, stark promontory not only dominates the southwestern corner of the Dead Sea, but also commands the main highway — formerly the caravan route. This ancient artery traversed a causeway connecting the western shore of the sea with the spur jutting out into it just below Kerak, from there leading to Petra and south Arabia. It was thus the last link in the commercial chain connecting Arabia Felix with Palestine. More importantly, there was a significant stockpile of weapons stashed in the citadel. Jonathan, the brother of Judah Maccabee, may have been the first to fortify the formidable hilltop, according to Josephus, but it is likely that his nephew, John Hyrcanus, under whom Herod the Great’s Idumaea was forcibly converted, established a permanent military base there. It was Herod who really rendered the aerie all but unassailable, surrounding the summit with a wall of dressed stone, almost a mile long, 18 feet high and 12 feet thick, strengthened by 38 75-foot towers.

The lozenge-shaped stronghold contained storehouses, barracks, a garden plot and an ingenious rain and dew collection system that led to great cisterns. The four corner towers, structures attaining a height of 60 feet, were embellished with massive carved stone pillars, whose conveyance up the steep slopes was of itself an engineering marvel. The lofty perch was approachable from the shore of the Dead Sea by a narrow, precipitous, exposed winding path. The only other approach was a tortuous serpentine trail that ran across the constricted saddleback connecting the isolated crest with the massif of the Judean hills to the west, dominated at its narrowest section by a tower. Josephus does not indicate how recently the Romans had garrisoned Masada. It is likely that it was only done after the recent disturbances in Jerusalem; hence, the garrison is not likely to have been well prepared to guard all possible paths of ascent and points of entry.

Menahem was aware that in 34 B.C. Herod had accumulated an arsenal at Masada sufficient for 10,000 fighters as well as vast stores of food, arrows, javelins, stones to roll down the slopes against a foolhardy rush and other munitions. The reserve was accumulated in anticipation of a war against Cleopatra that never happened being that Mark Antony had worked out an arrangement that mollified Cleopatra and still left Herod in charge. The dry climate preserved the perishables for a century. Menahem's party had little trouble in surprising the Roman defenders, who certainly could not anticipate that the Jews had need — not to mention the audacity and cunning — to attack this outpost. With typical brutality, the sicarii raiding force killed the entire Roman garrison. Menahem left a detachment to secure Masada and then led a group of his men back to Jerusalem, which he entered in triumph, dressed in purple robes with all the pomp and imperiousness of a king. The manner of his entry into Jerusalem already aroused the suspicions of Eleazar that Menahem had not undertaken his mission to Masada merely to serve the common cause.

Menahem's group arrived on the scene of the main action and found fertile ground for their particular sort of theatrical messianic charisma. The Jewish administration was in disarray, wavering between the counsel of the moderates and the intoxicating illusion of an idealized restored monarchy where high priest and king were combined in the personage of a visionary leader. Menahem's appeal was enhanced by the fact that he brought in fresh supplies of weapons and manpower at a critical phase of the rebel's effort in the capital. In this jubilant atmosphere, Menahem joined Eleazar's faction in a temporary marriage of convenience; however, it was not a very lasting alliance, given the sicarii leader's separate political agenda. Arriving with great flamboyance and seeming to constitute the means of a military breakthrough, Menahem easily took charge of the siege operations. From the outset, Menahem showed intuitive understanding that, weary of the bumbling priestly

aristocracy, the common folk longed for a legendary past when majestic kings ruled a sacred theocratic state.

The attackers had no battering rams and were therefore obliged to undermine one of the commanding towers in the curtain wall. When they succeeded in toppling this barricade, the Jews were confronted with another rampart hastily improvised by the defenders. The royal troops realized that their effort was doomed and asked Menahem for terms. Menahem, seeing that the supporting forces in the Antonia fortress had been crushed, offered quarter and safe passage only to Agrippa II's troops, commanded by Philip, and other Jewish soldiers trapped in the palace. He was determined to exterminate the hated Greek auxiliaries of Florus — mostly drawn from the extremely hostile gentile population of Caesarea. Since Philip survived this siege unscathed then mysteriously disappeared, there had been some slanderous allegations that he, Philip, must have betrayed the Roman garrison and had thus become a "general of the Judaeans." It was to answer these charges that Vespasian later sent him to appear before Nero; the emperor was assassinated before the proceedings could transpire, and Philip was returned to the service of Agrippa II, where he was welcomed without qualms. A significant section of the troops dispatched by Agrippa II to quell the disorder — presumably those soldiers of Jewish origin — were brought over to the rebel's cause upon their parole. Silas the Babylonian (alternately "the Batanaean") was prominent among them, descendant of Herod's imported Babylonian military colony. The rest fled.

The Roman forces watched their royal and Jewish colleagues take advantage of the limited reprieve and withdrew to the three remaining main towers of the palace, Hippicus, Mariamme and Phasael.

Menahem's men, with typical brutality, dragged Eleazar's father, Ananias, and the former high priest's brother, Hezekiah, from their underground hiding place and had them executed. This action would not in and of itself have caused Eleazar any great concern, since he was firmly set against his father's faction and regarded them as despicable quislings. What did arouse his wrath was the fact that Menahem now bedecked himself with purple robes and conducted himself as if he were the anointed messiah. At this point, Eleazar decided to liquidate the upstart, who threatened to undermine his own authority, and took the rebellion in a different and dangerous direction. Some of Menahem's sicarii were able to escape back to Masada and join their associates there. Menahem and his bodyguard were dragged from their hiding place down in Ophel and were tortured to death.

Eleazar, who also had no love for Florus's bully-boys, now had them trapped in the towers and saw a way to exact cruel revenge upon them. Rather than allowing them the honor of dying in battle, he promised them safe passage if they would lay down their arms. Once they did so, he treacherously

cut them down, sparing only their commander, Metilius, who had to submit to forcible conversion by circumcision. This barbarous act, along with the extreme cruelty in dealing with Menahem, showed that Eleazar, in throwing in his lot with the extremists, embraced the harsh code of conduct that all violent revolutionaries adopt. The crowds swarming the streets of Jerusalem were exhilarated in anticipation of the collapse of Roman authority. The rebels had thus seized control of Jerusalem and most of its dependent areas of Judaea within a month's time. The fact that Philip ben Jacimus's contingent from Agrippa II's army was granted "safe passage" created some credibility problems for Philip later with the Romans.

When word of the massacre of Florus's cohort which had manned the Antonia fort along with the upper palace reached Caesarea, the gentiles of that city did not waste time in exacting retribution against their Jewish neighbors.

Ethnic Strife

Now that revolt was unstoppable, Jews in many of the cities around Judaea rose against their venomous gentile neighbors, who in turn, had taken advantage of Rome's open warfare with the Jews to satiate ancient phobias and plunder and kill the Jewish encroachers. The revolt in Jerusalem seems to have triggered a general pogrom against the Jews of Caesarea, over 20,000 of whom were allegedly slaughtered in an hour. The Jews, for their part, responded in kind. Infuriated at reports about the anti-Jewish eruptions in Caesarea and elsewhere, Jews organized hit-and-run squads to spread destruction and carnage in the Decapolis, the Jaulan district northeast of the Sea of Galilee and in Galilee. Even Tyre was invaded as were Ptolemais, Gaba and Caesarea — where the counteraction began. Sebaste, Gaza, Anthodon, and Ascalon were the subject of Jewish retaliation.

The ravages of the anti-Jewish mobs were particularly malicious in Ascalon, a longtime thorn in Judaea's side — indeed from the time of the Phillistines forward. Ascalon was marked for one of the first, and the most comprehensive, Jewish offensive campaigns. In the largest city of the Decapolis, Beisan or Scythopolis, the Jewish residents, feeling a certain loyalty to their erstwhile neighbors, helped the gentile population repel the attackers. But the Greeks, suspicious to the last, kicked the Jews out of town, whereupon the Jews retreated to a sacred grove, where they expected to find temporary respite. Waiting until nightfall, the Greeks set upon the Jews hiding in the copse, murdered 13,000 of them and looted their goods.

Next, it was the gentiles' turn again. In Ascalon, Ptolemais and Tyre, the gentiles executed and/or imprisoned several thousand Jews while in Hippos

and Gadara the Greeks settled for exiling the likely ringleaders. The only city of the Decapolis that acted humanely through all this was Gerasa (Jerash), where the Greeks offered safe escort to any Jews who wished to leave — though not compelling any — and they bade them go in peace. The Syrian cities the farthest from the areas of upheaval, Antioch, Apamea and Sidon, left their Jews untouched. Such was not the case within Agrippa II's realm. The king had gone on a mission to Antioch, to request Cestius Gallus to intervene and restore order. In Batanaea, the region spanning the main Damascus road north of Dera'a, he had left in charge one Nuwwar, related to Sohemus of Homs — a Roman client king who was to provide substantial forces to fight alongside first Cestius, then Vespasian. Probably with the intention of irritating Philip ben Jacamus, Nuwwar engineered the destruction of almost the entire colony of Babylonian Jews and did likewise to the Jews in Caesarea Phillippi. Oddly enough, Gamala initially remained loyal to Agrippa II (and the Romans); it was Eleazar's hometown. This loyalty was short-lived, as it soon became a rebel stronghold, and was to provide one of Vespasian's toughest fights in Galilee, next to Jotapata.

The last Roman strongholds in Peraea and Judaea were overthrown — Cypros, the massive bastion overlooking Jericho, which was largely destroyed and its garrison murdered, and Machaerus, where the Roman garrison was allowed to surrender and go into captivity.

There were even repercussions of the upheaval in Judaea as far away as Alexandria. The familiar inter-communal rioting between Jew and gentile also erupted here — simmering resentments unleashed by the Jewish rebellion. Tiberius Alexander, the apostate Jewish governor of the territory, was compelled to send in the two Roman legions stationed in Egypt along with a contingent from Libya. The Jews by far sustained the highest casualties from the Roman intervention, which was widely perceived by Jews in the empire as supporting the Greek position in Alexandria.

During all of this catastrophic turn of events, Florus remained idle, whether out of indolence or incompetence it is hard to say. Similarly to the situations in 4 B.C., A.D. 6 and A.D. 40, the task of restoring Roman control was entrusted to the legate of Syria. In Antioch, Cestius Gallus gradually collected a large force that included the XIIth Legion *Fulminata*, other legionaries, and troops provided by allied kings, including Agrippa II.

The Fatal Miracle: Beth-horon Pass and the Judaeian Council of War

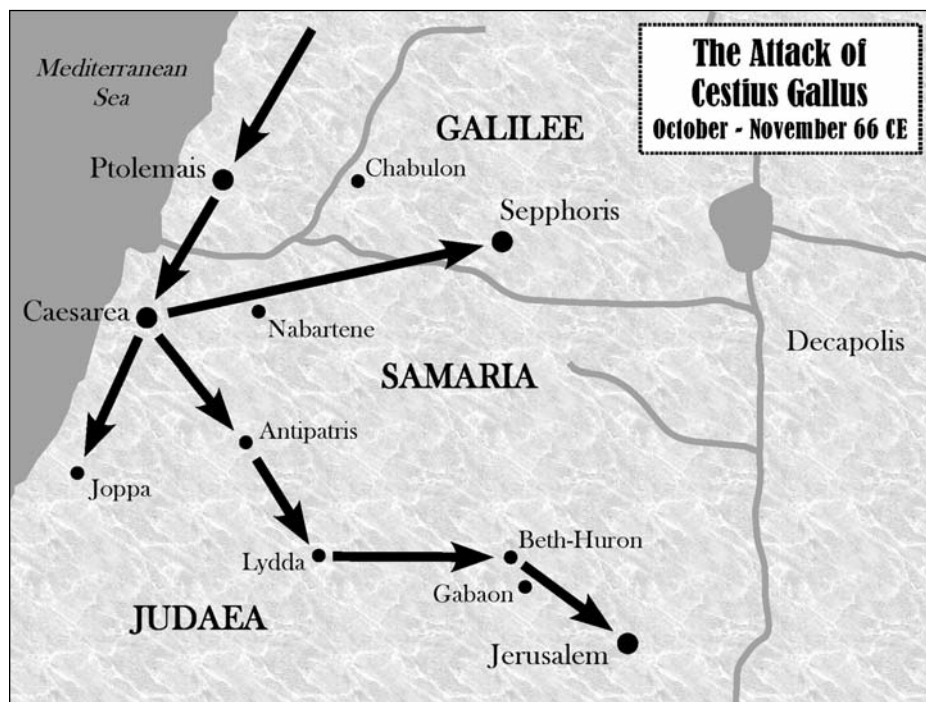
Procurator Gessius Florus sent an urgent request for assistance to his immediate commander, Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria, who commanded

the four legion regional strategic reserves in Antioch. Cestius was quite familiar with the situation, having heard deputations from both the Jews and Florus during the Passover season of 65. On that occasion, Florus was reprimanded; however, Cestius remained in his regional command center at Antioch, 300 miles — and a two-week march — from troubled Jerusalem. Now, in July of 66, he learned that the situation had continued to deteriorate when he received further deputations from the Judaeans and from his headstrong procurator, this time pertaining to violent clashes. His military advisors suggested that Cestius immediately send forces to Jerusalem to intervene. However, the cautious, methodical Cestius decided instead to send a fact-finder, Neapolitanus, to visit the arena of conflict and sort things out. At this point, Agrippa II hastened to Antioch to consult with Cestius about his own failed effort to mollify the mobs. Things had gone too far: Cestius was forced to react militarily. However, he was not a seasoned battlefield commander, but rather a civil administrator. Nero had sent him to replace the eminent general Corbulo, whom the Emperor had forced to commit suicide. Cestius was apparently chosen because of his loyalty to Nero and his alleged managerial capabilities. Martial prowess was not one of his strongpoints.

Despite the gravity of the situation, it took the circumspect Cestius three months from the date he received Florus's report to concentrate his expeditionary force. The assemblage consisted of the XIIth Legion *Fulminata* ("Thunderbolt") as the core with some 4,800 men, augmented by vexillationes, consisting of 2,000 men from each of the other three legions, for a total of 11,000 infantry. Additionally Cestius assembled four *alae* of cavalry in all likelihood 2,000 horse and six cohorts of auxiliary infantry totaling about 5,000 men.

Allied monarchs offered their Roman benefactor a specially suitable "counter-force," conceivably on the assumption that the hilly terrain of Judaea and Galilee would favor the native slingers and javelin throwers mounting hit-and-run attacks; this contingent would nowadays be called light infantry or skirmishers. Cestius, if his intelligence were up to snuff, would have cherished these special forces. Kings Antiochus IV of Commagene and Sohaemus of Emesa contributed soldiers totaling about 5,000 cavalry and 8,500 infantry. The total force thus gathered numbered about 32,000. En route from Antioch to Ptolemais on the coast near present-day Haifa, the township/*toparchy* militias in predominantly Graeco-Syrian areas contributed another 2,000 troops, not well-disciplined but eager to fight Jews.

Cestius then moved this large taskforce to Chabulon (Cabul) on the border of Ptolemais and Galilee, where he commenced a deliberate terror campaign. Some townspeople were slaughtered, the rest put to flight while the soldiers looted and burned the town and surrounding villages. The legate



The Attack of Cestius Gallus (map by Éric Grenier).

Placidus (he'll later be placed under Vespasian's command) was left at Ptolemais with two infantry cohorts and a cavalry *ala*, while Cestius continued his "pacification" campaign. The latter was designed to intimidate the populations both along the projected path to Jerusalem and in his rear so that they would neither aid nor harbor the expected Jewish resistance.

The hostile elements largely consisted of perhaps a dozen more or less independent, makeshift gangs operating in packets of 2,000 or so. Cestius placed the legate of XIIth *Fulminata*, Caessennius, in charge of operations in Galilee. Caessennius proceeded to march to Sepphoris, a strategically key city in Galilee with a strong pro-Roman element. They welcomed him with open arms. As the leading commercial hub of Galilee, the nobles and mercantile class wanted only to be left in peace to maintain their prosperity. The rest of Galilee was put on notice that any hesitancy to support the Roman legions would be met by severe, exemplary punishment. Some of the insurgent units moved off into the rebel mountain strongholds of Asamon and Jebel al-Deibedeh to the northwest, pursued by an *ala* of cavalry.

The case of Asamon is instructive. What apparently happened (Jose-

phus, *War* ii, 511) is that the Romans, based on Sepphoris, were harried as they tried to gain the slopes. The lightly armored Jews, using the cover of crannies and other natural obstacles, waited on higher ground to hit the heavily encumbered Romans in quick hit-and-run attacks, when the legionaries were unable to employ their cavalry or the flexible manipular maneuvers as they struggled up the promontory. Nor could the Romans take evasive action. However, while some Roman units were kept busy to their front, the greater part of the force was able to turn the Jews' flank and move up to higher ground. Here the Roman heavy infantry's superiority in weaponry and armor could be brought to bear against the Jewish skirmish force and, unlike the later battles during the siege of Jerusalem, could best them in hand-to-hand combat. Once the Jewish cohesion was broken, the Roman cavalry was brought into play corralling the fleeing Jews, allowing only a few to escape by using the difficult ground to their advantage. In the end, the Romans lost 200 men for a loss of about ten times that many Jews in the struggle for the heights of Asamon (which has not been identified with any particular feature in modern Israel).

Meanwhile, Cestius led a detachment down the coast towards Caesarea while detaching other units, by land and sea, to demolish Joppa on the Judaeen coast with the naval vessels isolating the port in support of the land operation. The town was razed and 8,000 of its inhabitants slain. Another column was sent to deal in the same way with Nabatene (Narbata) and the adjoining villages. The force continued down the coast from Caesarea to Antipatris, splitting off a contingent to deal with the nearby rebel stronghold at the Tower of Aphek, which proved to be abandoned. It and the surrounding villages were razed.

The coastal columns rejoined Cestius's main force at Caesarea along with the troops that had ravaged Joppa and Nabatene to regroup for the offensive towards Jerusalem. With Galilee and the entire Judaeen coast in his hands, Cestius might have reasonably determined that he could wrap up the campaign in three weeks or so, before the October rains rendered the roads impassable. His regenerated force then moved into Judaea proper, entering Lydda and burning the abandoned town along with 50 Jewish stragglers. A detachment was split off to Aphek (Mejdel Yaba) where they dispersed a concentration of insurgents.

Up until this time, the Jewish resistance seemed disorganized, and it often simply appeared to have melted away, confirming Cestius's hunch that his terror campaign had intimidated the Jews. The Romans continued to advance along the road to Jerusalem, to the point where it leaves the plain at Emmaus (Emwas or Nicopolis) and twists up into the hills through the notorious gorge at Beth-horon. They bivouacked overnight at the citadel of Gabao (Gibeon or Jib), lying just over six miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Encouraged by the good fortune and light resistance he had encountered thus far, Cestius rashly set out the next morning in haphazard marching order, allowing his baggage train with its accompanying escort to lag behind, detached from the main body. He failed to reconnoiter in conformity with the usual Roman doctrine. Conversely, the Jews made excellent use of the heights neglected by Cestius's columns where their sentries accurately discerned the layout and order of battle of the Roman forces. The Jews set up a comprehensive ambush along the crests. Although it was a Sabbath, the Jews poured out of Jerusalem and attacked the vanguard of the Roman column just as it was redeploying from marching to battle formation.

Niger of Peraea and Silas of Batanaea, seasoned defectors from Agrippa II's army, led the forces attacking the forward elements, aided by an assemblage of Jewish fighters from Adiabene. Simon bar Gioras, a coarse but charismatic guerilla chieftain, simultaneously led the attack on the rearguard where it was lumbering through the Beth-horon Pass. The Romans suffered considerable losses: 515 killed (400 infantry, 115 cavalry) against 22 Jews and, portentously, forfeited many mules needed to transport the baggage and equipment. However, they were able to recover, inasmuch as the forward elements disengaged in good order and wheeled about to assist the main body, whilst the Jews were not sufficiently well organized to counterattack the Romans once the legions had reformed into their versatile battle dispositions. Cestius was able to regroup and withdraw to the main camp at Gabao.

The Romans mustered and advanced again towards Jerusalem in search of supplies. Cestius swept aside Jewish skirmishers and set up camp on Mt. Scopus, just under a mile outside of the city. He was in no hurry to attack, under the notion that the Jews were wracked with internal strife and could not repeat their success at the defile of Beth-horon. During the hiatus, King Agrippa II sent emissaries to offer to broker an amnesty for the rebels, but the Jews killed one intermediary and wounded the other. For three days, Cestius sent out foraging parties to collect grain manifesting his concern for his dwindling provisions while he vainly awaited signs that the Jews within the walls were wavering. The next day, October 15th, he entered the Jerusalem outskirts and observed the rebels withdrawing behind the secondary city wall, where they manned prepared defenses. The Romans burned the suburb of Betheza in the hope that this demonstration of Roman ferocity would dampen the Jews' zeal. Skirting the Antonia Fortress, Cestius shifted toward the wall opposite Herod's palace on the west side of the city. Josephus states that had Cestius pressed his attack at that moment, Jerusalem would have been his. This seems probable, but his explanation that the procurator Gessius Florus bribed certain commanders not to attack so that general prolonged warfare would ensue, obscuring the procurator's misdeeds, is spurious.

The Roman taskforce pressed the attack for a further six days, ultimately leading a picked force headed by archers to attack the north side of the Temple compound near the Antonia Fortress. Then, Cestius suddenly abandoned offensive operations. The onset of winter, the unexpected skill and boldness of the guerillas at Beth-horon Pass, and his shortage of supplies and baggage mules all contributed to his decision.

Having learned nothing from his previous experience at Beth-horon Pass, during his evacuation, Cestius neglected to post pickets on the hilltops overlooking the narrowest parts of the gorge, allowing the emboldened Jews to play cat and mouse with them all the way to his encampment at Gabao. Sundown saved Cestius from further catastrophe. The Romans loitered there fruitlessly a further two days while more Jewish fighters took up blocking positions along the heights lining the road to the coast. Selected Jewish forces barred the Romans' exit from the pass, while others assaulted down the slopes. Covered by a devastating and unanswered hail of arrows, the Roman cavalry were immobilized in the crevasse. Captured Roman catapults inflicted further casualties and chaos on the disordered Roman force. In order to extricate his more mobile units, the Roman commander had to abandon what was left of his baggage train and rearguard.

The XIIth Legion lost 5,300 infantry and 480 cavalry, as well as all their pack animals and artillery, which was to serve the Jews of Jerusalem well during Titus's siege operations four years later. *Fulminata* also lost its eagle to the Jews, a stigma that only a stunning victory could erase. By the time that the remnants of Cestius's battered force staggered back into Syria, the insurgents controlled all of Jerusalem, most of Judaea, and a foothold in Fort Machaerus in southern Peraea.

LESSONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE BETH-HORON MIRACLE

At this time, we should consider how the example of Cestius's demonstrable carelessness might have affected both the strategy of Vespasian and the attitude of the Jews. Unforeseen circumstances beyond his control had compelled Cestius to lead an army against Judaea. But he was a civil administrator with no discernible battlefield experience. It seems that Nero had only recently appointed him commander of the legions in Syria, as successor to the highly successful (thus dangerous) late general Corbulo. Cestius's inexperience showed in a number of mistakes he made in the attack on Judaea that led to the destruction of the XIIth Legion. Israeli ancient historian Mordechai Gichon wrote an important analysis of Cestius's campaign ("Cestius Gallus' Campaign in Judaea," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 113 [1981] 56). Gichon

observed that although Cestius began his campaign in classic Roman style, including the terrorizing of the populace and wholesale destruction of crops and buildings to undermine the enemy's ability to wage war, he made several significant errors.

First, he was indecisive, tarrying in camp rather than assessing the situation and acting. Thus, he gave his opponents time to methodically evaluate his dispositions and make their own plans accordingly.

Next, instead of placing his baggage train in the center of his marching troops, Cestius placed it at the end of the column, where it became susceptible to ambush. The loss of his supplies, especially his considerable siege equipment, severely hindered a viable assault on Jerusalem, which needed to have been accomplished quickly in the face of the oncoming winter rains. Serious as it was, this was not his worst error. That consisted of failing to secure the heights overlooking the defiles that the army had to negotiate; this disregard was contrary to standard procedures. The oversight allowed the rebel forces to seize these strategic positions. As a result, the Romans suffered heavily as they negotiated the pass at Beth-horon, not once but twice — when advancing on Jerusalem and again on the retreat.

Further, Cestius, notwithstanding his showy reprisals, had not fully secured the area of Galilee, thus leaving his rear uncovered. Some modern accounts claim that Cestius did protect his line of communications in Galilee. In reality he merely conducted raiding expeditions designed to terrorize — or punish — certain Jewish bastions in the north, without, however, systematically bringing these territories under Roman control. Recall that sizeable parties of the rural wildmen escaped to the hills where Cestius could not pursue them. The big cities of Galilee, engrossed with their own contests for regional dominance, were not prone to oppose the Roman juggernaut in any event. This fear for the integrity of his line of communications back to his main operational base at Ptolemais unquestionably increased the psychological effects of the Jewish attacks on his exposed extended column as it ran the gauntlet of Jewish hilltop positions on the approaches to Jerusalem. Had there been a clear safeguarded chain of supply back through Galilee, Cestius might not have been so concerned about the onset of the winter campaign season as he knocked at the gates of Jerusalem. This reflection doubtlessly inspired his mysterious decision to break off his siege of Jerusalem just when victory seemed within his grasp. Add to this the fact that nobody had prepared him for the doggedness of the Jewish attacks on his columns as they approached Jerusalem, and one can see why Cestius may have not perceived victory as within his grasp but simply concentrated on the avoidance of a disaster — which overtook him anyhow.

So ignominious was this defeat that it could not fail to escape the notice

of Roman historians. Two major Roman historians of the era, Tacitus and Suetonius discussed the disheartening Roman reverse about 30 years after Josephus penned his commentaries. Suetonius, in his portion of *The Twelve Caesars* devoted to Vespasian remarked how the Jewish rebels not only routed the governor of Syria but also captured the XIIth Legion's eagle. Tacitus, in what little has reached us of *Histories, Book V*, remarks that Cestius had possibly died thereafter from "vexation." Josephus does not specify Cestius's fate. It is likely that he would have committed suicide in view of what doom might lie in store for one responsible for losing a legionary eagle under such disgraceful circumstances.

The Jews regarded the rout of an entire Roman Legion, augmented with auxiliary troops, as a propitious omen, a sign of God's favor. The false prophets that cooperated with the revolutionaries unquestionably saw divine providence in the sudden and inexplicable retreat of Cestius, who had seemed on the verge of taking the city. Biblical precedents would likely have come to mind, as itemized by Gary Goldberg on his Flavius Josephus Homepage. One would have been the sudden withdrawal of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah, as celebrated in 2 Kings 19. Goldberg also notes the precedent in the miraculous success of the Maccabees against a previous "ruler" of Syria, because the pass at Beth-horon was the very site of Judah Maccabee's defeat of the army of Syria, under general Seron, demonstrated in 1 Maccabees 3. While tactics and topography dictated the selection of Beth-horon as the place to confront Cestius, it was likely influenced by the knowledge of that earlier Heaven-sent victory. Cestius was cast in the role of the present-day Seron, while the various Judaeans may have envisioned themselves as the spiritual heirs of Judah Maccabee. It was also at Beth-horon Pass that Joshua scourged the five Amorite kings, the Israelites then as in A.D. 66 receiving Celestial assistance. This is elaborated in the Book of Joshua at 10:10–13.

Thus Beth-horon, as the site of some of the most famous and miraculous victories in Jewish history, was a windfall of unimaginable proportions to those advocating rebellion. Conversely, the pro-Roman faction was completely silenced, abandoning Jerusalem "like swimmers from a sinking ship," in the words of Josephus. The middle of the roaders, so-called moderates, throughout Judaea flocked to the rebels' banner — including Josephus himself from all appearances.

The unexpected Jewish victory convinced many ambivalent Judaeans "moderates" to join the ranks of the outnumbered, though relentlessly vigorous, war party, thereby frustrating an impending compromise with the Romans and ensuring that there would be a cataclysmic war. Had the Jewish insurgents been routed, it is likely that those still influential moderates in favor of rapprochement would have prevailed, forestalling the rebellion. As it

happened, many borderline collaborators were driven from Jerusalem to take refuge in the Decapolis cities or with Agrippa II's forces. Others flocked to the rebel cause, either out of fear, momentum or the renewed certitude that God favored their cause. The conflict would signify the beginning of the end for the sovereign Jewish nation.

After the rout of Gallus, prominent Jews in Jerusalem who had steadfastly counseled moderation either left the capital for safe haven in Agrippa II's territory or changed their stance, holding a wet finger up to the wind. The Gospel tradition has it that the Christians left Jerusalem at that moment to take haven in Pella, on the east bank of the Jordan, then one of the cities of the Decapolis under Agrippa II's control. The Christian cult was as yet a minor splinter faction of Judaism, along with many other apocalyptic sects whose existence is hinted at in the Dead Sea scrolls, but whose brief careers have been lost to us. Agrippa II's kin, Costobar and Saul, followed the chastened Gallus back to Antioch from whence he assented to their request to present an account of the state of Judaea to Nero. The hapless Syrian governor approved of their mission only when he was assured that the envoys would place all the blame for the fiasco on Florus. Suetonius tells us that Florus was already dead at this time. Suetonius is also the source of an additional detail not mentioned by the circumspect Josephus, that the Jewish troops had captured the XIIth Legion's eagle — a grave disgrace. Recall the odium that attached to Crassus when he lost a legionary eagle to the Parthians at Carrae. The princeps, however, was unable to receive Costobar and Saul since he was in Greece on a cultural "tour," a kind of showcase for his dubious talents as singer, harpist and chariot-racer.

Nero did, however, learn of the Judaeian crisis while ceremonially lifting the first spade full of dirt from his proposed Corinthian canal. He outwardly showed nonchalance, refusing to curtail his Hellenic festivities; however, he was in fact quite concerned that the Armenians and Parthians might exploit this distraction to turn their arms against Rome. Further, there were elements among the lands beyond the Euphrates that were anxious to exploit the Roman distraction with Judaea. If Josephus is to be believed, there were pockets of Jewish influence, if not outright control, in these lands, potential reinforcements for the uprising in Jerusalem. The challenge was in fact vital, and Nero knew it. He had to find a tested commander to put down the rebellion. One who was battle-tested, yet someone of humble origin, whose victory could not be exploited to undermine Nero's popularity. The example of the late Corbulo was foremost in his thoughts. Corbulo, of course, would have been a logical choice for the task.

Nero appointed Flavius Vespasian, 58, a grizzled veteran of the uprisings in Britannia. There he had captured the Isle of Wight and Maiden Cas-

tle, being rewarded with the insignia of a Triumph. However, while governor of Africa, being an honest administrator, he did not indulge in the usual practice of extortion and accordingly returned to Rome a poor man. Reduced to bankruptcy, he was forced to take up the profession of draft-horse breeding, whence he derived the derisive nickname “Mulio,” or mule-driver. Nonetheless, his past achievements secured him a place in Nero’s entourage for the Grecian tour. He aroused Nero’s ire by falling asleep and loudly snoring during one of the Emperor’s singing performances and was ordered to leave the court. In spite of that, Nero needed the services of this rough-hewn old soldier in Judaea. Besides his martial achievements, Vespasian had his lowly lineage to commend him as someone who could not aspire to the throne, whatever celebrity might attach to his future triumphs. Recall the fate of Corbulo, the last of Nero’s triumphant eastern generals who had gained wide popularity with his troops. Corbulo had been one of the highborn nobles, hence might have supplanted the increasingly paranoid Nero. Accordingly, the emperor designated the hardy, unambitious, rustic Vespasian legatus of Judaea and assigned him the task of putting down the Jewish insurrection.

According to Barbara Levick, in her admirable biography of Vespasian, the scope of Vespasian’s command is a matter of controversy, similarly to that of Corbulo during the latter’s period of tenure in the East from 55 to 66. The tasks of both men were comparable: recover control of a people and their territory that had lapsed from Rome’s authority. Their titles reflected this task. It was accordingly that Vespasian became Propraetorian Legate of the Army of Judaea (*Legatus Augusti pro praetore exercitus Iudaici*). Initially it is thought that he was concurrently governor of Syria, replacing the doomed Cestius. There is some indication, as reported by Levick, that Mucianus, more about whom later, was not in fact appointed Legatus of Syria until Vespasian was preoccupied with the siege of Gamala, around October 23, 67. Thus, we have the novel situation that the de facto ruler of Judaea, assuming the status of operational military commander, was equal in rank to his nominal superior in Antioch.

While Vespasian was carefully marshaling his forces, a conference of the more susceptible priests and gentry unenthusiastically formed a war council to prepare to meet the impending Roman counteraction. This council was comprised of the high-born top level of the priestly bureaucracy. At first sight, one might have expected that they would have been discredited as Roman collaborators, since that group had been the primary local beneficiary of Roman misrule. But consider that there were no other nationally recognized leaders at that time, and these cautious gentlemen at least gave the semblance of casting their lot with the rebels.

Greater Judaea was divided into defense commands with five “generals”

appointed to each organize his respective region. A few abortive assaults on the vestigial Roman forces proved ineffective — notably the fiasco at Ascalon, described below, while Josephus Flavius, grasping at his opportunity to attain supreme command, clumsily attempted to hammer together a coalition of conflicting gangs in Galilee where the first blow was expected. Josephus temporized, neglecting to adequately consolidate and fortify the strategic towns, while trifling fruitlessly with an “army” on the Roman model. We’ll take a closer look at Josephus’s shenanigans in the north later: it exemplifies the failure of the Jewish war effort as a whole.

6

Jewish War Preparations, Preliminary Skirmishes

The Cautious War Council: Girding for War, Anticipating Compromise

In Jerusalem, whatever the qualms of the higher priestly order and those among the erstwhile ruling elite who chose to stay on, the departure of the Romans and the royals had created a power vacuum. The stunning reverses suffered by Cestius galvanized the insurgents to reorganize in confident expectation of reconstituting an independent nation. However, they were not so drunk with victory that they deluded themselves that Rome had been chastened into forfeiture. Thus, in the heady early days, when Yahweh seemed to smile upon the Jewish nation again, the victorious rebels set about establishing a provisional government as well as a council of war to prepare against the expected Roman counterattack.

The former high priest Ananias, also referred to as Ananus ben Ananus, who had been deposed after the execution of James, the brother of Christ, was appointed as Supreme Commander with Joseph ben Gorion as his deputy. Although Eleazar ben Simon and Eleazar ben Ananias initially been passed over as being too ‘despotic,’ these men were eventually to wrest control of the revolution from the temporizing moderates when the fall of Galilee revealed the latter’s lukewarm posture towards all-out war.

One of the first orders of the day was the rebuilding of the Jerusalem defense system, a series of concentric walls with carefully sited towers and casements, arranged to command all possible approaches excepting the several deep ravines, which were considered impassable to an attacker under fire. The council authorized the minting of special coins proclaiming the freedom, or redemption, of Zion and dated “the year one.”

Although there were six subordinate commands for the respective country districts, the total numbers of combat-capable Jews never totaled anywhere near Josephus's claimed 100,000 for his Galilean force alone. At the same time, the political complexion of the first government in Jerusalem, and the appointment of a Pharisee (if, in fact, Josephus already was one) to Galilee, does not suggest a determination to fight to the death.

Those Jewish patricians who did not go underground hoping to save their own skins, were confident of attaining leadership roles simply because the Jews needed some kind of steadiness at the helm at this perilous juncture; traditional leaders who were not demonstrably Quislings, were perforce trusted. For their own part, the Jewish moderates heading the first war council could play this new unaccustomed role of rebel leader to their advantage. If they resisted and then surrendered on terms, they might win concessions, especially with Agrippa II as an intermediary. That had to be achieved before men who did not want an ameliorated status quo overthrew them. Undeclared readiness to compromise has led modern writers with twentieth-century nationalistic hindsight to paint Josephus as a "traitor" and his writing as being "apologetic" notwithstanding the constraints on his freedom of expression.

The country was divided into six military administrative districts, allocated as follows:

1. **Idumaea:** Jesus ben Sapphias and Eleazar ben Ananias (whose refusal of the sacrifice on behalf of the emperor started the revolt)
2. **Jericho:** Joseph ben Simon
3. **Peraea:** Manasseh
4. **The Western region:** Consisting of Thamna, Lydda, Emmaus and Joppa — John the Essene
5. **The Central region:** Consisting of Gophna and Aqraba — John ben Matthias (the High Priest's son)
6. **Galilee:** Josephus (possibly to be allocated between John of Gischala and Josephus)

The above districts roughly conform to those demarcated by Gabinius in B.C. 55. However, they do not coincide with the established toparchical boundaries so far as these can be determined for that timeframe. Significantly, the progeny of at least three traditional priestly families among the commanders, and one, John, is said to be an Essene, contrary to that sect's pacifist image. As modern scholars have discovered, the notion of the Essenes as some kind of abstemious dovish monastic order confined to the Qumran community is wide of the mark. There were, as with Judaism as a whole, a number

of variants of the Essene sect, and it is not even certain that they were all celibate.

We know the most about the preparations of Galilee, such as they were, because Josephus is our chief narrator. Before delving into that complicated series of skirmishes, marches and counter-marches, we should record what little we have from Josephus concerning the districts not under his jurisdiction. We have already mentioned the feverish activity in preparing the walls of Jerusalem for a siege. Add to this the forging of some weapons, principally javelins, pikes and short thrusting swords. Note that though the armory at Masada was assumed to have arms for up to 10,000 men, it is doubtful that Menahem and later the surviving sicarii on Masada were willing to freely share these weapons and armor with any group who might rival their own supremacy.

There was likely a good hoard of close-in personal weapons — thrusting swords, javelins, daggers — taken from Cestius's baggage train. We know that there was a quantity of missile-throwers seized by the Jews at Beth-horon Pass as well as at Fortress Antonia in Jerusalem. There was a body of men who were already familiar with the operation of the artillery and these trained others. Later Roman deserters assisted the Jews in mastering the complexities of the engines. The machines were placed on towers and at ramparts, after the artillerists had reconnoitered good fields of fire along likely approach routes. Josephus informs us that the handling of these captured machines in the early phases of the Roman assault on Jerusalem was anything but expert. He reports, however, that John of Gischala and Simon bar Gioras quickly developed proficiency in the use of their artillery. But Josephus also indicates that they later had some difficulty in directing these weapons to fire on Roman batteries before Jerusalem. It should be noted here that Herod's mercenary army, of whom there were a number of Jews, had employed stone and bolt-throwers in the defense works of Herod's chain of forts.

Josephus was sent to take control of Upper and Lower Galilee where the brunt of the first attack was expected, as well as the important defended locality of Gamala; this accent on Galilee suggests strategic planning of sorts. Josephus's "mission orders" reflect that although the major deployments were arranged from Jerusalem, the field commanders enjoyed considerable tactical autonomy. Josephus was ordered, essentially, to gain control of the frenzied outbreaks in Galilee; it seems that the rebellion there had broken out unevenly, mostly on the initiative of town factions and revolutionary groups operating under widely differing agendas. He in turn — confronted with the task of unifying the disparate interests of town and country and of the brigands outside settled society — entrusted the administration of the diverse rebel groups to a principal council of seventy, allocating seven mag-

istrates to satellite councils in each of the main cities. It is possible that these men were newly appointed, but more likely Josephus exploited an existing power structure to underpin his vulnerable authority. Josephus was expected to begin the fortification of towns and strong points of an area that he found already under the influence of the revolutionary John of Gischala and that man's henchmen. Men who had already looked to John as a provider and protector were far from ready to accept Josephus's edicts merely on his own say-so.

A word is in order here about Josephus's "qualifications" for military command, only if to reply to some modern authors who have puzzled over this appointment. Any student of the Roman military can tell you that rarely was an appointment as a *legatus*—or military commander of an unpacified district—made on the basis of military competency or experience. It was a necessary part of the political education of the aspiring senator to command a body of troops. The clever novice general could always find militarily savvy underlings to ensure that the operations were effectively managed. In cases where the appointee also possessed or developed military expertise, as had happened with Corbulo for example, the high-born commander who was adulated by his troops was often seen as a threat to the authority of the emperor, with disastrous results for the over-popular general.

In a similar manner, the Hellenistic ruling class of Judaea would have made its appointments on the basis of political reliability. If the trustworthy commander was also proficient in the art of war—as in the cases of Niger of Peraea and John the Essene—then so much the better. Gohei Hata (in Parante/Sievers, 1994, pp. 309–28) presents the "alternative history" scenario wherein Josephus, after his sojourn in Rome securing the release of some captive priests, was appointed by Nero as a Roman double-agent charged with working undercover as a putative general in the service of Judaea while secretly undermining the revolt. This is how Hata explains why Josephus was appointed to command. He had secretly been trained with the Fifteenth Legion in Alexandria for several months before returning to Judaea so that he would be assured of the key nomination. Intriguing as this conjecture is, it is a bit of a stretch. Josephus was a very meticulous observer of Roman military methods and organization, as his descriptions of the Roman procedures confirm. He had plenty of time while petitioning Nero and Poppaea in Rome to painstakingly scrutinize Roman soldiers in training.

Before describing Josephus's organizational struggles in the north, we should note two notable events nearer to the capital. These are presumed to run *concurrently* with Josephus's movements in Galilee. Since the Galilean interlude is complicated enough without diversions, we'll review these other scuffles here.

Agitator or Champion? Early Skirmishes of Simon Bar Gioras

The first challenge to the temporizing revolutionary commune involved the taming of a rather independent-minded rebel named Simon bar Gioras. Simon's agitation in Acrabatene (capital Aqraba) about 22 miles northeast of Jerusalem, just below Samaria, threatened to remove allegiance and materiel from Jerusalem and even to disrupt Josephus's line of communication between Galilee and Jerusalem. Simon had distinguished himself in the rout of Cestius near Beth-horon and believed that on that account he should have received an important command — or at least a generous share of the booty. He would become a key rebel leader in the endgame at Jerusalem. The measure of his significance is the fact that, of all the principal rebel commanders who survived the war, he was the only one that gave the Romans so much anxiety that they paraded him along the streets of Rome during the triumph, then publicly executed him.

Simon was a young and valiant leader, who Josephus later describes as leading a virtual army of the proletariat. Martin Goodman's modern study of the Judaean leadership informs us that this social revolutionary reading of Simon is inaccurate, clearly reflecting an anachronistic modernist spin. Simon's overtures to the urban poor and the rural serfs was as cynically opportunistic as was his recruitment of certain nobles to his cause.

Simon is notably missing in the roster of district commanders, after having led the vanguard in the attack on Cestius's retreating column. Jonathan ben Anannias was put in charge of the Acrabatene district, where Simon believed, as a native son, he would be rewarded for his considerable assistance in defeating Cestius. Obviously he was viewed as a dangerous Bolshevik style status seeker, appealing to the basest instincts of the rabble, notwithstanding that another Simon (ben Eleazar) would make a similar self-serving appeal to the poor when he would burn the tax records.

At *War* 2 § 653, we find Simon “in the toparchy of Acrabatene [where] after gathering many ‘innovators’ [i.e., populist religious reformers], took to robberies and not only ravaged the houses of the rich, but also abused their persons and since then it was clear that he started to act as a tyrant.” On that same occasion, Josephus adds that “after an army was sent against him by Ananus and the authorities, he and his men took refuge with the brigands at Masada where he remained until Ananus and his other adversaries were killed overrunning Idumaea.” It is noteworthy that while Simon is running rampant in the Acrabatene, the designated commanding officer for this territory was Jonathan the son of Ananias (*War* 2 § 568). So here is Simon bar Giora, who, despite his considerable military achievements in the wondrous victory

against Cestius Gallus, was denied a place in the inaugural high command structure. This man with an axe to grind against the timid plutocracy running the war is now seen rousing the rabble against the arrogant patricians in Jerusalem from a “popular base” and usurping the role of independent warlord ... a role he felt was unjustly denied him by the junta.

Josephus notes that Simon was able to attract a large number of followers, freeing slaves and incorporating them into the ranks as well as aristocrats, both locally and from Jerusalem. Later when we encounter him again entering the capital (*War* § 4.534) he is the head of a considerable army, much larger than the band that he led in the rout of Cestius. Entire families are enlisted in his assemblage, which is said to have 50 officers, several of whom are named at *War* § 5.248 and 6.360. We’ll return to Simon’s empire-building efforts after dealing with Josephus’s transactions and altercations in Galilee. It’s interesting to consider what the evolution of Simon’s fortunes, from troublemaking fringe phenomenon to the war’s central figure tells us about the nature and development of the rebellion itself, even as observed through Josephus’s antagonistic filters.

Rebel Attack on Ascalon: Sobering Setback

The attack on Ascalon warrants special attention. It is a small but significant thread in Josephus’s cryptic tale; one from which some kind of Jewish strategy may be extrapolated. If there indeed were such a strategy, Josephus would be reluctant to reveal it, for it would signify deeper complicity of his priestly caste in the war than he wants to acknowledge. However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that there *was* an orderly conscious war plan, such as we understand the term today. It’s just that, thanks to Josephus’s delicate position as narrator, any offensive strategy is implied rather than asserted. The difficulty is that the regime that was appointed in 66 was not in power long enough to direct the defense of Jerusalem and the rest of Judaea. During its one and three quarters years of existence, the Temple blue bloods were chiefly absorbed in suppressing rival factions in the city.

Ascalon in itself was not a strategically significant locality. It was removed from the sweep of the main Roman army. One commentator has suggested that Ascalon, with its intact Roman military force, could have harassed the Judaeans rear while attention was focused on the main blow up in Galilee. This is a possibility. However, the first ruling clique apparently decided to mount quick morale-building strikes at seemingly easy targets, such as Ascalon, removed from the main Roman orbit. Further, Ascalon was already embroiled in the ongoing rioting between Jews and gentiles. The Jews knew Ascalon as

a center of idol worship. As the ancient stronghold of their archenemies, the Phillistines, Ascalon epitomized gentile arrogance and heathen idolatry. Even under Herod the Great, the town had remained beyond the pale of Jewish influence, a bastion of Hellenizing and Romanizing. The rebels were heady with their crushing defeat of Cestius Gallus's vast juggernaut. The eradication of Ascalon would be a highly meaningful catharsis and a morale-builder.

There can be no doubt that the junta regarded this mission as being of the highest importance. This was borne out by the fact that they assigned the best fighting units to the attack and that the most reliable commanders, John the Essene and Niger the Peraean, were delayed in taking up the assignments made at the Temple meeting in order to lead the offensive. The choice of commanders may have been partially influenced by the fact that Ascalon abutted John the Essene's district and Idumaea. However, these veteran commanders were mainly selected on the basis of their military competence, as was the third commander in the expedition, Silas the Babylonian.

Only one cohort of Roman infantry and a few hundred horsemen held Ascalon, perhaps an ala of cavalry. Aryeh Kasher suggests that this force may have been augmented by local auxilia to the order of one cohort. The defenders' small numbers were more than offset by fighting discipline and battle testing. Their commander, whom Josephus only identifies as "Antonius" appears to have been a steadfast, patient tactician. Fighting on the level plain, where cavalry was free to maneuver, Antonius had the densely packed Jewish masses of close-combat troops where he wanted them. It had been quite a different matter to descend on Cestius's strung out linear columns from the hilltops, a type of tactic that suited the Jews' limited resources well.

The attack was launched near the end of 66 (around Hanukkah). The Jews ascertained Ascalon to be poorly defended and knew that they considerably outnumbered the small body of infantry and cavalry stationed there. Notwithstanding, the Jews made the grave tactical error of unmasking themselves to the assault of the enemy cavalry, a mistake that they would repeat during the war. The troops were highly motivated, infuriated by the slaughter of 2,500 Jews at the outbreak of the revolt several months earlier.

The attack was a well-planned and coordinated undertaking, from three directions. The force headed by Niger of Peraea, attacked from the direction of Idumaea, to the southeast. Idumaea was nominally under the command of Jesus ben Sapphias and Eleazar ben Ananius, but there is no indication that they ever actually took control there. A second force under the Silas the Babylonian attacked from the east, from the direction of Judaea proper. John the Essene attacked from the north, from the localities neighboring Joppa, where he had been assigned commander by the rebel government. This was

significantly the only real Jewish initiative; all other actions by the Jews were undertaken in response to Roman movements.

The bearing of John the Essene's assault indicates that in the flush of the victory over Cestius, the Jewish rebels had gone on to take over Jamnia and Azotus. The retaking of these two mixed cities — where no doubt the gentile population was put to the sword — would be Vespasian's last actions in his summer-fall 67 campaign.

According to Josephus, the Jews left 10,000 dead on the field, including John the Essene and Silas the Babylonian — distinguished commanders whose loss they could ill afford. Niger and the survivors escaped to a neighboring village. Undaunted by the slaughter, the Jews did not pause to carry off the wounded and dead but immediately launched another impetuous assault.

Once again, Antonius's force routed the Jews, who sustained an additional 8,000 casualties. Kasher finds it inconceivable that a mere 2,500 Romans could have inflicted such a high number of casualties on such a large attacking force. Even if, as he suggests, the Romans were supported by a cohort equivalent of local militia defending the walls, Josephus may have rounded these numbers upward to drive home his overriding lecture on Roman tactical superiority.

Niger led the remnants of this chastened force back to Majdal, between Ascalon and Gaza, where he holed up in a fortress with his men. The Romans set fire to the castle, but Niger escaped the conflagration by leaping from the walls and hiding in a nearby cave with his band. Despite these reverses, Niger's men still regarded him as an inspired leader and lost little faith in their cause as they straggled back to Jerusalem.

If Josephus's numbers can be believed, and there is less likelihood in this instance that he grossly inflated the figures, then the Jews had indeed shot their bolt at Ascalon. Earlier we estimated the Jewish forces engaged against Cestius at around 14,000. Allowing for some exaggeration, or rounding up, it is likely that the provisional government in Jerusalem had mustered 20,000 to march against Ascalon, primarily the same force, augmented, as had faced Cestius. As mentioned above, Ascalon was selected mainly because of its ancient hostility towards the Jews. This not only motivated the Jewish attackers to great exertions, but Ascalon exposed the Judaeen sea flank. It might have provided a base whereby Jews could have been attacked from the rear while the main Roman effort was advancing from the north. If the Ascalon disaster occurred, as suspected, in the early phases of Josephus's mission in Galilee, it would help to explain why the Jewish ruling clique did not furnish troops to Josephus, as he had requested, but ordered him to muster whatever fighters he could assemble locally. Apart from a Praetorian Guard for each member of the ruling faction, there was hardly anything in the way of a cen-

tral reserve. Recall that Menahem and Simon bar Gioras had early on been siphoning off a large number of men who might have been available to bolster a centralized national army.

In fact, the central government in Jerusalem, such as it was, does not seem to have organized or prepared the other military-administrative sectors for defense. Apart from Josephus, the designated district commanders are never depicted as showing up in their assigned districts. Only Galilee and Jerusalem seem to have set up any kind of organized defense under designated commanders.

The evidence for this disregard is shown by the fact that the district of Jericho, ostensibly commanded by Joseph ben Simon, failed to resist the Roman advance. Likewise, the sources show that the Jews did not make a stand in Peraea, assigned to Manasseh, or Gophna and Acrabetta, assigned to Jonathan ben Ananias. After John the Essene's death at Ascalon, his district seems to have been left without a commander. When Simon bar Gioras was busily raiding granaries, armories and recruiting a private army in Idumaea, the Jerusalem council does not appear to have been able to muster an expedition sufficient to curb his rampage. Nor were any such troops available to resist the Romans there later.

There is further evidence that the example of Ascalon stunned the Jews into inaction. Even though Jerusalem was theoretically able to provide a limited mobile reserve, since it did not yet require an extensive defense, there is no indication that these assets were exploited while Vespasian was mobilizing in the far north. Price observes that although resources were limited, the Jews missed "countless opportunities to hinder the movement of the Roman army by ambushes and surprise attacks" (p. 75). Unfamiliar with the treacherous mountain terrain in Judaea and Galilee, weighted down by heavy armor and equipment, unable to quickly redeploy due its ponderous mass, the Roman army was predictable in its movements along the regular roads, directly through precipitous passes. Prewar experiences, such as that of Athrongaeus, a rebel who sought to form a monarchy during the chaos following the death of Herod the Great revealed how the Romans could be checked. Sixty years earlier, this pretender to the throne, with a handful of his brothers, had taken a Roman convoy by surprise, isolating a centurion and a cohort of soldiers. Of course, there was the more recent example of lightly armed rebel forces mangling Cestius's cumbersome columns.

The avoidable trauma of the Ascalon fiasco appears to have constrained the so-called Jewish central army to making forays for narrowly factional missions that were reasonably safe such as the expulsion of the wayward Simon bar Gioras from Acrabatene or the farcical efforts to recall Josephus, described below.

Situation in Galilee on the Eve of Invasion

Sepphoris and Tiberias, cities founded or developed by Herod, harbored assertive pro-Roman elements — or at least these constituencies were opposed to the revolt. Sepphoris had been garrisoned with Herod's soldiers, many of them recently converted Jews elevated to the patrician class, hence loyal to Rome. Although Josephus claims to have fortified this important locality, this is dubious in view of its, at best, lukewarm attitude toward the rebels; in any event, it is unlikely in view of the course of events. Significantly, Sepphoris was not a player in the ethnic friction between Jew and gentile that ran like a red thread through the various class wars and strife between city elite and country dweller. This may have to do with the fact that it was surrounded by villages of like-minded (i.e., pro-Roman) citizens. What we can discern, reading between Josephus's ambiguous lines, is that Josephus would be able to menace Sepphoris and make some inroads militarily, but the pro-Roman elements always seemed to have control of the situation, particularly as they were able to summon help from the legatus of Syria in Antioch a number of times.

Tiberias was also settled by Herod's Jewish troops — not particularly fastidious in their observance of Jewish custom. The residents were divided among various parties, some pro-war, others militantly neutral and a few, loyal to Agrippa II, and thus indirectly to Rome. Class differences appear to have been the cause of some communal friction, the poor generally leaning toward the war party. The predominant strongman in Tiberias seems to have been one Jesus ben Sapphias, leader of the proletarian groups, who became the city's chief magistrate. Jesus led his band in the attack on Agrippa II's Tiberian palace, allegedly to remove the animal carvings — a taboo in Jewish religious law — but not so incidentally to loot the place. The synagogue in Tiberias was not used merely as a place of worship but to hold meetings of a decidedly political nature. Although Jesus was nominally head of the plebeians, like so many modern-day charismatic champions of the masses, he used his position to become a member of the landed gentry. He developed a natural alliance with a like-minded entrepreneurial *nouveau riche* rabble-rouser, John of Gischala.

Justus and his father, Pistus, were other prominent chieftains in Tiberias. Justus was Josephus's rival historian — one who would, after the war, challenge Josephus's account of events in Galilee as a pack of lies. Justus and his father were active in the local turf wars that preceded Vespasian's *reconquista*. Several of these gang fights pitted Justus against the anti-Judaean cities of the Decapolis, while others had him fighting the Galilean rural clans, some of which were under Josephus's nominal command. He appears to have had local

Tiberian patriotic interests at heart when attacking enemies belonging to the other factions who would undermine Tiberias's claim to be the foremost polis in Agrippa II's dominion. The squabbling among local warlords sometimes would run up against Roman interests, and at times imperial forces would crack down on whomever they believed to be the transgressor. Since the Tiberian civil war occurred within the territory allocated to a client king, Roman forces turned over Justus to Agrippa II for punishment. Justus seems not to have aroused Agrippa II's ire since the king eventually appointed him his private secretary. Julius Capellus and some magistrates he controlled were in the "moderate" or nominally pro-Roman bloc of Tiberias.

Unlike the "Herodian" cities described above, some of the indigenous municipal hubs were unequivocally hostile to Rome and served as rallying points or centers of refuge. According to Josephus's account, the main loci of hardcore resistance in Galilee were Jotapata, Gamala, Tarichae, Gischala and Gabara. Gischala's practically uncontested strongman, John son of Levi — destined to become Josephus's archrival — led his retinue against ethnic (i.e., non-Jewish) enemies in Gadara, Gabara, Sogane and Tyre. Gamala's anti-Roman orientation was initially compromised by pro-Roman factions loyal to Philip, son of Jacimus, and Philip's relatives, Chares and Jesus, the last named a brother-in-law to Justus son of Pistus, one of the faction leaders in Tiberias. "Joseph son of a midwife" led the anti-Roman proletarian opposition in Gamala. Gamala suffered an ethnic blood feud with neighboring Trachonitis in Batanaea. In *Life*, Josephus relates a rather complex and typically grandiloquent account. There he spells out how Philip outwitted the schemes of Agrippa II's assistant, one Varus (or Noarus) to impeach Philip's authority in Gamala by spreading slanders that he had been in cahoots with Menahem's bandits in Jerusalem during the sack of Herod/Agrippa II's palace there. At the time, Philip was making his way back to Gamala after narrowly escaping death at the hands of Menahem. In this instance, he reports that Philip was successful in exposing Varus's deceit and thus kept Gamala firmly in Agrippa II's camp. In *War*, Josephus, on the contrary, portrays Gamala as a hotbed of rebel ferment from the start.

Before plunging into the rather theatrical episodes of Josephus's travails in asserting his authority, we should consider that Josephus's reading audience — the Roman illuminati — loved their history served up with scandal, melodramatic hairsbreadth escapes and acts of bravado. History was as much for entertainment as it was for explanation — perhaps even more so. It's important to bear this in mind when following the following chapter.

Josephus's accounts of his activities in Galilee preceding Vespasian's invasion differ somewhat between *Life* and *War*. In any event, they comprise a web of conspiracies, decoys, feints and hairsbreadth escapes, some of them a

bit too shrewd to be believed. I will rely on Gary Goldberg's (webmaster of the Flavius Josephus Homepage) chronological reconstruction of the somewhat convoluted sequence of events. Goldberg has conveniently divided this confusing period into five phases. Phase I deals with the period of the "three commanders of Galilee" and lasted three or four weeks. Phase II concerns the two to three weeks when Josephus was left in sole command. Phase III relates the six or more weeks when Josephus attempted to deal with opposition to his command in the major cities of Galilee. Phase IV, lasting four to five weeks, recites the episode wherein the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem sent envoys that attempted to relieve Josephus of his command. Phase V at last deals with expanding military activity against the Roman allies, occupying about three to four weeks.

When I first encountered this episode in *Life* (*War* has a very truncated accounting of this period), I was tempted to simply disregard it and use the succinct chronicle laid out in *War*, that omits all the strutting and pretence Josephus deploys in *Life* to justify his methods. It's true that this section diverges somewhat from the narrative of the combat operations proper. But it is important in explaining just why Josephus's sector was so ill prepared for the Roman onslaught. And it is no less germane to the subsequent course of *War* than is the squabbling among the revolutionary cadres in Jerusalem during the lull in hostilities when there was a succession of four claimants to the Roman throne within the period of a year.

Initially, Josephus was sent to Galilee by the revolutionary war council in Jerusalem to reconnoiter the situation, always with the objective of coordinating the diffuse warlike parties and if possible disarming these unpredictable wildmen for the ostensible purpose of establishing a central arms depot for his army-in-the-making. His secret agenda was to keep these hot-heads from provoking a Roman attack if at all possible. But that was not Josephus's main problem. Given the nature of fractious Galilee, some of the cities were already conducting their own mini-campaigns, somewhat against Roman outposts and surrogates, but in the main attacking other Jewish cities in the rivalry for regional influence. Rather taken aback at this tumultuous situation, Josephus wrote to the Jerusalem council for instructions. Their less than helpful advice was to stay put in Galilee and keep a lid on things. Meanwhile, Josephus saw that his writ from the Jerusalem authorities was far from certain; there were other rival commanders that did not believe Josephus's authority extended to their enclaves.

Josephus Assumes Command in Galilee: His Unstable Tenure and Challenges to His Authority

Josephus in Galilee, Phase I: Period of the Galilean Triumvirate

After the setback at Ascalon, the Revolutionary Junta seemed to be rather quiescent. It was during this hiatus that Josephus was dispatched to Galilee, along with two other priests identified as Joazar and Judas, with the objective of collecting the weapons from the unrestrained gangs while posturing and jockeying for position in Galilee. This was to be done under the pretext of coordinating their rather diffuse efforts into a centralized command and not so incidentally repressing their bravado so that Rome would not be to sorely provoked while there was yet some glimmer of hope for a rapprochement. The other predicament that this triumvirate had to master was the ethnic strife between the Greek populations and the Jews. Add to this the intercommunal quarrels among the polises to determine which would be the regionally dominant municipality in their particular district of Galilee.

It has been suggested that the Jerusalem council sent along the two associates to make certain that Josephus didn't usurp too much power. The central committee realized that there were several groups in Galilee that had not jumped on the rebel bandwagon and suggested that these be utilized to help mollify the more bellicose bands.

After assessing the conditions in Galilee, Josephus sent an evaluation of the situation to the Jerusalem "revolutionary" Sanhedrin, suggesting that the sector was not cohesive nor was it ready for war and requesting further instruc-

tions. The reply recommended that Josephus remain in Galilee with his companions and make do with the human resources he could muster. Josephus next informed the leading men of Tiberias that the Jerusalem directorate had ordered Agrippa II's palace in Tiberias be demolished because of the animal carvings throughout — a violation against the Jewish taboo prohibiting artistic renderings of humans or beasts. Justus son of Pistus reluctantly supported this undertaking and agreed to abide by Capellus and his aristocrats. It is likely that the Jerusalem council directed Josephus to handle this religious imperative very cautiously, taking care to return any plunder to Agrippa II, and not to harm any residents. Next Josephus notified the Tiberian leadership that because Agrippa II's palace had taboo animal decorations, he had been ordered by the Jerusalem directorate to demolish it.

Justus, son of Pistus, reluctantly went along with the harsh edict; the pro-Roman noblemen answering to Capellus acquiesced only after some arm-twisting. Josephus was a bit slow to act on this order. He left Bethmaus for Upper Galilee, leaving Cappellus to carry out the job, with the secret understanding that this act was to be done as a kind of sop to the masses who were impatient for some anti-Roman show of force. The demolition was to be undertaken with due care for Agrippa II's treasures and personal effects, which were to be given to Josephus for safekeeping, with the idea of returning them to the king. In any event, Jesus son of Sapphias, who had not been consulted although he was the president of the Tiberian council, preempted the operation by leading a mob of city folk who were joined by some of the rural malcontents. Jesus's group set the palace on fire, looted its valuables, and, in their frenzy, murdered some Greek residents of Tiberias.

In conformity with this scrupulousness to protect Agrippa II's property while perfunctorily smashing the offending images, Josephus recovered some silver treasures from the plundered king's property, and entrusted it to Capellus and ten councilpersons to retain for eventual return to the king. After this risky balancing act, Josephus was confronted by John of Gischala, who advised him of his intention to sell the king's stowed grain and use the proceeds to repair his city's walls as defense against the expected Roman invasion (or against John's domestic enemies). Josephus turned John down, claiming that the Jerusalem authorities had extended Josephus's power to the district embracing the stored corn. However, Josephus informs us, his two priestly associates were bribed by John's partisans to out-vote Josephus two to one.

The next piece of John's skullduggery exposed by Josephus was induced by the confinement of the Jews of Banyas to their community by order of King Agrippa II's viceroy, Aequs Modius. Kosher Galilean olive oil, being an essential staple to the residents, was thus denied to them. John requested Josephus's assent to deliver certified pure olive oil to the Jews of Banyas in Syria,

then known as Caesarea Philippi. Josephus makes a great deal out of the fact that John first cornered the market on Galilee olive oil, then sold it to the besieged Jews of Caesarea Philippi at a profit margin of ten to one. Modern commentators more sympathetic to John than the ancient chronicler find that John was performing a valuable service by making sure his co-religionists had sufficient supplies of the essential foodstuff. Josephus's spin on this episode of course reflects his post-war vindictiveness about John. Nonetheless, this affair accurately portrays the situation in Galilee wherein one of Agrippa II's lieutenants, anticipating the Roman attack, quarantines a pocket of potentially troublesome Jews to demonstrate his allegiance to the impending Roman juggernaut. Further, local brigands were able to exploit the opportunity to augment their private war chests by various creative means, not limited to robbery pure and simple. John exhibited an entrepreneurial flair, which doubtlessly attracted his considerable following.

Josephus next managed to rid himself of his two colleagues, who, as we noted, were likely to have been sent along with him to act as a curb on his self-aggrandizing proclivities. It becomes apparent that these men tended to favor John of Gischala's claim to act as commander of all of Galilee, particularly after John had greased their palms with some of his profiteering receipts. These "companions" had already twice sided with John in disputes with Josephus. Josephus slyly explains that they returned to Jerusalem, where they preferred to be, once they had lined their pockets with adequate tithes. Josephus, for his part, claims that he forswore this greedy abuse of religious privilege.

Josephus in Galilee, Phase II: Sole Command

Now that his intelligence gathering was completed, and he was no longer under the prying eyes of his associates, Josephus remained in sole command, free to organize and prepare the tumultuous northern front in such manner as his natural talent dictated.

Josephus proceeded to carry out his purported assignment of obtaining arms for his militia and fortifying towns. Josephus cleverly resolves the dual enigma of how to raise an army from among this untamed rabble and how to tame the bandit gangs. Unabashedly — in fact proudly — Josephus reports that he summoned the most bloodthirsty of the gang leaders, whom he wouldn't dare try to disarm by strong-arm tactics; he proudly boasts how he persuaded the fickle mob to pay these men off, in effect co-opting them to suit his own purposes.

Having thus provided himself with a mercenary bodyguard, Josephus

next appoints 70 of the leading citizens, “the Galilean authorities,” as a sort of central judiciary “council of seventy,” with seven liaison delegates to remain in each city. In Josephus’s words, they became “hostages for the loyalty of the district.” (*Life* 14 79). What Josephus was doing here seems to be offering the independent-minded district bosses a placebo while ensuring his own pre-eminence: They’d be formally endorsed as undisputed honchos answerable only to Josephus. Not a bad piece of pork barrel politicking.

According to the account in *War* 2.20.6 576, Josephus levied an army of 100,000 young men. It is highly improbable that Josephus commanded an actual armed force of such proportions. He also claims, at *War* 2.20.6 576 and 2.20.8 581–83, that he mustered an army consisting of 60,000 infantry, 350 cavalry, 4,500 mercenaries (the professionals) and a personal bodyguard of 600. He notes that this considerable body of troops was “maintained in the towns,” which may indicate that they were more of a ready reserve than an actual standing army. In fact, he may be alluding here merely to a manpower pool of potential enlistees. Josephus notes that only half of the men in each town were sent out; the other half were kept there to prepare supplies.

These arbitrary, highly inflated numbers are presumably fabricated to match the numbers that Rome ultimately fielded in their Judaeian campaigns so that it would not seem that they enjoyed a walkover, thereby understating the Roman (Flavian) achievement. A reasonable estimate of total forces under Josephus’s nominal control, including those operating more or less independently under allied chieftains, would be around 8,000–10,000. [See appendix.] Many of these forces formerly operated as freebooters. Josephus asserts that he warned the leaders that before he will declare a unit fit for battle, he would personally ascertain that it has abstained from extortion, robbery, rapine and otherwise defrauding their compatriots. Rather than demonstrate Josephus’s vaunted martial virtues, it simply reflects the rough, raw material with which he had to deal.

Josephus is continually emphasizing his purity of arms, imitating Polybius’s depiction of the idealized Scipio Africanus. Thus he affirms his immunity to bribery or even accepting gifts from those who seek influence with him; likewise, he mentions that he is unsusceptible to the common practice — by conquering troops — of harassing women. However, he does admit to taking a portion of the spoils from defeating the Graeco-Syrian towns in the vicinity and sending it to his relatives in Jerusalem, thereby underscoring his upright devotion to family. Josephus wants his readers to believe that it is this putative integrity that has ensured his preservation to bear witness to these momentous events in the life of his people. It is from this point that the opposition to Josephus’s leadership commences.

*Josephus in Galilee, Phase III A: Time-Wasting
Battle of Wits and Wills*

Josephus maintains that he had a lock on the allegiance of the “people of Galilee”—the vaunted Galileans—which devotion, he claims, aroused the jealousy of John of Gischala. John, in nominal submission to Josephus’s declared authority, asked Josephus permission to go to Tiberias for the curative baths. Josephus contends that in reality John was going there to hatch plots against his command. Being a trusting soul, and concerned for a fellow Jew’s health needs, Josephus agreed to let John make the trip. The governor of Tiberias, Silas, warned Josephus that many of the Tiberians who were already inclined towards revolt, were being courted by John during his alleged health cure, prominent among whom were Justus and his father, Pistus. Meanwhile, Josephus remained in his fortified camp at Cana in lower Galilee where he had a commanding view of the main valley and easy access to Jotapata, a powerful fortified locality nearby.

Josephus and 200 men marched to Tiberias overnight where the populace met them at dawn. He addressed them from a platform in the stadium. While he was speaking, John dispatched an assassin to take him out, but Josephus discovered his assailant in the nick of time and his bodyguards swept him into a boat whence he miraculously escaped to Tarichaea, yet another of his melodramatic adventures (*Life* 7–18:90–96). News of this attempt on Josephus’s life spread throughout Galilee, and the Galileans rallied to him from all quarters, armed to the teeth and ready to follow Josephus in an attack on Tiberias. Nonetheless, Josephus, exhibiting some of his feigned noble restraint, dissuaded them, telling them that civil strife will only help their looming Roman common enemy.

Josephus next advanced to Sepphoris. It seems odd that Josephus, ostensible leader of the rebels, had not earlier experienced any Sepphoran resistance while he used the territory as a base from which to gather intelligence, yet now they have to be brought around to the rebel cause. The mercurial Sepphorans, loyal to Rome at this particular point, hired the brigand chief Jesus ben Sapphias to gather his 800 men and attack Josephus. This also appears a bit curious, since Jesus, if anything, was in the “Romans and their lackeys be damned” camp. A deserter from Jesus’s forces informed Josephus of this scheme. He gathered a large body (numbers not specified) of the Galileans and some of the Tiberians (Josephus makes such a distinction here) and captured Jesus in the Tiberian bazaar; thereafter Jesus pledged his loyalty to Josephus, which of course was feigned on a wait-and-see basis. Next, two of King Agrippa II’s nobles deserted from Trachonitis to Josephus; Josephus’s closest advisors recommend that the defectors subject themselves to

circumcision. Josephus rejected this as unreasonable, declaring that everyone should worship Yahweh in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience rather than by coercion; further, these people are refugees who should be welcomed and encouraged by example to practice Judaism rather than subjecting them to a ritual they may abhor.

There follows the first engagement with the Romans, or rather their advance parties marching under the flag of Agrippa II. Agrippa II sent a force under Aequus Modius. This officer was apparently sent as the replacement for Varus the Iturean, first promoted in the absence of Philip ben Jacimus, busy saving his skin in Jerusalem, who had then tried to reassert his claim to royal power while Agrippa II was away. Aequus had orders to destroy the rebel stronghold at Gamala but merely commenced a desultory siege.

Gamala was significant because it lay in Gaulanitis, about 7 miles east of Bethsaida-Julias at the junction of the Jordan River with the north end of the Sea of Galilee. This strategic crossroads is not far from the seventh century A.D. decisive Battle of Yarmuk between the Moslem Arabs and the Byzantines. Josephus's description of the fortress-town in the shape of a camel's back (in *War* 4.5–10) with steeply inclined terraced housing, even his portrayal of the fortification of its walls and the manner of the Roman attack, has been confirmed by excavation. The discovery of several ritual baths indicates the presence of at least some residents concerned about ritual purity.

Josephus's recital continued to build narrative tension concerning the important issue of Philip, son of Jacimus and the fortress city of Gamala. The last we heard of Philip was that had reached Gamala, to which Iturean refugees from Varus's attack on Little Babylonia in the Ecbatana region had also fled. Josephus claims that in spite of a strong sentiment there for an attack on Varus and Caesarea — most likely from the displaced Itureans — and perhaps revolt from the king on the part of the natives, Philip kept Gamala at peace with Rome. If all this seems confusing, it does reflect the mini-wars and sideshows that fed off the Roman-rebel confrontation.

At this time King Agrippa II apparently still did not know that Philip was alive, let alone still supportive (see below). Presumably, we are to surmise that he had heard rumors of restiveness at this major fortress. Meanwhile, Aebutius the decurion in charge of the Plain of Esdraelon learned that Josephus was nearby in Simonias (village on the frontier of Galilee, due west of Nazareth), 60 stadia from the Roman force, and marched overnight with 100 cavalry, 200 infantry and citizens from Gaba as auxiliaries. Although the standard Roman siege techniques, which called for at least one improvised wall (*vallum*) to encircle the besieged site, could not be executed because of the terrain and lack of manpower, the force was sufficient to secure the perimeter with a series of bases and patrols. This Roman party engaged with

the large force of Josephus. Aebutius was forced to withdraw to Gaba, presumably because he was outnumbered. Significantly, Aebutius would be a key officer serving under Vespasian when the Roman general first sought to defeat Josephus in the defense of Jotapata. Most likely, his experience against Josephus and his familiarity with the terrain commended Aebutius for this task

Josephus pursued Aebutius with 2,000 infantry, and, after stationing patrols on the roads so that the enemy would not harass them, he removed the corn stores from Besara belonging to Queen Berenice (near Ptolemais, 20 stadia from Gaba). Paradoxically, while on his own turf of Galilee, Josephus safeguarded imperial and royal possessions for their high-born rightful owners; otherwise, when fighting outside his territory, he played the role of opposing general and seized the enemy's supplies for his own people.

Josephus next blocked Neapolitanus Neapolitanus — now there's a mouthful — from doing any more damage in the district of Tiberias, where his cavalry had been making trouble. If, as he claims, Josephus had 2,000 men against Aebutius's squadron of 30 or so horsemen, Aebutius might well have considered it a mismatch. Note, however, that Josephus consistently claims that he intimidated royal and Roman troops into avoiding confrontations with him. It is easy to imagine that Aebutius was barely aware of Josephus's grain-gathering activities, and simply did not bother with him; compare the cases of Neapolitanus and Placidus in the passages mentioned here.

There is a different version of this episode in the *War*. In that account, Neapolitanus appeared as a fair-minded tribune of the Syrian governor Cestius Gallus, who was sent to Jerusalem to assess the temper of the populace. Finding them aggrieved but nonetheless peaceful, he encouraged them to remain loyal, paid his respects at the Temple, and returned. It is not clear whether this tribune is the same man as Josephus's cavalry-prefect opponent here. If so, Josephus has mistaken his rank in one place or wrongly dated it. Each legion had six tribunes.

We next discover that restless rascal John trying to bring “the three chief cities of Galilee” — Tiberias, Sepphoris and Gabara — over to his side by emphasizing he is a better general than Josephus is, and consequently they would prevail under him. Sepphoris remained pro-Roman, Tiberias signaled amity, but did not overtly defect to him, while Gabara went over to his side under Simon, one of John's associates. The people of Gabara supposedly had a fear of the “Galileans” (the rural group loyal to Josephus) so they kept their withdrawal from Josephus's camp quiet. It is not clear that any of these places had ever previously been loyal to Josephus. Sepphoris was staunchly pro-Roman and had been afraid of Josephus. Josephus had fled Tiberias in fear for his life, since the city had largely supported John already. Although

we know nothing yet of the Gabarenes, they would turn out to be solid supporters of John. Clearly, Josephus indulges in a bit of wishful thinking.

Gabara now supported John under direction from Jerusalem and received both the Jerusalem delegation and John warmly. This is why Josephus refused to meet his opponents there, placing Gabara on a par with only Gischala (the town) in its hostility towards him. John had been introduced at *Life* 43–5 as a prominent figure at Gischala, who at first tried to restrain his citizens from anti-Roman activity but then responded to attacks from gentile towns by launching his own raids and fortifying his town. In *Life* 70–6, Josephus visited John at Gischala and found him now eager for both revolution and personal power. It is this personal rivalry, as Josephus presents it, which will evolve into the major conflict of his Galilean career: that against the delegation sent from Jerusalem.

Josephus in Galilee, Phase III B: The Dabaritha Affair (the “Fake Navy”) and the Revolt of Tiberias

The young men of Dabaritha (by Mount Tabor) attacked the wife of the king’s overseer Ptolemy on the Great Plain, bringing gold and silver back to Josephus at Tarichaeae. Embarrassed, as always at the revolutionary zeal of “his” Galileans, Josephus retained the booty to return it to Ptolemy in accordance with his reading of the law — and not so incidentally with his unwillingness to offend Agrippa II. However, he lied to his men about it while he had two of the king’s friends return it to Agrippa II. In *Life* 27:132–36 and *War* 2.21.3 598–600, this failure to distribute the plunder to its claimants, raised the rumor that Josephus was intending to betray the country. Given, Josephus’s previously expressed proclivities, this would be a reasonable expectation. However, Josephus likes to portray himself here as committed to doing his duty as a general, notwithstanding his doubts as to the wisdom or success of the rebellion, much like Ananus in *War* 2.648–51. Josephus boasts how he tried to trick his accusers by asserting that the plunder would be sold and the proceeds used to repair the defenses of Jerusalem. In a world turned mad with rebellion and knavery, being cleverer by half than your enemy is a virtue — at least to a proper Roman nobleman.

There was a rally in the hippodrome wherein Jesus ben Sapphias, chief magistrate of Tiberias, led a discussion about Josephus. Jesus claimed that Josephus intended to betray the Law of Moses, with reference to the restoration of the plunder to the king. Jesus held copy of the Torah in his hands, urging the mob to attack Josephus for his transgression of that religious decree. Unquestionably, Josephus wants his reader to discern the irony of the “devil

quoting scripture.” Jesus then led a body of soldiers to Josephus’s home, where Josephus laid sleeping.

Now Josephus’s assistant, Simon, seeing the inevitability of defeat, awakened Josephus and urged him to do the honorable thing expected of a general faced with capture and take his own life. Josephus demonstrated his ingenuity, and perhaps his devilish duplicity, when he pre-empted the armed group and rushed out to meet the mob dressed penitently in black with his sword dangling from a rope tied around his neck while he clasped his hands behind him, demonstrating his peaceful/submissive intentions. Finally, in a show of debasing histrionics, he threw himself on the ground and sobbed. Here he cleverly sowed doubt and dissension, breaking the mob’s unified front against him by telling the Tarichaeans that he had intended the profits from the loot to go towards building stronger city walls for them. Josephus thereby angered the Tiberians, whom he, in turn, assuages by mentioning further projects to provide them with fortifications along with any other towns of Galilee, which were, oddly, still lacking these ramparts.

Josephus’s temporizing promises seemed to satisfy most of the throng, but apparently a number of them were either still unconvinced, or, as Josephus would have you believe, suspicious that Josephus would now punish their conspiracies against him. Whatever their motives, a group of about 600 armed men followed him to his house with the intention of prying the loot from him or, if that failed, setting his house afire. Josephus again boasts of his ingenuity. He tells us that he retired to the upper level of his residence and then sent word down that the group should send in a delegate to receive their portion of the loot. When one man, ostensibly a bold leader, entered, Josephus commenced to torture him, finally forcing him to walk out with his severed hand tied around his neck, sending an unmistakable message to his waiting compatriots, who then fled the scene in panic. Significantly, Josephus is here taking a page directly from Frontinus, whose manual of tricks for cornered generals was published in Latin just prior to the time when Josephus would have been transcribing his memoir.

The next plot foiled by the intrepid Josephus concerns the renewed agitation by several obdurate members of the fickle crowd to force the two Trachonitan defectors from Agrippa II to Josephus’s camp to be circumcised. This time the mob refused to be assuaged by Josephus’s assurances about this matter. The agitators suggested that the two dignitaries be put to death because their refusal to accept circumcision somehow proved that they were in reality “sorcerers” who were sent among them to ensure that the Romans would prevail against the Jewish rebellion. Josephus ridicules this suggestion, arguing that the Romans would not have bothered to amass tens of thousands of troops against them if it were possible to defeat the Jews merely by means of

a couple of necromancers. Josephus bought a little time with his harangue — enough to dig a trench connecting the endangered dignitaries' residence to the Sea of Galilee, bring a boat up the canal and transport them, sans horses (for which Josephus reimbursed them), to the territory of Hippos. This town was not part of Agrippa II's domain but rather under the direct control of Roman forces. Josephus is uncertain whether the Romans would then put them to death, since the fugitives would be known to have come from Josephus's area. Nonetheless, Josephus reasons that it would be best that he not bear responsibility for their death at the hands of a mob in territory he controls. In any event, they managed to find their way back to King Agrippa II, who pardoned them for their lapse of judgment.

The following episode is notable for the light it sheds on Josephus's quandary in posing as the regional champion against Rome and its lackeys, while avoiding provocative actions towards these powers. The Tiberians, who by and large rejected Josephus's bid for their allegiance, petitioned King Agrippa II to send a force to protect their territory. At the same time, some of the Tiberians appealed to Josephus to construct new ramparts for them, as he had promised to do in the episode at the hippodrome, where he first pacified the Tarichaeans with the same promise. The walls of Tarichaea had been reinforced as agreed; now the Tiberians demanded that Josephus, as their professed protector, should do likewise with them. Apparently, those parties appealing to Josephus (and separately to the king) for protection had abandoned Jesus ben Sapphias and Justus. Josephus, unaware of the parallel appeal to Agrippa II for an armed guard, commenced to organize the fortification project.

Josephus had been reconnoitering in the vicinity of Tarichaea, about 3½ miles away, where he went to release some of his forces there to go home the next day for Sabbath leave. He notes that this largesse was exercised essentially so that the citizens of that town would be free from the troubles caused by carousing militia. While en route, he received word that Tiberias had renounced his authority upon the approach of a body of King Agrippa II's requested auxiliary cavalry, in order to prove the Tiberians' loyalty to Agrippa.

At this point Josephus, having dismissed his troops, was accompanied only by a bodyguard of seven armed men. He reckoned that it was impractical, not to mention impious, to recall his dismissed troops in order to recover Tiberias, because Agrippa II's forces would have had time to take up positions in Tiberias by then. He decided to work out a stratagem to handle the problem. First, he posted a guard at the gates of Tarichaea to prevent any defectors from slipping out to Tiberias to expose Josephus's plans. He convinced a group of fishermen from Tarichaea to launch their boats; each manned only by a skeleton crew of four seamen, along with Josephus and his bodyguard of seven.

There were 230 boats in all. The boats were disguised in such a way as to

convey the impression that each was filled with marines ready to land on the shore at Tiberias, standing sufficiently offshore so that nobody could tell that the boats were nearly empty. Josephus solicited the cowed Tiberians to send a delegation of Tiberias's ten-man governing council, led by Julius Capellus. Apparently these staunch pro-Romans could not be assuaged by Josephus's fence-straddling game, since his earlier attack on the pro-Roman Sepphoris might have signaled that he was playing his "rebel general" role all too well for their tastes. Josephus used his counterfeit armada to carry off some 600 councilmen, 600 other foremost Tiberians and 920 crewmen to Tarichaea to be kept under guard.

At this point, Josephus ordered exemplary punishment of a ringleader, preselected by the mob. As his soldier balked at Josephus's command to cut off the scapegoat's hands, he offered this unfortunate man the "clemency" of allowing him to cut off only one of his own hands. The example stifled any remaining rumblings of sedition among the Tiberians for the time being. In typical vainglorious boasting of his "generalship" (i.e., to win by stratagem) Josephus says he found the Tiberians awed and grateful that he was able to deal with their treachery with so little loss of their own blood.

Next Josephus reveals something of his own ambiguous role as well as the indistinct nature and nuances of the revolutionary movement when he invited a body of those Tiberian councilmen he had imprisoned at Tarichaea to a banquet, prominent of whom his post-war *bete noirs* Justus and his father, Pistus. Josephus confided in them that he, like themselves, was cognizant of the invincibility of Rome and the futility of resistance, and perhaps the fact that they, like himself, had to act circumspectly in view of the Galileans' ferocity against suspected collaborators. The context here makes it unclear as to whether Josephus was at heart a revolutionary leader or merely forced to play the role for political reasons. If the latter is the case, he failed, because after the war Justus's history accused Josephus of being a revolutionary commander in earnest — albeit for reasons of grabbing personal power — and then proving to be an incompetent commander once he had stirred up the rabble. In any event, he is here seen counseling the two eminent Tiberians to bide their time, as he did, and play the part of rebel until the sensible gentry in Jerusalem might convince Rome to reform their provincial administration and dampen the flames of revolt.

Josephus in Galilee, Phase IV: Efforts to Impeach Josephus—Tragicomic Relief

At this juncture in Josephus's *Life* narrative, there is a lengthy, theatrical and typically intricate account of the amateurish efforts to recall Josephus

to Jerusalem, supposedly engineered by John of Gischala's agents circulating amongst the ruling elite of the holy city. This episode may appear digressive. It echoes the personal feuding among the chief nominees for control of Galilee mentioned earlier when Josephus illustrated the snags impeding his professed rudimentary northern front anti-Roman coalition. As before, I include an account of these events even though they do not concern the combat operations against Rome per se. They help to explain why Judaea was inherently incapable of mounting a coherent and cohesive response to the Roman invasion. These feints, snares and flamboyant duels demonstrate why Josephus, despite his extravagant — and rhetorical — claims to have formed and trained a prodigious native army, was in fact unable to mount much resistance to the Roman attack. This struggle to maintain his leadership position in the face of inter-city gang warfare was a major distraction during the months in which Josephus should have prepared a plan and sufficient forces and hoarded supplies against the most likely Roman strategy in Galilee.

Apparently, John or his agents persuaded the assembly in Jerusalem to sack Josephus, whom John portrays as a tyrant who might at any time march his considerable “army” upon Jerusalem. John's influence is wielded through Simon ben Gamaliel, who Josephus at various times characterizes as basically a virtuous person, who was susceptible to manipulation. Josephus implies that Simon bribed Ananus, who then dispatched four envoys to recall Josephus and find a replacement. Josephus caught wind of the plot and decided to return to Jerusalem — supposedly at the request of his aging father who wished to see him while there was still time. The Galilean followers of Josephus begged him to stay with them, fearing they would be left as prey for the brigands.

Josephus tells his readers that he was visited by a prophetic dream that told him to stay in Galilee and fight to preserve his command. A 3,000-man armed guard accompanied the envoys, which sent instructions for Josephus to meet them at Gabara without an armed escort. As they proceeded through several villages en route to their rendezvous with Josephus, they allegedly met with protests from the crowds of Galileans loyal to Josephus, many of which were beaten by the soldiers.

Sepphoris, due to its pro-Roman proclivities, is said to have been neutral towards the anti-Josephan taskforce. In short they could have cared less who the Jerusalem authorities set up as rebel honcho in Galilee — they would not raise their hand against the Roman authority, whom they expected would soon arrive in any event and crush all the wannabe warlords. Josephus is more confusing about this town than usual. Note that in his earliest pronouncements about his vaunted preparations in Galilee, he says that he allowed the Sepphorites to build their own walls, as they had indicated a desire to do so.

He is deliberately vague as to whether the walls were erected against the Romans and Agrippa II, the hothead Galileans, Josephus personally, or all of the above.

Josephus, having good intelligence as to the make-up and intentions of the taskforce, went to Jotapata with a 3,000-man force and stalled for time. He notified the committee that he wouldn't meet them at Gabara (which supported John's faction). Josephus next intercepted dispatches from John to his supporters in a number of towns throughout Galilee to confront Josephus. Josephus also had all the roads blocked and instructed a body of Galileans to meet him at Gabara, where they captured John's couriers through whom he communicated with his patrons in Jerusalem. There was a confrontation at Gabara, when Jonathan, the leader of the Jerusalem delegation and his retinue holed up in the Gabaran castle of Jesus, while Josephus appeared before a cheering crowd of Galileans, who assured him they'd never accept another governor in Josephus's place.

Then Josephus entered to make his case. He presented the original bill of charges against him, wherein the envoy Jonathan claimed that he merely wanted to learn more about Josephus's complaints against John of Gischala. This modest assertion was doubtlessly a ruse to lure Josephus into their trap. In any event, Josephus had the Galileans bear witness to his own unrepachable conduct, whereupon they loudly acclaimed Josephus as their savior. Next Josephus read from the intercepted letters, which he averred, were full of slanders (Josephus was a tyrant rather than a general). Galileans then supposedly clamored for the death of Jonathan and his embassy. Josephus claimed he tried to restrain his supporters and told Jonathan that he'd guarantee safe passage for the entourage if they pledged they would give a true account on the situation between John and himself, knowing this was not about to happen. The crowd was adamant, however, and rushed at Josephus's accusers. He diverted them by asking them to follow him to his fort at Sogane, 2½ miles distant — careful to point out that he wished to avoid being accused of fomenting stasis, in the Greek sense of the term, “contention”— a cardinal sin to Josephus's readership.

Persisting in his unceasing struggle against John's machinations, Josephus next dispatched 100 elderly leading citizens along with a 500-man armed guard to Jerusalem in order to present Josephus's side of the story and refute John's slanders. Josephus accompanied the party to the borders of his command in Galilee and secured safe passage for the group via the shortest route by contacting his friends in Samaria (since the Decapolis cities adjacent to the more commonly used river route were already conducting anti-Jewish purges). Josephus withdrew to Japha, near his chain of sentry posts, to await word about the effects of the delegation.

Meanwhile, Silas, Josephus's man in Tiberias, alerted his boss to yet another bit of chicanery. Apparently Jonathan and the envoys didn't return to Jerusalem as promised, but instead heeded the appeal of the chief magistrate of Tiberias, another devious schemer, Jesus ben Sapphias, to persuade a number of malcontents to desert Josephus. At this time the ever-nefarious envoys, encountering Josephus at Tiberias, grew a bit skittish and deceitfully confided in him (swearing in forceful, thus persuasive, oaths) that they were very impressed with his achievements in Galilee and tarried only so they could arrest John. They suggested that Josephus not stay in Tiberias with his armed guard as the Sabbath approached since it would inconvenience the householders to have so many troops about looking for shelter and carrying on.

Josephus proceeded to Tarichaea, leaving behind informers and posting a string of troops along the road back to Tiberias to relay intelligence to him. At the following day's assembly held at the synagogue in Tiberias (synagogues served as both prayer houses and political meeting halls), Jonathan slyly suggested that perhaps a better general was needed for Galilee. Jesus ben Sapphias was more blunt, asserting that it would be better to be governed by four more experienced men than by the novice Josephus.

Justus of Tiberias then came forward to support Jesus's argument and his good character, thereby persuading many in the gathering. Josephus maintained that quite a number in the crowd began to protest that Josephus had shown great leadership, and things began to get a bit unruly when the delegation wisely dismissed the proceedings until the following day, explaining the intermission as due to the obligation to take the Sabbath luncheon. The conduit of sentinels quickly informed Josephus of the situation, and he hastened to Tiberias, arriving just as the meeting was getting underway the next morning. The mob, according to Josephus, was puzzled as to the purpose of the meeting.

When Jonathan's group saw that Josephus had arrived, they concocted a decoy for him to the effect that a detachment of Roman cavalry were approaching through Hommonia, some 3.75 miles away. Although Josephus suspected that this to be a phony report, it was nonetheless plausible. Neapolitanus, prefect of a cavalry wing based in Scythopolis, had earlier harassed the villages around Tiberias and attracted Josephus's attention. Thus, Josephus was obliged to check it out. He saw nothing happening on the frontier and so returned to the meeting. He learned that the envoy Jonathan presented obviously forged letters to the congress allegedly from pickets on the border, soliciting Josephus's immediate assistance to confront Roman forces that were expected to arrive in three days.

Trusting the Jerusalemite commission's slanders against Josephus, whom they suggested was living in luxury on the defense revenues raised by the pop-

ulace, the Tiberians demanded Josephus show some leadership and responsibility and heed these urgent entreaties. Josephus, relishing his ingenuity as usual, tells his readers how he outwitted the delegation. He told the assembly how he perceived that the reports indicated the enemy would strike at four locations. Since he, Josephus, could personally only handle one “unit” (possibly the equivalent of a Roman cohort, or body of 500), the four men in the delegation should each lead a unit, thus providing sufficient command and control over the expedition. Additionally, these fellows should not only counsel preparedness but also demonstrate it by example.

Meanwhile, a member of Jonathan’s party, yet another person named Ananias, suggests that they all observe a fast day prior to engaging the enemy and, in order to ensure God’s assistance, should attend a prayer service weaponless as a sign that they mainly depended on God’s help.

When Josephus went to his dwelling to prepare for the fast day, Jonathan secretly sent word to John of Gischala to come there early the next day, bringing as many soldiers as possible, so that he could immediately take advantage of Josephus’s defenselessness. Noteworthy here is that John’s army would consistently appear as the main force backing the Jerusalem delegation, notwithstanding that there were 300 men from Jerusalem supplemented by the 600 mercenaries. John apparently had at least 3,000 men under his command.

The omniscient Josephus of course smelled a rat and, just before he entered the synagogue on the appointed fast day, arranged for he and two bodyguards to penetrate the assembly with concealed daggers and breastplates beneath their tunics. Ironically (the irony, as usual, was intended) this was the very technique that Josephus decried when employed by the diabolical sicarii. Additionally, Josephus hid a sword beneath his cloak. Jesus ben Sapphias stopped Josephus’s entourage at the door, admitting only Josephus and his two bodyguards, who were accepted as his close legal advisors, thereby deemed harmless. By this means, Josephus would appear to ensure that his subterfuge would go undetected, since there were now only the three of them mingling with the throng.

While all were in the midst of prayer, Jesus interrupted Josephus and his men to demand an accounting, once again, for the furnishings and unminted silver coinage taken from Agrippa II’s burning palace in Tiberias and given to the aristocrat Capellus for safekeeping. Josephus said that all of the plunder remained with Capellus so far as he knew. Jesus then demanded to know what Josephus had done with the 20 gold pieces he received for the sale of the unminted silver. Josephus professed that it was given as travel funds for his delegation of 100 men that he sent to Jerusalem to clarify who in fact was supposed to be in charge in Galilee.

Jonathan then charged that this use of public funds was not authorized.

Josephus here is making a pointed, satiric, contrast to the 40,000 gold pieces that Ananus and the Jerusalem war council gave to Jonathan's own delegation as travel money. This whole business was obviously a ploy to buy time until John's soldiers arrived. Josephus averred that the crowd was becoming agitated by these unjust accusations against his command. He contrived to further their righteous anger by offering to pay back the 20 gold pieces if the delegation would only stop behaving like tyrants themselves. Jesus observed that the crowd was becoming dangerous, so he directed the citizenry to withdraw while the council remained within, claiming that the uproar prevented a fair hearing, but they continued their commotion.

Jesus and Jonathan meanwhile heard from their envoys that John and his armed contingent were approaching, at which point Jonathan boldly demanded that the Tiberians and the council put Josephus to death. He sought this penalty not for the trifling matter of the 20 gold pieces, but, as Josephus tells us, because he sought to usurp the governorship of Galilee. John's rationale — or that imputed to him by Josephus — obfuscates the fact that it was Josephus who was entrusted with this position and John who sought to usurp the office through bribery and deceit. At that point, the councilmen attacked Josephus, whereupon Josephus's armed guardsmen drew their weapons and held the attackers at bay while the mob began to stone Jonathan. In the confusion, Josephus's retinue hustled him out of the building and, encountering the vanguard of John's approaching troops, found an alleyway leading down to the lake where they embarked on a boat bound for Tarichaea.

Back in his camp, Josephus convened the principal leaders among the Galileans and reported about his narrow escape and the conspiracies against him. They suggested that he engage Jonathan's retinue along with John and his supporters in a showdown. Josephus (as always) urged moderation. Josephus convinced his followers to hold off until they got the report from Josephus's delegation to Jerusalem. John returned to his native Gischala, his attempt to assist the ambush against Josephus temporarily checked but not abandoned.

Josephus's own delegation to Jerusalem returned and reported that there was popular resentment against Ananus and Simon ben Gamaliel for having sent out the impeachment posse without the knowledge and consent of the full assembly. They bore letters from the assembly ratifying Josephus's commission and ordering Jonathan's group to return to Jerusalem at once. These apparently were delivered via Josephus. Josephus then went to the village of Arbela, about 7 miles north of Tiberias (amidst the notorious cave complexes of formidable bandit gangs active since before the tax revolt under Quirinius) and instructed his Galilean stalwarts to inform Jonathan about the written instructions from Jerusalem. Jonathan parleyed with John of Gischala and

sympathetic factions in Tiberias and Gabara, whereupon it was decided to send two respected envoys, Jonathan and Ananias (a layperson, Pharisee, not to be confused with the leader of the Jerusalem War Council), to Jerusalem accompanied by 100 armed men where they would again try to make the best case about Josephus's malfeasance of office. The Tiberians were instructed to prepare for battle based on the rumor that Josephus was preparing to attack them. They placed additional ramparts behind the existing walls, and John sent a large body of men, detached from the estimated 3,000 under his command.

Josephus's sentries, the 600 men under his officer Jeremiah, who had earlier been dispatched to secretly guard all the exit points from Galilee, intercepted Jonathan and Ananias at Dabaritta in the middle of the night as they traveled towards Jerusalem. They confined them for two days so that Jonathan's Tiberians would be convinced that the messengers had reached Jerusalem. While his intended victims let down their guard under that assumption, Josephus took his 10,000-man armed force and moved towards Tiberias. He sent messengers ahead telling the gathering in Tiberias to lay down their arms and to send the remaining delegates, Jozar and Simon, back to Jerusalem.

The Tiberians, who were under the illusion that Jonathan's group had already made their report in Jerusalem, defied Josephus's emissaries. Josephus decided that it would not be politic to make war against his fellow Jerusalemites, Jozar and Simon, so he resolved to extricate them from the mob. He divided his 10,000 into three groups, which Josephus ordered to stand by in Adamah, about 5 miles southwest of Tiberias, and set up an ambush there. Josephus took another 1,000 men to another village about half a mile from Tiberias, which Josephus had originally used as a base camp. Josephus set himself up on a height about one-third of a mile from the scene of the action to observe the proceedings.

The Tiberians, discerning Josephus surveying the scene from atop his perch, taunted him and even prepared a mock deathbed for him, anticipating his quick demise. Josephus then sent notice to Jozar and Simon that he wanted to reconcile with them and apportion out the defense of Galilee. Simon approached with a group of 20 or so friends and advisors. He then took Simon aside if as to parley with him, and got him into an armlock, taking him off to some trusted friends to guard. Then Josephus mounted an attack on Tiberias by land and sea, setting a house on fire. He then entered Tiberias with his 10,000-man force, summoning the leaders of the anti-Josephan faction to the stadium. Most of these instigators were sent in chains to Jotapata. Josephus claimed that he restored the plunder taken by his soldiers to its rightful owners among the Tiberians. He gave exemplary punishment to one soldier who had kept a plundered garment. Once again, the Galileans asked Josephus to march against John of Gischala, and he again

nobly refused to do so. Instead, Josephus offered a pardon to any of John's followers who would join Josephus, and 4,000 did so, leaving John in Gischala with only 1,500 Tyrians under his command.

Josephus in Galilee, Phase V: Intensifying Military Action Anticipating the Entrance of Vespasian

The action now centers on Sepphoris and moves away from the tedious accounts of the Judaeen warlord turf battles to the looming confrontation with Rome. Getting Sepphoris to support him had been Josephus's first project upon arriving in Galilee, reflecting its strategic significance. He had briefly used Sepphoris as a sort of intelligence headquarters from which he dispatched his spies throughout Galilee to assess the situation. The security of this operational base, given Sepphoris's strong pro-Roman element, had to continually worry Josephus.

Consequently, Sepphoris was a big problem. The city was emphatically pro-Roman and pro-Agrippa II — the two predilections being synonymous. By this time, Josephus had to tilt his double game towards the side of showing his Jewish-nationalistic colors. With Josephus preoccupied in Tiberias, far to the east, and feeling secure behind their newly strengthened walls (for which Josephus, cynically, takes the credit), the Sepphorites used the opportunity to arm themselves and petition the Syrian governor, Cestius Gallus, in Antioch to send more troops to protect them against Josephus's schemes. This is interesting: Cestius had already been put to shame by the Judaeen forces surrounding Jerusalem. Yet, here we see the Syrian governor still exercising authority.

Apparently, this petition for help occurred in the interim, while news of the disgraceful Roman rout was still making its way to Nero. Cestius answered that he would send some soldiers — surprisingly he still had some to spare after his whipping — to defend Sepphoris, but he did not specify when this would be. Josephus, meanwhile, set his troops upon Sepphoris, which he claimed to have taken “by storm.” He became concerned about the anger of his “Galieans,” who had long harbored resentment against the lordly urban Sepphorites. The troops begin to loot and burn the houses, which had been vacated as the residents retired to the acropolis, the municipal district at the top of the hill. In order to get his men to back off, Josephus circulated a rumor that Roman forces were attacking the town from a different direction. The ruse worked and Sepphoris was spared utter destruction.

No sooner had Josephus restrained his hotheaded Galileans from sacking one polis than he had to suppress their ardor for attacking another. He received word in his base camp at Asochis that his pickets intercepted one of

Agrippa II's valets who was journeying to Tiberias carrying letters from Agrippa II to the Tiberian council. These letters were allegedly intended to be delivered through Josephus. The letters assured the petitioners that the king would honor their request for troops to protect the city against Josephus's Galileans. Tiberias was nominally under the authority of Agrippa II, but the anti-royalist parties seemed to hold sway; hence the loyalist faction's call for help. The Galileans had invariably detested the haughty patricians of Tiberias and their cosmopolitan lackeys; this bit of news goaded them to demand that Josephus allow them to demolish the treacherous town. Josephus again cautioned patience, this time on the pretext that he had to sort out just who the culprits were, for there were some there loyal to the Judean cause, and it would have been a pity to harm them along with the traitors.

Josephus, who had put the king's servant in chains, as his Galileans expected, secretly arranged for his escape after Josephus pretended he had to leave the camp for a while. Unknown to Josephus, the valet took a traveling companion — one of Josephus's proclaimed bitter enemies, Justus son of Pistus. Justus used this chance to elude Josephus and make his escape to Agrippa II. Josephus alleges that Justus had earlier tried to lure the Galileans away from his own authority by directing the Tiberians to take up arms against the approaching Roman forces; this action was in defiance of Capellus's loyalists who had planned to welcome the Romans as allies when they marched through Galilee. The Galileans had apparently mistrusted Justus because of some earlier unspecified grievance against him and in any event detested the Tiberians, of whom they held Justus to be an archetype. They would not permit Justus to command them, distrusting his declaration of zeal for the Judean cause.

Josephus became furious at Justus for his intrigues to undermine his leadership; in reality the disingenuous Josephus was playing the same double game — avoiding antagonizing Agrippa II while laying claim to leadership of the anti-Roman resistance. In any event, Josephus succeeded in stirring up such animosity to Justus that the latter decided to escape to Agrippa II, cleverly using the opportunity of his envoy's breakout, as previously arranged by Josephus.

It was now the turn of irrepressible, ever-fickle town of Sepphoris to stir the pot by once again requesting the assistance of the Syrian governor, Cestius Gallus. The supplicants asked that if he couldn't take the city under his direct protection, that at least send a force large enough to repel the raids conducted by Josephus and his intrepid Galileans. They persuade Cestius to send a "large" body of cavalry and infantry. Although Josephus does not specify the strength of the reinforcements, it should be noted that Cestius officially had four legions at his disposition in Antioch, although the XIIth *Fulminata* had been decimated in his earlier march on Jerusalem. He commanded various auxiliary cohorts and infantry wings, in addition to those provided by

friendly kings, per *War* 2.500. The ad hoc nature of the operation suggests that the additional troops Cestius scraped together for the defense of Sepphoris were drawn from auxiliaries. These troops arrived during the dark of night, which would explain how they slipped past Josephus's base camp at Asochis, immediately to the northwest of Sepphoris, athwart Cestius's troops likely approach march.

Seeing that Cestius's party had managed to get up on the heights of Sepphoris behind him, menacing his position, Josephus, under cover of darkness, led some of his forces to Garis, about 4 miles to the east of the city where they were out of the Romans' immediate striking range. There he dug a fenced camp. The first attack by Josephus, still utilizing the darkness, was an attempt to scale the walls by ladders. His allegation that he thereby gained temporary control of a large part of the city is not very credible in view of the fact that he claims to have abandoned the city for lack of familiarity with the terrain. It is certainly true, however, that he and his band were likely to have been much more knowledgeable about the local topography than was the Roman expedition from Antioch.

Josephus, in any event, acknowledges that he had to retreat after killing 12 enemy infantry and some citizens for the loss of one of his own soldiers. A bit later (how much so Josephus doesn't tell us), Josephus found his units trapped by Roman infantry in the open plain, likely near the Tir'an valley, where his foot-bound troops were forced to find a narrow defile to the rear where the mounted forces could not pursue. Josephus notes that one of his most trusted bodyguards, a man named Justus (not to be confused with his rival historian), fell in the engagement. Justus had defected from the army of Agrippa II, as had a number of others who rallied to the Judean nationalist cause.

More or less at this same time (Josephus's chronology in *Life* is particularly shaky), a prefect of Agrippa II's praetorian guard, an officer named Sulla, brought a body of troops of unspecified strength up to the strategic chokepoint at the junction of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. The objective was to cut off the roads between the possible Judean reinforcements from Galilee and the rebel fortified localities within Agrippa II's kingdom, namely Seleucia and Gamala. It has been seen that Gamala had been kept in line by Philip but had always harbored strong rebel sentiments. By now it had to be considered a hostile base, one that was set up deep within Agrippa II's territory no less. Having allocated most of his military resources first to Cestius, then to Vespasian's command, it is no wonder that Agrippa II was content to wait for the main Roman counterattack to liberate this important locality from rebel control.

Although the ever evasive (when reporting his engagements with Roman and allied forces) Josephus does not stipulate, it seems likely that coming on

the eve of Vespasian's grand sweep through Galilee, Agrippa II's contingent was doing its part in the alliance by tidying up the likely pockets of Judaeans resistance in and near his domain. When Josephus learned of these patrols posted on the crucial roads supplying key Jewish strongholds in Agrippan territory, he sent 2,000 soldiers under his trusted lieutenant, Jeremiah, to take up a position on the near side of the Jordan. The location was sited at a bend in the river where it would be within easy striking distance of Julias yet convenient for a safe withdrawal in the event Agrippa II's forces proved too aggressive. Jeremiah's troops set up a marching camp at that position.

Jeremiah's men hurled some projectiles, most likely stones and javelins, at Agrippa II's positions on the other side of the river. This barrage was initiated not with the objective of causing any real damage, but merely to taunt Agrippa II's men as part of a larger plan to draw the royal troops across the river. The other component of this strategy is revealed to the reader when on the following day Josephus took another 3,000 men and set up an ambush position in a gully behind the fenced camp. His men in sight of Agrippa II's forces feigned flight after having provoked the royal expedition with the desultory missile volleys.

Thus were Sulla's men drawn across into Josephus's waiting ambush, which took Sulla's pursuing assemblage from the rear and threw them into pandemonium. Josephus's decoy forces executed a sharp turn and confronted the panicked royal troops who were simply put to flight. There was no real pursuit, and one might wonder why. After all, Josephus was casting his classic ruse as a textbook ambush similar to that employed by Lucius Metellus against the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal (in Polybius 1:40 and Frontinus *Strat* 2.4). Perhaps this laxity was because Josephus was trying to prove his generalship to the Jewish supporters while at the same time not making an intemperate provocation against Agrippa II. Or possibly, it can be more simply explained that Josephus's soldiers would be vulnerable to a counterattack while crossing the river preparing to pursue.

Whatever the reason, Josephus provides a straightforward explanation to the effect that during the engagement, he was thrown from his horse when the animal became stuck in the muddy ground; the historian tells us he fractured the palm of his hand. Word went forward to the attacking Judaeans that Josephus had been hurt and, when he became feverish, was taken back to Capernaum, from whence he was evacuated to Tarichae to seek medical attention. His men were under the impression that their leader had sustained a more serious injury and, hence, broke off the pursuit. Pursuit would have been a precarious venture at any rate, taking them deep into Agrippa II's domain.

Josephus's evacuation to Tarichae was presumably also to ensure the safety of his men, for if Sulla had perceived that the Jewish leader was

wounded, he may have been emboldened to try to capture Josephus. Of course, the vain Josephus notes that Sulla, once he did detect the intrepid Josephus's absence, decided to turn the tables on the Galileans. During the night, he sent across the Jordan an ambush detachment of cavalry. The next morning Josephus's men advanced to Sulla's troops, who were in the open, to challenge them. When they engaged, Sulla's hidden cavalry sprung into action and put Josephus's force to flight, much as had happened to them the day before — implying that Sulla merely copied the stratagem of the clever general Josephus. Six of Josephus's soldiers were killed in the action.

Josephus notes that Sulla failed to exploit this coup principally because they were apprised of the arrival at Julius of Galilean reinforcements from Tarichae. As Steve Mason observes in his commentary on *Life*, it is hardly likely that Sulla, with his clearly superior numbers, would have been put off so easily. Moreover, Josephus is typically ambiguous about the numbers and objective of his own reinforcements. Once more, when it comes to Josephus's encounters with the Romans, he gives the impression of mere hesitant posturing for effect; i.e., to demonstrate to his troops that he is steadfast in confronting the enemy while reassuring the Romans that he is not seeking an escalation. Contrast this to the much more aggressive and determined actions he describes where the enemy is John of Gischala, Jesus ben Sapphias, Justus of Tiberia, and the Jerusalem impeachment commission.

Necessarily, we have depended upon Josephus's rather slanted review of events up to the onset of the principal Roman pacification campaign. The focus on Galilee somewhat reflects the fact that it was where Josephus was posted. The efforts to curtail the influence of Simon bar Gioras and the disaster at Ascalon are presumed to have occurred concurrently, or perhaps in the opening weeks of Josephus's escapades up north.

What did Josephus actually achieve during these crucial months, when news of Vespasian's arrival in Antioch and progression towards Ptolemais had reached him? He seems to have expended much energy in preserving his own skin, while perhaps fortifying a number of key Jewish strongholds, abandoning a number of places to the pro-Roman fifth columnists — notably Sephoris — and proved his mettle to his restless Galileans by giving a show of attacking Agrippa II's interests. At the same time, Josephus's caution in confronting Agrippa II's troops and attacking Agrippa II's assets signaled Agrippa II that Josephus was not looking to dissipate the king's influence nor diminish his holdings. Of course, much of this may have been post-war affectation since Agrippa II was an honored guest in Emperor Vespasian's court. Unquestionably, Josephus did not want to provoke a premature, all-out assault by Agrippa II's forces. Further, there is archaeological evidence to uphold Josephus's claims that he did fortify many of the places he names.

8

Vespasian Versus Josephus

State of Josephus's Preparedness in Galilee

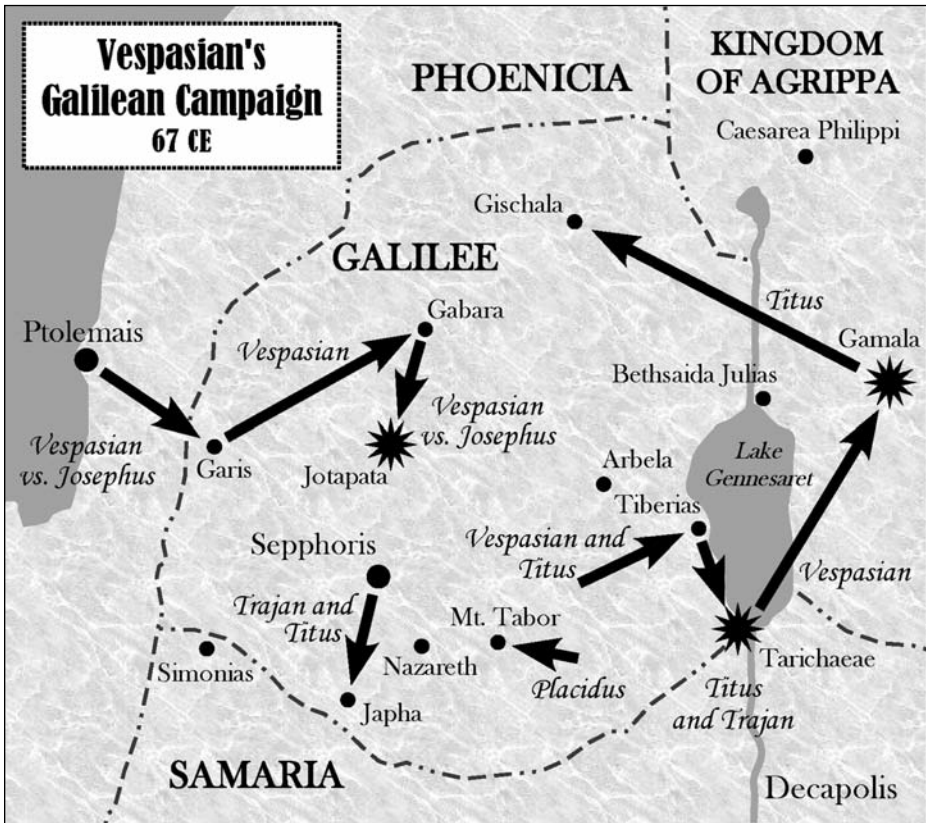
Apart from saving his own neck and maintaining his own ascendancy in the principal sectors of Galilee, some credit is due Josephus for his strengthening the defense works in those key areas of Galilee that he could control.

At *Life* (370, 187–188) we have Josephus fortifying the following areas under his command, in dutiful execution of his obligation as commander, reinforced by his fear of sowing doubts among the fierce Galileans whom he had bought off:

Gaulanitis (which had revolted against the king as far as the village Soly-mas); Gamala (which Josephus persuades to defect from the king); Seleucia; and Solane.

In Upper Galilee—Jamnia, Ameroth, Acharabe.

In Lower Galilee—Tarichaea, Tiberias, and Sepphoris. (The last-named seems a bit out of place since Sepphoris seems to have remained resolutely pro-Roman; thus it's difficult to see how Josephus helped them build their walls against the Romans. Sepphoris figures in some of Josephus's most vigorous — on paper — military actions, second only to Tiberias in this respect; yet Josephus maintains he had fortified its walls. Perhaps he did assist them during the short period of time when he thought to gain their cooperation.) Plus the following villages: the Cave of Arbela (a defiant bandit sanctuary from the time of the Hasmoneans), Bersoubai, Selame, Jotapata, Capharath, Komos, Soganae, Japha (not modern Jaffa, but a village, sometimes spelled "Yafo" near modern Arab Nazareth) and Mount Tabor. (These Josephus claims to have fortified, then stocked with weapons and grain to prepare for the expected Roman invasion as a follow-up to the distracting civil wars he was fighting while he was supposed to be fortifying. While there was no neatly patterned "concentric ring of fortresses," archaeology confirms that Josephus found time



Vespasian's Galilean Campaign (map by Éric Grenier).

amidst playing out his personal vendettas to arrange for the reinforcement of existing ramparts and towers at the most vulnerable sites or those likely to be early objectives in the imminent Roman campaign.)

Here Josephus completes his initial mission, which was to disarm the radical rebels and bring the military situation under his control.

His assignment, then, as drawn in both *War* and *Life* was *not* to disarm the nation entirely but to organize the revolt under the control of the elite. This is very similar to the role that *War* had attributed to Ananus, chief priest and leader of the Jerusalem assembly: "providing for the war under constraint, so that, if the Judaeans should not resolve it, it should at least be done properly and with distinction" (*War* 4.230).

It has been apparent that Josephus's claim to have trained 60,000 infantry and 300 cavalry on Roman lines, including 4,500 mercenaries and a body-guard of 600, seems grossly exaggerated. We can allow that there may have

been 60,000 potential fighters if we include all those holed up in the various fortress cities throughout Galilee. Keep in mind that not all the folks manning the defenses of the likely Roman target fortresses were really part of Josephus's "army." Their loyalties may simply have been to their city-state or some local notable. It is more likely that his operative mobile force may have attained the level claimed for only the mercenaries and his Praetorian Guard — a combined total strength of roughly 5,000 fighters.

The effectiveness of Josephus's fortification program, though perhaps less methodical than he would have us believe, is in evidence throughout the narrative that follows. The determined, and possibly desperate, spirit of the defenders is demonstrated by the way that a premature attack on Jotapata in Galilee was repulsed: they came out of the town and ambushed the Romans.

Vespasian's Opening Moves, Including Disposition of Roman Legions and Those of Its Allied Forces

The whole time the Jews in the south were coping with Simon bar Gioras's disturbances and learning the painful lessons of Ascalon, and Josephus was trying to stifle a simmering pot in Galilee, Vespasian had been preparing the logistical underpinnings of his invasion machinery.

Vespasian started from Greece as soon as Nero had firmed up his marching orders, perhaps in early February 67, making for Antioch by the overland route, via the Hellespont and the Cilician Gates in Turkey where he picked up two legions, the Vth *Macedonia* and the Xth *Fretensis*, whereupon he marched down to Ptolemais. Both of these legions had seen action under Corbulo; the local dignitaries assured Vespasian of the loyalty of these two legions.

Agrippa II had joined Vespasian at Antioch, and they both stopped briefly at Tyre where the inhabitants presented their complaints against Agrippa II. The king delicately avoided an embarrassing situation by sending his general Philip ben Jacimus to Rome in order to account for this officer's questionable behavior in Jerusalem.

In Acre, other delegations from the Decapolis lodged a complaint against Justus of Tiberius to the effect that this archrival of Josephus had burned their villages. Vespasian turned Justus over to Agrippa II who, for the time being, imprisoned him. Since Justus detected Josephus's connivance underlying this affair (with some justification), it doubtlessly increased his thirst for revenge against his future rival historian and postwar friend of the very king whose patronage Justus so carefully nurtured.

Sepphoris, it will be recalled from Josephus's exasperating account, had

given lip service to Josephus's efforts to make that town a bastion against the Roman invasion, all the while importing troops from Cestius to protect them against Josephus's demands. Now they petitioned Vespasian to increase their garrison as Josephus's Galileans were preparing an all-out assault in anticipation of Rome's advance towards that friendly citadel. Vespasian promptly increased troops to bring the garrison up to 6,000. He was to establish Sepphoris as a vital headquarters for his opening campaign. Josephus's inability to work out a deal with Sepphoris demonstrates the limits of the priest-turned-general's vaunted diplomatic adroitness in playing both sides against the middle.

Vespasian's oldest son, Titus, now makes his appearance. At age 27 he had already made his mark in letters and court politics and had gained some military experience in Britain and Germany. He was with his father in Greece during Nero's tour when the emperor received the bad news from Judaea. Hence, Vespasian dispatched his son directly to Alexandria by sea, where he was ordered to assume command of the XVth Legion *Apollonaris* and march overland up to Ptolemais to join his father. The latter had been busy patching up the esprit de corps and comportment of the perennially lax Syrian legions in the north. The establishment of Ptolemais as a secure forward base was a necessary preliminary after the disastrous experience of Cestius.

Regional client kings duly furnished their contingents, as per the terms of their rule. Agrippa II, Soheimus of Emesa and Antiochus of Commagene each sent 2,000 foot-archers and 1,000 cavalry. Malik II of Petra provided 1,000 horsemen and 5,000 infantry of whom most were archers. Not counting the servants, most of whom could also fight if the need arose, the army strengths was not far short of Josephus's rounded figure of 60,000:

3 legions of 6,120 men each	18,360
10 cohorts of 1,000 each	10,000
13 cohorts of 720 each	9,360
6 wings of 1,000 each	6,000
Auxiliaries of the Syrian kings (3 × 3,000)	9,000
Nabataean auxiliaries	6,000
Total	58,720

It is at this point in Josephus's *Jewish War* that he presents his celebrated detailed description of the Roman army, including enumeration of its weapons, armor, discipline, marching order and the preparation and defense of the field camps. This passage is the basis of many works about early imperial Roman campaigns, overlooking the very one from which it was drawn.

The pageant of all this might was calculated to send a clear message to the peasants in the fields, the townspeople and any lurking would-be attack-

ers: You don't stand a chance against Rome's disciplined and ready armed might. Consequently, Vespasian arrayed the vast military ensemble at his disposal as a warning for potential enemies and a harbinger of support for the beleaguered Roman allies amongst them.

Vespasian had not been a brilliant commander but a careful and prudent one. He recognized that, given Jerusalem's importance to the Jews, its capture was always the ultimate goal of his campaign. But, as was made painfully obvious by his predecessor's catastrophe, Jerusalem could not be safely attacked without first securing control of territories between it and the Romans. Hence, his first objective would be the conquest of Galilee. Additionally, he recognized the desirability of controlling the coastal strip as a launching pad, much as had been the case with controlling the south coast of Britain in 43–47. In a sense, these preliminaries duplicated Cestius's approach. However, Vespasian was more methodical in his advance and did not prematurely commit to a direct attack on the Judean seat of government.

Vespasian faced a tougher military problem than A. Plautius had surmounted in 43, in spite of the fact that there was no seaborne landing. The main obstacles to the conquest of Britain 20 years earlier were introduced when the Roman troops had to master the Pennines, Wales and southern Scotland, and the highlands impeded movement. In the Jewish province, mountain masses running north to south complicated west to east movement and theoretically afforded security and raiding bases for rebels. Apart from guerilla strongholds, there were regular settlements that would have to be subdued one by one in a series of sieges. This was precisely the sort of methodical adaptation and preparation that the impetuous and militarily naive Cestius had shirked. It would be hard to over-estimate the significance of Vespasian's British experience in reducing hilltop forts, though the terrain of Britain was far less cruel. The Romans recognized the problem, and Vespasian deployed an impressive array of equipment against Jotapata and Jerusalem.

Besides the differences in terrain, there were temperamental distinctions. The Britons were familiar with how Gaul was brought under Roman control and had reaped some benefits. Thus, they were more amenable to some form of Romanization than were the headstrong Jews. Neither did the Britons share the fanatical Jewish faith in a God who would sustain them against terrible punishment.

As soon as the command structure and discipline of his troops organized during his two-week stay in Antioch satisfied Vespasian, he marched south, reaching Ptolemais in about mid-April 67, and reorganized Titus's XVth Legion to conform with his tactical system.

When completely mustered, which took some time, the forces also accommodated 23 auxiliary infantry cohorts (including the garrison of Judaea,

five units from Caesarea). Ten of these were likely *milliariae*, notionally twice the regular size. To this, Vespasian added six regiments of auxiliary cavalry.

The local monarchs made a substantial contribution: 2,000 archers and 1,000 horses each. The Nabataean Malchus furnished a further 1,000 cavalry and 5,000 foot archers. All accounts agree that Vespasian must have had a total of roughly 60,000 men under his command.

Among his eminently expert legates, besides Titus, were Marcus Ulpius Traianus (i.e., Trajan, father of the future emperor by that name) in charge of X Fretensis, who in ten years would be governing Syria, and Sextus Vettulenus Cerialis, later legate of Moesia.

Vespasian's first task was to address the situation in Lower Galilee and rally all the people of Sepphoris who were still loyal. Ambassadors from that town apprised him of the situation in and around the stronghold, assuring him that any reinforcements would be put to good service. To this end, Vespasian dispatched a detachment of 7,000 men, including 1,000 mounted troops, under the military tribune Placidus. This reinforcement was in addition to the troops previously obtained from Caesinnius). Josephus had this to say about the significance of Sepphoris: "It was the largest city of Galilee, a fortress in an exceptionally strong position in the enemy's [Jewish] territory, and adapted to keep guard over the entire province" (*War*, 3.2.4 32–34).

Placidus deployed his 1,000 horsemen and the strengthened garrison of Sepphoris to scour the surrounding countryside for straggling members of bandit gangs, which he brutally slaughtered in the open in order to strike terror. He made it clear that those who did not rally to him and defect from Josephus's command would suffer a similar fate. He systematically began burning crops and undertaking other punitive measures against the population. Placidus observed that many of these men tended to flee to refuge in fortified villages prepared for such a contingency, Jotapata particularly.

With the idea of disrupting the integrity of local defense, Placidus went directly for the strongest of the defended localities: Jotapata. He had no siege engines and was forced to make a rather obvious approach march, allowing a body of men to prepare a determined sally from behind the walls. This aggressiveness is the first instance since the drubbing at Ascalon where the Jews showed eagerness to take on the legions. It would be all too rare in this campaign. The sudden Jewish assault dumfounded Placidus's troops, who were in the midst of preparing to rush the gates. However, due to the Romans' sturdy body armor and their ability to retire in good order, the Jews were only able to inflict seven casualties on the withdrawing Romans while sustaining three of their own.

This ability of the Romans to conduct an orderly withdrawal, most likely in a well-protected *testudo* formation, drove home the incapacity of the Jewish

forces to achieve decisive results in the open, even against Roman troops taken by surprise. Even more striking is the ensuing proclivity of the Jewish forces to hole up in their fortified cities, apparently hoping to wear down the Romans in a time-consuming series of sieges, while their compatriots in Jerusalem devised a more forward strategy. The practical (as opposed to theological) lessons of Beth-horon Pass — where the Jews used to advantage their light, mobile style of warfare and close-quarters fighting from ambush — were neglected.

In May 67, Vespasian advanced his army from Ptolemais to the border of Galilee, where he bivouacked. The calculated ostentation of his advance was intended to, and apparently did, provoke dread among his certain quarry. Meanwhile scouts returned to Josephus's base at Garis, three miles from Sephoris, on the road to Tiberias, to which he had withdrawn on the earlier news of Vespasian's caucus of allied kings in Antioch. The reports of the deliberate and formidable progression of this armed multitude — now clearly set to strike — sent tremors of alarm throughout Josephus's compound.

The Jewish commander's troops began to desert. Vespasian's first objective was to storm the village of Gabara, five miles on the near side of Jotapata. This was to set the tone for the rest of his campaign and quickly cancel the disgrace of Cestius, who, according to Tacitus, was now dead, the victim of shame and remorse. The Roman assault was a ferocious exemplary "scorched earth" operation, putting all inhabitants to the sword, taking no prisoners and razing the village. All males of the neighboring hamlets were likewise slaughtered in view of their surviving families.

The Siege of Jotapata: Josephus's Shining Hour or Claim to Shame?

Seeing that his troop morale was ebbing, Josephus left a trustworthy guard at Garis and took a devoted escort with him to Tiberias where he could safely contemplate his options. He sent a courier to Jerusalem advising them of the situation. He demanded reinforcements sufficient to withstand Vespasian's imminent offensive. If they were unwilling to send such reinforcements, then he requested permission to negotiate a truce, and seek the best terms possible under the circumstances. Here we can appreciate the constraints on Jewish manpower, concentrated at Jerusalem. Each faction among the priestly coalition, beginning to fray as Roman retribution was upon them, did not want to weaken its own power base at home, and thus was reluctant to commit soldiers to actions far from the seat of power. The drubbing at Ascalon also had a dampening effect on the Jews' willingness to confront Romans in the open. This was especially compelling when they consider that

Vespasian's force was many times that which inflicted so much damage on the attackers at Ascalon.

There is no indication that the council even deigned to reply to Josephus's entreaties. This is not surprising. There would have been elements that would tell him to come to terms while others now starting to flex their muscle would advise him to resist; yet, this latter camp could not send Josephus the essential additional troops. The failure of the purported revolutionary council in Jerusalem to adequately reinforce Galilee, or even address the situation as Vespasian approached anticipates the problems that would continue to plague this irresolute agglomeration of factions as the Roman ring closed around the national capital.

Josephus, despairing of relief from his hypothetical superiors, decided to move his retinue into Jotapata, where he believed that he could make a determined stand. He likely would have figured that at best he could bring Vespasian to some terms that might preserve a semblance of Jewish dignity; at worst, he would have been defeated after an honorable defense that might have assured him some kind of "worthy enemy" reception in Vespasian's camp. In any event, having invested so much of his prestige on masterminding the battlements at Jotapata, Josephus felt duty-bound to direct its defense.

The siege was to last 47 days in the heat of summer, doubtless stretching Roman engineering skills and fortitude to the limit. The latter-day war memoirist would certainly consider the defense of Jotapata to be his greatest martial achievement, whether or not its significance in the "big picture" justified Josephus's detailed treatment.

Between June 8–10, 67, learning that Josephus had gone to Jotapata, Vespasian quickly surrounded the city. As Josephus would have us believe, Vespasian relished the idea of capturing the territorial commander, rendering the reduction of the rest of the district all the easier. Allowing for Josephus's inevitable vanity, it would have been plain to Vespasian that, after he had secured Sepphoris, the other lynchpin to the defense of Galilee would be Jotapata and Josephus was the man to beat there.

Vespasian advanced on Jotapata, as Josephus notes in *War*, "impatient to make an end of it." Engineers were engaged in preparing the road for four days. It was actually on the fifth day after Vespasian prepared his encirclement that Josephus left Tiberias and entered Jotapata. These two towns are only between 10 and 15 miles apart. A deserter had informed Vespasian of Josephus' presence. On hearing that this estimable general had taken the bait, Vespasian immediately sent his seasoned tribune Placidus and the decurion Aebutius to surround the town and prevent Josephus's escape. The next day Vespasian marched until evening to arrive at Jotapata, surrounding the city with three lines of soldiers.

It may help to organize our narrative by tracing the orderly, businesslike stages of the Roman siege. This deviates somewhat from the dramatic presentation of Josephus, but it perhaps will better elucidate the military aspect.

As mentioned above, the first thing that the Romans did was to level an access passage, then construct a broad road athwart the jagged approaches, to provide an even smooth pathway for their later labors, bringing up siege equipment, etc. It would also serve as a better footing for cavalry screens. This project took four days, after first setting up their base of operations to the north of the town, all other approaches were protected by deep gorges, as was the case with Jerusalem. This all occurred while Josephus was still in Tiberias.

Josephus tells us how the initial assault, whereby the Romans anticipated easy pickings, was met by the unexpected rush of a body (he doesn't say how many) of Jewish fighters from an encampment just outside the walls. This extramural camp is surprising given Josephus's assertion that Vespasian's show of force had intimidated the Jews. At this point Placidus is still in command; Vespasian is not yet personally directing the operation. Placidus's second in command, the decurion Aebutius, commander of several squadrons of auxiliary cavalry, had earlier confronted Josephus when Aebutius was serving under Agrippa II (and possibly Cestius) and was entrusted with the defense of the Great Plain.

Aebutius was chosen to assist Placidus not only because of his military prowess, but because he would have been familiar with Josephus from his earlier clash. The Romans protected the advance of their infantry with an umbrella of arrows and darts, but the Jews' sudden audacious rush to meet them astounded the infantry, who sustained 13 dead and many injured (Josephus does not indicate their numbers) as they withdraw. The Jews suffer 17 dead and 600 wounded in this action, attesting to the doggedness of their defense.

The Romans continued to mount attacks against this wall for a total of five days. The defenders were able to muster sufficient spirit to prevent these typically resolute assaults from gaining a foothold. It was at this point that Vespasian decided that the fortress could only be taken by means of the expensive and labor-intensive project of a formal siege. He would have to collect all of the forces under his command and employ all of his resources.

It might be useful here to review the methodology and instruments available to the Romans in tackling such a problem.

Roman siegecraft at this period was comprised of six different techniques. The first was the mine, which entailed the digging of a tunnel under the enemy ramparts, securing the roof with temporary timber bracing as the excavation progressed. When the tunnel had completely undercut the particular towers or casemates to be breached, then combustibles were introduced, set-

ting the timber supports afire and hopefully bringing down the section of the wall directly above. This tunneling could be offset by the technique of counter-mining.

Next came the battering ram. This consisted of a huge beam, much like the mast of a ship, which was capped at one end with a thick piece of iron, usually fashioned to resemble the head of a ram, giving the device its name. The beam was slung with a pair of ropes looped around the midpoint and was hung similarly to the balance in a pair of scales from another beam. This second beam was cross-bracketed to a pair of beams on each side. The ram was pulled backward in its rope cradle by a large body of men, who then pushed it forward after it reached its apogee. The momentum imparted by the weight of the beam and iron cap, reinforced by the strength of the crew was usually sufficient to crumble the strongest, thickest barriers.

The third apparatus was the tower, comprised of a structure resembling a pagoda, often built up to five or six landings, rising to a height of 50 to 90 feet as required. The structure was hauled towards the wall on wheels or rollers. It could be plated with iron and hung with animal hides to protect the crew from enemy missile fire. In some cases, a tower could be equipped with flexible gourds made from animal gut through which water could be forced by syringes to be employed as a rudimentary fire-fighting apparatus.

Both the ram and the tower had to be brought to bear directly against the wall in order to take effect. It was for this purpose that the fortress walls of the period were provided with ditches, not like the later water-filled moats of the northern forts, but simply to provide the ancient version of a modern tank-trap, i.e., something to tip or immobilize the enemy machine. The Romans would often neutralize the fosse by filling it in.

The fourth technique consisted of throwing up earthworks. Besides the suggested procedure of overcoming the ditch, there was the ramp, which could either replace or support the tower, making up for its relative immobility by the fact that it was fireproof. The other use of embankments was the circumvallation, consisting of a continuous mound surrounding a walled city in order to prevent passage in or out of the besieged town, hoping to starve the defenders into submission or incapacity to resist a direct assault.

Finally, there was the artillery — ballista (stone-thrower) or catapult or scorio (large or smaller bolt-throwers respectively). The most massive models were similar to an inverted metronome, wherein the base of the beam was slipped through a great cirlet of elastic cords — long, thick cables made from horsehair. The beam was manhandled backward until it was almost horizontal, and a cup at its extremity was fixed with a stone or iron-capped projectile. The crew then turned a windlass in order to twist the cords until they were stretched taut. A buckle held the beam down until it was tripped, thus

releasing the tension and flipping the beam forward, propelling the missiles towards the enemy in an arcing trajectory. Josephus records that the stones could often weigh over a hundredweight and were capable of dispersing whole formations in the field or inflicting heavy damage on towers and walls.

The final component of a Roman siege-train consisted of scaling ladders, which were emplaced by an infantry team covered by locked shields, the *testudo*, which usually was the culminating stage, employed after the other devices had taken effect.

In his siege of Jotapata, Vespasian utilized all of these techniques with the exception of mining, which the sitting of the fort rendered impractical.

After despairing of carrying the walls by main assault, he first constructed a ramp. The defenders skillfully foiled this effort: They matched each increase in the ramp's height by raising the elevation of the walls. In addition, the Jews were able to undermine the earthworks in various sallies, burning the supporting timbers in each instance.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the defenders to repulse them, the Romans succeeded in bringing up a battering ram, using 160 catapults, backed by archers and slingers, to suppress the fire of the Jews atop the ramparts. The ram was beginning to complete a breach when Josephus devised the stopgap of lowering sacks filled with straw to deaden the blows of the ram. The Romans guessed correctly that the brutal sun was beginning to take a toll on the defenders, who, lacking an indigenous spring, had limited supplies of water available. Josephus temporarily disabused them of this notion by the ruse of hanging damp linens to dry on the ramparts, creating the illusion that there was no water shortage.

Nonetheless, the Romans steadfastly proceeded to complete construction of three ramps, atop each of which they mounted a 50-foot armored tower. The Jews defeated the first Roman assault wave, which was shielded by the *testudo*, by pouring down boiling oil, which ran through the interlocked shields and even through the seams of the attackers' armor, inflicting horrible, searing wounds, dismaying the men not yet committed to the assault.

Josephus engineered a system to elude the Roman pickets and secure supplies. He dressed certain runners in sheepskin coverings so that, in the fading light of dusk, they appeared to be dogs traversing the ravines.

The fact that Vespasian had decided to resort to the less glorious technique of strangulation by blockade was attested by his being able to send off the commanding officers of two of his three legions on punitive raids at the height of the siege of Jotapata.

We will return to the closing stages of the Jotapata siege after briefly describing two simultaneous events, to some extent related to Josephus's extraordinary and momentarily inspirational display of steadfastness.

JOTAPATA'S STAYING POWER INSPIRES
WOULD-BE IMITATORS

Encouraged by the tenacious defense of Jotapata, the village of Yafo, or Japha, about 10 miles south of Jotapata, went over to the rebel cause. Vespasian detached 1,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry to overpower the rebel town before it could make trouble. The force was commanded by the commander of Legio X Fretensis, Traianus (Trajan, father of the future emperor of that name). Around July 12, the detachment reached the town, which enjoyed a commanding hilltop position and additionally was ensconced behind a formidable double circuit of walls.

Luckily for Trajan, a large band of the defenders had ventured out in the open to engage his forces prior to their arrival at the walls. He mounted a cavalry charge against the advancing militiamen, who, after a brief resistance, broke and fled towards the bastion, with Trajan's horse in hot pursuit. They gained entrance to the outer ring but failed to seal off the entrance in time, and the Romans were able to penetrate this enclosure. Seeing this, those manning the gateways to the inner ring shut the doors in the face of their compatriots who tried to escape the marauding enemy. This not only penned up the Jews so that they were unable to mount a resistance, but it broke their spirit so that Trajan's forces were able to slay 12,000 of them before all resistance ceased.

Estimating that there would be token resistance, if any, from what was left of the dispirited defenders (the best fighters presumably perished outside the inner wall) Trajan sent for Vespasian to dispatch his son, Titus, to enter the town in triumph. Vespasian, concerned that there might yet be some fight left among the Galileans inside the wall, gave Titus 500 cavalry and 1,000 infantry to finish the job. Titus immediately formed for battle, taking the right wing under his own command and allotting the left wing to Trajan.

The men on the wall briefly resisted Titus's efforts to mount scaling ladders, but the frontage was too broad and they fell back. Once inside, the Romans found themselves hotly engaged in house-to-house fighting throughout the treacherous winding alleyways. The men ambushed the restricted packets of Romans as they crouched in the courtyards for shelter. Women pelted the Romans with any missile at hand. This intense free-for-all continued for six hours until all able-bodied resistance was vanquished. All the remaining males were hunted down and slaughtered, and the women and small children were taken to be sold in slavery. Total Jewish killed, including those massacred after resistance ceased, numbered 15,000, while 2,130 were taken prisoner.

Around July 15, a second town was also emboldened by Jotapata's res-

oluteness to rise up against the Romans. However, it is not clear that they made common cause with the Jewish rebels; this time the show of defiance was mounted by Samaritans, who had their own quite separate grievances against the Roman occupation.

A large group of Samaritans had assembled on their holy mountain, Gerizim. The Romans had felt quite threatened by these congregations in the past and had dispersed them several times with extreme brutality. On this occasion, Vespasian sent the commander of Legio V, Sextus Cerialis Vettulenus, who laid siege to the hilltop. The same heat wave that strained the deficient water supply of Jotapata tormented the besieged Samaritans. Thirst induced many of the Samaritans to lay down their arms. Nonetheless, Cerialius slaughtered some 11,600 of the religious fanatics before all resistance ceased. In contrast to the situation in Yafo, many others were allowed to surrender.

Allowing for Josephus's tendency to exaggerate his centrality to the great events he was narrating, it is likely that the fate of Jotapata would resonate among the indecisive Galilean toparchies in the neighborhood. Much as Jotapata's seeming success would have inspired them to rebel, the ultimate fate of Yafo and the Samaritans at Gerizim, as well as that of their role model, would conceivably have a cooling effect on any groundswell of sympathy with the rebel cause.

ENDGAME IN JOTAPATA AND JOSEPHUS'S CAPTURE

It was after Vespasian had determined to forgo direct assault in favor of the time-consuming but relatively bloodless strategy of blockade, that Josephus, seeing that the situation was ultimately doomed, planned to flee the city with the town leaders. This flight was outwardly on the pretext of continuing the fight where there was some hope of success. The townspeople discovered this scheme and compelled Josephus not to abandon them.

On July 29, 67, two weeks after Yafo and Mount Gerizim, where the Romans had quashed Jewish prospects of a more general uprising in support of Jotapata's holdouts, a deserter informed Vespasian that the Jewish defenses of Jotapata were weakly manned. Vespasian distrusted Jewish informers, based on the example of one earlier defector from Jotapata who had refused to divulge any information even as he was in his death throes on the crucifix. However, Vespasian's military instincts told him that this man was being frank. The informant told his captors that a pre-dawn assault would stand the best chance of success as this was when the exhausted men on watch snatched a few moments of sleep.

Titus took with him a tribune and a handful of troops from the XVth Legion, and under cover of a thick early morning haze, crept silently over the

escarpments, lowered themselves, slit the throats of the slumbering sentries and opened the gates for their comrades including Placidus's men. By daylight, before the other inhabitants could be alerted, the Romans had taken citadel and the troops were in the center of town ending the siege after over seven weeks. According to Josephus, the defenders had suffered 40,000 casualties, while only 1,200 prisoners were taken, exclusively women and infants. The Romans leveled the ramparts and burned the town.

For his part, Josephus unabashedly informs his readers that he did not choose to die with those he swore to defend to the death. We had an inkling of Josephus's survival instincts during his earlier abortive plot to abandon Jotapata so he'd "live to fight again." Instead, Josephus took with him 40 of the town notables and hid in an empty cistern just outside the town walls. A woman captive subsequently betrayed their hiding place to Vespasian.

The Roman general sent word down that he'd spare their lives if they'd surrender. Josephus's group at first refused the offer, but when Vespasian sent down one Nicanor, a trusted friend of the Jewish commander, Josephus decided to accept the offer, telling the others about the inanity of suicide after Jotapata had already been overcome. Furthermore, Josephus recalls his prophetic dreams wherein he would be the savior of the Jewish nation. However, his companions drew swords and advised Josephus that they preferred to die fighting. Josephus agreed to honor a suicide pact, whereby they'd all kill one another, the last two martyrs to be selected by drawing lots. Josephus claims that either by luck, or more likely God's providence, he and a companion gained the honor. Josephus persuaded the other survivor to permit them take their chances in the enemy camp, and so, Josephus was brought before Vespasian. The Roman general ordered Josephus to be kept under strict guard as he intended to send him back to Nero, where it could be expected Josephus would be executed.

Shrewd as ever in preserving his own skin, Josephus ostentatiously informed Vespasian that he was no ordinary Jewish prisoner, but both a priest and a prophet. Josephus invoked earlier episodes of the potency of his prophetic gifts, then dropped the bombshell that he, Vespasian, and his son, Titus, shall both become lords not only over their not-so-humble Jewish captive, but as future emperors, over all the land and sea. The earthy Vespasian was somewhat suspicious that this flattering premonition comprised merely a temporizing measure. However Titus, who was roughly the same age as Josephus took a liking to the Near Easterner and persuaded his father that they should keep Josephus under guard in their entourage. If the prophecy proved false, they could execute him at their leisure. If, on the other hand, he was no mere charlatan, it would be worthwhile to keep such a seer handy.

The Romans were familiar with the Jewish prophecy of a savior from

the Near East who would come forth to lead the Jewish nation. They distrusted and feared the Jewish messianic movements — witness the earlier harsh repression of seers and the recent severe reprisal against the resurgent Samaritans as they gathered on Mount Gerizim.

This prophecy is one of the few items in Josephus's narrative that is carried forward in the Talmudic tradition, which otherwise ignores Josephus. But the Talmud attributes this incident to a rabbinical sage, Johanan ben Zakkai, who went on to found the seminary of Pharisaical scribes at Jamnia in Galilee. The anecdote of ben Zakkai — derived from the Talmudic tradition — presents a curiously close parallel to Josephus's own story. Josephus does not mention ben Zakkai, nor do any of the several Talmudic sources mention Josephus. Josephus's version is validated by a synopsis in Suetonius's short biography of Vespasian as well as in the works of Dio Cassius. In any event, Titus convinced his father to maintain Josephus as a prisoner in their camp, under relatively comfortable conditions.

The Roman army, especially the troops drawn from the municipal areas back home, required rest and convalescence after a rigorous campaign in the grueling heat of an especially scorching Judaeian summer. Vespasian withdrew the Vth and Xth Legions to the posh coastal port of Caesarea Maritima, while the XVth had to be satisfied with the less wholesome facilities at Scythopolis (Beisan).

In Caesarea the parading legions were greeted with wild acclamation; at the same time these crowds demanded the death of Josephus. Vespasian ignored the entreaties for Josephus's execution. Josephus attests that the news that, instead of dying honorably at the sack of Jotapata, he was in fact an honored prisoner of the Romans, created a furor among the rebels who had previously mourned his loss and now desired only his capture and execution at their own hands.

Now it appeared that both the pro-Romans and rebels in Judaea were out for Josephus's scalp. This may reflect a bit of Josephus's artful rhetoric, since he likes to portray himself as the center of the universe. Nonetheless, it is possible that the anti-Jewish crowd in Caesarea would want to see this Jewish troublemaker punished, while it is likely that the Jerusalemites would be outraged at Josephus's seeming treachery. They were quite upset with the war leadership at the turn of events in Galilee; it seems logical that the discredited revolutionary council welcomed the opportunity to shift the blame to their renegade general, one whom they had recently tried to recall without success.

9

The Naval/Amphibious War

Revisiting the “Fake Navy” Episode and the Implied Naval Strategies of Both Sides

At this juncture it would be helpful to review the episode of the “fake navy” amassed by Josephus at Tarichaea in order to delude his political opponents into thinking that he had a considerable body of naval vessels under his command. In that the Jews apparently did *not* maintain any body of dedicated warships to oppose any potential enemy naval threat, Josephus depended on a couple of hundred commandeered fishing craft to simulate warships with embarked marines.

THE MARITIME THREAT: PIRATE’S LAIR AT JOPPA

While ignoring their appeals that Josephus be executed, Vespasian regarded more seriously the citizen’s complaints that Jewish refugees from the fighting in Galilee and the minor skirmishes in the south had settled in the ruins of Joppa (present day Jaffa, immediately to the south of Tel Aviv). These refugees had rebuilt Joppa shortly after Cestius Gallus had razed it during his unsuccessful punitive expedition. They did not have the wherewithal to construct sufficient fortifications, however.

The objective in rebuilding the town is another manifestation of a rudimentary Jewish strategy. The settlers were predominantly fishermen and maritime traders from the Lake of Kinneret or Galilee. These seamen now utilized various commandeered fishing and merchant vessels to organize a base for buccaneering all along the Levantine coast. This menace had ramifications for the further maritime supply or reinforcement of the Roman expedition. More seriously, it threatened the grain supply of Rome. During this season, northwesterly winds prevented the Roman grain ships departing Alexandria from taking the direct route across the Mediterranean. The winds forced these ships to hew closely to the Judaeian and Levantine coast where they were easy pick-

ings for the Jewish pirate ships. Consequently, Vespasian sent a force to deal with the pirates at Joppa.

Discerning that the fortifications were not well manned, Vespasian made a night raid. At the approach of the Romans, the pirates retreated to the safety of their ships as they understood that the Romans had taken the citadel. The harbor of Joppa was situated in a rough crescent framed on both ends by formidable rocky promontories. While the Jewish pirates remained on their ships to get beyond range of the Roman missile weapons, one of the sudden storms to which this coast is exposed arose and dashed a number of vessels against the rocks.

Seeing that their flotilla was in danger, the remaining vessels tried to put out to sea where they could avoid the jagged jetties. This effort was fruitless. Several of them abandoned ship and swam to shore where the waiting Romans cut them down on the beach. According to Josephus, 4,200 bodies washed ashore.

The Romans destroyed the Jewish earthworks and set up a camp on the ruins of Joppa from which they conducted “scorched earth” raids against the neighboring communities that had supported the pirates. There is a persistent rumor that some of these ships were blown out to sea by the storms and eventually made their way to the east coast of North America. Some spurious archaeological “finds” of proto–Aramaic inscriptions along the southeastern seaboard have been adduced to sustain this speculation (or perhaps gave rise to it). Similarly, odd inscriptions unearthed further west in the United States have motivated folk legends of refugee Carthaginian seamen, fleeing the destruction of their capital city, finding their way across the Atlantic to the North American continent.

At least one Israeli “alternative history” of the Jewish Revolt has the Joppa pirates gaining sea command of the entire coast westward to Alexandria, severely hampering Vespasian’s seaborne supply as well as the vital food imports of the Empire. See my own speculation on how the Jewish rebels might have effectively interdicted the Roman sea lines of communication to the homeland in the concluding chapter of this book.

The Roman rest, obviously was not as quiescent as Vespasian might have wanted, but being the alert commander that he was, he was not going to wait for the war to come to him. The actions along the coast had been but sideshows calculated to tie loose ends. All too soon, he would hear about more portentous rumblings of renewed rebel agitation in Galilee.

Conquest by Armed Diplomacy and a Combined-Arms Triumph: Tiberias and Tarichaea

The conclusion of the initial campaign for Galilee had required Vespasian to move up from the south by way of the Jordan Valley.

Agrippa II sent word to Vespasian at the Judaeen provincial headquarters in Caesarea Maritima that he'd like him to visit and be royally entertained at the king's estate in Caesarea Philippi, up near Banias (now near the Lebanese-Syrian border). Vespasian marched with a body of his troops to honor Agrippa II's request. When he arrived, he also learned that Agrippa II wished to alert him about some problems within and bordering his kingdom that directly impinged on Roman military security. Vespasian and his soldiers enjoyed a three-week repose. Agrippa II feted the general, who held pagan rites thanking the deities for his success thus far. Vespasian's serenity was rudely disturbed with reports that, just 30 miles to the south, Tiberias and Tarichaea, both under Agrippa II's jurisdiction, were again up in arms.

Vespasian dispatched Titus to proceed to the coastal Caesarea Maritima, retrieve the Vth and Xth Legions and meet him at Scythopolis, where the XVth Legion was already quartered. Leading the three legions, Vespasian marched 20 miles northward to the Sea of Galilee, and camped at Sennabris, some 4 miles south of Tiberias.

Vespasian's intelligence sources, including Agrippa II's agents, informed him that the Tiberians were basically well disposed towards Agrippa II and the Romans but were harassed by rebellious elements. In view of this leaning, Vespasian sent a junior officer, the decurion Valerian (Valerianus), with a troop of 50 horses to parley with the town elders.

As a sign of peaceful intention, Valerian had his cavalry dismount and approach the walls on foot. This prompted a waiting gang of rebels, under Jesus ben Sapphias (Josephus's old foe from the gang war days) to ambush the emissaries and carry off their horses. Vespasian checked his natural desire to punish this treachery; a body of elders entreated Vespasian to forgive this perfidy, assuring him that Jesus was isolated and anathema to the townsfolk but had conducted a reign of terror among them.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Jesus and his followers made off for Tarichaea. The pro-Roman citizens demolished a part of their walls as a symbol of submission to Vespasian, who entered Tiberias in triumph, hailed as a deliverer. A body of the town dignitaries had appealed to Agrippa II, assuring him that the rebel minority among them intimidated them. Josephus took this usual line with regard to the defiance of some of the "swing cities." That Vespasian treated the town with such uncommon leniency and civility is an indication of the respect that he held for the obliging Agrippa II.

Vespasian had yet to deal with the other seat of resistance in Taricheae, which was located at the southern extreme of the plain of Gennasareth, where Jesus ben Sapphias was holed up with a large number of his brigands. Vespasian brought his legions southward along the western shore of the lake, setting up camp just short of Taricheae. He sent Titus with a force of 600 foot

and horse combined to confront the main Jewish strength in front of the walls. Josephus had built and reinforced walls on three sides. The fourth side was fronted on the lake, where Jesus had established a fleet.

Titus perceived that Taricheae would be a tough nut to crack. What's more, his troops were appalled at the large numbers of armed Jews as well as the seeming invulnerability of the defense works. Sensing the despair of his men, Titus addressed them, emphasizing that the Jews were motivated by "audacity, temerity and despair," which emotions were invigorating in victory but could easily be demoralized upon the slightest setback.

The Romans, in contrast, were spurred on by a sense of discipline, supremacy, glory and a resolve not to let the impulsive Jews believe they were a match for the masters of the world. The Jews, despite their fearlessness, were after all a mere rabble in arms, while the Romans were an army, trained in peacetime to a fighting pitch. Unlike the Jews' volatile temperament, such a warrior ethos was not dampened by adversity.

This speech, of course, could not possibly have been recorded in such detail. Notwithstanding, it most likely reflects the sentiments of the Romans on the brink of engaging an intimidating enemy. It was a common practice among ancient historians to put such set-piece speeches into the mouths of their heroes. For example, Tacitus concocts pre-battle orations for Boudicca and the Scottish tribal chieftain Calgacus, whereas these leaders would have addressed their soldiers in a language incomprehensible to any Roman within earshot. The men were further heartened by the arrival of Trajan (Traianus) with 400 horse.

Jesus sent out sorties to attempt to intimidate the assembling Romans. Trajan's cavalry broke up these sallies, inflicted heavy casualties and forced them to retreat behind the city walls. Titus subsequently ordered Antonius Silo with 2,000 bowmen, to take the adjacent hilltop of Arbela, which was done after a short, sharp fight. From that vantage, the Roman archers could cover the entire community, especially suppressing the fire of slingers and archers on the walls.

Jesus's repeated efforts to bring in reinforcements were checked by the Romans. At this juncture, seeing the declining fortunes of Jesus ben Sapphias, the moderates in the town began to harass Jesus's troops, blaming them for their misfortune, much as these men had opposed going to war with the Romans from the start. This is a stock motif in Josephus, but not improbable for all that.

While the moderates were scuffling with the die-hards, Titus, seeing that the lakeshore approach was relatively unprotected, led a troop of horse across a shallow passage of the lake and bypassed the fortifications. Vespasian, animated by the report of his son's courage and resourcefulness, joined him with

more troops who now were able to press the Jews on the distracted dry flank as well, inasmuch as the Jews were being pounded from the rear. Some of Jesus's men were able to flee overland, but the majority retreated to the sanctuary of their boats on the lake. Vespasian ordered heavy rafts to be built and loaded them with strongly armed footmen. This makeshift, though well-adapted armada, pursued the withdrawing Jewish naval force across the lake.

There ensued a bloody "naval battle" in which the better-armed Romans slaughtered the Jews and demolished their vulnerable vessels. The boats of Jesus's fleet, being converted fishing craft, were relatively small and fragile. Roman firepower and coordinated lance thrusts easily overwhelmed the unsteady rebel craft when the heavily laden but sturdy Roman rafts bore down on each of them separately. The Jews pelted the Romans with stones, at times bringing several of their more maneuverable watercraft alongside a single Roman raft. Roman archery easily dispatched these attackers, whose stones bounced off the Roman armor.

Those boats that were not sunk or cleared by the Roman assault were driven ashore. Some of those who leapt from the boats and attempted to board the Roman rafts had their hands and arms cut through. Sword, javelin and arrow cut down the rest as they floundered in the water, attempting to reach the shore. No Jews survived the naval engagement.

It is believed that this naval victory, along with the maritime achievement in Joppa underlie the inscription *Victoria Navalis* on Flavian coins issued for several decades after the war.

Those rebels who had waited in Taricheae were rounded up and sorted out. These were mostly refugees who were not citizens of the toparchy but had sought protection within its walls against the Romans. Vespasian was disposed to pardon these "stateless persons," or at least situate them so he could keep an eye on them. A court martial convened among his officers who disagreed; they believed that these men were potentially more than refugees. As stateless persons, moreover untrustworthy Jews, they were in a position to make trouble, for there was no guarantee that, having weathered one Roman siege, they might incite to mutiny the Jews of whatever cities took them in. Vespasian reluctantly agreed they had to be dealt with severely. These Vespasian ambiguously granted "safe passage" from the town.

The true meaning of this cloaked term soon became apparent. They were forced to march to Tiberias along a road ominously lined with Roman soldiers. Twelve hundred of the old and infirm — i.e., the useless ones — were taken at once to the stadium of Tiberias where the gauntlet of soldiers encountered along the road shut them up. There they were massacred. Six thousand adolescent refugees were sent to Nero, who was still in Greece, to work on his Corinth Canal project (which was never to be completed — cut short by

his death). Those who were Jews from Agrippa II's kingdom who treacherously rallied to the rebel cause, 30,400 in all, were given to Agrippa II to be sold as slaves. The Romans didn't remain long, as the stench of rotting corpses being washed up on the lakeshore rendered the place unendurable.

This brings us to September 27 of the year 67. Vespasian again moved north for a short repose at the hot baths at Amathus before embarking on the final phase of his northern campaign.

10

Mopping Up in Galilee as Discord in the Jewish Camp Boils Over

Costly Urban Warfare Assault: Gamala

News of the fall of Taricheae brought about the capitulation of all of Galilee, including those holding out in fortified towns. There were three notable exceptions: Gischala (John's dominion), Mount Tabor and Gamala. The last named was a strongly held fortress in the Jaulan, smack in the middle of Agrippa II's turf, about 12 miles to the east of the lake. The natural position of Gamala was strong enough, more so than Jotapata.

As the name indicates, Gamala resembled the profile of a kneeling camel, and was the last of the towns fortified by Josephus to hold out. Sogane and Seleucia, both in the vicinity of Gamala, had been likewise reinforced during Josephus's static defensive building program. However, there was no need for the Romans to storm these towns, because they had made their peace with Agrippa II early in the campaign, after briefly declaring for the rebels.

Gamala enjoyed both natural and fabricated defensive advantages over these other towns. Its natural configuration, shaped like the back of camel (hence "Gamala"), was fronted and flanked on both sides by impassable ravines, while the "tail" section was more accessible, hence was reinforced by digging a trench athwart its approaches. The whole edifice was quite steep, and the most precipitous sector, the southern face, became the citadel. Josephus's claimed fortification project in Gamala has recently been corroborated by the archaeological findings at the site, attesting to supplemental defense works being constructed at the time of the First Revolt. Besides a newly augmented citadel constructed under Josephus's supervision, Gamala had the benefit of an indigenous spring — a critical deficiency at Jotapata. Josephus

dug trenchworks and underground passages to enable reinforcements to be clandestinely switched at will. It was on this account that it could hold out against Agrippa II's rather haphazard efforts to reclaim it for seven months, from the spring to the autumn of 67.

Because of its unassailable natural position, Gamala was not as heavily garrisoned as Jotapata. Besides, what with the influx of Jewish refugees from the earlier fighting in Galilee, the city was already crowded. Initially, while Josephus was matching wits with John of Gischala, Jesus ben Sapphias and Justus of Tiberias, Philip ben Jacimus (Agrippa II's trusted lieutenant) had tried to keep the town loyal to his master, with mixed results.

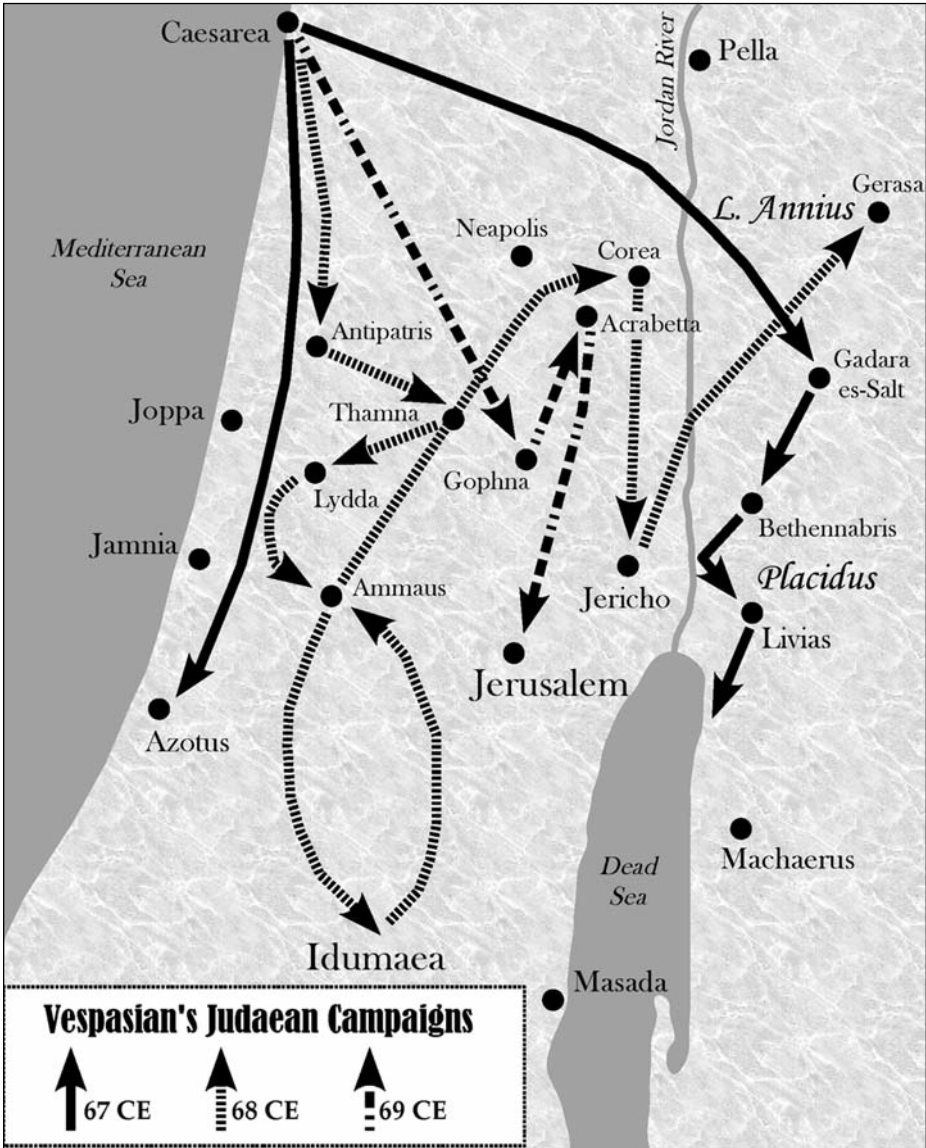
Upon learning of the town's refusal to acquiesce in the Roman *reconquista*, Vespasian interrupted his recuperation at the warm baths of Ammathus, just to the south of Tiberias and marched his men to Gamala. Vespasian perceived that he would be unable to resort to the usual Roman tactic of posting a ring of soldiers around a town under siege — the aforementioned natural obstacles precluded that. Accordingly, he posted sentries at key vantagepoints and had his troops set up camp on the near slope of an overlooking hill.

Seeing that the camel formation's "tail" was, relatively speaking, the most practicable approach, he had his legions begin the construction of scaffoldings at that end. At the eastern portion of the tail end ridge, where the highest of the defense towers had been sited, Vespasian assigned the engineers of the XVth Legion, while the Vth was earmarked for the ramp construction at the middle of the town. The Xth had the job of filling in the ditches and ravines dug by the Jews to prevent access from that quarter.

During the businesslike setting up of the appropriate siege equipment, which the Jews doubtlessly observed with some apprehension, Agrippa II decided to try to reason with the inhabitants and elaborate what he doubtlessly felt were just and equitable terms for their surrender. As he stood before the walls and set forth his and the Romans' conditions, an impertinent slinger fired off a stone that struck Agrippa in the elbow. His own troops immediately surrounded the king.

Josephus tells us that this effrontery infuriated the Romans and increased their resolve to deal harshly with such blackguards as would so contemptuously treat an attempt at amelioration by a fellow Jew. As usual, Josephus appeared oblivious to the fact that the rebels did not consider Agrippa II a colleague but regarded him as a collaborationist toady. Unquestionably, this naïveté is feigned, since Agrippa II was an honored foreign guest in Rome at the time that Josephus was writing his history.

The Romans were able to devote a large proportion of their fighters to the raising of the siege ramps. This was because the siting of Gamala did not afford accommodating sally-ports from which the Jews could conduct raid-



Vespasian's Judean Campaigns (map by Éric Grenier).

ing parties, such as they did at Jotapata. In any event, the defenders would not have felt it necessary to engage the Romans prematurely, so confident were they in their impregnable position. Accordingly the works were finished in a rather short time. The Romans were bringing up their missile engines when the defacto leaders of the rebel defense, Chares and Joseph, tried to rally their men at the wall. They exhorted them to assault the Romans while the

attackers are engrossed in setting up the catapults and ballistae. Josephus tells us that some of the men held back because they believed there was not enough water and supplies to last through a prolonged siege — somewhat contradicting Josephus's earlier reference to the indigenous spring.

The nervously watching townsfolk were eventually persuaded to try to disrupt the positioning of the siege engines. They made a sortie only to be repulsed by bombardment from the engines that were already emplaced. The Romans immediately sought to exploit the retreat and brought up battering rams, which succeeded in breaching the walls at three separate stations. They poured into the breaches, trumpets blaring and shouting while they fiercely threw themselves upon the defenders, who resisted for a while, but then withdrew to the upper, precipitous tiers of the citadel as the Romans tried to outflank them. Regrouping in the upper town, the Jews turned around and counter-attacked the Romans as the latter were tediously winding their way up declivitous passageways through the serpentine, constricted alleys.

The Romans, thus penned in below the Jews were sandwiched between the still advancing groups behind and the Jewish rush ahead. Many were cut down or crushed. Many others tried to avoid catastrophe by climbing onto the roofs of the houses, which collapsed under their weight, the toppling debris inflicting yet more casualties on the Romans, as the collapsed buildings higher up avalanched upon the lower structures, collapsing them as well. Jewish attackers, who furnished themselves with swords from fallen legionnaires, cut down those Romans not crushed by the stones. Choking dust hampered the efforts of others to rescue their trapped comrades. The Jews rolled stones and hurled darts down upon any Romans still struggling to extricate themselves from the tangle of bodies and wreckage. Groups of Romans who tried to exit, became lost in the maze of alleyways and sinuous side streets, and blinded by the dust, even attacked their own troops.

Vespasian had tried to rally his overwhelmed troops and had in fact scaled a lofty, isolated tier of buildings, where he realized that he was separated from his men and in danger of being surrounded. Uncharacteristically, his son Titus was not at his side. Josephus enigmatically informs us at this moment that Vespasian's son was up in Antioch at the time on some unspecified mission to Mucianus, who had recently replaced the disgraced Cestius as governor of Syria. Vespasian was able to rally the few men around him into forming a testudo and holding off the Jewish assault long enough to retire down the slopes in good order, facing the enemy and exiting the gates with shields still interlocked. Roman casualties were quite heavy, though Josephus does not give us any numbers here.

Josephus divulges that among the fallen was the decurion Aebutius, familiar to us from the pre-invasion skirmishes with Josephus, when the latter was

belatedly starting to hamper Agrippa II's efforts to drive out or isolate rebel pockets within royal territory. We learn of a centurion named Gallus, a Syrian, who was enveloped along with his group of ten by the swarm of advancing Jews and decided to enter a household where he'd hide out until nightfall to make his escape. He overheard the occupants discussing how they'd even scores with the hated Syrian auxiliary troops. Gallus, after dark, slit the throats of all the inhabitants and fell back, eventually finding his way out of the walls.

Back in the Roman camp, the survivors of the bloodbath were severely demoralized, particularly as they had abandoned their isolated commander, Vespasian, who had been forced to hack his way out. This is the occasion for another pep talk by Vespasian. As creatively "reported" by Josephus, Vespasian not improbably waved off any shame the troops may have experienced about the fact that their leader was isolated far ahead of the main body and, unlike so many of them, was able to conduct an orderly withdrawal. They had to understand that Roman martial self-control permitted neither exultation in victory nor brooding in defeat. He pointed out that the Jews won not because they were superior soldiers but because they had lured the impetuous Romans up into a perpendicular labyrinth where Roman fighting strengths could not be brought to bear. Instead, once they had occupied the lower town, they should have baited the Jews to come down and attack them on favorable ground with sure footing.

Although the Jews were momentarily comforted by their unexpected rout of the Romans, upon reflection many recognized that their cache of food and water was dangerously low. Observing the Romans earnestly resuming work on their siege, a number of Jews began making their escape by traversing almost inaccessible ravines where no Roman pickets had been posted or through underground passages. Josephus characterized those who remained within Gamala as being immobilized by fear and dismay at the shriveling food stocks. This seems a bit deprecatory in view of the fact that the resistance still held off the Romans, to the point where Vespasian diverted some of his force to deal with another rebel holdout — the garrison of Mount Tabor, halfway between Scythopolis and the Plain of Esdraelon (the Great Plain).

The village of Mount Tabor was sited on a 1,000-by-400 yard table atop a 1,300-foot sheer climb on the northern face, ringed by breastworks which Josephus claims he painstakingly erected in 40 days, although it is omitted from the catalog of places he claims he fortified earlier in *The Jewish War*. For this task, Vespasian sent Placidus with 600 horse.

When the large assemblage of rebels (including a large share of both combatant and noncombatant refugees) viewed the approach of this rather meager body of cavalry, they were emboldened to attempt a ruse. They realized that there was no way that men on horseback held an advantage, nor

were there any signs of siege gear. Thus, they contrived to lure Placidus into a trap by sending down a party to negotiate terms while others would descend and take Placidus off guard. They were ignorant of the fact that Placidus had set his own trap, into which the Jewish scheme dovetailed perfectly.

When the Jews, as expected, began their attack amidst the parley, Placidus had a select group feign retreat, then when they had drawn sufficient numbers of the Jewish infantry out onto the open plain, wheeled about and cut them down. They enveloped them from the rear as well to prevent the succeeding ranks from returning to the fortress. There were numerous Jewish casualties (once again Josephus isn't precise), yet a large body were able to make their way back to the safety of Jerusalem. The natives of the site who remained were out of water; they handed the place over to Placidus, who gave them safe passage. Josephus doesn't tell us about their subsequent fate; it is unlikely that Placidus would want a large mass of Jews to feed while he garrisoned the citadel.

Returning once again to Gamala, Josephus paints a picture of further breakouts by reluctant warriors, while the nucleus of bitter-enders sets up defenses at the positions already punctured by the Roman battering rams. There they posted pickets to ascertain the further intentions of the unrelenting Roman besiegers. With his usual derision of the hardcore rebels, Josephus notes that the average town dweller, a mere pawn in the rebel cause, was starving while the fanatics manned the defenses.

At dawn on November 9, 67, when the shadows were deepest and the sentries at their least attentive, three soldiers from the XVth Legion scurried unobserved to the base of one of the main towers opposite them and were able to undertake mining operations under the tower's foundation. It is an interesting commentary on Roman engineering efficiency and organization that only three men were able to excavate the five massive foundation stones supporting the tower. They quickly leapt out of the way as the tower bearing its sentries collapsed. This panicked the sentries on the adjacent towers, who abandoned their posts, many getting cut down as they tried to exit through the gaps, among them the leader Joseph. A general hysteria took hold, on the false assumption that the entire Roman army had broken into the stronghold. The other rebel leader, Chares, was lying ill at the time and expired upon hearing the tumult.

Notwithstanding the disarray of the Jewish defenders, the legions were still skittish after their recent misfortune at the hands of the demoniacal Jewish street fighters, so ferocious in urban hand-to-hand combat. Accordingly, they held back until the return of Titus from his parley with Mucianus the next day. Titus was angered by the reports of how the Romans had been disgraced during his absence and at the way they hung back now.

Titus at once selected 200 cavalry with a small escort of infantry to clan-

destinely infiltrate the town while turmoil still reigned. One group of Jews tried to scamper upwards to the citadel on the acropolis, but the Romans were determined not to be drawn into such a disadvantageous position again and had posted the footmen to block the avenues leading to the summit. When the Jews headed for the summit were turned back towards the walls, Roman cavalry cut them down mercilessly, exacting a very high toll.

Nonetheless, some defenders did make their way up into the citadel. They resisted the Roman ascent frenetically, much as they did previously, by rolling down heavy boulders, again crushing the Romans, so ill-prepared for this sort of warfare. Whether or not one can give Josephus some slack here, or simply shrug it off as his usual hype about God's retribution, he tells us that a "miraculous" tempest struck the hilltop at this moment, dislodging the defenders from their footholds on the ledges, flinging dust in their eyes. The wind, being at the Romans' backs, helped propel their arrows and javelins upward, but stymied the barrages from the Jews.

Whether through providence or mere earthly tenacity, the Romans were able to ascend to the top and hem in the Jews. The latter, dumbfounded at the Roman reprisals that spared neither the women, infants nor the feeble, committed mass suicide, leaping en masse into the flanking ravines. The scene prefigures the Japanese denouement on Okinawa in the summer of 1945 as the Marines mopped up. Roman blades cut down some 4,000; another 5,000 were suicides. The only survivors were two nieces of Philip ben Jacimus, mentioned earlier as the controversial officer in King Agrippa II's army. Thus the very hard fought conquest of Gamala lasted about a month, from October 10 to November 10, 67.

In a laconic, but intriguing notation, the *MacMillan Bible Atlas*, which is the U.S. edition of Israel's *Carta Bible Atlas*, observes that by capturing Gamala, Vespasian cut the Jewish insurgents' lifeline to Babylonia. Under the heading of "Jewish Strategy," I have described the forlorn hope of some factions that their brethren in Babylonia (e.g., Parthia, Adiabene, and Armenia) would join up with them once the revolt had begun in earnest, much as they had come to the aid of Aristobulus contra Herod the Great and Antipas a century earlier. We have no firm information as to how the Jewish-Parthian threat affected Vespasian's strategy, but it had to weigh on his mind, given that Parthia was the ever-present overriding menace in the Roman East.

Gischala: Final Stronghold in Galilee

If we accept the rendition in *Life*, John, the strongman of Gischala, had initially tried to restrain his devotees, if they were indeed followers at this

early phase, from defecting from allegiance to Rome and/or Agrippa II. This effort was threatened by the attacks against Gischala by the neighboring Graeco-Syrian towns of Gadara and Tyre (or villages under their jurisdiction). These ethnic enemies of the Jews attacked Gischala, set fire to it and then undermined the supports of the fortifications. This was done for no other apparent motive than Gischala's Jewish character. It was perhaps then part of the general anti-Jewish pogroms that erupted after receiving news of the Jewish expulsion of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. Whatever the nature of the attacks, John is seen to be enraged. He fortified the walls in anticipation of further attacks but did not launch a punitive counter-strike.

Now, Josephus informs us that Gischala's inhabitants were peacefully disposed towards Rome, not because of any inherent sense of gratitude but simply because they were humble farmers, looking only for a good harvest and serenity. John, in Josephus's prejudiced view, holds the townsfolk hostage, having them prepare for war, though they had wanted to send messages of nonbelligerence to the Romans.

In order to crush this last foothold of resistance in Galilee, Vespasian sent Titus with 1,000 mounted troops after sending the Xth Legion to Scythopolis to rest, while taking the remaining two legions with him to Caesarea for that purpose. The idea was that the comforts of the larger cities would ensure that these legions were well rested, then energetically trained in preparation for the severe battle testing to come at Jerusalem. Vespasian was fully cognizant that the taking of the capital would be a very tough struggle, indeed not only because of the huge populace and strong nationalist emotions of its defenders, but because its defenses were being swelled by the large numbers of refugees streaming in. Further, it was ringed by a well-nigh invincible system of concentric walls.

Titus discerned that the town of Gischala would be easy to take by a coup de main, but held off because he foresaw a wholesale slaughter of inhabitants and was sickened by the massacres at Jotapata, Gamala and the other forts. Titus consequently addressed the defenders, reminding them of the failure of all efforts to defeat the inexorable Roman siege methods thus far and offering them peace with honor if they would submit.

Josephus claims that John's henchmen on the walls prevented anyone in the town from going out to accept the amnesty. However, John, deceitfully, said he agreed to these terms, but that the approaching Sabbath prevented observant Jews from either making war or negotiating peace. Thus, he asked Titus's forbearance for another 24 hours. Titus agreed and, as a sign of good faith, withdrew his force to Cydassa (Kadesh Naphtali) 2 miles southeast of Gischala, in the coastal strip, under the control of the toparchy of Tyre.

That evening, seeing that there were no Roman sentries posted, John took his bodyguard and a sizeable number of fighters, as well as their families and some other noncombatants out on the road towards Jerusalem. It's difficult to tell why so many accompanied him if, as Josephus claims, his strongmen bullied the local peasants into submission. It's possible that there were a number of folks apprehensive of Roman retribution if they remained. Some in the rear, distressed over the fate of those they left behind, became separated from John's vanguard, which galloped rapidly towards the capital.

The stragglers became convinced that they could hear the hoofbeats of pursuing Romans. Terrified, they stampeded and lost their way in the confusion. At dawn, when Titus entered the town, he was told of John's escape with a mass of fighters. Titus posted guards at the gates and led his forces on a wild pursuit. Although John and his bodyguard were able to elude capture, Titus managed to kill 6,000 men and rounded up 3,000 women and children as prisoners. He declined to ferret out those remaining in the town who had been John's supporters since it would become a fruitless game of finger pointing, more likely to settle old scores than to sort out the subversives. He was thus content to destroy a section of the town's walls and leave a garrison there while he joined his father in Caesarea.

Apparently, Vespasian had some mopping up of operations to take care of before settling into his winter quarters at Caesarea. In order to ensure Roman freedom of movement along the coast road — an important consideration in the forthcoming campaign in Judaea proper — he marched a body of troops (Josephus gives no numbers here) and overpowered and rebel garrisons at Jamnia, Azotus and Lydda.

We learn from Kasher's study (see bibliography) that, with respect to the above-mentioned towns, the Jews had most likely kicked the primarily Graeco-Syrian landowners off the tracts where Jews had been mere tenant farmers. In any event, they did not appear to have set up much in the way of defenses in the interim. Vespasian's reconquest restored these landowner roles to the status quo ante. Their populations accepted surrender terms, so it does not appear that the subjugation of these places required strong detachments. The possession of these last three pretty much removed the threat from the rebel bases scattered throughout Galilee.

As can be seen from this abbreviated survey of the pre-invasion brawls and maneuvering among the rival chieftains in Galilee, the prospects were not auspicious for mounting a coherent defense against the unavoidable assault on the capital. It was a foregone conclusion that there would be a massive, exhaustive Roman effort to crack the continuous defense system guarding the few approaches to Jerusalem that were not screened with deep natural ravines.

The Splintered Rebel Camp: Heightened Friction Among the Jews

As Vespasian and Titus recuperated in Caesarea and exercised their troops in readiness for the anticipated tough A.D. 68 campaign season ahead, intelligence filtered back regarding the in-fighting within Jerusalem and elsewhere. These reports affected Vespasian and his top generals differently. Vespasian, ever the cautious, thorough commander (a “Roman Montgomery”) was hoping to wait until the clashing Jewish parties wore each other down and softened the defense of Jerusalem from within. His generals, on the other hand, wanted to strike directly for the capital, feeling that the momentum was with them.

Vespasian expected that a direct assault would have the effect of precipitately uniting the feuding factions. So the legions remained in winter quarters over the winter of 67/68 while monitoring the situation in Jerusalem. They were able to make good use of their “inside man,” their prisoner/guest, Josephus, who helped interpret the information gleaned from tortured prisoners, as well as defectors. Josephus himself was in a precarious position, as he tells it, because he could not dare to enter Jerusalem, where he’d be flayed, nor did some of Vespasian’s advisors totally trust Josephus, believing he could still be working on behalf of his people by feeding his captors misinformation.

When John of Gischala arrived at the walls of Jerusalem with his retinue, he entered as a proud war chieftain, nevermind that he had abandoned his constituency in Gischala to the depredations of the Romans. At the moment, John believed that he had earned the standing as the preeminent commander in Jerusalem. His charisma was considerable among the restless youths, who accepted John’s version of his flight from Gischala. John explained that his group, unlike Josephus at Jotapata, had not run from the Romans but merely had executed a strategic withdrawal to the capital where it was believed a credible defense could be mounted. Sound familiar?

At some point during his efforts to co-opt Josephus’s constituents, John had changed his image from a patrician entrepreneurial moderate, very much like Josephus, to a fire-eating radical, doubtlessly discerning the shifting tides of the rebellion. Those who were able to survive the Roman assault and make their way to Jerusalem can be considered the hard-core insurgency. These were the defacto power brokers.

Josephus had been completely disgraced in Galilee. Those among his original sponsors in Jerusalem, who had backed him against John’s accusations, were now highly suspect, to put it mildly. It was thus that John of Gischala was able to attract a following among the youthful revolutionaries in

Jerusalem. Like Josephus, he had ultimately abandoned his charges; however unlike Josephus, John did not surrender but could plausibly claim that he took refuge in Jerusalem when he realized that this is where the real resistance was centered.

John's constituents among the "Zealots," that ill-defined motley group of various temperaments, were disenchanted with the tepid conduct of the war thus far, witness the endorsement of the defector Josephus to lead the catastrophic resistance in Galilee. Their first move upon their arrival in Jerusalem, around November 67, was to isolate and eliminate those suspected of pro-Roman sentiments. Several of the key members of the first ruling coalition, among them Antipas, apparently "acting treasurer" of the Temple and a Herodian, were imprisoned and murdered in their cells.

Eleazar's faction had annulled the priestly lineage based on the Herodian appointments of a century earlier and revived a spurious "lost tribe" genealogy from which they were to elect a new pontiff. Accordingly, a new High Priest was chosen by lot, the previous ones all having been aristocrats. The winner of the lottery was a man named Phannias (there are various spellings), who was from the peasant class, said to be totally ignorant of the duties of a High Priest — though this is Josephus's slanted viewpoint. He may well have been a pious man, well versed in the Law, but ignorant of the High Priest's ceremonial tasks. As a populist, this upstart's ignorance of the fine points of ritual did not hurt his reputation. Again we are reminded of the way in which the directorate of the French Revolution had arbitrarily stripped themselves of expertise among the distrusted old guard ruling class, and the Bolsheviks had to reinvent the wheel as a result of their extravagant "clean sweep" of alleged capitalists.

Against this popular clamor for Zealot rule, the imperiled Jerusalem commune, consisting of Joseph ben Gorion, the notable Pharisee Simon ben Gamaliel and the two former high priests Ananus ben Ananus and Jesus ben Gamaliel, deposed by the proletarian Zealot candidate, cautioned the people against following the disorderly Zealots. Howling against the wind, the endangered council warned that the Zealots' irrational barbarity could not save Jerusalem, while only inflaming the Romans to more savage reprisals. Ananus's speech to this effect did persuade a number of them to resist Zealot control. But these were largely members of the distrusted old guard and this splinter group was forced to withdraw into the Temple's inner forecourt.

Many others who might have rallied to Ananus's conservative call for help had either deserted the city and found refuge in the territory of Agrippa II, or literally "gone underground," hiding in tunnels and passageways. A few sentries were sufficient to hold off the mob inasmuch as the Jewish rabble had no desire to defile the Temple at this point by storming the holy gates. The

insurgents kept a careful watch on the barricaded moderates as well as those still manning the towers and walls immediately adjacent.

In order to obtain support for their effort to eradicate the establishment, the Zealots covertly sent messengers to the bellicose Idumaeans, who had not been previously inclined to cooperate with any of the rebel factions. The Idumaeans were sold by the Zealots' false accusations that the moderates were about to turn over the capital to the Romans. When the Idumaeans arrived at the city walls, word that they were in league with the Zealots preceded them. The moderate elements were still apparently in control of the outer defenses and thus refused entry to the Idumaeans. A fortuitous tempest provided cover for the Idumaeans to enter the gates. Once inside, the Idumaeans joined the Zealots in attacking anyone whom they identified as the affluent aristos, regardless whether these victims had shown any proclivity to support the status quo. Josephus describes what ensued as a reign of terror. All of the former leaders of the rebellion were executed as collaborators. Prominent among those murdered were the High Priests Ananus and Jesus.

In order to provide a veneer of legality to the executions, the new directorate convened a kangaroo court. Even then, when this sham tribunal acquitted one Zacharias ben Baruch, a few Zealots killed him on the spot, announcing sarcastically that they were giving him their "vote." This type of excess disgusted the Idumaeans, who broke ranks with the Zealots and withdrew. John of Gischala seems to have been firmly in charge at this point. The Zealots, in the absence of the Idumaeans, notched up their reign of terror, bringing about the death of Joseph ben Gurion. It was at this time, according to the testimony of the Church Father Eusebius, that the proto-Christian community deserted Jerusalem and took refuge in Pella, safely within the Roman-allied decapolis in Peraea.

Vespasian's sources also informed him about another source of dissension among the quarrelsome Jews. Wholly irreconcilable with the original coalition of moderates (now somewhat radicalized and restive) under Ananus, the third opportunist came on the scene: Simon bar Gioras, who we last encountered trying to build a power base in the Aqraba, or Acrabatene district immediately southeast of Samaria, bordering Peraea on the west.

After being chased out of the Acrabatene, Simon had, for a time, found refuge among the sicarii manning Masada, now somewhat quiescent after Menahem's demise. Simon's program was, however, more ambitious and nationalistic than that of the sicarii, who seem to have been driven by an isolationist/purist ethos. The sicarii, at least for the time being, wanted only to be able to run their own affairs, safely ensconced in their desert retreat. Josephus tells us that, as a result, Simon's group occupied a separate quarter of

Masada, somewhat lower down than the Herodian citadel, accepted only reluctantly by the sicarii, and with misgivings.

During Simon's brief stay at the fortress, it was obvious that the sicarii were more interested in protecting their own interests than in fighting the Romans. They apparently informed Simon that if he were going to remain with them, his hungry mouths had to make themselves useful. Their capture of Masada had been rather sudden; they had not brought much in the way of provisions with them, and the small Roman garrison had not stockpiled much. Thus, they resorted to raiding the oases and encampments of their fellow Jews, with whom they didn't make common cause in any event. During Passover (early spring) of 68, the sicarii conducted a raid against the Jewish oasis settlement of En Geddi on the Dead Sea shore some 10 miles north.

It appears that Simon's men accompanied the raid on En Geddi, which was undertaken merely for the worldly immediate goal of feeding their mouths. The adult males of the village escaped, but after the sicarii had looted the town for food and other commodities, they slaughtered the remaining women and children. Although it's true that Josephus delights in portraying the rebels as ungodly reprobates, it is unlikely that he would invent such an episode out of whole cloth. One has to wonder for whom the ultimate defenders of Masada had sacrificed their lives. This behavior calls into question the heroic rendition of the final stand at Masada five years later.

Unlike the situation with Cestius, the Roman army would be kept together as a unified, imposing body rather than sending detached columns out piecemeal to randomly harry suspected dissidents.

Informed by deserters of the deteriorating conditions within the city, Vespasian was under considerable pressure by his generals to exploit this chaos and move against Jerusalem immediately. Vespasian decided to let the anarchy play out and take his usual methodical indirect route. However, news of ominous rumblings in Rome and among the Roman soldiery in Gaul and Spain impelled the methodical, painstaking, old warlord to wrap up his conquest of Judaea post-haste.

11

Suspension of the Roman Campaign; Romans Lay Foundation for the Reduction of Jerusalem

Interlude: No Emperor, No Mandate

Chronologically, the interval between Nero's death and the accession of Vespasian as Emperor does not neatly bracket the periods covered by the preceding and following campaign narratives; rather it overlaps them. For purposes of a coherent narrative, I thought it would be tidier to describe it separately.

A detailed consideration of the so-called "Year of the Four Emperors" (June 68–June 69) is beyond the scope of this booklet. The vicissitudes of the Roman civil war of that year, however, did directly impact Vespasian and Titus, not only their military operations, but their personal fortunes as well. Moreover, news of dissension in Rome and among the Roman troops in Gaul and Spain impelled the cautious, old warlord to wrap up his subjugation of the rebels in Judaea. As Tacitus had said in Book I, part 4 of his History, with Nero's death "the secret of empire was now disclosed — that an emperor could be made elsewhere than in Rome." Of course, this selection of the emperor by popular proclamation of the legions had occurred earlier, but never before did it produce four rulers within the span of a year.

When, at last sickened by Nero's despotism, the Senate proclaimed him as an outlaw, they accepted as a successor the elderly Galba, who had been a provincial governor and who finally had voiced his withdrawal of allegiance to Nero. Galba was backed by elements in the army and another provincial governor. Galba was a singularly uninspired nominee, whose only asset was his noble lineage; however, the true Roman aristocracy was for all practical purposes defunct in any event. His military/political experience was as gov-

ernor of Upper Germany and more recently in Spain, where his administration had been notably impotent.

True to form, the enfeebled Galba chose disreputable men as his advisors, delayed his entry into Rome for too long, and then immediately embarked on a cost-cutting campaign that alienated special interests without saving any money. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Galba chose as his successor a no-talent named Piso. This choice angered a member of his staff, Otho, whose affinity for Galba was based on nothing more than their mutual hatred of the late unlamented Nero. Otho had been the husband of the bright, beautiful and conniving Poppaea Sabina, to whom Nero took a fancy. Nero had contrived to send Otho off campaigning in foreign lands while he dallied with his spouse. Otho fully expected that Galba would name him as successor and offer him as well the hand of his daughter. Otho arranged for the assassination of both Galba and his anointed one on January 15, 69.

Even before the double murder, another rival had made his appearance on the scene. Aulus Vitellius had been hailed as emperor by his troops both in Upper and Lower Germany while Otho was dithering. Their movement towards Italy was well advanced by the time Otho sent an army northwards to belatedly follow this force. The two rival armies met at Bedriacum, near Cremona. Vitellius was victorious, and Otho committed suicide. At the end of May 69, Vitellius, at the head of his motley pack of northmen, reached Cremona, and his army, mainly composed of various ethnic German groups, treated Italy as if it were a conquered foreign land — looting, raping, the usual pattern attributed to “barbaric hordes.” Vitellius, characterized by Josephus as well as other Roman historians as a mercenary, venal gourmand did nothing to restrain his predatory mob of outlanders. The hapless men of Rome were soon looking for yet another leader to save them from this latest incompetent.

Vespasian had delayed six months before he had decided to formally acknowledge the principate of Galba, sending Titus and Agrippa II to Rome as his emissaries in December of 68, notwithstanding the perils of a sea voyage in winter. Their ships were making their way along the coast of Greece when they learned of Galba’s death. Titus realized that the equation had changed and sailed back to rejoin his father in Alexandria, while Agrippa II, sensing some diplomatic opportunities on his own behalf, continued on to Rome.

It was only when he had returned to Caesarea that Vespasian heard of Otho’s downfall and of Vitellius’s swath of destruction towards Rome. It took the gluttonous pretender six months to reach the capital. Vespasian also learned that the troops in Syria and Judaea had sworn an oath of fidelity to him, in defiance of Vitellius now ravaging Rome itself. Vitellius’s representatives who

had been sent to cement their loyalty to him had disgusted the legionary field commanders with their arrogance and crass demeanor. Tiberius Alexander, governor of Egypt, as well as Mucianus in Antioch were inclined to favor Vespasian as the rising star emanating in the East. Should he bow to the will of his supporters, Vespasian would have fourteen legions, almost half the entire Roman army, plus auxiliaries behind him. Mucianus had not got along with Vespasian at first. However, Mucianus's liking for Titus had swayed him to appreciate Vespasian's talents. It was the arguments that Mucianus put forth, that Vitellius would do to him what Nero did to his own too popular field commander, Corbulo — offer him the “honorable” way out (i.e., suicide), that furnished a convincing rationale for Vespasian's accession to the purple.

Finally, it was the oriental prophecy, so compellingly declaimed by the enterprising prisoner, Josephus, which swayed Vespasian. Both Tacitus (*History* V, 13) and Suetonius (*Vespasian* 4) repeated the tale that, in Suetonius's words, “There had been spread throughout all the East an opinion of old, and the same settled in men's heads and constantly believed, that by the appointment of destinies about such a time there should come out of Judaea those who were to be lords of all the world.” Both historians, as well as — independently — Josephus, held that this prophecy foretold the rise of Vespasian and Titus. In response to a popular acclamation among the troops, Tiberius Alexander was first to declare for Vespasian (July 1, 69), and two days later the army of Judaea hailed him as Caesar.

Thanks to Mucianus's rumor that Vitellius planned to transfer them to Germany, the Syrian legions followed suit on July 15. Before Vitellius learned of the Orient's defection, Agrippa II, through his intelligence agents, learned of Vespasian's elevation and returned to Beirut where Vespasian was already being charmed by Agrippa II's sister, the captivating (even at age 40) Berenice. The council of war held at Beirut established that Mucianus should march with his army against Vitellius in Italy, Titus should assume command of all Roman and allied troops in Judaea and continue the war, and Vespasian should establish himself in Egypt, from whence he could cut off Rome's grain supply if necessary. The king of Parthia proclaimed that he would not only refrain from exploiting the situation to his own advantage but would commit 40,000 of his mounted archers to assist Vespasian.

While Mucianus's army was still making its way towards Rome, the seven legions of the Danube destroyed Vitellius's troops at Cremona and advanced upon Rome, which was again ravaged by open warfare in the streets and was scorched by flames and in October 69 Vitellius was cornered and slaughtered. Thus by the end of 69, Vespasian became the fourth emperor within a year. In acknowledgment of his own, albeit, self-serving prophecy to that effect, Josephus's chains were severed and his future seemed assured. It was not until

early summer of 70 that Vespasian would sail for Rome, reaching the capital in October of that year.

Having presented this backdrop to the post-Galilean campaigns of Vespasian, it's necessary to backtrack in order to resume the battle narrative where we left off.

The A.D. 68 Campaign Season: Subjugating Peraea; Controlling the Approaches to Jerusalem

Encouraged by the news of challenges from within the Judaeen hierarchy, Vespasian began in earnest to tighten the noose around Jerusalem even while the succession struggle was going on in Rome. He knew that there was some tidying up to do antecedent to the direct assault on Jerusalem, which may or may not be authorized by whomever was to come out on top in Rome. He began to set his vice-grip on the capital by securing Peraea, on his eastern flank, marking the commencement of his campaign of 68. The wealthy class of a place called Gadora (not Gadara), which is now called Tel Jadour, just southeast of Simon's stamping grounds in the Aqraba, invited Vespasian to set up an advanced headquarters there, mainly to protect themselves from anti-Roman agitation in the town. The pro-war party had already killed their leading citizen, Dolesus.

It is believed that the town of Es-Salt now occupies this site, where General Edmund Allenby's "Judaeen" contingent assisted in fighting the Turks in 1918. As the Romans approached the town, the wealthier patricians, who seem to have been in the majority, sent a deputation out to greet Vespasian and offer their cooperation, tearing down a section of the city walls as a token of their submission. Of those remaining, rebels who were steadfastly opposed to compromise (again numbers unspecified) exacted their vengeance on some of the hoi polloi who had authorized the embassy to Vespasian and, seeing that the town was indefensible, deserted the place.

Vespasian dispatched Placidus to overtake them with 500 horse and 3,000 infantry, pursuing them down the Shaib Valley, en route to Jericho. At the first sight of the pursuing horsemen, the fugitives eluded them by shunting off into a village that Josephus calls Bethennabris, which is likely the modern Beth Nimrin, some 12 miles southwest of Gadora (Es-Salt) just above where the valley leads into the plain, above the Jordan River.

The fleeing rebels hastily armed the young men of the town with whatever weapons they could provide and organized an assault against Placidus. The latter pulled his troops back a little to lure the Jews away from the town walls; then when they had encircled them and pinned down the bulk of them,

the infantry moved in to mop up while the cavalry fanned out to cut off those who could flee.

At this point, the trapped Jews attempted to move in with their slings and darts to try to dislocate the Roman foot, but the Romans formed a tight hedgehog, shield to shield so that the Jews' missiles were wasted while the Romans could hurl pila and javelins from cover. Josephus gives the Jews credit for a desperate, spirited, and suicidal assault onto the waiting Roman sword-points.

Placidus's horse archers cut to pieces those remnants that were able to dash for the town walls, though there were a small number of them who made it to the gates. The sentries let them in just before they were able to shut the gates on Placidus's spearhead.

Placidus immediately moved to exploit the exhaustion of the rebels and the confusion of the townsfolk and launched a series of relentless attacks up until dusk, when they were able to clear the walls sufficiently to force the gates. All noncombatants were slaughtered, houses pillaged, and the town set afire while the able-bodied vestiges fled. Word had spread about the disaster at Bethennabris. The haggard veterans of the fighting rallied all the Jews in the towns to reach the Jordan, where they hoped to ford the river and reach the safety of Jericho.

The retreating fighters exhorted their fellow Jews flanking the Roman line of march, that Jericho was the only place where they could hope to make a stand against the advancing Roman columns. Unfortunately, the Jordan fords are flooded at that time of year; thus, those who could evade the Roman assaults were pinned along the banks by Placidus's cavalry. Having no recourse but to fight, the Jews fanned out in a single rank, hoping that by extending their line, they would be able to isolate the charging mounted troops. This was futile, and Josephus tells us that 15,000 perished by Roman steel, while uncounted others drowned in the river. Some 2,200 were taken prisoner.

News of Placidus's ruthless advance had unnerved all in his path, who were even further alarmed at the sight of the corpses drifting down to the Dead Sea. Accordingly encouraged, Placidus attacked the rest of the Jewish-held towns of Peraea, notably Abila, Julius and Besemoth. Not having forces to spare for garrison duty, he used trustworthy Jewish deserters to hold the towns against any lurking Judeans not already intimidated. A small group reached the Dead Sea where they had hoped to avoid capture, but the relentless Placidus embarked boats and rounded them up. Placidus had consequently secured all of Peraea with the sole exception of Fortress Macharaeus, which remained in rebel hands.

Having eliminated the threat of Peraean Jewry to their rear as he moved against the main concentration in Jerusalem, Vespasian began his Jerusalem

campaign in earnest. Vespasian was by this time spurred to action by news of the anti-Neronian uprising of Vindex in Gaul, signaling the likely conclusion of Vespasian's imperial mandate in Judaea

It remained to neutralize Judaea's western approaches to the Jewish capital. For this final operation of 68, Vespasian established a forward headquarters at Antipatris, northeast of the former Jewish pirate lair at Joppa, capturing the town after a two-day siege. On the third day, he devastated the surrounding neighborhoods, including Thamna on the southeast quarter. From there, he continued moving southeast to Lydda and Jamnia. He garrisoned these latter two locations with dependable deserters and moved forward to the toparchy of Emmaus, on the northwest of Jerusalem where he established an advance post for his Vth Legion.

Archaeological evidence shows that the Vth Legion remained based in this camp until at least 70. From there Vespasian made successful forays throughout Idumaea, turning south to take Betogabris (Beit Jebrin) and Caphartobas (et-Taiebeh), putting them to the torch, slaying 10,000 and capturing 1,000 Idumaeans in the process, expelling the rest and leaving a cohort to storm the Idumaeen hill country on Jerusalem's southern approaches.

He then turned back northwards by way of Emmaus and marched through Samaria to Mabartha (Neapolis = Schechem/Nablus) a village between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Vespasian then, making a right hook, turned southeast via Corea on the Judaeen perimeter, where he arrived in May/June of 68. From there he continued down the Jordan Valley to Jericho. At Jericho and Adida, Vespasian stationed Roman garrisons, linking with forces under Trajan coming from Peraea.

Apparently at this time, Vespasian's forces also destroyed the community at Qumran, home base of the so-called Dead Sea sect.

With Trajan's forces once again under his command, Vespasian sent an ala of cavalry under Lucius Anneus to destroy Gerasa (Khirbet Jarish) on the northeastern corner of Peraea, inflicting a loss of 1,000 dead upon the Jewish defenders. Gerasa, or Jerash, was the only predominantly gentile city of the Decapolis that had spared their Jewish citizens during the inter-ethnic rioting two years earlier. This clemency, construed as an anti-Roman act in context, would now be "rewarded" by the Roman conquerors. Also, Jerash was Simon bar Giora's hometown, and Vespasian had good reason to rebuke the place for that reason alone. Simon had been on Rome's "most wanted" list ever since he cut up Cestius's rearguard and took his siege engines and baggage train.

Therefore Vespasian achieved the subjugation of the toparchy of Natopha and blocked the southern approach to Jerusalem. The country was now sufficiently mastered for the siege of the capital to begin. The capital was

ringed with a loose cordon of Roman garrisons, who could intercept any Jews escaping, which in any event were killed on the spot by the Zealots within.

Vespasian returned to Caesarea, where he gathered forces and began his preparations when news arrived of Nero's death on June 9, 68. He accordingly decided to suspend military operations and await further developments in Rome and elsewhere in the empire. When he got news in the winter of 68–69 of Galba's elevation to the throne, he sent his son Titus to Rome to pay homage to the new emperor. Titus had only got as far as Corinth when he learned of Galba's assassination (January 15, 69), whereupon he returned to his father in Caesarea. Vespasian had determined to play a waiting game.

Nonetheless, Vespasian was compelled to take the initiative once more because Simon bar Gioras had exploited the cease-fire to augment his body of followers and roam the southern districts of Palestine, enlarging his demographic base and his war chest. Finding the desert retreat too remote to suit his ambitions, Simon transferred his headquarters to Phara, neighboring Jerusalem, from which base he steadily increased his influence in Idumaea.

Even allowing for Josephus's bias, it is apparent that Simon was able to use his wild-man charisma to appeal to slaves and bondsmen, whom, he announced through his tribunes, he would set free if they would flock to him now. Likewise, he could appeal to the merchant class and some enterprising aristos, as well, by offering them opportunities to enrich themselves unburdened by usurious debt. He captured the fortress of Herodium, held by a rival Zealot faction, fought rival gangs at Tekoa and made an alliance with the tougher among them at Alulus, just 3 miles north of Hebron.

Next Simon mounted a surprise attack against Hebron, gathering a valuable haul of loot. He stocked and fortified a series of caves, near Adullam, openly proclaiming his intention of storming Jerusalem to deal with those who had given him such trouble at Herodium and Hebron. He was especially infuriated when his enemies took his wife hostage. Now with considerable supply of arms, equipment and plunder, Simon marched his newly augmented force into Jerusalem, where he challenged the authority of John of Gischala as well as the "old guard." All of this activity goaded Vespasian into tightening his hold on Judaea, notwithstanding his inclination to let the Jewish feuding do his work for him within Jerusalem's daunting defense network.

In April or May of 69, after a hiatus of a year, Vespasian had declared his loyalty to Otho and thus felt safe in attempting to wrap up this exhausting pacification campaign.

Ever the cautious general, Vespasian eschewed the main Beth-horon route to Jerusalem, bearing in mind the way in which the Jews were able to pen Cestius's mobile troops into ambushes along the treacherous west-east passage. He set off again from Caesarea seeking to pare down Simon's

encroachments threatening the northern approaches to Jerusalem. He thus went up through Samaria to arc down to Jerusalem from the north. Correspondingly, he had Titus move down the northern axis intersecting Jerusalem with the XIIth and XVth legions, with which he subjugated the districts of Gophna and Acrabata. This sector had been Simon's original power base after the rebel chieftain had been rebuffed by the halfhearted war directorate. After this, Vespasian's main body drew nearer to the gates of Jerusalem.

The Roman commander-in-chief sent his tribune Cerialis, leading the Vth Legion, from its base in Enmmaus, to mop up Idumaea. Cerialis swept down past Adullam, then conquered and destroyed the towns of Bethel (Capharther) and Ephraim (Capharabis), where he left garrisons and, at length, moved into Hebron after it had offered resistance, slaughtering all the young men of the town. All of Cerialis's secondary operations took place in and around Upper Idumaea, on Jerusalem's southwestern quarter.

At this point, Vespasian had overcome nearly all of Palestine while the Jews held only a triangle circumscribed by Jerusalem, Herodium and Masada and the fortress of Machaerus on the far shore of the Dead Sea. Titus meanwhile had gone with his father to Alexandria to await further word on the still volatile situation at home. News arrived in Alexandria that Otho had been defeated and committed suicide and Vitellius had scored successes along his march towards Rome. Titus marched his troops from Pelusium, at the eastern mouth of the Nile, across the northern base of the Sinai triangle to Gaza — a five-day trek. Titus next moved up via Ascalon, Jamnia and Joppa to Caesarea, where he concentrated his forces in the spring of A.D. 70.

12

Death Throes: The Final Phases

Factional Fighting Within Jerusalem

During the hiatus in the Roman campaign, the competing power blocs in Jerusalem tore at each other and in the process wiped out much of the city's grain supply. Once again, it is very difficult to establish a coherent chronology from Josephus's narrative, replete as it is with digressions and excursions. The following description may have inadvertently telescoped episodes from later periods into this framework. In particular, Vespasian's start-stop mopping up operations on the outskirts of Jerusalem, all keyed to the succession struggle in Rome, may have postdated some of the infighting among the rebel factions.

We have noted Simon's successes in building a power base in Idumaea, all to be abruptly counterchecked by Vespasian's ensuing offensives through Acrabatene and Upper Idumaea. By this time, Simon was ready to make his grand entrance into Jerusalem at the head of an army. He had meanwhile driven a large number of Idumaeans hostile to his command to take refuge in Jerusalem, where John's Galileans were busy eliminating elements unfriendly to them.

For their part, the sicarii often employed the ruse of having boys dress as women, facial make-up and all, to entice or placate men who they had pegged as collaborators; when the duped men would draw close, the "tempresses" would stab their victims with daggers concealed in their cloaks. It is often difficult to tell where Josephus is piling on accusations that he believes will discredit his *bete noir*; however, there is no reason to believe that this ploy was an invention of Josephus's.

Those among the Idumaeans who had refused to join up with Simon soon crowded the city and clashed with John's followers when they refused to take orders. They attacked and killed many of John's men, forcing the oth-

ers to take refuge in the palace reserved for the Adiabene royalty, which Simon had made his temporary headquarters. Simon's retinue soon drove these Idumaeans outcasts from their precincts and forced them to fall back on the Temple compound, largely still dominated by the more extreme of the Zealot elements, nominally in the service of John of Gischala.

The rumor now circulated that John and his Zealots, penned into the Temple area, intended to break out and set the city ablaze. This threat forced a temporary alliance among the strange bedfellows: the remnants of the priestly caste, the propertied men, and the displaced Idumaeans. They only had one recourse against John's extremists: As the lesser of two evils, they had to invite Simon into the capital from Idumaea; he still laid some claim to rule the remnants of that district that weren't already under Roman occupation.

Thus it was that Simon, just a step ahead of Vespasian's advance, entered the capital in great pomp and was hailed as a protector by those who dreaded John's brand of tyranny. Simon in the event was only able to master the Upper City. John's Zealots exercised control over the crenellated ramparts bordering the hallowed compound as well as four towers on the north and west sides of the enclosure, on which they had sited their artillery, commanding all approaches to the sanctuary. They had no monopoly on the missile engines, to the great misfortune of anyone trying to walk a path between the feuding warlords — especially those making pilgrimages for the festivals. Eleazar's forces still controlled a number of these engines that they had managed to wrest from Simon during the relatively halcyon days when the whimsical "first coalition" held sway.

While Titus was busy concentrating his forces at Caesarea in the spring of 70, after his overland journey from Alexandria, the already jumbled situation in Jerusalem got even more complicated. Eleazar ben Simon, it may be recalled had earlier antagonized public sentiment when he and his colleague Zachariah invited in the Idumaeans to finish off poor old Ananus, during the first upsurge of revolutionary euphoria in 66. Nonetheless, in the mob rule that prevailed, Eleazar could command the loyalty of those who still respected him for the role he played in humiliating Cestius Gallus.

Two "dignitaries" (likely members of the "old guard" who had seen the light), many of the radical priests, and all those who despised the despotism of John and Simon supported Eleazar's bid to direct Jerusalem's defense. Eleazar's group took over the inner courts of the Temple and made the tabernacle itself their headquarters. This left John and his partisans in charge of the Temple's outer court and cloisters, sandwiched between Eleazar's Zealots and Simon's clique, the latter controlling much of the city outside of the Temple complex.

The skirmishes among these groups continued even while pilgrims came

to offer sacrifices and the priests officiated. Many of these visitors were wounded or killed in the crossfire of the stone and bolt throwers.

Eleazar's group was able to support themselves with the provisions stocked in the sanctuary, and Simon had access to the depots and markets of the city at large. Lacking such ready access, John had to supply his troops at sword point.

When John raided the granaries controlled by Simon, a conflagration broke out amidst the warehouses, destroying a large part of them with disastrous implications for the populace in the siege to follow.

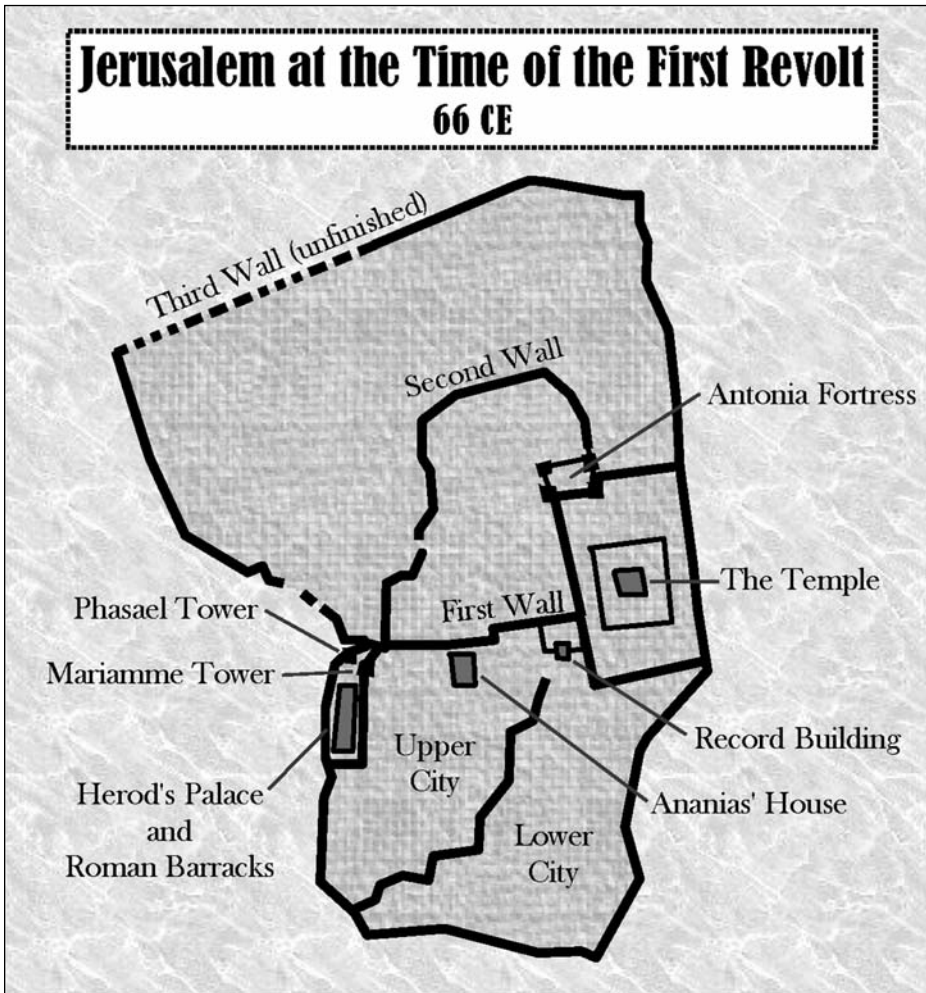
The area just below the Temple's Western Wall was the scene of much fighting between John's and Simon's warriors, rendering this sector a devastated no-mans land. Without getting into excessive detail, suffice it to say that the situation was chaotic (Josephus is particularly tendentious about the factional infighting). At the approach of Titus's juggernaut, the feuding factions belatedly managed to cooperate.

Conclusion of the Siege and the Sack of Jerusalem

Titus had under his command the three legions originally commanded by Vespasian: the Vth based at Emmaus; the Xth, now at Jericho; plus Titus's own unit, the XVth. The reconstituted XIIth, anxious to redeem itself after its disrepute after Beth-horon, augmented these three giving a total of four regular legions. Then, from Alexandria, Titus had brought back detachments of 1,000 men each from the IIIrd and the XXIIInd, as well as another 3,000 drawn from garrisons along the Euphrates. Recall that Vespasian had to siphon off some fighting strength destined for Judaea to staff the taskforce led by Mucianus against Vitellius. The additional troops had to compensate for this loss.

Allied cohorts totaled 20, plus eight cavalry alae and the auxiliaries provided by Agrippa II, Soheimus, Antiochus and Malik of Petra. By tallying the number of units, it seems that this army now numbered about 65,000 men, whereas the *Macmillan Bible Atlas* puts this at 80,000. It's possible that some of the designated auxiliary units contained a higher strength than the regular Roman order of battle.

Titus appointed as "chief of staff," or its Roman equivalent, (variously, "advisor" or "assistant") Tiberius Alexander, who had formerly been procurator of Judaea. Hence, Alexander's knowledge of the country, its people and language would be of inestimable help. Further, Alexander had served as Corbulo's adjutant during the campaign in Parthia, giving him a bang-up military background.



Jerusalem, First Revolt (map by Éric Grenier).

Similarly to his father, Titus approached Jerusalem from the north, camping overnight at Gophna, and then positioned his army in a depression four miles north of Jerusalem, lying between Gibeah of Saul (Tel-el-Ful) and Beit Haninah. He expected that this location was not visible to the pickets on the walls of the Jewish capital so that he could approach undetected. Accordingly, when Titus led a reconnoitering party of 600 horse to the base of the North Gate (roughly near the modern Damascus Gate), he had neglected to don his helmet and breastplate, taking only his sword.

Titus's purpose was to test the defenses of the massive tower of Psephi-

nus, sited at the northwest corner of the city. Unknown to Titus; Simon had watched every move of his approaching unit from the Tower of the Women, flanking the gate. Simon waited for Titus's force to pass and rushed out to attack them from the rear, placing the horsemen at a disadvantage as they struggled among the labyrinth of gardens and stone walls. Titus and a few dozen companions were separated from the main body. Titus was able to fight his way clear and return to camp, while two of his companions were cut down and one horse was captured. This early success had an invigorating effect on the rebels.

The following morning, Titus advanced the XIIth and the XVth legions to establish their camp on a good vantage point, the southern slopes of Mount Scopus (literally "Look-out"). From there they could see all the activity occurring in the main towers and palaces of Jerusalem as well as within the huge Temple compound itself. The Vth Legion, moving up from Emmaus, bivouacked a little farther north, on the site of the present village of Sh'afat. From its temporary camp at Jericho, the Xth Legion completed the picture, taking up positions on the Mount of Olives, where they could also observe practically the entire city from across the Kidron valley.

Watching all this ominous buildup on the heights overlooking their separated enclaves prompted the disunited Jewish rebel groups to form a combined command. The Xth Legion, setting up camp on the Mount of Olives, demanded their immediate attention. At first, there were skirmishes in the orchards just outside the Gate of Women. The Jews sortied, crossed the wadi, or valley, at the base of the Kidron ravine and, under cover of hedges, fences and groves, ascended the winding paths up through the Garden of Gethsemane, converging as they neared the summit.

This bold raid from behind the safety of their formidable defenses caught the Xth totally off balance; they could not have anticipated this type of offensive spirit based on their military experience thus far. Seasoning and drill taught them that inferior forces lodged securely behind massive fortifications would not be so foolhardy as to expose themselves to the power of the Legions outside their walls. They had not fathomed the Jewish mentality or fighting style. They were still in the process of setting up their camp and did not have their arms at hand; the Jews pushed them back until Titus managed to rally the Xth and drive the Jews back down the bank.

Undaunted the Jews regrouped and mounted another assault, not only pushing back the Roman troops but also panicking the engineers still constructing the camp into abandoning their work. Ultimately Titus succeeded in reinvigorating his men, and the Jews were forced back sufficiently for the workmen to complete the defenses of the camp, securing themselves against another threatened Jewish attack.

As Passover of the year A.D. 70 was approaching, Eleazar, whose followers were still in control of the Temple shrine, noticed the congregation of worshippers who wanted to enter the Temple grounds to worship. John convinced Eleazar's followers to open the doors and let the citizens enter the sanctuary to worship. Some of John's men entered along with the worshippers, their weapons concealed, and attacked Eleazar's men, forcing them to take refuge in the underground cellars. Having eliminated Eleazar as a rival, John convinced those Zealots who didn't flee with Eleazar to join with his own party as the only way they could mount an effective defense and at the same time break the will of the obdurate Simon.

The two remaining factions returned to fighting each other while Titus began the deliberate job of leveling the ground leading up to the northern and western ramparts, the only places not fronted by deep ravines where the walls could be approached. The first bold sorties of the Jews convinced Titus that stone walls and garden plots were perfect cover for the former's marauding expeditions; accordingly he was determined to laboriously "bulldoze" the intervening area stone by stone and tree by tree. While the greater part of his army was engaged in the ground-clearing work, Titus posted a sufficient picket force of infantry and cavalry to shield them in the event of another abrupt sortie.

Simon's army was reckoned at 10,000, with 50 commanders plus a separate Idumaean contingent numbering 5,000, under 10 officers, chief among whom were James ben Sosas and Simon ben Cathlas.

John's force numbered 6,000 serving under 20 commanders. These were augmented by 2,400 of the Zealots who had earlier abandoned Eleazar. The latter apparently had come out from hiding, forged a truce with John, and was allowed to again oversee his entourage as an element of a combined force.

Simon still controlled the Upper City and part of the Lower City, while John held the Temple compound and the eastern sector of the Lower City.

At the same time as Titus's working party continued the task of clearing the approach to the walls, he sent Josephus as an envoy to address the Jews manning the towers, convince them of the folly of further resistance, and apprise them of Titus's generous terms. Of course, Josephus was rebuffed. The particulars of this parley are not known, but unless he was accompanied by a strong armed guard, it's a wonder that Josephus wasn't flayed alive considering his reputation among the Jerusalemites, whose population was now swelled with homeless refugees from the north. His audience doubtlessly saw that their predicament was in large part due to Josephus's negligence and duplicity. However, his hypocritical harangue did yield at least one benefit: It gave the clever Jerusalemites an idea.

At this point, the Jews devised a stratagem to interrupt Titus's meticu-

lous preparations. This little scene is notable for once again showing what the Jews were capable of had they only been united before the time when Titus was literally knocking at the gates of Jerusalem. Seeing that the Romans were already sending out truce feelers, the Jews decided to capitalize on this predilection.

They arranged for a group of insurgents to be ostentatiously expelled from the city, exiting through the North Gate. Their fellow Jews on the walls pelted them with stones, outwardly haranguing them for not honoring the will of the people, which was for peace with honor. When the outcast insurgents, feigning dread, turned back at the sight of the Roman pickets ahead of them, their compatriots refused to open the gates to let them reenter. The Jews on the walls called out to the Romans, telling them that they had been ready to lay down their arms but had been prevented by this intransigent group they had just expelled. Meanwhile, the Jews outside the walls ran towards the Romans to throw themselves on their mercy. According to Josephus, who doesn't miss an opportunity to sing Titus's praises, the clever Roman commander cautioned his men that this might be a trap since Josephus had been snubbed just the night before.

The advance party of Romans either didn't hear or ignored Titus's warning and rushed forward at the invitation to enter the gates. Those who had rushed forward now found themselves caught between two flanking towers, while the group of banished Jews, who now were to their rear, closed the trap. There were a large number of killed and wounded, the survivors being pursued back as far as the tomb of Queen Helena before they straggled back to camp.

Titus was inclined to punish with death the surviving members of those of his men who had been tricked by the Jewish ruse. Instead, he yielded to the pleas for clemency among the rest of the legion and gave them a warning about their impatience and how the Roman "by the book" approach ill-prepared them for such tricks. This seems a bit hypocritical; had Titus practiced more vigilance himself, he would never have allowed his troops to get into such a position. In any event the Jews on the walls taunted and jeered the Romans, promising them that they had more nasty surprises in store. This shows not only their brazenness but a bit of sophistication in applying psychological warfare, knowing that the taunts would only serve to make the Romans more impatient to get at them.

After four days, Titus's leveling operations were completed. In order to protect the aggregation of his baggage train, Titus deployed his men opposite the north and west walls, seven deep as follows: the first three ranks were infantry, behind which were posted a single line of archers, next followed by another three ranks composed of cavalry. With this force screening against

further sorties from behind the walls, Titus marched his three legions into position. Titus set up his camp on the place now called the Russian Compound, 400 yards from the wall, opposite to the tower called Psephinus. The rest of the army dug in opposite the great tower of the upper palace called Hippicus, likewise 400 yards from the wall. The Xth Legion remained in its camp on the Mount of Olives.

Final Tasks: The Advance

On the east and south, the Kidron and Hinnom hollows, which join just below the Siloam tunnel area, frustrated any attack from those quarters. There was no way to erect towers and battering rams on the abrupt promontories rising from the gullies fronting these walls, while their height overlooking all possible approaches gave the defenders an insurmountable advantage. Accordingly, the Jews had only built one wall shielding these approaches.

Only on the north and the west were the approaches to the capital sufficiently even to contemplate the erection of towers and battering rams alongside the walls. For that reason, those flanks had been reinforced. In addition to the old north wall, running from the upper palace to the Temple compound, Antipater, Herod the Great's father, had added a second wall when the Romans first assaulted the metropolis over a century earlier. Next, Agrippa I had added a third wall during his brief reign, which, as we have seen, prompted a stiff rebuke from the justifiably suspicious Emperor Claudius.

A reconnaissance by Titus's scouts revealed that on the north side this third wall was strong enough to endure the pounding of his devices. Accordingly, he decided to attack the west flank, that is, against the portion of the wall running from Psephinus to Hippicus towers — roughly from today's College des Freres to the Jaffa Gate. Apparently, it was at this intersection where Agrippa I's reinforcement project was cut short by Claudius, leaving a gap where the wall was either abbreviated or thinned and it was lower. These circumstances explain why Titus located his camps where he did.

All along their line of defense, the Jews mounted continuous raids against the Romans as they prepared and showered them with a hail of javelins, arrows, spears and stones. It was quite obvious that they were far from being intimidated by the approach of Titus's army. Titus therefore ordered the construction of three earthwork ramps to be constructed in order to allow the towers to roll forward to the point that the battering rams could be brought to bear. It was necessary to deforest the countryside for miles around in order to prepare the embankments. Given the aggressiveness of the Jews, Titus was compelled to maintain a steady barrage of missiles against the parapets to

cover the methodical construction below. Even then, he could not approach the walls in order to calculate their distance from the rampart. This had to be accomplished by throwing out a weighted line up to the foremost portion of the rampart.

Simon was able to mount his portion of the artillery captured from Cestius Gallus on the parapets he controlled and attempted counter-battery fire against the Roman catapult and ballista emplacements. However, Josephus tells us that they were insufficiently trained in their use (although some Roman defectors had provided a crash-course). The Xth Legion's artillery section was the best equipped and trained of all the legions; their machines were capable of hurling a hundredweight stone a distance of over two furlongs — about a quarter of a mile — with great accuracy.

In order to try to counteract these deadly salvos, sentinels were posted to keep a steady eye on the Xth Legion's heavy weapons sections and as soon as they observed a launch they would follow the flight of the incoming stone, which shone white in the sun's rays. The message would be relayed back to those in the probable area of impact: "Baby on the way!" Then they would try to take cover and throw themselves to the ground, preferably in a depression. The Romans took note of this passive defense method and took to painting the stones a dull, nonreflective black so the Jews could not detect the trajectory.

Determinedly, the three battering ram towers (Josephus calls them, in Greek, *helepoles*, or City-takers) were brought forward until they could exert their most forceful shock power. It was the ominous racket of the rams striking against the masonry ramparts that finally brought about the noted collaboration between Simon and John, along with the latter's newly incorporated contingent from Eleazar ben Simon's group. As the Roman legions pierced the outermost defenses, the opposing commanders of the rival gangs, Simon bar Gioras and John of Gischala, at last ceased their standoff, and they focused their attention on the ominous Roman infiltration towards the second line of defense. They divided responsibility for the city's defense between them. Simon was to oversee the sector running from the northeastern corner to the Pool of Siloam. John was assigned the eastern wall. Later, as the siege pressed inwards, Simon defended the Upper City and John commanded the defense of the Temple itself. The strength of their combined forces was no more than 25,000, opposing the estimated 70,000 to 80,000 Romans.

Largely by virtue of this truce, Simon allowed members of John/Eleazar's faction to come from their posts at the Temple — strictly speaking no longer necessary thanks to the cease-fire between the blocs — and move up to the western wall, controlled by his own troops, from which they threw firebrands into the Roman towers. This effort was fruitless because the Romans had

shielded the tower against such a contingency by a combination of the locked shields of the men inside and some overhead armor reinforcement.

Persevering in their effort to burn down the towers, the Jews next made a sortie through a concealed portal near the Hippicus gate and carried the torches in their hands, making an energetic dash through the surprised Roman pickets. According to Josephus, Titus again saved the day by rallying his elite corps of Alexandrians who pushed the Jews back before they could torch the towers.

The three *helepoles* were now free to do their destructive work. Each one of these towers was 75 feet high. The job of advancing these lumbering leviathans up the ramps while fending off a hail of missiles from the walls above must have been daunting.

The night following the foray by John's troops in an attempt to burn the towers, one tower collapsed, apparently due to a fault in the construction or an insecure footing on the ramp. Whatever the reason, the Roman troops nearby panicked at the sight of the falling tower, erroneously believing that the Jews were on the rampage again. Once more Titus's resolve saved the day when he rallied the frenzied legionaries and restored order in the ranks.

The two remaining towers were then brought into play, the men in the battlements atop the towers firing arrows and small bolts and hurling javelins as the rams began biting through the masonry bulwarks. One of the rams was so effective in shattering all in its path that the Jews nicknamed it *Nikon*, Greek for "conqueror."

Finally the ram made a small breach in the wall and, in the morning hours just before dawn, when the tired and disordered guards had withdrawn from their posts while the relief was being awakened, the Romans gained entry. They quickly secured the tract enclosed by the outer wall, known as Betheza, and forced the Jews to retire behind the second wall while they completed their demolition of the outmost curtain. This left the whole new city in their hands. Thus by May 25 — 15 days after the siege began — the Romans were knocking at the second wall.

During the period when the third (Agrippa I's) wall was being ruptured, Titus moved his camp up to the place then known as the Camp of the Assyrians. This was named after an earlier fateful siege, just outside of Agrippa I's breastworks, adjacent to the massive tower Psephinus, now doomed to destruction like the wall itself. This sector is now occupied by the Damascus Gate.

Final Tasks: Zero Hour

The Jews now reorganized their defenses along the second wall where the Romans were systematically repositioning their towers. In Tacitus's *His-*

tory V, 11, the historian remarks to the effect that its diagonal casement walls and re-entrant angles ensured that the Roman attackers' flanks would constantly be exposed: From there, anchored by a citadel at each end with the serpentine wall between, the Jews now enjoyed an excellent sheltered position from which they could harry the Roman progress. Simon's corps manned the upper, or western, section while John's manned the eastern zone, embracing the Antonia as well as the Temple cloisters. There was another great tower in the middle of this segment, which had originally guarded access from the area of Golgotha which earlier had been sited outside the city proper.

The middle tower was now the object of the Roman battering rams, which took but five days to pulverize the stronghold. The Jews meanwhile had constructed a subterranean passage connecting the central tower with the interior. A spokesman, identified as Castor, tried to delay the devastation of the tower by feigning a readiness to capitulate, but his offer was exposed as stonewalling, and Castor and his companions on the tower were soon pitched downwards by the collapse of the turret. Notwithstanding they had set fire to the tower just before its disintegration and were able to escape by means of the tunnel back to the Jewish lines. The confusion created by the conflagration provided cover for the Jews to engage the Romans in hand-to-hand street fighting, in which the Jews had time and again proven the masters. The Romans were driven out of their newly occupied part of the city and back to their camp. However, within four days they had regrouped and by June 4 had returned to stay.

In the period between the two assaults, Titus took the time to indulge in a bit of morale building, which doubled as psychological warfare against the Jews. He conducted a majestic military review, in which, legion by legion, his entire army was paraded in full regalia and approached their commander at the reviewing stand to receive their full pay and rations. The Jews crowded the crest of the parapets to watch this ostentatious display. Titus sent Josephus to use the occasion of the grand pageant to press his fellow Jews once more to capitulate, pointing out the unlimited might of their enemy who just kept coming on. If anything, the aspect of the turncoat Josephus lecturing them made the Jews even more determined to continue the fight.

Titus, seeing that the Jews were obdurate, now commenced the destruction of the second wall, saving only a section running north and south on the extreme western end; this was preserved to shelter his new forward camp. Lying before him now was the First Wall, which descended in an almost straight line from the upper palace to the Temple. This first wall, which had been the bulwark against the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians, enclosed a much larger portion of the city than had the other two combined, which meant that Titus had to spread his forces along a greater perimeter. Further,

the Temple area, overlooked by the imposing Antonia tower, was a veritable castle in itself.

Titus perceived that notwithstanding his achievements against the outer two walls, a more formidable task now confronted him. The Jews had moreover been steadily training in the use of their artillery since the pathetic early attempts to silence the Roman engines from afar. The Jews possessed 300 bolt-throwing catapults and 40 stone-throwers. The experienced Jewish fighters from Adiabene, on the Parthian-Armenian border, who had come to the aid of their beleaguered fellow countrymen, were not only training them in the use of the engines but also refining their mining techniques, looking forward to disabling the Roman towers and engines from below.

The Antonia fort was isolated from the slope of Betheza by a formidable manmade moat, coterminous with "the Transverse Valley," the same that had confronted Pompey during his siege of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. Since then, Herod the Great had deepened and widened the ditch in the course of constructing the Antonia stronghold. Much as Pompey had done, Titus concluded that he had no option but to fill in this trench so that he could bring his battering rams to within striking distance.

This process entailed the construction of what the Romans called *aggeres*, or inclined levees over which a causeway would be laid. Since the available timberland had been pretty much depleted during construction of the preceding siegeworks, this job meant that the lumber would have to be hauled in over a greater distance.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, Titus soon had three *aggeres* underway. The Vth Legion's task was made even harder by the fact their ramp had to be raised in the middle of a pool, Josephus identifies as *strouthion*, which was formed when Herod's workmen had excavated stone for his building out of the bedrock. This embankment was some 50 feet deep. The XIIth Legion's ramp was parallel to that of the Vth, 10 yards distant. In order to stretch the defense along a wide perimeter as possible, the Xth and the XVth legions built their ramps all the way at the far end of the north wall just below the formidable Hippicus quadrilateral tower complex.

On June 16, all the ramps were completed, but this 17-day drudgery was to be frustrated in a single blow. Observing the steady progress of the causeway construction, John began tunneling under the ramps in his (Antonia Fortress) sector. He filled the mines with combustibles amply covered with inflammable bitumen from the Dead Sea. Waiting until the towers were on their way up the ramps, John gave the signal to pull the supports from the roof of the tunnel and set fire to the filler. The ramps collapsed and the towers toppled over into the ditch flanking the ruined causeway, and the fire soon finished them off.

On June 18, Simon matched John's achievement at his, the northern, sector. Not having the benefit of the mining experts to hand, Simon made a raid towards the Roman engineering crews as they were rolling the tower up the ramps and managed to throw blazing torches onto the towers, setting them on fire. His men were able to hold off the counterattacking Romans long enough for the collapsing towers to set the timber façade of the ramp ablaze, ruining it as well.

In the confusion of the fire and the melee, another detachment of Jews made a daring attack on the Roman forward military compound, which was barely held in check by the Roman artillery mounted atop the debris of the third and second walls. This double parry, combined with the fact that the weeks-long construction projects were laid waste and it was at the height of a brutally hot summer with water supplies running low, discouraged Titus's men.

Since the Jews controlled the one native spring, in the Siloam depression, the Romans were obliged to bring in water from distant springs, and these convoys were frequently ambushed by murderous Jewish raiding parties. Not only were the Jews amply supplied with water, but they were able to bring in supplies through the labyrinth of tunnels running beneath Jerusalem.

In desperation, Titus convinced his staff that their only recourse was to construct a ridge wall, a *circumvallation*, to totally enclose the city—a last resort that had usually given the Romans victory in the toughest of siege operations.

Amazingly, within three days' time, the Romans had constructed a wall about eight feet high neatly enclosing the entire remaining Jewish defensive complex, a circuit of roughly five miles embracing some 13 watchtowers within its structure, each 200 feet in circumference. From these towers the Romans could observe all points of access and egress in the Jewish defense works, while waiting beyond the range of the increasingly effective Jewish artillery.

Titus, Tiberius Alexander and the regimental commanders split the three-night watches, apportioning them by drawing lots. The key to this part of the siege was a waiting game pure and simple. They were going to starve the Jews out and had plenty of time with which to do it. The rest of the country had been pacified, so there was no worry of other Jews coming to their relief. Those who could bear arms had flocked towards Jerusalem as the Roman noose tightened. The Jews in Machaerus, Herodium and Masada were themselves isolated and in any event showed no signs of venturing beyond their own secure walls.

It is here that Josephus delineates, with dramatic intensity, the wretched effects of the siege on the Jewish populace. Of course, he took poetic license,

since it was partly his purpose to deter any would-be insurgents within the empire. There is no reason to distrust the gist of his tale. The horrors are laid out in excruciating detail for Josephus's readership.

Remarkable, and famous, among these scenes are those of a mother cannibalizing her infant. There is also the oft-told tale of how those Jewish refugees making their way towards the Roman lines swallowed their few gold pieces to defeat the greed of the captors. Whether true or not, the rumors of this trick prompted savage troops among the Syrian and Nabataean auxiliaries to cut open the stomachs of any Jews unlucky enough to cross through in their sector.

At that time a virtual forest of crucifixes sprung up around Jerusalem so that the Jews could observe the grisly slow death awaiting each and every one of them. Then Titus took to cutting off the hands of his captives, sending baskets full of them back towards the wall, a gruesome reminder of how harsh their untiring enemy could be.

In the midst of Jerusalem's death-throes the Romans once more sent Josephus to stand under the battlements of the inner wall and harangue his wayward fellow Jews of the futility, even the profanity, of resisting to the last. At long last, one of the heavy stones kept handy for such an occasion found its mark on the pontificating orator's head, knocking him unconscious.

The Jews were sending out a party to drag the benumbed renegade back behind the walls where they could make an example of him, no doubt flinging his flayed carcass back to the Romans in defiance. Some Romans, under heavy covering fire, managed to retrieve Josephus and return him to their lines. Josephus tells us he was at this point between a rock and a hard place. Not only did his countrymen totally reject his advice and mistrust his motives, but also there were several officers on Titus's staff who advised their commander not to trust Josephus's interpretation of intelligence obtained from refugees. They believed him to be a double agent, in fact feeding the Romans misinformation. In any event, Josephus tells us that his speeches did persuade some members of the priestly caste to surrender.

Desperation begot depravity within the walls. Simon now had Matathias, the former High Priest who had originally brought him into the city, murdered along with three of his sons on suspicion that they were about to sell out the rest of them. Another man, whom we know only as Judas, was caught preparing to surrender the tower he was manning to the Romans. Simon had him and his men quartered and the pieces thrown down to the crowd as a warning. The stench of rotting corpses in the hot sun added disease to the agonies plaguing the survivors. Titus grew impatient by early July. He decided that his earlier mistake in storming the inner, first wall was that he had divided his forces along the entire frontage. He determined that it was

best to concentrate all his efforts on the fortress Antonia, then having made his breach there take the Temple and from that point make his way to the upper city. He raised four new ramps against the walls of Antonia, this time protecting the towers and ram with fireproofing — layers of earth and metal. Braving a murderous hail of missiles from the walls, Titus was able to effect a breach, only to discover that John had constructed another wall behind. Titus' troops were inspired by the offer of a rich prize for the first man to scale the new wall.

On July 22 a swarthy Syrian volunteer named Sabinus led a storming party of 12 men and succeeded in gaining a foothold atop the wall when he tripped and fell into the throng of Jews waiting below where he was torn limb from limb. Deciding to try stealth next, on July 24, a handpicked group led by the standard-bearer and the trumpeter of the Vth Legion crept up to the exhausted somnolent outer guard at two in the morning, cut their throats and mounted the wall as the trumpeter sounded the signal.

Upon hearing the horn blasts, the Jews fell back inside the Temple as the Romans led by Titus and his praetorian guard surged forward, finally claiming Antonia and with it the entire area surrounding the Temple itself. Hoping to maintain the momentum and carry through to the Temple, a Bythnian centurion named Julian was able to press the Jews into the Temple Court, but his hobnailed boots slipped on the marble flooring and he fell, whereupon the Jews wheeled about and overwhelmed him, forcing the Romans back into Antonia. It was a harbinger of how desperately the Jews would defend the Temple itself.

The daily sacrifices in the Temple, which had continued without interruption, finally ceased on the 7th day of August. This was seen by the pious as a sinister portent; during previous sieges of the holy city, no matter how desperate the fighting, the priests had continued the daily sacrifices in the face of death. A group of rebels attempted to break out through the Roman fortifications on the Mount of Olives, hoping to make it to the desert beyond, but this failed miserably.

On August 15–17, the Romans burned the Temple porticoes. A ramp was next erected against the inner wall, whereupon the Romans entered the Temple itself. On the 9th of the Jewish month of Av, (around August 28) the Temple was burned.

Various degrees of responsibility have been assigned to Titus for the events that followed his order the night before to set the massive wooden Temple doors afire. Josephus relates that on eve of the 9th of Av, Titus convened a council of war to determine the Temple's fate, and after hearing divided opinions, decided that it should be preserved.

Josephus ascribed the actual setting alight of the Temple to the unau-

thorized act of a Roman soldier who flung a burning torch at the Temple and states that Titus's subsequent efforts to persuade his soldiers to extinguish the flames were in vain. Their desire for revenge allegedly overcame their sense of discipline. Sulpicius Severus, however, asserts that the destruction of the Temple was a premeditated act of Titus, based on his conviction that its fall would be accompanied by that of the rebellious people whose fount of strength it was. His source is thought to be the lost writings of Tacitus, to which Severus lent a Christian interpretation. This latter version appears to approximate the truth rather than that of Josephus, which was probably written with the desire to clear Titus of the blame and flatter his imperial patron, not incidentally making the Roman conqueror more agreeable to his fellow Jews.

On August 30, the Romans took the Lower City, but the defenders of the Upper City, fully aware that their cause was doomed, nevertheless continued to resist. Only after another month of costly siege and assault operations were the Romans able to capture the Upper City and Herod's Palace. By decree of Titus, all the people of Jerusalem were taken captive and the buildings were leveled to the ground. Only the three towers around which the Xth Legion had camped were left standing, and the ruins of Jerusalem and its surrounding environs were placed under the Xth Legion's watch.

His soldiers hailed Titus as emperor, an accolade that was more ceremonial than oracular. He distributed awards and held a three-day victory celebration and other festivities including gladiatorial contests, at which many of the Jews who had been taken prisoner were killed. He held similar festivities in the capital and other cities of Syria, from whence he continued his journey through the Euphrates area to Alexandria and Rome.

In Antioch, Titus rejected a request to have the Jews banished from the city. Josephus ascribes this to his humanitarian feelings but, more probably, it was to avoid incurring the enmity of the Jews in various parts of the empire toward Rome at a time when Rome was quite war-weary. He took with him the two leaders of the revolt, John of Gischala and Simon bar Gioras, together with a large number of young and healthy prisoners, who were included in the victory procession given by Rome to conquerors, at which sacred vessels taken from the Temple were also displayed. An arch depicting scenes from the procession was erected to commemorate Titus's victory over the Jews, which is still able to be seen in Rome at the ruins of the Forum.

When he became emperor, Titus severed his relationship with Berenice, sister of Agrippa II, whose lover he had been in Judaea. It's one of history's bizarre ironies that the Jewish (for she still considered herself as such) Princess Berenice was thrown off by "her" Roman emperor lover much as Julius Caesar had been compelled to abandon his "eastern entanglement" Cleopatra when Rome first dipped her toe into the quagmire of Near Eastern politics.

Tacitus and Suetonius testify to the general approval Titus met with during his short reign.

Coda: The Siege of Macherus and the Fall of Masada

I have paired these two episodes under the heading of Coda, or Post-script, because they are really minor mopping up operations and occurred after the dust had settled from the collapse of Jerusalem. Further, they are not related in any important sense to the main struggle, which in reality ended with the burning of the Temple in 70. In fact, three isolated fortresses were holding out several months after the fall of Jerusalem: Herodium near Bethlehem, Masada in the far south and Macherus in Peraea. Judaea retained its status as a province subordinate to Syria, but now was ruled by a full military governor. After the temporary incumbencies held by officers of the Xth and Vth legions, Lucilius Bassus was appointed *legatus* of Judaea.

Bassus was determined to eject the holdouts from their remote outposts — not because they threatened the integrity of the “liberated” colony but because this defiance was potentially embarrassing to Rome and could set a bad example. Additionally possession of the strategically located forts would confer a useful military advantage in defending against Parthians, Nabataeans or any combination of Near Eastern rivals. Herodium did not pose much of a problem and was taken relatively easily, in a single attack.

The stronghold of Macherus consisted of two parts: the upper fortress, or acropolis, and the lower area, which comprised the city proper. The Zealots took up defensive positions in the fortress, while those rebels not affiliated with the particular Zealot faction within the citadel had to be content with manning such ramparts as they could improvise in the town. The Romans mounted a particularly intense siege at the stronghold and managed to capture one of the Zealot leaders. After negotiations, the Romans agreed to give the Zealots safe passage out of Macherus. The non-Zealot resistance in the city, however, was not included in this amnesty. Most of them attempted to flee but were killed in the ensuing skirmishes.

Masada was built on top of a finger-like rocky ridgeline, its sheer cliffs ascending from within the deep ravines surrounding the craggy precipice. The Roman siege force was divided between a lower camp and an upper camp, the latter containing the headquarters. These camps can be seen clearly today from the summit of the promontory. The Romans were faced with the problem of getting their siege towers up to abut the walls of the lofty fortress atop the cliffs. Roman patience, endurance and engineering skills were all brought to bear as they painstakingly built a siege-wall around the entire precipice,

disregarding the impassable approaches. Although this *circumvallation*, which was armed with catapults, completely isolated the defenders, there was little prospect of a quick decision through starvation, since there were abundant reserves of food and water within.

Flavius Silva, legatus of Judaea and commander of the Xth Legion, chose a site to the west of Masada, where there is a low saddle between the two surrounding ravines, and began a ramp from the so-called White Rock (Leuke) up to the defenders' wall, a height which Josephus gives as 300 cubits — actually only 260 feet. At 200 cubits the Romans raised a platform made of wood and iron, 50 cubits tall. Upon this they placed a siege-tower reaching upwards a further 60 cubits, which meant that its top stood about 20 feet higher than the walls of Masada. The Romans were able to breach the wall with the assistance of an iron battering ram on May 1 of A.D. 73. The defenders hastily constructed a barricade of wood within the breached outer wall that the Romans immediately attempted to burn down. At first, the wind went against the Romans, blowing the flames back into their faces and keeping it from reaching the barricade. However later in the day the wind shifted and the wood rampart was set ablaze. Assured of success, the Romans delayed their final assault until the next day. But the remaining defenders of Masada — 960 men, women and children — the last vestiges of open defiance against Rome in the First Jewish War, had committed suicide during the night, giving the Romans a hollow victory. There is some evidence that the actual number of suicides is highly exaggerated, most having died during the Roman siege or taken captive. The suicide pact tale gave Josephus the opportunity to indulge in another one of his literary conceits — the mass suicide speech familiar to Graeco-Roman historians. Recall his similar literary device in describing the “suicide pact” among his co-defenders of Jotapata in 66.

In any event, the episode of Masada has assumed an ideological status in modern Israel all out of proportion to its effect in 73 or 74. Bear in mind, the group of sicarii holding out in Masada were not part of the mainstream Jewish rebel movements that had effectively been defeated three years earlier.

13

Aftermath of the First Revolt

As was the case in the era leading up to the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C., most Jews apparently had thought that the Temple was impregnable. They saw it as a sign of God's presence and accessibility among them and could not believe that the sanctuary might at any time fall and be taken from them. Its destruction must have precipitated a major spiritual trauma. Indeed, in view of the tragedy's magnitude, the sources from the early tannaitic period are extremely reticent about the destruction, just as Jewry was reticent for the first 30 years after the Holocaust in modern Europe. The silence in Late Antiquity stemmed from several factors. Among them was a lack of preparation for a tragedy of such dimensions, as well as an inability to accept the inevitable traditional explanation for all such suffering — that it was due to the transgressions of the people. It is often stated that there was no reaction at all, but this is not true; it was merely suppressed and deferred.

Following the defeat of the rebellion, Judaea's maintenance was financed, in part, by a new tax, the *Fiscus Iudaeus*, imposed on all Jews in the Empire. The *fiscus* was an ironic surrogate for the Temple tax, the latter of which the Flavian rulers, Vespasian, then Titus, and finally Domitian, were pleased to contemptuously observe was no longer necessary now that the Temple was destroyed and thus needed no upkeep. The tithe was now earmarked for the maintenance of the Temple of Jupiter — a piercing affront to the Jews.

To the best of our knowledge Josephus never returned to Judaea, although Vespasian gave him tax-exempt acreage there to replace his lands that had to be used for the Roman garrison. He was given a pension and allowed to stay in the new emperor Vespasian's former residence near Rome where he wrote his famous histories of the Jewish Revolt and, more generally, the record of the Jewish people as well as a mini-biography and a spirited defense of Judaism against its slanderers. It is safe to assume that he would not have been welcome among those Jews remaining in Judaea, as he was, fair or not, perceived as a turncoat and a lackey of the conquering enemy. It is possible, though

unlikely, that he might have made his peace with the religious pedants gathered at Jamnia.

There have been tantalizing suggestions that Josephus in fact did travel back to his homeland to try to curry favor with the “new order” there (at Yavne/Jamnia), but these clues may only be wishful thinking on the part of those who want to see him as continuing to play a pivotal role in Roman-Jewish relations. (Lion Feuchtwanger, the twentieth century German-Jewish novelist, imagines such a denouement in his Josephus trilogy — see Appendix VIII.) It is likely that he was, in his old age, oppressed by Domitian’s crackdown on “Judaizers” and the new, even more dangerous, Jesus sect. Graetz believes that Josephus was executed by Domitian, as part of this last Flavian ruler’s paranoia about the continued mystique of the Messiah arising from the House of David — a challenge to his own authority as divinely ordained ruler. This can remain mere conjecture until someone locates a “lost scroll” of Josephus recording his late-life reflections and circumstances.

Vespasian died in 79 and was succeeded by his son, Titus. Agrippa II was an honored guest among the Roman aristocracy and was part of the entourage of Vespasian and Titus. He died around the year 100. Berenice, as was mentioned, was sent away as per the will of the senate and the people. She apparently returned to Rome during the reign of Domitian, Vespasian’s youngest son, who succeeded Titus as emperor after the latter’s untimely death in 81. Although it was rumored that the jealous Domitian may have contrived Titus’s death, the hero of the Judean campaign seems likely to have died from natural causes.

Domitian ruled until he was assassinated in 96, the final three years of his regime being characterized as a “reign of terror.” It is said that Domitian, as part of his crackdown on oriental superstitions — at that time a popular fad among the bored *hoi polloi* of Roman society — persecuted the Jews, but note that Josephus wrote his most outspokenly pro-Jewish books during that period. More likely, Domitian directed his paranoia against the Christian sect, which by then had become disassociated with the mainstream of Judaism — witness the execution of T. Flavius Clemens, his cousin, who was under suspicion of being sympathetic to Christian doctrines. The Jews had been permitted by Vespasian to establish an academy of sorts at Jamnia in Galilee. There they completed the transformation of Judaism from a Temple cult centered on animal sacrifice to a cerebral/religious civil code that concentrated on rules and regulations, often over hair-splitting minutiae; as such, it posed no threat to the integrity of Roman order in that corner of the world.

The fervor of the Jewish insurrection did not simply evaporate with the smoldering embers of the great Temple. As Josephus attests, there was an incipient uprising among the Jews of Cyrenaica (Libya) in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion in Palestine, possibly as early as A.D. 73. Accord-

ing to Josephus, one of the instigators of that mini-revolt, one Jonathan the weaver, slipped into Cyrene as an emissary of the sicarii, apparently as obdurate in defeat as are Al Qaeda and the Iraqi Baathists of our time. Perhaps he was nothing more than a charlatan, heading one of those messianic pilgrimages into the wilderness that beset Judaea under the early procurators, but, then again, this characterization is colored by Josephus's anti-rebel animus. As to whether this Jonathan was actually an agent of the moribund sicarii (still battling against Roman legions while holed up in their remote desert forts at this time) has not been established. In any event, this incipient resettlement of aroused millenarians was exposed by some of the wealthier, more Rome-friendly Jews of Cyrene, who reported it to the Roman governor, Catullus. This petty politician wanted to make a name for himself and thus portrayed the apocalyptic expedition as a purported rebellion, making mass arrests and, according to Josephus, eventually executing some 3,000 well-to-do Jews in his province. Josephus tells us Catullus did this so that he could confiscate their wealth and also gain some unearned military glory for himself as vanquisher of a Jewish revolt. Catullus, to cover up his misdeeds, took Jonathan to Rome as his prisoner and coerced or convinced him to frame the leading citizens of Alexandria in the plot and also to implicate Josephus as one of the underwriters of the project. There was an inquiry, in which Josephus was eventually cleared. The proceedings of this hearing, if ever discovered, would provide an excellent insight on the position of Josephus, the Jews and the possible wider ramifications of the events on Cyrene.

Notwithstanding the narrow absorption of the Sanhedrin council in Jamnia on analyzing the "halakah" (moral code of behavior extrapolated from the Torah) which codified Jewish deeds and religious practice, Jewish resentment and messianic aspiration was by no means extinguished by the destruction of the Temple. This inclination is demonstrated by the fact that Jewish animosity towards the local pagan practices and the Roman rulers that sanctioned this wickedness was to reach the intensity of a full-scale armed uprising twice more over the next 60 years before Rome was able, by applying "extreme measures," to conclusively extinguish Jewish insubordination. Josephus most likely passed away at the beginning of the second century A.D. and the only Jewish writings contemporary with the latter two rebellions were the religious-legalistic rulings of the sages who composed the Talmud. However, judicious study of this body of ordinances and exemplary anecdotes has, in passing, revealed some glimmerings of the nature and aftermath of these revolts.

Inasmuch as the Jewish rebellions of the second century A.D. are still clouded in mystery, the following section of this book dealing with those revolts is necessarily much shorter than the preceding portion concerning the First Revolt.

II : THE SECOND AND
THIRD REVOLTS

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Interwar State of Affairs, A.D. 73–115

Between the two wars fought in Judaea against the Roman government — the “Great War” and that of Bar Kochba — the uprisings of Diaspora Jews toward the end of Trajan’s reign constitute a unique event in the history of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. It marks the first and only episode of Jewish violence on a grand scale to take place outside Judaea and, at the same time, the only instance of simultaneous outbreaks in different geographical places. What happened exactly? From whence did the Jews get their arms and for how long did they succeed in resisting the impact of the Roman legions? Were these rebellions coordinated, or do they simply reflect a ripple effect, when word flew across borders or Jewish refugees from one conflict contacted the members of a neighboring Jewish community and ignited them with accounts of Roman and pagan atrocities and Jewish suffering? I will attempt to address these issues.

It must be confessed that we know very little about the revolts under Trajan in 115–117 A.D. The general picture, reconstructed from laconic literary allusions and fragmentary archaeological remains, is that of a series of savage battles between Jews and Greeks in North Africa (Libya-Egypt) and Cyprus, which caused a dramatic reduction in the Jewish population in those regions. The revolt spread either to or from Mesopotamia, and there were certain repercussions in Judaea, although of a lower magnitude. There may have been more activity in Judaea than is commonly accredited, whether they were open hostilities or some lesser form of resistance. It seems quite possible that the reconquest of Judaea may have been the ultimate aim of the rebels and thus could explain the wanton destruction of the lands they hoped to leave behind, but this is merely an educated guess. There is very little evidence of the true causes or inspiration: Some see the hand of displaced rebels from the Jewish War, others the influence of heightened messianic expectations or a

combination of both. Whatever the motivation, the outcome was disastrous — decimation of the Jews in North Africa and their expulsion from Cyprus.

One of the more enduring enigmas is whether such a series of violent eruptions spanning a vast territory (Morocco to Persia) in such a relatively short period of time was the result of premeditated coordination or rather simply a case of spontaneous combustion — perhaps resulting from news of uprisings in one territory spreading to and encouraging similar actions in neighboring districts. We will return to this issue near the end of this chapter.

Papyri, inscriptions, archaeological data, as well as the writings of Appian and Dio Cassius and of the later Christian historians Eusebius and Orosius provide us with evidence of a massive uprising of the Jews of Egypt, Cyrenaica and Cyprus. As noted above, the Jewish communities in Parthia, Armenia and Adiabene may have had their own separate motivations, although it does seem too much of a coincidence that they occurred nearly simultaneously with the rebellions to the west. As for Judaea, there was at the very least some agitation there requiring the dispatch of a recently battle-tested military leader; whether this unrest attained the level of a full-scale rebellion remains an open question.

The revolt probably began early in 116 and was quelled a little over one year later; one of the leading authorities on the revolt has cast doubt on the usually asserted three-year duration. Although its causes are uncertain, long-standing tension between the Jewish and Greek communities of the area, especially in Alexandria, was a factor, and Palestinian Jewish refugees who had fled to Egypt and elsewhere after A.D. 70 may have fanned nationalistic and messianic sentiments. The outbreak in Mesopotamia, although likely influenced by the uprisings to the west, were more directly tied to Trajan's Parthian expedition, as will be seen. In fact, there is some indication that the rebellion in Mesopotamia may have come first and evoked sympathetic uprisings to the west. Even if the revolt began as a conflict between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations "west of Suez," however, Rome was soon involved. Added to this continued intercommunal tension was the above noted acute sense of loss and consequent increased yearning for messianic deliverance engendered by the fall-out from the Great Revolt. Let's examine this menu of motivations more closely.

Smoldering Embers of Discontent— Long-Term Causes

The standard accounts of the First Jewish Revolt, based, as they must be, largely on Josephus, speak of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 (or

the fall of the final fortress at Masada in 73) as the dividing point between Jewish nationhood centered on Jerusalem and its Temple and the portable theology of the Torah and Talmud. It is, as they see it, a transformation of Judaism from a place-centered identity to a meditative, mobile spirituality. Those cleric-scribes in their monastic study-centers in war-ravaged Judaea represented the New Judaism of quiescent introspection and rigid adherence to complex regulations in place of Temple sacrifice. At least, this is the prevalent point of view. This is not quite the way it panned out. The rebellious and messianic temperament endured, even if overshadowed by the philosophical attitude of the rules-writers.

It has been seen that the Jews of Judaea who survived the First Revolt were not rounded up and exiled en masse as some have inferred (as happened when Assyria overran the northern kingdom of Israel over six centuries earlier). It is true that thousands of them were sold into slavery and large numbers were either crucified or released in the amphitheaters to be ravaged by wild animals for the amusement of bloodthirsty Roman spectators. As much as a third of the population was exterminated both by wartime attrition and post-war persecution. Nonetheless, although the Temple's destruction had diminished Jerusalem as the focus of Jewish spiritual life, the academies at Jamnia and Lydda were host to a thriving parliament of Pharisaic rabbinical scholars, who were busy forging the foundation for the "Palestinian Talmud"—the body of interpretative legalistic tracts that would ultimately supplant the Temple-centered high priesthood as the glue that held Judaism together.

Contrary to some accounts, this group of theoreticians did not constitute a "Sanhedrin" in the sense of a judicial body exercising legal authority over Jewish internal affairs. Although their rulings were respected as to the virtuous conduct of everyday dealings of the Jews, they did not carry the force of law in the absence of the defunct priestly hierarchy or a supervisory civic body. The watchful eye of the legions stationed in the country would allow Rome to exercise the ultimate authority over the Jews' religious freedom should it again interfere with preservation of Roman order. In the fractured post-conflict Judaeian society, it is also uncertain whether this scholastic group was in touch with the proverbial "common man" of what remained of the Judaeian Jewish populace and how influential they were in affecting the aspirations of the disenfranchised veterans of the First Revolt.

Thus, the scholarly or legalistic monkish pursuits of the rabbinical sages in the decades following the sack of the Temple has given the false impression that the Jews of the Empire were by and large passively resigned to the loss of the political center in Jerusalem founded upon worship and sacrifice at the High Temple. This simplistic view, drawn largely from the rabbinic interpretative texts of the period, assumes that the Jews of Judaea and the Dias-

pora were shorn of all defiance, bereft of a nationalist ideology that had, in the view of most, brought about the Great Tragedy. In fact, as Mireille Hadas-Label has pointed out in her *Jerusalem Against Rome*, references to Temple ritual persisted in the Talmudic writings for generations after the destruction. Apparently, as Dr. Hadas-Label observes, there remained some hope that the Temple could be rebuilt and the priestly functions resumed.

We do not have any explicit record of continuous Jewish defiance, but the elevation of the military governorship of the province from procurator to praetor, and the permanent stationing of the Xth Legion (*Fretensis*) near Jerusalem is *de facto* evidence that there was enough of an indigenous Judaeian threat remaining to warrant a strong occupying force. Even during the tense run-up to the First Revolt, the Romans had never stationed a complete legion permanently in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Smaller detachments and minor formations of auxilia were deemed sufficient to maintain order. The legions themselves were posted way up north in Syria, where they could presumably be on call for any disturbances in the Jewish province, albeit several days' march away.

That there were, as well, signs of Jewish restiveness in various other parts of the Empire, already revealed by the activities of Jonathan in Cyrenaica, similar activities reported by Josephus involving sicarian refugees/agents operating in Egypt, and further attested by the drafting of Josephus's (since lost) first Aramaic-language edition of his *Jewish War*, composed circa A.D. 75. Josephus indicates that this first edition was circulated among the Jews of Babylonia as an admonition against emulating their ill-fated Judaeian comrades. There is no doubt that the promulgation of this cautionary tract was fully supported by Emperor Vespasian, if not actually proposed by him. There is no indication that the intended Jewish audience in fact read Josephus's cautionary tale, but the fact that the Flavian rulers deemed it necessary suggests there remained a Jewish tinder box merely awaiting another spark.

The imposition of the *Fiscus Iudaeus* in lieu of the now superfluous Temple tax by the Roman conquerors on all Jews wherever they lived in the Empire (not merely the Jews in Judaea) must have been particularly galling. It was like rubbing salt into a wound, since the Jews themselves had previously voluntarily paid the Temple tax to the high priests for the maintenance of their maliciously destroyed Holy Place. Now the exact same tithe was to be collected by Roman officials and paid to the victors for the maintenance of their abhorrent pagan shrine to Jupiter.

In Rome, a special procurator known as procurator ad capitularia Iudaeorum was responsible for the collection of the tax. Only those who had abandoned Judaism were exempt from paying it.

In contrast to the levy paid for the Temple of Jerusalem which was

payable by adult men between the ages of 20 and 50 only, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* was imposed not only on males but on all Jews, including women, children, and elderly.

Domitian, who ruled between A.D. 81 and 96, expanded the *Fiscus Iudaicus* to include not only born Jews and converts to Judaism but also on those who concealed the fact that they were Jews or observed Jewish customs. This effort to conceal one's continued adherence to Judaism is reflective of the increased harshness caused by the success of the Jewish (and possibly Christian) proselytism and Domitian's paranoia about these sects — as part of his general suspicion of anyone professing a faith or having a talent that might, in his view, usurp his divinity. Domitian's successor, Nerva, relaxed the *fiscus* to the extent that he only applied it to self-professed Jews not to those who may have secretly practiced the religion.

Given the scarcity of ancient accounts postdating Josephus's narrative, it is difficult to gauge the mood of the common folk both in Judaea proper and in the Diasporic communities in North Africa, Asia Minor and the Parthian domains to the east. It is only in hindsight and with a careful reading of the scraps of surviving texts that we can piece together a survey of the Jewish mindset in the wake of the Temple's destruction.

Direct Causes of the Second Revolt

While the Jews both in Judaea proper (the *am-haaretz*, or common folk) and in the Diaspora were furious over the new abusive tax and the loss of the Temple, this agitation does not in itself account for the apparently abrupt, massive, and widespread uprisings under Trajan.

On first sight, the extensive and ferocious Jewish mutinies during the reign of Trajan appear to have erupted out of nowhere. However, if we take into account the prolonged and profound social alienation between Jews and non-Jews, the aggressiveness of the Jewish uprising in A.D. 116–117 and its equally fierce suppression makes more sense. During those years the Diaspora communities in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus and Mesopotamia were involved in the most serious disturbances of their history, a chain of revolutions — more like riots or mob actions than organized guerilla warfare — which left hundreds of thousands dead. This friction must be viewed as coterminous with a more deep-seated restlessness.

Some of the immediate motivations for this otherwise inexplicable uprising may be Rome's looting of Jewish property to finance their wars against Parthia, the continued repression and attempts to impose idolatry on the Jews, superimposed on the long-standing impetus for revenge for the destruction

of the Temple in A.D. 70. Finally, the general sympathy for the Parthians (Jews had customarily been partial to the Persians — one of the only uses of the word messiah in the Tanakh refers to Cyrus the Great) likely contributed to the worldwide uprising of what some would call a “fifth column” of Jews against Rome in support of the Parthian resistance. As will be shown by the events of the uprising, there was a strong impulse to smash all statues, temples and other religious paraphernalia pertaining to pagan worship; it was not only to eradicate the pagan practices and exact revenge upon their Greek tormentors but, to some extent, to wage war upon their various gods themselves.

We know from Philo’s references to the Alexandrian pogroms of A.D. 38 that relations between the Jewish and Greek populations of that metropolitan center were terrible. There was apparently some serious friction there, likely erupting into violent mob tit-for-tat, in 115 (see below). It is to be expected that the same situation applied elsewhere in Egypt wherever Jews lived in closed proximity to pagans. Further, the brief notice in Josephus about the post-war agitation, circa A.D. 73 in Egypt and neighboring Cyprus reveals that there was friction between Jews and non-Jews there as well. In fact, when some of the aristocratic Jews of Alexandria revealed the plot of their co-religionists there to Roman authorities, retribution was taken not merely against the Jewish agitators but against the Jewish community as a whole. We can assume that this situation likewise prevailed in Cyrenaica.

As was explained earlier, with reference to the First Revolt, the Romans played both sides against the other in the divide-and-rule principle that the British applied much later with respect to their colonial empire. Within Judaea proper, the Romans had favored the pagans in their frequent disputes with the Jews, whereas outside of Judaea, the case of the Jews was generally supported over pagan claims. Thus, the privileged party would be beholden to Rome in each case, and similarly the power of the aggrieved party would have been checked. This policy, as has been seen, was one of the principle flash-points setting off the First Revolt.

There is some fragmentary documentation of sorts in the form of a torn scrap of papyrus vaguely describing a quarrel between the Jews and Greeks of Alexandria during Trajan’s reign; Miriam Ben-Zeev Pucci has credibly dated this document to October 115, so it can be considered one of the proximate causes of the uprising that took place later that year. The exact nature of the squabble is not stated in the extant portion of the manuscript, but it was obviously quite serious for the matter to have been referred all the way up to the emperor. Clearly violence was involved. There are certain elements in the narrative that sound like fiction, such as the allusion that Trajan packed his senate with Jews (quite improbable) and the episode of the “sweating bust,” but the tale is partially a veiled political attack in which Trajan’s alleged

favoritism toward the Jews is criticized. There is nonetheless a kernel of fact underlying the recounting of the episode. Apparently this was just another instance of a long-standing feud that had persisted by then for 30 years after the defeat of Judaea. The friction, as usual, concerned what the Greeks considered to be undue Roman acquiescence towards the Jews' inflexibility in fulfilling their religious mandates, as well as this stiff-necked group's seeming aloofness in not wanting to mix with the Greeks, for fear that it might compromise Jewish religious strictures. It is likely, then, that Trajan's ruling against the Greeks in this matter enraged the pagans of Alexandria — and elsewhere — and made them ever more eager to teach the Jews to stay in their place.

As for Libya, the unrest that had occurred in A.D. 73, which ended with the death and confiscation of property of a large number of wealthy Jews reported by Josephus in his *Jewish War* (7.437–51), may have weakened the number and the restraining authority of the elite members of local Jewish communities — those who might have channeled the rage towards a more peaceful solution. This lack of responsible leadership paved the way for the most extreme elements to react violently to the provocations of their pagan neighbors. It also opened the door for an adherent of the old Zealot or sicarii mentality to promise the long-suffering Jewish under-class redemption in the here and now.

It is only with respect to Mesopotamia that this local pagan–Jewish friction did not play a role. That rebellion seems to have been a direct consequence of Trajan's military operations and difficulties in guarding his rear as he made deeper incursions into Parthia. Apparently the Jews of Mesopotamia coordinated their efforts with pagan Parthians, although the exact nature and origin of this collaboration is unclear and its relation to the revolts to the west of Judaea is similarly vague. However, it does seem likely that there would have been some synchronization. In occupied Petra, the Nabataeans nursed the same irritation as did the Jews of Judaea at having their lucrative frontier trading connections disrupted by Trajan's moving the empire's boundary farther to the east.

Given the vague and conflicting primary sources, the foregoing is only an educated guess at the origins, motives and nature of this intermediate revolt. Before dealing with the uprisings themselves, we should examine Trajan's objectives in the Parthian campaign and glance at the course of the campaign.

Trajan's Grand Strategic Objectives

It is not mere coincidence that the Jewish uprisings occurred during Trajan's Parthian expedition. The timing was certainly influenced by the fact that military forces had to be stripped from North Africa and Cyprus to flesh out the operations to the east of Judaea.

Trajan spent his first two years after being elevated to the purple settling affairs on the German frontier, delaying his first arrival in Rome after his appointment. Next, from 101 to 106, he fought his first campaign against Dacia (Romania) and returned victorious. Then Trajan conquered the Nabataean sandstone capital of Petra (in South Jordan) and made Nabataea a part of the new Roman province of Arabia; the Nabataean kingdom, for all intents and purposes, ceased to exist, although Petra still remained an important trading center, and the Aramaic-speaking Nabataeans later developed the Arabic script. In fact, the Nabataeans did not meekly submit to Roman rule but remained stiff-necked and potentially dangerous. It is conceivable that they allied themselves with the Jewish rebels while Trajan was distracted in the east.

Dating from the eastern conquests of Licinius Lucullus and Pompey Magnus in the 60s B.C. and into the imperial period, Roman expansion made recurrent conflict with Parthia inescapable. Previously, we pointed out that during the reign of Nero (A.D. 50s–60s) a major campaign to ensure Roman hegemony over Armenia was conducted under Cnaeus Domitius Corbulo.

Though the Neronian war between Rome and Parthia largely resulted in a stalemate, the matter was ostensibly settled by allowing Rome the final authority in naming the Armenian King. Despite the arrangement the situation remained problematic for the better part of the next half century, and during Trajan's reign matters of the Armenian succession flared into war again.

Typically, the succession struggle within Parthia and Armenia was very complicated; boiled down to its essence, in A.D. 113 the Parthian King Osroes I was in the midst of an internal battle with a rival, Vologases III, for the kingship. In order to strengthen his position within the borders of Parthia proper, Osroes deposed the Armenian king and replaced him with his nephew. This usurpation of Rome's previously won power to name the Armenian ruler apparently crossed a red line and provoked Trajan to move east from Rome and amass an invasion force. Some authorities find that this incident was merely a pretext for Trajan to embark on an Alexander the Great style eastern campaign of conquest that had already been decided upon.

The Parthian Campaign: A Tripwire for Rebellion?

As Trajan was preparing his ultimate triumph in the East, the assault on the Parthia heartland was delayed because a major earthquake struck Syria in December 115. Antioch was particularly badly hit. Many thousands were killed, including a consul and troops who assembled for the impending war. Even Trajan's own residence was wrecked. In later years, Christian inventiveness

would link the earthquake to the fabricated celebrity martyrdom of Bishop Ignatius, supposedly accused by the pagans of having caused the quake! More significantly, Jews throughout the Empire took this as a sign that the time for the return of the messiah and the redemption of “Eretz Yisroel” was nigh.

PARTHIAN CAMPAIGN OPERATIONS

Failed attempts to broker a peace by the Parthians before any impending Roman invasion led to reasonable contemporaneous assumption that Trajan’s true motive was an Alexandrian-style campaign of conquest, and the political events simply offered a convenient excuse. Regardless of Trajan’s personal motivation for going to war he marched into Armenia in A.D. 114. Initial resistance was weak and ineffective (perhaps an indication of the debilitating internal struggle in Parthia); Armenia’s royalty was deposed and its independence stripped with its annexation as a Roman province.

Over the following two years, Trajan moved south from Armenia directly into Parthian territory. Militarily, his campaign was met with great success and resistance in the field was ineffective. With the capture of such cities and Babylon and the Parthian capital of Ctesiphon on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, Mesopotamia and Assyria (essentially comprising modern Iraq) were annexed as Roman provinces, and the emperor received the title *Parthicus*. Trajan continued his march to the southeast, eventually reaching the Persian Gulf in A.D. 116. Though Dio Cassius states that Trajan would have preferred to march in the footsteps of Alexander, his advanced age (approximately 63 years) and slowly failing health forced him to abandon any such thoughts.

Despite the swiftness of the initial victories, the long-term prospects for Roman control were completely in doubt. Returning to the west and crossing the Tigris, Trajan stopped to lay siege to the desert town of Hatra. In A.D. 117, with poor supply and unable to breach the walls, the Romans suffered their first defeat of the campaign with Trajan narrowly avoiding personal injury. To add insult to the defeat, the recently “conquered” population of Jewish inhabitants began to revolt against newly installed Roman rule. For reasons that aren’t entirely clear, though religion certainly played a major part, the revolt spread to Jews living in Egypt, Cyrene and Cyprus.

Here is an rough calculation of the five legions that participated in the military operations in Parthia: Legio I *Adiutrix* (“helper,” later Pia Fidelis “loyal and faithful”); Legio VI *Ferrata* (Iron); Legio X *Fretensis* (re-deployed from Jerusalem); Legio III *Cyrenaica* (borrowed from its Cyrene/Egyptian posting); Legio XV *Apollinaris* (veteran of combat during the First Jewish Revolt, likely stripped from occupation duties in Syria); and Legio XVI *Flavia Firma*.

The Parthian operation denuded provinces to the west of any but a token

occupation force, since, besides the two legions redeployed from the sectors directly involved in the rebellions, several alae (sub-units) were scrounged up from those left to guard the Jewish populations in order to augment the legions. Thus, the harassed and enraged Jewish communities in North Africa, Egypt and Cyprus saw that they had a relatively free hand to strike a decisive blow against the pagan bullies in their vicinity, particularly as messianic leaders arose to assure them that the fateful hour was nigh.

In actuality, Trajan's "lightning triumph" was a chimera. The Parthian king Osroes remained undefeated and had escaped to the east before the advancing Romans. Now, everywhere along a front of 600 miles, the Parthians were able to harass the invader from foothills east of the Tigris. Roman supply lines were dangerously exposed, and the fortress of Hatra, bypassed by the legions, became a focus of resistance.

At this troubled moment, news reached Trajan that in regions as far afield as Cyprus, Egypt and Cyrenaica (Libya) the Jews were in revolt, ostensibly encouraged both by Jewish agents sent from Parthia and the reduction of local military strength in order to augment the legions allocated to the eastern operations. In Cyprus, where Herod the Great had owned copper mines, Jewish rebels were agitated by a local messianic pretender "Artemion" and had forced Greek and Roman citizens to fight each other in gladiatorial combat. Cyrenaica was even more badly hit, and the slaughter of Greek settlers had been horrendous. A Jewish messiah, "King Loukuas" had been proclaimed, pagan sanctuaries and the Caesareum had been attacked and Cyrene itself almost destroyed. Fourth century Christian historian Paulus Orosius records that the violence so depopulated the province of Cyrenaica that new colonies had to be established by Hadrian.

"The Jews ... waged war on the inhabitants throughout Libya in the most savage fashion, and to such an extent was the country wasted that its cultivators having been slain, its land would have remained utterly depopulated, had not the Emperor Hadrian gathered settlers from other places and sent them thither, for the inhabitants had been wiped out." — Orosius, *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, 7.12.6.

Before commencing a theater-by-theater review of the Jewish uprisings, we'll examine the status of Jews directly in the path of Trajan's onslaught.

The Jews of Parthia and Their Contacts with Jews Elsewhere

The Parthian Empire was large, tolerant and weak. How free a hand the Parthians permitted the Jews is perhaps best illustrated by the rise of a small

Jewish outlaw state in Nehardea in the first decades of the first century A.D. Still more remarkable is the conversion of the vassal kingdom of Adiabene to Judaism also in the first century A.D. Yet the vastness of the Parthian Empire was one of its strengths. Rome would be hard-pressed to hold such a large area and would lay itself open to revolts in its own territories due to Roman troops being removed to the front lines.

It is not surprising that the Jews of Judaea, as well as in the Diaspora, were dismayed at Trajan's Parthian campaign. There were an estimated one million Jews residing in Mesopotamia at this time. The Jews, at least those in Judaea, saw Mesopotamia as a land of refuge, not an enemy. During the First Jewish Revolt, which led to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Babylonian Jews gave support but few soldiers to fight together with their Judaeans against Vespasian. To be fair, the logistics of bringing an organized body of Jewish fighters from Adiabene, Armenia or Mesopotamia to Judaea in time to affect the outcome were daunting. Nonetheless there was material assistance and a unit of archers originating in Babylonia that had assisted the rebels in Galilee during Herod the Great's reign.

Many of their co-religionists were trading partners, enjoying a prosperous mercantile career within the Parthian Empire. Roman success in this campaign threatened financial ruin to Jewish merchants as well as Arab exporters, who as middlemen, controlled Rome's international trade with India and the mysterious, lucrative lands at the eastern terminus of the Silk Road. The recently subdued Nabataeans, given their economic and political animus against Rome's imperial greed, were *de facto* allies in the Jewish cause.

Here we should also consider the economic stake of the Nabataeans who also shared this perilous neighborhood with the Jews. The Nabataean Arabs had built up a trading network that extended from the Sinai and the Negev far down into the deserts of the Hijaz, in what is today Saudi Arabia. Centered on their well-protected capital at Petra, in what is now Jordan, the Nabataeans traded in the frankincense (an aromatic resin) and myrrh (used in perfumes and incense) from what is now Oman and the spices of India. Every year a fleet of 120 ships sailed down the Red Sea to India, borne on the cyclical winds of the monsoon. The Nabataeans maintained an emporium at "LeucL KomL" ("The White Village") 240 miles down the Red Sea coast of the Hijaz (modern El Haura). A Roman centurion there levied a 25 percent duty on all goods coming in. In other words, the Nabataeans and the Romans had what we would today call a customs union. The King's Highway ran from what is now Aqaba on the Red Sea, via Petra, to Bostra and Tiberias and thence to Ptolemais (modern Acre, Israel) on the Mediterranean coast, with branch routes going off to Gaza and Egypt. It was a very profitable operation, and the Nabataeans grew quite comfortable on their earnings. This activity dove-

tailed neatly into the Jews' own commercial network and gave the Nabataeans and Jews "common cause" in resisting the disastrous effect that Trajan's Mesopotamian venture would have on this mercantile lifeline.

Having considered the basis for the diaspora-wide rebellions, we should take a look at the actual operations, which became known in the Jewish lore as the "*Polemos shel Qitos*" or the "Kitos War" after the consular legate Lusius Quietus who had been sent to Parthia to quell the Jewish uprising there and then was posted to Judaea, apparently to keep a lid on the brewing or incipient tumult in that province.

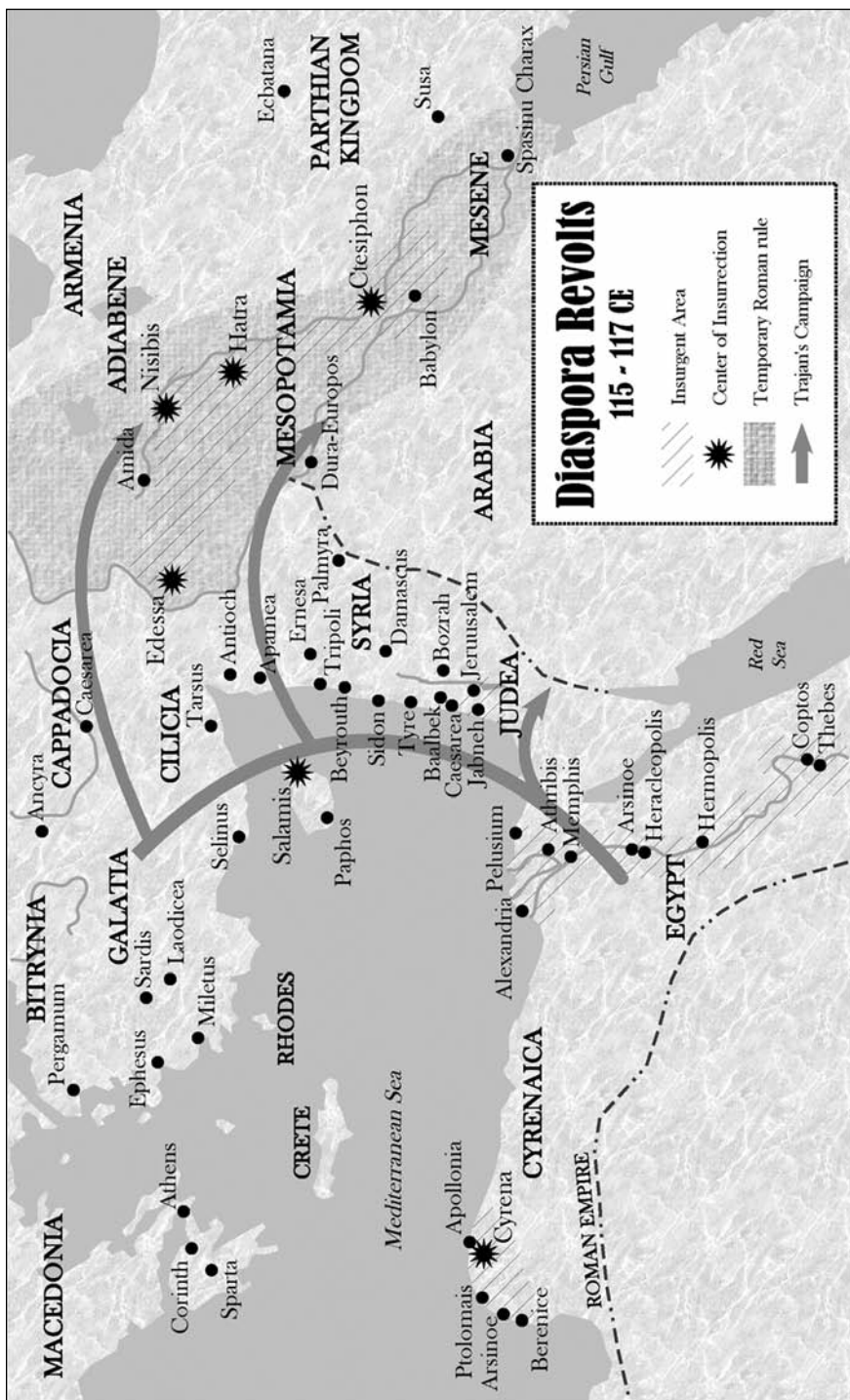
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Kitos (Quietus) War or *Tumultu Iudaico* (The Tumult of the Jews)

There is reliable evidence for fighting that occurred in Cyrenaica, Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia, and some controversial suggestion of “unrest” in Judaea. As to exactly how that fighting transpired, we can only guess, since there is no connected chronological narrative of these events such as Josephus provided us for the 66–74 hostilities. Thus, what follows is more oblique than the direct account of that earlier conflict. We can thrash out its main features, but it is not possible to present an orderly, sequential description.

While most authorities believe that the rebellion began in Cyrenaica (Libya) and spread eastward, the Mesopotamian outbreak may have, in fact, slightly preceded and inspired the manifestations further west. Whatever the progression, the sources support a widespread and intense Jewish uprising throughout Cyrenaica, Egypt, Cyprus and parts of Mesopotamia directed at the trappings of pagan worship and all infrastructure associated with the pagan practice.

Epigraphical and archaeological data indicates that Cyrene, in Cyrenaica, was the main theater of the hostilities. Inscriptions from the time of Hadrian, Trajan’s successor, refer to an extensive public works project of reconstruction following intensive damage caused as a result of the revolt. For example, the Temple of Apollo, which was burnt to the ground as a result of the *tumultu Iudaico* had to be rebuilt, as well as public baths and other temples (e.g. those dedicated to Hecate, Isis, the Dioscuri, Apollo and Artemis). The road network was extensively damaged, bringing about a food shortage not only to transport but to the agricultural areas themselves. Inscriptions collectively demonstrate extensive reconstruction efforts undertaken over the early years of Hadrian’s reign as a direct result of this “Jewish tumult.”



Diaspora Revolts (map by Éric Grenier).

The causes are nowhere directly attributed, but it can reasonably be inferred that the Jews' primary objective was to make war upon the gods of the pagans, uprooting their shrines and destroying the worshippers in the process. This conforms to a primary messianic motivation — that the messiah had arrived in the form of Loukuas-Andreas and was sent by God to eradicate the sacrilege of the pagans dwelling among the Jews.

Several authorities indicate that the rebellion in Cyrenaica spread eastwards towards Egypt when the Jewish rebels in the former area, having wreaked havoc upon the pagan elements in that land, trekked into Egypt, where they hoped to join forces with the seething Jewish population of Alexandria. They were preceded by Greek refugees who alerted and terrified the pagan elite in Egypt to the scorched-earth policies of the rampaging Jews. Even one of the more conservative ancient Judaism specialists, Dr. A. Fuks, believes that at least the Cyrenaican and the Egyptian actions were coordinated, and there may even have been some synchronization with the uprising in Mesopotamia, even if the latter was conducted in conjunction with a general mutiny of the population in the ostensibly conquered portions of Parthia as Trajan's forces moved farther east.

The Cyrenaica operations seem to have been organized by said messianic leader called Loukuas by the early Christian church cleric Eusebius and Andreas by the Roman historian Cassius Dio. Eusebius gives this Loukuas the title "king" or "prince" and his depiction in Dio, where he is called Andreas, similarly betokens that he was a messiah-figure. Apart from this brief mention, we know little of this galvanizing figure.

Late in A.D. 115 or early in A.D. 116 (Dr. Ben Zeev Pucci proposes a shorter period of hostilities than others, arguing for a 116–117 window, or just about a one-year duration in contrast to the 1.5–2 years customarily proposed) the Jews of Cyrenaica left for Egypt. There is some indication that there were a number of Greco-pagans who had also made the trek to Egypt in order to stay out of harm's way as the Jews rapidly gained the upper hand and were wreaking havoc with the non-Jewish population and their temples, not to mention roads, shrines, public buildings and other infrastructure supporting the hated idolaters. The Jews who arrived in Egypt were in some way frustrated in their attempts to join forces with the Jews of Alexandria but were able to link up with the Jews in the adjoining areas, incurring high casualties but apparently giving more than they got. Thus we have the merging of the Cyrenean and Egyptian Jewish uprising, still under the command of the Cyrenean "Jewish king" Loukuas-Andreas. There is also some indication that the Cyrenean-Egyptian insurrection was coordinated with that in Cyprus and Mesopotamia. The expeditionary force that Trajan dispatched under the command of Marcus Turbo included a fleet. At a certain stage in the revolt it

appears that the Jews commanded the waterways of Pelousion (according to Appian) which seems to show that the Jews were in possession of a small flotilla of ships — in fact Appian specifies that one of them was actually captured from the Roman squadron. This would facilitate contact — and coordination — with the Jews of Cyprus, as well as those in Mesopotamia.

In Cyprus, the evidence centers on the city of Salamis, which appears to have been captured and sacked by the Jewish rebels, who slaughtered its Greek population. Dio Cassius, in speaking of the island of Cyprus in general states that after the suppression of the revolt, Jews were forbidden to settle on the island on pain of death and even Jewish shipwreck victims washed ashore in Cyprus could be put to death. In fact, Jewish settlement in Cyprus seems to have ceased altogether until the fourth century A.D. It is therefore reasonable to assume that hostilities spread throughout the island and were not confined to Salamis proper. Here the leader's name is given as Artemion, but it is not clear whether he, like Loukuas, was a kind of messianic leader or simply a fanatical opponent of all things pagan who was inspired by the fighting in Cyrenaica under Loukuas. If he coordinated his fight in any way with Loukuas, the record is silent. The Jews seemed to have taken a number of Roman ships under their control, which accounts for the way in which the rebellion spread to Cyprus, as well as farther east in Mesopotamia.

In Mesopotamia, the Jewish rebellion was, it would seem, part of a general revolt of the local population against Roman occupation, and it is difficult to ascertain the extent of Jewish military activities there. Whether or not they coordinated their actions with those of the Parthian fellahin is uncertain.

The Roman historian Appian emphasizes the shocking barbarity of the Jewish attacks, but he, like Eusebius (or his redactor), is somewhat prejudiced against the Jews and eager to portray their actions in the most unfavorable light. Allowing for this hyperbole, there is no doubt that the Jewish actions were of an intensity only matched by that of the revolt of 50 years earlier. Epigraphic evidence also points to the fact that this was a war of terror and that this terror had a ripple effect throughout the Greco-pagan populations of the Near East — they prayed to their gods to be spared from the terrible vengeance of the Jewish mobs. And the Jews, for their part, made war not only on the worshippers but the temples and other institutions of these pagan deities. Clearly, this was not simply a tit-for-tat retaliation against pogroms conducted by the pagans but a holy war against their very foundations.

The magnitude of the Jews' military effort is to be measured not only by the wide territorial extension of the revolt over Cyrenaica, Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia, but also by the number of participants. In Cyrenaica, the extent of physical damage caused by the Jews demonstrates the use of considerable forces. The ferocity of the Jewish inhabitants, even allowing for the

exaggeration by Roman and Christian sources, was severe. Many of tens of thousands of Cyrenean and Egyptian Jews are said to have been killed in the final struggle waged on Egyptian soil against Marcus Turbo's amphibious expeditionary force. Many more Jews from Cyrene must have reached Egypt in something like a national trek, or *Volkerwanderung*, from Cyrenaica to Egypt.

With regard to Egyptian Jewry itself, it is possible, and even probable, that some strata of the Jewish population of Alexandria did not join in the fighting in their vicinity, possibly due to the moderating policies of the still extant Jewish upper class there. Yet great numbers of Alexandrian Jews must have taken part in the clashes in Alexandria since Roman legions were finally called in against the rebels. The fighting that ensued is styled as an intensive military confrontation in an official Roman source — evidently the fighting was of no small magnitude. Even though in the urban defense complex known as the *chora* the Egyptian Jews were helped by Cyrenean fighters, the following factors indicate that very great numbers of Egyptian Jews must have participated in the revolt: (1) the Egyptian fellahin had to be called to arms to assist the Romans; and (2) a great expeditionary force, including cavalry and a fleet, had to be sent against the rebels and quelled the rebellion only with difficulty.

Though military details of this operation escape our knowledge, the result would seem to point to the use of large forces. There is but scanty information of this revolt. According to Roman sources (Cassius Dio), the Jews destroyed the capital of the "island" of Salamis which apparently refers to the urban center on Cyprus, and slew 240,000 Greeks. The revolt was quelled by Trajan's general/admiral Marcius Turbo; and to judge by the atrocities committed by him, the suppression was attended with very calamitous results for the Jews. The use of some naval assets available to the Jews would have facilitated synchronization of this uprising under Artemion, who remains an enigmatic figure. Were his actions allied to those of Loukuas in North Africa? We cannot know for certain.

We have seen that Trajan's Parthian campaign began to unravel. Everywhere along a front of 600 miles, the Parthians were able to harass the invader from foothills east of the Tigris. Roman supply lines were dangerously exposed, and the fortress of Hatra, bypassed by the legions, became a focus of resistance. Recall that it was at this juncture that Trajan was apprised of the Jewish uprisings to his rear.

In order to quell these serious disturbances, Trajan sent out two expeditionary forces. One, consisting of VIIth Legion *Claudia*, restored order on Cyprus; the other was to attack Loukuas's rebels and was commanded by Quintus Marcius Turbo. The Roman general sailed to Alexandria, defeated the Jews in several pitched battles and killed thousands of enemies, not only

those in Egypt but also those of Cyrene. It is unclear what became of Loukuas, except for the fact that according to our Greek source Eusebius he had styled himself, “king” (Messiah?). Presumably he died in the fighting. After this war, much of northern Africa had to be repopulated. The emperor Trajan and his successor Hadrian confiscated Jewish property to pay for the reconstruction of the destroyed temples.

Trajan was by now aware that this revolt was spreading to (or perhaps *from*) the Jews in the rebellious eastern provinces. Consequently, he ordered the commander of his Mauritanian (Moorish, North African) auxiliaries, Lusius Quietus, to clean the perpetrators out of these regions. Quietus organized a force and killed many Cypriote, Mesopotamian and Syrian Jews — in effect wiping out all pockets of resistance; as a reward, he was appointed governor of Judaea. (He is one of the few blacks known to have made a career in Roman service.) He was responsible for a forced policy of Hellenization; in response, the rabbis ordered the Jewish fathers not to teach their sons Greek, according to the Mishna.

From the Jewish standpoint, the Diaspora Revolt was hardly a success, resulting in the practical extermination of the communities in Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus, and perhaps some difficulties in Asia Minor. Judaea was brought more firmly under the heel of the legions, as it was deemed a boiling cauldron. It is apparent that the inhabitants of Judaea were spoiling for a fight. Whether or not their discontent erupted into violence is a matter of controversy, which I’ll address below. It is clear, though, that the dispersion of Roman effort entailed in putting down these rebellions while at the same time trying to consolidate gains of the Parthian campaigns and quashing the uprisings of native Parthian troops (in cooperation with Jews?) in their rear was influential in the ultimate failure of the Mesopotamian operations. Likewise, it permitted the vibrant Babylonian Jewish community to survive. This is reflected in the Babylonian Talmuds, which were further refined and disseminated, ensuring that there would continue to be a vigorous Jewish presence beyond the repressive reach of Rome. Meanwhile, Trajan had seemed to have attained his military aims and returned home, the simmering rebellion in the Mesopotamian hinterland notwithstanding. On his way back, he fell ill, and not much later, he died (August 8, 117). His successor, Hadrian, gave up the newly conquered countries and dismissed Lusius Quietus, who was killed in the summer of 118. It is believed that Quietus was killed because his military exploits made him a possible rival to Hadrian, whose succession was on shaky grounds, and he was implicated in plots against the new emperor. These were possibly trumped up charges, much as Nero had compelled the wildly successful and admired Corbulo — an earlier popular military commander — to take Hemlock when he was accused of treasonous conspiracies.

Further on the Sequence of the Revolts

In the abridgement of Cassius Dio made by Xiphilinus, the order given is Libya, Egypt, Cyprus, and a brief notice on the military actions of Lusius Quietus against the Jews, although the place of these latter actions are unspecified. Eusebius has a different order of events. In the *Chronicon*, he gives the order as Libya, Egypt, Alexandria, Cyrene, Thebes, Mesopotamia, and, finally, Cyprus. The *Historia Ecclesiastica*, however, has the following order: Alexandria, the rest of Egypt, and Cyrene. The revolt in Cyprus is not mentioned. Last in this order of events are the military actions of Quietus against the Jews of Mesopotamia. While scholars have argued over which order is preferable, it is probable, according to Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev, that the revolts in the various countries were more or less contemporaneous, explaining the lack of consistent order in the various sources.

This, of course, leads to the question of whether the revolts resulted from some type of general Jewish plan. This notion is not new. Shimon Applebaum, for example, in the late 1950s, conjectured that the roots of the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–135 go back to the period just prior to the Diaspora Revolt, when central planning of a sort was underway. Unfortunately, after all is said and done it is impossible to reach any firm conclusions, but, fortunately, the careful and cautious analysis of Pucci Ben Zeev authoritative book should prevent fantasies on the part of scholars such as those suggested decades ago that the revolts were coordinated from a headquarters in Judaea or that the Jews feared that Trajan's conquest of Jewish communities in Mesopotamia would destroy the Babylonian-Jewish way of life. There were valid reasons for revolt in each country, and thus the "common plan" theory must remain speculative. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that the near-simultaneity of the revolts was simply fortuitous.

Rebellion in Palestine/Judaea?

As the nature and intensity — the very existence — of the resistance in Judaea during the Diaspora Revolt is a matter of some controversy, the issue warrants some consideration here. Lusius Quietus was posted to Judaea, as noted, after, along with Marcius Turbo, putting down the Jewish rebellions in North Africa, Cyprus and Mesopotamia. The fact that this important commander was given the Judaeian assignment signifies that something more was going on there than mere agitation. Then again, he may simply have been rewarded, but some think it betokens an emergency posting to quell disturbances.

Three modern authorities present some arguments, although from indirect evidence, pointing to a rebellion in Palestine during 115–117: Shimon Applebaum (“Notes on the Jewish Revolt Under Trajan,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 2. [1950/51] 26–30); D. Rokeah (“The War of Kitos: Towards the Clarification of a Philological–Historical Problem,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 23. [1972], 79–84); and Elizabeth Mary Smallwood (“Palestine c. A.D. 115–118” *Historia* 11. [1962] 500–510). Their judgment essentially runs as follows:

Various rabbinic texts in the Mishnah mention a “War of Quietus,” who was appointed as governor of Judaea in 117–118. He was distinguished in fighting in the East just prior to that time, and his appointment may signify that there were serious disturbances in the province to justify his posting there. Possibly, but it is also likely that he was given the post, now elevated to consular status, simply as a reward for his service in Mesopotamia, not necessarily because of conditions in Judaea. The story of the martyrdom of Pappus and Lullianus, referred to in a Mishnaic text and adduced as relating to their seditious activities either in Judaea or Syria, also shows Trajan as being killed by Roman officials. Applebaum and Smallwood deem that this actually refers to Governor Quietus, who was executed by Hadrian, so that this historical allusion at least is correct, even though the Pappus and Lullianus tale may be legendary. Rokeah expresses doubts that it is ever correct to use any part of such an invented parable in a reconstruction of historical events.

The *Historia Augusta* (Hadr., 5.2) states: “For the nations which Trajan had conquered began to revolt: ... and finally Libya and Palestine showed the spirit of rebellion.” Although this source is not regarded as entirely trustworthy, being copied mostly in the fourth century A.D. from a variety of earlier texts, it may betoken an uprising in Judaea, but then again it could simply mean that the Jews in that province were on edge—possibly in sympathy with the rebellions elsewhere throughout the empire.

Several Roman inscriptions indicate that at least part of IIIrd Legion Cyrenaica was in Judaea at this time. See below for one expert’s estimation of the epitaph possibly alluding to the presence of a particular soldier who was present there in 117. This substantiation is also subject to dispute, but it seems quite possible that the fragmented reference does refer to a military expedition sent to Judaea in 117.

Medieval Syriac sources mention that the leader of the Cyrene revolt eventually made his way to Judaea where he made a “final stand” against the Romans. Although this report is late, such writers as the compiler of this manuscript often had access to earlier material which is now lost.

Applebaum mentions that an excavation at Jaffa indicates devastation during the reign of Trajan, but it is not certain that this episode is connected with a revolt there in 115–117.

There is a possibility that an arch from the time of Hadrian in the Decapolis city of Gerasa incorporated fragments of a synagogue, and it seems at least possible that this synagogue was destroyed in the 115–117 period since Gerasa was known to have protected its Jewish inhabitants in the 66–74 war. Of course there are other reasons that a synagogue may have been destroyed in that vicinity apart from the revolt of 115–117, but this at least bears further scrutiny.

Some feel that it is unlikely that the Jews of Palestine would remain neutral while their compatriots were in a life and death struggle elsewhere. However Lester Grabbe, in his *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, Volume II, p. 569, notes that the Jews of Palestine did not rebel when the Alexandrian Jews (mentioned by Philo among others) were attacked by their pagan neighbors in A.D. 38, nor did the Diaspora Jews come to the aid of their brethren in Judaea in 66–70. However, at least with regard to the First Revolt, there was apparently some material aid sent from the Jews of Adiabene, and the fact that there was a Jewish insurgency in Cyrene as early as A.D. 73 indicates that there was some interaction between messianists or apocalyptic agitators in Palestine and the Diaspora.

Significantly, an inscription found in Sardinia, published in 1929 and again in 1988, possibly the epitaph of a legionary named L. Tettius Clemens, lists among his campaigns an “*expeditio Iudaea*” (Judean expedition). It may be that Clemens was not actually a soldier but a civilian auxiliary enlisted to help guard the army’s baggage train while encamped. Even if this were so, according to a paper by Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev [“L. Tettius Clemens’ Expedition Iudaea,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 133 (2000) 256–258], this mission in Judaea was likely to have referred to events near the end of Trajan’s reign. As such, it is indicative that the situation was more severe than mere instability but suggests that there was some kind of violent event either in collusion with, or simply in support of, the Diaspora rebellions.

Less convincing, but worth mentioning, are opinions that the above noted scattered enigmatic references to the martyrdom of “Pappus and Lullianus” in the Mishnah are possibly connected with seditious activities in Syria, to the north and east of Judaea. A. Peter Hayman of Cambridge University thinks so. He has asserted that (“Pappus and Lullianus in Jewish Resistance to Rome”) whether or not the two figures were in fact real or emblematic, their tale may demonstrate that Trajan executed eminent Jews in Syrian Laodicea in connection with assisting Jewish entry from Syria into Judaea to support some kind of anti-Roman disturbances there.

Perhaps, taken in isolation, several of the above indicators might be dismissed. But in combination they suggest that there were disturbances in Judaea

to some degree coinciding with the “War of Kitos.” If there was a flare-up, it was quickly put down by forces under Quietus.

THE DIASPORA REBELLION—SUMMING UP

While our scant sources — the Roman authors, Christian scribes and Jewish redactors of the rabbinic literature — all agree that there was a widespread and extreme violent paroxysm among the Jews of the Empire coinciding with Trajan’s preoccupation with the final solution to the Parthian problem, these sources are vague about the causes that underlies such an eruption. All seemed more concerned with reporting the progress of the revolt and seem oblivious to the motivation.

We can safely say that a general ferment prevailed at the time among the Jews, caused by the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and by the demeaning *fiscus Judaicus*, which compelled all Jews to pay an annual poll tax to the Roman state. Jewish texts composed in this epoch, such as the *Third Sibylline Oracle*, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch* insist on an impending cataclysm resulting from a combination of the current political situation, on the imminent coming of the Messiah, the destruction of the wicked, the ingathering of the exiles, the restoration of the Jewish state, and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Surely these second century A.D. texts signify that something was afoot. It is likely no accident that the Jews armed themselves while Trajan was busy with his war against the Parthians, a war that had begun in 114 and the results of which still appeared uncertain at the time of the probably coordinated series of insurrections.

The causes of this uprising also included local factors. This fact is evident concerning Egypt, where social, economical, political, and ideological competition and rivalry between Jews and Greeks had been demonstrated since the third century B.C. The situation had become more volatile in Roman times and twice earlier in Trajan’s days — in 112 and in the summer of 115 — armed attacks had been perpetrated by Greeks against Jews, the last of which may definitely be considered a direct cause of the Jewish uprising. As for Libya, the unrest that had occurred in A.D. 73, which ended with the death and confiscation of property of a large number of wealthy Jews (attested in Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, 7.437–51), may have weakened the number and the restraining authority of the wealthier members of local Jewish communities, giving free reign to the most extreme factions. Refugees (some may say “agents”) from the Jewish fighting in Cyrenaica and Egypt likely were able to utilize captured ships to travel to Cyprus and either incite or support the rebellion by Artemion there, which was destructive in the extreme and resulted in the complete ban on Jewish presence there.

16

Bar-Kokhba Revolt

Prelude—Hadrian’s “Exit Strategy” from Trajan’s Eastern Quagmire

Hadrian received the news of Trajan’s death in Antioch. It was scarcely a moment for celebration. His most pressing task was to extricate himself and the army from his late patron’s fruitless military adventure. Hadrian took the unpopular but farsighted decision not only to end the war but also to abandon Trajan’s eastern conquests.

Hadrian’s “exit strategy from Iraq” preserved only a negligible return for Rome’s pointless Herculean effort. Although he abandoned the erstwhile province of Mesopotamia, he installed Parthaspates — ejected from Ctesiphon by the returning Osroes — as king of a restored Osroene. A Roman client state would now have to protect the Syrian flank.

For a century Osroene would hang on to a shaky sovereignty, sandwiched between two empires. In that period it would hatch a novel creed — Syriac Christianity — out of the ruins of Edessa. It would also produce the first Christian monarch when Abgar IX (A.D. 179–186) gave state sponsorship to a creed which wrapped divine endorsement around his precarious earthly authority. The device would be copied by the client kings of Armenia — and soon after by Constantine, Emperor of Rome. But the Christian branch of Judaism would no longer be “within the fold” after the disastrous events of 132–135.

Hadrian adopted a conciliatory policy (relatively speaking) with regard to his Middle Eastern subject states and peoples. Did he hold out an olive branch to the recently violent Jewish members of the Empire? Perhaps. But if so, it was abruptly withdrawn, in a tactless manner. His actions towards the Jews indicated that he had a poor grasp of the potential for trouble in Judaea — which he visited in 130 during his grand tour of the Eastern provinces.

Causes

Briefly described, factors that contributed to the revolt include the following: administrative changes in Judaea following the First Revolt of 66–70; the unrest caused by the sizable (trebled since the time of the First Revolt) Roman military presence in Judaea; a possible economic decline—a shift from landowning to sharecropping; the nationalistic agitation provoked by Jewish uprisings in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Libya during the Trajanic Revolt (115–17) as well as the possible sense of guilt at failing to timely support the struggle of the Diaspora Jews; and the upshot of Trajan’s war (“the War of Quietus”) against the Jews of Mesopotamia (116–17). For proximate causes, the sparse historical evidence focuses inconclusively on the foundation of the pagan city of Aelia Capitolina on the ruins of Jerusalem (Cassius Dio 69.12, 1–2), or on Hadrian’s ban on circumcision (*Historia Augusta*, Vita Hadriani 14.2). Although scholars are divided about these factors’ weight and historicity, the prevailing consensus ascribes a role to both. Bear in mind, though, that some authorities believe that the issues of circumcision and the building of a pagan temple atop the Holy of Holies were a result, rather than a cause, of the Bar-Kokhba uprising. Of the two commonly attributed causes, the role of the circumcision ban seems the least likely. There may have simply been a more general edict directed against those cults in the Empire that practiced any form of bodily mutilation including castration practiced by some cults desirous of creating eunuchs. If it included circumcision specifically, then this particular ban was likely to have applied to the circumcisions performed on behalf of those converted to Judaism and derives from the disapproval of the religious conversions to the “*superstitio*” by Roman citizens rather than any ban on Jews circumcising their own newborn sons. However, its conflation with castration and other acts of bodily alteration renders the whole matter as a *casus belli* doubtful.

In A.D. 117–132, the status of the province of Judaea was changed and was raised from a praetorian territory to the rank of consular province. This change must have taken place before A.D. 127, because evidence implies that the hated Tineius Rufus was the consular governor at the time of the revolt. Since the area of Judaea received a higher rank, elevated to consular province, two legions must have been occupying the territory during this time. Gregorovius remarks that the Xth Legion was in Judaea during the reign of Trajan and that it took part in the Parthian war. Also, considering the road construction undertaken during this time by Hadrian, he must have clearly directed his attention to the province of Judaea. Even the milestone identified at Caparcotna in the Jezreel Valley as having been an important military base had at that time been connected with Sepphoris and further with Akko in

A.D. 120. Hence, it follows that Caparcotna was the headquarters of the new legion which controlled movement between Judaea and Galilee. The possibility of increased Roman activity following the death of Trajan, and in A.D. 129–130 may reflect a response to local unrest and/or preparation to suppress anticipated revolts. In any case, it could have been Hadrian's purpose to secure some type of peace in the eastern provinces following the abandonment of shaky claims to Trajan's areas of conquest in Mesopotamia and Assyria. The cities not willing to adapt to Roman culture would be replaced by re-constituted cities that would.

It is also possible that the organization of Jerusalem as a colony did not provoke the Jewish resistance per se, but the decision to make it a pagan city and the plans for the site of the temple did. The project was most likely merely in the planning stage or the initial construction phase. In fact, it seems most likely that when Hadrian was making his grand tour of his Near Eastern legions in 130–131, he made some preparations to erecting a great Roman urban center in the ruins of Jerusalem. This plan may have been misinterpreted by some Jews in the region as an intent to restore the Jewish Temple, since Hadrian was being hailed as the “restitutor” (restorer or rejuvenator) by those pagan groups to whom he was making conciliatory gestures. It was to be a magnificent Greco-Roman city, complete with palaces, gymnasiums, circuses, temples of Juno and Jupiter, bathhouses, and monuments. There is some numismatic evidence that the groundworks of the new temple (albeit to Jupiter and not to Yahweh as the Jews had hoped) were being undertaken in 131. When word got around that this would *not* be a Yahwist facility, the news must have been devastating. It is quite possible that Hadrian was quite clueless as to the religious mood and sensibilities in Jerusalem and actually considered that his proposed magnificent city would be welcomed by the Jews as a compliment — that they were worthy of such a favor, one that all other subject communities welcomed. In fact, Peter Schäfer, in the first chapter of his symposium on the revolt, *Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis*, believes that perhaps there were Hellenized Jews, much as was the case during the Maccabee/Hasmonean revolt of the second century B.C., that either acquiesced in or welcomed this project, giving Hadrian the false impression that it would be welcomed by the Jews as establishing their place in the Empire. Be that as it may, already there was messianic fervor astir in Judaea at the prospect of the redemption of Israel through the supposed rebuilding of the Temple. Recall that the priestly apparatus was still in place, and some rabbinical writings of the period make reference to Temple sacrifice as if it were still a viable option. The outrage aroused among many by this apparently broken promise along with the messianic stirrings created the volatile mixture that was ignited in 132.

However, the establishment of Judaea into a consular province together with the assignment of a second legion and the road construction undertaken in Judaea cannot be seen as having been the cause of Jewish unrest. This action may not have been directed towards the repression of the Jewish population but towards the establishment of peace and of secure borders in the east of the Empire in keeping with Hadrian's "retrenchment" after the overextension of his predecessor. In any case, the pagan coins and the statue of Hadrian in the cities with both Roman and Jewish citizens do not provide evidence of Hadrian's patronizing the Jews. However, they do suggest an increasing adoption of Hellenization among the numerous loyal Jewish population. Still, the number of Jewish and Christian inhabitants had also gradually increased. Moreover, E. Mary Smallwood remarks that regardless of the political aspirations of the Jews during the reign of Hadrian, he himself had no quarrel with their religion beyond his possible objection to circumcision — which, again, might be broadly applied to any cult within the Empire advocating genital mutilation, seen as a form of barbarity. Note the assumption stated in the "Historiae Augustae" is that he was hostile to foreign cults in general. But this ban, if that's what it was, may have been enacted as a result of rather than prior to the uprising.

Brief Outline of the Course of the Struggle

Before discussing several aspects of the revolt, we should understand the course of the struggle as best as can be deduced from the scant literary and archaeological data. We will return to the controversial points afterwards. Here I will attempt an approximate chronology of the revolt.

There had apparently been endemic unrest in Palestine, which would explain why the Romans felt it necessary to post a second legion in the territory some time before 120, which would likewise explain the intense spurt of road-building in the decade 120–130 to support the movements of the legions.

In A.D. 132, the Jews of Palestine, under the leadership of one Shimon Bar-Kokhba (alternately Shimon bar Koziba or Koseba), rose up against Roman rule. Rabbi Aqiba, the president of the rabbinical academy at Yavne and the authoritative religious chief of the Jews in this age, declared that the successful Jewish commander was the Messiah; at least two rabbis — Rabbi Gershom and Rabbi Aha — agreed, but others, also prominent, remained skeptical and said that "grass would grow in Aqiba's cheeks" before the Son of David would come. It was a war to the bone. The rebels were convinced that this was the apocalyptic war that had been predicted by prophets like Daniel

and Zechariah. Their coins minted during the hostilities (struck over Roman Aelia Capitolina issues depicting the forthcoming New City of Hadrian) show a star on top of and the Ark of the Covenant inside the Temple; the legend is written in paleo-Hebrew (archaic Hebrew letters). Some coins were struck with the legend “Eleazar the priest.” This phrasing strongly suggests that a new high priest was either elected, or, more probably, anticipated. Contrary to some opinions, conclusive proof that Jerusalem or the Temple Mount were in Jewish hands for all or any part of the uprising is lacking.

The rebels, likely numbering in the hundreds of thousands (even allowing for the usual hyperbole of ancient sources), seized towns and fortified them with walls and subterranean passages. They captured approximately 50 strongholds in Palestine and 985 undefended towns and villages. The occupied area is not likely to have included Jerusalem (see below for further debate on this matter). They also invaded the coastal region. The Jews had cunningly obtained arms by sabotaging some of these that were made in workshops for Roman use, and then, instead of destroying the defective weapons, secretly repaired them and stored them for their own use. This and the construction of a network of communication tunnels and concealed redoubts are indicative of significant planning. As with his apparent obtuseness about the consequence of his Aelia Capitolina project, Hadrian’s obliviousness to such widespread and thorough preparations under the nose of his legions indicates surprisingly poor intelligence proficiency. The establishment of the network of tunnels and underground redoubts is somewhat comparable to the Viet Cong tunnels (“Cu-chi”) of the 1960s and the Hezbollah system of summer 2006. This preparation would have taken the good part of a decade, and it is likely that it began in the 120s, heralding the period when Rome reinforced their Judaeae garrison.

At first the governor of Judaea, Tineius Rufus, a debauched and venal individual, if Jewish accounts are to be trusted, attempted to put down the revolt with the local forces under his direct command, presumably the aforementioned two legions stationed in Judaea. Rufus could not at first resist the onslaught of the Jews, to whom he was compelled to relinquish one place after another almost without a struggle. From the account of the Greek historian Cassius Dio (*Roman History* 69.12.1–14.3) we can deduce that the ensuing war effort of the Jews was extensive, widely supported and fanatical. But they seem to have failed to take Jerusalem: This seems the only possible explanation for the fact that the rebel coins have been found everywhere in Judaea, except for its capital. On the other hand, the aforementioned coins indicating that a new high priest was elected suggests that the Jews controlled the site of the Temple at least for some time. Among the historians, Graetz is almost the only one that accepts the supposition of a long-term conquest of

Jerusalem. But if this had been the case, the insurgents would probably not have made Bethar, but rather Jerusalem, their center of operations. Moreover, Bethar, according to Eusebius, was situated in the vicinity of Jerusalem, a statement which may apply equally to a place north or south of the Holy City. However this may be, a city of the size ascribed to Bethar in Jewish sources could never have arisen in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem.

Whether or not Jerusalem was ever held by the rebels — and it is doubtful — it is certain that Simon and his men were able to control the countryside surrounding the holy city. Legal documents signed by the “prince of Israel” show that the Roman imperial estates were confiscated and leased out to Jewish peasants.

Rufus had to summon Publius Marcellus, legate of Syria, to his aid — much as had been done in initial phases of the First Revolt 66 years earlier. The fact that he did not do so promptly reveals that either Rufus was incapable of judging the scope of the uprising or simply that he was reluctant to have to admit that he was negligent failing to see it coming. In the event, Marcellus with the additional legion under his command could do little by now.

The rebels did not dare try to risk open confrontation against the Romans but occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, so that they would have places of refuge when hard pressed. The subterranean system ensured that they could communicate with one another unobserved underground. They pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light. The existence of this elaborate underground system has all been borne out by recent archaeology.

The turning point of the war came when Hadrian sent into Judaea one of his best generals from Britain, Julius Severus, along with former governor of Germania, Hadrianus Quintus Lollius Urbicus. Due to the large number of Jewish rebels, instead of waging open war, Severus besieged Jewish fortresses and cut off food supplies until the Jews grew weak. Only then did his attack escalate into outright war. The main conflicts took place in Judaea, the Shephela (the area of foothills which mark the transition from the coastal plains to the mountains), the mountains and the Judaeian desert.

It was in December 133 or January 134 that Julius Severus superseded Tineius Rufus as governor of the war zone after the assistance from Syria proved inadequate. He commanded a large army. Three entire legions were deployed: VIth *Ferrata*, Xth *Fretensis* — hastily strengthened with marines from Italy — and XXIIInd *Deiotariana*. No less than seventeen auxiliary units are known to have fought in Palestine. The XXIIInd Legion was probably annihilated by the Jews, since there are no indications of its existence after this war. In addition to the three legions sent in connection with Severus’s expedition,

new reinforcements had to be sent, consisting of the IInd Legion *Traiana Fortis*. There are indications that units borrowed from other legions were involved in the struggle, possibly IInd *Cyrenaica*, IIIrd *Gallica* and IVth *Scythica*. For the first time in more than a century, the Romans suffered from manpower shortage; two senators even started to conscript Italian boys. By that time, there were the equivalent of 12 army legions from Egypt, Britain, Syria and other areas in Palestine, taking into account both the complete legions noted and the *vexillationes*, *alae* and auxiliaries borrowed from additional legions.

This war proved to be one of the most difficult “police actions” that Rome would have to undertake. The Romans experienced great difficulties when they tried to subdue the Judaeian hills, and they made some progress only after the emperor had personally come to Judaea. Some have questioned whether Hadrian actually entered the theater, but it seems likely that he did, given the urgency of the situation. The Roman soldiers were accustomed to fighting full-scale battles, but Simon evaded this kind of engagement. Hadrian’s generals were forced to form smaller units — mobile patrols — to intercept small groups of rebels. In this war, the highest ranking officers had to stand by doing nothing, while the under-officers had large responsibilities. Famine, disease and fire proved better weapons than swords and lances.

Severus did not dare attack his opponents in the open at any one point, in view of their numbers and their fanaticism but — by intercepting small groups, thanks to the number of his soldiers and under-officers, and by depriving them of food and shutting them up — he was able, rather slowly, to be sure, but with comparative little danger, to crush, exhaust and exterminate them. Very few Jews, in fact, survived. According to Cassius Dio [*Roman History* 69.13.2–3] 50 of their most important outposts and 985 better known villages were razed to the ground. 580,000 were killed in the various engagements or battles. As for the numbers who perished from starvation, disease or fire, that was impossible to establish.

It was the type of war the Romans recalled only in horror. When the Roman author Cornelius Fronto wrote a letter to the emperor Marcus Aurelius on the occasion of the destruction of a legion by the Parthians (in A.D. 162), he compared it to the Bar-Kokhba revolt, implicitly admitting that the latter had been a defeat.

The Romans had to resort to severe brutality to win the war. Bodies were left unburied for several years. There are three reports that children were wrapped in Torah scrolls and burned alive (Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57a–58b; *Lamentations Rabbah* 2.2 §4; *Seder Elijah Rabbah* 151). This may be extravagant overstatement, but earlier experience shows that Roman legionaries were perfectly capable of fear-provoking acts like these. Recall that in the First Revolt, Jews trying to escape the siege were eviscerated in the search

for gold pieces they may have swallowed. Many Jews started to regret that the rebellion ever started. A new pun on Bar-Kokhba's name became popular: some called him Shimon bar Kozeba, the "son of the fiasco" (or "son of the liar/deception").

Letters found in caves at the Wadi Murabba'at addressed by "Simeon, Prince of Israel" to "Jeshua ben Galgola, commander of the fort" or to the latter and the "men of the camp" indicates that this Jeshua was an important subordinate commander, in charge of a military guard force that Bar-Kokhba maintained at this desert stronghold, not far from the site of the Dead Sea Scrolls cache. Thus we have an indication of some kind of command structure, though the uniqueness of this find requires us to extrapolate to arrive at a more comprehensive organization.

The final battle of the war took place in Bethar, Bar-Kokhba's headquarters, which housed both the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) and the home of the Nasi (leader). Bethar was a vital military stronghold because of its strategic location on a mountain ridge overlooking both the Valley of Sorek and the important Jerusalem-Bet Guvrin Road.

Thousands of Jewish refugees fled to Bethar during the war. In A.D. 135, Hadrian's army besieged Bethar and on the 9th of Av (likely a traditional, rather than a genuine, date), the Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples, the walls of Bethar fell. After a fierce battle, every Jew in Bethar was killed. Six days passed before the Romans allowed the Jews to bury their dead.

Following the battle of Bethar, there were a few small skirmishes in the Judaeen desert caves, but the war was essentially over, and Judaeen independence was lost. The Romans plowed Jerusalem with a yoke of oxen. Jews were sold into slavery and many were transported to Egypt. Judaeen settlements were not rebuilt. Jerusalem was turned into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina, and Jews were forbidden to live there. They were permitted to enter only on the 9th of Av to mourn their losses in the revolt. The date chosen for the commemoration is likely not the actual date of the fall of Bethar. The 9th of Av (Tisha B' Av) is a convenient ceremonial as it coincides with the alleged day that the Second Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. In order to eradicate all association of the Jews with the province, Hadrian changed the country's name from Judaea to Syria Palestina—a pointed reference to the Phillistines, the Jews' long-established arch-enemy. The appellation "Palestine" was thus enshrined for two millennia as a deliberate rebuke to and repudiation of the Jewish connection to the land, until the accession of the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century. Note, though, that by that time the advocates of a Jewish homeland were already referring to the preferred location as Eretz Yisroel (the Land of Israel).

Christian and Jewish scholars alike point out the rebellion as the final parting of the ways between the followers of Jesus, until then a dissident sect of Judaism, and the dominant Pharisaic-rabbinical Judaism then prevailing. Although Justin Martyr speaks of (likely highly exaggerated) terrible atrocities of the Jewish rebels against the Christians who refused to join the revolutionaries, it is likely that there was a final split at this time, because the Christians had already found their messiah, while the Jews were at that time rallying behind one who seemed to be the real thing. It does not follow that the Jewish rebels committed acts of violence against the Christian hold-outs; it is quite possible that the latter were evicted from areas controlled by the rebels as representing useless mouths to feed at best and possible deserters at worst.

Bar-Kokhba, the Man and the Legend

The very existence of Bar-Kokhba as well as his personality are both matters of contention, due to conflicting allusions from suspicious sources. However, Yigael Yadin, the prominent Israeli archaeologist, military commander, and statesman, made an extraordinary discovery in the Judean desert near Ein Gedi in 1961. Yadin and his excavation team found in a canyon crevice a letter signed by Shimon Bar-Kosiba. In the letter, Bar Kosiba describes himself as the leader of an independent Jewish state that rebelled against the might of the Roman Empire for three years, flourishing from A.D. 132 to 135. Yadin's discovery shed light on the history of the rebellion led by one Bar Kosiba, providing missing pieces of information on the insurrection led by the man who is credited as the leader of the rebellion. For the most part, the letters appear to be fragments of military dispatches, which lend evidence to the historicity of the revolt. Unfortunately, as they are mainly administrative and logistical, they give little information about Bar-Kokhba's personality or the larger causes and goals of the Revolt. The letters seem to confirm the image of the man either as a tyrannical fanatic or a strict disciplinarian, depending on one's modern political or religious sensibilities. The letters show Bar-Kokhba complaining bitterly to his field commanders about their failure to send supplies as requested but also reveal that he kept strictly to the requirements of the precepts of the Torah regarding kosher law and observance even under the most trying circumstances.

This is about all that is known concerning the personality of Bar-Kokhba, and even the meager data here presented are so uncertain that the very name of the hero is doubtful. Everything else pertaining to him is mythical. Like the legends about the slave prince, "Eunus of Sicily," Bar Kosiba is said to

have blown burning tow from his mouth, while other Talmudic references aver that such was his strength that he was able to hurl back with his knees the stones discharged from the Roman ballistæ. Perhaps it's a stretch, but the Talmudic reference to exhaling burning pitch might allude to the fact that Bar-Kokhba (or his technicians) was able to master some form of flame-thrower, such as Greek fire tubes, while the reference to catching the incoming stones with his knees indicate that he possessed some sophisticated "field artillery" of his own. (For my speculations on the existence of these possible "wonder weapons," refer to Appendix I *Judaea Invicta: The Revolt That Might Have Been: A Reflection on the Elements for an Alternative Outcome.*)

Bar-Kokhba is said to have tested the valor of his soldiers by ordering each one to cut off a finger, and when the wise men beheld this, they objected to the self-mutilation involved and advised him additionally to issue an order to the effect that every horseman must show that he could tear a cedar of the Lebanon up by the roots while riding at full speed. In this way he eventually had 200,000 soldiers who passed the first ordeal and 200,000 heroes who accomplished the latter feat. It must have been during the war, when he had already performed seeming miracles of valor, that Rabbi Akiva said of him, "This is the King Messiah." It was Rabbi Akiva's exegesis on the Biblical verse "...A star-[king] will rise from Jacob [i.e. the House of Jacob]" (Num 24:17) that interpreted the passage as prophetically referring to this Jewish hero-rebel, Bar-Kokhba. [The Hebrew word *Kochav* (*Kochva*) means "star."]

But this ersatz messiah had the brazen effrontery — so runs the legend — to pray to God: "We pray Thee, do not give assistance to the enemy; us Thou needst not help!" Thus, it was inevitable that many persons, among them his uncle Rabbi Eleazar of Modi'im, should disbelieve in his Messianic mission. In fact, it was Bar-Kokhba's murder of his dissenting uncle in a fit of rage that is said to have turned many of the Talmudists against him, painting his image in the Talmuds as a cruel deceiver rather than a would-be deliverer.

Most modern accounts of the revolt agree that Galilee was not involved in the fighting, that the rebellion only occurred in Judaea proper. The issue of the magnitude of the rebellion as seen from Rome will be taken up next, in which the matter of geographical scope will be covered as well. This section will also shed some more light on the development of the military effort.

The Revolt from the Roman Viewpoint: Intensity and Geographical Extent

Cassius Dio asserts that Hadrian sent against the Jews "his best generals." The only one specifically identified by Dio is Iulius Severus, who was

“foremost amongst these” (i.e., the generals) but the fact that there were apparently others is usually ignored. (We will return to this question of additional commanders below.) In itself, the transfer of Severus from Britain to Judaea is indicative that the situation was one of extreme emergency, considering that only Syria equaled Britain in importance among the military commands of the Empire at that time. The urgency of the appointment is further indicated by the fact that the limited experience in command his immediate successor in Britain, P. Mummius Sisenna, did not commend itself to the accession of such an important post as Britain. His appointment was thus rather hastily done, showing that the dispatch of Severus was also made in a great rush. Further, Hadrian authorized the sudden transfer of marines from the fleet (the *classis Misennius*) who were not normally Roman citizens to the Xth Legion, membership in which required citizenship. This is another indication of the great urgency of the situation. There is also evidence of widespread conscription to replace soldiers transferred from legions in other outposts to Judaea; conscription, as opposed to voluntary recruitment, was an unpopular measure at that period.

It is highly likely that at least one entire legion, XXIIInd *Deiotarinaia*, was annihilated in Judaea during the revolt. While it is impossible to know the precise number of legions employed to put down the revolt, even minimalists concede that, in addition to the two legions of the Judaeian garrison, at least seven more legions in full force took part in the war. This does not count the number of *vexillationes* (sub-units) stripped from other legions to supplement the complete legions dispatched to the province. The best estimate (by Werner Eck) is that the equivalent of 12, or even, 13 legions were eventually sent to Judaea to put down the Bar-Kokhba uprising. Given Judaea's size, this represents a tremendously large military force. Thus Hadrian was moved by the danger posed by the uprising to tap all possible resources throughout the Empire — an emergency that has been compared to the outbreak of the Pannonian revolt in A.D. 6 and the Roman disaster in the fight against Arminius in the Teutoburger Forest in A.D. 9. This had to remind the Emperor of the perilous events of 115–117 in which he had participated in Syria.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Hadrian had sent other generals besides the valued veteran from Britain, Iulius Severus, and it is likely that they were not subordinate to Severus but were at least his co-equals. The other named commander, Q. Lollius Urbicus, as a legionary legate, was clearly the inferior of Severus. Urbicus most likely was in command of *vexillationes* detached from the Pannonian legions for service in the Judaeian emergency. There was no independent general in Judaea itself at the time of the revolt that was on a par with Iulius Severus. Eck has concluded, from epigraphic

texts, that Publius Marcellus, the governor of Syria called in when Tineius Rufus proved incapable of getting the situation under control, was awarded a triumphal reward (*ornamenta triumphalia*) for his part in quelling the rebellion, and this was done not merely as a commander independent of Iulius Severus but in operations not confined to the district of Judaea but also in Syria and Arabia, which Eck concludes were also involved in the fighting—contrary to others who believed that only the Judaeian hill sector was concerned. Fighting in Arabia (Nabataea) is attested by the fact (in Eck's estimation) that the IIIrd Legion *Cyrenaica* stationed in that province, was involved, and that the discovery of the “Babatha archive” in the 1960s substantiates such activity there.

It appears that Hadrian was quite stingy in the awarding of the *ornamenta* during his reign, even for the difficult years in Britain. The fact that both Publicius Marcellus and Iulius Severus were awarded this honor attests to the extreme significance of and menace posed by the Bar-Kokhba rebellion. Further, as Eck has demonstrated, it is likely that Haterius Nepos, the governor of Arabia, also received his *ornamenta* for his service in helping to quell the revolt. The participation of Nepos, most likely in fighting within his province, helps to explain why the two women, Babatha and Salome Komaise (subjects of documents found in the Judaeian desert) had to flee from Arabia to try to join up with the rebels in Judaea as Nepos's legionaries closed in. Eck has determined, from these clues, that the rebellion encompassed the entire province of Syria, the Galilee, Judaea and Arabia—in other words it was regional in scope. The *ornamenta* granted these three co-equal commanders (Severus, Marcellus and Nepos) were the first to be awarded since those bestowed under Trajan for participation in the Dacian wars.

Thus from the perspective of command structure, honors awarded and likely (in the opinion of Dr. Eck) regional scope, this rebellion was quite strenuously fought and difficult.

While Eck's arguments, summarized above, for the power of the rebellion and the resultant intensive Roman efforts to suppress it are widely accepted, note that Menahem Mor, in his chapter of the Peter Schafer edited symposium “The Geographical Scope of the Bar Kokhba Revolt” in *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 100)* disputes that the revolt led by Shimon Bar-Kokhba in Judaea necessarily extended into Arabia (Nabataea/Petra) and Syria. Mor feels that the length of the rebellion, now estimated as running from 132 into 136, while it betokens an alarming challenge for the imperial forces, does not necessarily denote that the rebellion was geographically widespread—at least not in the manner that Eck proposes. Mor suggests that the actual area under the control of Bar-Kokhba's forces may have

only comprised a triangular patch angled to the southwest of Jerusalem, mainly confined to the Judaeian desert and the foothills. From this core area, Bar-Kokhba's men were able to conduct successful harassing raids against Roman mobile columns, until Julius Severus arrived and devised a counter-strategy.

Mor suggests that the reasons for the length of the revolt are mainly related to the military methods used by both sides. In its first phase, the rebels fought a guerilla war in limited areas in the Judaeian mountains, but these were familiar territories, which granted them military advantages over the Roman army. It is possible that in this stage of the revolt the local Roman command did not take the rebels seriously. This intelligence failure falls squarely on Tineius Rufus, who does not seem to have been mentioned further in the annals, either because he was killed in combat or because he was sacked and ignominiously condemned to death for his errors of judgment. Likewise, the garrison of Judaea and the forces that joined to support it continued to fight according to their traditional techniques without adjusting to the terrain or to the techniques used by the rebels. At this time the Romans suffered heavy losses, and some of the senior commanders, like the governor of Judaea, Tineius Rufus, and the governors of the neighboring provinces, Publicius Marcellus and Haterius Nepos, all probably participated in the fighting in Judaea.

The change in the balance between the Romans and rebels occurred when Iulius Severus arrived in Judaea to command the Roman forces. The change in the fighting practice is described by Dio Cassius:

“Severus did not venture to attack his opponents in the open at any one point, in view of their numbers and their desperation, but by intercepting small groups, thanks to the number of his soldiers and his under-officers, and by depriving them of food and shutting them up, he was able, rather slowly, to be sure, but with comparatively little danger, to crush, exhaust and exterminate them” (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69, 13–14).

Upon Iulius Severus's arrival in Judaea, he adjusted the Roman tactics to meet those of the Jewish rebels. By means of the vast numbers of his soldiers, he adopted counter-guerilla tactics, dividing his soldiers into small units and defeated the rebels, forcing part of them to fortify and take refuge in Bethar while others found shelter in the caves of the region.

Though the revolt was concentrated in the Judaeian mountains, a relatively small territory, a large number of Romans soldiers, under the command of senior officers was engaged in the fighting. Because of the military achievement of the rebels in the first phase of the revolt and their hard struggle in the second stage, their subjugation came to be regarded as an important military triumph, accounting for the extraordinary honors bestowed upon the commanders.

The Status of the Bar-Kokhba Rebellion in Modern Israeli Historiography, Ideology and Policy

The rebirth of Israel as a modern state on the ancient foundations has refocused attention on the last stand of the Zealots at Masada around A.D. 73 and the failed Bar-Kokhba Revolt against Roman rule between A.D. 132–135. During the rise of modern Zionism in the latter half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the narratives of these events were reinterpreted from traditional readings to serve themes of national heroism. Rather than being understood as the somber outcome of a disastrous revolt, the collective suicide of the Zealots on Masada was seen as a heroic stand of the Jewish people against foreign oppressors and the fall of the fortress as the event that brought on the Exile. Here Masada serves as an analogy for the modern State of Israel, a final stand from which no one dare retreat and for which all its citizens must be willing to sacrifice. In an even more dramatic reinterpretation, Bar-Kokhba was no longer seen as a man filled with hubris and self-righteousness whose poorly conceived revolt ensured the expulsion of the Jews from ancient Israel, but a national hero whose bravery and wisdom should serve as an example for contemporary defenders of the state.

These ancient acts of heroism and sacrifice were then explicitly matched to the experiences of Jews returning to Israel in the early 1900s. The Battle of Tel Hai in 1920, an early clash between Palestinian Arabs and Zionists, was made famous by the demise of Yosef Trumpeldor who uttered before his death, “ein davar, kedai lamut be’ad ba’aretz [never mind, it is worth dying for the country].” Although the attack by Arab militia was not in itself exceptional in a year of severely heightened tension in the territory, the event was taken as a symbolic rupture with the Exile and identified with the sacrifices made by Jews for their land at Masada and during the Bar-Kokhba revolt. With this event was “reborn” a patriotic legacy of heroic death seen in early Zionist circles as profoundly different from what they perceived to be the passive and disarmed character of the “old” Jews of the Exile. Typical of modern nationalist veneration of Bar-Kokhba is the right-wing Israeli politician and writer Israel Eldad’s sense of a “sublime” meaning for Yigal Yadin’s discovery in 1960 of the actual letters written by Bar-Kokhba. In Eldad’s view, these letters from the last commander of an organized Jewish army was only awaiting the unearthing of a reconstituted Jewish army of modern times — Yadin was Commander of Operations during Israel’s War of Independence, 1947–49. For Eldad, this was a miraculous sign proving that the Jewish nation and army had been predestined to be reborn in our era.

In keeping with the hero image, Bar-Kokhba was the subject of an operetta, *Bar Kokhba*, written by Abraham Goldfaden some time between

1883 and 1885. When Goldfaden's musical melodrama reached the boards on May 5, 1883, in Odessa, the Jewish world in Russia faced the consequences of the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, the May Laws of 1882, and the series of pogroms which had coursed throughout Southern Russia for the previous two years. This and the fact that revolution was a touchy subject in Russia of that period ensured the operetta would be banned in that land. Another operetta on the subject of Bar-Kokhba was written by the Russian-Jewish emigre composer Yaacov Bilansky Levanon in Palestine in the 1920s.

John Zorn's Masada Chamber Ensemble recorded an album called *Bar Kokhba*, displaying a photograph of the Letter of Bar-Kokhba to Yeshua, son of Galgola on the cover.

According to a legend, during his reign, Bar-Kokhba was once presented a mutilated man, who had his tongue ripped out and hands cut off. As he was unable to talk or write, he wasn't able to tell who his attackers were, so Bar-Kokhba decided to ask simple questions to which the dying man was able to nod or shake his head with his last movements; thus they were able to apprehend the murderers. In Hungary, this legend spawned the "Bar-Kokhba game," in which one of the two players comes up with a word or object and the other one has to find out by asking questions only to be answered with "yes" or "no."

In recent decades, however, the Bar-Kokhba myth has become controversial. The principal instigator of this controversy, Yehoshafat Harkabi, prominent columnist and former chief of Israeli military intelligence, marked his transition from uncompromising hardliner to supporter of peace with a Palestinian state [he founded the liberal-pacifist "Peace Now" movement]. In a 1978 open letter to then Prime Minister Menachem Begin, in which he termed Bar-Kokhba "an irresponsible adventurer who brought disaster upon the Jewish People," Harkabi drew an explicit contemporary parallel to Israel's holding on to the Occupied Territories, which in Harkabi's view might cause a new such disaster. This concept was expanded into a full book, originally in Hebrew in 1982 as *Vision, Not Fantasy* and in English as *The Bar Kochba Syndrome: Risk and Realism in International Relations* (1983). The English-language edition coincided with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which had the objective of wiping out the Palestinian Liberation Organization's presence in that nation, which organization was conducting rocket attacks and shelling from enclaves in the south. Harkabi originally had in mind what he considered to be the unrealistic Israeli attitudes towards Palestinian statehood and the correlated status of the Occupied Territories (West Bank and Gaza). However, some commentators regarded the latest Israeli military effort to resolve the Palestinian issue (the invasion of southern Lebanon) as a consequence of its earlier inflexibility on the statehood question. In any event, Harkabi

employed the Bar-Kokhba uprising in a controversial way. The image of Bar-Kokhba in Israeli historiography had theretofore been largely hero worship. Now, using state of the art archaeological research, he was depicted as a pied piper who led gullible ideologues into a tragic misadventure. Harkabi asserted that too many Israelis at that time exhibited an admiration for “heroism and rebelliousness detached of responsibility for their consequences,” an admiration he termed “the Bar-Kokhba syndrome,” since it often accompanies an unreflective admiration for Bar-Kokhba himself. Here, then, are two modern images of Bar-Kokhba — the popular Israeli image of a glorious national defender and Harkabi’s image of an irresponsible zealot. Richard Marks (*The Image of Bar Kokhba in Traditional Jewish Literature*) finds that Harkabi’s politically motivated portrait is simplistic. He is dually a hero and unrealistic ideologue in the modern memory. This legacy becomes ever more apparent as the struggle with the Palestinians over the viable “final” boundaries of Israel and a Palestinian state, contingent upon the willingness of authentic Palestinian spokespersons to recognize the right of Jews to have a national home, enters a new phase.

17

Subsequent Rebellions and Conclusions

The Persistence of Expectation

One might reasonably expect that, after Rome's "final solution" to the Jewish problem adopted in the wake of the Bar Kochba revolt, there would be no further trouble from the Jews. However, this was not to be the case. It is a witness to the resilience of Jewish hope for a restoration of the Holy Temple and its accessory institutions that the late Roman Empire witnessed several more instances of turmoil among the Jews.

In the time of Marcus Aurelius, in A.D. 351, the Jews launched yet another revolt, provoking heavy retribution. It seems that the Jewish community in Palestine was severely oppressed by Gallus, the Roman Emperor of the east, who inflicted harsh and cruel policies. This infuriated the local Jewish community. The leader of the Jews in their battle against the Romans was Patricius, also known as Natrona, a name with messianic connotations. The rebellion started at Sepphoris where the Jews managed to gain possession. It then spread to Tiberias and Lydda. The Roman General Ursicinus reacted quickly and fervently. Many of the revolting towns and other neighboring towns were destroyed. In Sepphoris itself the uprising was put down, but the city was not destroyed. However, in 363 an earthquake destroyed the city, which was then rebuilt, but the damage is still evident in excavations. After the events, a permanent garrison occupied Galilee. Because the Talmud centers were in the cities affected, the work of Jewish learning in the "land of Israel" was weakened. For more details on this topic, see references on the "War against Gallus" as this episode is sometimes known.

In A.D. 438, when the Empress Eudocia removed the ban on Jews' praying at the Temple site, the heads of the Community in Galilee issued a call "to the great and mighty people of the Jews" which began: "Know that the

end of the exile of our people has come!" However, this has to be considered an incipient revolt, if that, since there is no record of anyone acting upon this summons to return to Zion. It simply attests to the continued aspirations among Jews of the Diaspora to return to a homeland in Jerusalem.

The final Jewish revolt worthy of the title was that under the reign of the Byzantine Emperor and eminent general Heraclius. In the belief of restoration to come, the Jews made an alliance with the Persians who invaded Palestine in 614, fought at their side, overwhelmed the Byzantine garrison in Jerusalem, and for five years governed the city. Here it can be seen that the Jews remained friendly to the Persians, whom had generally treated them with respect. This episode is sometimes considered under the heading of the revolt against Heraclius (613–617). Whatever it is called, it was a Jewish insurrection against the Byzantine Empire, the Jews coming to the aid of the Persian invaders.

The main battle was in Jerusalem, where the city fell to the combined forces of the Persians and the Jews after a 20-day siege. The Christian population of Jerusalem was then massacred. Jews were given permission to run the city, and they effectively did so for the next five years. Reports indicate that at the time 150,000 Jews were living in 43 settlements throughout Palestine. Benjamin of Tiberias was the Jewish leader who aided the Persians in their battles.

While the Jews of Jerusalem gained autonomy to some degree, they became frustrated with its limitations and, anticipating losing this limited freedom, betrayed the Persians and offered to assist the Byzantines in return for amnesty for the revolt.

In 625, the Byzantine army reconquered the territory. Amnesty was granted to Benjamin of Tiberias and the Jews who had joined the Persians.

In 628, after the defeat and death of Khosrau, Heraclius came as victor into Jerusalem. The Jews of Tiberias and Nazareth, under the leadership of Benjamin of Tiberias, changed sides and joined him as allies. According to Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria's *Annals* (compiled in the eleventh century), the Emperor would have kept peace with the Jews had not fanatic monks instigated him to conduct a massacre. Only a few Jews escaped into Egypt or sought refuge in caves and in forests. In atonement for the violation of an oath to the Jews, the monks pledged themselves to a fast, which the Copts still observe. Heraclius is said to have dreamed that destruction threatened the Byzantine Empire through a circumcised people. He therefore proposed to destroy all Jews who would not become Christians; and he is reported to have counseled Dagobert, King of the Franks, to do the same. The situation of the Jews was so desperate that, according to the Tiburtine Sibyl (the Etruscan Sibyl of Tibur), written around A.D. 380, it had been

prophesied that the entire community of Jews in the Byzantine Empire would be converted in 220 years. The Tiburtine Sybil reports the alleged meeting between Augustus Caesar and the Sybil. It purports to prophesy the advent of a final Emperor vanquishing the foes of Christianity. This Emperor's reign is characterized by a period of great wealth, victory over the foes of Christianity, an end of paganism and the conversion of the Jews.

Thus, in 629, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius marched into Jerusalem at the head of his army. After the defeat of the Persian Empire, a new threat, the Arab Islamic Empire, had emerged in the region. Heraclius sought to consolidate and secure his gains. Though he had previously granted the Jews amnesty for their revolt, he would not risk another likely revolt in a war with the Arabs. His solution was to disperse the Jews as Titus had in the Jewish Revolt, and so a massacre of the Jews in Jerusalem ensued, and tens of thousands of Jews were put to flight from Palestine to Egypt.

In 638, the Byzantine Empire lost control of the territory of Palaestina to the Arabs. The Arab Islamic Empire under Caliph Umar conquered Jerusalem and the lands of Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. There remained a Jewish presence in certain sections of Jerusalem and in Safed and other scattered communities in Galilee. The Moslems appear to have regarded the Jews under their control as "dhimmi" or second-class citizens due to their obstinance and refusal to accept the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Others have pointed out that the Moslem treatment of the Jews was benign relative to the persecution inflicted by the Christians.

There were a number of efforts to launch a "return to Zion" by various magnetic Jewish figures in Europe and England during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment epochs (Alroy, Sabbatai Zevi, et al)—a kind of Jewish crusade, if you will. But these were rather isolated episodes, and some were inaugurated by people who were either crazy, power-mad, cynically mercenary or a combination thereof.

It should be noted, however, that Jews scattered among the nations never relinquished a hope of return to Jerusalem. This yearning was expressed in the fervent epigram attached to the Passover Haggadah—"next year, in Jerusalem."

The culmination of the "return to Zion" lietmotif was reached in the Zionist Movement, formulated in Basle, Switzerland, in 1897 as an indirect result of the anti-Semitism that swept Europe epitomized in the energizing Dreyfus Affair in France. This movement resulted in several waves of immigration of East European/Russian Jews to Ottoman Palestine in the aftermath of the Russian pogroms of the early 1900s and in the eventual establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 pursuant to UN mandates and the Partition Resolution of 1947. It is beyond the scope of this book to comment

on the controversies surrounding the flight of the Palestinian Arabs during the 1947–1949 Israeli War of Independence and the debate over the restoration of Palestinian Arab statehood rights.

Summing Up: The Elements of Reality, Fantasy and Futility in Jewish Reactions to Roman Rule

It is my contention that there were seeds of Jewish victory, if such is the right term, in each of the three revolts I have discussed. Had they been combined in a single uprising, it is quite possible that there might have been an honorable truce and a key role assigned to the strong, united and self-reliant Judaea that would have emerged from the contest. To suggest that the favorable elements in each could have been present in a single conflict is not merely an exercise in “what if” — per Appendix IX. It points up the matrix of defeat.

Recall that Herod Agrippa I, called “the great,” was considered a “friend of Rome” and, as such, his people enjoyed a relatively privileged place among the Empire’s outlying provinces. His personal instability was what caused the Jewish entity to fall from grace so to speak. Likewise, Herod Agrippa II (more commonly known as “Agrippa I”) in Caligula’s reign had gained for his kingdom the earmarks of a “favored nation” status with respect to Rome. It was only the paranoia of the emperor and Caligula’s impolitic demands regarding setting up his effigy in the Temple that unraveled the relationship.

In my examination of the two-century Jewish struggle to guard the Jewish way of life against encroachments and insults both by local pagan neighbors and insensitive Roman administrators, I have found that the Jews of antiquity were as divided two millennia ago as they are in the fragmented Israeli parliamentary system of today. In assessing Judaism in the ancient world, scholars have found that there were many Judaisms, not a monolithic religious hierarchy. Often, the self-appointed arbiters of Jewish conduct, both in daily life and in matters of state, were sorely out of touch with the situation of the farmers and merchants whom they claimed to represent. Complicating this disconnect is the equally unrealistic and extremist promises made by would-be defenders of the common man, the divergent radical revolutionary movements, conveniently lumped together under such labels as Zealots, sicarii, etc.

Given this oft-repeated pattern of secular accommodation, ecclesiastic rebuke and correction and revolutionary zealotry confronting the formidable forces arrayed against it, one might be excused for regarding the continued existence of Judaism, let alone the reconstitution of a Jewish state, to be a kind of heaven-sent miracle.

APPENDICES

A

Josephus's Reliability as a Source for the Military History of the First Jewish Revolt*

Josephus's *Jewish War* is replete with detailed descriptions of the Roman army on campaign. Yet, military historians have consulted it to interpret Roman warfare in every place *except* Palestine. A comparison between the neglected Judaeen operations of A.D. 66–73 with the much-studied Claudian and Neronian skirmishes in Britain, shows that the Jewish uprising engaged over double the number of legionaries for a much more sustained period of conflict. So, why is there no military history of the Jewish revolt based on Josephus?

The Judaeen insurrection and Josephus are studied primarily for the light they shed on the milieu of Jesus. They also set forth the cataclysmic transformation of the Jewish faith from a hierarchical cult based on animal sacrifice to a universal faith. Finally, they demonstrate the nature of classical literature. The preeminence of these peaceable disciplines has overwhelmed the study of the Judaeen revolt as a military event.

Josephus's works were initially preserved because they glorified the Flavians and thereafter because they "bore witness" for the Church fathers. The only other ancient military campaign that has been described in such detail by an eyewitness/participant is Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. A least that work, when not being employed by classical philologists and grammarians, has been used to study the battles of the Celts against the Romans.

There are some complications in using Josephus to reconstruct the Roman campaign in Judaea. First, like his models, Thucydides and Polybius,

**This is an abbreviated version of an address that the author made before the "Military Classics Seminar," a caucus of military history bibliophiles that meets monthly from September to June at Fort Myers, Virginia (September, 2000). This truncated paraphrase first appeared on the Internet web site, "Flavius Josephus Homepage."*

Josephus embellishes, distorts and invents for the purpose of enhancing the dramatic effect. He uses stock Greco-Roman literary devices, called *topoi*. Additionally, he alternately exaggerates and obfuscates his own controversial role. These filters can be pierced through a critical reading. However, there's another problem. There appears to be a discrepancy between Josephus's two different accounts of his period as "general" in Galilee, A.D. 66–67. In *Jewish War*, he portrays himself as a *strategos*, a general commissioned by the revolutionary council to prepare against the expected Roman counterattack in Galilee. In *Life*, he seems to portray his role as a peacekeeper sent to disarm and pacify the hothead armed gangs spoiling for a fight, until some kind of understanding could be arranged with the Romans.

The reasonable choice for a modern guidebook is Shaye Cohen's *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Life and Development as a Historian*. It's practically the only study that concentrates on the *War-Life* dichotomy. The book is quite negative about Josephus as a reliable source ... and about his character generally. In this aspect, it harks back to what is known as the "classical" view of Josephus derived from late-nineteenth-century German source-criticism of Josephus's corpus. Epitomized by Walter Laqueur's work in the 1920s, this view neglected the likely socio-political and theological circumstances under which Josephus composed his history. It considered only information meant to support the classical conjecture that Josephus brazenly utilized deceitful forgeries (earlier spurious works) in a way so as to flatter his Roman benefactors and rationalize his own moral weakness. Laqueur and company painted Josephus as only wanting to promote his assumed role as Flavian lackey and gifted author.

Notwithstanding this negative spin, critics could not continue to ignore the obvious Jewish nationalistic (in this sense "apologetic") features and goals that influenced Josephus's writing. I refer here to the later works, *Antiquities of the Jews* (his proud paraphrase of and postscript to the Old Testament) and *Against Apion* (a combative attack on pagan anti-Semitic slanders).

H. St. John Thackeray, translator/editor for the Loeb Classical Library edition of *War* and *Life*, to his credit recognized Josephus as a defender of his beleaguered Jewish colleagues, those shattered remnants in Judaea and those in the Diaspora looking for something to cling to after the destruction of the Jewish heart in Jerusalem (*Josephus, the Man and the Historian*, 1929). However, this redeeming feature was peripheral to Thackeray's analysis, which retained much of the standard negative character portrait.

In 1956, Joseph Farmer's *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus, an Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period* finally made an attempt to consider Josephus's ideological imperative, his redeeming mission in an empire that still considered Jews and Judaism a dangerous influence in the aftermath

of the brutal revolt. Instead of seeing Josephus's praise of the Flavians as self-serving groveling, he saw it as a means to elevate the Jews as a former worthy enemy and now an even worthier ally, as well as a means of reassuring his defeated countrymen and defend their rights in the Diaspora. In this role, Josephus resembled one of his models, Polybius. In order to safeguard the post-revolt Jewish community, he had to distinguish them from the atypical relative handful of irreligious instigators that fomented and sustained the uprising, creating a situation into which the normally orderly majority was drawn against their better instincts.

Ignoring the judgment of these broad-minded commentators, Cohen's basic assessment of Josephus regresses to the hostile detractors of the early 1920s. His critique is not so much concerned with Josephus within the distinct political matrix of his time and place but with his development as historian, apologist and Jew. Cohen is very diligent in reviewing Josephus's use of sources, the specific comparison/contradictions between Josephus's two versions of Galilee. In this sense, the book is a great boon to researchers for laying out this material in an accessible format. However, his conclusions do not seem to advance much beyond the censure typical of the early twentieth century "classical school."

Cohen asserts that *Life* and *War* both depend upon a common source, a preliminary outline statement of affairs that Josephus kept as a possible defense against future accusations — a diary. In the *War*, he allegedly used this outline in a selective way to bolster his thematic rendering of events. Josephus's thesis constituted a defense of the Romans and a vain excuse for himself and his aristocratic associates. On the other hand, *Life*, written some 15 years after *War*, adopted a chronological format. This chronological restatement was influenced by Josephus's desire to court the new "leaders" of the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem, the Pharisee rabbis in the Jewish theological center in Jamnia, Galilee. Cohen's hypothesis about Josephus's relationship to this new Jewish elite and his fallen prestige among the Roman court is predominantly based on Cohen's rather extravagant deconstruction of Josephus's text. It does not elucidate the likely external political or theological situation that supposedly motivated this changed perspective.

Cohen's conclusion from his textual deconstruction is that, in line with other aristocrats, Josephus in 66–67, contrary to his avowed qualms, actually was a wholehearted supporter of the Revolt, at least until the fall of Jotapata. His reservations about the impending conflict expressed in *War* are a subterfuge meant to camouflage his failure as a commander. Although *War* was in a sense more truthful in portraying Josephus as an accomplice to the revolt, it does it in a manner that tends to conceal the enthusiasm of he and his patriotic colleagues in the opening stages of the revolt.

In making his case, Cohen is self-contradictory in places. For example, notwithstanding his own assertion, Cohen accuses Josephus of falsifying the record when he claims that Josephus could not have been among the peace party since he was a general in the rebel army and on that account could not have wanted peace. He discredits Josephus's description of the selection of regional commanders for the defense of the various districts of Judaea because Josephus asserts that all generals were chosen at the same time — which Cohen seems to reject. But then he goes on to state that the selection may have actually occurred in one sitting. Cohen allows that Josephus's account of the proceedings, albeit exaggerated and simplified, seems inherently plausible. Nonetheless, Cohen claims that Josephus's roster of area commanders is generally fictitious.

Further, Cohen acknowledges that there were many shades of opinion among the Jewish elite. Yet he disregards this dictum when he asserts that Josephus could not have been for peace, since he was a general, as such a defacto, a hawk, forgetting that he had only just allowed that there might have been dovish hawks and hawkish doves in the revolutionary cadre.

In order to discredit Josephus's description of his somewhat ambiguous role in preparing and mounting the Jewish defense against Vespasian's offensive, Cohen proposes that Josephus's account of his clever stratagems in withstanding Vespasian's siege of Jotapata is largely rhetorical overstatement. According to Cohen, the ruses are most likely fabrications to support his self-characterization as "the ideal general," a device (a literary topos) going back at least to Thucydides. Cohen makes a great deal about Josephus's bluster about how clever he was to think up these tricks, when, in fact, he most likely copied them from well-known military treatises and campaign histories available to him. I found at least half of Cohen's suggested "models" for Josephus's stratagems doubtful. However, even if these ruses were well-known, there is no reason why Vespasian would not have been surprised or stymied by Josephus's use of them, because the Roman army had little experience of Judaeian counter-siege warfare at that time. Of course, in keeping with Josephus's vanity, he would indulge in a bit of bravado; however, his vanity and poetic license is insufficient justification for disbelieving Josephus's account in its entirety.

As for the differences and omissions between *Life*, where he revealed underlying motives, and *War*, where he was more taciturn, this goes to the nature of the two accounts. This has been pointed out forcefully by Tessa Rajak in her 1984 critique of *The Jewish War*, titled *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*. Rajak notes that the information overlooked in *War* is simply irrelevant there — and that includes the details about the way Josephus took up his appointment and about his companions. But it is important to the *Life*, with

its special interest in the quarrels over Josephus's command in order to refute Justus's charges. So, in *Life* every internal political maneuver is spelled out. Nevertheless, it remains true that the same picture of the mood and attitudes of Josephus and his colleagues is painted in the two accounts. That they went unwillingly to war is quite evident from both. And so it is of little moment that a short-lived expedition sent out to discover whether the revolt in Galilee was still small enough to be stifled, which accomplished nothing, does not rate a mention there.

Josephus wrote the *Life* because his reputation as a captured enemy general was being seriously tarnished by Justus of Tiberias's claims. Those assertions that he could dispute, he did. Those that seemed undeniable, he granted but reinterpreted. For example, he allows that he was not *initially* sent as a general (*Life* 28) but insists that he was *ultimately* confirmed as sole commander (*Life* 310), after a hectic and rapidly changing period wherein he attempted to control the chaotic four-way battles in Galilee. He also acknowledges the great prestige of Simon ben Gamaliel, the priest who initiated impeachment and recall proceedings against him in the Jerusalem Revolutionary Council; however, he also suggests that this Pharisee's friendship with John of Gischala corrupted his accuser (*Life* 191–192). He further alleges that the high priest had originally defended him (*Life* 194), but changed his mind solely because he was bribed by Simon ben Gamaliel. He opportunely records that everyone in the city was unaware of the plot.

So where was Josephus lying: in *War* or in *Life*? The answer is neither. He provided a terse but sufficient military history to suit the purpose of *War* and later provided missing personal details in order to present a personal defense against his accusers in *Life*. All in all, his overriding and undeviating goal was to defend and protect his people in the manner best suited to their precarious circumstances at the close of the first century.

B

Disposition of Roman and Allied Forces, A.D. 66–73

The following itinerary of Roman forces is related in the narrative of operations in the main text, but I have conveniently itemized it here. I have drawn heavily on articles in the compendium prepared for the British Archaeology Review, special annex, 1986: *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* edited by Freeman and Kennedy.

After initial conflicts in 66 between the Jewish population in Jerusalem and the auxiliary forces stationed there, outside military intervention began in an unprecedented way with the dispatch by a local client ruler, Agrippa II, of 2,000 cavalry to Jerusalem — the equivalent of four Roman cavalry *alae*—recruited from Auranitis, Batanaea and Trachonitis. But after the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem had been massacred and Agrippa II's forces had withdrawn, the long-established pattern of large-scale intervention emanating from Syria was again repeated. Cestius Gallus, the *legatus* of Syria, marched from Antioch with the XII legion *Fulminata*, 2,000 men from each of the other three Syrian legions, six cohorts of infantry and four *alae* of cavalry. He was accompanied also by quite significant royal forces, which Josephus gives as follows: from Antiochus IV of Commagene 2,000 cavalry and 3,000 archers on foot; from Agrippa II the same number of foot soldiers and rather fewer cavalry; and from Sohaemus of Emesa 1,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry, mainly archers. At something like 13,000 men in all, the royal forces were, in numbers, equivalent to between two and three legions, or 26 of the normal auxiliary units of 500 men.

Gallus also raised large irregular forces (which Josephus calls *epikouri*) from the cities, including the *colonia* of Berytus, who made up for their insufficiency of training with their loathing of the Jews. The army took the traditional route via Ptolemais and Caesarea to Antipatris, Lydda and Jerusalem. There, while Josephus claims that with determination Gallus could

have captured the whole city, after some fighting he chose to withdraw. While the army was doing so, its retreat was forced into headlong flight with the loss of 5,300 infantry (effectively the equivalent of a whole legion) and 480 cavalry (the equivalent of a whole cavalry *ala*). There is no other example of a comparable defeat of Roman regular forces by the population of an established province.

Nero's reaction was to appoint one ex-consul, Licinius Mucianus, as the regular *legatus* of Syria, and another, Flavius Vespasianus, to take charge of the war in Judaea. Again, the military and administrative arrangements of a later period were foreshadowed. There were, however, in the winter of A.D. 66/67, no significant Roman forces left in Judaea, so Vespasian inevitably had to start with those of Syria. Once again, therefore, we see a Roman *legatus* marching south from Antioch to Ptolemais (now a Roman *colonia*) before entering Galilee. Given the evident extent of the crisis, the occasion offers even clearer evidence of what military resources could be deployed.

Vespasian's forces consisted of three whole legions. One, the XVth *Appollinaris*, which had earlier in the 60s been engaged in the Armenian campaign, had since been moved to Alexandria and was now marched from there to Ptolemais by Vespasian's son, Titus. The others were the Vth *Macedonia*, also earlier in Armenia, but where it had been since is unknown, and the Xth *Fretensis*, also earlier engaged in Armenia, but from the established garrison of Syria.

The significance of these details is the accumulation of force in the Near East that they represent. Three of the four legions of Syria remained there, and six whole legions, out of an Empire-wide total of 26, were now divided between Syria and Judaea — therefore, just under a quarter of the total.

Twenty-three auxiliary cohorts and six *alae* of cavalry, presumably drawn largely from Syria accompanied the legionary forces. The total is very substantial (in principle, at full strength, some 14,500 men), but at this period we still do not have the evidence to identify any of the units. It is not until the later 80s that the *diplomata* given to their soldiers on discharge began to detail the auxiliary forces of Syria and Judaea.

Along with these there were forces provided by four dependent kings. Antiochus IV of Commagene, Agrippa II and Sohaemus of Emesa each sent 2,000 infantry archers and 1,000 cavalry, and ("the Arab") Malchus (Malchus II of Nabataea) also 1,000 cavalry but as many as 5,000 infantry, mainly archers. These totaled some 15,000 men, roughly a third of the whole force. The Jewish War was notable also, in the military history of the Roman Empire, as being the last moment of significant dependence on royal forces.

So substantial a deployment of force was necessary for even the most northerly area of Jewish settlement, Galilee, contained a very large popula-

tion that was mainly grouped in villages that were easily made defensible and of which each contained, so Josephus claims, at least 15,000 inhabitants. That must be an exaggeration, as is no doubt his claim that the army which he, as he Jewish commander in Galilee, raised in 66/67 amounted to 100,000 men (*War* II, 20, 5 [576]). But Rome nonetheless faced a major task.

C

Jewish Combat Effectiveness in the First Revolt

Jonathan Price's *Jerusalem Under Siege* contains an appendix detailing all instances where the Jews prevailed against the Roman legions. Interestingly, the successful encounters all entailed hand-to-hand fighting, the Romans only saving themselves by use of cavalry, archers and superior technology. It is usually on level, open ground where the Romans can utilize their superiority in flexible maneuverable "open formation," which can quickly adjust to meet contingencies, pressing the attack with heavy infantry, cavalry, and missile weapons. The Jews could not parry these advantages since they had no counterpart in their own setup.

This was pointed out in the section describing the Battle of Ascalon. Here the Jews marched in unwary, uncharacteristically depending on their superior numbers to bowl over the Roman lines, forgetting to provide flank guards against the enveloping Roman cavalry. There were more such painful lessons in Galilee, but by the time of the Jerusalem siege, the Jews seem to have realized their strongpoint and consistently bested the Romans when they were able to hit them by quick surprise sallies from angles and embrasures undetected by the Romans.

In the preliminary encounters of the siege of Jerusalem, the Jews mounted two attacks on the Xth Legion on the Mount of Olives, routing them both times. Only their cavalry saved the Romans. Then there was the stratagem whereby they pretended to expel the war party. When the Romans went to attack the isolated group of seemingly ejected insurgents, they were taken under a hail of missiles from the walls while another group charging from a hidden portal in the walls were able to get behind the attacking Romans and cut them off from their camp and overpower them.

In the fight for the outer wall, the Jews initially made sudden sallies and routed the besiegers until they were finally driven back by archers and cav-

alry. Next the Jews were able to emerge to burn the siege works, overpower the Roman soldiers and have them at their mercy until Titus intervened with cavalry.

At the second wall the Romans made a breach and poured in, whereupon the Jews immediately swarmed them and expelled the Romans who were once again saved only by the actions of their archers and cavalry; the Romans could only regain the wall through three days' hard fighting. This was one of the Romans' most serious defeats, and Josephus has a hard time explaining why "his" Roman stalwarts were shamed, resorting to the rationalization that "the Jews were so drunk with success that they thought themselves invincible, but really God was clouding their judgment." Then the Jews, from their Temple redoubt, made another attack against the Xth Legion on the Mount of Olives and were only pushed back after fierce resistance by the action of the cavalry. A series of persistent Jewish impetuous sallies and close-in fighting ensued.

At the first, innermost wall and in the defense of the Temple itself there are more examples. Simon's section charged out, scattered the soldiers protecting the siege works and set the engines afire, following up by pursuing the fleeing Romans back to camp where they were finally rescued by Titus's cavalry. This debacle is what convinced Titus to build the *circumvallation* and weaken the Jews by starvation. Next the Jews cautiously waited until the ramps were completed opposite John's sector (that's the only place they were constructed) then made another one of their audacious assaults, but here Josephus tells us that they uncharacteristically failed because of hesitation, disintegration in the ranks and lack of vigor.

When the Romans penetrated the Temple grounds, their spears and missiles were of no use to them amidst the confined corridors and porticos, and Josephus indicates that they were not attacking in full strength at this point, the bulk of the force still hanging back at the fortress. This is most likely because the soldiers ahead of them were tightly packed against the fiercely struggling defenders and there was no room to make an entry. The Jews succeeded in pushing them back to the Antonia fortress. Following this there was another night battle at the Temple that ended in a draw. The Romans were able to stand their ground because, in the confusion of the close quarters in the darkness, the Romans maintained cohesion by locking shields and identified friend or foe by passwords, whereas the Jews often attacked their own men in the chaos and their attacks and retreats were disorganized. The Romans attempted to mount the porticoes of the Temple, whereupon the amazingly tenacious Jews pushed them back and caused them to lose their standards, the Romans apparently fighting from an inferior position. The following day, the Jews mounted another sally and were defeating the Romans

when cavalry arrived to rescue the beleaguered infantry. The burning of the Temple, whereupon all Jewish resistance collapsed, follows.

Price shows that Josephus rationalizes the examples of Jewish victories over the Romans as being due to Jewish strength in adversity and fearlessness of death and the meeting of Roman skill with Jewish daring. Always the recklessness of the Jews is counterbalanced by the measured, practiced discipline of the Romans, which did not always work to the latter's advantage. He shows how Josephus covers over the conspicuous Jewish superiority in close combat, or hand-to-hand combat, over the Romans. By his counterbalancing the solid Roman virtues against Jewish inspired desperation, Price tells us that Josephus masks this Roman incapacity to meet the Jews one-on-one or in an eyeball-to-eyeball melee.

The corollary to this is the burning question of why the Jews didn't take advantage of their skill in ambush situations from the start, given the early clear lessons of Beth-horon Pass (positive) and Ascalon (negative). As the main text illustrates, the reasons for failure in Galilee were twofold: first, the splintered patchwork nature of the rebel infrastructure in Galilee and, second, the factional infighting for control of the key cities as part of the local rivalry among the cities themselves — that is when they were not preoccupied with fighting the gentiles in their midst.

D

Factions, Parties and Patron Allegiance in the First Jewish War: John of Gischala Versus Flavius Josephus

In the main text, I tried to describe the disarray of the Galileean/Northern front in the face of the almost certain main Roman onslaught through that district. The problems can be only partially laid to the personal vendettas among the overlapping clique and precinct headmen. There was a “patronage system” that was the operative “chain of command” with respect to Judaea. This system has been admirably explicated in an unpublished Masters of Arts dissertation by Michael Strangelove written for the University of Ottawa’s Department of Religious Studies in 1991: “Patron-Client Dynamics in Flavius Josephus’s *VITA*: A Cross-disciplinary Analysis.” I have borrowed liberally from that paper in the following analysis, hopefully eliminating most of the social scientific theory.

Here we utilize the John-Josephus rivalry and ignore Simon bar Gioras simply because Simon was not a “player” when Josephus was still in the game — Simon was off fighting his own private war for the allegiance of the disaffected in Adiabene and Idumaea.

First, we should identify Josephus’s problems; they are threefold:

1. However inadequate Roman authority over the region was, its suspension and the uncertainty of its future immediately opened the door for a profusion of indigenous disagreements and rivalries; the introduction of the “war question” simply provided a new issue around which the old vendettas could ignite anew.
2. Josephus’s former positions as an elitist compromiser were well known to his new constituency in Galilee, yet he had to remake his image as

an organizer of the revolt. Those whose trust he sought would accordingly be watching his every move like hawks, ready to pounce on any sign of insincerity, which indeed happened. He was not the quisling that some detractors like Shaye Cohen would have us believe, but he was ever the Clausewitzian incrementalist, looking for diplomatic opportunities at all times.

3. Josephus had connections in the area with officers and clients of King Agrippa II (e.g., Philip ben Jacimus) or propertied men such as the four “principal men” of Tiberias who sought to preserve the city’s allegiance to Agrippa II. This conservative faction in Galilee would not have been sympathetic to the cause of the revolution as long as the prospect of Agrippa’s military and diplomatic protection remained. Josephus was certainly solicitous of their worldview and needs, yet he had to make a show of opposition to them in order not to arouse the suspicions of the rebels he purported to lead.

Around October of A.D. 66, less than three years after his successful embassy to Rome to free some fellow priests, Josephus was appointed by the “leading men” of Jerusalem as the emissary in Galilee of the provisional government. Josephus’s account of his interaction with John ben Levi of Gischala (hereafter simply “John”) provides a somewhat skewed account of the place of both himself and John within a larger framework of the relevant factions that formed the coalition government. Only when we see how Josephus and John are located in relationship to the factions of the Jerusalem coalition is it then possible to understand their behavior towards each other as depicted in Josephus’s books, *The Jewish War*, and *Life*.

The head of the Jerusalem coalition was Ananus ben Ananus, and within this coalition, there were two factions that competed for control of Galilee through Josephus and John. The coalition’s structure is explained as follows: Eleazar ben Ananias was the leader of the faction that controlled northern Galilee through John. A leading Pharisee, Simon ben Gamaliel, was a close friend of John’s and supported Eleazar’s faction by sending a deputation from Jerusalem to replace Josephus with John as commander of Galilee. When Josephus was first sent to Galilee to assess the situation on behalf of the coalition, Eleazar’s faction sent Joazar and Judas to represent their interests and ensure that John was placed firmly in control of northern Galilee. This Joazar was probably the same Joazar (or Joesdrus) ben Nomicos who later returned to Galilee as a member of the deputation to remove Josephus. John was later to become the leader of the resistance in Jerusalem for a year when Galilee finally fell to the Romans in A.D. 68.

The power of Eleazar ben Ananias’s faction was checked by the bloc led

by Jesus ben Gamalas, who had been High Priest in A.D. 63–64 (not to be confused with Jesus ben Sapphias who assisted John in his struggle against Josephus in Galilee). Josephus describes Jesus ben Gamalas as a close friend who warned him of the plot to remove him from Galilee. Both Josephus and John were able to gain and maintain their positions in Galilee as a result of their friendships with members of the Jerusalem aristocracy. The tensions of uneasy cooperation and outright competition between Josephus and John are apparent within *Life* and flow out of their membership in rival elite parties that were aspiring for complete control over Galilee. Given this context of the factional network between Jerusalem and Galilee we can analyze Josephus's interaction with John.

John of Gischala is introduced to the reader as a leader (or one of the leading citizens) of the Jewish town of Gischala. Although some have made him out to be a man of the common people, he was, and remained, a member of the elite class who led by virtue of *noblesse oblige*. At first, when it seemed that Galilee was not uniformly committed to the rebellion, John tried to bridle the elation of the citizens over the news of the revolt from Rome and urged them to maintain their allegiance to the emperor. Thus, we can see that both Josephus and John were birds of a feather in that they initially tried to defuse the situation and restore loyalty to Rome. This is an indication of their status as members of the ruling class and a further confirmation of the deportment of the Jewish upper echelons as Roman collaborators.

John's moderate stance did not last, for the surrounding Greek cities sacked his hometown, forcing him to respond by arming "all his followers," and then attacking and defeating their neighboring enemies. In light of the intense, local hostility that the Jews faced it is likely that Josephus's fortification activities were not primarily a defensive measure against the Romans but an interim measure against the Jews' Greek neighbors, who were stirred into action when they saw that the Jews were pitted against Rome. Similarly, it is possible that John fortified Gischala not from anti-Roman motives but as a defensive measure against non-Jewish neighbors. From the start of the *Life*, Josephus's readers are introduced to John as a leader of Gischala in northern Galilee who has an armed following.

We can assume that Jesus ben Gamalas' faction maneuvered to have Josephus installed as commander of Galilee, or at least southern Galilee as a countermeasure, being that Eleazar's faction arranged to have Joazar and Judas sent with Josephus to ensure that *their* man in Galilee, John, was able to maintain control of northern (Upper) Galilee. This scenario is confirmed by Joazar and Judas's support of John over the issue of who would control the imperial corn of Upper Galilee. It is obvious that whoever controlled the stores of imperial corn thus gained the ability to build and maintain support

within that region. Note that once Joazar and Judas confirmed John's position in Upper Galilee, they returned to Jerusalem. Their abrupt departure at this point in the action leads one to wonder if they had not been sent by Eleazar's faction for this very reason — to ensure that John gained control of the imperial stores and thereby maintained his (and therefore, Eleazar's) position in Upper Galilee.

Josephus, an astute politician and savvy about both Jerusalem and Roman politics, would have known full well that Eleazar was intent on maintaining John in Upper Galilee. Josephus would have figured that this is why he sent Joazar and Judas with him: They were commissars tasked to represent Eleazar's faction's interests in Galilee and support John over the issue of the imperial corn.

With the resource of the imperial corn behind him and the control of Upper Galilee that it conferred, John was now firmly in position to further strengthen himself and his faction by selling off the oil of Gischala to Caesarea Philippi at an enormous profit. In *Life* 76, Josephus was reluctant to prevent John from gaining yet more power through the sale of Gischala's oil out of fear of being stoned by the mob if he interfered. This is the first, notwithstanding by itself weak, indication of John's role as a patron of the people of Gischala and their support for him over against Josephus. The people of Gischala would have supported John in the sale of oil, as they knew the profits would have given their patron yet more resources to distribute among themselves, his clients.

In light of what follows, these two episodes show two elite rulers maneuvering for control over key resources of Upper Galilee. Whoever gains control of the resources attains a position to engage the Jews as clients and, indirectly, as supporters of one or the other factions of the Jerusalem coalition. Through the support of Eleazar's faction, as mediated by Joazar and Judas, John acquired control of the resources and Jews of Upper Galilee. After this point, Josephus is never able to exercise any authority in Upper Galilee. As will be seen below, the issue of patronage and resources are inextricably intertwined within *Life*.

Because Josephus and John were technically allies in the coalition, Josephus delegated power to Eleazar's supporters in Galilee as an appropriate measure. But he did not trust them, and much of his energy was directed to preventing them from supplanting him from his post. Josephus's attitude towards John and the rest of Eleazar's faction was ambivalent since they were technically in coalition with his own political associates.

John's unwillingness to cooperate with Josephus is certainly more than a matter of mere personal resentment — he had to promote the interests of his faction. Neither Josephus nor John was in a position to accept the other as a

full “associate” within the context of rival factions in an uneasy alliance. Cooperation for the sale of the corn oil, even if unwilling, would have been essential in light of the alliance.

This patronage competition is next seen in the contention for the loyalty of the Tiberians. The next time Josephus and John met was in Tiberias where John had travelled to the hot baths on account of his health. Since Josephus was busy in the village of Cana, John took advantage of his absence to try to sway the allegiance of the Tiberians from Josephus to himself. Josephus of course disparages those who heeded John’s appeal as men who were “ever craving for revolution, by temperament addicted to change and delighting in sedition.”

Silas, whom Josephus had earlier appointed as governor of Tiberias, warned Josephus of John’s intrigue. On hearing of John’s plot, Josephus marched with 200 men to Tiberias to confront John and try to regain control of the city’s inhabitants. This episode ends with Josephus running for his life from Tiberias when John sent men to kill him. When the clients of Josephus heard of John’s attempt on their patron’s life, they rallied to Josephus’s aid and threatened to sack Tiberias. This in turn caused John to retreat from Tiberias back to Gischala, and Josephus and John were once again in a stalemate over the control of Galilee.

In this affair, we observe one member of an elite faction, John, trying to out-manoeuvre a member of another elite faction, Josephus, for the loyalty of a group of clients — the Tiberians. This is clearly understood in Josephus’s speech to the Tiberians where he reminded them that disloyalty to one patron will put them at a disadvantage under their new patron, who will then suspect the quality of their loyalty and be less likely to govern in their interests. This interpretation of the hidden meaning of Josephus’s appeal is entirely probable when one remembers that loyalty is one of the few things the peasants had to offer the ruling class. Josephus has rightly identified the very dangerous position that the Tiberians were placing themselves in by withdrawing their loyalty from his client, Silas, the governor of Tiberias. They threatened to seriously devalue their primary resource — loyalty.

E

The Jewish Rebels — Zealots, Bandits, Sicarii, and Others: Organization, Motivation, Unit Strengths*

Thanks to Josephus's well-known bias against the Jewish insurgent groups, we have a very skewed picture of their origins, objectives and role. Reading between the lines, we get an idea that there was a more or less continuous presence of paramilitary bands, borderline criminal and seditious vagabonds since the time of the Maccabee rebellion in the mid second century B.C.

The groups are not homogeneous; nevertheless, all seem to have found more in common with the offshoot Pharisee faction than the Priestly Sadducee establishment. During the Maccabee uprising, the holy men spurring on the warriors were known as Hasidim. They continued to play a role as a rudimentary form of Pharisee throughout the time of the later Hasmonean rule, as the leaders became more Hellenized (capitulating to cosmopolitan fashion instead of behaving piously) and corrupt. They were persecuted during the time of John Hyrcanus II and Alexander Jannaeus (mid first century B.C.), and it is believed that at this time they formed outlaw bands, loosely identified with common criminal gangs.

Queen Alexandra, the last Hasmonean ruler, tried to make a rapprochement with them, but when she died, the ineptitude of her successors left the door open for Roman intervention and domination. During the reign of Herod the Great, these gangs became endemic, to the extent that Herod's army spent much of its time hunting them down, somewhat successfully. The out-

**Adapted from the author's chapter on "Beth-horon" published in 100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present, edited by Paul Davis, Oxford University Press, 2000.*

right conversion from Robin Hood-like underground opposition groups to political insurgents occurred in reaction to the conversion from client kingdom to full province after the death of Herod.

In opposition to the census imposed by the Syrian legate Quirinius in A.D. 6, according to Josephus, one Judas of Galilee, associated with another leader, Saddok, formed a “Fourth Philosophy”—after Sadducee, Pharisee, and Essene. The movement recognized no master but God, thus no temporal being nor other deity could require payments, prayer or any other form of homage from a Jew, especially a Jew in the land bequeathed to his people by Yahweh. Overlaying the matter of religious defilement, the small landholders were being crushed by the fiscal burdens of Roman taxation, Temple tithes and a general downturn in the economy. Many lost their lands to foreclosure and had to become common laborers on the grounds they formerly owned. Employment became so scarce after the completion of Herod’s vast make-work Temple project that his successors had to inaugurate a street-paving project so these men would not be left jobless.

Both piety and poverty were driving many into the arms of the proto-guerrilla gangs. Though Josephus is inconsistent about the origins and development of the Zealots, there is no real sense that they represented a single “organization” with a continuous tradition. Reading him between the lines, in conjunction with his modern interpreters, one sees that there were many groups with varying agendas. The sicarii, or daggersmen, for example, were urban terrorists who stalked upper echelon Jewish collaborationists and stabbed them with curved daggers concealed beneath their cloaks. Their connection with other “mainstream” Zealot organizations is nebulous. They were engaged at several points in internecine fighting with the more moderate factions of the resistance and were believed to have been the group that conducted the generally misinterpreted “last stand” at Masada Fortress.

At the onset of the Jewish War, there were a number of disparate guerrilla bands operating in Galilee as well as Judaea. Among the leaders of these groups, John of Gischala became prominent in Galilee and Simon bar Gioras took a leading role in Judaea. Eleazar bar Simon, the “captain” of the Temple who signaled the start of the revolt with his refusal to authorize sacrifices on behalf of the Roman Emperor, may also have led a Zealot coterie.

One estimate considers that there may have been a dozen or more guerrilla bands operating in packets of 1,000 to 3,000. They were armed with spears, swords, javelins, slings and throwing darts. They were very lightly armored if at all since their only armor was that taken from fallen Romans. Command structure was quite simple, and there does not appear to have been any formal chain of command. The war council in Jerusalem had to deal directly with the guerrilla chieftains, as there was no centralized staff system. Leader-

ship was thus charismatic and dependent upon the active involvement of the chieftain. The men in the ranks had no special loyalty to the powers in Jerusalem, only to their commander. Josephus's assertion of assembling, arming and training an "army" of 60,000 in Galilee based on the Roman model appears largely to have been wishful thinking.

F

Josephus's Presumptive Life Story*

The enigmatic Jewish-Roman “general” and historian Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37–c. 98) participated in, observed, then chronicled the Jewish War. It was the fate of future generations that this self-seeking crafty individual would be virtually our sole source of information on the conflict. The central controversy turns on whether he is a traitor to the Jewish cause (the oddly enduring prevailing viewpoint) or one who tried to defend his people’s dignity and way of life against its numerous detractors both during and after the cataclysm. This is the crux of the conflict between his two accounts and the subject of Shaye Cohen’s book.

Born Yoseph ben Mattathiah (or Mattayahu) ha-Cohen, in the reign of Caligula, shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus, Josephus was an exceptionally resourceful but otherwise representative highborn Jewish male of the priestly class, thoroughly rooted in Jewish Pharisaical practice and belief and also well-versed in the classical Greco-Latin learning of the ruling Romans. However, his basic mindset was that of a staunch advocate of the priestly aristocracy as the sole arbiters of Jewish life. His later claim that he was a Pharisee from the get-go is a bit questionable, given his background. He was proud of the fact that he was descended from a long line of Temple priests on his father’s side and Hasmonean royalty on his mother’s. His claim that due to his precocious grasp of the intricacies of Jewish Law (which is the Torah’s chief mission in transmitting the historical doctrine) learned white-bearded rabbis came to him for rulings when he was 14 is a stock ancient literary device. Nevertheless, in Josephus’s case it might be believed — his later works engaging in polemics with Greek and Greco-Roman authors manifest a singularly keen

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intellect. In his teen years, Josephus did the Judaeen equivalent of the *wanderjahr*, or the Grand Tour of Europe and “going on the road to find oneself” in later generations.... He was an apprentice, so to speak, in all three of the Jewish sects, the most interesting being the time spent with a religious hermit named Bannus in the wastelands dressed in and sheltered by only what grew wild. Some believe that Bannus was an Essene. It was this experience that seems to have impressed the young Josephus the most; however, being a practical man, he says he finally settled on the Pharisees — which, if true, would place him most likely among the progressive “reformers” faction of the Temple hierarchy as contrasted with the more politically conservative Sadducees.

A patriotic Jew, Josephus both feared and admired Roman military supremacy, which he saw firsthand on a youthful visit to Rome. This was just after the great fire of 64. Josephus acted as an envoy seeking the release of some lower priests imprisoned for what he calls “some trivial offense.” Thanks to the assistance of Aliturius, a Roman actor of Jewish descent and a favorite of Nero’s consort, Poppaea Sabina, Josephus was received favorably in the imperial court. There, Poppaea allegedly not only acceded to his request for release of the Jewish clergymen but also showered him with gifts. In the German-Jewish novelist Leon Feuchtwanger’s wonderful fiction trilogy featuring our subject, the libidinous Roman empress flirts demurely with the pensive, scholarly Judaeen innocent.

Josephus was a pragmatist who saw no hope in resisting Roman rule. His realism starkly contrasted with the mystical fatalism of many of the other Jewish leaders. Because of his priestly lineage and evident intellect, he became a natural, albeit reluctant, military leader of the rebellion, the causes of which his history fails to explain in any depth, and in fact, which he tries to pin on what he calls a misguided and sacrilegious handful of rabble-rousers. He clearly had no sympathy with the rebels, whom he consistently denigrates as mere bandits, thugs, and worst of all, blasphemous defilers of Judaism. His disdain, on reflection, is less the attitude of an arrogant, reactionary elitist than that of a person truly horrified by the calamity that befell his nation. Josephus consistently tried to find a middle ground satisfying both the Imperial needs of Rome and the dignity and integrity of the Jewish way of life.

He opposed the uprising against Rome. Before the escalation of events in the summer of 66, he was constantly reminding the hotheads of the invincibility of the Roman war machine that he had witnessed firsthand while in Rome. However, in the climate of the “terror” after the early, unforeseen success against Cestius Gallus, he would have been executed had he confronted the fanatical Jewish leaders. After an initial victory, the Jewish leaders were reduced to defending their fortified cities against the Roman armies of Ves-

pasian and his son, Titus. Josephus, designated by the rebels as the Governor-General of Galilee, engaged in a double game. The priestly Jerusalemite war council wanted Josephus to merely feign forging an army from the disparate bands of hotheads and prepare to forestall the Roman counterattack if this proved unavoidable. In reality, they wanted him to mollify the insurgents while the junta tried to hammer out a truce with the Romans. Instead of consolidating the defenses of Galilee, Josephus was mainly preoccupied with duping and defeating those who suspected ulterior motives as well as other power seekers in Galilee who wanted to secure petty fiefdoms in the power vacuum resulting from the temporary Roman defeat and withdrawal. Nevertheless, he ultimately managed to mount a semblance of resistance as the Romans advanced. Josephus defended besieged Jotapata, persistently frustrating the more numerous and better armed Romans through a variety of clever stratagems. However, Jotapata finally fell, and Josephus, through trickery, managed to survive a suicide pact among the few survivors. The celebrated and amazingly frank tale of how he was forced into a Masada-like suicide pact, including the drawing of lots, with a handful of survivors suspiciously echoes the scene at the fall of Masada. After his surrender, Josephus befriended Vespasian and Titus through flattering prophecies about the father ultimately becoming Emperor (which later proved accurate). The Roman generals spared him, and Josephus became an interpreter and intelligence analyst for the Romans and witness to their destruction of Judaea, including Jerusalem, in A.D. 70.

After the loss of Jerusalem, Josephus accompanied his captors to Rome, where he stayed for the rest of his life. There he was granted Roman citizenship for his wartime services to the two Flavian commanders, father and son, who were instrumental in achieving the Roman victory over Judaea, the elder who had become emperor, just as Josephus had prophesized. He was given the former residence of then-Emperor Vespasian on the outskirts of Rome and a generous pension. Needless to say, Josephus had made many enemies among his own kinsmen. Thus, even though he also had been awarded some estates in the vicinity of Jerusalem which were exempted from the Roman tax, he never returned to his native Judaea, which must have pained him greatly. Even in Rome, some of the former revolutionaries sought revenge against Josephus. Two of them who had fled to Cyrene and tried to stir up a revolt among the Jews there were captured and taken to Rome. There they falsely and spitefully fingered Josephus as being the chief instigator and financier of their rebellion. In the ensuing judicial inquiry before Vespasian, Josephus was cleared of all complicity. This demonstrated not only the continued enmity of the Jewish revolutionary parties but also Josephus's ambiguous and tenuous position in Rome.

Sometime around A.D. 74 or 75 he composed an early version of the *Jewish War* in the Aramaic language to be disseminated among the Jews and other Semitic peoples east of the Euphrates — presumably Parthia, Adiabene and other smaller provinces on the borderlands. This first version is lost to us, but apparently, it was in the form of a cautionary tale, demonstrating to the restive peoples in those areas, including his own, the futility and extravagance of resisting Roman rule. Around A.D. 79 he wrote a Greek version (some say translation but this is not accurate) of the war history, which received the official endorsement of Titus and was thus placed in the major libraries of Rome. Some point to this seal of approval as characterizing the work as an “official history.” Others note that the title, *The Jewish War*, connotes Josephus’s Roman vantage point, as it signifies the war of the Jews *against* Rome, whereas a Judean would have called it the Roman War. There is some evidence, however, that the original title may have been simply *On the Capture of Jerusalem* and that it was not given its present name until the third or fourth century. *War* does not merely cover the seven-year period of all-out armed conflict but extends back to the time of the Maccabean revolt two centuries earlier. Interestingly, there is considerable evidence that Josephus utilized the official “war diaries” of Vespasian and Titus as well as the after-action reports of the field commanders.

Around A.D. 93, Josephus wrote the *Jewish Antiquities*, a comprehensive history of the Jewish people, which in part is a loose rendering of the Jewish scripture extended up through the outbreak of the revolt in 66, consequently overlapping *The War* in its coverage of the Hasmonean, Herodian and Roman provincial periods. There are discrepancies. For example, Herod is painted in much darker colors in the later work. There is also a composition titled *Vita* (the *Life*), which was actually intended as an appendix to his *Antiquities* to provide his credentials. This objective was adjusted to fit the circumstances, however. Just after *Antiquities* was promulgated, it appears that a rival historian and former political enemy, another transplanted Judean by the name of Justus of Tiberias, wrote his own version of the war. There are no copies of this book extant, though Photius, the ninth century Byzantine scholar mentions having read it. In his war history, Justus evidently challenged Josephus’s version, accusing the latter of actually instigating Tiberias, among other localities, to rebel and then, having put his flock in danger, totally failing to exercise effective command to deal with the consequences of his incitement. Accordingly, Josephus devoted the bulk of the *Life* to a detailed examination of his military command in Galilee in refutation of Justus’s charges. As mentioned, Justus’s book is lost to us and can only be partially reconstructed from Josephus’s rebuttal.

Among Josephus’s last works is *Against Apion* (written in the late 90s),

a polemical work that seeks to defend the Jewish people against the slanderous falsifications of certain Greek and Egyptian authors, prominent among which is the named Apion. It is considered his most finely crafted work from a literary standpoint, whereas *Life* is his most awkward piece of expository writing. This possibly reflects the latter text's agonizing objective — to defend himself against something that bothered his conscience. It is my contention that the aggressively protective spirit of *Against Apion* is the key to Josephus's motive and attitude throughout all of his writings. It shows that, in spite of his debt to the Flavian dynasty for his safety and livelihood, Josephus remained devoted to the cause of protecting and advancing Jewish interests regardless of official Roman attitudes and practices.

Josephus's war history lacks impartial analysis of the causes of the Jewish rebellion or of the civil war among Jewish factions, which, in part, hastened the fall of Jerusalem. The astute, practical Josephus and his moral compromises shine through his works and leave the reader to decide whether he was a despicable traitor or an admirable realist. His *Jewish War* is a well crafted, if not quite candid account of Rome's campaign against Judaea — through the eyes of the Jewish priest, general, Roman captive/intermediary/intelligence analyst, and court historian. It describes the key first-century events in Judeo-Christian culture without which that epoch would be a blank page in our history books.

G

Estimating Numbers in the First Jewish Revolt

The first and most famous critic to discredit the ancient historians' use of numbers in warfare was Hans Delbruck, widely considered the father of modern military history. In his 1913 pamphlet, *Numbers in History*, distilled from his four-volume *History of Warfare*, Dr. Delbruck arrived at a sound method to estimate the likely numbers of combatants engaged in an ancient campaign. He considered the supply and transportation demands of contemporary battles and campaigns, mainly the Franco-Prussian war, and adjusted these criteria to conform to methods available to the ancients over similar terrain.

The principal problem is that the ancient historians engaged in deliberate inflation of the figures, whether for dramatic effect or because of current doctrines and dogma. Even when they were trying to be precise, there were misconceptions. Indeed, consider the widely differing estimates of protest rally crowds generated by police, organizers and the media. A participant in an ancient battle was no more likely to be able to calculate the total strength of his and the enemy's forces than someone basing his narrative on twice-told tales generations later. Examine, for example, the cut-and-paste methods of such modern historians as Martin Middlebrook, Cornelius Ryan, and others who specialize in collating oral histories. The best of them integrate the disparate anecdotal renditions with big-picture "official" bureaucratic studies. John Keegan in his classic *The Face of Battle* presented a case-by-case critique of the defects and skewed depiction of the experience of combat from a variety of viewpoints. Despite the ancient authors' careless approach to approximating battlefield statistics, Herr Delbruck and his literary heirs have shown that it is possible to arrive at reasonable estimates.

Josephus presents a special problem. He sometimes devises an "ideal" count for deaths, strengths, etc. that he distorts to conform to his specific

agenda; at other times, he seems to be more meticulous in his estimates. Jonathan Price, in “Appendix Three — Numbers” of his valuable *Jerusalem Under Siege* takes a more severe line on Josephus’s numbers than most students of The Jewish War: doubt them unless they are absolutely provable. He even excludes numbers that all scholars accept as “reasonable.” Price catalogs contradictions and patently absurd distortions in Josephus, where there are unacceptable margins of error. Bear in mind that Price is discussing Josephus’s reporting of Jewish troops; his figures for the Roman strengths and losses are widely accepted, since Josephus was relying on Vespasian and Titus’s official reports (the equivalent of Julius Caesar’s several “histories” of his own campaigns in Gaul, Spain, Africa and Italy) as well as some selected after action reports of lower commanders.

For example, Josephus reports that Simon commanded 15,000 troops, including 5,000 Idumaeans, and that John’s forces numbered 8,400 including 2,400 Zealots. These figures seem reasonable and are freely quoted in standard reference works such as Shatzman’s chapter, “Military Confrontation between Rome and the Jews” in *Judea and Rome — the Jewish Revolts*, ed. Uriel Rappaport (Jerusalem) in Hebrew and E. Mary Smallwood *Jews Under Roman Rule*. Price allows that the numbers *appear* to be less distorted than others transmitted by Josephus, such as his incredible casualty statistics for A.D. 70, which far exceed the population of present-day Jerusalem. He then goes on to cast doubt on even these figures that are widely accepted by the modern authorities. Price concludes that if Josephus could err astronomically in population figures so could he err on a smaller scale, “and small numerical errors are more serious in smaller figures.” Price assumes that if the figures are wrong, they are too low. For example, given the more reliable statistics for the size of the Roman forces outside the walls, the Jewish forces could not have been much *smaller* than reported. But he allows that this assumption, too, may be mistaken. His second example is less dismissive. *War* 4.1515 shows Simon invading Idumaea with a force of 20,000. This is exactly double the reported size of his forces in Jerusalem, not counting the Idumaeans. Price asserts that “it is easier to believe that Josephus made an error (of 100 percent) than that Simon lost 10,000 men in the civil war. He acknowledges, though, that “this is also a subjective judgment” and that “Josephus may have been in a better position to estimate Jerusalem’s forces.” The logical conclusion might be that, except where Roman army numbers are concerned, Josephus’s statistics are useless. However, this won’t do. Price is correct to be cynical concerning the precision of Josephus’s Jewish army inventories. But he concedes that his careful catalogue of doubts does not prevent us from arriving at *relative* strengths for the Jewish army factions arrayed against Titus’s siege force in 70. All is not despair.

Writing a few years after Price's valuable study on the politics of the main war council in Jerusalem, though apparently unaware of that book, Seth Schwartz ("Josephus in Galilee: Rural Patronage and Social Breakdown" in Parente and Sievers *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period* [Leiden, New York, Koln: E. J. Brill, 1994]) provides some touchstones. Schwartz's main objective in his essay is to show the importance of the patronage system in Galilee and how it affected the decisions to join or oppose certain insurgent groups. However, it does offer some helpful guidance in estimating Jewish fighting strengths, the more reliable figures presented in *Life* in contrast to *War*. Schwartz concludes, "We cannot calculate the number of brigands in lower Galilee in 66, nor their exact proportion in the population. We can, however, with a minimum of trust in *Life's* statistics, speak of orders of magnitude."

Schwartz supposes that first century Palestine as a whole could support a maximum of one million people and so posits a maximum of 200,000 for Galilee. Lower Galilee was more intensively farmed and less mountainous, and so more populous than the north; let us assume for it a population of 120,000. Josephus's evidence suggests a number of between 1,500 and (let's say) 8,000 for the brigands — between slightly over 1 percent and about 7 percent of the entire population — or between circa 5 percent and 20 percent of men between 16 and 60. Now, brigandage was an option available only to healthy young men, and was notoriously dangerous, so brigands must have constituted a relatively small percentage of those — even of those men of military age — who failed to find "normal" means of subsistence. All this is both crude and speculative but suffices to establish that even Galilee, which was richer and less bellicose than Judaea, was experiencing unusually severe social and economic problems in the 60s. The most useful episode for deriving useful numbers is, Schwartz asserts, the story of Josephus's "pacification" of the local brigand chiefs to form the kernel of his army, or a Praetorian Guard.

Probably better are the figures Josephus provides in *Life* for the size of his forces (presumably for the most part consisting of hired tough guys) in separate actions: He went from Cana to Tiberias with 200 men to meet John (*Life* § 90–92); the "bold youths" of Dabaritta who robbed the wife of King Agrippa's steward (*Life* § 126) were most likely Josephus's brigands — at any rate, when Josephus failed to give them their cut, 600 of them (now explicitly called *Lestai*) marched on him (*Life* § 145). The only thing certain about what happened next is that it bore little resemblance to Josephus's account of it in *Life*, but the figure of 600 is worth taking seriously. Later, around the time of the Jerusalem delegation, Josephus says he had 3,000 "hoplites" in his service and raised an additional 5,000 from the Galileean peasantry (*Life* § 213). These numbers are too round and perhaps also too large, and it is

impossible to tell what percentage of the 3,000 were brigands — cf. also the 500 hoplites Josephus sent to escort the Jerusalem delegation home (*Life* § 332). Yet the numbers are not absurdly large and the percentage of brigands among Josephus's "regular" forces, to the extent that he had them, was probably high (Cohen 1979: 211–213). Schwartz suggests that the size of the Lower Galileean brigand population on whom Josephus could reasonably expect to draw for support was 2,000 +/- 1,000. So, a mobile strike force of 600 seems trustworthy.

There were, in addition, brigand bands that did not cooperate with Josephus — or at least retained their integrity even if they were willing to make deals. When Josephus arrived at Sepphoris, the inhabitants hired a bandit from the Galilee-Ptolemais frontier called Jesus with 800 men to protect them from Josephus. Josephus obscures what happened next, but apparently, some sort of bargain between the competing bosses was struck. Soon after, a Galileean brigand chief, also named Jesus, the leader of 600 men, turned up at Jerusalem; there he was hired by Ananus and his faction to accompany the delegates sent to remove Josephus. There is no way to determine whether or not the two Jesuses are identical (Schalit 1968; Goodman 1987: 224). After the failure of the Jerusalem delegation, Josephus says he brought about the defection of 4,000 (so *Life* § 371; in JW 2 § 625, 3,000) members of John's faction (Cohen 1979: 225–226). It can be plausibly supposed that these constituted John's faction in Lower Galilee. Some of these were certainly brigands but not all; in both *War* (2 § 624) and *Life* (§ 370) Josephus says he had threatened to seize the property of John's partisans, a commodity brigands are generally supposed to have lacked.

All of the foregoing was taken into consideration in arriving at the projected strengths for the Jewish groups described in Appendix E, "The Jewish Rebels — Zealots, Bandits, Sicarii, and Others: Organization, Motivation, Unit Strengths."

H

Epic Stuff: Some Treatments of the First Revolt in Novels, Theater and Motion Pictures

I have concentrated on the First Revolt in this appendix mainly because the Bar Kokhba rebellion has not received attention of those writing or filming sweeping “sword and sandals” productions (an expression denoting larger-than-life exploitation of the early Christian and/or Roman imperial milieu). Needless to say, the even less familiar revolt under Trajan has been virtually ignored.

Some of the earliest literary depictions of the epoch covered by this book are fictionalized treatments of the life and setting of Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples or early believers. While the Jewish Revolt, or its run-up, merely serves as a backdrop for reverential re-tellings of the Gospels, some sword and sandal tales centering on the period are more focused on the political and social situation in Judaea than are the rigorously spiritual paeans. The novelty, and appeal for many, is that the tale of Jesus is told from the vantage point of Roman oppressors or Jews who eventually come to “see the light.” I discuss a few of the most famous below. I have devoted most of the discussion to the Josephus trilogy of Lion Feuchtwanger for reasons that should be apparent. There were, however, a string of best-sellers now less well-known, as well as some frankly terrible books, where cruel pagans are instantly converted to the new religion by a plucky Christian’s honest face and brave resistance to torture.

Among the early Christian novels that explored the Judaeian context, *Ben Hur*, subtitled *A Story of the Christ*, by former Civil War Union general Lew Wallace, is a standout. Published in 1880, it tells the didactic tale of Christian faithfulness not through directly involving Jesus and the disciples, but by way of a nationalistic Jew, Judah ben Hur, and his erstwhile boyhood friend,

Messala, who becomes a Roman general and a latter-day arch-enemy of Judah, whose family tragedy and enslavement in a Roman galley has poisoned him against everything Roman. Meanwhile, a brief encounter with Jesus turns the embittered Judah into a devotee of the nonviolent ways of the Christian flock. The time frame of the novel is during the lifetime and ministry of Jesus, and the 10 years or so thereafter. Thus it concerns the period roughly from A.D. 30 to 40, the turbulent prelude to the revolt. In the 1950s a version was published in Israel that was supposed to be a Hebrew translation of *Ben-Hur*, but was in fact a substantially modified book. In this version, all references to Christ and early Christianity were removed and a new ending added, implying that Ben-Hur was about to join Zealots in their uprising against Roman rule. As such, the book enjoyed considerable popularity at the time, blending in with the then-considerable sub-genre of original Hebrew historical novels with protagonists heroically facing various ancient enemies of the Jews, with obvious contemporary implications in newly-independent Israel. Since the film productions of 1927, and 1959 (see below), the emphasis has been on the spectacle of the lethal chariot race in which the two erstwhile friends, now bitter enemies, compete on the Circus Maximus — which has become a symbol for some of the triumph of Christianity over pagan Rome.

The next famous depiction of the early Christians in the Judaeian framework is Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*, which was originally written in Polish, the English translation was published in 1896. This book is more nearly contemporaneous with the First Revolt, taking place in A.D. 64, the year of the great fire in Rome. Set during the reign of the emperor Nero, *Quo Vadis?* tells the story of the love that develops between a young Christian woman and a Roman officer who, after meeting her fellow Christians, converts to her religion. Underlying their relationship is the contrast between the worldly opulence of the Roman aristocracy and the poverty, simplicity, and spiritual power of the Christians. The novel has as a subtext the persecution and political subjugation of Poland by Russia, a theme dear to the Polish novelist. It is presented in a very objective way. Not all of the Christians are presented compassionately. In fact, one of them is depicted as a severe, unyielding extremist. Similarly, not all the Romans are portrayed unsympathetically. The noblest character in the novel may very well be Petronius, who uses his influence as much as he can to alleviate the suffering he sees around him. As usual, the Jews are portrayed only as a backdrop or foil to the noble Christians.

Lloyd C. Douglas, co-author of *The Robe*, published in 1942, began his literary career after leaving the ministry at the age of 52. All of his novels, essays, and short stories relied on his spiritual background for thematic and creative inspiration. At the height of his popularity, Douglas was receiving on average 100 letters a week from fans. One of these letters provided the idea

for *The Robe*. Hazel McCann, a department store clerk from Ohio, wrote to Douglas asking what he thought had happened to Christ's clothing after the crucifixion. The book's title refers to that crucifixion garment worn by Jesus. The protagonist of the story is a young Roman soldier, Marcellus, in charge of the crucifixion. He wins Christ's robe in a dice game at the foot of the cross. Marcellus then starts his quest to find the truth about Jesus. He becomes a convert and a martyr in the Colosseum to the new religion.

These three novels represent the most celebrated of the fictional renditions of the Josephan epoch in Judaeian affairs, albeit told from a piously Christian viewpoint. I will briefly note the cinematic adaptations of these works, which were even more renowned than the print versions. Lastly, I want to suggest one of the most illustrious, if overlooked, fictional treatments of the life and times of Flavius Josephus: the German-Jewish author Lion Feuchtwanger's Josephus trilogy.

Ben-Hur was among the first of these romances to make it to the silver screen. The 1925 silent version starring Francis X. Bushman as Messala was well received as a religious message film, but it was the spectacle of the chariot race that formed the focal point of the movie. Stage productions had already been running for 25 years when, in 1922, two years after the play's final tour, the Goldwyn company purchased the film rights to *Ben-Hur*.

Shooting began in Italy in 1923. After two years of production problems and accidents, the project moved back to Hollywood, where the title role was assigned to screen idol Ramon Novarro. The production's budget skyrocketed. The studio's publicity department was shameless, advertising the film with lines like: "The Picture Every Christian Ought to See!" Although audiences flocked to *Ben-Hur* after its premiere in 1925 and the picture grossed nine million dollars, its huge expenses made it a loser for MGM. MGM was unable to recoup its investment of four million dollars. In filming the chariot race scene, the actors and stunt extras tried to play it safe, so to increase the excitement of this climactic scene, the producer offered \$100 to the winner of the mock race — this resulted in a hugely exciting sequence, but fatalities and accidents incurred during the filming engendered revisions of the rules of film safety. So exciting was this race, that when the movie was remade in 1959, with Charlton Heston as Judah, they recreated the 1925 race shot for shot.

While the 1959 remake of *Ben-Hur* represents perhaps the apex of modern cinematic efforts of the genre (unless one considers Mel Gibson's controversial 2004 crucifixion retelling *The Passion of the Christ*), two predecessors of the early 1950s, respectively, the artistically forgettable *The Robe* and the equally trite *Quo Vadis* represent rather clichéd examples of the religious-themed cinematic morality play. Both movies were devised when Hollywood

was desperately trying to lure folks away from little video screens in their living rooms back into the lavish movie emporia. While both were box-office successes, using the new cinemascope wide-screen panoramas to good effect, they epitomized the glitzy Hollywood approach to the era. Both were pitched in the self-serving manner of high-minded passion plays, pitting pure Christian good against debauched Roman evil. The only standout was perhaps Peter Ustinov's brilliant rendition of Nero in *Quo Vadis*, a more nuanced performance than the other more stereotypical character types. At least that film did depict Nero and Poppaea Sabina, both figuring largely in the saga of Flavius Josephus. One notable feature of such Roman-themed blockbusters is that the aristocratic Romans are typically played by Brits, with their patently noble diction, while the hoi polloi are portrayed by actors with American (plebian) accents.

Having dispensed with both the semi-competent and the cheesy, I will devote some space to Lion Feuchtwanger's unjustly neglected Josephus trilogy. In an interview, Feuchtwanger declared:

I chose therefore to transplant this conflict (between Jewish nationalism expressed in a gentile homeland and transplantation into a Jewish homeland) into the soul of a man, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who, it appeared to me, had experienced it in the same way as so many do today, with the difference that he did so 1,860 years ago.

The neglected German-Jewish author Lion Feuchtwanger is one of the most stalwart defenders of Josephus's blighted reputation. Feuchtwanger's fiction trilogy, approximately based on Josephus's discernible life history, is considered by many Josephan scholars to be in the forefront of the modern tendency towards moderation of the latter's conventional traitor image. In Germany, paperback editions of Feuchtwanger's novels have been enjoying a renaissance. They have sold close to a million copies from the late 1970s to the present day. No such recognition has been forthcoming among the world's English-speaking population. Even among those English-speaking commentators that have mentioned Feuchtwanger's work, the Josephus trilogy is overlooked. Yet, knowledgeable specialists generally agree that Feuchtwanger's depiction of the noted Jewish historian is his finest achievement.

Feuchtwanger was a German Jew who wrote his works in German even after he resettled among LA's German expatriate arts colony in 1941— all refugees from Hitler's regime. His Josephus (the German title was *der Jüdische Krieg*, after Josephus's own semi-fictional history), the first episode of the trilogy, reflects his determination to make the historical novel (his forte) relevant to contemporary issues. Josephus Flavius is a wonderful vehicle to illustrate the modern Jew's schizizophrenia. On the one hand, the Diaspora Jew of the early twentieth century was pressured to be a nationalist patriot within

his adopted country and as such a “citizen of the world.” On the other hand, he is obliged to champion Judaism and be a defender of the “Jewish people” refuting the ignorant slanders of those alien to its rich culture. During the waning days of Weimar Germany when the Nazi handwriting was already on the wall, this duality was very much on the mind of Feuchtwanger and his fellow German-Jewish intellectuals. Josephus, who — in his own words — was a leading light of the aristocratic Priestly order in Jerusalem, trained in the worldly Hellenistic culture as well, saw the inevitable and invincible rise of Roman political supremacy. He also watched the confrontational collision course that rebellious factions of Judaeen Jews were taking toward the Roman colossus. He feared for the future of his people.

Feuchtwanger’s name had already become a literary by-word by 1926–1927 in England and America. It was then that his first major novel, *Jud Süß*, was brought out. It was known as *Jew Suess* in its London edition and as *Power* under the imprimatur of the Viking Press in New York.

The usually brutal London reviewer Arnold Bennett described the story about the eighteenth century Jewish courtier Joseph Süß Oppenheimer as a novel that fascinated at the same time as it educated the reader. Equal critical acclaim greeted the novel throughout the world. In a cruel twist, Nazi filmmakers appropriated the story for one of the first Nazi-influenced motion pictures, also titled *Jud Süß*. Of course the Nazi rendering depicted Suess-Oppenheimer as a typically rapacious Jewish money-manipulator.

There is a bizarre parallel to this Nazi desecration. When the inaugural installment of the Josephus trilogy was released in Germany under the title *der Jüdische Krieg* (*The Jewish War*), anti-Semites initially snapped it up under the misconception that the novel concerned the final reckoning between Christians and the wicked Jews, in which the Jews get their comeuppance.

As the German-Jewish author of novels that astutely portrayed Jewish themes, Feuchtwanger was repulsive to the National Socialist party, which was burgeoning in the 20s. His novel *Success* (*Erfolg*), on which he started to work in 1927, was published in 1930. In that year the Nazis received 18.3 percent of the votes. To Goebbels, Feuchtwanger became an un-German Jewish criminal. When Hitler came into power, Feuchtwanger was fortunately on an American tour. He realized he could not go back to his home, which had been plundered by the Nazis, and much of his invaluable rare manuscript collection — including many Josephus-related items — was destroyed. He elected to take up residence in France.

In France Feuchtwanger completed the trilogy, begun in Berlin, on the life and work of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in “officially” friendly Rome in the first century A.D. As Feuchtwanger saw Josephus, the latter wished to transcend his Roman affiliation as well as his Jewish nation-

alism and achieve world citizenship. The literary contrivance, Josephus's alleged "Psalm of the World Citizen," is the heart of the trilogy. Josephus sought an undivided cosmopolitan world but, again and again, was thrown back to his Jewish origins. At the end of the final novel Josephus realized that he had pursued worldwide consummation too soon, but, with his dying breath, prayed that *Der Tag wird kommen* (The Day Will Come), as the German title reads. The American version is called *Josephus and the Emperor*, emphasizing the contest of wills between Josephus and the increasingly hostile Domitian. Volume 2, *Die Sohne* (*The Son*) is translated as *Jew of Rome* in the English and American editions to highlight Josephus's "integration" into Roman society, which falls far short of his unrealistic expectations. The German title denotes the significance—and tragedy—of Josephus's legacy: the sad fate of his children.

While Feuchtwanger was working on the last chapters of *Josephus*, World War II broke out. Feuchtwanger and thousands of other anti-Fascists were interned in France. German exiles were, after all, Germans and thus potentially dangerous. His escape and eventual refuge in America, with the covert connivance of U.S. diplomats, is quite an adventure story in itself.

In Germany, paperback editions of Feuchtwanger's novels have sold close to a million copies from the late 70s to the present day. His Frankfurt publisher asserts that "In my 30 years of experience as an editor, I have never seen a renaissance comparable to that of Feuchtwanger."

No such popularity has attended Feuchtwanger in the United States, where he remains largely unknown, except among cognoscenti of modern German literature. This reader unfamiliarity most likely stems from the fact that Feuchtwanger was anathema to American Cold Warriors of the late 1940s and the 1950s. In 1937, in the midst of the vicious "show trials" of falsely accused army officers, Feuchtwanger had made a visit to Moscow, in which he was granted an interview with Stalin, based upon Feuchtwanger's already apparent sympathy with socialism. His report on the experience warmly praised Stalin and his program. He never formally recanted that naïve attitude. This taint as a fellow traveler, while it might have been appropriate to some of Feuchtwanger's colleagues in the West Coast German colony, such as Brecht, was unfair. Feuchtwanger believed in egalitarianism and hated the fascism that had done so much evil to him and his people. But he was hardly a cheerleader of the Communist cause.

As far as his attitude towards using historical themes in a contemporary and politically relevant novel, the following excerpt from one of Feuchtwanger's essays is instructive:

One topic that has deeply moved me as long as I can remember is the conflict between nationalism and internationalism in the heart of a single indi-

vidual. If I were to tackle this theme in the form of a contemporary novel, I fear my presentation might be overshadowed and contaminated by personal grudges and resentment. I chose therefore to transplant this conflict into the soul of a man, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who, it appeared to me, had experienced it in the same way as so many do today, with the difference that he did so 1,860 years ago.

I hope I have retained the peace of mind to judge things fairly; still I believe I can do a convincing job of depicting the persons who —1870 years ago— put the torch to various central buildings in Nero's Rome, poor, foolish implements of the feudalists and militarists of their day that they were, and indeed do a more convincing job of it than I could of describing the people who two years ago set fire to the Reichstag in Berlin, poor, foolish tools that they were of the feudalists and militarists of our own era.

Some Josephus specialists have cringed upon perusing Feuchtwanger's liberties with their subject. For example, in *Josephus*, the protagonist is depicted as having been a temporary convert to the Zealot cause (styled as Maccabees by Feuchtwanger). This characterization is certainly a stretch; whatever sympathy Josephus may have had for the uprising was seen from the wary viewpoint of his self-aggrandizing priestly caste. Feuchtwanger had this to say with respect to such artistic license:

I have always made an effort to render every detail of my reality with the greatest accuracy; but I have never paid attention to whether my presentation of historical facts was an exact one. Indeed, I have often altered evidence which I knew to be documented if it appeared to interfere with my intended effect. Contrary to the scientist, the author of historical novels has the right to choose a lie that enhances illusion over a reality that distracts from it. Hindenburg scolded the artist who painted his portrait for incorrectly reproducing the buttons on his uniform: the painter Liebermann had different views on portraiture. It is not difficult to demonstrate that Homer, the authors of the Bible, Shakespeare, and countless other writers of historical works down to the present day have been surprisingly bold and cavalier in their handling of documented reality.

The final installment of the trilogy was published in the United States in 1942. It revealed Josephus as having failed as a father. Both sons (by different wives, matrimony being another of Josephus's failings) had met tragic ends: The one became a stalwart Roman military commander fighting the Jewish rebels; the other had an "accident" at sea, arranged by Domitian, for the young man was a would-be Messiah and, as such, a threat to the principate. Josephus himself was killed in Galilee attempting to reach a Jewish rebel band in another rising in the year A.D. 107. This invented rebellion occurs under the aegis of a young Rabbi Akiva, in reality, spiritual backer of Bar-Kokhba during the latter's rebellion of 132–135.

Some critics, who admire the unappreciated fictional studies of Jose-

phus, marvel that it was never brought to the screen. In fact, the film producer Dino De Laurentis near the end of Feuchtwanger's life had asked the latter to work up a screenplay adaptation of his Roman-Jewish War epic. Before he did this, however, Feuchtwanger had wanted to complete a screenplay on Simon Bolivar. In any event, there is no trace of a manuscript in Feuchtwanger's records, as they reside in the Feuchtwanger Archives at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

I have been seeking leads to the whereabouts, or existence, of any such Josephus screenplay. This quest has been energized by my discovery of a play manuscript written by Feuchtwanger in Hebrew, based on the first volume of his trilogy. Titled *The Jewish War*, it is a faithful representation of the novel, albeit in a mere 32 pages. The brevity of this manuscript suggests that it is an unfinished product. The provenance of the work is unknown. There is a Hebrew language translator — coincidentally reminiscent of Josephus's alleged Greek language assistants. I have forwarded copies of the play to several professors in Israel, England and Switzerland — authorities on Josephus and German-Jewish literature. The play is being translated for me, although I have had it translated orally. From my preliminary review, it appears to be very faithful to the novel.

One of my informants tells me that the person listed as a translator or redactor on the title page used to write scripts for Israeli radio, indicating that the piece may have been performed on the air.

My hope is that this short piece can be expanded into a full screenplay and, as such, will attract some persons or organizations in the film industry who will at last do justice to this fascinating and powerful story — a tale that touches on the intense cataclysm in history when the Jewish people were in the last throes of the Temple cult, and the Christians were forming a new faith. Most importantly it will bring the amazing life and works of Josephus Flavius to a wide audience.

As a footnote, I'll mention three lesser-known fictional treatments. *The Triumph* by Ernest K. Gann (1986), the sequel to *The Antagonists* (his earlier novel was focused on the siege of Masada), is chiefly about Xth Legion commander Flavius Silva's involvement in the power struggle between Titus and Domitian for control of Rome. *The Antagonists* is notable for utilizing Josephus as one of its secondary characters. While Gann's first novel of the series is a pretty standard rehash of the well-worn Masada legend, the subsequent novel's treatment of Josephus and his status in Flavian Rome is worth a look.

The second book is quite obscure in the West. Israel Eldad was a radical Jewish nationalist, an advocate of a Greater Israel, who rejects any statehood for Palestinian Arabs. In 1982, his Hebrew-language book, *Pulmus, ha-hurban u-lekahav: ketsad nityahes le-hurban ha-bayit ule-mered Bar Kokhba*

(translated roughly as *Controversy: Our Perceptions of the Destruction of the Second Temple and of Bar Kokhba's Rebellion*, Mosad Van Lir bi-Yerushalayim, 1982), includes a short section speculating on what if the Jewish rebellions against Rome during A.D. 115–117 and 132–135 had occurred at the same time and were coordinated. Eldad concludes that with the assistance of the Parthian Empire, Roman rule in the East would have been severely weakened or destroyed. This speculation also guided my own rudimentary alternative history described in Appendix I, which follows. However, I differ with the conclusion that Rome might have been destroyed. My take is that it could have been weakened only to the extent that it would offer an “honorable truce,” even amity, to the Jews.

There is another untranslated Hebrew-language counterfactual treatment, Refael Rupin's *Milhemet ayehudim 2 (The Jewish War 2)* published by Yaron Golan publishers in 1994. In this novel, the Jews defeat the Romans in the great rebellion in A.D. 70 and build an independent state, which later destroys itself through internal squabbling. It was seen in Israel as a warning against modern-day trends, much as was the book by Harkabi on the Bar Kochba revolt. I am in agreement that the civil strife that spelled eventual doom for the Jewish nation was in the DNA.

I

Judaea Invicta— The Revolt That Might Have Been: A Reflection on the Elements for an Alternative Outcome

Simply stated, an alternative history is the description and/or discussion of an historical “what if” with some speculation about the consequences of a different result. Alternative histories, or counterfactuals, as they are occasionally known, are not universally respected among scholars. In fact, there is an ongoing controversy between those academics who support them as legitimate ways to re-examine historical events and those who reject them as mere entertainment at best. The format originally derives from economic analysis, which posits alternative outcomes in order to demonstrate the potential effects of different economic theories. There are basically two ways to present such assessments: the novel, pure and simple, and nonfiction “counterfactuals.” In the case of the latter treatment, the occasional complete volume is published, sometimes as a comprehensive hypothesis examined through a faux history, such as Robert Sobel’s *For Want of a Nail* or Peter G. Tsouras’s *Gettysburg: An Alternate History*.

In the foregoing analysis of the three seemingly independent revolts, I have endeavored to show that they were not simply unrelated rebellious eruptions, but that such an interpretation derives from the fragmentary nature of the sources and the religious propagandistical agendas of latter day redactors of the early texts. Further, the War of A.D. 66–74 was a “near run thing” meaning that there were several turning points representing missed opportunities. Given a few tweaks of the record, instead of the renowned celebratory Flavian *Judaea Capta* coins, archaeologists of the future alternative world might uncover Jewish-minted issues commemorating an historic treaty of friend-

ship. As an alternative to the image of a weeping, submissive Judaeen woman, obeisant before a triumphant Roman soldier, we could examine the figure of a Judaeen warrior standing next to the Roman combatant, with whom he clasps hands in amity.

Significantly, Flavius Josephus mentions in his Greek version of *The Jewish War*, published around A.D. 76, that he had sent an earlier edition in Aramaic to the Jews of Parthia as a warning against rebelling in support of the failed revolt in Judaea. My impression, conveyed in the main narrative of this book, is that the three rebellions comprised a single drawn-out conflict, bequeathed from generation to generation. My faux history is based upon imagined revisions and embellishments of the Wars of the Sons of Darkness and the Sons of the Light (in the enigmatic textual cylinder among the Dead Sea Scrolls), inscribed around 50 to 100 years before Josephus's war.

In this exploratory examination of an alternative Roman-Jewish War, I have slightly changed the traditional account of the actual aims and roles of Josephus, Simon bar Gioras, John of Gischala, Princess Berenice and her supposed lackey brother, Herod Agrippa II, and Nero's mistreated and bitter stunning concubine, Sabina Poppaea in light of the grand design and covert stratagems revealed in some newly unearthed (in the alternative timeline) ersatz documents. I believe that the modifications remain true to the character of each. My alternative Roman-Jewish War fuses the events of A.D. 66–74, 115–117 and 132–135 in order to combine the most promising elements of each rebellion.

Although I began this exercise as a novel, I have to agree with my sons that dramatic dialogue is not my forte. So this will remain as a "factual" sketch for a counterfactual history. I have taken some liberties with the time frame and had originally arrived at a conjectural date of around A.D. 107, borrowing that used by Lion Feuchtwanger for his third installment of the Josephus trilogy (see Appendix H), *Der Tag wird kommen (Das gelobte Land)*, English edition *The day will come*, American edition *Josephus and the Emperor*) in which he sets out a kind of embryonic "alternative Jewish War." However, only the opening phase is discussed as Josephus expired just as the revolt got underway. Upon further reflection, however, in order to retain some of the key *dramatis personae* from the First Revolt, I took the simpler expedient of employing the approximate time frame of that rebellion, folding in the critical elements of the latter two conflicts.

This section represents a much abridged adaptation of my article *Judaea Invicta*, which was initially presented as a paper at the "War College" seminar at Origins, the annual war-gaming convention held in Columbus, Ohio, in July 2006. A longer version of this lecture was published as an article in the British war-gaming periodical *Slingshot: The Official Journal of the Soci-*

ety of *Ancients*, Issue 250 (January 2007, 18–25). Here I simply present my chapter synopses; if anyone would like a comprehensive exposition of the weapons innovations including artillery and naval assets, political backdrop, characters (both altered actual persons and those invented for the tale), and opposing forces, please refer to the *Slingshot* article. While it is only the bare bones of an alternative historical version and needs some tidying up, I thought it might be amusing.

1. A.D. 40, Ptolemais port, Galilee, a crowd gathers to watch stevedores attending a Roman merchantman offload a massive statue of the Roman emperor Caligula, destined to be erected in the High Temple in Jerusalem. Small groups are being harangued by wild-eyed seers who suggest that the day of judgment is nigh. The agitated multitude is carefully scrutinized by legionaries posted on the heights overlooking the harbor, who are distracted by the vocal rabble-rousers and so don't notice the members of the Maccabee Guard, a more disciplined offshoot of the early Zealot movement from the Census Rebellion of A.D. 4, passing among the mob. Experienced cavalry and archers from Bythnia (the Babylonian military colony planted there by Herod I) have formed the nucleus of this proto-army, whose scouts are seeking out recruits among the younger and healthier males present and are able to corral a number of candidates under the noses of the Romans. Among the priests who were sent from Jerusalem to watch this ominous spectacle is Mattiyahu, the father of the future Judaeian commander Josephus. Observing how some petitioners who approach the tribune commanding the escort for the procession are cut down by Roman swords, Mattiyahu vows to patiently await the right time but work for the eventual defeat of the Kittim. There is disaffection of the common people with the Sadducees, who they perceive as appeasing Caligula and submissively tolerating emperor worship in conjunction with the Jewish sacraments. Herod Agrippa I, the last effective Hasmonean ruler, is thwarted in his efforts to convene an assembly of Near Eastern potentates and to fortify weak spots in the walls of Jerusalem; the Romans smell a conspiracy. He is sent to Rome for "re-education." In A.D. 45, a "young lion," Simon bar Gioras, at age 15, takes charge of the Maccabee cells and trains them in guerrilla tactics. [Note: this plot device of the "Maccabees" as a well-organized revolutionary group is to some extent borrowed from Feuchtwanger's first installment of his *Josephus* trilogy].
2. A.D. 64. The Jewish High Council (Sanhedrin) sends Joseph bar Mattiyahu (latterly Flavius Josephus), reputed to be a crafty and worldly young member of the second echelon of priests from Jerusalem to Rome

on a curious mission. Ostensibly he will petition Nero's court for the release of some lesser priests who were imprisoned for some minor disturbances in which they were severely provoked by a drunken tribune. He will meet with Poppaea Sabina, Nero's consort, but the subject will not be confined to the plight of the prisoners. The emperor is away on one of his cultural tours of Greece and has authorized a counselor to act in his stead, in the company of Poppaea. Having just lost their unborn child as a result of a beating that the insanely jealous Nero administered on Poppaea (almost taking her life), is receptive to plots against Nero. The meeting with Josephus is authorized by an envoy from Vespasian, who is awaiting further instructions at his post in Africa, where he is proconsul and highly unpopular among the civil servants there for his cost-cutting measures along with a crackdown on Roman officials squeezing protection money from local chieftains. He retains the respect of his legions for his professionalism and attention to the needs of the soldiers. During the meeting in the imperial court, Poppaea warmly greets Josephus and sends off all courtiers on various errands, leaving only Josephus, her trusted counselor Anexander, and the three prisoners. After ascertaining that there are no curious ears about, she interrogates Josephus about the readiness of his people in Judaea. She arranges for him to observe some maneuvers of the legions, ostensibly — so the commander is told — so that Josephus will return to Judaea and warn off any hotheads who think they can challenge the might of Rome. He is taking notes regarding the pace and configuration of the sub-units as they prepare to take a fortified place.

3. A.D. 65. Parley in Cilicia with Corbulo and Vespasian. Cilician pirate chieftains coordinate with Jewish sailors from Joppa. Representatives from Adiabene (Parthia) Jewish communities/military forces and Niger of Peraea, commander of militant Christian sect from Nabataea. Consummation of plans initiated by Agrippa I before he was squeezed out by Rome in A.D. 40. [The relations between the Jews and the Nabataean had, in fact, started with great friendship in the beginning of the Hasmonean period and declined until the Alexander Jannaeus wars and the accession of Roman rule.]
4. A.D. 65, forest in Germanica Superior, a meeting of four legionary legates with Caecinus and Vitellius where they outline strategy against their likely enemies for succession after imminent assassination of Nero. Consider how to defeat Vespasian in Judaea where he appears to be forging a loyal following among the legions and local auxilia/rulers there.
5. Petra, Spring, A.D. 65. The radical, combative Christian sect attends a

- meeting with Josephus's representative — his liaison with the renegade Christians. Simon Aketelos, a former follower of Saul of Tarsus who defects to the militant wing in reaction to the destruction of his family in the Neronian Thermidor represents the Nabataean Christians along with their military leader, Niger of Perea. Josephus also authorizes John the Essene to coordinate the military effort with the Nabataean Christians. Privately this group hedges their bet on the Judaeans and work up contingency plans for both (a) a Judaeans stalemate and honorable truce with the Romans (out and out victory doesn't seem to be a realistic option) and (b) a victorious Roman campaign of annihilation.
6. A.D. 68. The testing ground at Wadi Arava, Judaeans desert. Roman artillery expert Gaius Vedennius Moderatus, defecting from Vitellius, whose cruelty towards his troops in Germany alienated this dedicated officer, is overseeing the trials of the new missile weapons that had been produced in Rhodes with the assistance of the Alexandrian Jew Heron, an engineer/inventor, who is making some last minute modifications. John of Gischala is there as representative of Josephus.
 7. A.D. 68. Palace of Agrippa II, with Berenice the apparent dominant figure in a meeting with military representatives from Adiabene to discuss coordination between the Parthian Jews and Jewish cadres in Alexandria, Cyrene, Cyprus & Cilicia (which include naval components) and Bythnia. Josephus is somewhat awed by the strong-willed Berenice, unaccustomed to such forcefulness in Jewish women.
 8. A.D. 68. Britannia. Eleazar ben Deinaios, the escaped galley slave from Egypt arrives and is concealed among Boudicca's Druid warriors where he receives a crash course on how to fight the Romans at sea and on the beaches. He is conveyed to Rhodes, where he is familiarized with the new ship-board variants of the advanced missile weaponry being completed there.
 9. A.D. 69, at sea aboard the command ship in the Roman flotilla en route to Alexandria to safeguard the grain supplies now being interdicted by the Joppa pirate enclave. Admiral Marcus Turbo maps out strategy to cripple the pirates in their lair. Naval battle along the north Sinai coast when Judaeans ships emerge from treacherous reefs and shallows believed to be impassable to ships and cause Roman fleet to lose 40 percent of their transports along with the troops and horses, another 15 percent beached or damaged to put them out of action, total of 3,800 Roman marines killed/critically wounded. Jews lose only 20 ships, 13 of which are beached and repaired, 85 sailors killed and wounded.
 10. The Port of Ptolemais, Galilee, A.D. 70. Disembarkation of XII Legion,

which the Jews ambush near Mt. Carmel. The Romans sustain 35 percent casualties and evacuate to ships, which are then hit by Lembi (fast, maneuverable galleys), skirting up the coast from Joppa, which were lying in ambush around the cape below that port.

11. A.D. 70, Rome, Nero's chambers. Senator Marcus Antoinius Primus and Gaius Licinius Mucianus, governor of Syria, are "in the wings" as Poppaea Sabina baits the trap for the assassination, which is carried out by two gladiators, whose escape from the pens at the amphitheater is contrived by Poppaea and the alienated Praetorian Guard. Word goes out to Vitellius in Germany who sets in motion his grand plan to eradicate his rivals while they are still in the Near East preparatory to their march on Rome.
12. A.D. 71, Wadi el Arish, Sinai (near the modern Abu Ageila defile). Hephaistos ben Hillel routs a Roman demi-legion through a ruse. Meanwhile, news of Nero's assassination in Rome is reaching the pro-Jewish Roman forces in place, while Vitellius's legions embark for Alexandria to try to defeat the legions loyal to Vespasian and Corbulo now in the Judaean theater.
13. A.D. 71., the southwest of Alexandria, near the site of the 1942 Battle of El Alamein. The decisive battle between Vespasian and Titus's forces on the one side and those commanded by Vitellius on the other. Vitellius, defeated by the Flavian coalition, evacuates remnants of his forces by sea from Alexandria to Puteoli, Italy. En route, a number of the transports are intercepted and sunk by the Jewish pirate vessels. Peeved at what he perceives as Jewish dishonor, Agrippa II has a parting of the ways with his sister Berenice, who by now is in the camp with her lover, Titus, some 20 years her junior. Agrippa throws in with Vitellius, embarking his non-Jewish forces for Italy (the Jewish units desert and join the Flavian armies).
14. Battles in the extreme northwest of Italy, A.D. 72. This will reflect the actual battles during the "year of the four emperors" (esp. the order of battle), as recorded by Tacitus, with some slight modifications. Here the remainder of Vitellius's forces evacuated from Alexandria, along with some other legions newly arrived from Germany and Gaul, are defeated. The Dacians coordinate their resistance with the Roman-Jewish Flavian contingents. Loss of the Cyrenaican Jewish unit guarding the Dacian flank, but the Dacians are able to regroup and change their attack plan after the rout of the Jewish group so as to hit the Vitellian phalanx just as it was breaking camp.
15. Final battles in Jerusalem, A.D. 73. Here some of the Sadducees, see-

ing that the Temple will be dominated by the radical Pharisee sect and believing that this will profane the holy site, set fire to the Temple, unsuccessfully attempting to frame soldiers of Titus's legions for the act.

AFTERMATH. As the Flavians, Vespasian and Titus return to Rome to be installed, the radical Pharisee sect represented by the Maccabee Guards arranges to have the Temple rebuilt, but there is now less emphasis on animal sacrifice, which is simply reduced to ceremony, and more stress on its role as an academy, similar to that actually set up in Yabneh. The Jerusalem coterie of the Christians, led by Peter and James, remain a dissident sect within the Jewish camp and numbers of Essenes swell their ranks. The militant Nabataean Christians become reconciled to mainstream Judaism as the sages in the Holy Temple incorporate the wisdom and moral teachings of Jesus alongside those of Hillel and Gamaliel, whereas the Peter/James movement bears the entire brunt of the Roman crackdown on what they believe as dangerous superstitions popular among the *hoi polloi* in Roman society in the 80s under Domitian. During this same period, the Jews in Judaea (now renamed Israel), Egypt, Parthia, Cyprus and Cyrene are wracked by internal strife — Sadducees seeking to resume control of the Temple administration, pious Pharisees perceiving that the Judaeans and Diaspora Jews are becoming Romanized, seek to have more power adhere to the new synagogues and religious centers outside of Jerusalem which they set up. A splinter group of Christians, believing that the Jews have strayed too far from the precepts of Jesus, join up with the Jerusalem Church and preach to the pagans, despairing of the Jews' high-handed handling of their vocation. Internal rifts result in another Jewish civil war in the early A.D. 100s. Perceiving the dangerous chaos in Judaea as they prepare to deal decisively with the Parthian question, another Roman invasion of Judaea under Trajan in A.D. 125 destroys Jewish resistance and exiles hundreds of thousands, allowing only a seminary to remain in Safed.

As is apparent, the end result of the altered Roman-Jewish War is pretty much the same as in our timeline. The underlying forces and basis for the rise of Christendom and the transformation of Judaism, including the destruction of the political base, were not going to be redirected, nor was the Roman Empire going to be modified in any significant way. It would still take another couple of centuries before the Christians came to power. As for the eventual rise of Islam, this likewise seems manifest.

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Critical Bibliography

In this bibliographic essay the value of sources used in researching this book, and which references were utilized for particular sections or data, are discussed. I decided to eliminate the use of footnotes or endnotes, believing this expedient tends to overpower the “story” element in history. Herein sources for quotes and academic points of disagreement in the text are indicated. The original Hebrew sources, where they exist, have been accessed secondhand through the works of modern scholarship. The author has tried to sort through these modern accounts and critical works to arrive at a reasonable compromise, indicating thorny unresolved points of contention briefly in the text where needed.

1. *General Histories*

The gold standard for presenting the historical record of Jews throughout the epoch covered by this book has to be Emil Schürer’s *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* in five volumes. After studying at Erlangen, Berlin, Heidelberg, and Leipzig, Schürer lectured at prestigious German universities from the mid-1870s until 1910. He devoted his life to the study of Judaism around the beginning of the Christian era. Over the years he gradually expanded his 1874 handbook of New Testament history (*A Manual of the History of New Testament Times*) into a famous, massive, and standard five-volume treatise entitled *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ* (German edition *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* 1886–1890; English translation, 1890–1891). This epic work covers the period from 175 B.C.–A.D. 135 from the political, social, religious, and literary viewpoints. His work is not, strictly speaking, a piece of church history. Although Schürer was writing his tale of the Jews as a Christian, as such providing the background for the emergence of Christianity, he took pains not to judge or belittle the Jews for their supposed betrayal or rejection of Jesus’ ministry. Though

it is quite costly and a bit dated, even in the annotations, it is still considered a standard reference. It is actually a part of a 4-volume series which was translated into English from German and updated by a team of highly respected scholars, Geza Vermes, Matthew Black and Fergus Millar between 1973 and 1987. This new edition has been used here, not only for Schürer's valuable original text but because of the indispensable notes and comments by the modern scholars. Most importantly the new edition makes use of scholarship on the Dead Sea Scrolls, just being analyzed during the 1970s and 1980s when the annotations were written.

Next in importance has to be *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian. A Study in Political Relations* by Elizabeth Mary Smallwood, latest imprint published in 2001, (paperback edition) by Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. Boston, Leiden. Smallwood was professor of Romano-Jewish history at Queen's University, Belfast. Smallwood regards it as incredible that Judaism could develop at all, given the domination by Rome in Palestine over the centuries. Smallwood traces Judaism's constantly shifting political, religious, and geographical boundaries under Roman rule from Pompey to Diocletian, that is, from the first century B.C. through the third century A.D. Smallwood shows how, from a long-standing nationalistic tradition that was a tolerated sect under a pagan ruler, Judaism became, over time, a threat that needed to be repressed and confined against a now-Christian empire. This work examines the galvanizing forces that shaped and defined Judaism as we have come to know it. In doing so, she has provided a valuable complement to the Schürer volumes.

Considerable use has also been made of Peter Schäfer's *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*. First published in English translation in 1995 and reprinted in 2003, it is a concise distillation of the author's extensive expertise on the entire period covered by this book. His account has been used herein to cross-check facts and to clarify uncertain points of contention.

The above three references were valuable not only for the overview of the epoch but for each phase as well.

Henk Jagersma's *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba* is another helpful succinct review of the entire period as is *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity: From Alexander to Bar Kochba* by John Hayes and Sarah Mandell. A. H. M. Jones's *The Herods of Judaea* was useful for the Hasmonean period as well as for aspects of the First Revolt and its aftermath.

Mireille Hadas-Lebel's *Flavius Josephus* and her *Jerusalem Against Rome* were invaluable in sorting through the labyrinth of Talmudic and epigraphical sources.

2. First Revolt

A. General Histories. For the First Revolt, the primary source was Josephus's *The Jewish War*. The Loeb edition has been used in conjunction with the condensed Penguin edition. The former is published by Harvard University Press in their Loeb series of classical texts. *The Jewish War* is published as a three-volume set, with Books III in the first volume, Books III–IV in the second volume and Books V–VII in the third, all originally published in 1927, with many reprintings since. The translation and enlightening commentary is done by H. St. John Thackeray, the dean of Josephus scholars writing in English from around 1910–1940. The Loeb Classical Library's format was to set the original text (in this case in Greek) on the left hand side with the facing page containing the translation, along with ample footnotes at the base of the page. I would have like to have used the more recent and reportedly excellent Brill edition, but these were not available when I was doing my research. I believe that only Books I–II have gone to press as of this writing. I was fortunate to be able to consult Brill's edition of the *Life*, ably translated and annotated by Steve Mason (*Life of Josephus*, Translation and Commentary by Steve Mason, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 2001). This volume, which although second to be published is assigned the place of Volume 9 in the series, maintains the format of the first published volume Louis Feldman's version of the first books of the *Judean Antiquities*. There is the same large format, with a literal translation at the top of each page and extensive commentary filling the page below, usually in the ratio of one-third text and two-thirds commentary. As Josephus's autobiography is of great interest to students of first-century Judea, Steve Mason has supplemented his volume with archaeological findings related to locations mentioned by Josephus. Appendix A, "Galilean Archaeology," is a valuable summary of current knowledge, arranged encyclopedia-style by location and topic. For example, for the town of Jotapata (Yodfat), where Josephus was captured by the Romans, one learns that excavations took place "from 1992 to 1999 and uncovered the remains of the town wall, residential areas including a large mansion with fresco walls in the Second Pompeian Style. Clear evidence of a heavy battle as described by Josephus was found all over the site: some nails from the Roman army sandals (caliga), more than a hundred arrowheads and catapult bolts, and many ballista stones...."

Valuable appendices have also been added for other areas of particular interest to readers of the *Life*, including a table showing Josephus's travels and a synopsis comparing episodes found both in the *Life* and in *The Jewish War*, making similarities and differences in those descriptions apparent. The unavailability of the relevant Brill *The Jewish War* volumes is partially offset

by Mason's ample cross-referencing to the *War* to explain differences and concurrences.

The Penguin edition of *The Jewish War* [*The Jewish War: Revised Edition*, The Penguin Classics, by Flavius Josephus (Author), Betty Radice (Author), E. Mary Smallwood (Editor), G. A. Williamson (Translator, Introduction)] as noted is an abridged version. It contains a sparkling translation by G. A. Williamson, and is judiciously edited with very useful commentary by E. Mary Smallwood, published by Viking Press in 1984. It runs to 511 pages in the small format including the extensive notes and observations. Smallwood's notes were quite helpful in sorting out both the lapses and truthfulness of Josephus's artfully crafted narrative as well as much contextual information amounting to a treatise on the First Revolt.

Per Bilde's *Flavius Josephus Between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works and Their Importance*, published by Sheffield Academic Press in 1988, has been extremely useful in sifting through the thicket of claims and counterclaims about Josephus's veracity and true role as well as many other aspects of the First Revolt. Bilde introduces the concept of the "classical conception of Josephus," flourishing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which pictured Josephus as weak in character and incapable as a historian. Against this Bilde identifies the "modern conception of Josephus" which views him as a skilled author sincere in his descriptions of himself and his times. Also discussed is evidence for Josephus's reliability as a historian and how his works can be used in a variety of disciplines.

B. Military Aspects. Israeli archaeologist/historian Mordechai Gichon (co-author with Hayim Herzog of *Battles of the Bible*, quite the best study of the confusing war record in the scriptures) wrote "Cestius Gallus Campaigns in Judaea" for the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 113 (1981), 39. Also available was Gichon's more general analysis of Josephus's famous discourse on the Roman army, "Aspects of a Roman Army in War According the Bellum of Josephus." That article was published in Freeman and Kennedy, *Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East*, a special edition in the *British Archaeological Reports* series (1986) which is almost impossible to come by today. I would add to that Jonathan Price's 1992 *Jerusalem Under Siege: the Collapse of the Jewish State, 66-70 C.E.*, which deals mostly with the politics of the war leadership of the Jerusalem priest-Zealot coalition and the denouement at the Temple compound. Naturally there is much on the different factions backed by various priestly families, their rivalry and the effect of all this on the preparations for and resistance to the Roman siege of Jerusalem. The combat prior to 69/70 and in other parts of the Judaeen province outside of the capital is considered only briefly. Price includes a few invaluable appendices in which he discusses

probable numbers, equipment and tactics of the Jewish resistance forces, which I found beneficial in preparing my paper on the combat operations of the war. Price is especially useful since he draws this material from a variety of untranslated and diversified Hebrew-language articles. Apart from this, there is Israel Shatzman's *The Armies of the Hasmoneans and Herod* (1991) which, although predating our period by a century, gives some good background on the possible participation of Jewish fighters with military credentials. Also in this same vein is Bezalel Bar-Kochva's (an apt name for an Israeli military historian) *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (1976) and his later (1989) *Judas Maccabaeus*, both of which contain military discussions of some relevance to the fighting of A.D. 66–73. Bar-Kochva's book has been a sort of handbook for the relatively few miniaturist war-gamers who want to set up tabletop Maccabean and Seleucid armies. Unfortunately not available to me was a paper originally presented to the colloquium but never published due to the subsequent illness of the author, Shimon Applebaum, "Josephus as Military Commander." My efforts to find a copy of this paper have been fruitless. Professor Saddington, of the University of Capetown, South Africa, author of the acclaimed, *Auxilia of the Roman Army*, kindly furnished me his notes for his forthcoming commentary on the early books of the *War*, regarding Josephus's description of Roman military units. Professor of ancient history Jonathan Roth pointed me to his 1990 dissertation, *The Logistics of the Roman Army in the Jewish War*, that has much on the Roman side of the conflict. Aryeh Kasher's *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities During the Second Temple Period (332 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)*, notwithstanding its title, actually contains much on the warfare and contending forces, as would be expected of Dr. Kasher, who has done some admirable work in Hebrew on the opposing forces and tactics.

3. *Diaspora Rebellion/War of Kitos*

Here the indispensable single study has been done by Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev whose *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 C.E.* has to be the definitive work on this very poorly documented episode. Also noted in the text is an article by Dr. Pucci Ben Zeev regarding the epigraphical evidence for an uprising in Judaea during this period. To this I would add the brief article by Dr. Fuks, "Aspects of the Jewish Revolt in A.D. 155–17," published in the *Journal of Roman Studies*. Where he disagrees with Dr. Pucci Ben Zeev, I defer to the latter.

4. *Bar Kochba Uprising*

The last decade has seen some striking developments in research on the Bar Kochba War. In particular, recent archaeological findings provide new

material for evaluation. A conference took place in November 2001 at Princeton University, gathering a distinguished array of scholars working at the forefront of research on the Bar Kochba period. The collected papers from this conference were published as *Der Bar-Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom*, edited by Peter Schäfer and translated as *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered* (Tubingen: Mohr, 2003). It appraised the state of the subject in light of the then present scholarly discussion and evaluated the historical importance of this major event and its repercussions for the subsequent history of the Jews in Roman Palestine. A concluding essay investigated the use of Bar Kochba's image in modern Israeli culture. The following table of contents should be helpful to anyone wanting to research aspects of the revolt further.

Peter Schäfer: Preface; Peter Schäfer: *Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis*; Martin Goodman: *Trajan and the Origins of the Bar Kokhba War*; Yoram Tsafrir: *Numismatics and the Foundation of Aelia Capitolina: A Critical Review*; Benjamin Isaac: *Roman Religious Policy and the Bar Kokhba War*; Aharon Oppenheimer: *The Ban of Circumcision as a Cause of the Revolt: A Reconsideration*; Ra'anana Abusch: *Negotiating Difference: Genital Mutilation in Roman Slave Law and the History of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*; Hanan Eshel: *The Dates Used During the Bar Kokhba Revolt*; Menahem Mor: *The Geographical Scope of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*; Hannah M. Cotton: *The Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Documents from the Judaean Desert: Nabataean Participation in the Revolt*; Werner Eck: *Hadrian, the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and the Epigraphic Transmission*; Glen W. Bowersock: *The Tel Shalem Arch and P. Nahal Hever/Seiryal 8*; Amos Kloner and Boaz Zissu: *Hiding Complexes in Judaea: An Archaeological and Geographical Update on the Area of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*; Yuval Shahar: *The Underground Hideouts in Galilee and Their Historical Meaning*; Yaron Z. Eliav: *The Urban Layout of Aelia Capitolina: A New View from the Perspective of the Temple Mount*; Yael Zerubavel: *Bar Kokhba's Image in Modern Israeli Culture*.

Eck's "The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View" in the *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999, 76ff) was very useful as was David Goodblatt, Avital Pinnick and Daniel Schwartz's *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to the Bar Kokhba Revolt in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Boston: Brill: 2001). Richard Marks's *The Image of Bar Kokhba in Traditional Jewish Literature: False Messiah and National Hero* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press: 1994) was my main source for the legacy section. Leibel Reznick's *The Mystery of Bar Kokhba* (Northvale: J. Aronson: 1996) had some interesting discussions of the rabbinical literature.

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