

Chapter Twelve

Judaea from the Death of Herodes Agrippa to the Destruction of the Temple

In early spring of 44 CE, as Herodes Agrippa was beginning his fourth year on the throne, Judaea was peaceful and people had good reason to assume that traditional Judaism - centered on sacrifices at the great temple in Jerusalem - would continue forever. That was not to be. What happened in Judaea in the next twenty-six years ended sacrificial Judaism. By the beginning of the second century rabbinic Judaism and New Covenant Christianity had emerged from the ruins of the Jerusalem temple, and eventually the religious upheaval would bring classical civilization to a close, as God triumphed over the Greco-Roman gods.

Judaea's complete subjection to Rome

In his palace at Rome, the emperor Claudius was shaken by the news, completely unexpected, that Herodes Agrippa, king of Judaea, had died. Agrippa had been not only a faithful client king, who had kept the otherwise restive Judaea quiet for three years, but also a personal friend of Claudius. Because Agrippa had a 17-year-old son, some of the emperor's freedmen and advisors favored letting the son succeed to the Judaeian throne. But Claudius regarded Agrippa's credentials and kingdom as unique. Since Claudius' early childhood Judaea had been a Roman prefecture, and the fact that for the years 41-44 it was once more an autonomous kingdom was an aberration, due entirely to Agrippa's great service to Claudius in the dangerous days after Caligula's assassination. With Agrippa's death, Judaea would once more become a Roman province of the third class, governed neither by a proconsul nor by one of the emperor's senatorial *legati*, but by a civil servant of equestrian rank. The governor would henceforth hold the title of *procurator* rather than *praefectus*, but would otherwise resume the duties and powers of Pontius Pilatus and Marcellus (or Marullus).

But in the eyes of many Judaeans things became far worse in 44 than they had ever been. Although "little Judaea" - Jerusalem and its environs - and Samaria had been under Roman prefects from 6 to 41 CE, the northern and eastern parts of "greater Judaea" had throughout that period been under Judaeian rulers: Galilee, Peraea, Gaulanitis and Trachonitis had been ruled first by the tetrarchs Philip and Antipas, and then by Herodes Agrippa. In the dispensation announced by Claudius in 44, all of these lands were now under direct Roman rule. In Galilee, this was unprecedented, and much detested. Although it appears that in Galilee, as elsewhere, the majority was passively accepting of Roman rule, a minority of Galileans sharpened their swords and joined one or another guerilla leader who promised deliverance from the Gentile "yoke." Galilee thus became a hotbed of anti-Gentile fanaticism, and when the revolt against Rome broke out, in 66, Galilee was in the forefront.

The first four years of the new province were relatively quiet, but during the governorship of Ventidius Cumanus (48-52) there was much violence and loss of life. The most catastrophic incident occurred in Jerusalem, at a festival of course, when a huge crowd was being contained

by a Roman cohort. At one sector of the perimeter, with the crowd and the Romans exchanging taunts, a legionary turned his back and mooned the crowd opposite him. When the crowd responded by surging forward and hurling stones the soldiers drew their swords. The threat of violence led to a stampede in which many people were trampled to death. Josephus' figure (*BJ* 2.227) of more than 30,000 dead is undoubtedly a gross exaggeration, but with the enormous mass of pilgrims crowding around the temple the victims may indeed have been counted in the thousands.

A much less costly but perhaps more ominous episode during Cumanus' term was a Judaeen attack on Samaritan villages and towns. When a company of Galileans entered Samaria in order to attend one of the festivals at the Jerusalem temple, one of the Galileans was killed at the Samaritan village of Ginai. As the news of the murder spread, a Galilean named Eleazar, son of Deinaios, assembled a mob which descended on Samaria, massacring Samaritans and burning their villages.¹

By 49 CE the *ekklesia* of Jesus the Christ had recovered from its suppression by Agrippa and had once again become quite visible. Its leadership now included James, or *Yakov*, the oldest of Jesus' four brothers, but very different from Jesus in his beliefs and behavior.² Because of his scrupulous obedience to the *torah* this James was nicknamed *dikaio*s, "the Righteous" or "the Just," and became a conspicuous figure at the temple precinct. According to tradition his knees were as calloused as those of a camel because he knelt incessantly in the temple courtyard.³ He was perhaps a Nazirite in the traditional sense, never cutting his hair, and under his leadership the *ekklesia* included other Nazirites, who kept their vows as specified at Numbers 6:1-21. Luke tells the story that when Paul came to the Jerusalem temple, James insisted that he go through the purification ritual along with four Nazirites, so that Paul could demonstrate to the *ekklesia* his fidelity to the *torah*. In this story James informs Paul that the *ekklesia* numbered many thousands, "all of them staunch upholders of the Law" (Acts 21:20).

Because of the Judaeen violence against Samaria the emperor cashiered Cumanus as governor of the province and in his place named Antonius Felix (52-60). Tacitus reports that Felix was a paragon of savagery and lust.⁴ Although Felix was a freedman rather than an equestrian, his brother was none other than Antonius Pallas, who was Claudius' most trusted freedman and advisor. Felix therefore, despite his viciousness, enjoyed Claudius' full confidence, and seems to have been instructed to follow a hard line in dealing with the Judaeen radicals. According to Josephus (*BJ* 2.253) Felix apprehended and crucified Eleazar and "countless" of his followers. Far from ending the unrest, however, Felix's severity seems to have aggravated it, as messianic saviors took Eleazar's place:

Deceivers and imposters, under the pretence of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, they persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into the desert under the belief that God would there give them tokens of deliverance. Against them Felix, regarding this as but the preliminary to insurrection, sent a body of cavalry and heavy-armed infantry, and put a large number to the sword. (*BJ* 2.259-60, Thackeray translation).

Next came a Judaeen prophet from Egypt, who gathered an armed following and, intending to make himself ruler of Jerusalem, encamped on the Mount of Olives. Felix, with the help of the residents of Jerusalem, defeated the prophet and slew many of his supporters. And all the while the countryside of Judaea was threatened by vigilantes who burned the houses of, or simply murdered, those whom they saw as supporting or even acquiescing in Roman rule (*BJ* 2.261-65).

One stabilizing development during these years was Claudius' recognition and use of the talents and loyalty of the son of Herodes Agrippa. This was M. Julius Agrippa, usually called Agrippa II, who had now reached adulthood. In 49 Claudius gave him a tiny kingdom at Chalkis, east of the Lebanon range. Four years later Claudius transferred Agrippa II to the old tetrarchy of Philip, east and north of the Sea of Galilee. In the harrowing times ahead Agrippa II was to be a mediator between the empire and the anti-Roman Judaeans of the province.

Class divisions in Judaea, and the rallying cry of apocalyptic

These internal divisions within Judaea remind us that although Josephus' attention (and therefore our own) focuses almost continuously on the disorderly groups committed to ending Roman rule, not all Judaeans were religiously zealous. The guerilla bands enrolled some men of means but were recruited especially from those *hasidim* who were poor, angry, and eagerly awaiting the world's end. At the opposite end of the spectrum was a self-conscious "peace party," which openly - although somewhat timidly - exhorted their countrymen to accept Roman control, for the simple reason that resistance was futile and perhaps suicidal. This peace party included the religious establishment (both the Sadducees and the Pharisees) and most of the Sanhedrin, along with many of the wealthier families in Judaea. Some of the wealthy lived in the towns and villages, and others in Jerusalem, where they tended to cluster in what was called the Upper City, close to the city's western edge. Aside from the open advocates of peace were many hundreds of thousands, with neither wealth nor influence, who passively accepted Judaea's lot. This silent majority had been in the habit of following the lead of the high priest and others in the religious establishment. Unfortunately, counsels of prudence and acceptance are never very stirring, and in the tumultuous decades following the death of Herodes Agrippa the hyper-religious and anti-Gentile firebrands were generally more persuasive than were their pacific counterparts.

A drumroll for the fanatics, although Josephus said nothing about it, was provided by the inspired poetry of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writers. The *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Testament (or Assumption) of Moses*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the Book of Daniel and the several pieces of Enoch literature reassured many readers that divine help was on the way. Much of the pertinent literature looked back to the glorious deeds of Adonai as he destroyed the wicked and rescued his worshipers from what had appeared to be certain disaster: the fire and brimstone that smashed Sodom and Gomorrah, the ten plagues that ravaged Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the sun standing still over Gibeon, and other miracles. From more recent times the apocalypticists cited the example of the Maccabees, who with the help of Adonai had triumphed over the armies of the mighty Seleukids. Undoubtedly, the apocalypticists warned, the Judaeans would in the short term have to endure much suffering and even death, but

resurrection and a glorious eternity awaited the martyrs.

However fictitious they were, the numerous stories of the Lord's great acts in history made him unique among ancient gods. They also, unfortunately, made his worshipers uniquely susceptible to prophecies of more and far grander miracles still to come, and of an End Time in which the Lord's worshipers would triumph gloriously and permanently over their adversaries. Without so distorted a view of the past, the present, and the future the Judaeans would not have descended into the three tragic wars that occurred between 66 and 135 CE. And without the fanaticism engendered by what they understood to be "history" New Covenant Christians would not for two hundred years have gone bravely and even eagerly to a martyr's death in Roman amphitheaters.

The book called Fourth Maccabees, recounting how Old Eleazar and the Seven Brothers defied Antiochos Epiphanes, was composed in the first century CE to stiffen the spine of potential Judaeans against the Romans. Another illustrative text is Fourth Ezra (also known as Second Esdras), which may have been composed before the rebellion and revised in the 70s or 80s. This text survives only in a Latin translation, because in the more sober atmosphere of later periods it was discarded in both rabbinic Judaism and New Covenant Christianity. But in the first century CE such "revelations" found their public.⁵ In Fourth Ezra the angel Uriel consoles Ezra in his grief for the suffering of Judah and Jerusalem, and reminds him of the great miracles that God has done in the past. Then at 6:18-24 the author details what will happen at the End of Time. A trumpet blast will terrify all of humankind. One-year old infants will suddenly begin talking like adults, and for three hours all rivers and streams will stand still. On this glorious day, "Zion's humiliation will be over, the time when a seal will be set on the age about to pass away" (6:20 NEB).

The most graphic manual for the coming ordeal against Rome was the War Rule, or the War Scroll, which may have been composed early in the first century CE. Although its prescriptions were not followed, this text was especially popular - as the Qumran scrolls and fragments show - in the decades before the war of 66-70 (in the war's aftermath it found few readers and was eventually forgotten). The War Rule looks forward to a conflict at the End of Time, in which all Twelve Tribes of Israel, assisted by the angels of Adonai, will utterly defeat the "westerners" (*kittim*). The book spells out in minute detail the kinds of weapons to be used, the age and qualifications of infantrymen and cavalrymen, specifications for the war horses, and especially the insignia for the standards. The war against the "westerners," or the "Sons of Darkness," would not be an easy one, and Col. ii of the great War Rule scroll warns that it will last forty years.

Heartened by the promises of the apocalyptic writers, and the expectation that the Son of Man - probably Jesus the Christ, or Moses, or Elijah - was soon to appear in the clouds, significant numbers of Judaeans had by the early 60s begun to tire of the restraint that characterized the religious establishment. The bands of actual guerillas, following Eleazar son of Deinaios or one of the several regional leaders who arose after his death, seem to have been still quite small. But because the general populace not only tolerated but even supported them, the bands' influence went far beyond their rag-tag numbers. They were armed and tough,

willing to take action, and - as events were to show - in a general breakdown of authority they were capable of taking over almost the entire country. Josephus condemns both the leaders and their followers, and in his account the great majority of Judaeans were not at fault. But Josephus' *Bellum Iudaicum* was an apologetic work, and we must say that the religiosity of several hundred thousand Judaeans, and their desire to rid Judaea of its Gentile occupiers, made it possible for the guerillas to take the province with them into rebellion.

The death of James the Righteous

In 60 CE the procurator Felix was followed by Porcius Festus, who governed more adroitly but too briefly (60-62). Festus died unexpectedly, and the emperor Nero replaced him with Luceius Albinus (62-64). In the months between Festus' death and the arrival of Albinus the highest authority in the land was the high priest at the Jerusalem temple, a newly appointed Sadducee named Ananos (whose father had also served as high priest). Appointment of the high priests was vested in Agrippa II, whose capital was at Caesarea Philippi. Agrippa II was careful to appoint only Sadducees who were committed to quenching the anti-Roman fervor that often threatened to boil over at the temple during the great festivals.

Ananos took this aspect of his responsibilities very seriously, and according to Josephus (*AJ* 20.200) it was Ananos who took the drastic step of ordering the killing of James, brother of Jesus the Christ. After the execution of James, son of Zebedee, by Herodes Agrippa, this other James (often identified with the "James the Less" of Christian tradition) had become one of the leaders of the Jerusalem *ekklesia*. Ca. 50 CE, along with Peter and John, son of Zebedee, James the brother of Jesus met with Paul to discuss the latter's preaching to the Gentiles.⁶ By the early 60s James was known as "James the Righteous," and by that time he had, as the brother of Jesus, become the most important figure in the Jerusalem church's leadership, evidently eclipsing even Peter.

The killing of James occurred at the Passover festival in 62 CE. Whether Jesus was or was not the expected Son of Man, who would establish an eternal and worldwide kingdom, was an increasingly urgent and controversial question as Judaea sank deeper and deeper into chaos and violence. Feelings on both sides were intensified at the Passover feast, as *Christiani* from the Diaspora arrived for the festival and as Judaeans awaited the arrival of yet another Roman governor, to take the place of the recently deceased Festus. What happened then is told in detail - how much of it is reliable is uncertain - by Hegesippos, who in the middle decades of the second century wrote the first history of the Christian church. Because Ananos wished to quell the enthusiasm for Jesus' *parousia* before it infected more of the Passover crowd, he and other leaders of the religious establishment prevailed upon James the Righteous to address the people. The authorities asked James to dampen apocalyptic expectations by explaining something about "the Gate of Jesus," an expression that may have been meaningful to Hegesippos but is not clear to us. After bringing James up to the parapet of the temple, from which he could be seen and heard by a large audience, the authorities, according to Hegesippos,

cried out to him and said, "Oh, Just One, to whom we all owe obedience, since the people are straying after Jesus who was crucified, tell us what is the Gate of Jesus?" And he

answered with a loud voice, “Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great power, and he will come on the clouds of heaven.”⁷

Furious that James had encouraged the crowd rather than calmed it, Ananos ordered his men to throw “the Just” down from the parapet. Although James was still alive after the fall, opponents of the *ekklesia* rushed up to stone him and he died when a laundryman struck him on the head with a fuller’s club.

Josephus (*AJ* 20.200-01) saw the killing of James as a rash mistake. Instead of improving it exacerbated the already dangerous situation in Jerusalem and the rest of the province, weakened the authority of the establishment, and added to the appeal of the militants. Ananos was removed from the high priesthood after only three months, and Agrippa II replaced him first with Jesus son of Damnaios and then, in 63 CE, with Jesus son of Gamaliel. Because all of the successive high priests were seen as more or less creatures of the Roman administration, none of them enjoyed the confidence of the populace.

The burning of Rome

On a July night in 64 CE fire broke out in Rome, spread quickly, and continued to rage for eight days.⁸ It destroyed approximately forty per cent of the city, and was the worst disaster in the city’s long history, surpassing even the sack by the Gauls in 390 BC or by the Visigoths in 410 CE. In the wake of the fire, suspicion at Rome focused on the city’s *Christiani*. No action seems to have been taken against them, however, until January or February of 68, by which time Judaea had been in open revolt for a year and a half.⁹ More importantly, by the beginning of 68 Nero’s grandiose “Golden House,” was taking shape on land that had been purchased and cleared after the fire, and next to the Domus Aurea was rising Nero’s colossal statue. Many Romans had therefore begun to murmur that Nero himself may have started the fire, in order to clear a space for his palace and the Colossus. It was to allay this gossip that Nero finally brought forward the *Christiani* and put them on trial. Tacitus’ account deserves to be quoted in full:

In order to squelch the rumor Nero put forward as defendants, and punished in the most exotic fashion, those whom the populace called *Christiani*, a group hated because of their crimes. Their name came from Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilatus. The wretched superstition was checked for a while but was breaking out again, not just in Judaea, where the plague had begun, but also in Rome (dreadful and disgraceful things from all over the empire drain into Rome, where they are celebrated). The first to be arrested were those who confessed, and on information supplied by them a huge number were found guilty, not so much on the charge of arson but because of their hatred of the human race. Their execution was made into a carnival. Some were covered in animal skins and died after being mutilated by dogs. Some were nailed to crosses, and some were set afire, so that as night fell their flames might light the darkness. Nero made his gardens available for this spectacle, and also staged chariot races. In the costume of a charioteer he mixed with the common people, or rode around on his chariot. As a result, even though the victims were guilty and deserving of the

most terrible punishment, there was some pity for them: they were being put to death, it seemed, not so much for the welfare of the populace but because of one man's savagery.¹⁰

The possibility that *Christiani* could have been responsible for setting the great fire in Rome in July of 64 has been entertained by few historians. Understanding "Christians" to be the peaceful Gentiles whom Paul had converted in Anatolia, most historians of course find it difficult to imagine such "Christians" strewing flammable material in Rome's rickety buildings and setting fire to them. But in 64 the *Christiani* were apocalyptic and messianic Judaeans, and were in fact among the most militant of the various Judaeans sects. Many of them would have fit into Josephus' "fourth philosophy," a school which shared the religious zeal of the Pharisees and Essenes, but unlike them (and the Sadducees) was not averse to using violence as a means to achieve its religious objective.¹¹ We do not know that *Christiani* set Rome ablaze in 64, but we do know that the Romans found such an accusation credible because the *Christiani* had a reputation for violence and for hatred of what Tacitus calls "the human race" and what we may identify as the Gentile world and especially the Roman empire. The hatred is readily seen in the Book of Revelation, otherwise known as the Apocalypse of St. John, which after much debate was eventually made a part of the New Testament. The book contains material from various periods, some of it perhaps dating from the time of John the Baptist or even earlier and some from the reign of Domitian (81-96), but much of it seems to date from the late 60s. The author of this Neronian material represented Rome as "Babylon," the Great Whore, drunken with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus the Christ. But her destruction is assured, "and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (Revelation 18:9 AV).

The descent into rebellion

The procurator of Judaea when the rebellion broke out was Gessius Florus (64-66 CE), whom Josephus described as completely corrupt and ruthless, and as personally responsible for driving Judaea to take up arms against Rome (*BJ* 2.277-79). Florus' immediate superior was Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, and during Passover in 66 Gallus traveled to Jerusalem to see how well or how badly Florus was doing. A huge crowd - Josephus (*BJ* 2.280) gives us the preposterous figure of 3,000,000 - gathered round Gallus and demanded that he remove Florus and ask the emperor to appoint someone less vicious to administer Judaea, but Florus remained in his post. A few weeks later trouble broke out in Caesarea Maritima, where the Judaeans fought with Hellenes because of an affront to the synagogue. In early June of 66 Florus sought to appropriate seventeen talents of silver from the temple treasury, evidently on the grounds that the annual tribute from the province was that much in arrears. His arrival in Jerusalem with infantry and cavalry led to rioting in which many people died (at *BJ* 2.307 Josephus gives the number as 3600), some of them victims of trampling by frightened or frenzied crowds, some killed by troops that sacked the wealthier homes in the Upper City, and some crucified. The temper of the city rising, Florus summoned two more cohorts from Caesarea. Despite the efforts of the Sanhedrin and of Matthias the high priest to mollify the crowds, the arrival of the additional cohorts occasioned still more violence. Finally, with anti-Roman rebels (Josephus *BJ* 3.329 calls them *stasiastai*) in control of the portico connecting the temple to the Antonia, Florus made a compact with the high priest and the Sanhedrin: Florus would return to Caesarea and take two cohorts with him, and the Judaeans authorities would then restore order to

the city.

But order could not be restored in the city. The year's tribute to Rome had not been collected, and crowds insisted that no more be paid and that Florus be expelled from the province. Meanwhile, frantic communiques were sent by the peace party to Cestius Gallus and to Agrippa II. The latter came immediately. Years later Josephus composed an interminable speech (*BJ* 2.345-401) - stressing the strength of the Romans, the weakness of Judaea, and the foolishness of revolt - that he put into Agrippa's mouth for the occasion. Whatever speech Agrippa II may have actually given was ineffectual: the crowd favored the rebels, and amid jeers that he was simply a Roman toady Agrippa left Jerusalem and returned to his kingdom along the Sea of Galilee.

In midsummer a symbolic and formal act of rebellion against Rome was ordered by the *strategos* of the temple, or the officer in charge of temple security (*BJ* 2.409-10). This was the youthful Eleazar, whose own father Ananias (a former high priest) was prominent in Jerusalem's peace party. Eleazar, who commanded a small but armed force, broke not only with his father but also with the incumbent high priest Matthias, and crossed his own Rubicon by terminating the twice-daily sacrifices that were made for the emperor's health and for the welfare of the Roman empire. These sacrifices - consisting of two lambs and one bull - had been performed at the Roman emperor's expense ever since Herodian times, and symbolized Rome's friendship for Judaea and Judaea's loyalty to Rome. So far as Josephus saw it, ending the sacrifices was tantamount to open rebellion. With the gauntlet thrown down, other young men with weapons joined Eleazar's group. Matthias and other priests, the leading citizens of Jerusalem, and the most authoritative of the Pharisees remonstrated with the insurgents, but to no avail. Agrippa II dispatched a force of 2000 cavalrymen to Jerusalem to restore order, but the force was inadequate to the task and - given safe conduct by the rebels - retired from the city.

While Jerusalem watched with fascination Eleazar's usurpation of the temple, and the subordination of the high priest and the Sanhedrin to much younger and more fanatic leaders, the first attack on Roman troops occurred far to the south. The Roman garrison at the fortress of Masada, on the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea, was besieged by a guerilla force of Zealots led by Menahem (probably the grandson of Judas of Gamala, rather than - as Josephus identifies him - the son). Menahem's guerillas took the fortress and then slaughtered the Roman garrison.

About the middle of August (*BJ* 2.430-31) Eleazar's men, who already controlled all of the Lower City, laid siege to the Antonia and took it after only two days. They killed the men of the Roman garrison, and then destroyed the fortress. At about that time Menahem and his Zealots arrived in Jerusalem. These men were more ferocious than Eleazar's, and Menahem turned them loose on the peace party, mostly resident in the Upper City. Wealthy Ananias, Eleazar's own father, was one of the most eminent victims of Menahem's purge. Whatever Eleazar may have thought of this new turn of events, he and Menahem seem to have collaborated in besieging the Roman cohort that had taken refuge in Herodes' Palace, at the far end of the Upper City. The cohort surrendered, on the promise of safe conduct out of the city, but as soon as the Romans surrendered their weapons they were set upon and slaughtered by the rebels. This atrocity occurred in mid-September.¹² With no more Romans left in Jerusalem, Eleazar

and Menahem faced off against each other and Menahem was beaten and killed. Some of Menahem's band fled from the city, but others remained. As "Zealots," advertizing their zeal for Adonai and his *torah*, they played an ever greater role as the revolt evolved. Stepping in as their leader, to replace Menahem, was another Eleazar, this one Eleazar the son of Simon.

Repercussions in the Diaspora in nearby cities

The armed rebellion in Judaea ignited mob violence in many cities of the Levant and in Alexandria.¹³ In many cities near to the province Judaeans and Gentile mobs assembled and attacked their respective "enemies." One of the causes for the violence may have been a deepening alienation of the two camps. As religious extremism spilled over from Judaea proper to the Diaspora, the Gentile citizens of the cities increasingly thought of the Judaeans in their midst as outsiders, while at least a few of the Diaspora Judaeans began to see themselves on a collision course with the Gentiles. It is likely that more immediate causes were Gentile revenge against Judaeans for the slaughter of the soldiers in Jerusalem and Masada, and Gentile suspicion that the bloodshed in those places would be followed by more widespread Judaeans attacks against Gentiles (this suspicion was strengthened by the report that the great fire at Rome had been set by *Christiani*). The first violence occurred at Caesarea Maritima, home base of the troops killed in Jerusalem. When word reached Caesarea that the rebels in Jerusalem had seized the Antonia and killed the Roman garrison the Gentiles of Caesarea stormed into the Judaeans neighborhoods and according to Josephus (*BJ* 2.457-58) - whose figures seem usually to be exaggerated, are always suspect, but are all that we have - killed 20,000 Judaeans in one hour, virtually exterminating the city's Judaeans minority.

On the other side, guerilla bands from Judaea attacked Gentile cities and villages on Judaea's periphery. Gerasa, Philadelphia (Amman), Skythopolis, Gadara, Ascalon and Ptolemais were targets, and although the rebels could not enter the cities themselves, "in the vicinity of each of these cities many villages were pillaged and immense numbers of the inhabitants were captured and slaughtered" (*BJ* 2.460, Thackeray trans.). The violence spread to Egypt and at Alexandria the Judaeans and the Hellenes squared off in massive riots. Although Tiberius Alexander, the prefect of Egypt, had once been a Judaeans (he later became a Hellene), he judged the Judaeans of Alexandria to be the instigators and sent his two legions against them. The riots were quelled but - again according to Josephus (*BJ* 2.487-98) - not until the legions had slain 50,000 Judaeans.

In an especially precarious position were the "God-fearers," those Gentiles who frequented a synagogue but had not formally joined one. They were looked upon with suspicion by both sides. At some cities - Skythopolis and Gerasa are mentioned - the local Judaeans stood with their fellow townsmen against the guerillas from Judaea. In the general spasm of violence a few cities preserved the peace: at Antioch, Apamea and Sidon the Judaeans minority was small and showed no sympathy with the rebels (*BJ* 2.479). The Diaspora violence does not seem to have extended beyond the Levant and Alexandria. At least Josephus mentioned no conflict in the cities of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, most of which had considerable Judaeans minorities.

The defeat of Cestius Gallus (late 66 CE) and its aftermath

Despite appeals from the Sanhedrin and the peace party in Jerusalem, Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, was slow to react to the violence in Judaea, and when at last he acted he underestimated the gravity of the situation. He marched south in October, with approximately 10,000 men. He met no resistance in Galilee: Sepphoris welcomed his arrival, and the smaller towns likewise announced that they were taking no part in the uprising. The guerilla bands retreated to a mountain in Galilee but there were forced to fight. Some two thousand of the guerillas were killed (*BJ* 2.512).

Judaea itself gave Gallus much more trouble. As he neared Jerusalem rebels surprised him with an attack on the Sabbath day and killed 515 of his men (*BJ* 2.519). Regrouping and ordering better reconnaissance, Gallus pushed on to Jerusalem. The approaches to Jerusalem on the east, south and west were very difficult because of the natural terrain, and the only military access was therefore from the north. The new north wall that Herodes Agrippa had intended to build around the suburb of Bezetha had never been completed, and Gallus entered the suburb against no resistance, the rebels having fallen back behind the city's old north wall. According to Josephus' dubious report (*BJ* 2.538-9) the populace looked upon Gallus as a deliverer, and had he persisted in trying to scale the old wall he would have easily taken the city: the rebels were beginning to flee, thinking the city was about to be taken. But after pressing the siege for about ten days, Gallus withdrew, perhaps because of the November cold and a shortage of provisions.

The Zealots under the command of Eleazar son of Simon pursued Gallus and although they were too lightly armed to attempt a pitched battle, they attacked the rear of Gallus' line with javelins and other missiles. As the Romans descended through the narrow pass between Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, ten miles northwest of Jerusalem as the crow flies, rebels from the commanding heights on both sides of the defile showered the Romans with arrows and inflicted heavy casualties (*BJ* 2.546-50). Gallus' retreat turned into a rout, and by the time he reached Antipatris, on the border of Samaria, he had lost some 6000 men, more than half of his original force. Retribution for the defeat and casualties fell on the Judaeans population of Damascus: to avenge the deaths of the troops and perhaps in fear of an attack from Judaea, the Gentile majority at Damascus imprisoned the city's 10,000 Judaeans males and then slaughtered them. Perpetrating the atrocity was difficult, according to Josephus, because almost all the Gentiles' wives had converted to Judaism (*BJ* 2.559-61).

What had been a small revolt, sustained by a few thousand men, was transformed by the victory over Gallus' army into a much more serious project. Apparently even then many of the inhabitants of greater Judaea wished that the revolt had never begun, and feared the response that the Romans were sure to make. But the revolt had now proceeded too far to be unilaterally ended. Eleazar (son of Simon) and the Zealots were heroes to much of Judaea, and the only hope for the moderates was that by creating some position of strength the Judaeans might be able to negotiate their way out of a military showdown with Rome. During the winter of 66-67 the Jerusalem establishment cobbled together a government of sorts, with the Sanhedrin functioning under the leadership of the former high priest Ananos, who had been responsible for the killing of James the Righteous. Ananos' government - if we are to believe Josephus - hoped to come to terms with the Romans, but believed that in order to do so it had to create at least a semblance of military organization. The production of arms and armor was begun. The north wall around

the Bezetha suburb was quickly completed, to a height of about 35 feet.¹⁴ Men who were thought to have some talent for military leadership were identified and sent to various parts of the province to find and train recruits. Among the leaders selected was Josephus, later to be the historian of the war, who was sent to Galilee. The new government issued its own coins, with proud inscriptions: "Shekel of Israel," "Jerusalem is Holy," and "the Freedom of Zion."¹⁵

Vespasian's campaign in 67

But the contest between a fractured Judaea and the Roman empire was a mismatch. Even had the entire province - with possibly 2,000,000 people¹⁶ - been united in rebellion, its prospects of success would have been poor, because it had no organized army to field against the Romans. In 66 CE the province was not at all united behind the rebellion. Although Roman rule was disliked throughout Judaea, many Judaeans were reasonable enough to know that revolt was suicidal. A fanatic minority promoted the rebellion, the establishment was against it, and although the rest of Judaea sympathized with the rebels (and expected that the End of Time was near) it was not ready to resort to armed rebellion.

On the other side, the emperor Nero, stung by the success of the rebels against Gessius Florus and Cestius Gallus, replaced them both. To Judaea he sent Vespasian (T. Flavius Vespasianus) a senator, ex-consul, and proven military commander, and authorized him to raise the largest army that the Romans had fielded in almost a hundred years. Vespasian was given three of the most dependable legions - V Macedonica, X Fretensis and XV Apollinaris - plus 23 cohorts drawn from other legions. Client kings in the Near East, including Agrippa II, furnished both cavalry and infantry, and in his itemization of Vespasian's force Josephus reckoned the total at about 60,000 (*BJ* 3.64-69).

Because of the great discrepancy in military forces, the rebellion of 66-70 was for the most part a "war" without pitched battles. It featured instead hit-and-run attacks by the Judaeian rebels, while the Romans besieged and took cities and fortresses one by one until they took Jerusalem itself. The Judaeian guerillas took over various cities, including of course Jerusalem, and more or less controlled them until finally the Romans broke through, at which time the fighting was desperate and the carnage immense. In addition to the guerillas, a city under siege normally also contained a large number of refugees from surrounding towns and villages. The refugees fled to a fortified city in the questionable belief that their chances for survival were better behind a city wall. Judaeians who stayed in their unwalled towns or villages and surrendered to the Romans often fared better than did the refugees, because the Romans assumed that all refugees supported the war party. But because the Romans had no consistent policy of pacification, or of giving immunity to Judaeians who surrendered or turned in their arms, villagers often chose to flee rather than to await an uncertain fate in their homes. As a result, Vespasian's troops killed tens of thousands of unarmed refugees. Militarily, then, the "war" of 66-70 was essentially a guerilla insurrection. The principal reason that the rebellion lasted four years instead of two is that for the last half of 68 and all of 69 Vespasian was distracted from his assignment by events in Rome, events which culminated in his becoming emperor.

One of the few pitched battles of the war occurred in early spring of 67, even before

Vespasian and his legions had arrived. A huge force of rebels, poorly armed and untrained, marched on Ascalon, determined to take that important harbor city. Ascalon was defended by a single cohort of infantry and one *ala* of cavalry, but the Roman commander deemed those units sufficient to risk a battlefield encounter. Cavalry charges were especially effective against lightly armed troops who were ranged in loose order on a plain. Although supposedly outnumbered almost 20-1, the Romans defeated the attackers and, says Josephus, slew 18,000 of them (*BJ* 3.9-25).

Vespasian, meanwhile, collected two of the legions stationed in Syria and with them headed for the port city of Ptolemais, where he awaited the arrival of Titus, bringing the third legion from Egypt. With the army at full strength Vespasian proceeded to Galilee, reputed to be rife with rebels. Sepphoris, the largest city in Galilee by far, had briefly flirted with the idea of joining the revolt but then changed its mind, declared its loyalty to the Romans, and opened itself to Vespasian. Josephus, to whom the rebel government in Jerusalem had assigned the Galilean theater, claims to have commanded an army of 100,000, but perhaps all he had done was identify 100,000 adult Galilean males and appoint officers to conscript and train them. That Josephus' army was never more than a paper force is suggested by the difficulties that John of Gischala gave him: John, a religious fanatic who was wholeheartedly in favor of the rebellion and was Josephus' bitter rival for control of Galilee, operated with a guerilla force of only 400 men. In the event, whatever "army" Josephus was able to raise melted away before even catching sight of Vespasian's legions. The conscripts returned to their homes and - except for a few fortified places - Galilee was pacified without a battle.

With a small number of companions Josephus made his way to Jotapata, about six miles from Sepphoris. Jotapata was one of the other five or six cities in Galilee, and was well defended both by its high and precipitous location and by a wall whose construction Josephus had ordered. Josephus directed the defense of the city from the inside, and in great detail emphasizes his courage and cunning in holding the city (Vespasian, according to the *BJ*, was keen to kill or capture Josephus, because the Romans knew that if they got rid of Josephus they would have no difficulty putting down the entire rebellion). In the middle of July of 67, and after a siege of forty-seven days, the Romans scaled the wall of Jotapata and took the city. Josephus and several comrades made their way to a cavern outside the city, but were detected and Josephus was taken captive.

Vespasian then proceeded to the Sea of Galilee (Lake Gennesareth), and to the cities of Tiberias and Tarichai. Both of them were nominally subject to Agrippa II, having been given to him by Nero, but both had been taken over by rebel forces. At Tiberias the populace was able to evict the guerillas and to open its gates to Vespasian. But the residents of Tarichai - at the southern shore of the sea - were not so fortunate. Although they were themselves opposed to the revolt their city had been taken over by several thousand guerillas under the command of a renegade named Jesus son of Saphat. In addition, the fanatics from Tiberias had fled to Tarichai, as had thousands of refugees from the countryside of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis and Gadara. The refugees evidently thought that either Jesus son of Saphat or the city walls would protect them from the Romans.

The guerillas did attempt a battle of sorts in the plain just outside Tarichai, but were routed by only a thousand Roman cavalrymen under Titus' command. Titus then led his cavalry through the shallow water and into the city (the waterfront of Tarichai was not walled), which fell quickly. Some of the rebels put to sea in the small boats of the town's fishermen, but Vespasian built rafts with which his legionaries pursued the rebels (a *pugna navalis* that Vespasian later bragged about). According to Josephus (*BJ* 3.531) the Romans killed 6700 rebels in the land and sea battle at Tarichai. The non-combatants' fate was almost as bad. Although the residents of Tarichai were evidently spared, because they were subjects of Agrippa II and had not wished their city to be a haven for the rebels, the refugees from the countryside were not so fortunate. Vespasian ordered his men to kill 1200 who were too old or too physically feeble to be of any use. Some 6000 young men were sent as slaves to Nero, who was in Greece at the time and had plans to build a canal through the Corinthian Isthmus. Another 30,400 refugees were sold to slave-dealers, to be retailed in the empire's slave markets. The tragedy at Tarichai occurred late in September of 67.

The next siege (*BJ* 4.1-83) was at Gamala, in Gaulanitis. This well fortified city, a few miles east of the Sea of Galilee, was also within the kingdom of Agrippa II, and had been swollen by refugees. The initial Roman entry into Gamala was beaten back, with the Romans suffering many casualties in the city's streets and Vespasian himself receiving a slight wound. A second assault, however, was successful. Josephus reports that in this attack 4000 people were slain in the streets of Gamala, and that after the Romans had taken over most of the city another 5000 people hurled themselves into a ravine outside the walls. The siege of Gamala ended on November 10 of 67.

The campaign of 67 ended with Vespasian's capture of Gischala (*BJ* 4.84-120), the home base for John of Gischala and his band of guerillas. The permanent residents of this little city, near Galilee's northern border, were for the most part farmers who - says Josephus - had no interest in the rebellion and worried only about their crops. But Gischala was completely in the hands of John and his guerillas. Approaching the walls, Titus remonstrated with the people, urging them to surrender and not undergo what Tarichai and Gamala had suffered. John gave a conciliatory reply and asked that Titus should simply give the city one more day - because it was the Sabbath - to open its gates. That night John and his followers left the city and made their getaway to the south. The refugees in Gischala, learning that John had departed, tried to follow him but were quickly run down and slaughtered by the Romans. Rid of John and the outsiders, the residents of Gischala opened the city gates to the Romans. John and his guerillas, having a head start on the Romans and traveling at a fast pace, were able to reach Jerusalem, where John was to play a prominent role until the city's fall in 70.

The Roman civil wars and the prolongation of the Judaeen rebellion (68-70 CE)

With Galilee - from whose villages many of the rebels had come - in Roman hands, the rebellion could conceivably have been ended in summer in 68. That did not happen, however, and the Judaeen revolt was allowed to continue because of events in Italy. Nero's principate, which had begun quite happily in 54 CE, had by early 68 lost most of its support. A series of conspiracies, some real and others imagined, had resulted in the execution of many leading

senators. By the early months of 68 criticism of Nero was also being expressed among the lower classes in Rome, and we have seen that the rumor was by then rife that the disastrous fire of 64 had been started on Nero's instructions. In March of 68, C. Julius Vindex, the governor of the large province of Gallia Lugdunensis (much of what today is France), renounced his allegiance to Nero and called on other provincial governors and on the Roman senate to put an end to the mad tyrant's rule. To back up his declaration, Vindex recruited thousands of Gallic volunteers and added them to the legion which he commanded. On April 2 Servius Sulpicius Galba, governor of the Spanish province of Hispania Tarraconensis, announced himself no longer under Nero's authority but now at the disposal of the senate and people of Rome.

Nero and his advisors ordered L. Verginius Rufus, commander of the four legions on the Upper Rhine, to attack Vindex and end the Gallic revolt. The dutiful Verginius did just that. In May, before the battle at Vesontio (Besançon) Verginius and Vindex met in private and tried to find common ground, but Verginius' troops (who had fought with Gallic rebels before) pressed the issue. Verginius' legions won the battle and Vindex committed suicide, but in the euphoria of their victory the legions acclaimed Verginius himself as *Imperator*, a clear signal that they had not risked their lives for the sake of Nero. When Verginius too declared himself a servant of the senate and people of Rome, and not of Nero, the handwriting for the emperor was on the wall. Early in June the Praetorian Guard at Rome renounced its allegiance to Nero and declared itself for Galba, the elderly governor of Hispania Tarraconensis. At that point the senate declared Nero an enemy of the Roman people, and the last of the Julio-Claudians committed suicide.

In Judaea, meanwhile, Vespasian had opened the campaigning season with another siege, this one at Gadara, in Peraea (*BJ* 4.413-39). By late March of 68 the inhabitants of Gadara, despite opposition from rebels in their midst, had delivered the city to the Romans. At that point Vespasian made his way back to his base at Caesarea Maritima, but he ordered Placidus, a military tribune, to use the cavalry and fast-moving infantry units to pursue fugitives - almost all of them unarmed - who had fled from Gadara as it was being handed over to the Romans. The fugitives tried to reach Jericho, the closest fortified city, but Jericho lay sixty miles to the south of Gadara and the fugitives were easily overtaken by Placidus' force. Josephus reports the number slain as 15,000.

Vespasian was at Caesarea Maritima when ships arrived bringing news of Vindex's revolt against Nero. Initially Vespasian's reaction was to proceed with his assignment, and with a ruthlessness that is difficult to explain (perhaps he intended to finish his task quickly, and be available for another and more prestigious assignment). He spent the spring of 68 (*BJ* 4.440-90) in "reducing" the countryside outside Jerusalem. Many towns and villages were garrisoned, the villages under decurions and the towns under centurions, but many others were destroyed and their inhabitants - between 10,000 and 20,000 according to Josephus - were slaughtered. Vespasian's troops encountered no military opposition. Even the fortified city of Jericho was abandoned by its inhabitants, most of them fleeing to Jerusalem.

Then, in June of 68, came the news of Nero's suicide. At that point Vespasian halted his operations, and they were not resumed until spring of the next year. Evidently he thought it necessary to ascertain the wishes of the new emperor - Galba - and when months went by and no

instructions came he sent his son, Titus, and Agrippa II to confer with Galba in Rome. They did not set out, however, until late in the fall, and while still on their way they learned that Galba too had been slain. Although Agrippa II continued on to Rome, Titus turned back to rejoin Vespasian and the army at Caesarea.¹⁷

Galba's tenure as emperor had been brief. Grumbling commenced almost as soon as he arrived in Rome in midsummer, and worsened during the autumn months. On January 1 of 69 the Rhine legions refused to take their annual oath of allegiance to the emperor, and Galba's days were clearly numbered. A plot in Rome was hatched by M. Salvius Otho, and on January 16 the Praetorian Guard struck Galba down and proclaimed Otho emperor. Otho's prospects were no better than Galba's, however, because the legions of Aulus Vitellius, commander of the Lower Rhine, were already determined to march on Rome. In April of 69 Vitellius' forces defeated Otho at Bedriacum, in northern Italy, and Otho committed suicide. The senate had no choice but to confer upon Vitellius all the imperial powers.

If Galba was disliked by the masses, and Otho seen as a creature of the Praetorian Guard, Vitellius was even less fit to rule the Roman empire. Not surprisingly, by late spring of 69 the governors of several eastern provinces had begun to suggest that Vespasian, with his sizeable army in Judaea, was far more worthy than Aulus Vitellius. On July 1 of 69 the troops in Egypt under the command of Tiberius Alexander acclaimed Vespasian as *Imperator*, and very quickly legions all over the eastern Mediterranean and in the Balkans did the same. Willing or not, Vespasian was riding the tiger. By the end of 69 - which in Roman tradition went down as "the year of the four emperors" - forces loyal to Vespasian had taken Rome. And so Vespasian, of the relatively humble Flavian family, was now emperor. The Flavian dynasty would rule the empire for twenty-six years (70-96).

Book 4 of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* covers the entire period from the end of 67 to the beginning of 70 CE, and is largely the story of factionalism within Jerusalem. After Nero's death the only significant action undertaken by Vespasian was an excursion into the vicinity of Jerusalem in spring of 69. But on July 1 of that year he was acclaimed *Imperator* and his own six-month struggle for the imperial throne had begun. From July until the end of December 69 Vespasian was busy keeping the eastern provinces loyal to himself, using his legions to that end, and what was happening in Jerusalem was not of much interest to him. He left Caesarea for Antioch, and then took his army to Alexandria. Because Egypt was Italy's granary, it was essential for him to hold that province while two staunch supporters - Licinius Mucianus and Antonius Primus - marched on Italy. When in late December of 69 word came that Vitellius had been defeated and killed, Vespasian and Titus and their legions were in the Nile Delta.

The violence in Jerusalem in 68 and 69 CE

Within Jerusalem, however, the violence that had begun in summer of 66 continued to build through four long years, culminating in disaster in late summer of 70. In 68 and 69 the Judaeans celebrated every announcement of the Romans' civil wars: the Gallic insurrection against Nero, Nero's suicide, the weakening of Galba, Galba's assassination, the battle between Vitellius and Otho, Otho's suicide, and on and on. To many in Jerusalem it

seemed that Adonai was indeed about to bring down the entire Roman empire, just as he had shattered the Seleukid empire two hundred years earlier.

During the winter of 67-8, after Gischala had fallen to Vespasian, John of Gischala entered Jerusalem and quickly became a leading figure among those most zealous for *Ioudaismos* and most keen about the rebellion. At that point the “legitimate” government of Ananos and the Sanhedrin still hoped to negotiate an end to the rebellion but in this were strenuously opposed by Eleazar (son of Simon) and his Zealots, who controlled the temple. When it appeared that Ananos and the moderates might be able to evict the Zealots from the temple and the city, Eleazar - in collaboration with John of Gischala - sent an urgent appeal for aid to Idumaea: unless the Idumaeans came to the aid of the Zealots, Ananos’ government would surrender Jerusalem to the Romans.

In Idumaea, as in Galilee, enthusiasm for the rebellion had been strong before Vespasian’s arrival, and because Idumaea had not yet been reduced by the Romans there were still thousands of young men who could be recruited to the cause. In early spring of 68, as news of Nero’s difficulties in Gaul electrified Judaea, some 20,000 Idumaeans streamed into Jerusalem, responding to Eleazar’s call for assistance against the peace party. The Idumaeans were grouped in four bands, each under its own “general.” The military force of Ananos’ government was easily crushed. Ananos himself and the high priest - Jesus, son of Gamalas - were killed, the government abolished, and the rebels took control of the city. They then purged the population of potential opponents, killing the sons of families that belonged to the peace party. Josephus says 12,000 of these “young nobles” were slain by the rebels. By summer of 68, having accomplished their mission of “saving” Jerusalem from the peace party, the Idumaeans returned to their villages (*BJ* 4.135-333).

Late in 68 another leader emerged, with another following. Simon son of Gioras, a native of Gerasa, joined the *sicarii* who controlled Masada and persuaded them to follow him in his bid for leadership of all Judaea. Simon added to his retinue by freeing slaves and by promising monetary rewards to free men who joined him. He canvassed much of the countryside and assembled a large army: 20,000 men, according to Josephus. It is difficult to imagine that this could have been done had not Simon and most other Judaeans been quite confident that Vespasian - with his eye on Galba’s shaky regime in Rome - had no intentions of taking his legions on campaign. What Simon’s objective was is uncertain, but the Zealots, now under John of Gischala, perceived that he was mostly a danger to themselves and to their control of Jerusalem. They accordingly marched out to confront him, but were defeated. Not yet daring to attack Jerusalem itself, Simon took his army to Idumaea and subdued it.

It was at about this point, in spring of 69, that Vespasian temporarily interrupted his idleness and returned to his task, evidently comfortable with Otho as emperor (Otho appointed Vespasian’s brother, Sabinus, as Prefect of the City of Rome, signaling his confidence in Vespasian’s loyalty). In their brief campaign Vespasian’s troops razed the ancient city of Hebron as well as villages around Jerusalem, certainly with intentions to put Jerusalem itself under siege (*BJ* 4.550-55). Vespasian took his cavalry up Mt. Zion to see Jerusalem and its fortifications, but nothing came of this reconnaissance. On learning of the defeat of Otho by

Vitellius, followed by Otho's suicide, Vespasian brought his troops back to Caesarea and the Judaeen rebellion dragged on.

It is typical that Simon's large "army," which was at large in southern Judaea, kept its distance from Vespasian's army as it ravaged the countryside outside Jerusalem. Soon after Vespasian's departure Simon returned to Jerusalem and this time he and his men were permitted to enter the city. They took control of most of it, but the temple remained in the hands of the Zealots (*BJ* 4. 514-84). The factions built walls inside the city, to demarcate their territory and protect themselves from their rivals.

In summer or fall of 69 the factionalism worsened, as Eleazar and John split the Zealots into two parties. Eleazar's supporters seized the inner court of the temple, while John controlled the temple itself, and Simon held most of the city outside the temple precinct. It is difficult to believe Josephus' report that the fighting among the three factions filled the temple courtyard with pools of blood, and that "old men and women in their helplessness prayed for the coming of the Romans and eagerly looked for the external war to liberate them from their internal miseries" (*BJ* 5.27-28, Thackeray). When the Romans did arrive, very few people in Jerusalem seem to have favored opening the gates to their "liberators."

The siege of Jerusalem, 70 CE

Vespasian was in Alexandria when he learned, early in January of 70, that forces loyal to him had taken Rome and killed Vitellius. Now securely the emperor, he could afford to send his army, under the command of his son Titus, back to Judaea in order to end the rebellion. Titus had been well schooled by his father in the art of war. In nine days Titus accomplished the march from Tanis, in the eastern Delta, to Caesarea Maritima. His army was perhaps larger than the one that his father had in 67: Titus commanded not only his father's three legions, but also Legio XII Fulminata, from Syria, and the auxiliary forces supplied by client kings as far away as Commagene in the Tauros mountains.¹⁸

In March of 70, during the Passover festival, Titus began moving his forces toward Jerusalem, one legion approaching from the east (the Jericho road) and the other three from the west (the Emmaus and Joppa road). Many of the several hundred thousand pilgrims who had come to celebrate the festival at the Jerusalem temple thus found themselves trapped in the city, unable to return on the roads by which they had come. In addition, villagers in the path of the converging Roman armies - fearful of being killed or enslaved - also fled to Jerusalem. The huge numbers of pilgrims and refugees added little to Jerusalem's military strength, since they were unarmed and untrained, and instead added to the city's plight. Once the siege began, the city's considerable food reserves dwindled quickly and people by the tens of thousands died of starvation.

The one improvement in Jerusalem brought about by the approach of Titus' forces was the reconciliation of Simon and John (Eleazar and his faction remained opposed to the other two warlords). Together, according to Josephus (*BJ* 5.248-57) the two rivals commanded 23,400 men. As the Roman columns neared the city Simon and John led out their troops in a concerted

attack on Titus' vanguard, killing many Romans and for a short time putting Titus himself in danger (*BJ* 5.54-66). The Roman columns pushed through, however, and set up camps: three legions on Mt. Skopos to the northwest of the city, and one on the Mt. of Olives to the east. By early May the city was more or less under siege, although the encircling lines were still porous.

The tactics of the besieged were now to make sudden sallies out from the gates, trying to catch the Romans unawares and to do enough harm to discourage them. But the attacks did more to infuriate Titus' troops than to weaken them, and the Romans tightened their grip. Late in May they poured through and over the outer north wall ("Agrippa's Wall"), and soon took control of the area called Bezetha (*BJ* 5.302). In order to overcome the second, or inner wall, Titus then ordered the construction of four massive siege mounds, cutting trees and demolishing houses in order to obtain material sufficient for the mounds, and then brought up battering rams. The Judaeans shot arrows and hurled javelins and stones down on the besiegers. Simon's sappers undermined one of the mounds and in the chaos at its collapse a well-coordinated and ferocious sally by thousands of Judaeans took over the other three mounds long enough that the rebels were able - with firebrands, pitch and oil - to set the battering rams ablaze (*BJ* 5.473-90). This Judaeans victory took place in the middle of June.

By that time, however, famine had already claimed its first victims. Titus therefore gave up his plan to go through the walls, and instead built a counter-wall, to seal off the city completely and so intensify the famine. By the end of June a serviceable counter-wall was in place. The starvation of Jerusalem was perhaps the greatest tragedy suffered by any city in antiquity, far surpassing the destruction of Nineveh, the plague at Athens, the burial of Pompeii and Herculaneum by volcanic ash, or the burning of Corinth and Carthage. The last section of the fifth book of the *Bellum Judaicum* is accordingly one of the most appalling narratives in all of ancient historiography. Here (5.512-72) Josephus recounts the desperate search for anything edible, and the final resort to cannibalism. The bodies of the dead were thrown off the walls into the ravines below. In one sector the count was 115,880, says Josephus (5.567-70), and the total number of people who starved to death was 600,000.¹⁹

And yet the besieged held on, despite Roman appeals to surrender. Titus repeatedly sent Josephus on the risky mission of shouting to the people on the walls that the Romans would respect the temple and would spare the lives of the innocent, but for his efforts Josephus was showered with abuse and missiles. In late July and after intense hand-to-hand fighting the Romans penetrated the second wall and took the Antonia fortress (*BJ* 6.1-80). It was only at about this time that the daily sacrifice to Adonai came to an end, animals having been given to the god every day while the city starved. Josephus was sent to plead with John to surrender, and so to spare the temple itself, but John had the unshakeable confidence of a Zealot. "After many invectives and imprecations upon Josephus, [John] ended by saying that he 'could never fear capture, since the city was God's'." (*BJ* 6.98, Thackeray).

Yet more walls had been erected to protect the temple, and the fighting at these walls went on for almost a month, with heavy casualties on both sides. The confined space within which the fighting took place made it impossible for the Romans to utilize their greater manpower. In early August Titus ordered a major assault on the temple wall: the thirty best

men from each century were to attack at the ninth hour of the night, when darkness would give them the advantage of surprise. But the Judaeans sentries alerted their comrades and the attack failed (*BJ* 6.129-48). Recourse was therefore had to siege mounds and battering rams, until finally the western wall of the temple's outer court was breached. The temple itself was fired and burned, at Titus' direction, on about August 30, in the Hebrew calendar the 9th day of the month Ab.²⁰ Thus after 585 years was the Second Temple destroyed, supposedly on the very anniversary of the day on which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the original temple built by Solomon.

The battle for the rest of Jerusalem was an anticlimax to the battle for the temple, but it persisted for almost another month. First the Lower City was taken by the Romans, and then - late in September - the Romans ran rampant through the Upper City, slaughtering most of those whom they found in the houses and setting fire to the buildings (*BJ* 6.392-408). From its beginning to its ghastly end the siege had lasted 139 days. When Josephus wrote his *Bellum Judaicum*, in the seven or eight years after the war ended, Jerusalem was a ruined city. In his moving tribute to Jerusalem (*BJ* 6.435-42) he reckoned the city's fabled history - from its mythical foundation by Melchizedek until its destruction by Titus - as 2177 years.

The end of the rebellion, and its costs

For most people, both Judaeans and Romans, the fall of Jerusalem signaled the end of the rebellion, although several fortresses - Herodion, Machairos and Masada - were still in rebel hands. Titus left the reduction of those places to subordinates (Masada did not fall until 73 CE), and from his labors at Jerusalem he escaped to Caesarea Philippi. There he relaxed with Agrippa II in the latter's palace and began his long affair with Berenike, Agrippa's sister. On October 24 of 70 Titus and Agrippa celebrated the eighteenth birthday of Domitian, younger brother of Titus. According to Josephus (*BJ* 7.37-8) the birthday spectacles included the killing of more than 2500 Judaeans, some in gladiatorial combats, some in contests with wild beasts, and others in flames.

In spring of 71 Titus finally returned to Rome, where in June he and his father, the emperor Vespasian, celebrated their triumph over Judaea. The triumph is described in detail by Josephus (*BJ* 7.116-62), who witnessed it himself and says that not a person in Rome missed the extravaganza. In the centuries-old tradition of Roman triumphs, the parade made its way into the city and toward the temple of Jupiter atop the Capitoline Hill. Vespasian and Titus rode in splendor, and Domitian too accompanied them, riding a beautiful horse. The legionaries carried the plunder taken from Jerusalem - gold, silver, tapestries - and scenes of the siege and the victory were re-enacted on floats. The symbols of the Jerusalem temple - the seven-canded lampstand (menorah) and the Book of the Judaeans Law - were paraded, along with thousands of the most handsome prisoners. At the base of the Capitoline the parade halted momentarily, as Simon son of Gioras was strangled in the Mamertine prison. When his death was announced a roar went up from the crowd and the three Flavians - Vespasian, Titus and Domitian - made the traditional sacrifice to Jupiter Capitolinus. As permanent memorials of the Roman victory over Judaea Vespasian ordered the construction of a new forum, of the Colosseum, and of the Arch of Titus.

What had the rebellion cost Judaea? In terms of human lives, first of all, Josephus gave a staggering summary (*BJ* 6.420-21, Thackeray):

The total number of prisoners taken throughout the entire war amounted to ninety-seven thousand, and of those who perished during the siege, from first to last, to one million one hundred thousand. Of these the greater number were of Jewish blood, but not natives of the place; for, having assembled from every part of the country for the feast of unleavened bread, they found themselves suddenly enveloped in the war.

As often, Josephus' figures seem inflated, and here we have a corrective from Tacitus, who gives the number of the besieged as 600,000. Tacitus' information on the war was probably drawn from a history written in the 70s by Marcus Antonius Julianus, one of the half dozen officers closest to Titus.²¹ Even if Tacitus' figures are more reliable than Josephus', it is clear that the rebellion and the siege of Jerusalem had devastated Judaea. Perhaps a third of the population died in the years 66-70 CE, and at least one person in twenty was sold into slavery. Never in its history had the land and its inhabitants suffered anything approaching a disaster of this magnitude.

The physical destruction was also enormous, with hundreds of villages and a dozen cities destroyed. Chief of them was of course Jerusalem. Here Titus ordered the general burning of the city in October of 70, and the leveling of all its fortification walls. Far worse for Judaeans than the ruin of the rest of the city was the destruction of the temple. Since its dedication in 516 BC the temple had been the center of Judaism, the place where "the name of Adonai" resided, and the annual destination for hundred of thousands during the three great pilgrim-feasts. It is no surprise that when he decided to destroy the temple Titus supposed that by so doing he would put an end both to Judaism and to the *ekklesia* of Jesus the Christ.²²

And - in a way - he did. The temple's destruction hastened the end of a temple-based, nationalistic, and fanatic phase of Judaism and of Christianity that the world today would have difficulty recognizing as either Jewish or Christian. For Judaeans of Judaea - and also, although to a much lesser extent, for Judaeans of the Diaspora - religion before 70 CE was rooted in the temple and nourished by the thrice-yearly mass-gatherings at Jerusalem. Such gatherings, as psychologists recognized long before the mass political rallies of the 1930s, can be inflammatory and dangerous, the group dynamics quickly becoming a herd instinct.²³ The destruction of the temple ended that phase of Judaism, virtually eliminated the Jerusalem *ekklesia* of Jesus the Christ, and cleared an opening for two religions in which for a very long time the crowd played no part: rabbinic Judaism and New Covenant Christianity.

The role of messianic prophecy in the revolt

There were many reasons why Judaea plunged into the suicidal revolt of 66-70. The Judaeans' fear and dislike of the Gentile world and their anger at the Roman empire in particular, a heavy annual tribute and corrupt and incompetent Roman procurators, the disparity between the wealthy aristocracy in Jerusalem and the poverty of the countryside - all of these were

undoubtedly factors in pushing the province to revolt.

The decisive factor, however, was the Judaeans' messianic fervor and their belief that the End of Time was near at hand. Although in his narrative of the war Josephus said very little about the widespread belief in apocalyptic prophecy, toward the end of his history he generalized that the war occurred mostly because of such a belief:

But what more than anything else incited them to the war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world.²⁴

These messianic expectations were focused in large part but not exclusively on Jesus the Christ. A widespread belief at the outbreak of the revolt was that "the Messiah" - whether Jesus or someone else from the side of Adonai, such as Moses or Elijah²⁵ - was soon to appear and establish Judaeon rule over all the world. The importance of this belief in stirring the populace to revolt is mentioned not only by Josephus but by Tacitus, Suetonius, and the so-called "Little Apocalypse" chapters in the synoptic Gospels. The Latin writers agree with Josephus' statement that the belief was based on an ancient prophecy.²⁶

Josephus, who himself believed the prophecies, turned them to his own advantage, persuading Vespasian that Vespasian was the world ruler whom the prophets had in mind. This was not necessarily a hypocritical piece of flattery. By spring of 69, as the revolt was failing and as the Roman empire was torn by civil war, Josephus may very well have been convinced that Vespasian would become emperor and so would be the world-ruler foretold in the Judaeon prophecies.²⁷ In early summer of 69, when Roman troops throughout the east acclaimed Vespasian as *Imperator* and so thrust him willy-nilly into a war against Vitellius, Josephus was suddenly released from prison and summoned to be Vespasian's advisor. From that time forward Vespasian himself believed the ancient prophecy, and for the rest of his life felt indebted to Josephus for presenting and explaining it to him.

The "ancient prophecy" that the Judaeans had in mind in 66 CE was quite certainly the "Son of Man" dream in Daniel 7. As the Qumran scrolls show, the Book of Daniel was a favorite text in the years just before the rebellion began. According to the prophecy, not until the Fourth Beast had been slain would the Son of Man come through the clouds of heaven and be given, by the Ancient of Days, an eternal kingdom over all the earth. Although some Judaeans may have thought that the Fourth Beast would be miraculously slain by Adonai, many others - if we can trust the popularity of the War Rule on this matter - assumed that they themselves would need to vanquish the beast.

Appendix: Josephus' *Tendenz*

In his *Bellum Judaicum* Josephus gave a remarkable explanation of the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. It was destroyed, he said, by the rebels who had taken it over, and the Romans were its liberators:

Her more cruel disaster preceded her fall, and the relief which her captors brought her

outweighed the loss. For I maintain it was the sedition that subdued the city, and the Romans [who subdued] the sedition. (*BJ* 5.256-7, Thackeray)

In addition to his primary goal of telling the story of the war in which he had played a considerable role, Josephus hoped that his *Bellum Judaicum* would soften the Judaeans' anger at the Romans for having destroyed the Jerusalem temple and causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands, and soften the Romans' anger at the people of Judaea for having revolted. His history of the war therefore lays responsibility for the war and the suffering on a few bad Roman procurators, and on a few Judaeen warlords and their followers, all of them brigands (λησται). As he tells it, neither the Romans nor the general population of Judaea were to blame: the average person in Judaea did not sympathize with the "brigands," and in fact was opposed to them. But because of their ferocity and ruthlessness the relatively few "brigands" were able to coerce their countrymen into rebellion.

This picture is difficult to accept for several reasons. It not only conflicts with Josephus' own account of the decades before the revolt broke out (he recounts many anti-Roman outbreaks during the 40s, 50s and early 60s in which almost all the participants were average Judaeans), but also contradicts his account of the war itself. If, for example, he is right (*BJ* 5.248-50) that Simon ben Giora and John of Gischala together commanded 20,000 men in Jerusalem in 70 CE, and if he is also right (*BJ* 6.414-22) that 1,100,000 Judaeans died in the siege of Jerusalem, then we must imagine that the guerillas kept in check a hostile population more than fifty times their own size. That is not easy to imagine. When John fled to the city in the winter of 67/8 he and his followers could have been kept out simply by shutting the gates against them. But Ananos' government did not do that. And how does one explain the hundreds of thousands of Passover pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem in March of 70 if they perceived the city to be - as Josephus says it was - under the "tyranny" of John and Simon?

At *BJ* 4.160-61 Josephus suggests that the Zealots (ζηλωται) were zealous for crime and vice, but of course that is not what their name denoted. They received their name because of "their ideals as crusaders 'zealous' for their God."²⁸ The Zealots were an extreme religious and national group, dedicated to the Law of Moses and to ridding greater Judaea of Romans and other Gentiles. It is likely that although the average person in Judaea may have disapproved of the means by which the Zealots went about their project, he or she was sympathetic to their goals. The Judaeen establishment, to which Josephus himself belonged, was certainly less hostile to Gentiles, because the establishment had to cooperate with the wider world and specifically with Rome. And because the Judaeen establishment was often the target of the Zealots, it is no surprise that Josephus denounced them and the other extremists. But the establishment was only a small fraction of the people of Judaea. Most Judaeans seem to have viewed the Zealots as heroes.

Tacitus' characterization of those besieged in Jerusalem is very different from Josephus' and probably relies on the history written by Antonius Julianus. At *Histories* 5.13 Tacitus says that of the 600,000 who were besieged "everyone who could carry weapons had them, and more dared to do so than would have been expected from such a number" (*arma cunctis, qui ferre possent, et plures quam pro numero audebant*). The zeal for rebellion and the desire for war ran

deep into the populace of Judaea, and it was fed by religious fanaticism and a faith in the coming of the Messiah from Heaven.

1. Josephus, *AJ* 20.118; *BJ* 2.234-42.

2. Eisenman 1997 argued that James the brother of Jesus was “the Teacher of Righteousness” celebrated in some of the Qumran scrolls, but the argument has not met with much success.

3. The character and death of James is described at Eusebius, *HE* 2.23.4-18, a long quotation from Hegesippos, who in the middle decades of the second century wrote the first history of the Christian church.

4. *Histories* 5.9.

5. The first two and the last two chapters of Fourth Ezra are additions, written by a Christian perhaps early in the second century, and are sometimes called Fifth Ezra. The rest of the book was written by a Judaeon who looked forward to the coming of a messiah other than Jesus the Christ. Although Fourth Ezra may date from before 66, it is more likely to have been composed after the destruction of the temple in 70.

6. At Galatians 2 Paul dates this meeting with “James, Cephas, and John” fourteen years after his first meetings with Peter. It is probably the occasion of the “Jerusalem Council” described at Acts 15, a “council” in which James, Peter and John discuss with Paul how much of the Law he is to require of Gentile converts.

7. Eusebius *HE* 2.23. Eusebius says that he is here quoting directly from the fifth book of Hegesippos’ history.

8. On the fire see Tacitus, *Annales* 15.38-43.

9. On this topic I am much indebted to William J. Asbell, Jr., who in 1990 wrote his Vanderbilt University M.A. thesis, “The Date of Nero’s Persecution of the Christians,” under my direction.

10. *Annales* 15.44: Ergo abolendo rumore Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. Igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendi quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis

contecti laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi, atque ubi defecisset dies in usum nocturni luminis ururentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistens. Unde quamquam adversus sontis et novissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur.

11. Josephus *BJ* 2.118, and *AJ* 18.23.

12. Smallwood 1981, p. 294.

13. This topic is briefly covered by Smallwood 1981, p. 295 and pp. 365-66; see also Grant 1984, pp. 191-92..

14. Smallwood 1981, p. 301.

15. Grant 1984, p. 193.

16. On the Jewish population of greater Judaea before the rebellion Feldman 1993, p. 23, concludes that it was “at least 700,000, with 5,000,000 as an overly generous maximum and 2,000,000 as the most reasonable estimate.” The latter figure is based on the work of Salo Baron.

17. Tacitus, *Histories* 2.1.

18. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.1.

19. Compare Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13, where we read that 600,000 Judaeans were in the city when it came under siege.

20. *BJ* 6.249-250. Josephus’ claim that Titus did not order the burning of the temple is patently part of his apologetic agenda. Sulpicius Severus, who seems to have drawn on Tacitus’ now-lost account of the temple’s destruction, had it right: in council Titus heard arguments on both sides, and then decided to burn the building. See Smallwood 1981, pp. 324-26.

21. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13. At *BJ* 6.238 Josephus lists Antonius Julianus as *epitropos* of Judaea and as one of the six councillors with whom Titus debated the fate of the temple.

22. Christian historians have seldom recognized the involvement of *Christiani* in the war of 66-70 CE, and tend to accept without examination Eusebius’ report that before the siege began the Christians of Jerusalem fled to Pella. See Eusebius *HE* 3.5.3 for the oracle that instructs “the people of the church” to leave Jerusalem, so that the Christ-killing Jews can be destroyed. For criticism of the Pella tradition see Lüdemann 1980, and for a response to Lüdemann’s arguments see Craig Koester, “The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), pp. 90-106. By the time that Eusebius wrote, early in the fourth century, Christian doctrine presented the Judaeans War as God’s punishment of the Judaeans for having rejected Jesus and the Gospel. The facts seem to be that the Judaeans War was in large

part a result of the Judaeans' expectation that Jesus or one of the other candidates for Daniel's Son of Man would reappear to deliver the land from the Romans.

That the *Christiani* were still in the forefront of the war when the Jerusalem temple fell in August of 70 is indicated by Sulpicius Severus, who seems to have closely followed Tacitus' account, which was lost (or destroyed?) in Late Antiquity. Sulpicius *Chron.* 2.30 reports the council that Titus convened on the fate of the temple, and says that it was Titus' view that the temple needed to be destroyed in order to put an end to the *religio* of the *Christiani*. See 2.30.6-7: (6) fertur Titus adhibito consilio prius deliberasse, an templum tanti operis everteret. etenim nonnullis videbatur, aedem sacratam ultra omnia mortalia illustrem non oportere deleri, quae servata modestiae Romanae testimonium, diruta perennem crudelitatis notam praeberet. (7) at contra alii et Titus ipse evertendum in primis templum censebant, quo plenius Iudaeorum et Christianorum religio tolleretur; quippe has religiones, licet contrarias sibi, isdem tamen ab auctoribus profectas; Christianos ex Iudaeis exstitisse; radice sublata stirpem facile perituram.

Hegesippus' information also implies involvement of *Christiani* in the war and continuing Roman concerns about "descendants of David." See Eusebius *HE* 3.11-12: "Hegesippus relates... that Vespasian, after the capture of Jerusalem, ordered a search to be made for all who were of the family of David, that there might be left among the Jews no one of the royal family and, for this reason, a very great persecution was again inflicted on the Jews" (Kirsopp Lake translation). It is likely that it was in this first roundup that Simon (Symeon), who was a cousin of Jesus and James and who in 62 had taken James' place in the leadership of the Jerusalem *ekklesia*, was arrested and crucified. At *HE* 3.32.3-6 Eusebius reports the tradition that Simon was crucified at the age of 120, in a second roundup of David's descendants during the reign of Trajan, but that tradition is suspect for obvious reasons. Elsewhere (*HE* 4.5) Eusebius himself, noting that no chronology of the early Jerusalem bishops had yet been compiled, constructed from assorted documents a list of fourteen monarchical "Hebrew" bishops, all of them circumcised, who led the Jerusalem church between the death of James and Hadrian's expulsion of the Judaeans from Jerusalem. It is incredible that the first of these fourteen - Simon - held the position for more than 40 years while each of the other thirteen held it on average for only two.

23. Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1925) was translated from the French edition of 1895.

24. *BJ* 6.312-313 (Thackeray translation).

25. In the Transfiguration story of Jesus (Matthew 17; Mark 9; Luke 9), the two who have preceded him into glory and now prepare him for his own ascension are Moses and Elijah. For the *Assumption* (Ἀνάληψις, literally the "lifting up") of *Moses* see Clement, *Stromateis* 6.15: Joshua saw Moses doubled, Moses' body lying lifeless on the ground while a transfigured Moses was lifted up into heaven by the angels. Elijah had ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire; for expectations of Elijah's return, bringing salvation to Judah, see Malachi 4:5-6, Wisdom of Ben Sirach 48:10, Mark 9:11-12.

26. In addition to Josephus *BJ* 6.312-13 see Tacitus, *Annales* 15.44 and *Historiae* 5.13. Cf. Suetonius, *Vespasianus* 4.5: *percrebruerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio esse in fatis ut eo tempore Iudaea profecti rerum potirentur. Id de imperatore Romano, quamquam postea eventu paruit, praedictum Iudaei ad se trahentes rebellarunt* (“Throughout the east there had grown strong an old and insistent belief that it was destined that at this time men would come from Judaea to take control of affairs. As events showed, this prophecy pertained to the Roman emperor. But taking it to refer to themselves, the Judaeans revolted”).

27. See *BJ* 4.622-29 for the release of Josephus in July of 69 CE, as Vespasian finally appreciates the truth of Josephus’ prediction (*BJ* 3.401). Josephus claims that he made the prediction at the time of his capture at Jotapata, but if so he must have kept it to himself. In the summer of 67 CE Nero was still emperor, was only thirty years old, and was paranoid about plots against him. Josephus should have been intelligent enough to know that any prediction that Vespasian would become emperor would put Vespasian as well as himself in mortal danger. The prediction could hardly have been made before Nero’s death in June of 68, and possibly was made as late as May of 69, after news reached Judaea that Vitellius had defeated Otho at Bedriacum. Dio Cassius 65.1 (66.1) has Josephus making the prediction one year before Vespasian became emperor.

28. Smallwood 1981, p. 299.