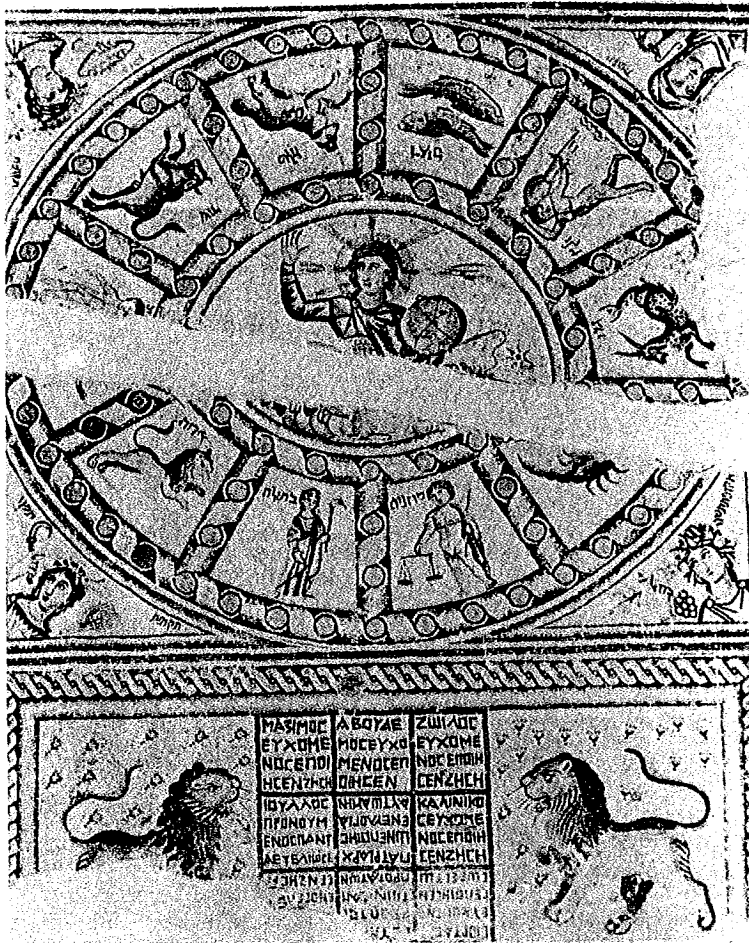


Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans

PRIMARY READINGS



Edited and Introduced by
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Zodiac, mosaic floor, Hammath Tiberias synagogue, fourth century.

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Revolts of the Jews against the Roman Empire

The First Jewish Revolt (66–73/4)

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Battles within besieged Jerusalem, woodcut, Paris, 1492.

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The fact that the Jews revolted against the mighty Roman Empire three times within a span of less than seventy years and the degree to which each of these revolts had popular support indicates how oppressive the Jews found Roman rule to be and how crucial many of them deemed independence. To a considerable degree these revolts were civil wars, brought about through vast social, economic, and religious divisions within the Jewish population and furthered by growing tensions between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations. Indeed, one of the major causes of the revolt of 66 was the favoritism shown by the Roman procurators for the non-Jewish population of Judaea and the lack of order and security which they allowed. A further precipitating cause was the fact that the Roman soldiers in Judaea were recruited almost entirely from the local Hellenized cities, especially Sebaste (Samaria) and Caesarea. And we must not forget that the Jewish king of Judaea, Agrippa II, actually fought on the side of the Romans during the Great Revolt of 66-73/4.

Most students join Josephus in looking upon the first revolt as foolhardy, but that is largely due to the fact that our chief source of information about this revolt is Josephus, who played an ignominious role in it and who devotes a great deal of attention to defending his actions. In point of fact, the revolt, which broke out in 66 CE, had at least some chance of success. In the first place, Rome was ruled by Nero, who, by any medical standard, would have to be regarded as insane. In the second place, there was a sharp division within Rome between the senate and the emperor and between various military cliques which ultimately led to civil war, in the years 68-9, when there were no fewer than four emperors within a single year in the very midst of the Jewish revolt. In the third place, the Jews of Judaea could reasonably have hoped for support from the numerous Jews - constituting, at least a tenth of the population of the Roman Empire - throughout the Empire; and indeed the severity with which the troops of the Roman governor of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander, dealt with the Jews of Alexandria on the eve of the revolution may have been occasioned by his fear that they would send aid to their co-religionists in Judaea. Fourthly, the revolt came in the midst of the climax of successes by the Jews in proselytizing, the greatest achievement being the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene in Mesopotamia; and the rebels could have hoped - as, indeed, materialized - that they would get military aid from the kingdom of Adiabene. Fifthly, the fact that Agrippa I was able to arrange a meeting not many years before this of a number of rulers of petty kingdoms would give hope that some of them might again be attracted to join a coalition against Rome. Sixthly, there had been numerous revolts against the

Romans in areas such as Britain, Gaul, Batavia, Germany, and Pannonia; and if these revolts could be coordinated the Romans hardly had sufficient troops to deal with them all. Seventhly, the great enemy of Rome at this time, as it had been for at least a century before this and was to remain for several centuries thereafter was Parthia; if the Parthians (and the large Jewish population within the Parthian kingdom might well have been able to induce the Parthians to coordinate their activities) would attack the Romans while the Jews in Judaea were revolting, the Romans would have to fight major battles on two fronts. The chief disadvantages for the Jews were their disunity, the inexperience of their generals, and their poor strategy in choosing to bottle themselves up within walled cities, notably Jerusalem, thus playing to the advantage of the Romans, who were particularly skilled in attacking such walls with their catapults and other machinery; if they had chosen to fight a guerrilla-type war, such as the Maccabees had, to a considerable degree, fought two centuries earlier, they would probably have given the Romans a more difficult time, since one needs a tremendous superiority in manpower, food, water, and supplies to be able to overcome guerrillas.

Prophecies of the Revolt

One major cause of the revolt was the ideological conflict between the Jewish conception of Israel as the elect and the reality of the powerful Roman Empire. One of the factors bringing on the revolt was the plethora of Messianic or Messianic-like movements, though Josephus does not actually use the word "Messiah" in connection with the revolt. Many Jews, it appears, were indeed awaiting a mighty leader who would bring them independence from the Romans or, as in the case of the Qumran sect, direct intervention by God.

9.1 Josephus, Jewish War 6.312-13

Josephus here cites an ambiguous prediction found in the Bible which led Jews to believe that they would rule the world. Josephus, however, interprets this to refer to Vespasian.

But what more than all else incited them [the Jews] to the war [against the Romans in 66 CE] was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures,¹ to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world. This they understood to mean someone of their own race, and many of their wise men went astray in their interpretation of it. The oracle, however, in reality signified the sovereignty of Vespasian, who was proclaimed Emperor on Jewish soil. (LCL)

9.2 Tacitus (ca. 56-120 CE), Histories 5.13.1-2

Tacitus, like Josephus, mentions a prophecy in the ancient writings of the Jews that men starting from Judaea would conquer the world, though

1. Presumably the allusion is to the prophecy in Dan 2:44-45.

various prodigies in Jerusalem should have warned the Jews that the end was near. He, too, like Josephus, interprets the prophecy as referring to Vespasian.

Prodigies had indeed occurred [in Jerusalem, 70 CE], but to avert them either by victims or by vows is held unlawful by a people that, though prone to superstition, is opposed to all propitiatory rites. Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the Temple was illuminated with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: 'The gods are departing;' at the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful; the majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judaea should possess the world. This mysterious prophecy had in reality pointed to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, as is the way of human ambition, interpreted these great destinies in their own favor and could not be turned to the truth even by adversity. (LCL)

9.3 Suetonius (ca. 69–ca. 150 CE), *Life of Vespasian* 4.5

Suetonius, like Josephus and Tacitus, mentions a prophecy that men from Judaea were destined to rule the world. Though the Jews understood it to refer to themselves, he, too, refers it to Vespasian.

There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world. This prediction, referring to the emperor of Rome, as afterwards appeared from the event, the people of Judaea took to themselves; accordingly they revolted and after killing their governor they routed the consular ruler of Syria as well, when he came to the rescue, and took one of his eagles. (LCL)

The Proposed Plan of Resistance

The following passage presents a plan for resistance against the Romans, as found in the *War Scroll*, one of the scrolls in the library of the sect at Qumran near the Dead Sea. The scroll is a kind of military manual for war with the Romans (here called Kittim). The sect apparently believed that a military confrontation with the Romans was inevitable. Qumran became a resistance center, and the sect apparently joined the anti-Roman revolt. The sect's fate was sealed by the Romans, who dispersed the community in 68/9 CE.

9.4 *The War Scroll* 16.24, 18, 19.31 (end of the first century BCE or early first century CE)

In this passage we have a description of the military array and the call to battle led by the priests against the enemy, who will be totally destroyed.

All this disposition they shall carry out on that day in the place where they stand over against the camp of the Kittim.² Afterwards the priests shall blow for them the trumpets of remembrance. They shall open the battle intervals, and the skirmishers shall go forth and take up positions in columns between the lines. The priests shall blow for them a fanfare for the array, and the columns shall keep fanning out at the sound of the trumpets until each man has fallen in at his proper position. Then the priests shall blow for them another fanfare, signals for engaging. When they stand near the line of the Kittim within throwing range, they shall each man raise his hand with his weapon. Then the six priests shall blow on the trumpets of assault a high-pitched intermittent note to direct the fighting, and the Levites and the whole band of horn-blowers shall sound a battle fanfare, a great noise. As soon as the sound goes forth, the skirmishers shall attack to fell the slain of the Kittim, and all the people shall cease from the sound of the fanfare, while the priests keep blowing a fanfare on the trumpets of assault, and the battle is waged victoriously against the Kittim. . . .

The Kittim shall be smashed without remnant and survivor, and there shall be an uprising of the hand of the God of Israel against the whole multitude of Belial.³ At that time the priests shall sound a fanfare on the six trumpets of remembrance, and all battle formations shall follow their call and spread out against the entire army of the Kittim to destroy them utterly. . . .

And there shall come forward in that place the chief priest and his deputy and his brother-priests and the Levites and all the elders . . . and the mighty men of war, and all chiefs of the formations and their subordinates, and they shall bless the God of Israel. (Y.Y.)

The Course of the Revolt

9.5 Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.1–3, 7–8.

Our chief source for the account of the war is the Jewish historian Josephus. The very title of his work, *The Jewish War*, betrays the fact that he is writing about it from the point of view of the Romans, inasmuch as, if he were writing about it from the point of view of the Jews, he should have entitled it *The Roman War*. In the passage below Josephus notes the inadequacy of previous accounts of the war and remarks that his Greek version is a translation from the Aramaic account which he had written for the barbarians of the interior, namely those of Mesopotamia. The long duration of the war and the fact that it took a huge Roman army and the most gifted generals to defeat the Jews lends some support to Josephus' view that this was the greatest of all wars and that one ought not to disparage the efforts of the Jews.

The war of the Jews against the Romans – the greatest not only of the wars of our own time, but, so far as accounts have reached us, well nigh

2. The fact that in the Dead Sea Peshier of Habakkuk the Kittim are said to come from far by sea, that they will afflict atrocities on all peoples, and will dominate Israel, has led many scholars to identify them as the Romans.

3. A satanic personification of wickedness.

of all that ever broke out between cities or nations – has not lacked its historians. Of these, however, some, having taken no part in the action, have collected from hearsay casual and contradictory stories which they have then edited in a rhetorical style; while others, who witnessed the events, have either from flattery of the Romans or from hatred of the Jews, misrepresented the facts, their writings exhibiting alternatively invective and encomium, but nowhere historical accuracy. In these circumstances, I – Josephus, son of Matthias, a Hebrew by race, a native of Jerusalem and a priest, who at the opening of the war myself fought against the Romans and in the sequel was perforce an onlooker – propose to provide the subjects of the Roman Empire with a narrative of the facts, by translating into Greek the account that I previously composed in my vernacular tongue [presumably Aramaic] and sent to the barbarians in the interior. . . .

Though the writers in question presume to give their works the title of histories, yet throughout them, apart from the utter lack of sound information, they seem, in my opinion, to miss their own mark. They desire to represent the Romans as a great nation, and yet they continually depreciate and disparage the actions of the Jews. But I fail to see how the conquerors of a puny people deserve to be accounted great. Again, these writers have respect neither for the long duration of the war, nor for the vast numbers of the Roman army that it engaged, nor for the prestige of the generals, who, after such herculean labors under the walls of Jerusalem, are, I suppose, of no repute in these writers' eyes, if their achievement is to be underestimated. (LCL)

9.6 Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.409–16

The following passage comments on the decision of the revolutionaries in the year 66 not to accept sacrifices offered on behalf of the Romans and their emperor and the vain attempt of the Pharisaic leaders to convince the revolutionaries of the serious consequences of their decision and to induce them to repeal it.

Eleazar, son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth then holding the position of captain [of the Temple],⁴ persuaded those who officiated in the cult to accept no gift or sacrifice from a foreigner. This action laid the beginning of the war against the Romans; for the sacrifices offered on behalf of that people and of the emperor were thus terminated. The chief priests and the notables over and over again urged them not to discontinue the customary offerings on behalf of their rulers, but the priests did not accede. They had great confidence in their numbers, and they were, moreover, supported by the stalwarts among the revolutionaries. But above all they relied on the captain Eleazar.

Thereupon the powerful men met in the same place with the chief priests and the most notable of the Pharisees for a comprehensive deliberation with regard to the desperate situation. Deciding to try a direct appeal to the revolutionaries, they assembled the people before

4. The position of captain of the Temple was second in rank to that of the high priest.

the bronze gate – that of the inner Temple facing east. And first they expressed great indignation at the audacity of the revolt and the serious war threatening the country. Then they exposed the absurdity of the pretext. Their forefathers, they said, had adorned the Temple mostly with the aid of foreigners, and had always accepted the gifts of foreign peoples; not only had they not forbidden anyone to offer sacrifices – for this would be most sacrilegious – but they had set up around the Temple the dedicatory offerings which were still to be seen and had remained there for a long time. But now Eleazar and his men were provoking the arms of the Romans and courting war with them, introducing a strange innovation into the cult, and, besides the danger to the city, laying open the city to the charge of impiety if Jews were to be the only people to allow no aliens the right of sacrifice or worship. If someone introduced such a law in the case of a single private individual they would be indignant at this as being an inhumane decision, yet they made light of it when all the Romans and the emperors were excluded. It was to be feared, however, that if the sacrifices for these were rejected, they might be prevented from offering sacrifices even for themselves; and that the city would be placed outside the pale of the empire, unless they quickly returned to discretion and restored the sacrifices and corrected the insult before the report came to the ears of those whom they had insulted. (M.R.)

9.7 Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.562–9

Josephus' role in the war has been the subject of much scholarly debate, fueled, in particular, by the fact that he seems to contradict himself. After the Roman governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, had been defeated by the rebels in the opening skirmish of the war in 66, Josephus, according to the *Jewish War*, which was apparently written between 79 and 81 CE, was appointed to conduct the war in Galilee, whereas in his autobiography, written toward the end of his life (ca. 100 CE), he indicates that he was dispatched to induce the rebels to lay down their arms. There is no indication as to what military qualifications he possessed for this task.

The Jews who had pursued Cestius, on their return to Jerusalem, partly by force, partly by persuasion, brought over to their side such pro-Romans as still remained; and, assembling in the Temple, appointed additional generals to conduct the war. Joseph, son of Gorion, and Ananus the high priest were elected to the supreme control of affairs in the city, with a special charge to raise the height of the walls. As for Eleazar, son of Simon, notwithstanding that he had in his hands the Roman spoils, the money taken from Cestius, and a great part of the public treasure, they did not entrust him with office, because they observed his despotic nature and that his subservient admirers conducted themselves like his bodyguard. Gradually, however, financial needs and the intrigues of Eleazar had such influence with the people that they ended by yielding the supreme command to him.

Other generals were selected. . . . Josephus son of Matthias [the historian] was given the two Galilees [upper and lower], with the

addition of Gamala [in the Golan region], the strongest city in that region. Each of these generals executed his commission to the best of his zeal or ability. (LCL)

9.8 Josephus, *Life* 28–9

In this account Josephus seems to say that he was appointed as general not to fight against the Romans but rather to induce those bent on revolution to lay down their arms. Perhaps this account may be reconciled with the account above in the *War* if we suggest that originally it was Josephus' hope that he could defuse the revolution but that when he realized that he could not he organized an army to fight against the Romans.

After the defeat of Cestius, . . . the leading men of Jerusalem, observing that the brigands and revolutionaries were well provided with arms, feared that, being without weapons themselves, they might be left at the mercy of their adversaries, as in fact eventually happened. Being informed, moreover, that the whole of Galilee had not yet revolted from Rome, and that a portion of it was still tranquil, they dispatched me with two other priests, Joazar and Judas, men of excellent character, to induce the disaffected to lay down their arms and to impress upon them the desirability of reserving these for the picked men of the nation. The latter, such was the policy determined on, were to have their weapons constantly in readiness for future contingencies, but should wait and see what action the Romans would take. (LCL)

9.9 Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.128–9, 131–2, 133–5, 143–6

Josephus describes in graphic detail the factional strife both in Jerusalem and indeed throughout Judaea. Especially fierce was the contention between those who favored the continuation of the war and those who were for peace.

By these harangues⁵ most of the youth were corrupted and incited to war. But of the sober and elder men everyone foresaw what was to come and mourned for the city as already lost. Such confusion reigned among the people. But even before sedition broke out in Jerusalem there was party strife in the country. . . .

In every city tumult and civil war were stirred up, and as soon as they had a breathing spell from the Romans they turned their hands against one another. Between the enthusiasts for war and those desiring peace there was fierce strife. At the start this party strife in the homes assailed those who had long been friends. . . .

Faction reigned everywhere, and the revolutionary and war party overpowered by its youth and recklessness the old and prudent. Each side turned first to pillaging of their neighbors, then organizing themselves in companies for brigandage throughout the country, so

5. Of John of Gischala (in Galilee), one of the acknowledged leaders of the revolt against the Romans. Josephus regarded him as an extremist. He was eventually taken prisoner and exhibited by Titus in his triumph in Rome.

much so that in cruelty and lawlessness the victims found no difference between compatriots and Romans. Indeed, capture by the Romans seemed a far lighter fate to those who were being plundered.

The [Roman] garrisons of the cities, partly from reluctance to expose themselves to risk, partly from their hatred of the people, provided little or no protection to the victims. At length, satiated with their pillage of the country, the brigand chiefs of all these bands everywhere joined forces and, becoming one pack of villainy, stole into wretched Jerusalem. . . .

[The brigands arrested and murdered eminent people in Jerusalem.] The brigands, however, were not satisfied with having put their captives in irons, and did not consider it safe to keep influential persons in custody for a long time, with large families quite capable of avenging them. Moreover, they feared that the people might be stirred by their lawlessness to rise against them. They accordingly decided to kill the captives, and sent for this purpose the most expert in murdering, a certain John, called in their native tongue 'son of Dorcas.'⁶ Accompanied by ten others, he entered the jail with drawn sword, and they butchered the prisoners. For such a crime they invented a monstrous excuse: they declared that they had conferred with the Romans concerning the surrender of Jerusalem, and that they had them killed as traitors to the freedom of the state. In short, they boasted of their iniquitous acts as though they had been the benefactors and saviors of the city. (M.R.)

9.10 Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 55b–56a (edited ca. 500 CE)

The Talmud, which stresses the point that the destruction of the Temple was due to groundless hatred, has a similar picture of factional strife and of pressure exerted by the revolutionaries upon the moderates. As in Josephus, we find the beginning of the war ascribed to the refusal to accept the offering of the emperor.

Rabbi Johanan [ben Nappaha, third century CE] said: . . . The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamza and a Bar Kamza⁷ in this way. A certain man had a friend Kamza and an enemy Bar Kamza. He once made a party and said to his servant, 'Go and bring Kamza.' The man went and brought Bar Kamza. When the man [who gave the party] found him there he said, 'See, you tell tales about me, what are you doing here? Get out.' Said the other: 'Since I am here, let me stay, and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink.' He said, 'I won't.' 'Then let me give you half the cost of the party.' 'No,' said the other. 'Then let me pay for the whole party.' He still said, 'No,' and he took him by the hand and put him out. Said the other, 'Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will

6. In Aramaic Bar Tabitha, i.e., "son of a gazelle."

7. These two men are otherwise unknown. Josephus (*Life* 33) does mention a Compus son of Compus as one of the respectable citizens in Tiberias who in the year 66 recommended that the city continue its allegiance to the Romans and King Agrippa II. Rabbi Johanan, the source of this account, taught in Tiberias, and may reflect a local tradition.

go and inform against them to the Government.' He went and said to the Emperor, 'The Jews are rebelling against you.' He [the Emperor] said, 'How can I tell?' He said to him: 'Send them an offering and see whether they will offer it [on the altar].' So he sent with him a fine calf. While on the way he made a blemish on its upper lip, or as some say on the white of its eye, in a place where we [Jews] count it a blemish but they do not. The Rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the Government. Said Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas [Palestinian, first century CE] to them: 'People will say that blemished animals are offered on the altar.' They then proposed to kill Bar Kamza so that he should not go and inform against them, but Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas said to them, 'Is one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals to be put to death?' Rabbi Johanan thereupon remarked: 'Through the scrupulousness of Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt, and we ourselves exiled from our land. . . .' (Soncino)

9.11 Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.401-9

Josephus places the chief blame for the debacle upon the various revolutionary groups, particularly the Sicarii, gangs of whom made raids everywhere.

When they [the Sicarii] learnt that the Roman army was inactive and that in Jerusalem the Jews were distracted by sedition and domestic tyranny, they embarked on more ambitious enterprises. Thus, during the feast of unleavened bread – a feast which has been kept by the Jews in thanksgiving for deliverance ever since their return to their native land on their release from bondage in Egypt⁸ – these assassins, eluding under cover of night those who might have obstructed them, made a raiding descent upon a small town called Engaddi.⁹ Those of the inhabitants who were capable of resistance were, before they could seize their arms and assemble, dispersed and driven out of the town; those unable to flee, women and children numbering upwards of seven hundred, were massacred. They then rifled the houses, seized the ripest of the crops, and carried off their spoil to Masada.¹⁰

They made similar raids on all the villages around the fortress, and laid waste the whole district, being joined daily by numerous dissolute recruits from every quarter.

Throughout the other parts of Judaea, moreover, the predatory bands, hitherto quiescent, now began to bestir themselves. And as in the body when inflammation attacks the principal member all the members catch the infection, so the sedition and disorder in the capital gave the scoundrels in the country free license to plunder; and each gang after pillaging their own village made off into the wilderness.

8. Consequently, most of the people would be in Jerusalem, where Jews congregated during the three pilgrimage festivals each year.

9. Engaddi [Engedi] is an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

10. The Sicarii had previously occupied Masada, near the Dead Sea, where they were to make their last stand against the Romans in the year 73/4 prior to committing mass suicide.

Then joining forces and swearing mutual allegiance, they would proceed by companies – smaller than an army but larger than a mere band of robbers – to fall upon temples¹¹ and cities. The unfortunate victims of their attacks suffered the miseries of captives of war, but were deprived of the chance of retaliation, because their foes in robber fashion at once decamped with their prey. There was, in fact, no portion of Judaea which did not share in the ruin of the capital. (LCL)

9.12 Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 56a-b (edited ca. 500 CE)

The terror which the Sicarii exercised over the population, including their own members, is indicated by the following passage, in the course of which the head of the Sicarii secretly advises Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai, the greatest of the rabbinic leaders of the day, how he might escape from Jerusalem, namely by pretending to be dead and being carried out of the city. Johanan ben Zakkai then proceeds prophetically (in a manner similar to Josephus' prediction to Vespasian) to greet the general Vespasian as king.

Abba Sikra,¹² the head of the *biryoni* [revolutionaries] in Jerusalem was the son of the sister of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai [Palestinian, first century CE]. [The latter, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans] sent to him saying, 'Come to visit me privately.' When he came he said to him, 'How long are you going to carry on in this way and kill all the people with starvation? He replied: 'What can I do? If I say a word to them, they will kill me.' He said: 'Devise some plan for me to escape. Perhaps I shall be able to save a little.' He said to him: 'Pretend to be ill, and let everyone come to inquire about you. Bring something evil smelling and put it by you so that they will say you are dead. Let then your disciples get under your bed, but no others, so that they shall not notice that you are still light, since they know that a living being is lighter than a corpse.' He did so, and Rabbi Eliezer [ben Hyrcanus, Palestinian, end of first and beginning of second century CE] went under the bier from one side and Rabbi Joshua [ben Hananiah, Palestinian, end of first and beginning of second century CE] from the other. When they reached the door, some men wanted to put a lance through the bier. He said to them: 'Shall [the Romans] say, They have pierced their Master?' . . .

When he reached the Romans he said, 'Peace to you, O king, peace to you, O king.' He [Vespasian] said: 'Your life is forfeit on two counts, one because I am not a king and you call me king, and again, if I am a king, why did you not come to me before now?' He replied: 'As for your saying that you are not a king, in truth you are a king, since if you were not a king Jerusalem would not be delivered into your hand. . . . As for your question, why if you are a king, I did not come to you till now, the answer is that the *biryoni* among us did not let me. . . .'

At this point a messenger came to him from Rome saying, 'Up, for the Emperor is dead, and the notables of Rome have decided to make you head [of the State].' (Soncino)

11. Presumably the reference is to synagogues.

12. I.e., Father of the Sicarii.

9.13 Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.442–5, 449, 450–1

Josephus gives graphic pictures of the terrible suffering endured by the Jews while they were besieged in Jerusalem in the year 70. Josephus puts the chief blame upon the Jews themselves. He attempts to exonerate the Roman general Titus, who, he says, hoped by continuing the crucifixions of Jews to induce them to surrender.

No other city ever endured such suffering, nor from the beginning of time has there been a generation more productive of crime. Indeed, in the end they actually disparaged the Hebrew people, in order to seem less impious toward foreigners, and confessed themselves what indeed they were – slaves, the dregs, and the bastard scum of the nation. It was they who overthrew the city, and compelled the reluctant Romans to record such a melancholy triumph, and all but drew to the Temple the tardy flames. Indeed, when from the upper town they beheld the city burning, they neither grieved nor wept, though among the Romans these emotions were detected. . . .

[When Jews sought to escape from the burning city] they defended themselves of necessity when caught [by the Romans], and after a conflict it seemed too late to ask for mercy. They were indeed scourged and subjected to torture of every description before death, and then crucified opposite the walls. . . . The main reason [on Titus' part] for not stopping [the crucifixions] was the hope that at the sight the Jews might surrender in fear that if they did not surrender they would suffer a similar fate. The soldiers out of anger and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their number that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies. (M.R.)

9.14 Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.201–13, 317–22

The Jews besieged in Jerusalem were beset by incredible hunger and thirst. The account of Mary, the mother who devoured her own son, is perhaps the most horrifying of all the episodes of the war.

Among the residents of the region beyond Jordan was a woman named Mary, daughter of Eleazar, of the village of Bethzuba . . . , eminent by reason of her family and fortune, who had fled with the rest of the people to Jerusalem and there become involved in the siege. The bulk of her property, which she had packed up and brought with her from Peraea¹³ to the city, had been plundered by the tyrants; while the relics of her treasures, with whatever food she had contrived to procure, were being carried off by their satellites in their daily raids. With deep indignation in her heart, the poor woman constantly abused and cursed these extortioners and so incensed them against her.

But when no one either out of exasperation or pity put her to death, weary of finding for others food, which indeed it was now impossible from any quarter to procure, while famine coursed through her intestines and marrow and the fire of rage was more consuming even

than the famine, impelled by the promptings alike of fury and necessity, she proceeded to an act of outrage upon nature. Seizing her child, an infant at the breast, 'Poor babe,' she cried, 'amidst war, famine, and sedition, to what end should I preserve thee? With the Romans slavery awaits us, should we live till they come; but famine is forestalling slavery, and more cruel than both are the rebels. Come, be thou food for me, to the rebels an avenging fury, and to the world a tale such as alone is wanting to the calamities of the Jews.' With these words she slew her son, and then, having roasted the body and devoured half of it, she covered up and stored the remainder.

At once the rebels were upon her and, scenting the unholy odor, threatened her with instant death unless she produced what she had prepared. Replying that she had reserved a goodly portion for them also, she disclosed the remnants of her child. Seized with instant horror and stupefaction, they stood paralyzed by the sight. She, however, said, 'This is my own child, and this my handiwork. Eat, for I too have eaten. Show not yourselves weaker than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother. But if you have pious scruples and shrink from my sacrifice, then let what I have eaten be your portion and the remainder also be left for me.' At that they departed trembling, in this one instance cowards, though scarcely yielding even this food to the mother. The whole city instantly rang with the abomination, and each, picturing the horror of it, shuddered as though it had been perpetrated by himself. The starving folk longed for death, and felicitated those who had gone to their rest ere they had heard or beheld such evils. . . .

So glutted with plunder were the troops, one and all, that throughout Syria the standard of gold was depreciated to half its former value.

Among the priests still holding out on the wall of the sanctuary a lad, who was parched with thirst, confessed his condition to the Roman guards and besought them to pledge him security. Taking pity on his youth and distress, they promised him protection; whereupon he came down and drank, and then, after filling with water a vessel which he had brought with him, raced back to his comrades above. The guards all failing to catch him and cursing his perfidy, he replied that he had broken no covenant; for the accepted pledge did not bind him to remain with them, but merely permitted him to descend and procure water; both these actions he had done, and therefore considered that he had been true to his word.

Such cunning, especially in so young a boy, astonished the Romans whom he had outwitted; however, on the fifth day, the priests, now famishing, came down and, being conducted by the guards to Titus, implored him to spare their lives. But he told them that the time for pardon had for them gone by, that the one thing for whose sake he might with propriety have spared them was gone, and that it behoved priests to perish with their temple, and so ordered them to execution. (LCL)

9.15 Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.403–8

Josephus describes in vivid detail the gruesome stages of the final massacre of the Jews.

13. A region to the east of the Jordan.

The Romans, now in control of the walls, planted their standards on the towers, and with clapping of hands and rejoicing raised a paean for their victory. They had found the end of the war much lighter than the beginning. Indeed, they could not believe that they had climbed the last wall without bloodshed, and, seeing no one opposing them, were really perplexed. Pouring into the narrow streets, sword in hand, they massacred indiscriminately those whom they met, and burned the houses of people who fled into them, people and all.

Often in their raids, on entering the houses for loot they would find whole families dead and the rooms filled with the victims of the famine, and then, shuddering at the sight, they would depart empty-handed. Yet, while they pitied those who had perished, they did not feel the same for the living, but running everyone through who fell in their way, they choked the narrow streets with corpses and deluged the whole city with blood, so that many of the fires were extinguished by the slaughter. Towards evening they ceased slaughtering, but during the night the fire gained the mastery, and the dawn of the eighth day of the month Gorpiaeus rose upon Jerusalem in flames – a city which suffered such calamities in the siege that, had she from her foundation enjoyed as many blessings, she would have been thought completely enviable, a city undeserving, moreover, of such great misfortunes on any other ground, except that she produced a generation by which she was overthrown. (M.R.)

9.16 Babylonian Talmud, *Giṭṭin* 56a (edited ca. 500 CE)

The Talmud, like Josephus, paints a picture of incredible famine besetting the Jews besieged in Jerusalem.

The *biryonim* [revolutionaries] were then in the city [Jerusalem]. The Rabbis said to them: 'Let us go out and make peace with them [the Romans].' They would not let them, but on the contrary said, 'Let us go out and fight them.' The Rabbis said: 'You will not succeed.' They then rose up and burnt the stores of wheat and barley so that a famine ensued. Martha the daughter of Boethius was one of the richest women in Jerusalem. She sent her man-servant out saying, 'Go and bring me some fine flour.' By the time he went it was sold out. He came and told her, 'There is no fine flour, but there is white [flour].' She then said to him, 'Go and bring me some.' By the time he went he found the white flour sold out. He came and told her: 'There is no white flour but there is dark flour.' She said to him, 'Go and bring me some.' By the time he went it was sold out. He returned and said to her, 'There is no dark flour, but there is barley flour.' She said, 'Go and bring me some.' By the time he went this was also sold out. She had taken off her shoes, but she said, 'I will go out and see if I can find anything to eat.' Some dung stuck to her foot and she died [from the shock].

Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai [Palestinian, first century CE] applied to her the verse, 'The tender and delicate woman among you which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground' [Deut 28:57]. Some report that she ate a fig left by Rabbi Zadok [Palestinian, first century CE], and became sick and died. For Rabbi Zadok observed fasts

for forty years in order that Jerusalem might not be destroyed, [and he became so thin that] when he ate anything the food could be seen [as it passed through his throat]. When he wanted to restore himself, they used to bring him a fig, and he used to suck the juice and throw the rest away.

When Martha was about to die, she brought out all her gold and silver and threw it in the street, saying, 'What is the good of this to me?' thus giving effect to the verse, 'They shall cast their silver in the streets.' (Soncino)

9.17 The Coins of the Revolutionaries

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The revolutionary authorities coined silver and bronze money with archaic Hebrew script.

- (1) Obverse: Chalice: SHEKEL OF ISRAEL YEAR 1.
Reverse: JERUSALEM THE HOLY CITY
- (2) Obverse: Amphora: YEAR 2.
Reverse: Vine leaf. FREEDOM OF ZION
- (3) Obverse: Citron, palm branch YEAR FOUR-AND-A-HALF.
Reverse: Palm tree, baskets THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL (M.R.)

The Destruction of the Temple

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9.18 Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.236–43, 249–53.

According to Josephus, as indicated in the passage below, Titus, in the council that he held with his staff prior to the attack on Jerusalem, showed so much clemency that he declared that the Temple should be spared even if the Jews should fight from it. Nevertheless, one of the Roman soldiers, contrary to orders, set fire to the Temple.

On the following day [after setting on fire the gates and porticoes of the Temple] Titus, after giving orders to a division of his army to extinguish the fire and make a road to the gates to facilitate the ascent of the legions, called together his generals. Six of his chief staff-officers were assembled, namely Tiberius Alexander, the prefect of all the forces,¹⁴ Sextus Cerealius, Larcius Lepidus, and Titus Phrygius, the respective commanders of the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth legions; Fronto Haterius, prefect of the two legions from Alexandria, and Marcus Antonius Julianus, procurator of Judaea; and the procurators and tribunes being next collected, Titus brought forward for debate the subject of the Temple.

Some were of opinion that the law of war should be enforced, since the Jews would never cease from rebellion while the Temple remained as the focus for concourse from every quarter. Others advised that if the Jews abandoned it and placed no weapons whatever upon it, it should be saved, but that if they mounted it for purposes of warfare, it should be burnt, as it would then be no longer a temple, but a fortress, and thenceforward the impiety would be chargeable, not to the Romans but to those who forced them to take such measures.

Titus, however, declared that even were the Jews to mount it and fight therefrom, he would not wreak vengeance on inanimate objects instead of men, nor under any circumstances burn down so magnificent a work, for the loss would affect the Romans, inasmuch as it would be an ornament to the empire if it stood.

Fortified by this pronouncement, Fronto, Alexander, and Cerealis now came over to his view. He then dissolved the council, and, directing the officers to allow the other troops an interval of repose, that he might find them reinvigorated in action, he gave orders to the picked men from the cohorts to open a road through the ruins and extinguish the fire. . . .

Titus then withdrew to Antonia,¹⁵ determined on the following day, at dawn, to attack with his whole force, and invest the Temple. That building, however, God, indeed long since, had sentenced to the flames; but now in the revolution of the years had arrived the fated day, the tenth of the month Lous, the day on which of old it had been burnt by the king of Babylon.¹⁶ The flames, however, owed their origin and cause to God's own people. For, on the withdrawal of Titus, the insurgents, after a brief respite, again attacked the Romans, and an engagement ensued between the guards of the sanctuary and the troops who were endeavoring to extinguish the fire in the inner court; the latter routing the Jews and pursuing them right up to the sanctuary.

At this moment, one of the soldiers, awaiting no orders and with no horror of so dread a deed, but moved by some supernatural impulse, snatched a brand from the burning timber and, hoisted up by one of his comrades, flung the fiery missile through a low golden door, which gave access on the north side to the chambers surrounding the

14. This is the apostate nephew of Philo who had been procurator of Judaea and governor of Egypt and who was now, in effect, quartermaster general.

15. The Antonia was the fortified portion of the Temple in Jerusalem.

16. The traditional date, still observed as a fast day by Jews, is the ninth of Ab.

sanctuary. As the flame shot up, a cry, as poignant as the tragedy, arose from the Jews, who flocked to the rescue, lost to all thought of self-preservation, all husbanding of strength, now that the object of all their past vigilance was vanishing. (LCL)

9.19 Sulpicius Severus (ca. 363–ca. 425 CE), *Chronica* 2.30.6–7

The Christian historian, Sulpicius Severus, in a passage which some have thought was derived from a lost portion of Tacitus?, *Histories*, asserts (in obvious contradiction to Josephus) that Titus, in the council which he held with his officers, demanded the destruction of the Temple in order to crush Judaism as well as Christianity.

It is said that Titus summoned his council, and before taking action consulted it whether he should overthrow a sanctuary of such workmanship, since it seemed to many that a sacred building, one more remarkable than any other human work, should not be destroyed. For if preserved it would testify to the moderation of the Romans, while if demolished it would be a perpetual sign of cruelty.

On the other hand, others, and Titus himself, expressed their opinion that the Temple should be destroyed without delay, in order that the religion of the Jews and Christians should be more completely exterminated. For those religions, though opposed to one another, derive from the same founders; the Christians stemmed from the Jews and the extirpation of the root would easily cause the offspring to perish. (M.S.)

9.20 Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 56b (edited ca. 500 CE)

The rabbis were particularly hostile to Titus, inasmuch as he was held responsible for the desecration and destruction of the Temple; and they note his inglorious end, presumably a divinely-inflicted punishment. On the ninth day of Ab, when the two Temples were said to have been destroyed and when, according to tradition, it is not permitted for Jews to have the enjoyment of study except for accounts of Jewish catastrophes, the Talmudic passage in *Gittin* 55b–57a describing this catastrophe is permitted to be read.

Vespasian sent Titus, who said, 'Where is their God, the rock in whom they trusted [Deut 32:17]?' This was the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He took a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a scroll of the Law and committed a sin on it. . . . A gnat came and entered his nose, and it knocked against his brain for seven years. . . . It has been taught: Rabbi Phineas ben Aruba [Palestinian, first century CE] said: 'I was in company with the notables of Rome, and when he died they split open his skull and found there something like a sparrow two *selas* in weight.' A Tanna¹⁷ taught: Like a young dove two pounds in weight. Abaye [Babylonian, end of third and beginning of fourth century CE] said: We have it on record that its beak was of brass and its claws of iron. When

17. One of the rabbis of the first two centuries CE.

he died he said: 'Burn me and scatter my ashes over the seven seas so that the God of the Jews should not find me and bring me to trial.' (Soncino)

The Fall of Masada

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Herod's fortress palace at Masada, on the western shore of the Dead Sea in Idumaeen country, was captured by Jewish extremists, the Sicarii, who massacred its Roman garrison. Reinforced by new arrivals, the partisans held out until 73 or 74, when the most spectacular event of the whole war occurred, namely the mass mutual suicide of the defenders. The excavations of Masada by Yigael Yadin in 1963-5 have disclosed Herod's palace complex, as well as relics of the partisans and their families.

Our only version of the episode comes from Josephus, who was not present but who presumably had access to an account that may have been written by the Roman general Flavius Silva, who directed the

operations at Masada. Josephus mentions that one of the seven survivors was a woman who recounted the grisly tale to the Romans when they arrived.

The accuracy of Josephus' account has been much debated: it is said that since the defenders were pious Jews they would have known how strongly forbidden suicide is in Jewish law, and they should have fought to the last man, especially since they had an abundance of food and water and plenty of stones to hurl down upon the Romans. Moreover, whereas Josephus says that all the possessions of the defenders were gathered together in one large pile and set on fire, archaeology shows that there were many piles and many fires. Furthermore, Josephus says that Eleazar ben Jair, the leader of the Sicarii, ordered his men to destroy everything except the foodstuffs, but archaeology shows that many storerooms containing food provisions were burnt. In addition, Josephus says that 960 committed suicide, whereas Yadin, in his extremely comprehensive excavations, found only twenty-five skeletons. Finally, the long speeches put into the mouth of Eleazar hardly seem authentic, since it would be unlikely that the ultra-pious Sicarii would use arguments clearly taken from Plato's *Phaedo*.

But inasmuch as there were many Romans and Jews (who were forced to help the Romans during the siege) still alive at the time when Josephus issued his book who could have contradicted him, it would seem likely that Josephus was careful with his details. In any case, the fact that the Romans, upon entering Masada, are said by Josephus to have marveled at the bravery of the defenders would further tend to verify the authenticity of the account, inasmuch as Josephus would hardly have been expected to say anything positive about the Sicarii, whom he elsewhere denigrates to such a degree.

9.21 Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.320-6, 328, 331, 333-40, 386-7, 389, 391-2, 395-406

However, neither did Eleazar [ben Jair, the leader of the Sicarii at Masada] himself contemplate flight,¹⁸ nor did he intend to permit any other to do so. Seeing the wall consuming in the flames, unable to devise any further means of deliverance or gallant endeavor, and setting before his eyes what the Romans, if victorious, would inflict on them, their children and their wives, he deliberated on the death of all. And judging, as matters stood, this course the best, he assembled the most doughty of his comrades and incited them to the deed by such words as these:

'Long since, my brave men, we determined neither to serve the Romans nor any other save God, for He alone is man's true and righteous Lord; and now the time is come which bids us verify that resolution by our actions. At this crisis let us not disgrace ourselves; we who in the past refused to submit even to a slavery involving no peril, let us not now, along with slavery, deliberately accept the irreparable penalties awaiting us if we are to fall alive into Roman hands. For as we

18. The wall around the fortress at Masada had, in part, been breached, and the defenders' second wooden wall had been destroyed by fire.

were the first of all to revolt, so are we the last in arms against them. Moreover, I believe that it is God who has granted us this favor, that we have it in our power to die nobly and in freedom – a privilege denied to others who have met with unexpected defeat. Our fate at break of day is certain capture, but there is still the free choice of a noble death, with those we hold most dear. . . . For had He [God] continued to be gracious, or but lightly incensed, He would never have overlooked such wholesale destruction or have abandoned His most holy city to be burnt and razed to the ground by our enemies. . . . For not even the impregnable nature of this fortress has availed to save us; nay, though ample provisions are ours, piles of arms, and a superabundance of every other requisite, yet we have been deprived, manifestly by God Himself, of all hope of deliverance. . . .

'The penalty for those crimes let us pay not to our bitterest foes, the Romans, but to God through the act of our own hands. It will be more tolerable than the other. Let our wives thus die undishonored, our children unacquainted with slavery; and when they are gone, let us render a generous service to each other, preserving our liberty as a noble winding-sheet. But first let us destroy our chattels and the fortress by fire; for the Romans, well I know, will be grieved to lose at once our persons and the lucre. Our provisions only let us spare; for they will testify, when we are dead, that it was not want which subdued us, but that, in keeping with our initial resolve, we preferred death to slavery.'

Thus spoke Eleazar; but his words did not touch the hearts of all hearers alike. Some, indeed, were eager to respond and all but filled with delight at the thought of a death so noble; but others, softer-hearted, were moved with compassion for their wives and families, and doubtless also by the vivid prospect of their own end, and their tears as they looked upon one another revealed their unwillingness of heart.

Eleazar, seeing them flinching and their courage breaking down in face of so vast a scheme, feared that their whimpers and tears might unman even those who had listened to his speech with fortitude. Far, therefore, from slackening in his exhortation, he roused himself and, fired with mighty fervor, essayed a higher flight of oratory on the immortality of the soul. . . .

'Unenslaved by the foe let us die, as free men with our children and wives let us quit this life together! This our laws enjoin,¹⁹ this our wives and children implore of us. . . .'

He would have pursued his exhortation but was cut short by his hearers, who, overpowered by some uncontrollable impulse, were all in haste to do the deed. Like men possessed they went their way, each eager to outstrip his neighbor and deeming it a signal proof of courage and sound judgment not to be seen among the last; so ardent the passion that had seized them to slaughter their wives, their little ones and themselves. . . .

19. There is no such law in the Bible, nor is there any such law in the Oral Torah as codified in the Talmud. Perhaps it was in accordance with the law as understood by the sect of the Sicarii.

While they caressed and embraced their wives and took their children in their arms, clinging in tears to those parting kisses, at that same instant, as though served by hands other than their own, they accomplished their purpose, having the thought of the ills they would endure under the enemy's hands to console them for their constraint in killing them. . . .

Then, having chosen by lot ten of their number to dispatch the rest, they laid themselves down each beside his prostrate wife and children, and, flinging their arms around them, offered their throats in readiness for the executors of the melancholy office. These, having unswervingly slaughtered all, ordained the same rule of the lot for one another, that he on whom it fell should slay first the nine and then himself last of all; such mutual confidence had they all that neither in acting nor in suffering would one differ from another.

Finally, then, the nine bared their throats, and the last solitary survivor, after surveying the prostrate multitude, to see whether haply amid the shambles there was yet one left who needed his hand, and finding that all were slain, set the palace ablaze, and then collecting his strength drove his sword clean through his body and fell beside his family.

They had died in the belief that they had left not a soul of them alive to fall into Roman hands; but an old woman and another, a relative of Eleazar, superior in sagacity and training to most of her sex, with five children, escaped by concealing themselves in the subterranean aqueducts, while the rest were absorbed in the slaughter.

The victims numbered 960, including women and children; and the tragedy occurred on the fifteenth of the month Xanthicus.

The Romans, expecting further opposition, were by daybreak under arms and, having with gangways formed bridges of approach from the earthworks, advanced to the assault. Seeing none of the enemy but on all sides an awful solitude, and flames within and silence, they were at a loss to conjecture what had happened.

At length, as if for a signal to shoot, they shouted, to call forth haply any of those within. The shout was heard by the women-folk, who, emerging from the caverns, informed the Romans how matters stood, one of the two lucidly reporting both the speech and how the deed was done. But it was with difficulty that they listened to her, incredulous of such amazing fortitude; meanwhile they endeavored to extinguish the flames and soon cutting a passage through them entered the palace. Here encountering the mass of slain, instead of exulting as over enemies, they admired the nobility of their resolve and the contempt of death displayed by so many in carrying it, unwavering, into execution. (LCL)

The Aftermath of the Revolt

9.22 Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.409–19

Some of the Sicarii had apparently managed to flee to Alexandria, where they embarked on revolutionary activities, murdering those Jews who opposed them. The leaders of the Jewish community were successful in convincing the Jewish populace to hand over these Sicarii to the Roman

authorities. And thus we have the spectacle of Jews handing over other Jews to the government for certain torture and death. Even Josephus marvels at the tremendous courage which the Sicarii showed while being tortured.

Moreover, at Alexandria in Egypt, after this date²⁰ many Jews met with destruction. For certain of the faction of the Sicarii who had succeeded in fleeing to that country, not content with their escape, again embarked on revolutionary schemes, and sought to induce many of their hosts to assert their independence, to look upon the Romans as no better than themselves and to esteem God alone as their lord. Meeting with opposition from certain Jews of rank, they murdered these; the rest they continued to press with solicitations to revolt.

Observing their infatuation, the leaders of the council of elders, thinking it no longer safe for them to overlook their proceedings, convened a general assembly of the Jews and exposed the madness of the Sicarii, proving them to have been responsible for all their troubles.

'And now,' they said, 'these men, finding that even their flight has brought them no sure hope of safety – for if recognized by the Romans they would instantly be put to death, are seeking to involve in the calamity which is their due persons wholly innocent of their crimes.'

They, accordingly, advised the assembly to beware of the ruin with which they were menaced by these men and, by delivering them up, to make their peace with the Romans. Realizing the gravity of the danger, the people complied with this advice, and rushed furiously upon the Sicarii to seize them. Six hundred of them were caught on the spot; and all who escaped into Egypt and the Egyptian Thebes were ere long arrested and brought back.

Nor was there a person who was not amazed at the endurance and – call it what you will – desperation or strength of purpose displayed by these victims. For under every form of torture and laceration of body, devised for the sole object of making them acknowledge Caesar as lord, not one submitted nor was brought to the verge of utterance; but all kept their resolve, triumphant over constraint, meeting the tortures and the fire with bodies that seemed insensible of pain and souls that wellnigh exulted in it. But most of all were the spectators struck by the children of tender age, not one of whom could be prevailed upon to call Caesar lord. So far did the strength of courage rise superior to the weakness of their frames. (LCL)

9.23 Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.421, 433–6 (73/4 CE)

Apparently, the Emperor Vespasian was afraid that the temple of Onias in Egypt, like the Temple in Jerusalem, would be used as a rallying point for revolutionaries, and so after the fall of Masada he ordered that it be demolished.

The emperor [Vespasian], suspicious of the unceasing revolutionary activity of the Jews, and fearing that they might again assemble in force

20. I.e., after the capture of Masada in 73 or 74.

and draw away others along with them, ordered Lupus [governor of Egypt] to demolish the temple of the Jews in the so-called district of Onias. . . .

Lupus, the governor of Alexandria, on receipt of Caesar's letter, came to the sanctuary, and, having carried out some of the votive offerings, shut up the temple. When Lupus died soon after, Paulinus, his successor in the office, completely stripped the place of its offerings, threatening the priests severely if they failed to produce them all, and prohibited those who worshipped there to approach the precinct. Instead, closing the gates, he debarred all access, so as to leave no trace of the cult of God in the place. The duration of the Temple, from its erection to its closing, was 343 years.²¹ (M.R.)

9.24 Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.132–3, 142–57

Josephus describes the triumphal procession in Rome accorded to Vespasian and Titus (in effect reviewing the whole war) and, in particular, the spoils taken from the Temple. The procession ended with the execution of one of the leaders of the revolutionaries, Simon bar Giora.

It is impossible adequately to describe the multitude of those spectacles and their magnificence under every conceivable aspect, whether in works of art or diversity of riches or natural rarities; for almost all the objects which men who have ever been blessed by fortune have acquired one by one – the wonderful and precious productions of various nations – by their collective exhibition on that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire. . . .

The war was shown by numerous representations, in separate sections, affording a very vivid picture of its episodes. Here was to be seen a prosperous country devastated, there whole battalions of the enemy slaughtered; here a party in flight, there others led into captivity; walls of surpassing compass demolished by engines, strong fortresses overpowered, cities with well-manned defences completely mastered and an army pouring within the ramparts, an area all deluged with blood, the hands of those incapable of resistance raised in supplication, temples set on fire, houses pulled down over their owners' heads, and, after general desolation and woe, rivers flowing, not over a cultivated land, nor supplying drink to man and beast, but across a country still on every side in flames. For to such sufferings were the Jews destined when they plunged into the war; and the art and magnificent workmanship of these structures now portrayed the incidents to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes. On each of the stages was stationed the general of one of the captured cities in the attitude in which he was taken. A number of ships also followed.²²

21. The correct figure would be approximately 243 years, from ca. 170 BCE to 73/4 CE.

22. Among other battles during the war there was a naval battle in the Sea of Galilee.

The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem.²³ These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lampstand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern from those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of each branch; of these there were seven, indicating the honor paid to that number among the Jews. After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law. Then followed a large party carrying images of victory, all made of ivory and gold. Behind them drove Vespasian, followed by Titus; while Domitian rode beside them, in magnificent apparel and mounted on a steed that was itself a sight.

The triumphal procession ended at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, on reaching which they halted; for it was a time-honored custom to wait there until the execution of the enemy's general was announced. This was Simon, son of Gioras, who had just figured in the pageant among the prisoners, and then, with a halter thrown over him and scourged meanwhile by his conductors, had been hauled to the spot abutting on the Forum, where Roman law required that malefactors condemned to death should be executed.²⁴ After the announcement that Simon was no more and the shouts of universal applause which greeted it, the princes began the sacrifices, which having been duly offered with the customary prayers, they withdrew to the palace. Some they entertained at a feast at their own table: for all the rest provision had already been made for banquets in their several homes. For the city of Rome kept festival that day for her victory in the campaign against her enemies, for the termination of her civil dissensions, and for her dawning hopes of felicity. (LCL)

9.25 *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.944 (= Emilio Gabba, *Iscrizioni greche e latine per lo studio della Bibbia* [1958], 27)

The inscription on the Arch of Titus records his victory over the Jewish people and his destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

The Senate and the Roman people to Emperor Titus Caesar Vespasian Augustus, son of the deified Vespasian, *pontifex maximus* [high priest], possessor of the tribunician power for the tenth year, hailed *imperator* [general] seventeen times, consul eight times, father of his country, their *princeps* [first citizen], because under the direction and plans and auspices of his father he subdued the Jewish people, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, previously either attacked in vain by generals, kings, peoples, or completely unassailed.²⁵ (M.R.)

23. Visitors to Rome may still see on the Arch of Titus above the Forum the spoils from the Temple that were borne in the procession.

24. This was the Mamertine prison at the north-eastern end of the Forum.

25. This is unhistorical. Jerusalem had been captured, e.g., by Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, and Pompey.

9.26 Roman Coins Commemorating the Capture of Judaea

The victory over the Jews was treated by the Flavian emperors, Vespasian and Titus, as the most important event of their dynasty. An enormous number of coins commemorating the capture of Judaea were minted all over the empire.

- (1) Obverse: Portrait of Vespasian. IMPERATOR CAESAR VESPASIAN AUGUSTUS
Reverse: Goddess Victory, trophies, palm tree, captive Jewess weeping. VICTORY OF AUGUSTUS (M.R.)
- (2) Obverse: Portrait of Vespasian. IMPERATOR CAESAR VESPASIAN AUGUSTUS, CONSUL SEVEN TIMES, FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY
Reverse: Captive Jewess weeping, trophies, palm tree. JUDAEA CAPTURED (M.R.)

The Fiscus Judaicus

Among the penalties visited on the Jews by Vespasian was a most extraordinary tax imposed by the Roman government: it was its only tax on a religion, and the only one for the support of a specific Roman temple. In 71/2 CE a special treasury was established, the *Fiscus Judaicus*, into which was paid the Jewish tax for the support of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus in Rome. Whereas the age-old Temple tax, in the amount of one-half shekel, had been paid to the Temple in Jerusalem by males over the age of twenty, the Jewish tax of two denarii (two drachmas) was imposed annually on all Jews of both sexes, from the age of three, as well as on slaves of Jewish households. The tax was, in effect, a license to practice Judaism.

9.27 CPJ, nos 160, 192, 207, 321

These are receipts on ostraca [potsherds] from the Jewish Quarter of Apollinopolis Magna [modern Edfu, Egypt] for payment of the Jewish tax.

Herenius son of Didymus, receipt for the two-denarius tax on the Jews, for the fourth year of our lord Vespasian Caesar [71–2 CE]. (M.R.)

Paid by Thedetus son of Alexion, for the Jewish tax for the fourteenth year of Domitian, four drachmas; by Philip his son, 4. Total, 8. Year 14, Mesore 25 [August 18, 95 CE]. (M.R.)

Paid by Copreus, slave of Antipater, for the Jewish tax for the ninth year of our lord Trajan, 4 obols. Year 10, Choiak 13 [December 9, 106 CE]. (M.R.)

Sambathion, also known as Jesus, son of Papius, for tax of the seventh year of our lord Trajan, 4 drachmas. Year 7, Pachon 6 [May 1, 104 CE]. (M.R.)

9.28 CPJ, no. 421 (May 16, 73 CE)

This is a long schedule of various tax payments due from Jews living in Arsinoe in the Fayum, Egypt. Here we have evidence that the Jewish tax was exacted from men, women, and children from the age of three. The fact that there are so few children is surprising. It has been suggested that this may have been due to the fact that peasant women were eager to prolong the period of suckling their children so as to prevent a new pregnancy.

From Heraclides in charge of the district of the quarter of Apollonius' Camp. Liability for the Jewish tax of the fifth year of our Emperor Caesar Vespasian Augustus, summarized according to the fourth year. The total of the Jews taken up by previous accounts: five adult males, six adult females, one of whom is over-age . . . and so adjudicated in the fourth year as being 59 years of age; one minor, four years old in the fourth year. Total names: twelve. And those taken up through transcript of the preceding revision of lists shown to be three years old in the fourth year, being one year old in the second year. Males: Philiscus son of Ptollas, grandson of Philiscus, mother Erotion. Females: Protous daughter of Simon, son of Ptolemaeus, mother Dosarion; total two. Making fourteen. Of these adult males five, one minor male four years old in the fifth year. Adult females six, one minor female who in the fifth year was five years old. Likewise one minor female four years old. Total names, fourteen. (M.R.)

9.29 Suetonius (ca. 69–ca. 150 CE), *Life of Domitian* 12.2

Under Domitian (81–96) the *Fiscus Judaicus* was collected most rigorously.

The Jewish tax was exacted most assiduously. To the *Fiscus Judaicus* were reported those who lived as Jews without declaring this, or who by concealing their origin did not pay the tribute imposed on their people. I recall when I was a young man being present when an old man in his nineties was examined by a procurator and a very large number of advisors to see whether he was circumcised. (M.R.)

9.30 Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 9a (edited ca. 500 CE)

The following seems to be a reference to the *Fiscus Judaicus*.

Rabbi Eleazar [ben Pedath, Babylonian and Palestinian, third century CE] . . . said: When the Temple stood, a man used to bring his shekel and so make atonement. Now that the Temple no longer stands, if they give for charity, well and good, and if not, the heathens will come and take from them forcibly. (Soncino)

The Lukuas-Andreas Rebellion (War of Quietus) (115–17 CE)

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During the reign of Trajan a second revolt of the Jews against the Romans occurred. Unlike the revolt of 66–73/4, which was confined to Judaea, this one engulfed large areas of the Roman Empire, from Cyrenaica to Mesopotamia, and indeed was apparently primarily centered in lands outside Judaea, notably Libya, Egypt, and Cyprus. Whereas we have a Josephus to give us an account in the utmost detail of the revolt of 66–73/4, our information about this revolt (known in the Mishnah as the War of Quietus) is extremely scanty. The immediate causes are obscure; but the uprising, which lasted from 115 to 117, took on the aspects of a Messianic movement led by a certain Libyan Jew named Lukuas-Andreas.²⁶ The Jews, as we see from the papyri, were accused of terrible atrocities; and such accusations brought about a war of annihilation against them, so much so that when order was finally restored, the Jewish community in Alexandria and throughout the rest of Egypt became virtually extinct.

9.31 Arrian (ca. 95–175 CE), *Parthian Affairs*, cited by Suda (tenth century CE), s.v. *atasthala* and *pareikoi*

So successful was the revolt at first that Trajan, in his frustration, resolved to destroy the Jewish people completely.

Trajan [116 CE] was determined above all, if it were possible, to destroy the nation utterly, but if not, at least to crush it and stop its presumptuous wickedness.²⁷ (M.S.)

9.32 Dio Cassius (ca. 160–230 CE), *Roman History* 68.32.1–3, 5.

Dio Cassius here describes the massacre by Jews of Romans and Greeks in Cyrene and Egypt. Here the name of the Jewish leader is given as Andreas.

26. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 4.2.4) refers to him as Lukuas; Dio Cassius (68.32) calls him Andreas.

27. The Jews had joined in the general revolt of the lands formerly part of the Parthian kingdom that had been conquered by the Romans.