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The *Fides* of Flavius Josephus

STEVE MASON

Everyone knows two things about Flavius Josephus (AD 37–ca. 100). First, “the Jewish historian” – a post he occupies by acclamation – is our principal source for southern Syria under early Roman rule. He wrote his *Judaean War* in seven volumes during Vespasian’s reign, then the twenty-volume *Judaean Antiquities* (Ἀρχαιολογία), running from Creation to the eve of the war and supplemented by an autobiographical appendix, as Domitian’s reign neared its end (AD 93–4). A two-volume polemical essay on the Judaeans’ antiquity and enviable laws, known as *Against Apion*, completes the surviving oeuvre.

The second thing everyone knows is that Josephus was a client of the Flavians, brought to Rome as a human trophy from their *virtus*-defining victory in Judaea. Near the end of his life, he boasts of having accompanied a respectful Titus on the journey from Alexandria to Rome (V 422), of his privileged access to the Flavians’ field notes when composing his *War* (V 342), and of benefactions from each successive Flavian ruler (V 413–29). He buttresses his credentials with the claim that he presented copies of the *War* to Vespasian and Titus (V 361; *Ap.* 1.50), whereupon Titus declared them the only reliable guide to the conflict (V 363). Josephus settles a dispute with a literary rival by citing the judgment of Vespasian, who protected him and condemned the other fellow (V 336–67). In the *Antiquities*, he recalls witnessing a display of Solomonian demon-therapy by a Judaeon in Rome, in the presence of all three Flavians with their top military commanders (*AJ* 8.46) – incidental evidence of the ongoing relationship.

Suetonius (*Vesp.* 5.6) and the *Epitome* of Cassius Dio (65/66.1.4) both mention Josephus by name. Tacitus may have borrowed from his *War* (in *Hist.* 5.12–13) and/or mentioned him in his own lost account of Jerusalem’s

fall. Within decades, at any rate, Josephus' writings had become the sole authority on matters Judaeian.¹

Such a career outline makes this extraordinary easterner an intriguing case study of Flavian *fides*. Since Josephus wrote in Greek, the word *fides* itself cannot be the focus of our discussion, and he exploits the parallel word-group πίστις/πιστός/πιστεύω too often and mundanely for this precise language to be worth pursuing.² In the scale of possible contexts for Roman *fides*, however, from Augustus' boast that many peoples (*gentes*, ἔθνη) experienced the good faith (*fides*, πίστις) of the Roman people under his leadership (*Res Gestae* 32.6) to the various dimensions of "mutual loyalty" in the Flavian circle, we have ample room in Josephus' thirty volumes for exploration. Several studies have examined Josephus' view of the Roman Empire in a conceptual way,³ and my recent *History of the Jewish War* looks in detail at the relationship of *fides* between Rome and Jerusalem, as Josephus presents it and in reality.⁴ The present investigation takes up more personal dimensions of *fides* in Josephus' literary portraits of the Flavians. Its underlying questions are: How does he present Vespasian and Titus? What was there about his writing that merited their support or at least tolerance? And what might Josephus' portraiture say about the governing style and expectations of Vespasian and Titus, in relation to writers who were on the margins of their circle?

We may sharpen these questions with four preliminary considerations. First, in the *War's* programmatic opening sentence, Josephus denounces contemporary historians of the war who fawn over the current rulers (*BJ* 1.1–8). Right off the mark, he tries to establish a niche as the only credible guide to the Flavians' founding achievement. With the unique knowledge of a Judaeian leader who personally faced Vespasian in battle, he will not further aggrandize the victors, no matter how powerful they may be. His task is that of the dignified statesman-historian: to set the record straight with a balanced account (1.9). Confronting regime flatterers is a bold and exciting gambit: What will he say? The reader can manage this program only while maintaining *fides* with Vespasian and Titus.

Second, "the Jewish historian" Josephus has understandably been read mainly for information on Judaea, seldom as a Roman author. Scholars accept as a circumstantial datum that he wrote in Flavian Rome, and in Greek, but he has rarely been included in surveys or syntheses of Greek, Roman, or Flavian literature.⁵ John Marincola's *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* tore down that fence in principle,⁶ but in the intervening years Josephus has been returned to the bench for the big games. Flavian specialists increasingly acknowledge that he should not be neglected – and hope someone is taking care of that.⁷ Reading his works as compositions

from Flavian Rome remains rare. But doing so forces us to consider their implications for his *fides*-relationship with the rulers.

Third, to the extent that ancient historians have commented on Josephus' relationship to the ruling family, they have mainly characterized it as the sort of mindless adulation one would *a priori* expect of someone in his position – rather dull, unless one is interested in sycophancy.⁸ A common schema, often taken to be self-evident, imagines Josephus as originally a determined rebel fighter in Judaea who, after an ignoble surrender, became eager to honour his saviours. He thus wrote the *Judaean War* in the service of Vespasian and Titus, possibly using an official Flavian chronicle as a main source.⁹ As Josephus matured, or became alienated from Domitian, he recovered his self-respect. Finally abandoning agitprop, he devoted his later writings to the antiquity and noble character of his people, leaving these works of quiet repentance as another part of his legacy. Nowadays, those who assume such a trajectory do not normally show the easy contempt of First World War-era critics for a renegade or turncoat,¹⁰ but they still convey bemusement at Josephus' allegedly abrupt shifts of allegiance.¹¹

Fourth, although this image of Josephus' *War* as the writing of a Flavian apparatchik remains alive and well among non-specialists,¹² specialist research in Josephus tends now to stress the independent Judaeans interests of all his writings, their unity as a corpus, and their significant departures from Flavian myth.¹³ The present chapter contributes to this trajectory in scholarship. It is not wholly original, but the literary portraits of the Titi Flavii in his *War* have not yet been isolated for study.¹⁴ So this is our task: to track and interpret the threads directly pertaining to Vespasian and Titus in Josephus' *Judaean War*.

Preliminaries

Before we proceed, it will be helpful to mention some facts about Josephus' *War* that may not be widely known, to clear the ground and discard mistaken assumptions.

First, the *Judaean War* is not about the Flavians.¹⁵ They take their places in the train of Roman strongmen that provides background scenery throughout the work's 250-year journey (ca. 170 BC–AD 75), but the story does not revolve around the Flavians any more than it does around Pompey, Antony, or Augustus in the earlier parts. The work's opening prospectus (1.19–29) anticipates this parade of great Romans without giving special attention to the Flavians. The two first and longest volumes use Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, Antony, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius (whose accession depends on Herod's grandson), and Nero, along with their legates and

officials, as background for the main story: Jerusalem under Hasmoneans, King Herod, and their descendants.

The work is nearly half over, therefore, before Vespasian and Titus appear.¹⁶ Nero sends Vespasian to take over from his failed legate in Syria, C. Cestius Gallus, the main Roman official in the final quarter of Book 2, who was planning to march on Jerusalem in the spring of AD 67. This is how Vespasian becomes a key player in Book 3. But his prominence there is because he is the adversary of the *War's* producer, director, scriptwriter, and leading man: Josephus. No one in Flavian Rome doubts the emperor's magnificence, or the legions' abilities. Josephus does not need to make that case here, when Vespasian is emperor. Instead he exploits the Flavians' reputations to highlight his own achievements and character. As a thirty-year-old priest with no visible means of support, he nevertheless managed to frustrate and demoralize Vespasian, Titus, and their 60,000-strong army. The famous conclusion of this conflict, in Josephus' surrender, is likewise about Josephus' divine mission and proximity to the Deity, not about Vespasian's virtues (3.351–4). Vespasian returns in the latter half of Book 4, to consolidate the Judaeen countryside and be acclaimed *imperator* in Caesarea, before leaving Josephus' narrative world for Rome.

Titus takes up the baton in Books 5 and 6, but the work is not about him either. Its driving tragic score concerns besieged Jerusalem, its temple, tyrants, and terrors. Titus' presence adds valuable texture and pathos, but Josephus says much more about the people in Jerusalem, their actions and their mind-sets. In Book 7, Domitian makes a diverting appearance, in the west (7.85–8), and Titus figures in a few eastern episodes before he leaves the region for Rome (7.121–62). That leaves the senatorial legates of the new imperial province – Cerialis, Bassus, and Silva (AD 70–4) – to conclude the train of Roman commanders (to 7.455). As the preface makes clear (1.11–12), then, this is a story of Judaea and its beating heart, Jerusalem, their long prosperity under Rome, and their sudden catastrophe at the end of Nero's reign. Roman leaders provide necessary context, but it is not a Roman, much less a Flavian, story.

Second, Josephus' overall account of Jerusalem's life clashes with Flavian media presentations at several points. To take only the most glaring discrepancy: the Flavians' founding myth depended on the claim that they had conquered a foreign people. Hence the triumph, the senate's permission to extend Rome's *pomerium*, the revived Augustan themes of eastern conquest, the abundant *Iudaea Capta* coins (recalling *Aegypto Capta* and *Armenia Capta*), the inscription on the arch in the Circus Maximus extolling Titus for an unprecedented *conquest*, and Silius Italicus' *ex eventu* prediction that Titus would tame the fierce tribes of Palestine.¹⁷

Scholars dismiss all this as political piffle but rarely notice that Josephus' *War* itself plainly exposes the sham. It begins its account of Judaeo-Roman

relations with Hasmonean treaties of friendship a century before Pompey (1.38, 48). It then dwells on Pompey's capture of Jerusalem for Rome (64/63 BC) and the repeat event, not thirty years later, by Antony's general Sosius, after a spell of Parthian control (1.127–58, 327–57). In this account, it is worth noting, Jerusalem's real conqueror, Pompey, piously resists the allure of the temple treasures – unlike the Flavians, who will bring them to Rome as the triumph's main attraction. The rest of the *War* is an unbroken story of Judaeao-Roman cooperation, elaborating Josephus' programmatic claim that Jerusalem had attained the height of prosperity under Rome, before this last reversal (1.11). So any notion that Vespasian and Titus conquered Jerusalem is rendered absurd. When the Flavians arrive, it is to clean up the mess that Nero's legate in Syria had failed to manage in his province (3.1–5).

I leave aside here the larger question of whether Josephus' description of the Flavians' "war" supports the representation of the conflict in their triumph, as he describes it (7.122–57) – or whether he describes their triumph in order to drive home the contrast with his authoritative account in volumes 3 to 6.¹⁸ In any case, what does his programmatic departure from central Flavian themes imply for his relationship of *fides* with the rulers?

Third, Josephus' *War* says almost nothing about the author's dealings with the imperial family after the conflict (7.448). He describes these relations much more fully in writings composed near or after Domitian's death in 96 (V 359–63, 414–29; cf. *Ap.* 1.50). It is inconvenient for the "sycophantic *War*" scheme that Josephus became unambiguously complimentary toward Vespasian and Titus when they were long dead. Indeed, he apparently contemplated writing another work, which would cover aspects of Titus' reign (*AJ* 20.144), and we have no reason to think that it would have been less laudatory than all the later remarks. But if Josephus turned so complimentary in these later writings, which are universally recognized as nationalist in sentiment, there is no reason to doubt that the earlier *War*, which portrays the two men in more ambiguous terms, was already written from the nationalist motives that Josephus forcefully declares in the *War's* preface (1.1–8). There is no reason to imagine an abrupt change of loyalties between the *War* and the later compositions.

I hope to have sufficiently disturbed any complacent assumptions about Josephus' *War* that we may now look afresh at the work's actual portraits of the Flavians.

Vespasian

The *War's* characterizations of Vespasian fall in four blocks: the Roman's campaign in Galilee and the Golan in AD 67, first as Josephus' enemy and then as his captor; Vespasian's domination of Judaea and Peraea in 68–9; his bid for power and release of Josephus in 69; and the Flavian triumph of 71.

Although Josephus' Vespaian material is broken up in these sections, his overall portrait has coherent elements.

Josephus does not expect his Roman audience to learn about Vespaian from his accounts, of course. He exploits what everybody knows about the emperor to bring his story to life. Common impressions of Vespaian have left enough traces in Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, Suetonius, Xiphilinus' *Epitome* of Cassius Dio, and Flavian coinage and monuments for a decent sketch. In marked contrast to recent imperial predecessors, the new man was known to be a tough, experienced, and dominating field commander who had faced enemies eye to eye. He was also shrewd, worldly wise, and cunning in politics. Even the avowedly non-partisan Tacitus can say, long after the emperor's death: "Vespaian was a keen soldier who would march at the front, select the camp site, and whether it was night or day throw his skill against the enemy, or indeed, if the situation called for it, his own arm" (*Vespaianus acer militiae anteire agmen, locum castris capere, noctu diuque consilio ac, si res posceret, manu hostibus obniti*; Tac. *Hist.* 2.5; cf. 2.82; Agr. 13, 17; Suet. *Vesp.* 4). He was a soldier's soldier, candid and free of affectation, with no patience for humbug in others. He reportedly satirized his triumph and joked about the deification awaiting him at death.¹⁹ Suetonius relates that, as a member of Nero's Greek entourage, before his dispatch to Syria, he had repeatedly fallen asleep or walked out while the young ruler was performing (*Vesp.* 4.4). The same author dwells on Vespaian's earthy wit, which he sometimes deployed to deflect criticism of his unseemly taste for money (*Vesp.* 16–23).

Josephus' Vespaian comes to life against this background. His unique military experience justifies Nero's choice of him – the *War* ignores doomed Corbulo – to take over the Judaeian portfolio (*BJ* 3.3–5). Josephus paints an imposing picture of the redoubtable commander, at the head of 60,000 soldiers. He intensifies his colours with a digression on legionary training, which insists that Rome's army simply cannot be beaten, by foes or by natural adversity (3.64–108, 115–26). In this way, Josephus makes vivid his own hopeless plight as the one assigned to protect Galilee from Vespaian's mighty force (3.69).²⁰ The reader feels Josephus' terror. Although he absurdly claims to have trained 100,000 men in column manoeuvres, of whom 60,000 completed his tough course (2.576–83), it turns out not to matter. His fighters vanish once the region's capital Sepphoris – "sentinel of the whole *ethnos*" – having sent delegates to welcome Vespaian, admits a 7,000-strong garrison, which quickly dominates the Galilean countryside (3.34, 59–63, 129–31).

It is understandable that Josephus, writing in Rome, milks his personal conflict with Vespaian for his own image construction. Who else could claim such experience? His aim is not to praise the Flavian ruler but to

display his own mettle as he had to face the world's greatest commander and army. Disarmingly, Josephus admits to having immediately fled for his life on the Roman's arrival – to King Agrippa's lakeside city Tiberias, which was apparently not on Vespasian's itinerary (3.131). But a sense of duty to the central Galilean town of Iotapata, which found itself suddenly imperilled by the arrogance of Vespasian's general Placidus (3.310–14), arouses Josephus to rush to the aid of friends there (3.141–3). In historical reality, he may have gone to Iotapata hoping that his aristocratic status and linguistic competence – he had already undertaken an embassy to Nero's Rome (V 13–16) – would enable him to negotiate terms with the Roman commander. In the narrative, when his ploys to buy time are exhausted, he again tries to flee rather than die pointlessly with the locals (3.193–206, 343).

When the people of Iotapata prevent his departure, flattering him as their only hope, Josephus has no choice but to embrace the role of their general. He instantly morphs into a Caesar-like tactician, and thus manages to create the biggest problems Vespasian will face in the region (3.155–61). Josephus' defensive genius thwarts Vespasian at every turn, dragging out the siege for well over a month. Each commander, now facing a worthy opponent, strains to adapt to the other's manoeuvres. Josephus, for his part, orders bold forays into the Roman camp and against the siege engines, massively strengthens his defensive walls, and pours scalding oil on advancing legionaries, a chemical weapon that burns under their armour, followed by boiled fenugreek to turn the ramps beneath them into lethal slides. He is even more adept at psychological operations: drenching cloths in water to feign abundance of provisions or hanging bags of chaff to absorb the blows of Roman rams (3.276–81).

Indeed each book of the *War* dwells on the psychological dimensions of each conflict. At Iotapata, in spite of the Romans' overwhelming numbers and material advantages, Josephus' narrative balances the terror they predictably create with the anxiety, despair, and sometimes panic on their own side.²¹ At one point, his generalship nearly throws the whole Roman force into disarray, when one of his archers manages to hit Vespasian's foot:²²

μέγιστον δὲ θόρυβον ἐνεποίησεν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις· πρὸς γὰρ τὸ αἷμα ταραχθέντων τῶν πλησίων φήμη διὰ παντὸς ἐπήει τοῦ στρατοῦ, καὶ τῆς πολιορκίας οἱ πλείους ἀφέμενοι μετ' ἐκπλήξεως καὶ δέους ἐπὶ τὸν στρατηγὸν συνέθεον (*BJ* 3.236–7)²³

This caused a huge commotion among the Romans. When those nearby became disturbed at the blood, rumour immediately spread through the whole army. Most abandoned the siege and came running, in panic and alarm for their general.

Young Titus' distress for his father (δείσας, ἀγωνία) compounds this general consternation. The tough old commander himself shrugs off the

injury and soon restores order, in accord with his character, but Josephus adds no adulation. The brighter beacon is his own generalship, which compels Vespasian to endure a dispiriting siege outside a town he had expected to roll over.

Josephus' famous account of his eventual surrender at Iotapata (3.340–408) has many fascinating dimensions, which again serve mainly to illuminate his command brilliance, oratorical skills, cool resourcefulness, and proximity to God. Vespasian is not his focus, though he is ours here.

In connection with the surrender episode, I would point out something generally missed: that Josephus portrays the enemy general-become-*princeps* as a serial liar, or at least a dissembler. Not that there is anything necessarily wrong with that. Frontinus' *Stratagems* assume that deception is basic to military success, and Josephus' autobiography is a stew of stratagems, beginning with the pretences of the Jerusalem elite, including himself, when dealing with the people (V 21–2, 126–8, 141–4, 226). Even pledges of security or safe conduct are a grey area. Josephus expresses outrage when militants in Jerusalem pledge safety to the auxiliary garrison, only to cut the men down after they relinquish their weapons (BJ 2.450–4). But many episodes show that promises of safe passage were always suspect. He is too canny to accept a domestic enemy's pledge, assuming that is a ruse (V 216–27). And he cheerfully describes how he himself invited local enemies into his house, assuring their safety, then flayed them to the bone or, in a different version, sent one man back with a severed hand dangling from his neck (BJ 2.611–13; V 147–9). Deception is part of effective leadership.

If one can find a consistent ethic here, perhaps the principle (as with rhetoric) is that a virtuous end justifies the means. Bad men revel in deceit for its own sake, whereas good men may be forced to use it for their noble purposes. Even still, when Vespasian is the deceiver and Josephus the intended victim, it is hard to see his portrait as adulatory of the Roman. We wonder, again, about the nature of Josephus' literary *fides* and the limits of Vespasian's tolerance.

When Iotapata finally falls, the story goes, Vespasian wants his troublesome enemy in hand, but Josephus has found a deep cave in which to hide. Vespasian sends two tribunes, instructing them "to offer him a pledge of safety and persuade him to come up" (3.340–4). Assuming that the pledge is an excuse to kill him, Josephus is "not at all persuaded" (3.345–6). Vespasian tries again, this time using a tribune named Nicanor, who is somehow known to Josephus. This fellow piles it on, rhapsodizing about the clemency of the Romans, insisting that Josephus' valour has made him an object of admiration and promising that Vespasian could never conceive of harming

him. *Au contraire*, his sole desire is to “save such a brave man.” Any suspicion that Nicanor was allowing himself to be used for dishonourable purposes would be an insult to the interlocutor (3.346–9).

Josephus does not believe even this cloying appeal. And right he is, too. For when he finally enters the Roman camp beside Nicanor – this after divine assurances of protection and mission, *not* because he trusts Vespasian (3.350–4) – his life is in immediate peril. Vespasian is nowhere to be seen, and the Roman soldiers plan to string him up. Only the visual impact that the thirty-year-old Judean makes on some commanders, fortunately including the sensitive twenty-seven-year-old Titus, opens a path to survival. Indeed, “he [Titus] was the main factor in securing his safety from his father” (3.397). Josephus need not spell out that Vespasian has been lying. It is clear that the general never dreamed of sparing Josephus, much less of honouring him as a worthy opponent. Even as he hears Josephus’ prediction of his own imminent rise to power,²⁴ Vespasian dismisses it as the prisoner’s predictable effort to save his life, and orders Josephus kept under close guard. Vespasian and Titus gradually extend courtesies to their prisoner as they discover his potential value, but still Vespasian will not release him until he makes his bid for empire two years later. Only then, as he begins plotting with supporters in Berytus, does he discover the truth – or usefulness – of Josephus’ prediction (3.403–8; 4.620–9).

Vespasian’s particular blend of toughness and trickery continues in the story long after Iotapata. Having quickly pacified Galilee by the beginning of summer in 67, he goes to relax with King Agrippa II in the cool of the royal capital at Panias, below Mount Hermon. There Agrippa requests his help in dealing with the restiveness that has recently been reported in the lakeside cities given to him by Nero a decade earlier. There is no reason to assume anti-Roman motives behind these disturbances, which seem targeted at the king. Nevertheless, as an eager commander and a faithful friend with a huge army now resting, Vespasian quickly agrees and recalls his force to put the fear of God into Tiberias and Taricheae (3.443–61). The former is predictably easy. The leaders of the Greek-style *polis* want no trouble, and the anti-Agrippa faction flees an hour’s walk up the lake to Taricheae (3.457).

There Vespasian’s force quickly isolates the militants and kills anyone willing to fight on land or lake (*BJ* 3.462–531). Josephus adds that many innocent residents were killed by Titus. Although they expected his pledge of security (κατὰ ... ἐλπίδα δεξιᾶς), Titus ordered his men to kill indiscriminately, just to be sure that all militants were destroyed (3.500–2).

When the fighting is over, Vespasian holds a *consilium* with his generals about the remaining foreigners in Taricheae, including many who are old

and unfit. Seemingly by inference only, he decides that they too must have been instigators (κατάρξαι γὰρ οὗτος ἐδόκει πολέμου) and so deserve death (3.532). Vespasian's only quandary is how to get rid of them (τὸν δὲ τρόπον αὐτῶν τῆς ἀναιρέσεως διανοεῖτο, 3.534). If he kills them in cold blood, as they beg for their lives, he will create needless opposition from the townsfolk for an unjust act, whereas he himself could not stomach offering them a pledge of safety and then killing them elsewhere (μετὰ πίστεις ἐπιθέσθαι προελθοῦσιν οὐχ ὑπέμενε, 3.535).

Josephus thus makes it clear that what is about to happen is deeply unjust, and that Vespasian knows it. But he blames it on Vespasian's friends, who prevail over their commander (ξενίκων δ' οἱ φίλοι, 3.536). The enemy is the Judaeans, they insist, and Vespasian's mandate is to suppress Judaeen trouble. So he has a right to kill them. Moreover – recalling Thucydides – he must “prefer what is advantageous over what is proper” (χρῆναι τὸ συμφέρον αἰρεῖσθαι πρὸ τοῦ πρέποντος), if he cannot have both.

So it happens that Vespasian follows a course he knows to be wrong. He permits the supplicants “a doubtful safe-conduct” (αὐτοῖς ἄδειαν ἀμφίβολον ἐπέτρεψεν). But their walk to freedom will be inside a four-mile security cordon leading back to Tiberias. There, after gathering an alleged 37,000 in the stadium, he kills more than a thousand of the elderly and weak, preserving the rest for slave labour (3.532–42). When we recall that, on other occasions, Vespasian readily overrules his advisors (4.366–76), as a wise commander must, this easy capitulation can hardly be characterized as flattery.

Vespasian concludes his assistance to Agrippa by besieging and overrunning the natural fortress Gamala in the Golan Heights, where the last anti-royal rebels have fled. His legionaries' rapid entry into the steeply layered town proves disastrous, however, as they become trapped near the summit and cannot retreat, their comrades still pushing ahead from the narrow alleys below. The townsfolk take full advantage of Vespasian's difficulties. His soldiers, including key officers, die horrible deaths as they fall through rooftops or absorb rocks hurled from above. Trapped himself, Vespasian barely manages to back out through the breach point (*BJ* 4.17–38). Josephus duly credits Vespasian's personal courage in all this and presents him as blaming the soldiers for *their* impetuosity. But he is in command. The incident does not cover him with glory, and Josephus' tendency to blame others is becoming noticeable (4.39–48). Vespasian wisely delays a further assault until Titus has returned from a trip. The younger man, angered by the earlier debacle, leads a hand-picked small force into the town, which Vespasian backs up in due course, and so the town finally falls (4.70–83).

Vespasian's later activities in southern Syria, consolidating his grip on Judaea and Peraea across the Jordan (from 4.410), enhance Josephus'

developing portrait of an effective commander with a massive army methodically going about his work, but still it is hard to find obvious flattery. His general Placidus, the one responsible for Iotapata's plight earlier, continues his personal glory-hunting: he cuts down terrified and innocent villagers, of all ages and both sexes, until the Jordan River is choked with their corpses (4.430–9). Vespasian's actions west of the Jordan are little different if not as crass: he kills more than 10,000 helpless countryfolk (4.445–8).

Josephus' account of Vespasian's tourist-like visit to the Dead Sea (Asphaltitis) seems likewise more concerned with consistency of character in his narrative than with bolstering any image that Vespasian's enablers might have desired. The lake was already famous for its buoyancy (Plin. *Nat.* 2.26, 5.72). Whereas most people confirm this by simply wading in, Vespasian concocts an experiment more suited to his nature. He "ordered some who did not know how to swim to be tossed in the deep part, with their hands tied behind them" (Οὐεσπασιανὸς ἐκέλευσέ τινας τῶν νεῖν οὐκ ἐπισταμένων δεθέντας ὀπίσω τὰς χεῖρας ῥιφῆναι κατὰ τοῦ βυθοῦ, 4.477). Luckily they float, but the test reflects a peculiar mindset, which Josephus neither praises nor criticizes. Vespasian's last engagement before departing the field is in a small town, where "the strong fled, the weak perished, and everything left went up in flames" (4.489) – not exactly epic warfare suited to a hero.

Josephus' account of Vespasian's bid for imperial power is too detailed for discussion here. But it is also more nuanced than one might imagine from his billing as a sycophant. Although Josephus does not openly denigrate the ruler, of course, his lighting choices are not uniformly flattering. To begin with, his account deviates from the cherished Flavian chronology, according to which the Prefect of Egypt independently acclaimed Vespasian emperor on 1 July 69. This became the dynasty's retrospective *dies imperii* – erasing most of Vitellius' principate (Suet. *Vesp.* 6.3). Josephus rewrites the story to serve his own purposes, having Vespasian first acclaimed around Judaea.²⁵ Certainly, Josephus' version does not seem to merit Tacitus' complaint about Flavian-era historians who cravenly reduced Vespasian's grubbier motives to a sublime "concern for peace" and "love of the republic" (*Hist.* 2.101).

Josephus grounds the story in personal conflict. Vespasian detests Vitellius and considers himself more deserving of supreme power (4.586–7, 602). Although he burns with rage and is inwardly tormented, he is too fearful to act because of the distances involved, the alleged winter weather, and the possibility that fortune will turn on him (4.591). He prefers the safety of a private life (4.602). His officers, however, confident of their superiority to Vitellius' men and free of such paralysing doubt, force Vespasian at blade-point to accept his responsibilities (ζῆν ἀξίως, 4.602–4). It is doubtful that this extreme version of the Cincinnatus-like draftee should evoke gushing admiration for the boss.²⁶

Finally, although Josephus' triumph story in Book 7 is all but universally read as the epitome of fealty to the regime, sizeable cracks in the account tell against that interpretation. Confining our focus for present purposes to Vespasian's character, we first discover that the emperor seizes the glory of his son's achievement: the destruction of Jerusalem. The recorded Circus Maximus inscription, the Flavian coinage, the surviving Arch of Titus relief, the *Epitome* of Dio (65–66.4), and Josephus' description all agree that Jerusalem's fall was the Flavians' definitive achievement. The temple spoils were the paramount symbol of this and the only compelling foreign attraction in the inaugural event. Josephus remarks, however, that the Senate had voted separate triumphs for the two men, no doubt to allow maximal glory for each. Vespasian's decision to hold a single joint event (7.120) might sound like modesty, but a moment's thought, or reading between the lines, leads one to ask what Vespasian could have displayed in his own triumph. He had garrisoned various towns in this longstanding province, burned empty villages, and killed the weak. What could those have yielded as tangible proof of his glory? Perhaps some local shrubbery or bitumen from the Asphaltites lake (cf. Plin. *Nat.* 12.111–12), which would not a triumph make.

In Josephus' description, the father imposes himself on the big day itself, driving his chariot in first place behind the temple spoils (7.152). He personally covets these objects, "exalting himself because of them" (σεμνυνόμενος ἐπ' αὐτοῖς). After the triumph, he preserves some of the temple furnishings in his private residence on the Palatine, reserving the more spectacular for permanent display in the Temple of Pax in his new forum, from 75 (7.161–2).

I do not pretend to have given a full accounting of Josephus' Vespasian, which would require much more space. Undoubtedly there are tokens of respect throughout: for the man's prudence, as when he counsels against a rapid assault on Jerusalem (4.366–76), for his lack of vindictiveness in reconciling with the Commagenian royals (7.219–43), and above all for his growing respect for Judaeans fighters. Contemplating what lies ahead in the Judaeans mother-*polis*, Vespasian articulates Josephus' main theme: "He reckoned that even without walls, the high spirit of these men and their daring actions would be difficult to deal with" (τὰ δὲ φρονήματα τῶν ἀνδρῶν καὶ τὰς τόλμιας δυσμεταχειρίστους καὶ δίχα τειχῶν ὑπελάμβανεν). So he trained his soldiers just like athletes for contests (*BJ* 4.89–90). Most interesting for us is the way in which Josephus plays against the mythic dimensions of Flavian imaging to describe a fully human commander, with feet of the lowliest clay. His Vespasian is not a heroic type. He is a man with a peculiar persona who faces tests and responds in keeping with his character. His greatness is not in question, but Josephus' *War* assumes it rather than

trying to prove or exalt it. The most unforgettable and protracted image of Vespasian in the work is of the world's most powerful man, leading the most fearsome army, being held at bay for weeks outside a no-account town in Galilee – by the young Judaeen priest Josephus. Vespasian's greatness serves to valorize the Judaeen people and their self-appointed spokesman.

Titus

The same realistic mode of characterization continues with Titus, although the character is entirely different. I do not mean that we know the real Titus and that Josephus faithfully portrays him. I mean that the portrayal does not deal in abstractions, as one would expect from Josephus' reputation as a Flavian booster, but depicts a distinctive personality. Titus' admirable qualities and potential shortcomings differ notably from those of his father.

Those who claim to find a panegyric of Titus in Josephus have trouble clearly illustrating it.²⁷ After noting that, in Josephus depictions, Titus' brutality is sometimes moderated by clemency, Zvi Yavetz detects panegyric when Vespasian's officers, demanding that he challenge Vitellius, appeal to his qualities *and those of his son* (*BJ* 4.597). But this is too indirect for encomium. John Curran presents as sycophancy Josephus' description of the perils faced by the Tenth Legion – as a result of Judaeen daring – which only Titus' intervention could neutralize (*BJ* 5.81–97).²⁸ I would rather include that among the more subtle ways in which G.M. Paul finds that Josephus "favours Titus." One device is his use of past unreal conditions for battlefield situations: "all would have been lost, had not Titus arrived." Paul also cites a highly rhetorical speech that Titus orders Josephus' character to deliver outside Jerusalem's walls, which includes the claim that Jerusalem's spring has begun to flow copiously with Titus' arrival (*παρουσία*, *BJ* 5.409–11). Paul suggests that the Greek word suggests a heroic or divine figure. In Josephus, however, *παρουσία* appears often in connection with nobody special.²⁹

For perspective we should recall what unstinting praise of Titus looked like, even in prose authors. The Elder Pliny opens his great encyclopedia by lavishing praise on Titus' character and his political, military, and literary achievements – "the empire lives with you as equal" (*ex aequo tecum vivat imperium*) – well before Vespasian's death (*Nat. praef.* 1–6). Long after Titus was gone, Suetonius introduced his praise of the man's impressive physical and mental qualities (*Tit.* 2–3) with the famous caption "the love and darling of the human race" (*amor ac deliciae generis humani*, *Tit.* 1). Even the jaded Tacitus found in Titus a happy combination of character, fortune, beauty, and majesty of countenance (*Hist.* 2.1). Josephus has nothing like this, as far as

I can see, although, strangely, he is the only one with a reputation for Titorphilia.³⁰ Brian Jones captures Josephus' Titus better when he remarks of the historical figure, "[A]t best he was competent and brave, at worst foolhardy and naïve."³¹

Titus' activities in Josephus' account fall in three periods: under his father as legate of the Legio XV Apollinaris (AD 67–9); following Vespasian's departure, his direction of the Jerusalem siege (April–September 70); and his final actions in the east before the triumph. We shall focus on the first period because it is the least explored³² and because it lays a foundation for the rest.

As long as Vespasian is in Syria, Titus is a supporting player. Since he is Vespasian's son, and virtual co-regent at Josephus' time of writing, it is not surprising that he receives more attention than other legionary legates, aside from considerations of friendship and gratitude from Josephus.

In discussing Vespasian above, we have already noted some relevant episodes for this period. Titus makes his narrative debut when he leads the panic outside Iotapata over his father's foot injury (*BJ* 3.238). This anticipates enduring themes in Josephus' portrait of the young man: Titus' distress is motivated by commendable concern (εὐνοία) for his father – but what does this portend for his military effectiveness? We also saw that compassion moves Titus to intervene with his father to spare Josephus' life. At Agrippa's Taricheae, by contrast, Titus is ferocious and unsparing of innocent life. And at Gamala an exasperated Titus must remedy his father's failure.

Three other episodes from this early period greatly nuance the picture of Jerusalem's conqueror in Rome, renowned for his military prowess, high spirit, and literary talent. First, when the little town of Iapha turns defiant in solidarity with Iotapata, it is quickly subdued by Trajan senior (father of the future emperor), commanding the redoubtable Tenth Legion Fretensis. Sent by Vespasian with 3,000 soldiers to deal with the small town, Trajan quickly has his hand around its throat. But then he magnanimously sends word to Vespasian, offering the *coup de grâce* with its minor glory to young Titus. Titus eagerly arrives with a supplementary force half the size of Trajan's. He assumes tactical direction, arranging the Romans' overwhelming numbers against the hapless countryfolk, who are by now bereft even of their young men. Titus and Trajan get more than they bargain for, however. Not only the old and very young males but especially the town's women throw everything they have at the soldiers, and in this way they prolong the fight for hours. The humiliated Romans cut the throats of all the males they find, leaving only infants and women for enslavement (3.298–306). Is this a glorious victory for young Titus? Josephus' story is, again, about the indomitable Judaeian character in the face of overwhelming odds.

Second, Titus' fixing of the situation at Gamala (above) comes after he has been given the lead in pacifying Taricheae. When Vespasian agrees to help Agrippa, he sends Titus to fetch the Fifth and Tenth legions from coastal Caesarea while Vespasian gathers the Fifteenth from nearby Scythopolis (3.446). The father and his other generals quickly chase the troublemakers to Taricheae. Titus returns in time for a key role in what comes next. Like Iapha, this looks like his father's effort at supervised training and confidence building, with Vespasian's camp ready nearby for backup if needed. Hearing that militants are gathered in the plain near Taricheae, Titus takes an imposing force of 600 cavalrymen, with the intention of surprising and destroying them. On arrival, he decides that his force is not large enough for the tough Judaeans. While awaiting reinforcements, he must give a rousing speech to encourage his elite but dispirited horsemen – again enhancing Josephus' picture of Boer-like Judaeans irregulars. Even Rome's most elite forces despair of taking them.

Titus' oration does its job and, once Trajan senior is alongside with an additional 400 cavalry, their force attacks. Contrary to their plan, however, they drive the militants *into* Agrippa's peaceful town. Titus orders a hot pursuit inside the walls. As we have seen, this leads to indiscriminate slaughter (3.500). His father, nonetheless "overjoyed at his son's prowess and success" (ὑπερησθεὶς τῇ τε τοῦ παιδὸς ἀρετῇ καὶ τῷ κατορθώματι, 3.504), moves in to consolidate. Their first order of business, before the fake offer of safe passage described above, is to chase down those who have fled to the lake on boats. Vespasian orders rafts built, pursues them, and fills the lake with stinking corpses (3.305, 22–331).

That Suetonius (*Tit.* 4.3) singles out Taricheae and Gamala as Titus' key victories while at his father's side might suggest this writer's knowledge of Josephus' *War*, or something like it. He includes the detail (not found in Josephus) that Titus, when his horse was shot by an arrow beneath him, seized that of a fallen comrade.³³ If Suetonius knew Josephus' work, it would be telling that he mentions neither the challenge from Iapha's women nor our third episode involving Titus: Gischala. This was surely Titus' greatest blunder of the war, because of its grave consequences for Jerusalem. If events occurred in anything like the way Josephus relates, which seems a reasonable assumption in a work that was known to Titus (*V* 361; *Ap.* 1.50), it is remarkable that Josephus would portray them in the way he does: suggesting that Titus lacked even common sense, never mind tactical acumen.

By the time that Vespasian has wrapped up his assistance to King Agrippa II with the taking of Gamala (late September 67), nearly all the region's population centres have sent envoys to confirm their submission, but two still require visits. Towering 450 metres above Galilee's Jezreel Valley,

Mount Tabor is one of these. Vespasian assigns his devious general Placidus to this task. He succeeds with relative ease, after a false pledge of security (*BJ* 4.54–61).

The other suspect site is Gischala, a small agricultural settlement in remote Upper Galilee (*BJ* 4.84), near today's Lebanon border. Here Vespasian sends Titus with 1,000 cavalrymen, while he himself leads the legions to winter quarters in coastal Caesarea (4.87–8). Perhaps this is the next level of confidence building: Titus leading a small campaign with no safety net. Evidently, neither Flavian expected trouble for the thousand-strong force. The principal man of Gischala, John, was earlier Josephus' rival and potentially lethal enemy. It is conceivable that Josephus alerted Vespasian to John's town as a place worth visiting in force before leaving the region.

On his arrival, according to Josephus, Titus sees that his cavalry can indeed easily overrun Gischala. However, he has tired of killing. Pitying the town's inhabitants, gentle Titus prefers that they submit voluntarily and accept a garrison (4.92–6). Their wily leader John, while professing his eagerness to receive a garrison, points out that, unfortunately, it is the sabbath,³⁴ on which Judaeans may not conclude treaties. Titus would surely not want a reputation for impiety. The only reason not to allow them a day's delay would be fear of their flight, but Titus can easily prevent this, John advises, "by camping around the perimeter to guard them" (ἐξὸν περιστρατοπεδεύσαντα παραφυλάξαι, 4.101). John will happily welcome a garrison the following day, when the sabbath has passed.

In case the ruse were not obvious, Josephus makes it plain that John "played Titus" (ἐσοφίζετο τὸν Τίτον, 4.103). So oblivious is Titus that he does not even take the precautions that John assumed. Instead of digging in, he leads his elite soldiers to the nearest non-Judaeian town, a good hour's ride away, for a comfortable overnight. John cannot believe his good fortune (4.106) and wastes no time fleeing south toward Jerusalem's strong walls, with his militant crew and their families. They have many hours on Titus, therefore, when he is shocked to find them gone the next morning. He sends a party after them, which catches only stragglers (4.112–16). As for those who are left, Josephus expatiates on Titus' distaste for the death penalty, with its finality, and his reluctance to accept tattletale charges. So he completes his mission to garrison the town, albeit rather ingloriously, with the loss of its most troublesome residents to Jerusalem (4.118–20).

When Josephus allows that the young commander "was gutted that he had not been able to punish John right then for his trick" (ὁ δὲ Τίτος ἤχθετο μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ παραχρῆμα τιμωρήσασθαι τὸν Ἰωάννην τῆς ἀπάτης, 4.116), it only advertises Titus' impotence. Nor does it much ameliorate the monumental blunder – though it makes the stakes clear – when Josephus observes that

it was really God who preserved John, so that he would cause the Romans to destroy Jerusalem (4.104). Josephus immediately follows up the episode of John's escape by describing his hero's welcome in Jerusalem (4.121–34) and the specious foundation of his rapid rise in popular esteem there. His outrages will eventually lead the townsfolk to admit the exceedingly brutal Simon bar Giora, whom they had managed to keep out of Jerusalem, when they can bear John's tyranny no longer. These two men generate the lethal *stasis* that will ensure the city's doom (1.10–11; 4.389–97, 503–44, 556–84). When we consider that Josephus' Roman audience must know the names of John and Simon, as the two leaders featured in the Flavian triumph (6.433–4; 7.118, 154), Josephus' picture of John's wrapping Titus around his finger is all the more impactful. It is no wonder that Suetonius omits Gischala from Titus' dossier under Vespasian, or that he credits Gamala to him instead.

This period as Vespasian's lieutenant lays the foundation for Josephus' portrait of Titus, when the young man takes up his most famous role as Jerusalem's besieger. Titus' hope is to intimidate the besieged capital into submission. Yet, as he witnesses the Judaeans' contempt for death, he is forced to escalate the vigour of his assaults and his use of psychological operations. Like his father, Titus combines a powerful aversion to risking Roman soldiers with acts of personal bravery. His bravery is needed surprisingly often, however, because he must repeatedly rescue his ill-disciplined forces. Although he gradually hardens and can even show brutality at moments (5.446–551), Titus never loses the image of "simplicity" that is at times indistinguishable from gullibility (5.319).

We cannot close this survey without comment on *War's* climactic event, the destruction of the temple. Josephus' account is consistent with his overall portrait of Titus' character. He always acknowledges Titus' role in destroying the famous holy site, while claiming with equal consistency that Titus did not want the site destroyed (*BJ* 1.10, 27–8; 6.266; *AJ* 20.250). Most historians of the war would like us either to believe Josephus, a trust that would be naive, or to read his account as a sycophant's "exculpation" of Titus for having ordered the temple's destruction – the Flavian's biggest boast in Rome.³⁵ This is a false choice. First, we need not assume that Titus gave any orders about the temple. In the fog of war, many scenarios could have resulted in the temple's burning, and Josephus could still have produced a story highlighting divine agency. Second, his account of how Titus was frustrated does not redound to the general's glory.

In the story, Titus is constantly changing tactics in his effort to secure Jerusalem's surrender. After he hears about an episode of cannibalism inside the walls, he resolves in fury to reduce the city to ashes. He thus orders the temple compound destroyed and its gates burned (*BJ* 6.214–19, 228).

But during a further consultation with his commanders, his anger now cooled, he realizes that his fight is not with these famous buildings. It will enhance Rome's image if he can preserve them (6.236–43). So he orders the fires extinguished, to prepare for an assault on the men inside. The next day he watches proceedings from the safety of a tower until, satisfied that the enemy are confined to the inner temple and the fires are being extinguished, he heads for a siesta, intending a full attack at dawn (6.248–9). While he sleeps, an anonymous auxiliary soldier in the cleanup crew, having come under attack from those within – and “moved by some other-worldly impulse” – tosses a firebrand through a window and unwittingly sets the temple stores ablaze (6.250–3).

When Titus is awakened, he is apoplectic with rage, but there is nothing he can do. He screams and waves his arms. But his legionaries, whom he has held back in preparation for the big assault, charge past him in a stampede of the temple courts, to get their share. Although the inner sanctuary could still have been saved, Josephus remarks, “passion became the general for all ... Once near the shrine, the [legionaries] pretended that they could not hear Caesar's instructions, but urged those in front of them to take the fire inside” (ἀλλ' ὁ θυμὸς ἀπάντων ἐστρατήγει ... πλησίον δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ γινόμενοι τῶν μὲν τοῦ Καίσαρος παραγγεμάτων προσεποιούντο μηδὲ κατακούειν, τοῖς πρὸ αὐτῶν δὲ τὸ πῦρ ἐνιέναι παρεκελεύοντο, 6.257–8). Again, “their passions, their hatred toward the Judaeans, and a violent warrior instinct prevailed over their respect for Caesar or indeed their fear of the one trying to hold them back” (τῶν δὲ καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸν Καίσαρα αἰδῶ καὶ τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ κωλύοντος φόβον ἐνίκων οἱ θυμοὶ καὶ τὸ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους μῖσος, καὶ πολεμικὴ τις ὁρμὴ λαβροτέρα, 6.263). The matter is now out of Titus' hands, and *this* is how the temple burns “against Caesar's will” (6.266). This would be a most peculiar way to exculpate Titus or honour his virtue. In any case, there was nothing to apologize for in Rome, where the temple furnishings were the Flavians' main spoils. The story shows rather that Titus' designs and “resolve” had to yield to the tragic role assigned him by the Judaeans' God. He is a supporting actor, not the centrepiece, in this Judaeian narrative.

Conclusion

I have argued that Josephus' *Judaean War* is a profoundly Judaeian story, in which the Flavians play only supporting roles along with other Roman leaders. It is a history of Jerusalem's remarkable success under Roman rule before the catastrophic fall. The whole account quietly undermines Flavian claims about an alleged conquest. Josephus' debts to Thucydides and Polybius in this pragmatic-political history are welded to a biblical-Judaean

frame, according to which nations rise and fall under divine supervision. Rome is currently ascendant, and it is wise to accept this, as Judaeans have done to their advantage since Pompey. Josephus casts all this in the universally intelligible language in which he seems also to have thought: τύχη and her reversals, *polis* leadership and its hazards, tyranny, sacred spaces, pollution, and purification.

His Flavians are recognizable human beings of distinct personality, not bathed in the *topoi* of hero worship. Gruff and tough Vespasian is careless of enemy life and will do whatever he must to subdue them quickly. This earns him the steadfast loyalty of his soldiers, for he minimizes their risks, leads from the front, and gives them abundant rest and training. They eventually force him to seize imperial power, for their sake as much as his. His possible character flaws, never analysed by Josephus, of course, follow from his temperament: callousness toward others, readiness to violate pledges of safety, and stealing others' achievements. He meets unexpected resourcefulness and national pride from the Judaeans of Galilee, especially in the brilliant adversary Josephus.

Vespasian is careful to give Titus a graduated series of combat experiences to build confidence and reputation, but his young son is a different sort of man. Although they share the trait of personal bravery, Josephus' Titus (as perhaps everyone's Titus) is a rather more sympathetic figure. He shows astonishing sensitivity and empathy toward even enemies, and so saves Josephus' life. The potential weaknesses of his personality, which are also left between the lines and never analysed, although they seem clear enough, are the lack of guile associated with military commanders, the lack of a killer instinct, and a tendency to gullibility. His relationship with his soldiers is correspondingly very different from his father's. Even at critical moments, he must often deal with the kind of low-grade and dispersed insubordination that is hard to punish effectively.

Plainly Josephus did not write in the service of Flavian myth-making. But then how should we think about his relationship to good faith (*fides* or πίστις) toward the ruling family? He could not have wholly invented his claims of Flavian support, even if he exaggerated (V 363; *Ap.* 1.50). What could the Flavians have found creditable and useful here?

Perhaps the question boils down to what is most important in their reciprocal relationship of *fides*: Is it trustworthiness, fair dealing with each other, loyal flattery, or faithfulness to the historian's task and to the real-life characters? Suetonius' biography of Vespasian, albeit a generation after his death, glows with omens and virtues. It is more overtly laudatory than Josephus' *War*, but Suetonius also describes a distinct character, one with a weakness for personal avarice and a crude sense of humour (*Vesp.* 16, 19, 22–3). He

remarks, interestingly, that Vespasian did not take offence easily or remember slights, even reconciling with Vitellius' family after the civil war (14). Not only did he "tolerate with great patience the frankness of friends, the ironic allusions of pleaders, and the obstinacy of philosophers" (*amicorum libertatem, causidicorum figuras ac philosophorum contumaciam lenissime tulit*; 13), but when some flatterers cooked up a divine ancestry for him he laughed at the silliness of it (12).

It may be that such a ruler preferred hard-nosed history, such as Josephus offers, to the cheap flattery of the lackeys whom both Josephus and Tacitus ridicule (*BJ* 1.1–8; *Hist.* 2.101). Perhaps Vespasian did not mind seeing himself throwing non-swimmers in the Dead Sea or breaking promises to terrorists – as long as the historian encouraged cooperation with his rule. Perhaps Vespasian and Titus understood that a judicious account by an intelligent Judaeon, proud of his own heritage and people, was a more credible basis for political relations than run-of-the-mill obsequiousness.

The genuineness of Josephus' loyalty to the Flavians is shown by his consistent gratitude, long after they and possibly Domitian are dead. In his *Antiquities*, completed in 93/94, he expresses awe at the forbearance and generosity (*ἐπιείκεια καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνη*) of Vespasian and Titus when they refused the petitions of Alexandria and Antioch for a curtailment of Judaeon rights in those major eastern *poleis* (*AJ* 12.120–9). As we saw above, Josephus' autobiographical appendix to the *Antiquities* concludes with a list of Flavian benefactions – "continued" by Domitian's wife, Domitilla, which might suggest that the emperor's assassination is recent.³⁶

Just as the Flavian rulers maintained their *fides* toward Judaeans throughout the empire and toward Josephus, continuing a long tradition of warm relations with Jerusalem and expatriate communities, Josephus remained deeply loyal to his Flavian benefactors throughout his life. But this did not prevent him from using great Roman figures to serve his own literary interests in extolling his humiliated people and advertising his own character. It is even conceivable that the unsuccessful accusations of *maiestas* that he faced in Rome, swatted away by Vespasian, gained traction from the independent hues of his writing.³⁷

NOTES

- 1 The *TLG* shows the eminent grammarian Aelius Herodian, for example, citing Josephus frequently for Judaeon names.
- 2 See Lindsay 1993 for a survey of πίστις.
- 3 Cohen 1982; Stern 1987; Spilsbury 2003.
- 4 Mason 2016: 199–280.

- 5 Josephus is missing from such standard treatments of Roman literary culture as Ogilvie 1980, Salles 1992, and Fantham 1996, though the last has two chapters on the Flavian period. The much expanded revision (Fantham 2013) still leaves him out (cf. also Augoustakis 2016a). Revealing is Bowie 1970: 15, in an essay that hunts down even fragmentary and neglected local Greek authors. Bowie mentions Josephus only as evidence for the lost histories of the post-Nero civil war, but otherwise excludes the works of “a Jewish writer outside the main Greek tradition.” Still, the attached note 41 concedes that “his approach and arguments fall squarely within the Greek tradition that goes back to Thucydides, and ... in this sense he does fall in the main Greek tradition.”
- 6 The entry for Josephus in Marincola’s index (1997: 349), exceeding those for Cato the Elder, Caesar, or Cassius Dio and rivalling that for Herodotus, reflects his value for studying themes and tendencies in Greco-Roman historiography.
- 7 Given that Josephus’ corpus is the largest extant from Flavian Rome, the twenty-seven chapters in Zissos 2016b are notably reticent. Josephus is named in several chapters (e.g., in relation to his sources, Titus, Judaea, foreigners, literary culture, spectacle), His works are briefly summarized as evidence for the period (Hurlet 2016: 21–2) and cited for various historical conditions (e.g., Brighton 2016), but they are not explored as other literature is.
- 8 E.g., Hurlet 2016: 21–2: “The proximity of Josephus to the new regime makes him a valuable witness, capable of understanding the Flavian political program, and of transmitting elements of its ‘official’ version.” Similarly Beard 2003: 543.
- 9 The creators of the scheme were Laqueur 1920: 245–78; Weber 1921: 246 (Josephus, “prophet of the new Caesar,” borrowed a Flavian source for much of Books 3 to 7) and 283–4; and Thackeray 1929: 3, 15–16, 37–9, 42, 52–3. NB: Josephus claimed to have consulted the generals’ field notes (5.342, 358; *Ap.* 1.56; cf. *AJ* 15.174), but this appears as primary research used for his purposes, a very different thing from copying out an official chronicle. More recent echoes of the classical scheme are in, for example, Künzl 1988: 9 (Josephus stood “auf der Seite der Römer und nicht mehr auf der seines Volkes”); Beard 2003: 558 (“besotted with the Flavians”); and Curran 2007: 77 (“His depiction of Vespasian is adulatory and that of Titus little short of sycophantic”).
- 10 Cf. Bentwich 1914: 54, who characterizes the surrender story as “a sad compound of cant and cowardice” and notes “pusillanimity and subservience to his Roman patrons ... He is at once vain and obsequious, servile and spiteful, professing candor and practising adulation ... As a general he proved himself a traitor” (255–6).
- 11 E.g., Hurlet 2016: 21: “Josephus, who fought against Rome prior to joining the Flavians ... a close associate of the new dynasty”; Murison 2016: 91: “Josephus, the one-time insurrectionist-general turned Flavian propagandist”; Parker 2016: 283: “in the course of the war, changed allegiance and joined the Romans”;

- Kemezis 2016: 464: "The references [to Vespasian and Titus] are uniformly positive, which is ... awkward given that Josephus had begun his career fighting against them as a rebel in Judaea only to end it in Rome as their favored dependent."
- 12 Rajak 1983 was decisive in laying out a more complex picture of Josephus' social-political position
 - 13 Lindner 1972: 65 (Vespasian's rise to power); Eberhardt 2005: 274–5, 277 (the triumph); McLaren 2005: (Titus); Mason 2005 (Titus and Domitian).
 - 14 Den Hollander 2014 comes closest, in treating Josephus' relations with each of the Flavian rulers *in Rome*. Material from Josephus' portraits of these men is obviously relevant, but he does not try to interpret the narratives as such. In a study of the historical war, Mason 2016: 121–30 offers a brief survey of Josephus' *War* on Vespasian and Titus, as part of the interpretation of the work.
 - 15 Hurlet 2016: 21: "The Flavian dynasty is at the heart of this account, and it is not surprising that it is presented in a positive light." Kemezis 2016: 464: "Vespasian and Titus are major characters in the *Jewish War* ... The references are uniformly positive."
 - 16 According to the *TLG*, the *War* contains 125,274 words; according to the desktop program *Accordance*, about 320 more. Either way, the first two volumes account for 42 percent of the overall work: Book 1 has nearly 30,000 words and Book 2 more than 22,500.
 - 17 Cody 2003; Millar 2005; den Hollander 2014: 196–197; Mason 2016: 3–45.
 - 18 Mason 2016: 3–45.
 - 19 "Dammit, I guess I'm becoming a god" (Suet. *Vesp.* 23.4; cf. 12).
 - 20 Only *BJ* (2.562–8) presents Josephus, as a general given a personal command in the north. The later *V* 28–30 has him sent with two other priests to see how Galilee is faring and to persuade its people to remain peaceful.
 - 21 E.g., *BJ* 3.169, 175, 177, 188, 222–5, 227–35, 282–3.
 - 22 Suetonius had heard (*Vesp.* 4.6) that Vespasian took several arrows to the shield and was wounded in the knee by a stone.
 - 23 For Josephus, I use Niese 1888–95; all translations are my own.
 - 24 The original may have been simply Josephus' statement that Vespasian was a real *imperator*, and a preference for life in chains there over the hazardous trip to Nero.
 - 25 Lindner 1972: 65.
 - 26 For fuller detail, see Mason 2018. The story has points of resemblance with Josephus' account of Claudius' accession. Claudius likewise is desperate to preserve his private life in safety, but when found hiding in the dark by the Praetorian Guard is thrust into power (*AJ* 19.212–17).
 - 27 Yavetz 1975: 423, 431. Yavetz argues generally that Josephus admired Titus' clemency and chose to emphasize it just when Titus needed an image enhancement, before his accession (426–32).

- 28 Yavetz 1975; Curran 2007: 77 n. 11.
- 29 Paul 1993: 65. Mundane *parousia*: BJ 2.617, 4.345; AJ 1.287, 2.20, 5.109, 12.86, 160, 352, 13.266.
- 30 There is also a “bad Titus” (pre-accession) tradition, which asserted Titus’ brutality and hedonistic lifestyle while Praetorian Prefect in the 70s (Suet. *Tit.* 6). But this image seems tied to his position in the Guard and may have been created by misunderstood motives and actions there. Murison 2016: 81–6 summarizes the evidence and argues (86) that the conspiracy of two Flavian stalwarts, Caecina and Marcellus, is clearer evidence than any narrative assertions of high-level unease about Titus’ accession. Although elements of Josephus’ presentation (especially the stress on clemency) might support Yavetz’s 1975 suggestion that he wrote to help facilitate Titus’ transition from Guard to imperial palace, other aspects of the story would not show Titus as particular fit for world rule.
- 31 Jones 1989: 128; cf. 134: “always brave, never original ... a commander in the traditional mould”; and Jones 1992b and 1984: 34–76; see also McLaren 2005.
- 32 For Josephus’ Titus in Jerusalem and later, see Jones 1989 and 1992b; McLaren 2005; Mason 2005 and 2016: 402–65; and den Hollander 2014: 139–99.
- 33 Jones 1989: 130 says: “Suetonius is wrong. It was not Titus who *redegit Gamalam in potestatem* ... [T]he credit belongs to Vespasian” (132–3). Actually, Suetonius’ remark would make sense as a summary of Josephus’ account, in which Titus becomes the crucial player.
- 34 Sabbath goes from sundown to sundown. Titus’ return early the next morning expecting to do business (4.112) implies that he considers the sabbath over. But, if this is Sunday morning, the sabbath ended the previous evening and he had no need to go away. John’s initial indication that it would not be over until the following day suggests that Titus arrives on a Friday, as it is beginning. If so, Titus assumes Roman time-keeping (a day begins at midnight or dawn), or John misleads the naive fellow on this point, or Josephus has fabricated parts of the story in ways that Roman audiences might not notice.
- 35 Leoni 2007; Mason 2016: 466–513.
- 36 For discussion, see Mason 2001: 171–2nn1774–6.
- 37 See Schwartz 1990: 18n80; Mason 2001: 171n1771.