University of Groningen

Religious Violence? Two Massacres on a Sabbath in 66 CE: Jerusalem and Caesarea

Mason, Steve

Published in:
Religious Violence in Antiquity

DOI:
[10.1017/9781108860215.008](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108860215.008)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Mason, S. (2020). Religious Violence? Two Massacres on a Sabbath in 66 CE: Jerusalem and Caesarea. In J. Dijkstra, & C. Ratschle (Eds.), *Religious Violence in Antiquity: New Perspectives* (pp. 106–132). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108860215.008>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Religious Violence? Two Massacres on a Sabbath in 66 CE: Jerusalem and Caesarea

Steve Mason

Introduction

In recent years a new debate has appeared in scholarship over the value of ‘religion’ as a category for studying the ancient Mediterranean world before its Christianisation. Although I have unwittingly become involved at the margins, I confess not to understand what is at stake for all participants. Whereas the debate usually proceeds on a theoretical or at least abstract level, a volume on ‘religious violence’ in Antiquity invites us to get down to cases. This chapter examines a pair of extremely violent incidents reported by Josephus for the year 66 CE, in Jerusalem and Caesarea, to ask what if anything makes them instances of *religious* violence, or how we might better understand what happened if we called it ‘religious’ behaviour. Before turning to the double episode in Josephus’ *War*, I would like to spell out my limited understanding of the stakes in using or declining religion language for the first century.

Context, Method and Possible Stakes

In 1962, shortly before Religious Studies exploded as a discipline in North American universities and the American Academy of Religion took shape, one of the twentieth century’s trail-blazing comparative religionists, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, published *The Meaning and End of Religion*. The title is paradoxical because Smith argued that ‘religion’, which only crystallised as a function of the West’s reifying propensities in viewing others, is ‘confusing, unnecessary, and distorting’ for most purposes. It ‘should be dropped’ in academic study, and he already found it disappearing in specialist use.¹ His *tour de force* included a detailed chapter on the development of Latin *religio*, from Antiquity through to modern times,

¹ W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1962) 48, 59–63.

and an insightful discussion of the ancient world, which included the lapidary observation: 'What was missing in classical Greece is any concept for a religion as a systematic or historical entity – as discriminated either from another such entity, or from other areas of social life'.²

As an undergraduate in one of the still-new departments of Religious Studies (at McMaster) in the late 1970s, I was puzzled that lectures in courses on Indian and Chinese religious traditions resembled history classes. In the tutorials we would discuss texts from each period, as we rolled through the centuries. I once mustered the courage to convey my puzzlement to Paul Younger, who taught the India course: 'This is all *really* interesting, though not what I had expected. At some point are we going to stop and discuss *what Hinduism actually believes?*' Professor Younger was kind enough not to guffaw, but encouraged me to go with the flow. Fortunately, I never did learn what Hinduism believes. By the MA, I had found Smith's book and thus discovered that my professors were on the vanguard, favouring the understanding of texts and events in their particular contexts, without assimilating them to the distortions of covering categories.³ Eventually, realising that also in my major field, Judaism and Christian origins, we spent our time trying to understand texts in historical contexts, and that this was thrilling, I decided to become a historian rather than a religiologist. The study of religion seemed to lack either a distinct object or a method. The much-pondered study of the human past provided the balance I sought between clear purpose and infinite variety. It could include religion, or not-religion, as the subject material required.⁴

Research on the ancient West has proved remarkably resistant to Smith's insights. Books billed as studies of Greek and/or Roman 'religion' are not the main issue here, because such titles are convenient hooks for prospective readers. The authors are usually quick to explain that the

² Ibid., 53.

³ Y.-L. Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. D. Bodde (New York, 1948) 1–6. Fung allows that Chinese society came to host coherent systems with 'superstitions, dogmas, rituals, and institutions', his perception of what constituted religions (p. 3). But Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism were first ways of philosophy (systematic and reflective thinking about life), free of religion's attributes. He develops these points in his two-volume *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, 1952–53). J. A. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago, 2012). Cf. T. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or: How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, 2005).

⁴ My article, 'Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007) 457–512 cites and takes for granted the insights of Smith and others on 'religion', as a firm foundation for exploring 'Judaism' and 'Jew/Judaeans' – in part challenging the argument that *Ioudaios* had taken on a religious meaning.

ancient world had no category corresponding to our religion; their goal is clearly to understand the ancients on their terms.⁵ Anything having to do with ancient Jews or Christians, however, seems to require the introduction of 'religion' as an analytical category, as though the ancients defined their lives in relation to it. Perhaps because these fields were long incubated apart from other ancient history, in Europe's theology faculties and American seminaries and later Religious Studies departments, they continue to be treated as two 'religions' – whether mother and daughter, legal and illegal, missionary or non-missionary, in any case 'systems' or 'patterns of religion' that one gets in, stays in, or leaves.

Our instinct to sublimate human life in this corner of the Orient is particularly striking when it comes to politics and warfare. Although Greeks and Romans suffused their military operations with what we call religious rituals (e.g. sacrifice, purifications and temple-vowing), we do not call the Persian, Peloponnesian, Carthaginian, Macedonian or Achaean wars 'religious'. When Judaeans fought, however, it must have been a religious or even holy war. We hold them immune from the normal human motives of fear and anger, or conflicts with neighbours, preferring to see them as a nation in thrall to, and motivated by, an abstract theology of chosenness-cum-apocalyptic messianism. Vasily Rudich's trilogy of books about dissent under Nero illustrates this phenomenon. The first two studies are about normal, human, social-political dissent, even among the super-religious Romans. When he turns to Judaea, however, he titles the volume *Religious Dissent in the Roman Empire*, because he is sure that 'Judaism . . . belonged among the best-organized religions of the ancient world'.⁶ This assumption encourages him to think that 'religious dissent' sprang from a different mentality from that of its political cousin. It does not explain, however, why most ancient Jews – even in Galilee and Peraea, let alone the large Judaeans minorities throughout the Eastern Mediterranean – did not involve themselves in Jerusalem's problems with Nero's later procurators. Rudich notices that Josephus, our only source for most of the events, uses common political rather than 'religious' language, but concludes that he

⁵ E.g. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 1985) 8: 'ritual and myth are the two forms in which Greek religion presents itself to the historian of religion'; J. Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (Bloomington, 2003) 18–29, focusing on sacrifice; cf. pp. 79–110; J. B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2007) 13–53, separating out spheres of Roman life in which 'religious' phenomena might be found.

⁶ V. Rudich, *Religious Dissent in the Roman Empire: Violence in Judaea at the Time of Nero* (London, 2015) 10. Cf. N. Faulkner, *Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt against Rome, AD 66–73* (Stroud, 2004) – religion with class struggle; R. Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism* (Oxford, 2012), taking the first revolt as a paradigm of divinely sanctioned conflict.

must have suppressed the true religious dimensions of the Judaeen War.⁷ Popular culture – *Ben-Hur*, *Life of Brian*, the TV series *Rome* – has often agreed with scholarship in presenting Romans as cool realists who understand only power and think religion sentimental or worse, whereas Jews appear as devotees of religion detached from grubby politics.

This religious reflex in studying ancient Judaea has come home to me in reactions to my 2016 book, *A History of the Jewish War*.⁸ Although that study discusses the piety of all parties to the conflict, themes of pollution and purification, and the temple's sanctity, it does not resort to 'religion' as a category because I do not find such language in ancient texts. Moreover, its trunk is a series of investigations into particular problems, such as: Why did Cestius Gallus take a legion to Jerusalem in October 66, and why did Jerusalemites respond as they did? What were Flavian and Judaeen aims in relation to Galilee, Jerusalem (70 CE) and the desert fortresses (72–74 CE)? When discussing the predicament of Nero's legate in Antioch or the fear felt by those who welcomed Vespasian in Galilee or fled to Machaerus in the desert, I saw no occasion on which invoking 'religion' was either necessary or helpful.

In a 2018 Jerusalem conference responding to my book, nevertheless, the most consistent criticism (in three papers) was that I had ignored the *religious* causes of the war. I had anticipated the criticism because two of the more appreciative published reviews of the book had voiced a similar concern. One author reflected:

One final and cautious concern should be raised: the almost total exclusion of religion as a force of any kind within the progression of the war . . . [T]he conflict at Caesarea, which exploded when Greek citizens performed a mock sacrifice outside a synagogue, *began explicitly through religious conflict*, even though there were certainly political questions underlying the choices made. *Josephus pays great attention to what he sees as conflicts rooted in religious difference* . . .⁹

The other: 'I would argue that for the Jews, as for ancient peoples generally (though not for us moderns), nothing was more realist or more human than religion. For just this reason, *they often expressed* other, ostensibly more realist ideas *in the language of religion*'.¹⁰

⁷ Rudich, *Religious Dissent*, xxiv.

⁸ S. Mason, *A History of the Jewish War, AD 66–74* (Cambridge, 2016).

⁹ U. Westwood, review of Mason, *History of the Jewish War*, in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 68 (2017) 189–93 (quote at pp. 192–93; emphasis added).

¹⁰ M. V. Novenson, review of Mason, in *BMCR* 2017.02.51 (emphasis added).

Clearly, we all need to talk, as we seem to be reading different texts. The authors' confidence that Josephus and other ancient authors couched political issues in *religious* language, or that the troubles in Caesarea – which were crucial in generating the war – were 'explicitly . . . religious', provides an opportunity for clarification, and my main motive for this study.

Before we turn to the texts, two other contexts need to be mentioned. In different ways, they seem to bring forward the potential stakes.¹¹ First, Smith's book inspired Brent Nongbri's *Before Religion* (2013). A more comprehensive and radical account of the concept's historical development, this book includes a compelling chapter on the modern creation of 'ancient religion' and argues for relinquishing even 'religious', which Smith accepted, as an unhelpful anachronism.¹² Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin soon complemented Nongbri's work with a detailed study of the Greek and Latin terms most likely to be rendered 'religion', *threskeia* and *religio*, in *Imagine No Religion* (2016).¹³ Their aim was to make 'an incommensurable thought world comprehensible' by exploring the semantic ranges of these terms from alien cultures, without obfuscation from our lexical habits.¹⁴

Anders Klostergaard Petersen's *BMCR* review of Barton and Boyarin exposes at least some of the roots of mutual misunderstanding:

First, obviously there was no concept of male chauvinism in the ancient world, but does that imply the *non-existence of the phenomenon*? Definitely not. Second, how could one possibly tell that there was no concept of religion in the ancient world if one does not subscribe to a concept and an undergirding definition of the phenomenon? . . . Frankly I do not see how we could or should avoid it in order to know what we are talking about. And if one defines religion as, for instance, 'semantic and cognitive networks comprising ideas, behaviours, and institutions in relation to counter-intuitive superhuman agents, objects and posits', I do not understand how this may be conceived *as an imposition on ancient religion* in our understanding of it, since applied in the context of pre-modern religion it only involves acknowledging the conflation between culture and religion.¹⁵

¹¹ See, for this scholarship, also the General Introduction, p. 3, Bendlin, pp. 140–41, Rives, p. 177, and Mayer, pp. 257–58, all this volume.

¹² B. Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, 2013).

¹³ C. Barton and D. Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York, 2016).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵ A. K. Petersen, review of Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, in *BMCR* 2017.06.14 (emphasis added). See the similar argument for 'Judaism' in S. Schwartz, 'How Many Judaism Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization', *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011) 203–38.

It seems that Petersen's disagreement is more about methodological assumptions than substantive interpretation. His assumption that one cannot say whether some X was present unless one first defines that X sounds reasonable, but only if it is a pre-agreed rule of the game that we are all looking for *abstractions*, which would indeed require definition. That is not Barton and Boyarin's game, however. They are looking at literary survivals from Antiquity to explore the *langue* in which they communicated, to see how their authors conceived of their world and communicated with each other about it. For this purpose, Barton and Boyarin have no need to define what is *not* there, any more than one would need to define 'health-care', 'pension' or 'public-school' systems to observe that these were not part of ancient discourse. Their simpler point, which builds on Nongbri's elaborate exploration of the 'modern concept' of religion (in turn building on Smith and a formerly common view), is that invoking the modern concept – *however* one defines it – is anachronistic and bound to mislead. It is also unnecessary, if one is simply trying to understand the world of the ancient texts.

Two Massacres: Josephus' War

In his *Judaean War* (2.450–57) Josephus tells the remarkable story of two simultaneous massacres, with aggressors and victims reversed. One was in Jerusalem, where Judaean militants cut down the military garrison, the other in Caesarea, where the Graeco-Syrian majority killed or expelled Judaeans resident there. The passage is brief enough to quote with minor omissions:

Although the populace [of Jerusalem] urged repeatedly that the siege be raised, in consideration of the soldiers . . . , they [Eleazar's faction] applied themselves ever more harshly until Metilius' group – he was the prefect of the Romans – could hold out no longer. They sent word to Eleazar's group, asking only for their lives under a truce, saying that they would surrender their weapons with the rest of their property. The others seized on this plea and . . . gave them the pledge as well as oaths . . . and Metilius led his soldiers down [from the Herodian palace towers].

As long as they had weapons around, none of the insurgents made a move on them. . . . But when, in keeping with the agreements, they all put down their shields and swords and began to withdraw, suspecting nothing more, Eleazar's group rushed at them, surrounded them, and made away with them – men neither defending themselves nor begging for mercy, but only crying out: 'The agreements!' and 'The oaths!' In this way they were all savagely butchered, then, except Metilius. Him alone they preserved,

because he had begged for mercy and promised to Judaize, going as far as circumcision.

On the Roman side the suffering was light, in that from a boundless force a few were expended, but still among Judaeans it seemed a prologue to capture (προοίμιον ἀλώσεως). Perceiving that the justifications for the [coming] war were already beyond healing, and that the city had been defiled with such pollution that it was reasonable to expect some other-worldly wrath (τηλικούτῳ μιάσματι πεφυρμένην, ἐξ οὗ δαιμόνιον τι μήνιμα προσδοκᾷν εἰκὸς ἦν), even if not retaliation from the Romans, the Judaeans began a public mourning . . . For it happened that the slaughter was committed on a Sabbath, on which for the sake of worship they observe a moratorium even on pious activities.

On the very same day and at the same time, just as from some other-worldly provision (ἐκ δαιμονίου προνοίας), Caesareans began doing away with the Judaeans among them. Thus more than 20,000 were butchered within a single hour. All Caesarea was emptied of Judaeans, for [the procurator Gessius] Florus arrested those who were trying to escape and took them down into the dockyards as prisoners.¹⁶

Given Josephus' habit of portraying violence in sometimes gory detail, his restraint here adds to the ominous feeling. Such glaring atrocities need no elaboration, but they cannot be the end.

Nor will they be. A few paragraphs later, C. Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria, is hurrying a large expeditionary force from Antioch to Jerusalem, in hopes of calming the situation (*War* 2.499). The recent expulsion of his friend King Agrippa II from Jerusalem (2.406) forced him to action, and now the slaughter of the garrison adds urgency. Fierce Judaeans strikes against Syrian *poleis* in retaliation for Caesarea, and the actions of those cities in turn, against their Judaeans minorities, are setting the whole southern region of his province aflame (2.458–80). His effort to pacify the region, however, will paradoxically become the crucial event in igniting the coming war.¹⁷ After angry young Judaeans devastate his departing Twelfth Legion in an ambush, Nero will assign the task of pacifying Judaea to (the future emperor) Vespasian (3.1–5), who will soon be magnifying his success there as legitimization of his claim on power.

The brief passage above is thus a linch-pin of Josephus' *War*. But how did these violent events come about? To what extent do the massacres reflect Judaeans antipathy towards imperial Rome? Above all, are they examples of *religious* violence? Where should we find, or supply, 'religion',

¹⁶ All translations in this chapter are mine unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁷ See M. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (London, 2007) 9–14, 392–99; Mason, *History of the Jewish War*, 281–334.

and how would that help us to understand these events, or at least the literary episodes in the narratives of Josephus? These questions we shall now explore, first broaching the thorny problem of the relationship between narratives, including those of Josephus, and lived reality.

Narrative and Real Life – Generally and in Caesarea

Real life and narrative are different things. This is not a postmodern claim. It has been obvious at least since Homer invoked the Muse to help him sing of Odysseus.¹⁸ It is why Cicero pleaded with the orator L. Luceius to write the history of his consulship, from Cicero's 'notes', and why Josephus declined to include the ancient past in *War* – so as to leave that work symmetrically balanced.¹⁹ Narratives are artistic creations with structures (beginnings, middles, ends), thematic palettes, characterisation of selected *dramatis personae*, and the other features of 'a good story'. Our lives do not unfold as elements of a story falling into place. We do construct narratives for our lives at various points. But 'the story' of our childhood, university days or a relationship is not fixed or given. It will change with each retelling in longer perspective.

The inability of events to declare their meaning is the reason for history – and criminal investigation, a quotidian application of historical thinking. Because the past does not generate a single story, if we want to know what happened we must launch a methodical investigation. An example is the 'quest of the historical Jesus'. For two centuries or more, scholars have been ingeniously imagining the lost figure of Jesus, who could have given rise to the highly varied traditions and disputes about him. That figure cannot simply be inferred from an 'accurate' narrative. So also in general, historians cannot make life so easy for themselves as to find a trustworthy narrative and sit on it. This is not because narrators are liars or incompetents, though they may be, but because stories and real life are different things.²⁰

We are now interested in what happened, in ancient Jerusalem and Caesarea, to produce the dual massacres described by Josephus. We notice immediately that the passage above is not transparent of real life, but obviously part of a crafted narrative. Most obvious is the repetition of *δαμόνιος* ('other-worldly'), Josephus' non-explanation of both the

¹⁸ Homer, *Odyssey* 1.1. ¹⁹ Cicero, *To Acquaintances* 5.12; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.6–7.

²⁰ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1994) 378; cf. the extensive section on criticism of sources in M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Paris, 1949) 35–67.

Jerusalemites' fear of retaliation and the timing of the Caesarean massacre (2.455, 457). *War* has this adjective thirty times in its seven volumes, using it for eerie or providential events, which are often crucial to the story's progression but beyond human accounting.²¹ Accordingly, in this work the neuter substantive τὸ δαιμόνιον refers nearly always to God or Providence, rather than an intermediate spirit as in other texts.²² Since Josephus' later works make no such use of this thematic language, the events themselves could not have generated it.²³ It is part of *War*'s constructed narrative only.

Other telltale signs of art include: Josephus' characteristic psychologising, which has the Judeans discern a 'prologue to capture';²⁴ Metilius' 'Judaising', which anticipates a coming observation on the same phenomenon in Syria (*War* 2.463); a typical expository remark on the Sabbath; the presence of one of Josephus' favourite words, θρησκεία ('worship');²⁵ and *War*'s characteristic language of butchery and savagery. While we are at it, I might mention 'strength of bodies', from an earlier passage on Caesarea (below), as one of many distinctive traits of this writer and of *War* in particular.²⁶

²¹ Josephus, *War* 1.69, 82, 84, 331, 370, 373, 376, 613; our two occurrences here; 3.341, 485, 4.34, 76, 217, 501, 622, 649, 5.377, 502; 6.59, 252, 296, 303, 429, 7.82, 120, 159, 185, 318. The italicised references are significant turning points in the story.

²² Only at *ibid.*, 7.185, does the substantive (plural) refer to demons.

²³ Josephus, *Antiquities* (2.5 times the length of *War*) has δαιμόνιος only twelve times, normally following the LXX in referring to malign spirits or demons (e.g. 6.166–68, 8.45–48). The unthematised providential sense comes in the part that parallels *War* (*Antiquities* 13.314, 16.76–77, 19.60).

²⁴ 'Capture' (ἔλωσις) occurs forty-five times from Josephus, *War* 1.10 to 7.407. This usage is so characteristic that the work was known among Church Fathers as Περὶ ἁλώσεως: Origen, *Fragmenta in Lamentationes* 105, 109 (GCS 6bis, pp. 273–74); Pseudo-Theodoret, *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos* 119 (p. 111 Papadopoulos-Kerameus); Procopius, *Commentarius in Isaiaem* (PG 87, col. 1837); cf. the title of Pseudo-Hegesippus' fourth-century Latin reworking, *De excidio hierosolymitano*.

²⁵ Josephus has the noun 101 times (114 times all cognates), though in all extant Greek literature before him it appears only 22 times. On Josephus' concern to explain Sabbath, see *War* 1.146 (narrative antecedent here), 2.517; *Antiquities* 1.33, 3.143, 11.346, 12.4, 259, 276–77, 13.352, 14.264; *Life of Josephus* 159, 275; *Against Apion* 2.20–27.

²⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.268; cf. 2.376, 476, 580, 4.503, 6.55, 81, 331, 7.232; note also 2.60; *Antiquities* 6.21, 17.278. The phrase ἁλκή σώματος is rarely attested before Josephus; this counts as characteristic. The plural here (σωμάτων ἁλκή) could be construed as either collective manpower (numerical superiority) or physical strength, as at nearby 2.376: the Germans are renowned for the strength and size of their bodies. Likewise at 2.580, strength of body and exaltation of soul have allowed the Romans to master the inhabited earth. The parallel account mentions only the Judeans' wealth (*Antiquities* 20.175). Although L. I. Levine, 'The Jewish–Greek Conflict in First Century Caesarea', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (1974) 382–83, and L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, 1993) 119–20, take the phrase to indicate numerical growth, the German parallel illustrates ancient

War's account of the massacres and the events that produced and followed them is thus a one-off artistic production. This is why historians have no business declaring such an account 'reliable' or the opposite. A story may be brilliant, carefully researched and planned, and suited to the author's (chiefly moral) purposes, but it cannot take the place of our investigation into what happened. Nor can we justify throwing up our hands and saying: 'Well, this is all we have, so we must follow it' – any more than we would declare sea water drinkable if it were the only drink available outside our lifeboat. Deuteronomy 19:15 already put the principle clearly: 'A single witness shall not suffice to implicate a person in any crime . . .; only on the word of two witnesses, or better on the word of three, shall a claim be substantiated'. Where we have only one source, we should adopt a critical nescience, or 'not knowing' – to revive a word from Samuel Johnson's old *Dictionary* that lacks the baggage of 'agnosticism' – until we can make a plausible case.²⁷

The life–narrative distinction looks even brighter when we realise that Josephus composed two very different accounts of pre-70 Judaea. His later *Judaean Antiquities* has a different structure and theme-set, with a correspondingly new literary style and diction. Pre-war events in Caesarea are among those he relates in a new way. Before I survey those different accounts, I jump to the most impressive divergence: *War's* massacres make no appearance in the parallel account in *Antiquities*. This observation forces us to realise that narrative structures and dramatic 'climaxes' are also properties of stories, not of life as we live it. Now to the two stories.

War makes clear, in its account of Caesarea's founding by King Herod, what sort of place the king envisaged. It was to be a grand Graeco-Roman *polis*: a boon to sailors working the Levantine coast, a centre of imperial cult for Augustus and Rome, and a gift to the province of Syria (1.414). Its world-class harbours, temples and entertainment facilities would make it a regional centre for quinquennial games (1.408–15). Although little more than an hour's drive from Jerusalem today, in the first century the 120 km distance required three or four days' walking. No less than Gaza, Ascalon, Dora, Ptolemais or Scythopolis, Caesarea was a different cultural universe from Judaea's highlands. Archaeology has amply confirmed that it was a

assumptions about varying degrees of physical vigour among the *ethne*. The Judaeans' advantage in 'strength of bodies' better matches the story: they are a minority, but their youth prevail in fights and can be restrained only by military forces (*War* 2.286).

²⁷ S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 6th ed., vol. 2 (London, 1785) s.v.

flourishing trading hub²⁸ – just the sort of place from which Josephus distances Judeans, because of the cultural mingling that maritime trade implies.²⁹ H. K. Beebe proposed that Herod built Caesarea as a counter-weight to the Judean mother-*polis*, which since Hasmonean times had controlled the much smaller port of Joppa.³⁰

Given this background, which is clear enough in *War* without the supporting archaeology, it comes as a surprise to read that in the late 50s:

A different kind of disturbance involving Caesarea compounded matters, when the Judeans who were mixed in there formed a faction against the Syrians (τῶν ἀναμεμιγμένων Ἰουδαίων πρὸς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ Σύρους στασιασάντων). They demanded that the *polis* was really theirs, saying that its *founder* had been a Judean (οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἤξιουν σφετέραν εἶναι τὴν πόλιν Ἰουδαῖον γεγονέναι τὸν κτίστην αὐτῆς λέγοντες) – this was Herod the king – whereas the others [Graeco-Syrians], though they readily conceded that the *coloniser* was a Judean (τὸν οἰκιστὴν . . . Ἰουδαῖον), nevertheless insisted that the *polis* was in fact one of Greeks. For if he [Herod] had dedicated it to Judeans, he would not have set up statues and shrines. Because of these issues the two sides were in dispute.

Their rivalry progressed to weapons, as every day the more spirited ones from both sides kept plunging into battle. The senior Judeans were not able to restrain their agitators, and to the Greeks it seemed a disgrace to be in a weaker position than the Judeans. The latter had the advantage in wealth and in strength of bodies (προεἶχον δ' οἱ μὲν πλούτῳ καὶ σώματων ἀλκῇ), the Greek side in protection by the soldiers – for the bulk of the military force there had been enlisted by the Romans from Syria. Just as relatives are, they were ready for acts of assistance.³¹

Josephus thus gives the violence in Caesarea a clear, if extraordinary, cause. As Lee Levine put it, ‘we find a Jewish community daring to seek control of a Graeco-Roman city, an attempt without parallel in Antiquity’.³² Josephus does not explain why Judeans made such a bold effort, or

²⁸ R. L. Vann (ed.), *Caesarea Papers: Straton's Tower, Herod's Harbour, and Roman and Byzantine Caesarea* (Ann Arbor, 1992); Y. Porath, ‘Herod's “Amphitheatre” at Caesarea: A Multipurpose Entertainment Building’, in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (Ann Arbor, 1995) 15–27; A. Raban and K. G. Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia* (Leiden, 1996); G. Alföldy, ‘Pontius Pilatus und das Tiberieum von Caesarea Maritima’, *SCI* 18 (1999) 85–108; K. G. Holum, A. Raban and J. Patrich (eds.), *Caesarea Papers 2: Herod's Temple, the Provincial Governor's Praetorium and Granaries, the Later Harbor, a Gold Coin Hoard, and Other Studies* (Portsmouth, RI, 1999).

²⁹ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.60.

³⁰ H. K. Beebe, ‘Caesarea Maritima: Its Strategic and Political Importance to Rome’, *JNES* 42 (1983) 195–207.

³¹ Josephus, *War* 2.166–68 (emphasis added). ³² Levine, ‘Jewish–Greek Conflict’, 387.

thought it would succeed, other than his remark that they enjoyed superior wealth and ‘strength of bodies’. Nor does he explain what it would mean concretely to make Caesarea Judaeac – presumably, dismantling its colossal statues, temples and defining institutions. I have proposed elsewhere that the move could be understood as what the realist school of political science calls a balancing effort. The threat of an increasingly confident auxiliary, nurtured in the foreign environs of Caesarea – no longer under Jerusalem’s control – could be offset by making Caesarea also Judaeac.³³

However that may be, this passage reveals two points that mostly lie beneath the surface in *War*’s narrative. First, although *War* is usually content to call the auxiliary force ‘Roman’,³⁴ perhaps to emphasise in hindsight the consequences of acting against this component of Rome’s military system, our passage acknowledges that the soldiers were locally recruited – as auxiliary cohorts were – in this case from populations long hostile to Jerusalem. *Antiquities* is more revealing in this vein. There, the premature death of the Judaeac King Agrippa I (44 CE) prompts unseemly celebrations in Caesarea and Sebaste. The people’s exuberance has to do, Josephus explains, with the large number of their family members serving in the auxiliary, which was under Jerusalem’s command while the king lived.³⁵ Since he might have ruled for decades, his unexpected death sparks riotous joy from the soldiery. The Emperor Claudius, indignant on behalf of his late friend, threatens to remove those units to the Black Sea. *Antiquities* claims that because they were not removed in the end, the auxiliary soldiers ‘sowed the seeds of war and became the source of the greatest calamities for Judaeans under Florus’.³⁶ *War* is not clear about this background, so the critical reader must pay attention to incidental clues, such as the notice I have quoted.

Second, although *War* (2.117) states that Judaea became a Roman province in 6 CE, the incidental remark at 2.268 that the auxiliary were recruited ‘from Syria’ agrees with other indicators that Judaea was in fact now part of Syria, hence the responsibility of the legate in Antioch. *Antiquities*, again departing from *War*’s formulations, will state unambiguously that Judaea was annexed to Syria in 6 CE.³⁷

The next part of *War*’s account of Caesarea elaborates points made in the opening paragraph above. The prefect Felix intervenes in one

³³ S. Mason, ‘Why Did Judaeans Go to War with Rome in 66–67 CE? Realist-Regional Perspectives’, in P. J. Tomson and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their Histories* (Leiden, 2014) 126–206, esp. pp. 199–201.

³⁴ E.g. Josephus, *War* 2.296, 308, 320, 321, 326, 329. ³⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.356–66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.366. ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.354, 18.1–2.

brawl, which the Judaeans are winning, and demands that they withdraw. When they refuse, he orders their fighters killed and wealthy Judaeans homes plundered (2.270). Still, he has the fairness to dispatch representatives of both sides to Nero, to settle the issue of the city's character definitively and end the strife. Will Nero accede to the Judaeans' claim that the *polis* is theirs?

Josephus often heightens drama by suspending a developing story to explore other matters before returning to it. So it is here. When we next hear of Caesarea, two more procurators (about six years) have come and gone. Nero's unsurprising verdict, when it finally arrives while Gessius Florus is procurator, is that Caesarea will remain Greek; Judaeans must not treat it as their *polis*. Josephus carefully dates this news – because he reckons it a foundation of the war – to May/June 66 CE (2.284). But now he must explain how it led to war. For it was not Nero's announcement as such, which only confirmed the status quo, but circumstances around it that sparked regional conflict.

Namely, in the interval while awaiting Nero's decision, wealthier Judaeans have been buying up contiguous plots of land. Whether from misplaced confidence in the imperial decision or as a hedge against the expected rejection of their initiative, they offer sums well above market value. So confident are they of making the *polis* theirs, one way or another, that they erect a meeting place (συναγωγή) right at the edge of one property, presumably expecting to buy the adjacent field. But their stubborn neighbour not only refuses to sell. He defiantly builds or develops workshops along the edge of his property, leaving the Judaeans a narrow passageway to their building.

The Judaeans try another tack. In exchange for a huge personal bribe, of eight talents, they try to secure Florus' backing. But Florus takes their money and absconds, leaving the parties to sort things out. This local spat, Josephus claims in *War*, remarkably generates conflict with Rome. How could that happen? The emboldened neighbour, after Nero's clear declaration, exploits his advantage. He further aggravates the Judaeans by sacrificing birds on a makeshift altar, which they must file past on their way to meetings. A lethal riot ensues, and this time the Judaeans get the worst of it. Seeing Florus' fecklessness, and aware of their vulnerability after Nero's rescript, they remove their laws from Caesarea for safe-keeping and prepare for the worst. Florus has the gall to arrest leading Judaeans also for this (2.291–92).

This turn of events also explains how the Caesarean situation comes to concern Jerusalem. For the Judaeans' capital's residents must deal with the

same Florus, and they are shocked by his treatment of Caesarea. His insults in Jerusalem itself include taking another seventeen talents from the temple treasury (citing Nero's needs), along with the eight from Caesarea (2.293).

The next we hear of Caesarea is Josephus' notice at *War* 2.457, in the passage at the head of this chapter. The Syrian majority massacre an alleged twenty thousand Judaeans in a single hour. This creates outrage in Jerusalem, causing Judaeans to fan out in parties and attack other southern *poleis* – adding urgency to Cestius' expedition, underway in September–October 66.

Antiquities (20.173–84) lacks not only the concluding massacre and these retaliatory strikes, but also *War's* entire explanation of how Nero's decision generated conflict. The land purchase and the offending sacrifices are missing. The few points of agreement with *War* come in the opening frame. Here too, the Judaeans initiate civic strife by attempting to change the status quo:

Whereas the Judaeans were asserting their primacy, on the ground that the founder of Caesarea had been their king . . . , the Syrians conceded the point about Herod but insisted that Caesarea had formerly been called Strato's Tower, and at that time there had been not a single Judaeans inhabitant . . . The Judaeans who were in the *polis*, made confident by their wealth and on that account holding the Syrians in contempt, kept slandering them, expecting to provoke them to anger. The latter, though inferior in resources, were in high spirits because most of those doing military service there under the Romans were either Caesareans or Sebastenes, and so took to abusing the Judaeans with words for a while. Then they began throwing stones at each other, until many were injured on both sides – though the Judaeans would surely win.³⁸

On that similar foundation, however, *Antiquities* builds a different story. To begin with, the prefect Felix is no longer *War's* even-handed referee, sending both sides to Nero. *Antiquities* portrays Judaeans prevailing in all the fights with their neighbours. Here, therefore, Felix's main concern is to get the Judaeans to desist. When they do not, he executes some and takes many others prisoner, while allowing his eager auxiliaries, clearly identified here as hailing from the area, to ransack Judaeans houses. In this account, when the Judaeans leaders beg him to stop and promise to rein in their youth, Felix accepts their pledge and the matter is settled. No appeal to Nero is needed (20.177–78).

³⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.173–76.

Antiquities has the next procurator, Festus (59–62 CE?), allow Judean dignitaries to visit Nero, but this is not to put their case concerning Caesarea. They want rather to accuse Felix because of the auxiliary's violence, which he authorised. There is no rival delegation from Caesarea. Notice incidentally the Judeans' continued trust in the emperor's fairness and protection. Felix escapes punishment, Josephus claims, only because his brother Pallas still has influence with Nero (20.182).³⁹

After the Judean mission to prosecute Felix fails, *Antiquities* departs further from *War* by claiming that the Syrian Caesareans make a separate overture to Nero, via the corruptible imperial secretary Beryllus. They offer him a large bribe to induce Nero to cancel the Judeans' 'equality of citizenship with them'.⁴⁰ The logic and language here imply that Caesarea's Judeans already enjoy political rights, in a non-Judean *polis* – a situation familiar from Antioch, Alexandria and Asian *poleis*.⁴¹ Their effort to improve their lot by making the *polis* Judean has provoked violent opposition (20.173). In this version, therefore, the Syrian population, perhaps inspired by the Judeans' failure to prosecute Felix, press their advantage. They make the extraordinary request, requiring the resort to bribery, that the emperor annul the Judeans' existing rights – an appeal paralleled in Alexandria and Antioch – as payback. Josephus does not spell this out clearly, but it seems the easiest way to understand his language.

In this version, it is this profound imperial insult, of removing the rights that had allowed Judeans to prosper in Caesarea, that helps to generate the coming war:

This [imperial letter] furnished the causes of the bad things that followed for our *ethnos*: for when the Judeans of Caesarea learned what had been written, they engaged all the more in civil strife against the Syrians until indeed *they ignited the war* (μέχρι δὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐξῆψαν).⁴²

³⁹ This is difficult on prosopographical grounds, a problem not diminished by Nikos Kokkinos' redating of Festus' tenure to 59–60: N. Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse* (Sheffield, 1998) 385. According to Tacitus, Pallas' influence was at its height around 52–54 CE under Claudius (*Annals* 12.53.1–2). Nero's accession cost him (*Annals* 13.2.2) and in 55 he was dismissed from court (*Annals* 13.14.2, 13.23.1–2). At the story time here, Pallas was reportedly near execution (62 CE; *Annals* 14.65.1).

⁴⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.183: ἀκυροῦσαν τὴν Ἰουδαίων πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἰσοπολιτείαν.

⁴¹ In Josephus, *War* 7.110, the citizens of Antioch unsuccessfully beg Titus to annul Judean rights there; cf. Claudius' famous letter to the Alexandrians (*P.Lond.* vi 1912), demanding that Alexandrians tolerate Judeans while ordering Judeans not to demand more, in a *polis* that is not theirs.

⁴² Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.184 (emphasis added).

In *Antiquities*, Nero's decision arrives while Festus is prefect (to 60 or 62),⁴³ in contrast to *War's* date of 66. Perhaps we should imagine that Caesarea's Judeans then begin reacting to their loss of civic status by fomenting *stasis* there, and that the malfeasance of Albinus and Florus in Jerusalem will compound these Judean grievances in the region – without the need of *War's* massacre as cause.

Similar observations apply *mutatis mutandis* to *War's* account of what led to the massacre in Jerusalem, a 'climax' that is also missing from the *Antiquities* narrative.

Conflict in Jerusalem – and Massacre

Jerusalem is *War's* main interest, and almost everything that concerns us there comes in Book 2. But the work's preface already highlights the tragedy of the mother-*polis*' catastrophe: 'For it happened that our *polis*, of all those under the Romans, certainly reached the pinnacle of prosperity, only to fall again in the worst of calamities at the last'.⁴⁴

The most obvious reason that Josephus includes such a long Book 1 – double his standard (15,000-word) *volumen* length – is to chart that long period of success from the beginning of Roman–Judean relations. That volume ends with the death of Augustus' friend Herod, hence the end of unalloyed good times. As Book 2 opens, the air crackles with tension. What will become of Jerusalem, which has flourished so brilliantly under Rome? Josephus devotes considerable space to the succession hearings in Rome (2.1–111). Augustus does his best to honour the late king's wishes by installing his three sons over parts of the kingdom. Archelaus gets the heartland plus Samaria and the title of ethnarch – with the carrot of kingship if he governs well – while Antipas and Philip receive tetrarchies (2.93). Alas, the other two are successful and rule longer than their father, whereas Archelaus alienates both Jerusalem and Samaria, forcing Augustus to remove him within a decade (2.111).

In *War's* formulation, as we have seen, Augustus now makes Judaea a province under an equestrian administrator.⁴⁵ *Antiquities* more plausibly reports that Judaea joined Syria at this point, I said earlier.⁴⁶ This is more plausible in part because *War* also assumes the northern legate's responsibility for Judaea, with: the legate Qurinius' census of 6 CE (2.433, 7.253);

⁴³ Ibid., 20.185, 197, 215. ⁴⁴ Josephus, *War* 1.1.

⁴⁵ Josephus, *War* 2.117: εἰς ἐπαρχίαν περιγραφείσης ἐπίτροπος τῆς ἰππικῆς . . . τάξεως.

⁴⁶ See p. 117 above.

Publius Petronius, the legate ordered to install Caligula's statues in the temple (2.185–203); Ummidius Quadratus' intervention against a rogue procurator and his auxiliary (2.239–44); and the ongoing concern of Cestius Gallus for Jerusalem (from 2.280). Indeed, *War* exploits the contrast between the distinguished ex-consuls in Antioch and the mixed bag of equestrian careerists in Caesarea to sustain its kinetic atmosphere. Whatever virtues the legate may have had, he was weeks away and likely to be seen in Jerusalem only during Passover visits. The character of the equestrian official based in Caesarea, commanding an auxiliary hostile to Jerusalem, is therefore crucial to *War's* account.

The clearest example of what could go wrong, before the war, is furnished by the procurator Ventidius Cumanus. On his watch, an auxiliary soldier patrolling the temple's colonnade roof during Passover makes rude gestures towards the Judeans below (2.224). A fatal riot ensues as the massed celebrants try to assault the soldier above them, while his comrades respond with their weapons. Under the same Cumanus, after Judean bandits rob an imperial slave at Beit-Horon, an over-zealous soldier exceeds the procurator's order to find the culprits, gratuitously burning a copy of the Torah he finds in a village. Cumanus must mollify the Judeans by executing this man (2.228). However, when a Galilean pilgrim en route to Jerusalem is murdered by Samaritans, and Judeans launch retaliatory raids against Samaritan villages (2.232–35), Cumanus brings a fast-moving cavalry wing against them (2.236). The parallel in *Antiquities* 20.122 says that he took nearly the entire auxiliary force – four infantry cohorts plus one cavalry wing – and that he 'armed the Samaritans' (τοὺς τε Σαμαρεῖς καθοπλίσας). This appears to mean that he armed civilians for protection from Judean raids, in addition to leading the auxiliary force. Even in *War's* version, this was clearly an eruption of the old hatred between Judeans and Samaritans.

In a revealing line, the elders of Jerusalem in *War* plead with the populace 'to not, for the sake of revenge *against the Samaritans*, provoke *the Romans* [that is, the legate and his legionary forces] against Jerusalem'.⁴⁷ Both sides appeal to the legate Quadratus, who characteristically investigates, executes Judean vigilante leaders and sends the key players to Claudius in Rome. The emperor, again characteristically, decides in favour of the Judeans. Advised by Agrippa II, who is then resident in Rome and vehemently pleading the Judean case (2.245), Claudius not only exiles

⁴⁷ Josephus, *War* 2.237: μή διὰ τὴν εἰς Σαμαρεῖς ἄμυναν ἐπὶ Ἱεροσόλυμα Ῥωμαίους παροξύνειν (emphasis added).

Cumanus; he even executes Samaritan delegates. Most remarkably, he orders the commander held most responsible, a certain Celer, back to Jerusalem for torture and beheading *at Judaeans hands* (2.239–46).

Although *War* does not clarify the inter-ethnic rivalry underlying Jerusalem's fall from happiness, then, a curious reader could join the dots. In this work Josephus prefers to focus on the character of the equestrian officials. With Rome itself the Judaeans never have a problem, before Nero's final years. To judge from Tacitus, this emphasis on the variable character of the men in Caesarea would have resonated with Josephus' audiences in Rome. Though no admirer of Judaeans, Tacitus remarks that the imperial freedman Felix behaved 'with every mark of barbarity and lust, and governed with the privilege of a king and the mindset of a slave. Nevertheless, the *patience of the Judaeans* held out until Gessius Florus was procurator'.⁴⁸ Even such distant observers could see that Judaea had recently been saddled with reprehensible specimens of this motley class.

Felix and Festus, whose tenures as procurator covered the decade from 52 to 62, we have met in connection with Caesarea. In spite of Tacitus' peevish remarks about Felix, *War* does not complain about him. His reported actions culminate in his dispatch of Judaeans and Syrian disputants to Nero for a decision about their claims in Caesarea (2.270). In the Judaeans heartland he has been on the side of the angels, doing his best to rid the country of the troublemakers Josephus also abhors: Judaeans bandits terrorising Samaritan borderlands (2.253)⁴⁹ and pseudo-prophets promising restored Judaeans greatness. These last focus their ire on the auxiliary garrison in Jerusalem, perhaps hoping for another king such as Herod, Archelaus and Agrippa I to put the foreigners in their place (2.260, 263).

Antiquities' thematic moralising about the fate of those who observe or violate Judaeans law (1.14, 20) leads that work instead to explore Felix's lust – mentioned also in Tacitus' *Histories* and suggested in the New Testament Acts – in snatching Agrippa's sister Drusilla from her virtuous husband (20.142–44).⁵⁰ *Antiquities* also explains why *War* (2.254–57) dates the rise of urban knife crime to Felix's time and separately notes that its first victim was the high priest Jonathan. In *Antiquities*, knife crime became popular in Jerusalem because Jonathan began to criticise Felix – feeling responsible for him because he had asked Claudius to send this man.

⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.10 (emphasis added).

⁴⁹ If Eleazar, the bandit ring-leader here who has been active for two decades, should be understood as the Eleazar son of Deinaius recently mentioned in Josephus, *War* 2.235, as *Antiquities* 20.161 clarifies.

⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9; Acts 24:24–25.

He charges that the increasingly self-indulgent Felix does not care about Judaea's interests (20.162). Felix contrives to get rid of his nagging sponsor by ordering his assassination, with hired knife assassins. Their success leads to copycat stabbings, and this accounts for the rash of knife crime under Felix in *Antiquities*.

It seems that Josephus knew all this when he composed *War*, but chose not to complicate his scheme there of a late-breaking catastrophe in Nero's later years. There, Felix does what a competent prefect should do, while the knife crime is incidentally dated to his tenure. *War*'s appreciative tone towards Felix is strengthened by its notice about his successor [Porcius] Festus (59/60–62 or 58–60), who behaves in the same way – 'he arrested the majority of the bandits and actually did away with quite a few' – which prepares for the radical change he attributes to Albinus and Florus: 'Albinus did *not govern affairs in the same manner*, and there was no conceivable form of sordid behaviour that he neglected'.⁵¹

A Roman audience might have assumed this man to be the Luceius Albinus whom Nero would later dispatch to Mauretania, where he reportedly claimed royal prerogatives and died in the civil war after Nero's death.⁵² In any case, they would have understood that the story time here is after Nero's transition of 59–60 CE, marked by his murder of his mother, sidelining of advisers, and urgent demand for revenue from Italy and the provinces.⁵³ Albinus devotes himself single-mindedly to raising money: he plunders the wealth of individuals and allegedly raises tax levies on the whole *ethnos*; he strikes bargains to release bandit-leaders and empty holding cells on payment of sufficient ransom (2.273). He thus creates a lawless atmosphere in which rival malcontents cause mayhem while virtuous leading citizens, ripe for plunder by both governor and gangs, are forced into silence. Josephus remarks that Albinus left the region with 'the seeds of the coming capture' sown in Jerusalem.⁵⁴

War's audience realises by now that the auxiliary force is the procurator's muscle. The degree of harm they can cause depends on the nature of this commander, which is why ordinary Judaeans long for a Judaeian monarch again in Jerusalem. With Gessius Florus (63/64–66 CE), the epitome of the late-Neronian governor, *War* dramatically slows the

⁵¹ Josephus, *War* 2.271–72.   ⁵² Tacitus, *Histories* 2.58–59.

⁵³ W. Eck, 'Die römischen Repräsentanten in Judaea: Provokateure oder Vertreter der römischen Macht?', in M. Popović (ed.), *The Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Leiden, 2011) 45–68 at 61–65; Mason, *History of the Jewish War*, 315–18.

⁵⁴ Josephus, *War* 2.276: τὰ σπέρματα τῆς μελλούσης ἀλώσεως.

narrative to elaborate on dynamics unexplored until now. We shall focus on those that lead to the massacre of the Jerusalem garrison.

War's programmatic contrast between the beneficence of the senatorial legate in Antioch, who is now Cestius Gallus (from 65 CE), and questionable equestrians or freedmen in the south reaches its high point in the brazenly rapacious Florus. *War's* audience may know what only *Antiquities* (20.252) explains: that Nero appointed Florus because his wife and Nero's wife were friends. Romans would certainly have understood the fear with which senators such as Cestius lived in Nero's final two years, after the Pisonian conspiracy and its aftershocks, as well as the boldness of Nero's equestrian emissaries in raiding provincial wealth – and informing on senators.⁵⁵

Josephus does not develop these connections in *War*, but he highlights the character of Florus, as this opening tirade shows:

He neglected no form of either plunder or torture. With those who deserved pity he was most savage, while among the shameful he was most shameless . . . To him it seemed pointless to make his gains one man at a time; he was instead stripping whole cities and despoiling populations *en masse*. Up and down the countryside, he all but declared that everyone had leave to practise banditry – as long as he himself got a share of the war-spoils.⁵⁶

Although there is every reason to see Florus' preoccupation with revenue as a result of Nero's orders (2.293), Josephus portrays it as a matter of personal greed (2.295, 311). The legate Cestius, by contrast, shows consistent respect for Jerusalem and its people, apparently making the long trek already during his first Passover in post (66 CE). As the procurator stands next to him, a massive crowd implores Cestius to deal with this egregious fellow. He promises that he will (2.280–83). Only a month later,⁵⁷ however, King Agrippa II's sister, Berenice, in Jerusalem to fulfil a vow, witnesses such atrocities and experiences such personal humiliation that she requests urgent help from Cestius against Florus (2.301). The legate hears a similar plea from Jerusalem's leaders, at the same time that he receives Florus' own self-exonerating appeal for help in suppressing an alleged Judean rebellion.

⁵⁵ See previous note and Mason, *History of the Jewish War*, 318–24. ⁵⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.277–78.

⁵⁷ Cestius is in Jerusalem for Passover in mid-Nisan (c. 1 April 66). Josephus dates the queen's appeal to 16 Artemisius, apparently = 16 Iyyar (the month after Passover). Given that Cestius would have needed a good couple of weeks to return to Antioch, a mounted courier bringing Berenice's letter may have reached him only a week or two after his return.

Against the advice of his military commanders in Antioch, who expect him to send an army to crush the Judaeans, Cestius has reason to suspect Florus' claim. He instead dispatches a trusted tribune, instructing him to meet up with Agrippa II and determine how things have developed since his Passover visit (2.333–34). The tribune's report confirms that Judaeans are happy with Rome and all other officials; they simply cannot tolerate Florus' ruthlessness (2.336, 339–41). Agrippa II's famous speech, given immediately after the tribune's departure, is occasioned by the people's demand that he let them send a delegation to Nero – to preclude any appearance of revolt and accuse Florus (2.342).

Cestius will finally march towards Jerusalem with a legion, reluctantly and with Agrippa alongside, after the king is expelled from Jerusalem for proving himself useless in dealing with Florus (2.499). Agrippa and Cestius are now the sole remaining pickets of the formerly secure fence around Roman–Judaeian relations. As the young emperor urges on his incendiary equestrian agent in aggravating the Judaeans by raiding their resources, these two figures can do little to change the direction of things.

We now see the decisive contribution of the auxiliary to the Jerusalem massacre. Even as he stresses Florus' responsibility, Josephus lifts the veil on a military seething with rage against Judaeans, and ready not merely to follow Florus' harsh orders but to exceed them. The auxiliary thus becomes a major aggravating factor in the story.

This new phase begins shortly after Cestius' Passover visit, when Florus dispatches soldiers to raid the temple for funds. This prompts rallies in the sacred precinct by outraged Judaeans, under the gaze of the auxiliary on the porticoes above. In one raucous meeting, angry Judaeian youths mockingly pass around a hat for the money-hungry governor (2.294–95). When Florus in Caesarea hears of it, 'he rushed against Jerusalem with an army of both cavalry and infantry', perhaps two cohorts to supplement the one already there, expecting to cover his alleged cupidity with Rome's authority (2.296). Later he will summon another two cohorts (2.318), meaning that he is willing to use nearly all of his six-cohort auxiliary to intimidate Jerusalem.

Setting up his tribunal in the Herodian palace, which dominates the city's south-west (today's Armenian) quarter, thin-skinned Florus demands that Jerusalem's elders hand over those who mocked him. When they try to deflect his anger with moral reasoning and excuses for youth, he commands his huge force to start plundering the adjacent Upper Market, in the rich part of town. Josephus observes:

In their lust for gain, they took advantage of such an authorisation and not only plundered the area against which they had been sent but, bursting into the nearby residences, began slaughtering the occupants . . . They arrested many of the respectable folk and brought them up to Florus. After torturing them with lashes, he crucified them.⁵⁸

The shocking death toll, allegedly 630, includes women, infants, and even Judaeans men who have attained Roman equestrian rank – the same as Florus (2.308). The soldiers' fury is hard to explain by greed alone, just as their behaviour towards Queen Berenice suggests deeper motives. She sends soldiers from her tiny bodyguard to Florus to appeal for mercy (2.310) – and risks her life in doing so:

[T]he soldiers' charge was rabid even against the queen . . . They would have done away with her too, had she not managed to take refuge in the royal palace [where Florus was]. There she passed the night, albeit with a guard unit because she was alarmed by the soldiers' aggression.⁵⁹

The episode ends with Berenice before Florus' tribunal, surrounded by these lethally hostile auxiliary men, a humiliated and barefoot suppliant (2.314).

Even as the wise leaders of Jerusalem try to persuade the people that violent reaction will only make things worse, Florus ups the ante still further by demanding that they prove their submission. Having summoned the two additional cohorts from Caesarea, he will believe their protestations of goodwill if they welcome that force in the customary way, out on the road, in spite of all that has happened. He has, however, sent orders to the cohorts to ignore any salute from the people, telling them to act harshly against anyone who utters a syllable in complaint (2.318–19). The ploy produces its intended result: 'Soldiers fell upon those they caught up with, beating them without restraint'.⁶⁰

Meanwhile Florus takes soldiers from the Herodian palace through the crowded streets north-east to the Antonia fortress. Fearing that he has assembled such a large force for a decisive raid on the holy precinct from the Antonia, the citizens destroy a section of the colonnade connecting that fortress with the temple (2.328–30). Their bold determination persuades Florus that he cannot succeed for the moment. In a conciliatory gesture he promises to depart from Jerusalem with his cohorts, leaving whatever size of garrison they choose. In response Jerusalem's leaders:

⁵⁸ Josephus, *War* 2.305–06.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.312.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.328.

promised everything . . . if he would leave just one cohort for them, and *not the one that had fought*, for the common folk harboured animosity towards this one because of what they had suffered. So he exchanged the cohort, according to their preference and, with the balance of the force, returned to Caesarea.⁶¹

This is puzzling because Josephus does not attribute the ravages of the Upper City to one cohort; those that arrive with Florus have a hand in the death and destruction.

Florus' withdrawal is in any case merely tactical. Once back in Caesarea, he writes immediately to Cestius requesting legionary intervention to crush the city (2.333). When Cestius instead sends the tribune and Agrippa II,⁶² they are greeted by the widows of Florus' victims and given a tour of the ransacked market and plundered houses (2.339). They understand that there is no desire in Jerusalem for rebellion against *Rome*. Whichever cohort remained as a garrison, the striking thing is that no further malfeasance on its part appears before Jerusalem's militants besiege and massacre it (2.434–50). It seems to be the very garrison that the leaders have chosen as least implicated in the recent bloodshed that the armed factions nevertheless kill.

The siege and massacre come about in the following way. Agrippa II has been forced out of Jerusalem. The population begins to arm itself, and younger priests close the temple to foreign connections. At the request of the city leaders and presumably in consultation with Cestius, from somewhere in the north Agrippa immediately dispatches two thousand of his Judaeans cavalry, partly to help shield the auxiliary garrison (2.409–21). His elite troops manage to secure the Upper City for a while, but soon are forced to yield to the armed faction of Eleazar, son of the high priest Ananias, and retreat to the security of the Herodian palace. They cannot save the auxiliary garrison unit stationed in the Antonia. After a brief siege, those men are attacked and killed by Eleazar's faction (2.430). The rest of the auxiliary garrison has taken refuge with Agrippa's force in Herod's palace.

Tensions are heightened further when a second Judaeans faction emerges, led by one Menachem and armed with professional-grade (if old) weapons liberated from Masada (2.433). These men seize control of the struggle and begin a methodical siege of the Herodian palace, which now hosts Agrippa's royal troops, members of the Jerusalem elite and the remainder of the auxiliary garrison. Menachem catches and kills the former

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.332 (emphasis added).

⁶² See p. 126 above.

high priest Ananias, Eleazar's father, along with his associates fleeing the palace. Menachem then permits the troops sent by Agrippa, apparently because they are Judean, to depart from the palace compound with their lives. This leaves only the remaining auxiliary garrison, trapped and terrified – but then Menachem is captured and killed by Eleazar's men (2.337–48).

Now Eleazar resumes the siege of the Herodian palace. As we saw in the quoted narrative, he finally yields to the cohort's plea for a truce that would let them leave unarmed (2.437). Since Agrippa's cavalry had just been released under a truce, this pledge must have seemed trustworthy. But only Metilius, apparently a Roman commander of the locally raised unit, survives the cold-blooded massacre of the Samaritan-Caesarean soldiers, and that when he desperately promises to Judaize (2.450–56).

Although Josephus' *War* thus gives a fairly clear causal chain for this massacre, puzzles remain, especially the mismatch between the unit that is killed and the one held responsible for earlier carnage. The reader must assume that much more happened in real life. It is again a paradox that *Antiquities*, which gives a much more vivid picture of the ethnic dimensions of this conflict, finds no use for the massacre of the garrison as a climax, whereas *War*, which somewhat obscures the motivating factors, includes the massacre as a crucial cause of the war.

Conclusions: Life vs. Narrative, Judeans vs. Romans, Religious vs. Other Violence

Having attempted a critical interpretation of *War*'s double-massacre episode, we may return to our three questions.

Real events and narratives. Our lives do not unfold as narratives with plots, themes and characters. We construct these in retrospect – as an astonished Napoleon declared at the end, 'What a novel my life has been!'⁶³ We have seen, first, that *Antiquities* makes a whole new story from events narrated in *War*, often contradicting the earlier account. It also frequently supplies information that would have been useful for the reader of *War* to know. Second, whether in *War* or *Antiquities*, each episode creates more problems than it solves. What were the concrete rights of Judeans in Caesarea before Nero's decision? What would a Judean Caesarea have looked like, and how would non-Judeans have fared in

⁶³ P. Gueniffey, *Bonaparte: 1769–1802* (Paris, 2013) 11, trans. in English under the same title (Cambridge, MA, 2015) 1.

it? What motivated the initiative in the late 50s? What was Florus' mandate from Nero? Which cohort did Jerusalem's leaders exclude? We can only wonder. Third, Josephus' accounts are obviously crafted, structured and thematic narratives.

Even if the distinction between life and narrative is now obvious, as I hope, some consequences for research might not be. A recent monograph on Judaeans minorities in the East illustrates the point. The author writes:

Josephus tells us that it was 'at the same day and hour' [as the Jerusalem massacre] that the Caesareans turned on their neighboring Judeans. Josephus seems to be *curiously unwilling to draw a causal connection* between the murder of the soldiers and the Judeans in Caesarea. But neither was Josephus an eyewitness in Caesarea. *News must have travelled to Caesarea first*. And a messenger traveling by horseback could have made the nearly 90 kilometer trip from Jerusalem to Caesarea within a short day's travel and reported the news there that same day of the Sabbath, and this is *certainly what must have happened*.⁶⁴

When watching a play or film, we expect the story to remain safely enclosed by its walls. When an actor leaves her dramatic world – ancient Rome, Victorian England or the Wild West – to address the audience directly, in terms of our twenty-first-century values and language, we say that they 'break the fourth wall'. Although no character in Josephus' *War* breaks out of the story in this way, scholars do so on their behalf, and this is an example.

Josephus' *War* fuses the two massacre scenes as part of its dramatic milieu of tragic pollution and purification. Inside that constructed world, the massacres can occur at precisely the same moment, not only the same day, because of the 'other-worldly provision' to which Josephus appeals. He himself has given the travel distance between Jerusalem and Caesarea as 600 *stadia*, or 120 kilometres (1.79), which obviates the possibility of travel between the two places, or any natural causal relationship.

Not living in his story world, we naturally suspect a tit-for-tat relationship between the two events. But – although Josephus often describes cycles of retaliations – that is not his claim, and he deliberately precludes it. Correlation at a distance is a feature of eerie stories. Cures that occur far away from the healer are part of Jesus' repertoire⁶⁵ – the distance heightening the sense of awe. Efforts to save Josephus' account by offering a

⁶⁴ B. Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire: Rights, Citizenship and Civil Discord* (Leiden, 2015) 256 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵ Luke 7:1–10; John 4:46–54.

rational causal explanation (with ‘must’ and ‘certainly’), which he ‘curiously’ does not recognise, amount to breaking the fourth wall on his behalf: trying to bridge his world to ours. But it is arbitrary to select only convenient elements from the story (‘the same day’) as factual data, while ignoring the other conditions that constitute *his* story (‘the same hour’, ‘other-worldly’ causes). We may well imagine that a massacre of auxiliary soldiers in Jerusalem led to retaliation against Judaeans in Caesarea or vice versa. But Josephus’ *War*, our only basis for supposing that any massacres occurred at all, does not help to make this likely.

Our analysis, indeed, raises the unsettling question of whether either of *War*’s massacres actually occurred. The honest answer is that we cannot be sure. We can only reason from imagined stakes and interests. *Could* Josephus have narrated these things in *War* if they did not happen? He does allow that many Judaeans were expelled from Caesarea (not killed). What were the proportions of the killed and expelled? Perhaps there were not comprehensive massacres, but murders of some Judaeans. That could explain why *Antiquities* could overlook them. Something happened in each place, but we cannot be clear about what it was.

Anti-Roman sentiment? Before some recent challenges, it has been all but universally assumed that the war with Rome must have been caused by the sort of Rome-hatred satirised in Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* (1979)⁶⁶ – a Jerusalem seething with ‘Romans go home!’ animus. Not only do our two stories fail to indicate any such anti-Roman feeling, however; they preclude it, for example with Josephus’ claim that Jerusalem achieved the highest degree of felicity under Roman rule. He could not have concealed pervasive anti-Roman feeling, for that would have rendered his narrative nonsensical: the relentless (usually successful) appeals and embassies to the emperor or his legate, Jerusalem’s primacy among regional *poleis*, and the concern of legates for Jerusalem.

The role of religion. Finally, to the central theme of this volume: To what extent were the massacres in Caesarea and Jerusalem, as *War* relates them, examples of a distinctively *religious* violence? They may have been religious in some trans-temporal sense defined by modern investigators. But Josephus had no category comparable to our religion for communicating with his audiences about the motivations of the ancient actors, though all sides understood their gods and sacred spaces to be part and parcel of *polis* life. Therefore he could not, and he did not, employ a concept of religion to

⁶⁶ See now J. E. Taylor (ed.), *Jesus and Brian: Exploring the Historical Jesus and His Times via Monty Python’s Life of Brian* (London, 2015).

explain these pivotal events.⁶⁷ For his Roman audiences, Josephus explains the reactions of all parties in the standard language and categories of his time, in which cult and temple were certainly part and parcel of *ethnos* and *polis* identity, but 'religion' was not an identifiable category or cause. The dominant motives are political power, insult, aggression, outrage, fear and self-defence – which reoccur through the human past. Most importantly, these were local actions and responses to particular social-political conditions in Jerusalem and Caesarea, and did not involve the vast majority of Judaeans in Galilee, Peraea, elsewhere in Syria or the Eastern Mediterranean, or even the nearby Idumaeans, who observed Judaeon law and cult. I remain open to suggestions, but so far do not see how including 'religion' at some point (where?) would help our historical understanding of these episodes: of what happened then.

⁶⁷ Cf., for a different view, Bendlin, this volume, pp. 141–42.