

CHAPTER 1

Josephus's *Judean War*

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1.1 Introduction

When the fourth-century Church Father Eusebius needed proof that Judeans had forfeited their ancient heritage, he turned to Josephus's *Judean War*. He quoted whole passages on the miseries of the Judeans, especially the cannibalism-inducing famine that preceded Jerusalem's destruction, because, he said, they had killed Christ (*Hist. eccl.* 2.6, 26; 3.5–6; see Chapter 23 by S. Inolowcki in this volume). Eusebius's predecessors had used the *Judean War* with diffidence, preferring to borrow *Apion's* polemics or to nibble off the bits of the *Antiquities* that mentioned Jesus, James, or the Baptist. Writing with the anxious confidence of the newly rising Church, by contrast, Eusebius took hold of Josephus's famous history and boldly repurposed it. Who knew that the unimpeachably accredited Judean (3.9–10) actually proved Christian claims? Eusebius's daring move launched Josephus's posthumous career as honorary “Jew for Jesus” and single-handedly rewrote the *Companion to the New Testament*. Like Eusebius's *History*, Josephus's *Judean War* would soon be translated into Latin, a treatment not accorded his other works for two centuries (the *Life* never), ensuring its accessibility in the Christian West.

Eusebius did not convince everyone. Later in the same century, the writer we call Pseudo-Hegesippus insisted that Josephus was just too Judean. If he had been so truthful, why did he remain so wedded to Judean values? Anticipating modern scholarship, Pseudo-Hegesippus thought it possible to liberate *Judean War's* facts from Josephus's interpretation, resetting the jewels in Christian gold (*De excid.* praef.).

Providing a companion essay for perhaps the most influential non-biblical text of Western history is a tall order. Even if we ignore the fascinating reception-history, as we must, the work itself is a dense and subtle narrative in the best Greco-Roman tradition. In the brief compass of this chapter, we must confine ourselves to a few essential questions: date and purposes, content and structures, themes and devices. A glance at *Judean War's* great speeches will end the tour.

1.2 Date, Context, and Purposes

No one doubts that the *Judean War* was Josephus's first known work, composed soon after he arrived in Rome in 71 C.E. The Greek text we use is reconstructed from a variety of manuscripts dating from the ninth century or later. These exhibit thousands of small variants, not surprisingly, but aside from apparent lacunae of a few words here and there, the text seems complete and readable in seven volumes (Leoni 2009). How and when Josephus composed the Greek history that underlies our manuscripts seem tolerably clear. As always, however, there are complications. But let us first establish the basic picture.

The *Judean War's* prologue shows Josephus living in Rome, in a lively exchange with others over the recent conflict in Judea (1.1–16). Although it was actually the suppression of a revolt in a long-conquered province, this war had become a *cause célèbre* because of its role, symbolic and practical, in vaulting the victorious generals Vespasian and Titus to imperial power. After the shambles following Nero's suicide in June 68, the Romans needed a trustworthy pair of hands with the promise of peaceful succession, and this Vespasian and Titus—separated by thirty years—could offer. On the practical side, the war had provided the vehicle for a critical mass of the empire's legions, from Egypt through Syria to north-eastern Europe, to declare their support for these proven commanders, against a series of contenders with fewer legions from Spain and Germany. Symbolically, supporters of the Flavians could play the Judean victory for all it was worth, as though it involved a previously unconquered nation. The pliant Senate eagerly offered a historic triumphal procession (last held after Claudius's conquest of Britain in 43/44), the right to extend Rome's sacred boundary, promulgation through landscape-altering monuments and empire-wide coins, and the creation of the new trophy province of Judea in southern Syria.

Newly settled in Rome after the triumph (summer 71), as the city is being rebuilt to expunge Nero's miasma and inscribe Flavian valor, Josephus observes that various hacks are busy writing up accounts of the war. He cuts a large clearing for his own effort with the claim that they are mere stylists, using second-hand information. Or, if they were present in Judea, they are falling over themselves to flatter the imperial conquerors at the expense of the defeated (1.1–3, 7–9). As a proud priest from Jerusalem, who personally fought against Vespasian and watched the sequel as a prisoner in the Roman camp, Josephus is in a unique position to provide that most cherished of historiographical values: balance. His clever argument for according the Judeans more respect is that in making the generals (Vespasian and Titus) conquerors of nobodies, "I suppose they regard them too as unworthy!" (*autois adoxousin*, 1.8). This rhetorical strategy yields the best sense if the two generals are still around to be slighted as he affixes the prologue to his completed work. But Vespasian died on June 23, 79.

This impression that he writes while Vespasian is emperor fits with explicit reflections in his later works. In the *Life* he claims that King Agrippa II exchanged a flurry of letters with him as he was writing the *Judean War*, promising detailed information when they should next meet (366). Agrippa and his sister, the great-grandchildren of Herod, rumored lovers, and crucial allies of the Romans in the war, apparently came to Rome in 75 and remained for years enjoying imperial favor—she as Titus's powerful mistress (Cassius Dio 65/66.15.3–5). Second, Josephus claims that, in contrast to a rival author who delayed making his work public until the principals were dead, he himself had "gifted the volumes to none other than the *emperators* [Vespasian and Titus], when the deeds were barely out of view" (*Life* 361).

Similarly, in his last known work Josephus explains that moving to Rome gave him the leisure to gather his materials, enlist collaborators for help with the (literary) Greek, and create a record of what he had seen in Judea. He stresses again his fearlessness in inviting the

Flavians themselves to prove his account—suggesting that he was suspected of pushing a Judean perspective (cf. Pseudo-Hegesippus): “I was so confident of the truth that I figured I would take those who had become *imperators* in the war, Vespasian and Titus, as my first witnesses of all. I gave the volumes to them first ...” (*Apion* 1.50–51). The prologue to *Judean War* likewise insists that his fairness is unimpeachable: he will not counter Roman chauvinism by inflating the Judean side (1.9). But a fair picture was already an improvement for the Judeans.

The last datable event mentioned in *Judean War* is Vespasian's dedication of the stunning Forum and Temple of Peace, which housed many of the spoils from Jerusalem's temple, near Augustus's Forum in the city center (*War* 7.158–162; cf. Pliny, *NH* 36.102). The site was opened in 75, so Agrippa and Berenice may have timed their arrival for the big event (Cassius Dio 65/66.15.1). Josephus thus finished his account at some point after the summer of 75 and before Vespasian's death on June 23, 79. We should allow margins on either side, for Josephus to finish Book 7 after mentioning the Temple of Peace and to circulate drafts before having copies disseminated.

Of the many problems that have been proposed for this dating, we can discuss only two kinds here. The first would affect our views of the literary unity of *Judean War* and of Josephus's awareness of his environment. For in spite of these clear and coherent indications, scholars have given reasons for shifting the bulk of the work to Titus's reign (79–81) and much or all of Book 7 to that of Domitian (to 96), with *ad hoc* insertions even later. The reasons have to do with perceived changes of tone or interest, Josephus's apparent stance toward one or another Flavian ruler, or, more concretely, what he appears to say about a particular individual—a Caecina or a Catullus—in light of what is otherwise known of the man's career (e.g., Thackeray 1929, 35; Cohen 1979, 84–90; Schwartz 1990, 13–21; Jones 2002, 113–114; Barnes 2005, 136–144). We lack the space even to explain each relevant issue here, so it is fortunate that two recent studies offer quite full analyses. In a sign of the changed times, they agree that Josephus's dating of the completed *Judean War* to Vespasian's reign remains the best explanation—if the relevant evidence is understood contextually (Brighton 2009, 33–41; Siggelkow-Berner 2011, 25–33). This does not preclude possible tinkering at a later date, of course. It fits, however, with the structural features that I shall point out later.

The other complication would suggest a pre-75 date and potentially affect our view of the *Judean War*'s purpose. In the 264-word opening sentence of *Judean War*, where he is driving home his advantages as an author, Josephus refers twice to an account of the conflict that he had written in his native language (presumably Aramaic). First: “I have set myself the task of providing a narrative in the Greek language, ... having reworked what I had formerly recounted in the ancestral [language] and sent to the upper barbarians” (1.3). It is absurd, he continues, that here in the capital of the world, he should “stand by and watch the truth about such momentous events” being corrupted,

while even the Parthians and Babylonians, the most remote of the Arabs, our own [Judean] compatriot bloc across the Euphrates, and Adiabeniens, should know accurately, through my diligence, why the war began, through what mutations it proceeded, and the way in which it came to an end. (1.6)

In this way, he stresses his unique authority and experience on location, over there. He is an exotic creature who knows the region intimately, and has already written the story in his native language. How could these pampered dilettantes in Rome hope to compete with such a man?

The elusive Aramaic version used to fascinate scholars, who built upon it the classic view of *Judean War*'s purpose, still occasionally aired today. One scholar compounded the mysteries by arguing that the Aramaic survived (via a Greek draft) in the thirteenth-century Slavonic version of the *Judean War* (Eisler 1931, 113–169; see Chapter 26 by Leeming in this volume). Assuming that our Greek *Judean War* is basically a mirror of the lost Aramaic, that the Aramaic was written from Rome to recipients in the Parthian Empire, and that this must have happened soon after Josephus arrived in the capital, Laqueur asked what its purpose could have been. It must have been commissioned propaganda, he concluded, aimed at dissuading elements of the Parthian world from interference with Rome's empire (Laqueur 1920, 125–128). In Thackeray's hugely influential lectures of 1926, he took over this idea with emphasis:

Josephus was commissioned by the conquerors to write the official history of the war for propagandist purposes. It was a manifesto, intended as a warning to the East of the futility of further opposition and to allay the after-war thirst for revenge [from eastern Judeans]. (1929, 27)

The agreement of these giants—Thackeray was more sympathetic toward Josephus's plight (1929, 29)—about the purpose of the Aramaic original, and hence of the Greek “translation,” entrenched the “Roman propaganda” interpretation for decades.

The lost Aramaic precursor has since been reconsidered from at least three angles: (1) what Josephus actually says about it; (2) the plausible occasion, scope, and purpose of such an account; and (3) the nature of our Greek text vis-à-vis whatever the Aramaic was. Let us briefly consider these in reverse order. Strangely, although both Laqueur and Thackeray imputed their hypothesized purpose of the Aramaic to the existing Greek, they agreed that the Greek was not simply a translation (Laqueur 1920, 28; Thackeray 1929, 34). This has subsequently been confirmed in every way: from analysis of the verb that Josephus uses to describe his reworking (*metaballō*—not “translate”; Hata 1975) to ever more careful study of the Greek text itself. Weber (1921, 13–18) and Thackeray (1929, 100–124) well realized that our *Judean War* has an ambitiously Atticizing style, and is replete with classical allusions, though they attributed these features to literary “assistants” who must have been effectively ghost writers, largely responsible for the Greek work. That explanation is no longer tenable (Rajak 1983, 233–236). Profound influences from Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, later Hellenistic historians, and possibly Strabo, as well as a heavy investment in politically and philosophically charged Greek vocabulary, make it impossible nowadays to imagine that Josephus wrote this *Judean War* first in Aramaic and then brought it over into Greek (Ladouceur 1980, 1983, 1987; Eckstein 1990; Chapman 1998; Mader 2000, 6–10, 156–157; Shahar 2004; Mason 2008 *passim*). The whole frame and political logic depend on a Greek discourse widely shared among eastern Mediterranean elites (see themes below).

If the Aramaic mentioned by Josephus cannot be re-constituted from our Greek text, we can only speculate about its contents and scope. Even if we took his description at face value—it included the war's beginning, course, and end (1.6)—it could have been a very compact work, with little resemblance to our *Judean War*. What if, for example, as a priest from Jerusalem with extensive contacts in the East (see Neusner 1969, on Jerusalem-Parthian connections), Josephus wrote a series of letters, while he was still in the region, keeping his eastern friends abreast of developments? Laqueur assumed that because the Aramaic included the end of the war, and Josephus moved to Rome soon thereafter, he must have written it in Rome (1920, 125–126). But there was plenty of time between Jerusalem's fall (September 70) and his trip to Rome (spring 71) for Josephus to have knocked together

a sketch of the whole conflict, or even a last “letter from the field” in a series. Any such effort could explain his rhetorical appeal to this credential in the Greek prologue. He does not assume that his audience knows this earlier work or invite them to consult it. Anyway, it is difficult to see why the Flavians would have commissioned a lengthy history from Rome in a barbarian tongue: partly because complex narratives are not best suited to the needs of propaganda (why include volumes 1 and 2?), partly because they would have had no control over what he was saying, and partly because Parthia's elites were perfectly comfortable in Greek (Debevoise 1938, xli; Grajetzki 2011, 14). Besides, it seems doubtful that the Flavians were worried in the early seventies about an attack on their eastern frontier from recently reconciled Parthia (Rajak 1983, 174–184).

Finally, Josephus's other indications about his process in writing the present *Judean War*, mentioned above, leave little room for an Aramaic base text; it receives no clear mention outside of that boast in the prologue to *Judean War* (the verb at 7.455 is not likely to suggest a translation). The more we think about its possible shape and context, the less relevant the Aramaic becomes for understanding our existing *Judean War*. Recent scholarship on the *Judean War* either marginalizes it (e.g., Mader 2000, 153 n. 6; Landau 2006, 211 n. 24) or more often simply ignores it. Scholarly interests do change.

The main alternative to the Flavian propaganda interpretation is the now-standard view, based solely on the *Greek* text of *Judean War*, that Josephus wrote to absolve the Judean people as a whole, or at least the ruling class and his good self, from blame for the war. He off-loaded culpability onto a few troublemakers, whom he labels “tyrants” and “bandits” (e.g., Luther 1910, 15; Rhoads 1976, 12, 56; Rajak 1983, 78–83; Goodman 1987, 20–21; Bilde 1988, 77–78; Mason 1991, 64–67; Price 1992, 33, 186; McLaren 1998, 55–56; Mader 2000, 10–17). This interpretation begins in a famous section of the prologue (1.9–11):

I have permitted my own feelings to mourn over the calamities of my native place. That *domestic civil strife* brought it down, and that *the Judean tyrants* drew both the Romans' unwilling hands and the fire upon the shrine, Titus Caesar—the very one who destroyed it—is witness ... He gave opportunity even during the siege for a change of mind on the part of *those responsible*. Now, in case anyone might recklessly impugn what we say accusingly against *the tyrants and their bandit bloc* or our groaning over the misfortunes of our native place, let him grant indulgence for this feeling, beyond the law of history. For indeed it happened that our city, of all those under the Romans, reached the most complete happiness, then in turn fell in the worst of calamities ... and since no foreigner was the cause of these things, it was not possible to keep control over one's lamentations.

The problem with the more recent view is that scholars (myself included) have usually taken these remarks as a kind of thesis statement, as though the seven-volume history were an argumentative essay. In this respect, it faces the same liabilities as the propaganda hypothesis, for such a complex narrative is not reducible to logical homogenization (Bilde 1979). We need to reconsider the work's content and structures.

1.3 Content and Structures

In the section of the prologue just quoted, Josephus vents his emotions as an ostentatious exception to his promise of balance and regard for the laws of history. But on what specific issue is he so emotionally overwhelmed? He is speaking here of the final catastrophe that befell his native city and the world-famous shrine he had served as priest. Indulging his

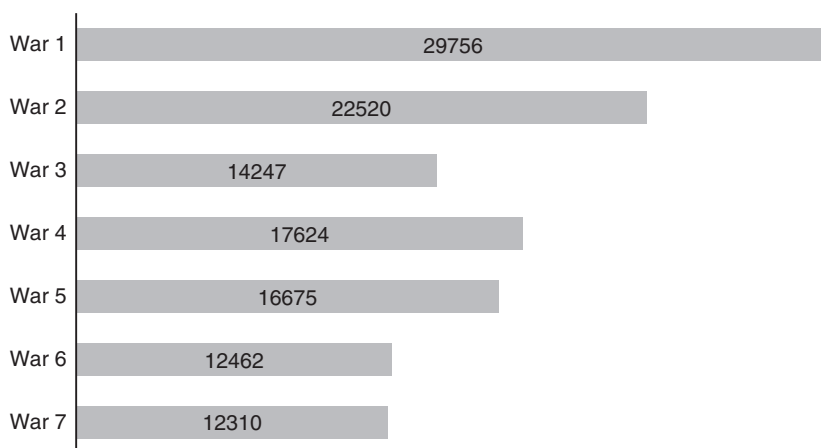


Figure 1.1 *Judean War*: Word counts per book.

emotions at such length costs him nothing (cf. MacMullen 2003, 1–78; Marincola 2003). But it underscores his eyewitness involvement while ramping up the dramatic quotient. He is not laying out the content of the following narrative, however. That he will do later (1.18–30), though even there he touches only on selected points of interest to his audience rather than providing a proportional Table of Contents. The calculated outburst quoted above attaches to the *outcome* of the war, which his audience knows and which the end of Book 6 will describe in detail. The blameworthy “tyrants” are Simon bar Giora and John of Gischala, primarily, Eleazar, son of Simon, secondarily. They become prominent only from the latter half of Book 4 (esp. 5.1–21; 7.259–273 [261]). So Josephus is not here offering a thesis about how the war began, much less blaming anyone for *that*. From the end of Book 2 through most of Book 3, he foregrounds his own energetic labors as a general, whose forces caused the Romans enormous trouble. That is the basis of his reputation and qualification as a historian (“I myself fought the Romans ...”). It cannot be said that he was trying to conceal his involvement in the war’s *origins*.

Any account of the *Judean War* will need to deal with its contents, and these may be surprising in their proportions (Figure 1.1). In a work of about 125,600 words (the printed Niese *maior* text), the weight is clearly at the beginning. Book 1 is by far the longest, and Books 1 and 2 together constitute 42% of the whole. In *Judean Antiquities* (about 306,488 words) each volume comes much closer to the mean of 15,324 words, the *Life* being typical at 15,835 words. Since Josephus created *Judean War*’s book divisions himself (cf. *Ant.* 13.298; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.21.3; 3.6.1, 20; 9.3), we can see that instead of allowing his content simply to spill over from one scroll to the next (contrast *Apion* 1.320), he fashioned each volume as a unity and created a history from seven of these. This meant stuffing some scrolls to overflowing (especially 1 and 2) while leaving others (6–7) much less busy. He evidently wanted to begin the Flavian campaign in Book 3 and conclude the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of Book 6. Although he could have included Book 7 (triumph and the desert fortresses) with 6 in a single volume that would still have been shorter than Book 1, he preferred to keep the last two separate and of almost exactly the same length.

Two conclusions force themselves upon us. First, Book 1 is important. Many readers or hearers would presumably never have made it past this double-strength volume. Of the many important histories we now know in fragments (Polybius, Livy, Tacitus’s *Histories* and

Annals), it is the first part—usually not the most important for historians—that remains intact. Any account of Josephus's aims that imagines a reader flipping past it in book-like pages to reach the end, will be implausible. We must think about what it contributes. Second, Josephus's effort to reserve each volume for a certain story arc, no matter how lengthy or brief, suggests that he hoped to create a symmetry based on the volumes, rather than on the mass of material, for example, by matching the prelude (Book 1) with the aftermath (Book 7). This impression is confirmed by the wildly varying periods of time covered in each book, from 167 years in Book 1 to just a few months in others (3, 6). Before considering the symmetry issue, let us take a tour through the contents.

1. From the primal conflict that created Onias's temple in Egypt and the Hasmonean Revolt to the funeral of Herod the Great, with a preview of the succession problem (ca. 170–4 B.C.E.). The Hasmonean story is compact (1.31–122), focusing on the rapid acquisition of territory after the peril of Antiochus IV's accession and the rulers' political agility in making alliances. Those themes continue under the main character Herod, whose rule over southern Syria emerges from the Roman civil war. Herod's story is tragic: the brilliant regional success of his rule from Jerusalem is undone by his inability to escape his passions and related domestic intrigues.
2. From the Herodian succession conflicts to Josephus's control over the northern defenses, with a Jerusalem preview (4 B.C.E.–66/67 C.E.). Archelaus's rule is displaced by succession hearings before Augustus, a story interrupted by revolts in Judea (4 B.C.E.). The main narrative intertwines regional politics, especially Judean-Samaritan issues, with Roman attempts at governance from Jerusalem or Caesarea. A failed diplomatic effort to judaize Caesarea generates violence throughout southern Syria and a failed intervention by the legate from Antioch, resulting in the loss of his legion to Judean militants. The final section is about the Jerusalem leadership's reluctant preparation for inevitable Roman retaliation: hence Josephus's assignment to Galilee.
3. From Vespasian's appointment to the fall of Josephus's northern command—except Gamala, Tabor, and Gischala (spring to late autumn, 67 C.E.). The narrative slows dramatically, after a survey of the terrifying Roman forces and a digression on the (alleged) invincibility of the legions, to highlight the few weeks of Josephus's brilliant defense before his surrender. Apart from his leadership, the war in Galilee is a non-event following Sepphoris's pre-emptive capitulation and the scattering of potential fighters. So the Galilean war is over with Josephus's drawn-out surrender at Iotapata (Yodfat). As a favor to Agrippa II, however, Vespasian and Titus confront his newly restive city of Tiberias, and militants who flee from there to Tarichea.
4. From the Galilean remnants to the summer of 69 in Judea; civil war in Rome to Vespasian's remote victory; Titus returns to Caesarea in preparation for the next volume (late 67–December 69). In a preliminary section, Vespasian and Titus deal with the fortress Gamala, Agrippa's last troublesome site, as well as remnants at Tabor and Gischala. The Gischala story brings John to Jerusalem, where he dominates the first half of Book 4 as key "tyrant." In the middle of the volume, John reveals his true colors by arranging for Idumaeans to enter the city and displace the popular chief-priestly notables, whom they murder. The latter half belongs to tough-guy Simon bar Giora, whom the surviving notables welcome as the only conceivable antidote to John's poison—inadvertently creating a more intractable problem. The final section shifts to the contemporaneous and comparable civil war and terror—Judeans were not the only ones plagued by *stasis*—in Vitellius's Rome.

5. From the post-Ananus factionalism in Jerusalem via the siege of Titus to the horrors of murder and famine in Jerusalem (ca. December 69–June 70). Titus's campaign is described in five parts: early narrative, digression on Jerusalem as an impregnable stronghold (emphasis on walls and surrounding depths), continuing narrative, Josephus's grand speech to the rebels, final narrative. Each narrative section moves back and forth between Roman and Judean conditions and also changes lenses from wide-angle to telephoto (focusing vividly on individuals from the masses on each side). In the background is the gradual hardening of Titus, after his many efforts to provoke early surrender with both carrots and sticks are rebuffed.
6. From Titus's renewed siege to the fall of Jerusalem (ca. late June–early September 70). This dramatic climax brings many threads together. It opens with the dispirited Romans redoubling their characteristic efforts (discipline, columns, ramps) against a seemingly unconquerable, death-defying, and endlessly resourceful foe. The internally generated miseries reach their nadir, however, in the horrendous famine and the tragedy of aristocratic Maria's cannibalism (6.193–219). This fires Titus with a determination to bury the city, though he too is trapped in this divinely orchestrated story. When he overcomes his emotion and resolves to spare the temple, it burns anyway and the city falls. This is the consequence of the strife perpetuated by the tyrants (John, Eleazar, Simon): divine retribution for their compatriot bloodshed and pollution of sacred spaces.
7. From the fall of Jerusalem to the end of Onias's temple in Egypt, with a relevant glance at the author's post-war life (September 70–ca. 75 C.E.). The overall shape of Book 7 contrasts the dire consequences for Judeans in Syria and Egypt along with the Roman triumph, on the one hand, with compelling stories of Judean heroism (Machaerus) and final disaster (Masada) in the remnant areas. The book ends with the closing of Onias's dissident temple and reminds us of the author's towering virtue.

This brief sketch, though no more 'objective' than any other, turns up some points to be reckoned with. For example, Josephus knows well the rhetorical mandates of variation (of scene, sub-genre, content, style, tone), vivid portrayal (moving from the general to the very particular), and symmetry. We cannot discuss all his digressions, but after building tensions up to a point, he takes every opportunity to punctuate his narrative, moving from place to place and angle to angle, introducing a rousing speech (below) or a geographical description, even dropping in a philosophical diversion. The most famous of these is the lengthy description of Judea's three schools (2.119–166), in which the Essene 'legion' (*tagma*) pushes the other two aside by virtue of its uniquely virtuous-masculine way of life (cf. Philo, *Prob.* 75–91; Pliny, *NH* 5.73; see Chapter 16 by Baumgarten in this volume). It is linked to the surrounding narrative in all sorts of ways, especially by Josephus's emphasis on this school's courage and endurance in the recent war, shown in their contempt for death and smiling at torture. The volume that is freest from such variation, or distraction, is Book 6. By that point, with all the preliminaries of Book 5 in place, Josephus puts us on a fast train heading toward Jerusalem's destruction, from which there can be no escape. He requires us to look squarely and without relief at the horrors of gruesome violence, oozing corpses, famine, bloodshed, cannibalism, and the destructive purging fire, as insolent men in Jerusalem prefer to see the city destroyed than give up their personal ambitions.

As for symmetry, the outline highlights a common pattern. In most volumes Josephus finds a way to frame the central section with opening and closing panels. This is clearest in Book 2 (opening in Rome, main story of regional conflict in Judea to the Cestius disaster, closing panel on Josephus's preparation in Galilee [for Bk 3]), in Book 3 (opening frame on

Roman army, closing on the return of Agrippa's cities, central narrative concerning Josephus as defender of Iotapata), and in Book 4 (opening frame on remnants of Galilee, main section on John and then Simon in Jerusalem, closing shift to the Roman civil war).

Josephus also makes frequent use of anticipation (prolepsis), most obviously by introducing a case at the beginning of Book 1, Onias's temple in Egypt, that he will resolve only at the end of Book 7. In Book 2 he sprinkles notes about the future importance of characters such as Eleazar, son of Yair, "who would later exercise tyranny at Masada" (2.447; cf. 7.253–401), or Simon bar Giora, who begins a career of tyranny but is chased off by Ananus to Masada, where he stays until the chief priest's death (2.652–654). These characters play no significant role in Book 2 itself, but especially because the audience is likely to know them as the two chief culprits (6.434; 7.36, 154) the anticipatory notices heighten suspense as they wait for Book 4. In Book 5, more subtly, Josephus refers to the reversal of fortune that would soon meet King Antiochus of Commagene, though at the time of the remark he is at the peak of his good fortune (5.461); the comment heralds his downfall at 7.232–243. More subtly yet, the story of Simon from Scythopolis, who runs through his parents, wife, and children before killing himself in a sudden recognition of his crime (of compatriot killing), and the speech Josephus furnishes him with, unmistakably anticipate *Judean War's* near-final scenes at Masada and Eleazar's speech there (2.469–476; 7.332–336). Such anticipations create further problems for any notion that Book 7 was an afterthought.

Josephus's anticipations in Book 2 of the horrifying siege and tyranny (Books 5–6) remind us how much narrative changes as the story develops. This recognition undermines the perception that he programmatically blames a few bad men for *causing the war*. In the two lengthy volumes devoted to the war's origins he paints a much more human and understandable picture. Conflicts burst out here and there, in the unsettled aftermath of Hasmonean and especially Herodian rule. No viable successor to Herod can be found, to rule the region from Jerusalem (2.1–118), and though the elites of all the ethnic groups continue looking to Rome for redress, it is the Judeans who suddenly become most vulnerable, with the shift of government to Caesarea. Roman legates try to manage things remotely, but the system crashes in Nero's final years.

Thus Josephus does not claim that evil men *generated* the war. He writes as the survivor of a massive trauma, searching for what hindsight allows him to identify as the war's causes. He does not say that people at the time (or any of lasting significance) were steadily pushing for war. Notice, for example, his admission that Nero's decision to keep Caesarea "Greek" became a foundation for the war, though no one could have guessed then that the seemingly trivial, local incidents involved would issue in such calamities (2.284–285).

From his post-war perspective, the auxiliary army based in Caesarea with its garrison in Jerusalem is simply "Roman," because that is now the important point: its conflicts with Judeans called forth stronger medicine from Rome. Josephus knows that these conflicts arose largely because the auxiliary was actually Samaritan (2.52; cf. *Ant.* 19.356–365; 20.176), but his purpose in *Judean War 2* is to show why things turned out as they did, not to relive decisions made at the time in context—though he goes remarkably far in that direction, too. Jerusalem's militants evidently massacred the auxiliary garrison because it was a hated Samaritan force, which had exceeded even Florus's orders in killing Judeans (2.296–332 [305, 332]). To make the point, the Judeans spared both the supporting force from King Agrippa and the cohort's Roman commander Metilius, who was even willing to judaize (2.430–456). It was the auxiliaries they hated, for their relentless brutality. But the cohort was also part of the Roman military, and its massacre could not go unpunished by

Rome (*Life* 407–408). Or again, the exasperated younger priests’ decision “to accept no gift or sacrifice from an outsider” (2.410) seems to have been directed first against those most likely to make such contributions (perhaps marking the end of Tyrian shekel as temple currency; 2.412–414); but in retrospect Josephus reflects on the implications for Judea’s relations with Rome (2.409).

This is what creates the tragic irony: the characters in the story do not have the narrator’s hindsight. They go about their lives—hot-headed youths, other-worldly fanatics, tough militants, helpless women and children, and wise elders—acting according to type. Some elders (and Josephus himself) know intuitively that vigilantism never comes to any good, and they habitually counsel submission, which the new procurator and his force abuse. The reader feels deeply the sense of rampant injustice and the lack of recourse, with Florus and his Samaritan muscle the only interlocutors, the northern legate and King Agrippa seemingly powerless to help. Even today we can understand Josephus’s claims that the young and energetic would respond in ways that seemed only right to them—but sealed their doom. We are watching the creation of a perfect storm. There are no Judean tyrants here. Before the Cestius affair and the Judeans’ ambush of his retreating legion (2.499–555), Josephus’s voice is much more observational than hectoring. His excoriations of the tyrants who would take over Jerusalem, from the end of Book 4, will create a rather different atmosphere.

We have noted Josephus’s framing technique. In several volumes he coils the narrative around itself on a central spindle (Greek *periodos*) and then, after reaching a critical moment, starts to unravel it. In Book 1, depending on whether one includes the prologue, the central section falls near the beginning or near the end of Herod’s decisive capture of Jerusalem (1.340–357). In Book 2, the end of the Caesarea conflict (2.292) comes just before the halfway point (10,269 words of 22,520). It is the unfolding of the Caesarea situation—a massacre of Judeans (paired with the massacre of auxiliaries in Jerusalem), Judean retaliation throughout southern Syria, and counter-retaliation in the Greek cities—that forces the legate Cestius fatefully to intervene (2.457–499). The nearly precise halfway point of Book 6’s 12,462 words comes at the dramatic conclusion of Maria’s cannibalism, itself the climax of increasingly desperate famine and brutality, with Titus’s resolve to bury the city (6.219 ending 6,202 words).

It would be hard to see this pattern as mere coincidence, for even within the passage on the philosophical schools, we find such a concentric structure. The fulcrum comprises the twelve oaths that initiates take (2.139–142), signposted by the rare but mirrored verbs ‘reckon in’ and ‘reckon out’ on either side (2.138, 143). Moving out from there we meet important parallel stops—reverence for the sun as a deity (2.128, 148), the rare phrase “make it a point of honor” (2.123, 146), the rare agent-noun “despiser” (of wealth and the terrors of death, 2.122, 151)—until we reach the outer points with their discussions of women, children, sex (2.119–121, 160–161), and Pharisees and Sadducees (2.119, 162–166).

If this approach has merit, we should expect to find something important around the middle of Book 4, the centre of the *Judean War*, and that is the case. In the volume’s 17,624 words, the precise halfway point comes at 8,812. Just one sentence before that (8,781 words) is the decisive turning point of the volume and the whole work alike. This is the end of the encomium on Ananus and Jesus (4.325), who have been managing the war effort since the defeat of Cestius, and whose murder now at the hands of John’s Zealots and Idumaeans ushers in tyranny and final disaster. Josephus’s encomium on the chief priests—“the capture of the city began with the death of Ananus, and from that very day came the overthrow of the walls and the ruin of the Judean commonwealth, on which they saw the

leader of their own rescue slaughtered in the middle of the *polis*" (4.318)—makes clear the pivotal role of this episode. And in Book 7, when he turns to the final debacle of Masada, he recalls that this murder of the chief priests removed the last traces of piety toward God and any remnants of the nation's political integrity (7.267).

Back in Book 4, he furnishes the episode with a grand frame, suiting its importance. John's Zealot faction deceptively entices a large force of Idumaeans to enter the city and get rid of their enemies (4.224–313). Those skilled, fresh, and heavily armed fighters accomplish the task efficiently, but then abruptly discover they have been misled. They supposedly march back out of Jerusalem in disgust at John (4.345–365). The artificiality of these literary gates on either side of the event is clear from the fact that Idumaeans actually remain as a significant factor in the rest of the war (4.566; 5.248–250; 6.381), unaware that they are supposed to have gone home.

This much information alerts us to watch for other signposts of symmetry. There are many, for example: Antiochus Epiphanes (at 1.31–40; 7.219–244; cf. 5.460); anachronistic references to Medes (1.50, 62; 7.244–246); Masada introduced and destroyed (1.237–238, 264–266; 7.252–406, 455); the *Pascha* festival, with "many sacrifices" explained (only at 2.10; 6.423); a heaping of corpses worse than in a foreign war (2.30; 6.259, 421); souls of the good at death enter the "most refined ether" (2.152; 6.47); a "pseudo-prophet" misleads the people and costs many lives (2.261; 6.285); the burning of temple porticoes by Romans, with either Judeans or Romans dying five ways (2.229–230, 405; 6.233); Agrippa's and Titus's speeches ("Don't foolishly rely on ..."; 2.362; 6.328–332); Josephus imprisoned, predicts Vespasian's rise; the prediction is fulfilled and he is released (3.387–408; 4.622–644); all Galilee and the north subdued, all the south except Jerusalem subdued (4.120, 4.490). This kind of patterning is not a matter of either mathematical precision or mysterious codes, of course. Arranging episodes near the beginning to be reprised near the end (not necessarily in exact order) is simply art. It helps to create a general impression of shape, symmetry, and closure. The technique of closing where one opened is common still today, even in newspaper and magazine articles.

In light of these patterns, Josephus's remarks at the beginning of the *Judean Antiquities* take on a particular meaning. There he relates that he had contemplated including the ancient past as part of the *Judean War*. Because the size would have been excessive, however, "I separated that [work] by itself and *measured off a balanced composition*, with the beginnings and the ending proper to it" (*tais idiais archais antou kai toi telei ten graphen synmetresā*; 1.6–7). The verb *symmetreō* (cf. *symmetry*) is architectural, often used for the coordination of columns or other features to create proportion (*War* 1.411; 5.192; *Ant.* 8.74). Josephus was conscious of having constructed his *Judean War* in just such a way.

1.4 Sources of the *Judean War*

This analysis requires a decisive break with an ingrained tradition in scholarship, which would attribute the shape of Josephus's narratives to available source material. The general idea has been that Josephus wanted to make a name by writing a big book, but its evident lack of *historical* proportion, for example, the relative skimpiness of information on the period from 6 to 66, shows that he was stuck with following whatever source material was at hand. On this view, his detailed story of Herod, which many have found hardly relevant to the war, is there because the material was there—in the detailed history by Herod's aide Nicolaus of Damascus. After the succession hearing in Rome, however, Nicolaus's material

ran out and Josephus had to rush through the next six decades with only a few episodes before he could turn to his own experience in Galilee—even there relying on a source *he* had written (see the essay on his *Life* in this volume)—and especially to the Flavian generals' field notes (*commentarii*; e.g., Hölscher 1916, 49–50; Thackeray 1929, 411; Grabbe 1992, 370–371). Weber imagined the “cowardly and incompetent” Josephus, “prophet of the new Caesar,” taking over bodily a Flavian literary work on “The Salvation of the Empire” through Vespasian, for Books 3 to 6 plus the Roman triumph. This ready-made literary work provided most of what he did not know personally (Weber 1921, 89–284). Likewise Josephus must have included the lengthy account of philosophical schools where he does, after finding it ready-made in some source or sources (Bauer 1924, 404; Gray 1993, 82), *because* he had a dearth of historical source material for that period. When he gives a much fuller account of the same events in *Antiquities* 13–20 (see Chapter 2 by Schwartz on *Antiquities* in this volume), he can do so because he has discovered new sources. In short, the assumption has been that the shape of his narrative is determined by his sources.

We should all agree that Josephus used sources in some way or other for most of what lay beyond his personal knowledge. And most of the *Judean War* falls in that category: not only events before he reached maturity (Books 1 to ca. 2.249), but much of what occurred inside Jerusalem after his surrender in Galilee, along with Book 7 outside Rome. Once we agree on this, however, we must then clarify and qualify. First, because he was a demonstrably creative writer, Josephus did not need much to spin out a story in rhetorically or morally compelling terms, creating speeches for characters and adding his flourishes. With many episodes that he does include, such as the two concerning Pilate (2.169–177), a little knowledge—that incidents involving a cohort's standards and an aqueduct produced protests and deaths—goes a long way. His stories are highly stylized with matching structures and vocabulary. Second, even where he did have a general knowledge of events, as we all have general knowledge of our nations' histories, he might well have used sources. Academics use all kinds of sources to write about subjects in which they are supposedly “expert.” We should not erect a fence between what Josephus personally knew and what he took from sources. Third, although our bookish proclivities often lead us to assume that sources were written, Josephus must have known a great deal from oral tradition. He was after all a prominent priest in Jerusalem. When I was a boy, I heard a great deal from my father about John F. Kennedy, LBJ, and Vietnam, and I would confidently call on that “knowledge.” Although no modern historian would trust such oral tradition in writing about the 1960s, Josephus was not a modern historian. Many of his episodes would have required no more knowledge than I have of Kennedy. Then again, what do “oral traditions” look like? Do they come in sealed packages? How are they different from simply “knowing” what one has heard from trustworthy people?

In any case, the shape of Josephus's works cannot have been determined by his available source material. He knew vastly more than he wrote. For example, though we may be sure that he took the extensive material on Herod from sources that *included* Nicolaus of Damascus, he did not use everything he found, or present it as Nicolaus had done. The much fuller material on Herod in *Judean Antiquities* 14 to 17 also comes largely from Nicolaus (*Ant.* 7.101; 13.347; 14.9, 104; 16.183; cf. *War* 1.629; 2.34, etc.), and yet it shows a completely different structure, significantly varied content and causal links, and a new rhetorical coloring within parallel episodes (Laqueur 1920, 128–220). As his biblical paraphrase proves (Feldman 1998a, 1998b), Josephus was not a slave to his sources, but

rewrote and shaped the narrative as he saw fit. But this means only that he was well aware of common literary-rhetorical values taught throughout the Mediterranean basin (Criboire 2001, 220–244). It does not mean that he never became lazy and copied a few sentences, or took over others' phrases when he could not find his own *mot juste*.

In the *Judean War* we can often see that he has condensed written or oral source material. I refer the reader to two examples. The first, concerning Herod's descendants (2.218–222), mentions Agrippa's death in one phrase, that of his brother in another, and dispenses with the governorships of Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander in a single sentence. A brief sentence covers the posterity of Alexander. Josephus knew much more about these topics, however. In a later volume (5.147–155), he will say a lot more about Agrippa's wall. In general, what he chooses to pass over here is found in the *Judean Antiquities* parallel, which presents the same points more fully (*Ant.* 19.326–352; 20.1–16, 97–104; 18.130–142). We must conclude that much of that *Judean Antiquities* material was already known to him when he wrote *Judean War*, but he carefully selected and pruned it for the earlier narrative. At *Judean War* 2.248–251, similarly, Josephus gives a rapid-fire overview of Roman affairs in 54 C.E. and following. He drops many names associated with Claudius, with knowing allusions to “Agrippina's tricks” and the emperor's other family members, then Nero's whole career of stage performance and brutality against distinguished men. Yet he refrains from expanding on what would be, in these happier Flavian days, “burdensome for everyone” (2.251). It is not plausible that he knows no more than what he says, or that the amplifications of these points in *Judean Antiquities* arise entirely from new material.

Josephus was not at the mercy of his sources, then. To put it the other way around, we are in no position to ascertain what he *knew* from what he chose to write. As for the sources he did use for the *Judean War*, we know less than scholars used to know. Understanding Josephus to be an Aramaic-educated Pharisee from Jerusalem, more or less isolated from Hellenistic culture, they reasoned that for him to have produced the *Judean War* in excellent Greek, so soon after leaving Judea, he must have had enormous help both in finding material and in writing it up (Weber 1921, 10–13). His later acknowledgment of “collaborators” (*Apion* 1.50) was therefore thought to be a late admission of dependence on ghostwriters (above). For source material, he must have simply borrowed Nicolaus of Damascus for Book 1 and the first part of Book 2, then Roman field notes or Weber's “Flavian work” from Book 3 (some use mentioned at *Life* 341, 358; *Apion* 1.56), supplemented by an array of small sources, traditions, and personal memories (summary in Thackeray 1929, 36–41). Scholars felt they needed to attribute as much of the heavy lifting as possible to other hands.

The main difference in our approach today is that, beginning from a very different view of Judea's position vis-à-vis Greek culture (e.g., Hengel 1981), and taking seriously both Josephus's diplomatic mission to Rome as a young man (*Life* 13–16) and the many affinities of his *Judean War* with contemporary Greek literature, we cannot assume that he was so ignorant of that larger culture (see Chapter 6 by Almagor in this volume). For him to think in such a deeply “Greek” way seems to require a much longer period of interaction with the surrounding world. The unity of language and conception in his work, revealed by the concordance and electronic databases, speaks further against the notion that other writers are chiefly responsible for one part or another (e.g., Rajak 1998). Since he was demonstrably a creative Greek-language author, then, we cannot say that because we know some of his sources, we have any clarity about how many he used, where he used them, or the extent to which they shaped his narrative, never mind the problem of defining and tracking “oral traditions.”

1.5 Thematic Threads

If the *Judean War* does not have an argument-like thesis or single bias (*Tendenz*), to which Josephus accommodates his material, it does nevertheless construct a coherent narrative atmosphere. This results not only from the use of similar devices (speeches, digressions, patterning) and structures, but also from the weaving of recurring themes through the whole fabric. Readers will discover such things for themselves. As a would-be reading companion, however, I might suggest some approaches.

The single most important message that any ancient historian needed to convey was one that stood mostly behind the text, namely: he was a man of character, seriousness, and authority (Marincola 1997, 128–174). Although modern historians wish to be well regarded too, we go about it differently. Not knowing our readers, we must try to win their support with evidence and reasoning, inviting them to retrace the steps of our analysis and to agree. For first-century Roman historians, a long tradition with Thucydides as model went in another direction. They did not try to win trust as specialists, painstakingly reconstructing what had happened and showing how they reached their conclusions. History was above all a moral and literary undertaking, typically done by statesmen in retirement, another expression of the character they had already exhibited in public, not least in military affairs. Instead of trying to show how they knew that x, y, and z had happened, they offered events as *exempla* for the lessons they wished to draw. We see this in Josephus's *Judean War*. He begins by stating his credentials, in lofty dismissal of competitors (1.1–3), and proceeds with a narrative that everywhere implies, “As you can see *from my perceptive analysis*, my judgements are trustworthy.”

It was not a one-way street from authority to trustworthiness, to be sure. Instead of presenting evidence and arguments, authors displayed culture and urbanity with the well-timed deployment of resonant political vocabulary, vivid battle scenes, moral-philosophical reflections, and meaningful classical allusions. They aimed at a quality of political analysis that would put them in the same league as Thucydides. Josephus tries to win over his audience by such techniques: “I am someone you can trust to tell you the (moral) truth about what happened in this war.” Every use of such devices, and every comparison between Rome and Judea, helps to cement the vital bond between the Judean author and those around him in the capital: “We’re not so different, you and I.”

Rather than trying to trace the countless themes that run through the *Judean War*, I propose to corral them under four heads: (1) the national character; (2) managing the *polis*; (3) Jerusalem’s tragedy; and (4) cultic pollution and purification. Others would arrange them differently, but since I offer these for initial orientation, it does not matter.

In advocating for his nation, Josephus distinguishes cleanly between the bad political choices made by some of his people and the national-ethnic character. Near the end he portrays Romans admiring, or at least being amazed at, the unexpected daring of the people at Masada, the “nobility of their resolve” to take their own lives, and their “contempt of death” (7.405–406). Although Josephus does not speak in his own voice there, the references to Judean daring and contempt of death are characteristic, and he does not shrink from crediting with these traits even rebels whose political decisions he repudiates. In one passage, after acknowledging the courage of a Roman centurion he had come to know, Josephus lists those who “fought with distinction” from John’s and Simon’s factions as well as among the Zealots (6.81–92). He stresses the point that the Judean character, contrary to the portraits of those other writers, is rooted in unshakable masculine courage and endurance. We have seen that he uses this point in the prologue to enhance the Flavian victory, but it is clear

throughout the narrative that he wishes to stress the nature of his people as a nation. Because of these qualities they often wrong-foot and embarrass even the famed legions.

In Josephus's time the "illusion" of old Sparta provided the model and benchmark of a disciplined society dominated by masculine virtue, not given to (Athenian-style) luxury or weakness but to simple living, inured to hardship and pain, and ready to die rather than violate ancestral laws (*Apion* 2.225; cf. Ollier 1933; Tigerstedt 1974; Hodkinson and Powell 1994, 273–346). Related language concerns manliness or courage (*andreia*, *andrizó*, *andragathia*), endurance and fortitude (*karteria*), discipline or regimen of life (*askêsis*, *diaita*), and contempt for death (*thanatou kataphronêsis*). Although the highest concentration of these terms is in the description of the Essenes (2.119–161), it turns up frequently elsewhere. Consider a few examples:

4.89–90 [Vespasian rests his soldiers in Caesarea before the final campaign]: For he saw that a good deal of work remained in the vicinity of Jerusalem ... And he reckoned that even without walls, the determination of the [Judean] men and their daring actions would be difficult to cope with. So he trained his soldiers just like athletes for contests.

5.315–316: The Judeans, for their part, careless of their sufferings, were intent solely on the damage they could inflict, and death itself seemed to them trivial if it meant attacking and killing one of the enemy. Titus, by contrast, took as much care for the security (*asphaleias*) of his soldiers as for success. Saying that the reckless charge was foolish, and that it was only valor if accompanied by forethought and avoiding the risk of casualty, he directed his side to show their manliness in ways that posed no risk to themselves (*en akindunôi tõi kata sphas ekleusen andrizesthai*).

6.11–14 [Of the Roman legionaries]: ... Their bodies were by now falling beneath their labors, their souls in the face of repeated reverses. ... Worst of all was the discovery that the Judeans possessed a fortitude of soul (*to parastêma tês psychês*) superior to faction, famine, war, and such disasters. They [Romans] began to suppose that the attacks of these men were irresistible, that their cheerfulness in distress was invincible.

6.42–44 [Titus to his *elite* forces]: "How shameful if the Judeans, for whom defeat carries no real shame since they have learned to be slaves, should ... hold death in contempt (*thanatou kataphronein*) and repeatedly strike at our middles—not in hope of triumph, but for the raw demonstration of their manly courage (*alla dia psilên epideixin andreas*)—whereas you, who control more or less all the land and sea, ... should not even once venture into the enemy's ranks."

It appears therefore that Josephus's famous digression on the Roman legions, accompanying Vespasian's arrival in the land (3.70–109), has a partly ironic function. It declares that the Romans have never been beaten, no matter what ruses, tactics, terrain, or numbers have opposed them (3.106). They absorb the shocks of battle with equanimity, never panicked (3.74). On the one hand, this assures his audiences that the Judeans were beaten by the very best (3.108: "for the consolation of those who have been bested"). On the other hand, it sets up the following narrative of legionary confusion, ill discipline, and temporary failure to bring forward the virtues of the Judeans.

Second, when Josephus arranges his wording to begin his narrative with the political hot-word *stasis*, or "civil strife," in the moments before the Hasmonean revolt (1.31), he signals his deep familiarity with a discourse in *polis* management and illness that goes back to Plato and Aristotle on the philosophical side, and Thucydides among historians. Profoundly suspicious of democracy, he assumes a world of *poleis* (citizen states) administered in the best interests of the populace, though not by them; rather, by the leading, powerful, or notable men (*hoi prôtôi, aristoi, gnôrimoi, dunatoi*). These are omni-competent aristocrats like

Josephus, who come from great families and are educated for leadership in all its forms, not for grubby commerce or technical expertise. The same men become, as circumstances require, advocates, judges, orators, military commanders, political leaders, priests of the civic cults (hereditary in Judea), major landowners, and writers. Their principal task is to keep the lumpen rabble (*to plēthos*, sometimes *ho dêmos* or *ho laos*) quiescent. Dangers to concord (*homonoia*, opposite of *stasis*) come from many directions: rival *poleis* competing for status, hot-headed youths who respond from passion rather than political wisdom, women in general, demagogues who whip up the masses with rhetorical wizardry and promise things that cannot be realized (*goês/goêteia*, *apatê/apataô*), otherworldly fanatics, and violent men (“bandits”), often in the service of some resentful wealthy person (on Polybius, Eckstein 1995, 28–236).

A particularly rich thread in the Greco-Roman tradition, manipulated brilliantly by Josephus, concerns the nature of political “freedom” or “autonomy,” on the one side, and “slavery” on the other. Paradoxes abound. Submission to Rome is undoubtedly a kind of slavery, and yet it may offer the best practical hope for internal self-regulation and preservation of the ancestral ways (*ta patria/ethê*, *ta nomima*, *hoi patrioi nomoi*). Demagogues typically rally the people with memories of glorious days past and vain hopes of both radical freedom and regional primacy. Like political losers everywhere, they play the justice/fairness card before the gullible, but what they actually offer is *slavery*—to their insatiable personal tyrannies. Throughout his writing, Josephus shows that he has thought much about the kind of *Realpolitik* that comes through the pages of Thucydides (whatever his own intentions may have been).

All of this was common coin in elite discussions of the day. Polybius had refashioned classical Greek discussions for the new situation of Greek political responses to Roman domination, and he was followed by the Hellenistic historians Diodorus and Dionysius. Josephus shows debts to all of them, as do his contemporaries Plutarch (*Mor.* [*Praec.*] 813d–816a, 819a, 824e–f) and Dio (*Orr.* 32, 38, 46). The main difference is that whereas Plutarch and Dio work fervently to prevent *poleis* of their day from tipping over into *stasis*, Josephus describes how the most famous *polis* of the time (thanks to Flavian propaganda) had gone over the edge, rather like Polybius’s Corinth two centuries earlier. He assumes the role of national spokesman, explaining these matters to audiences who should recognize the problems and the language.

Pervasive in ancient thinking (and evidently flourishing in western democracies) was the notion that the statesman managed the potentially volatile populace by appearing to share their sentiments—calling for justice, fairness, redress—while gradually bending them to a sounder view of things (see Plutarch, *Mor.* [*Praec.*] 800a–b). Since oratory was the principal tool for these purposes, the last thing one expected a statesman to declare in public speech was his heartfelt views: that was for prophets, whose role was to die, not for leaders (Liddell Hart 1941, 7–8). If we begin from such assumptions and values, though to earnest modern scholars they have reeked of sham and the author’s humbug, Josephus’s portraits of himself and his chief-priestly colleagues appear entirely plausible (though not for that reason accurate):

In Jerusalem, Ananus the chief priest and those of the powerful men who were not sympathetic to the Romans were preparing the walls and many war machines. Throughout the whole city, projectiles and body armour were being forged. ... Ananus, nonetheless, harboured the intention of bending the insurgents and the recklessness of those called “Disciples” [Zealots] to the more beneficial course, as he gradually sidelined the preparations for war. But he succumbed to the violence. ... (2.648–651)

This is not to say that political leaders felt no sense of honor. On the contrary, a decent leader should identify himself with the welfare of the *polis* to the extent that he is willing to die for it if necessary, even in a conflict he has not chosen. That selfless desire to pilot the ship of state to a safer harbor justifies his use of misleading appearances and rhetoric (cf. *War* 4.248–250, 319–321).

Another fertile theme in the political sphere has to do with fortune, or the circumstances that just come one's way, and its reversals (*tychês/pragmatôn metabolai*). Polybius affirmed history's value to statesmen as the best aid for "bearing nobly the reversals of fortune" (1.1.2), and his narrative is filled with such reversals (1.4.5, 35.2; 2.4.3–4, 7.1–2; 18.28.4–5; 39.8.2 [40.12.19]). In Josephus's *Judean War*, fortune language also turns up in seminal situations. Against the background of Rome's constant upheavals (1.5, 23) come reversals suffered by: Jerusalem, the greatest and happiest city now fallen to its nadir (1.11); various Roman, Seleucid, Hasmonean, and Herodian figures (e.g., 1.95, 270, 282, 353; 2.113); and Josephus the captured general himself (3.394–395). Josephus epitomizes the problem in the bad emperors Gaius and Nero, who did not realize what they owed to fortune and so abused or outraged it ("*exubrisen eis tēn tychēn*," 2.184, 250).

This vulnerability of humanity to reversals of fortune could equally be connected with tragedy, the third thematic cluster. Aristotle made pity and fear the hallmarks of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b, 1452b, 1453a–b, 1456b). Scholars used to think that "tragic history" was a recognized sub-genre, taking their cue from Polybius's attack on Phylarchus for failing to distinguish one from the other (2.56.6–7):

Being keen to elicit pity in his readers and generate sympathy by his words, he weaves tapestries of women and dishevelled hair and their breasts slipping out; to these he adds the tears and lamentations of both men and women being led off [to slavery]—all together with children and aged parents. He does this throughout his whole history, always trying to place the horrors in each situation before our eyes.

Although it is agreed now that Phylarchus had not written in a tragic sub-genre (McDonald 1975, 4; Marincola 2003), that conclusion is part of an increasing recognition that we should not make rigid genre distinctions generally in ancient literature. The same authors were writing across genres, and saw no problem intermingling history, geography, ethnography, biography, rhetoric, and indeed prose tragedy (Clarke 1999; Shahar 2004).

Josephus's *Judean War*, at any rate, has a tragic ethos. The prologue awakens potent themes of pity, compassion, and lament over the fate of nation and mother-city (*War* 1.10–12). The key words here (*eleos, olophyrsis, oiktos/oiktizô/oikteirô*) reoccur some 115 times in the narrative. Josephus unconvincingly begs pardon for allowing his passions (*pathê*) to intrude. Weeping women and children are everywhere in his story. In the first volume, King Herod establishes the framework (note the language of *drama*: 1.471, 530, 543) as a strong and proud man whose very virtues and way of being—including his passion for his wife and a Fortune that must exact revenge for his prosperity—cause his downfall (esp. 429–432, 556). Chapman (1998) has demonstrated Josephus's debt to classical tragedy in specific episodes, especially in the story of Maria's cannibalism (6.193–219). As that story of a particular *pathos* ("case of suffering," 6.214) illustrates, Josephus can play with specific words. At the end of the story (6.217), he puns on *ptôma*, which usually means "downfall, collapse" or secondarily "fallen person, corpse." *Judean War* has the word often (e.g., 1.594; 3.249; 5.18, 34, 440; 5.516, 541, 570; 6.2, 110; but 6.30), but mostly in the special tragic sense of *corpse* (Euripides, *Heracl.* 77; *Herc.* 1228; *El.* 575, 686; *Phoen.* 1482, 1697; *Troi.* 467).

Judean War's tragic ethos also offers Josephus a point of intersection, which he fully exploits, with the biblical tradition of lament associated with Jeremiah (Cohen 1982).

Judean War's tragic atmosphere cannot be separated from our final group of themes, connected with cultic pollution and purification. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* revolves around a case of pollution (*miasma*) that must be driven from the land: "it is blood-guilt that keeps the *polis* in a storm" (*Oed. Rex* 97–103). The later volumes of *Judean War*, similarly, speak often of the pollution of Jerusalem's sacred precincts through bloodshed and of the need for a purging by fire. Josephus foreshadows that catastrophe early by presenting a scene just after Herod's death in which Passover pilgrims become sacrificial victims themselves (2.10–13, 30, 197). Passover, the ultimate celebration of freedom (from Egyptian slavery, 4.402), becomes the main locus of bloodshed, captivity, and final destruction (Colautti 2002; Siggelkow-Berner 2011). In this way, Josephus reinforces the paradox of a drive for ostensible "freedom" from Rome that turns Judeans into victims (2.209, 264, 443; 4.177–178, 394). Here is a representative passage (5.17–19):

Those who had hurried from the ends of the earth to this renowned sacred site themselves fell before their sacrifices, and honored an altar universally revered by Greeks and barbarians with a libation from their own slaughter. Foreign bodies kneaded themselves together with the local dead, commoners also with priests, and the blood from corpses of all provenance flowed into pools in the divine precincts. Most miserable city, what have you suffered comparable to this from the Romans, who came in purging with fire your own internal defilements?

Although Josephus writes history, then, we cannot isolate this as a genre free of tragedy and powerful rhetoric.

1.6 Speech and Speeches

The question of rhetoric leads us finally to Josephus's great speeches in the *Judean War*. Which ones count as "great" may be debated, but there are seven set-piece orations of significant size:

- 2.346–401 King Agrippa II on the folly of war with Rome
- 3.362–382 Josephus, trapped by comrades at Iotapata, against suicide
- 4.163–192 Ananus harangues the populace against the Zealots/Disciples
- 4.238–269 Jesus to the Idumaeans outside Jerusalem; Simon the Idumaeon replies
- 5.376–419 Josephus outside Jerusalem on the pacific tradition of Judean history
- 6.93–110 Josephus's "Hebrew" speech on behalf of Titus to John
- 7.341–388 Eleazar b. Yair at Masada on the need for self-destruction

Whatever Thucydides meant in describing his contradictory criteria for including speeches—adhering as closely as possible to what was actually said, and keeping it appropriate to the occasion (1.22.1)—his willingness to craft orations for his characters lent legitimacy to the art. By Josephus's time, speeches were the expected place for historians to show off their rhetorical skills (Polybius 12.25a.4–5, 25i–26b; Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 58). Only grumpy purists excluded them (Polybius 36.1.1–7; Pompeius Trogus in Justin, *Epit.* 38.3.11). Although Polybius was one of those, in this respect, Josephus did not follow him.

As they stand, Josephus's speeches are his creations. We can tell this immediately from the similarity of language, form, and theme from one speaker to another (Lindner 1972, 40–48; Rajak 1991, 124–125; Runnalls 1997; Price 2007). Three aspects that reoccur are: (1) the proposition that God and fortune are *now* with the Romans, whom it is futile to oppose; (2) the realist recognition that, with everyone now “slaves” of Rome (cf. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 34.51), the Judeans are in no position to rebel against such power; and (3) the culpability of those would who lead the nation into a futile and ruinous war. The question posed by speakers as different as King Agrippa, Josephus, and Eleazar, is not what is right or even abstractly honorable, but rather what is advantageous, beneficial, and safe for the nation (2.346, 401; cf. Thucydides 5.89; Polybius 21.32c). None of this expresses a love of Rome as such (cf. 2.352, 355), but rather pragmatic politics conducted with as much honor as circumstances permit.

Understandably enough, given these commonalities, scholars have looked to the speeches as Josephus's vehicles of choice for expressing his own ideas, whether these were thought to involve propaganda for Rome (Thackeray 1929, 43–45; Saulnier 1991) or something more independently Judean (Lindner 1972, 17–48; Gabba 1976–1977; Stern 1987, 76–77). Here I would urge caution.

For one thing, Josephus appears to have had little constraint in what he chose to include outside the speeches, and how he structured and composed it. The more important reason is that, in keeping with his assumptions about political leadership (above), Josephus conveys a deep suspicion of rhetoric, which he shared with philosophers, Spartans, and old-school Romans. There is no space to elaborate this point, but I would draw attention to three relevant features of the speeches in *Judean War*.

First, the middle speech indicated above is actually two. Josephus deliberately crafts powerful speeches for opposing characters to show the plausibility of each, quite apart from considerations of truth (cf. Korah and Moses in *Ant.* 4.15–25). This technique of paired speeches, found already in Thucydides and Sallust, puts oratory in its place as a tool that can be used by both good and bad men (cf. *Life* 40), or indeed by good men who disagree.

Second, *Judean War*'s orators resort to speechifying in desperate situations. Agrippa is trapped by the demand for an embassy to Nero—intended, notice, to prove to the emperor that Jerusalem is *not* in revolt (2.342–344). Politically unable to oblige his people, he delivers a brilliant, tear-jerking effort on the folly of war with Rome. Nice, the audience replies, but not exactly on topic (2.402). Josephus and Eleazar are driven to oratory to convince hostile audiences as lives hang in the balance. Most of *Judean War*'s speeches contain obvious distortions of reality, in keeping with the well-known nature of rhetoric: Agrippa claiming that the rest of the empire reposes in happy tranquillity under Rome; Josephus insisting that Judean tradition has always been pacifist; Eleazar brilliantly inverting Josephus's speech against suicide with the case for it.

Third, Josephus highlights the slipperiness of speech by having his characters first attempt a pithy confrontation of their audience. Only when that fails do they resort to the fancy talk (3.354, 361; 5.360–375; 6.96–98; 7.332–339). Either the oratory produces results (5.420–421, 6.112–115, 7.389), or the speaker must employ even more devious moves (3.383–388). Most impressive is the example of Eleazar at Masada. Having gathered “the bravest” of his men and told them the simple truth that their principles required them now to kill their families and themselves, with the Romans at the door, many begin bawling and howling in womanish grief (7.337–339). Exasperated by this lot, Eleazar decides to pull out the stops and give them a fine oration on life, death, and the soul—by way of Indian self-immolation.

Sure enough, he is unable to finish before the same men rush eagerly to kill their loved ones. So vulnerable are they to clever speaking (7.389–392).

Josephus thus appears to view oratory as a characteristically *Greek* and un-Judean technical skill (*War* 1.13, 16; *Ant.* 20.263–264; *Life* 40), rather like a drug that will certainly work but is best avoided if possible. Men of honor and *gravitas*, who care most about laws and truth, speak through their actions. As an author, Josephus can of course produce a rhetorical *tour de force* on demand. Whereas bad characters have only shiny speech, he has much more, and good character above all.

1.7 Conclusion

The *Judean War* deserves its place among the most influential ancient western texts, though not for the reasons that caused it to survive. In it we see a Judean aristocrat living in Rome and writing in Greek in the decade following the destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus manages the extraordinary feat of meshing his native traditions with Greek political, rhetorical, and historiographical discourses, while yet distancing himself from “the Greeks” to cement the bond with his host society. He charts the interplay of Roman and Judean cultures over a quarter of a millennium to explain how, though the Romans have favored Judean dominance in southern Syria and Jerusalem’s leaders have always trusted them, that consensus ruptured under the pressure of age-old local rivalries. These grew unmanageable after the failure of Herodian succession, especially when Nero sent his loathsome agent Florus, who blindly fell in with the Samaritans. Despairing of redress, the Judeans understandably if unwisely turned to self-help. Their resulting civil strife produced native tyrants, who propelled the city to destruction. The Flavians now in power are men of character, unlike Nero (cf. 3.1–3). They respect the Judean character, which gave them such difficulties on the battlefield—and which Josephus embodies. One can only lament the whole miserable legacy of Nero, in Rome as in Judea, and draw a line under it now, with men of character ascendant.

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