

ROMAN TRIUMPH OVER JERUSALEM

70 [5*10 (SUN/MON 5/6 AUG) = 106th Day of Siege] Jewish Temple burned.

“And now, since Caesar was no way able to restrain the enthusiastic fury of the soldiers, and the fire proceeded on more and more, he went into the holy place of the temple; with his commanders, and saw it, with what was in it, which he found to be far superior to what the relations of foreigners contained, and not inferior to what we ourselves boasted of and believed about it...

“...whereby the flame burst out from within the holy house itself immediately, when the commanders retired, and Caesar with them, and when nobody any longer forbade those that were without to set fire to it; and thus the holy house burnt down, without Caesar’s approbation.”¹

“Now although anyone would justly lament the destruction of such a work as this was, since it was the most admirable of all the works that we have seen or heard of, both for its curious structure and its magnitude, and also for the vast wealth bestowed upon it, as well as for the glorious reputation it had for its holiness; yet might such a one comfort himself with this thought, that it was fate that decreed it so to be, which is inevitable, both as to living creatures and as to works and places also. However, one cannot but wonder at the accuracy of this period thereto relating; for the same month and day were now observed, as I said before, wherein the holy house was burnt formerly by the Babylonians.”²

“While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire. Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword. The people also that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under; the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill; and besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed, when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries again: Perea did also return the echo, as well as the mountains round about [the city], and augmented the force of the entire noise. Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of these bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.”³

[Mid-5th Jewish Month (AUG)] Josephus blamed false prophets for the deaths of so many Jewish civilians in the Temple, because they had prophesied that it would be a place of divine refuge.⁴

¹ Wars 6.3.7.

² Wars 6.3.8.

³ Wars 6.5.1.

⁴ Wars 6.6.1.

70 [5*? (? AUG)] After eradicating the last of the Jewish presence on the Temple mount, the Roman soldiers celebrated by holding their own worship service there.

“And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.

“And now all the soldiers had such vast quantities of the spoils which they had gotten by plunder, that in Syria a pound weight of gold was sold for half its former value.⁵

[Later-5th Jewish Month (AUG/SEP)] As his men engaged in taking what remained of the city, Titus offered to spare the lives of any Jews – civilian or rebel – who surrendered, although they would almost certainly be sold into slavery as a result of their failure to surrender earlier. In reply, the rebels demanded that in return for ceding the city to the Romans, they & their families should be given safe passage to proceed into the Judean desert. Titus was furious at their arrogant attitude & gave his soldiers permission to wage full-scale war on what remained of the city & its inhabitants.⁶

[6*8 (SUN/MON 26/27 SEP)] The final section of Jerusalem was taken by the Romans.⁷

Josephus' Final Casualty Figures⁸

- 1,100,000 died during the six months of the Roman siege of Jerusalem
- 97,000 were captured during the same period & processed after Jerusalem had fallen
 - Those among the captives who were identified as rebels by other Jewish captives were summarily executed, although 700⁹ of the tall, good-looking, younger rebels were saved for display in the triumphal parade that would take place in Rome, after which they would be executed
 - The Jewish civilians, 17 years of age and up, were either sent to work in the Egyptian mines or were sent to the various Roman arenas throughout the Empire to die in the games
 - All those under 17 were sold into general slavery
 - 11,000 died during processing, some by suicide or by refusing to eat the provided rations

⁵ Wars 6.6.1.

⁶ Wars 6.6.2-3.

⁷ Wars 6.8.5.

⁸ Wars 6.9.2-3.

⁹ Wars 7.5.3.

[FALL] For all intents & purposes, Jerusalem was erased.

“Now, as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done) Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.

“This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.”¹⁰

Titus had an awards ceremony with his legions, before dismissing them from the war zone.

“Hereupon Titus ordered those whose business it was, to read the list of all that had performed great exploits in this war, whom he called to him by their names, and commended them before the company, and rejoiced in them in the same manner as a man would have rejoiced in his own exploits. He also put on their heads crowns of gold, and golden ornaments about their necks, and gave them long spears of gold, and ensigns that were made of silver, and removed every one of them to a higher rank: and besides this, he plentifully distributed among them out of the spoils and the other prey they had taken, silver, and gold, and garments. So when they had all these honors bestowed on them, according to his own appointment made to every one, and he wished all sorts of happiness to the whole army, he came down, among the great acclamations which were made to him, and then betook himself to offer thank offerings [to the gods], and at once sacrificed a vast number of oxen, that stood ready at the altars, and distributed them among the army to feast on;

“and when he had staid three days among the principle commanders, and so long feasted with them, he sent away the rest of his army to the several places where they would be every one best situated; but permitted the tenth legion to stay, as a guard at Jerusalem, and did not send them away beyond Euphrates, where they had been before; and as he remembered that the twelfth legion had given way to the Jews, under Cestius, their general, he expelled them out of all Syria, for they had lain formerly at Raphanea, and sent them away to a placed called Meletine, near Euphrates, which is in the limits of Armenia and Cappadocia; he also thought fit that two of the legions should stay with him till he should go to Egypt. He then went down with his army to that Cesarea which lay by the seaside, and there laid up the rest of his spoils in great quantities, and gave order that the captives should be kept there; for the winter season hindered him them from sailing into Italy.”¹¹

John of Gischala, the Jewish rebel leader, starving in a hidden cavern under the Temple mount, eventually surrendered to the Romans, after securing the promise that he would be imprisoned after the Roman triumphal parade, rather than being executed.¹²

¹⁰ Wars 7.1.1.

¹¹ Wars 7.1.3.

¹² Wars 6.9.4.

70 [FALL/WINTER] Titus went to Caesarea Philippi where he oversaw the deaths of many Jewish captives in a series of games in the arena there. While there, he was informed of the strange capture of Simon of Gerasa, the other major rebel leader.

“This Simon, during the siege of Jerusalem, was in the upper city; but when the Roman army were gotten within the walls, and were laying the city waste, he then took the most faithful of his friends with him, and among them some that were stone cutters, with those iron tools which belonged to their occupation, and as great a quantity of provisions as would suffice them for a long time, and let himself and them all down into a certain subterraneous cavern that was not visible above ground. Now, so far as had been digged of old, they went onward along it without disturbance; but where they met with solid earth they dug a mine under ground, and this in hopes that they should be able to proceed so far as to rise from under ground, in a safe place, and by that means escape; but when they came to make the experiment, they were disappointed of their hope; for the miners could make but small progress, and that with difficulty also; insomuch that their provisions, though they distributed them by measure, began to fail them.

“And now Simon, thinking he might be able to astonish and delude the Romans, put on a white frock, and buttoned upon him a purple cloak, and appeared out of the ground in the place the temple had formerly been. At the first, indeed, those that saw him were greatly astonished, and stood still where they were; but afterward they came near to him, and asked him who he was. Now Simon would not tell them, but bade them call for their captain; and when they ran to call him, Terentius Rufus, who was left to command the army there, came to Simon, and learned of him the whole truth, and kept him in bonds, and let Caesar know that he was taken.

“Thus did God bring this man to be punished for what bitter and savage tyranny he had exercised against his countrymen, by those who were his worst enemies; and this while he was not subdued by violence, but voluntarily delivered himself up to them to be punished, and that on the very same account that he had laid false accusations against many Jews, as if they were falling away to the Romans, and had barbarously slain them; for wicked actions do not escape the divine anger, nor is justice too weak to punish offenders, but in time overtakes those that transgress its laws, and inflicts its punishments upon the wicked in a manner so much more severe, as they expected to escape it on account of their not being punished immediately. Simon was made sensible of this, by falling under the indignation of the Romans.

“This rise of his out of the ground did also occasion the discovery of a great number of others of the seditious at that time, who had hidden themselves underground; but for Simon, he was brought to Caesar in bonds, when he was come back to Cesarea which was on the seaside; who gave orders that he should be kept against that triumph which he was to celebrate at Rome upon this occasion.”¹³

70 [24 OCT = Domitian’s 19th Birthday] Titus held games in the arena at Caesarea-on-the-sea in honor of his brother, during which many Jewish prisoners were killed.¹⁴

[17 NOV = Emperor Vespasian’s 60th Birthday] Titus held games in the arena at Beruit in honor of his father, during which even more of the Jewish prisoners were killed.¹⁵

71 [WINTER] When he visited Antioch, despite requests from the Gentiles of the city, Titus refused to either expel the Jews living there or to revoke their specially protected religious rights.¹⁶

¹³ Wars 7.2.1.

¹⁴ Wars 7.3.1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wars 7.5.2.

71 [SPRING/SUMMER] After visiting Egypt, Titus proceeded to Rome, where a singular triumph was celebrated for himself & his father.



“And as soon as ever it was day, Vespasian and Titus came out crowned with laurel, and clothed in those ancient purple habits which were proper to their family, and then went as far as Octavian’s Walks; for there it was that the senate, and the principal rulers, and those that had been recorded as of the equestrian order, waited for them. Now a tribunal had been erected before the cloisters, and ivory chairs had been set upon it, when they came and sat down upon them. Whereupon the soldiery made an acclamation of joy to them immediately, and all gave them attestations of their valor; while they were themselves without their arms, and only in their silken garments, and crowned with laurel: then Vespasian accepted of these shouts of theirs; but while they were still disposed to go on in such acclamations, he gave them a signal of silence. And when everybody entirely held their peace, he stood up, and covering the greatest part of his head with his cloak, he put up the accustomed solemn prayers; the like prayers did Titus put up also; after which prayers Vespasian made a short speech to all the people, and then sent away the soldiers to a dinner prepared for them by the emperors.

“Then did he retire to that gate which was called the Gate of the Pomp, because pompous shows do always go through that gate; there it was that they tasted some food, and when they had put on their triumphal garments, and had offered sacrifices to the gods that were placed at the gate, they sent the triumph forward, and marched through the theaters, that they might be the more easily seen by the multitude.

“Now it is impossible to describe the multitude of the shows as they deserve, and the magnificence of them all; such indeed as a man could not easily think of as performed either by the labor of workmen, or the variety of riches, or the rarities of nature; for almost all such curiosities as the most happy men ever get by piecemeal were here heaped one upon another, and those both admirable and costly in their nature; and all brought together on that day, demonstrated the vastness of the dominions of the Romans; for there was here to be seen a mighty quantity of silver and gold and ivory, contrived into all sorts of things, and did not appear as carried along in pompous show only, but, as a man may say, running along like a river.

“Some parts were composed of the rarest purple hangings, and so carried along; and others accurately represented to the life what was embroidered by the arts of the Babylonians. There were also precious stones that were transparent, some set in crowns of gold, and some in other ouches, as the workmen pleased; and of these such a vast number were brought, that we could not but thence learn how vainly we imagined any of them to be rarities.

“The images of the gods were also carried, being as well wonderful for their largeness, as made very artificially, and with great skill of the workmen; nor were any of these images of any other than very costly materials; and many species of animals were brought, every one in their own natural ornaments. The men also who brought every one of these shows were great multitudes, and adorned with purple garments, all over interwoven with gold; those that were chosen for carrying these pompous shows, having also about them such magnificent ornaments as were both extraordinary and surprising.

“Besides these, one might see that even the great number of the captives was not unadorned, while the variety that was in their garments, and their fine texture, concealed from the sight the deformity of their bodies. But what afforded the greatest surprise of all was the structure of the pageants that were borne along; for indeed he that met them could not but be afraid that the bearers would not be able firmly enough to support them, such was their magnitude; for many of them were so made, that they were on three or even four stories, one above another. The magnificence also of their structure afforded one both pleasure and surprise; for upon many of them were laid carpets of gold. There was also wrought gold and ivory fastened about them all; and many resemblances of the war, and those in several ways, and variety of contrivances, affording a most lively portraiture of itself; for there was to be seen a happy country laid waste, and entire squadrons of enemies slain; while some of them ran away, and some were carried into captivity; with walls of great altitude and magnitude overthrown, and ruined by machines; with the strongest fortifications taken, and the walls of most populous cities upon the tops of hills seized on, and an army pouring itself within the walls; as also every place full of slaughter, and supplications of the enemies, when they were no longer able to lift up their hands in way of opposition. Fire also sent upon temples was here represented, and houses overthrown and falling upon their owners: rivers also, after they came out of a large and melancholy desert, ran down, not into a land cultivated, nor as drink for men, or for cattle, but through a land still on fire upon every side; for the Jews related that such a thing they had undergone during this war.

“Now the workmanship of these representations was so magnificent and lively in the construction of the things, that it exhibited what had been done to such as did not see it, as if they had been there really present. On the top of every one of these pageants was placed the commander of the city that was taken, and the manner wherein he was taken. Moreover, there followed those pageants a great number of ships; and for the other spoils, they were carried in great plenty.

“But for those that were taken in the temple of Jerusalem, they made the greatest figure of them all; that is, the golden table, of the weight of many talents; the candlestick also, that was made of gold, though its construction were now changed from that which we made use of: for its middle shaft was fixed upon a basis, and the small branches were produced out of it to a great length, having the likeness of a trident in their position, and had every one a socket made of brass for a lamp at the tops of them. These lamps were in number seven, and represented the dignity of the number seven among the Jews; and the last of all the spoils was carried the Law of the Jews.

“After these spoils passed by a great many men, carrying the images of Victory, whose structure was entirely either of ivory or of gold. After which Vespasian marched in the first place, and Titus followed him; Domitian also rode along with them, and made a glorious appearance, and rode on a horse that was worthy of admiration.

“Now the last part of this pompous show was at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, whither when they were come, they stood still; for it was the Romans’ ancient custom to stay, till somebody brought the news that the general of the enemy was slain. This general was Simon, the son of Gioras, who had then been led in this triumph among the captives; a rope had also been put upon his head, and he had been drawn into a proper place in the forum, and had withal been tormented by those that drew him along, and the law of the Romans required that malefactors condemned to die should be slain there. Accordingly, when it was related that there was an end of him, and all the people had sent up a shout for joy, they then began to offer those sacrifices which they had consecrated, in the prayers used in such solemnities; which when they had finished, they went away to the palace.

“And as for some of these spectators, the emperors entertained them at their own feast; and for all the rest there were noble preparations made for their feasting at home; for this was a festival day to the city of Rome, as celebrated for the victory obtained by their army over their enemies, for the end that was now put to their civil miseries, and for the commencement of their hopes of future prosperity and happiness.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Wars 7.5.3-5.