

leading to Vespasian's bid for power in Rome and Titus' quest for the propaganda coup of a rapid conquest of Jerusalem, and the devastating effect in the summer heat of a firebrand thrown by a soldier into the Temple of God.⁴⁸

I 2

Reactions, 70–312 CE

Conflict, 70–135 CE

Neither its antiquity, nor its deep wealth, nor its people spread over the whole habitable world, nor yet the great glory of its religious rites, were sufficient to prevent its ruin.' So Josephus laments the destruction of the Temple. It would be hard to overestimate the impact of this cataclysmic event on all Jews, wherever they lived. In practical terms those most affected were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and especially the priests who had served in the sanctuary, but the religious significance of what had happened was equally great for diaspora Jews who had never had an opportunity to visit the Temple while it stood. In the last century of its existence the Temple had been at its most magnificent, a symbol of God's glory and protective care for Israel. If God, ruler of the universe, had allowed his Temple to be destroyed, the explanation must lie in the sins of the Jews. There could not be clearer evidence of the withdrawal of divine favour. In retrospect, it was obvious that God had announced his intention not just in private dreams to the prophet Josephus but by public portents, when 'a star, resembling a sword, stood over the city, and a comet which continued for a year', or 'at the ninth hour of the night, so brilliant a light shone round the altar and the sanctuary that it seemed to be broad daylight; and this continued for half an hour', or 'a cow that had been brought by someone for sacrifice gave birth to a lamb in the midst of the court of the Temple', or 'the eastern gate of the inner court . . . was observed at the sixth hour of the night to have opened of its own accord', or 'before sunset throughout all parts of the country chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the clouds and

encompassing the cities, or 'at the feast which is called Pentecost, the priests on entering the inner court of the Temple by night... reported that they were conscious, first of a commotion and a din, and after that of a voice as of a host, "We are departing hence"'. Tacitus, too, knew about the most dramatic of these divine signs: 'Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed and suddenly the Temple was illuminated with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: "The gods are departing." At the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard.'¹

In the fortress of Masada down by the Dead Sea one Jew, a certain Joseph son of Nakson, was still behaving in 71 as if all was not lost. The divorce document he wrote for his wife Miriam was dated to 'the first of Marheshvan, year six'. The period that had begun so bravely in 66 could no longer be described as the era of the liberation of Israel, but perhaps hope lingered for the future of the nation as Joseph set his wife free 'to become the wife of any Jewish man you wish'. But for most Jews, misery, despair and gloom were the natural reactions. It would take time, a long time, for any Jew to find any positive lesson from the disaster.

O Lord, my Lord... from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself... and from all the multitude of people you have gotten for yourself one people; and on this people, whom you have loved, you have bestowed the Law which is approved by all. And now, O Lord, why have you delivered up the one to the many, and dishonoured the one root beyond the others, and scattered your only one among the multitude? And why have those who opposed your promises trodden down on those who believed your covenants? If you really hate your people, they should have been punished at your own hands.

The comfort offered, probably in the 80s, by the author of 4 *Ezra* to himself and his fellow Jews in response to this lament was eschatological. In contrast to present miseries, in a new age all will be well: 'And it shall be that whoever survives after all that I have foretold to you shall be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world.'²

The only Jewish author whose writings composed between 70 and 100 survive extensively was Josephus. He wrote mainly, of course,

about events before 70, but he also had something to say about the immediate aftermath of the war, and his apologetic treatise *Against Apion* reflected his views in the 90s. In none of these works does Josephus give any hint that a new and different Judaism had arisen from the ashes of the old, nor that such change could or should occur. In his frequent references to the varieties of Judaism which had flourished before 70 – especially the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes – nothing suggests that these 'philosophies' had ceased to attract Jews just because the Temple was in ruins. Most strikingly, when he comes to describe the Jewish religion as a whole in *Against Apion*, it is the Temple that he emphasizes: 'One Temple of one God, for like is dear to like, common to all, of God common to all. Him the priests constantly worship, under the leadership of him who for the time is head of the line. He with his fellow priests will sacrifice to God.' The use of the present and future tenses in referring to a sanctuary that had been destroyed a quarter of a century before was surely deliberate. Josephus was a Jerusalem priest and thus had a special interest in the Jerusalem sanctuary, but it is unlikely that his attitude was wholly different from that of Jews who were less personally concerned. The book of Deuteronomy in the Torah stated clearly enough that Jews suffered when they failed to keep the law as they should. The same Torah stated unequivocally that God required sacrifices in the sanctuary where he had chosen to be worshipped. If the Lord of the universe had temporarily made this impossible, it must be as punishment for sin. Pharisees would feel guilty at having failed to be good enough Pharisees, Essenes for their failings as Essenes, Sadducees for not fulfilling the laws as the Sadducaic philosophy required. All three schools of Judaism could continue without difficulty without the Temple cult – it would be possible to be a Pharisee, Sadducee or Essene even today, although to be an Essene one would need fellow Jews prepared to enter into a dedicated community – and each could provide a quite coherent, if depressing, explanation of the disaster on Deuteronomic lines. There was no need to seek for a novel theology. In any case, theological and philosophical reflection about a disaster of this magnitude can take many years. Only some decades after 1945 did Jewish theologians seriously begin to seek new theodicies to explain the Holocaust in twentieth-century Europe. Some Jews in 70

like some Holocaust survivors, will have lost their faith in a powerful, caring God. Others will have seen all the more reason to commit themselves to their earlier faith, just as after 1945 adherents of the different shades of Jewry – secular, religious, socialists, Zionists – affirmed that fuller commitment to their creed would have saved the communities that had perished.³

In due course a new Judaism was to emerge that preached forms of worship that might, at least partially, take the place of Temple sacrifices. Later rabbinic tradition portrayed the rabbinic sages at Yavneh (Jamnia), a small town on the Judean coastal plain, as devising under the leadership of Yohanan ben Zakkai a new Judaism in which good deeds and prayer would take the place, at least in terms of theological efficacy, of the Temple cult. That such a new Judaism was eventually advocated by the rabbis in late antiquity, by the fourth century CE, is well attested; but that it was devised immediately following the destruction is deeply implausible. The changes attributed to Yohanan in the Mishnah are modest, and mostly concerned with liturgy: 'Before time the palm branch was carried seven days in the Temple [on the feast of Tabernacles] but in the [rest of] the country for one day only. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai ordained that in the country it should be carried seven days in memory of the Temple.' In fact, the detailed prescriptions for the sacrifices to be found in the Mishnah, redacted around 200 CE, presuppose that even at that date rabbis expected, or at least hoped, that the Temple could and would be rebuilt. The hope was entirely reasonable. Jerusalem had lost one Temple in 587 BCE only to see it restored. The more Josephus pointed out the parallels between the two destructions, which had taken place in both cases on the same day of the month of Ab (in late July), the more plausible was a parallel rebuilding. The efforts need not have been onerous. The sacrificial cult did not require a building as magnificent as Herod's famous edifice. A small building for the Holy of Holies, an altar, and markers to delineate the perimeters of sacred ground, would suffice, provided that they were all in the correct place in Jerusalem. The most onerous task would be to clear the site of rubble. There were plenty of priests of good pedigree still alive able to fulfil their functions – of whom not the least well known was Josephus himself. The detailed instructions for the pro-

cedures of the Temple cult found in the Mishnah and in Josephus' histories show that people still knew what to do. At least according to later rabbinic tradition, there was still a supply of the ashes of the red heifer which alone could purify the severely defiled and ensure that the Temple cult was carried on in an appropriate state free from pollution. There is not a shred of evidence that any ordinary Jew at this time thought of the cessation of sacrifices as desirable. On the contrary, all Jews were waiting impatiently for God to be worshipped properly again, 'speedily, in our days'.⁴

In the context of normal practice in the Roman empire, the Jews' hopes should not have been idle. Temples burned down through accident quite frequently in the ancient world. Romans took for granted that the obvious response was to rebuild. The great temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome was burned down during the civil strife between Vespasian's supporters and those of Vitellius in 69; the moving of the Terminus stone, the religious ceremony which marked the first step towards the temple's restoration, took place on 21 June 70. But the Roman state was not to allow the Jerusalem Temple to be rebuilt in the same way, a refusal which may reasonably be seen as a major cause of the sixty-five years of conflict to come. It is worthwhile emphasizing the enormity of this refusal in the context of ancient religious practice, and the extent to which it revealed a special prejudice against the Jews. Not just in their own eyes but also in the eyes of Romans, Jews were unable to bring offerings to their ancestral god in the fashion standard throughout the Roman world.

Victory over Judaism

Josephus' extraordinarily vivid eyewitness account of the Flavian triumphal procession in June 71 is the fullest extant ancient description of any Roman triumph:

Previous notice having been given of the day on which the pageant of victory would take place, not a soul among that countless host in the city was left at home: all issued forth and occupied every position where it was possible to stand, leaving only room for the necessary passage of those upon whom they

were to gaze. The military, while night still reigned, had all marched out in companies and divisions, under their commanders, and been drawn up, not round the doors of the upper palace, but near the temple of Isis; for there the victorious generals reposed that night. At the break of dawn, Vespasian and Titus issued forth, crowned with laurel and clad in the traditional purple robes, and proceeded to the Octavian walks; for here the senate and the chief magistrates and those of equestrian rank were awaiting their coming. A tribunal had been erected in front of the porticoes, with chairs of ivory placed for them upon it; to these they mounted and took their seats. Instantly acclamations rose from the troops, all bearing ample testimony to their valour: the princes were unarmed, in silk robes and crowned with bays. Vespasian, having acknowledged their acclamations, which they wished to prolong, made the signal for silence; then amidst profound and universal stillness he rose and, covering most of his head with his mantle, recited the customary prayers, Titus also praying in like manner.

After a celebratory breakfast, Vespasian and Titus put on their triumphal robes, sacrificed to the gods and sent off the procession.

It is impossible adequately to describe the multitude of those spectacles and their magnificence under every conceivable aspect, whether in works of art or diversity of riches or natural rarities; for almost all the objects which men who have ever been blessed by fortune have acquired one by one – the wonderful and precious productions of various nations – by their collective exhibition on that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire. Silver and gold and ivory in masses, wrought into all manner of forms, might be seen, not as if carried in procession, but flowing, so to speak, like a river . . . But nothing in the procession excited so much astonishment as the structure of the moving stages; indeed, their massiveness afforded ground for alarm and misgiving as to their stability, many of them being three or four storeys high, while the magnificence of the fabric was a source at once of delight and amazement. For many were enveloped in tapestries interwoven with gold, and all had a framework of gold and wrought ivory. The war was shown by numerous representations, in separate sections, affording a very vivid picture of its episodes. Here was to be seen a prosperous country devastated, there whole battalions of the enemy slaughtered; here a party in flight, there others led into captivity; walls of surpassing compass demolished by engines, strong fortresses overpowered, cities with well-manned defences completely mas-

tered and an army pouring within the ramparts, an area all deluged with blood, the hands of those incapable of resistance raised in supplication, temples set on fire, houses pulled down over their owners' heads, and after general desolation and woe, rivers flowing, not over a cultivated land, nor supplying drink to man and beast, but across a country still on every side in flames. For to such sufferings were the Jews destined when they plunged into the war; and the art and magnificent workmanship of these structures now portrayed the incidents to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes. On each of the stages was stationed the general of one of the captured cities in the attitude in which he was taken. A number of ships also followed.

Josephus notes the extraordinary quantity of booty on display:

The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem. These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lamp stand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern from those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of each branch; of these there were seven, indicating the honour paid to that number among the Jews. After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law. Then followed a large party carrying images of victory, all made of ivory and gold. Behind them drove Vespasian, followed by Titus; while Domitian rode beside them, in magnificent apparel and mounted on a steed that was itself a sight. The triumphal procession ended at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, on reaching which they halted; for it was a time-honoured custom to wait there until the execution of the enemy's general was announced. This was Simon, son of Gioras, who had just figured in the pageant among the prisoners, and then, with a halter thrown over him and scourged meanwhile by his conductors, had been haled to the spot abutting on the Forum, where Roman law requires that malefactors condemned to death should be executed. After the announcement that Simon was no more and the shouts of universal applause which greeted it, the princes began the sacrifices, which having been duly offered with the customary prayers, they withdrew to the palace. Some they entertained at a feast at their own table: for all the rest provision had already been made for banquets in their several homes. For the city of Rome kept festival

that day for her victory in the campaign against her enemies, for the termination of her civil dissensions, and for her dawning hopes of felicity.

Josephus may have touched up this highly coloured narrative in later editions to give a more prominent role to Domitian after Titus died in 81, but there is no reason to doubt that the text which survives represents fairly closely what he wrote just ten years or so after the fall of the Temple. In the light of his heartfelt comments elsewhere in his histories about the disaster which had befallen the Jews, the description of the ceremony is remarkable for its consistently Roman viewpoint. The triumph was to set the tone of the dynasty until its demise on the death of Domitian a quarter of a century later, and the relations of Rome to the Jews for the rest of antiquity.⁵

It must have been very soon after Titus became aware that the Jerusalem Temple could not be saved from the flames that he also realized that its destruction must be presented to the Roman world not as a disastrous accident but as a great achievement and a cause for Roman celebration. The logic of his campaign, seeking a rapid victory regardless of his losses in order to reap the propaganda benefit, required its culmination to be portrayed as glorious. It was not standard Roman practice to glory in the destruction of enemy temples. On the contrary, the ritual of *evocatio*, through which a Roman general offered to the patron deity of the enemy a better form of worship in Rome if the deity consented to cross to the Roman side, seems still to have been practised by Roman generals in Asia Minor in the wars of the first century BCE. The ritual presupposed that war was waged against human communities, not against their gods. Foreign gods had long been incorporated into the pantheon of deities worshipped in Rome. If in 205 BCE the cult of Cybele and in 218 CE the worship of the sacred black stone of Elagabal could both be incorporated into the religious rites of the Roman elite, the same could have been done in 70 CE for the God of Jerusalem. But that was emphatically not the stance of Vespasian and Titus, as the triumphal procession showed all too starkly. The most prominent objects exhibited among the spoils were the golden candelabrum, incense shovels and other paraphernalia of the Jerusalem Temple. These, perhaps, were selected for their ostentatious magnificence, to delight

the spectators, but there was no mistaking the symbolic significance of the last of all the spoils of victory: 'a copy of the Jewish Law', that is, a scroll of the Torah. There could not be a clearer demonstration that the conquest was being celebrated not just over Judaea but over Judaism. No one in Rome could have been unaware of the likely Jewish reaction. It was after all only thirty years since Jews from many different parts of the Roman world had joined in protest at the much less serious desecration of the Temple envisaged by Gaius when he wanted his statue inserted in its precincts. It is unlikely, too, that Vespasian and Titus were insensitive to more subtle indications of the new status of Jewish religious susceptibilities: one of the insignia of the Tenth Legion (known as 'Frētensis', or 'of the strait'), now stationed permanently on the site of Jerusalem, was the wild boar, whose image is still to be found on many of the artefacts they produced. Of all aspects of Judaism, one of those best known to ordinary Romans was their abhorrence of pigs.⁶

That this war on Judaism was not to be only a temporary feature of Flavian propaganda is clear from the building projects into which it was incorporated. One of the first to be completed was the magnificent Temple of Peace, erected to the south-east of the Forum Romanum and dedicated in 75. Trumping the Altar of Peace set up by Augustus after the cessation of the civil wars of his day, Vespasian, who also in 71 closed the temple of Janus to symbolize the attainment of peace through Roman arms, celebrated the end of bloodshed in the same ambiguous fashion, avoiding reference to the slaughter of Roman by Roman and to the part played by his own partisans, and instead embellishing the new shrine with masterpieces of painting and sculpture culled from all over the inhabited world, including the gold vessels from the Jerusalem Temple. Josephus reports, but does not explain, that the Torah scroll ('their law') and the purple hangings of the Temple sanctuary Vespasian kept safeguarded in the imperial palace. Over the fifteen years or so following the conquest of Judaea the centre of the city of Rome was remodelled to reflect the victory, with two triumphal arches dominating the traditional route of all triumphal processions. The relief sculpture showing the table of shewbread, incense cups, trumpets and candelabrum, is still visible on the arch of Titus above the Forum at the top of the Sacred Way (the arch was

restored in 1824); the Colosseum, the great Flavian amphitheatre completed in 80, was built on the proceeds of sale of booty. Numerous coins, issued both in Rome and in Judaea, proclaimed *JUDAEA CAPTA*, with an image of a bound female captive beneath a date-palm tree. Not that all this propaganda stressed the religious defeat of the Jews: the inscription which adorned the arch erected in early 81 by the Senate and People at the south-east end of the Circus Maximus, one of the largest arenas ever created for watching sporting events and able to seat about a hundred and fifty thousand spectators, honoured Titus with the untrue flattery that 'with the instruction and advice of his father he subdued the race of the Jews and destroyed the city of Jerusalem which had either been attacked in vain by all leaders, kings and people before him or had not been attempted at all'. But wholly religious were the impact and symbolism of the new tax imposed by Vespasian on all Jews, wherever they lived. Josephus' report in the *Jewish War*, thus written before 81, is brief: 'On all Jews, wheresoever they be, he placed a tax, ordering each to pay two drachmas every year to the Capitol as before they contributed to the Temple at Jerusalem.' Cassius Dio, in the early third century, recorded that 'from that time forth [i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem] it was ordered that the Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two drachmas to Jupiter Capitolinus'. The tax was thus portrayed both as a substitute for the voluntary contributions previously made by adult male Jews for the maintenance of the regular communal sacrifices in Jerusalem, and as a payment, not to the Roman state in general, but specifically for the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol which had accidentally burned down in 69. Not only were Jews to be denied the right to rebuild their own shrine, they were to be required instead to pay for the upkeep of the main pagan cult of Rome. The extraction of this new and unprecedented tax seems to have begun immediately. Already in 70 enthusiastic bureaucrats in Egypt were extracting back tax for the previous year. Women and children were compelled to pay as well as men. And, as Josephus explicitly notes, the Jews of the diaspora wheresoever they be, including those of Rome, were caught up in the collective punishment of their nation for the failed uprising in Jerusalem.⁷

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In Judaea itself after the fall of Jerusalem, Titus and his successors in command extinguished, with extraordinary thoroughness, all possible resistance. The captives from the city suffered terrible fates: Josephus records that the old and feeble were slaughtered indiscriminately by the rampaging soldiers, those younger than seventeen sold into slavery, fit adult males sent to work in the quarries or mines in Egypt or presented to the provinces 'for destruction in the theatres by sword and wild beasts'. Thousands died of starvation or ill-treatment while in holding camps inside the Temple compound. Josephus claims that 'the total number of prisoners taken throughout the entire war amounted to ninety-seven thousand, and of those who perished during the siege, from first to last, to one million one hundred thousand'. He clearly expected his readers to be incredulous at the numbers, since he proceeds to give reasons for their plausibility. In fact he may have taken the figures from Roman military records. In his autobiography he describes his own invidious role, as a friend (of sorts) of Titus, in using his influence to rescue his friends and relatives from the masses doomed to punishment:

I made petition for my brother and fifty friends, and my request was granted. Again, by permission of Titus, I entered the Temple, where a great multitude of captive women and children had been imprisoned, and liberated all the friends and acquaintances whom I recognized, in number about a hundred and ninety . . . Once more, when I . . . saw many prisoners who had been crucified, and recognized three of my acquaintances among them, I was cut to the heart and came and told Titus with tears what I had seen. He gave orders immediately that they should be taken down and receive the most careful treatment. Two of them died in the physicians' hands; the third survived.⁸

Such ruthlessness provided good reason for Jews in the rest of Judaea to surrender all other strongholds without a fight, but a show of force was still needed. The Jewish garrison of the fortress of Herodium, near Bethlehem, surrendered to Lucius Bassus, who had been sent out as the new governor of Judaea evidently with a brief to pacify the rest of the countryside. The fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, 'it was absolutely necessary to eradicate, lest its strength should induce many to revolt', and Bassus concentrated against it all

his military force, including the Tenth Legion, beginning the massive earthworks necessary for the siege, but, in the event, a full-scale siege proved unnecessary: in return for the life of a captured youth, and permission for themselves to depart unharmed, they surrendered the fortress to the Romans.

The capture by Bassus' successor, Flavius Silva, of Herod's fortress palace on the rock of Masada, to the west of the Dead Sea, was to take longer. It will be recalled that the site had been occupied since 66 by sicarii, who took refuge there after failing to gain control in Jerusalem at the start of the revolt. Its natural defences, as described by Josephus, made it very hard to capture: it was 'a rock of no slight circumference and high from end to end, abruptly terminated on every side by deep ravines, the precipices rising sheer from an invisible base and being inaccessible to the foot of any living creature, save in two places where the rock permits of no easy ascent'. Herod had built for his own protection an impressive palace on the summit and stored there masses of corn, wine, oil, pulses and dates, all remarkably well preserved in 66, even after the passage of nearly a century, because of the dry climate. Huge cisterns efficiently preserved rainwater from sparse winter downpours. There was also a large supply of weapons and of iron, brass and lead, all hoarded by the king many decades before but left for the sicarii now to put to use against the Roman forces.

Josephus records how Flavius Silva encircled the fortress with a wall and encamped close by in order to prevent any escape by the besieged. For the Roman forces the isolation of the site created supply difficulties, for water as well as food, but there were plenty of Jewish slaves to provide the necessary manpower for transport. Silva set to work to throw up an embankment on the west side as a platform for siege engines, and a huge battering ram was used to break down the stone wall on that side of the defences. The sicarii threw up at speed a second wall inside the first, using huge wooden beams packed with earth, but that wall succumbed when set on fire – an uncertain weapon for the Romans to use, since at first a north wind directed the flames towards their own siege engines, until the wind veered 'as if from divine providence' (so writes Josephus), and the wall was consumed. The fortress now lay wide open to attack, but before the final assault

could take place the defenders were dead, killed by each other to avoid falling into Roman hands.⁹

This long description of the siege by Josephus has given Masada iconic status, although without Josephus' narrative the whole episode would be known only from the archaeological evidence, especially the siege ramp and the traces of Roman camps erected around the base of the rock on which the fortress was built; the elder Pliny, who mentions Masada as 'a fortress on a rock, itself not far from the Dead Sea', was writing between 70 and 79 but makes no mention of any military campaign at the site.¹⁰

Josephus failed to note what is in some ways the most peculiar aspect of the Roman operations at Masada, and the most obvious explanation of the reticence about them in Roman sources: why the Romans bothered at all to spend such time, resources and effort in the capture of a rock in the wilderness of the Judean desert. What was at stake was nothing more (or less) than a desire for total victory: 'Flavius Silva . . . seeing the whole country now subdued in the war, but one fortress alone still rebelling, brought together all the forces in the regions and marched against it'. Presumably, in the eyes of the Romans it was economically desirable after 70 to ensure that no bandits based in Masada attacked the lucrative balsam groves at En Gedi, since these were state property, but that only partly explains the huge expenditure of time and resources on the capture of the isolated rock fortress. Large numbers of troops camped out for months in inhospitable terrain, gradually building the siege ramp which eventually, inexorably, would bring the defenders to defeat. Roman determination that this war was to be concluded without compromise could not have been more clearly illustrated. The highly effective rhetoric of the philosophical platitudes on the justification for suicide which Josephus in his history puts into the mouth of Eleazar, the leader of the defenders, fails to mention the most obvious rationale for seeking death at the hands of friends rather than surrender to Rome. The real alternatives were not either a quick death from a slit throat or enslavement, as Eleazar was made to claim, enhancing the apparent heroism of those who made the former choice. If Eleazar and his colleagues fell into Roman hands they could expect to suffer death by crucifixion or some other method inflicted with exceptional

cruelty. Instead, on the first day of Passover in April 74 nine hundred and sixty of them, including women and children, died at the hands of each other: ten were chosen to kill the rest, then one of the ten killed the nine others, and finally he committed suicide. The palace was set on fire. According to Josephus, just two women and five children escaped alive to tell the Romans what had happened.¹¹

The thoroughness of the Roman victory in Masada and throughout the country left a political vacuum in Judaea. Despite the death and devastation, there were still many Jews left living in the region of Jerusalem, but the old ruling elite, led by the families of the High Priests, through which Rome had once ruled, simply vanished from sight. Josephus, who had once belonged to that elite, was relieved of his landholdings in Jerusalem: 'When Titus had quelled the disturbances in Judaea, conjecturing that the field which I held in Jerusalem would be unprofitable to me because of the Roman garrison which was about to be settled there, he gave me another tract of ground on the plain [presumably near the Mediterranean coast]. Already in 70, before he set sail for Rome and his triumph, Titus was assuming that there would no longer be a ruling class of Jewish landowners in the city.¹²

Who else, then, could now mediate between the cowed Jews and their Roman masters? If Titus sought a single, powerful Jewish individual with a strong tradition of loyalty to Rome, the obvious choice was Agrippa II, who, at least according to Josephus, had tried so hard to keep Jerusalem at peace in the months before the war and had then, once it was too late to avoid conflict, committed both his troops and his expertise to speed a Roman victory. Agrippa's personal links with the new imperial regime were exceptionally close. Vespasian had stayed for a while in Agrippa's palace in Caesarea Philippi by the source of the river Jordan in 67 to rest his army after the campaign in Galilee, and (although Josephus does not say so) the king was presumably there again in the autumn of 70, when Titus visited him and remained for a considerable time, exhibiting all kinds of spectacles. Here many of the prisoners perished, some being thrown to wild beasts, others compelled in opposing masses to engage one another in combat. The victors were recuperating in appropriate fashion now that the fighting was over. It would have been easy for Vespasian and

Titus to claim to be following precedent if Agrippa, like his father, became king of Judaea. The possibility had indeed been mooted over a quarter of a century earlier by Claudius. The reason why it did not happen in 70 may lie as much in the wishes and desires of Agrippa as those of the Roman administration. To take over a kingdom in ruins was hardly enticing – indeed, people recalled that Agrippa's great-grandfather Herod had bribed the Roman general Sosius to call off his troops from looting Jerusalem in 37 BCE for precisely that reason. And Agrippa may well have had plans for a political career on a larger stage. The friendship of his sister Berenice with Titus was a source of gossip and scandal in Rome throughout the 70s, when, as Cassius Dio later recorded, 'Berenice was at the very height of her power and consequently came to Rome along with her brother Agrippa. The latter was given the rank of praetor, while she dwelt in the palace, cohabiting with Titus. She expected to marry him and was already behaving in every respect as if she were his wife.' It was not unreasonable of Agrippa to hope to win, through his connections with the imperial family, a position of influence and power in Rome such as his father had once, briefly, wielded in the courts of Gaius and Claudius.¹³

Since the Roman state did not give authority in Judaea after 70 either to the former ruling class or to Agrippa, it was not to be expected that any other Jewish leaders would be deemed appropriate for the task. Later Jewish tradition assumed that the role of rabbis such as Yohanan ben Zakkai as religious leaders inevitably led to their recognition by Rome as political spokesmen for the Jews, but the Romans were hardly likely now to give secular authority to a religious leader in Judaea when they did not follow such a practice anywhere else in their empire. The only special and different aspect of Roman attitudes to Judaism compared to other provincial religions was the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, a reason for Rome to avoid giving any power to Jewish religious leaders rather than to encourage such a policy.¹⁴

In fact, it seems that Vespasian and Titus chose to rule Judaea not through Jewish intermediaries of any kind but by direct Roman control. Jerusalem after 70, in marked contrast to the general freedom from Roman interference enjoyed by the Jewish population before the

war, became an occupied city. The Tenth Legion was 'entrusted with its custody' and permanently garrisoned on or near the site, able to respond immediately to any potential trouble. Some land in the surrounding countryside, including fields belonging to Josephus, seems to have been assigned to the legion. In 72 or 73 a new and distinctively pagan town was founded in Samaria, near the sites of Shechem and Mount Gerizim, presumably to control the Samaritans after their abortive revolt in 67. The town, given the unimaginative name 'New City' (*Flavia Neapolis*, hence Nablus), was to flourish over the coming centuries, and between 244 and 249 was granted the status of a Roman colony. Already in the immediate aftermath of 70 a new Roman colony was founded in Caesarea Maritima, which had long been the centre of Roman administration of the province. Now it was repopulated, in place of the former Jewish residents, with retired Roman soldiers. Thus Latin was used for private inscriptions in Caesarea in the late first century CE as well as for public proclamations in the city: Caesarea became a Latin-speaking island in an Aramaic- and Greek-speaking world. Eight hundred other veterans were assigned a place to live at a site thirty stades from Jerusalem, in a settlement probably to be identified (despite the difference in the alleged distance from Jerusalem) with the Emmaus mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. These former soldiers were available for military operations when called upon in a crisis. The pattern of foundation of veteran colonies in the provinces in the Julio-Claudian period suggests that they were expected to play an important role in enhancing the security of the region. Judaea was now under military rule, and Jerusalem lay at the centre of the militarized zone.¹⁵

Jews in the Mediterranean diaspora had tried to avoid engagement with the dangerous politics of Jerusalem while the war continued, but they found this option closed to them after 70. The universal imposition of the special tax on Jews throughout the empire affected the eirenic communities in Asia Minor and Greece as much as the militants in the homeland. The Jews of the city of Rome must have felt their dual loyalties under intolerable strain as the sacred relics of the Temple they revered were carried in mocking triumph through the streets of their adopted city, their pride at being Roman in direct conflict with

the propaganda of the new imperial regime which, through the tax, suggested their responsibility for the costly and dangerous war in distant Jerusalem.¹⁶

For some diaspora Jews living closer to Judaea the dilemma was made even more acute in the immediate aftermath of the war by the need to respond to refugees from it who sought their help against Rome. Josephus reports that the Jews of Alexandria did their best to keep their distance when

certain of the faction of the sicarii who had succeeded in fleeing to that country... sought to induce many of their hosts to assert their independence, to look upon the Romans as no better than themselves and to esteem God alone as their lord... The leaders of the council of elders... convened a general assembly of the Jews and exposed the madness of the sicarii, proving them to have been responsible for all their troubles... They advised the assembly to beware of the ruin with which they were menaced by these men and, by delivering them up, to make their peace with the Romans. Realizing the gravity of the danger, the people complied with this advice, and rushed furiously upon the sicarii to seize them. Six hundred of them were caught on the spot, and all who escaped into Egypt and the Egyptian Thebes were before long arrested and brought back.

Such demonstration of their loyalty to Rome was not, however, altogether successful. The emperor, 'suspicious of the interminable tendency of the Jews to revolution', took precautionary steps to avoid an uprising of Jews in Egypt like that in Jerusalem and closed down the Jewish temple at Leontopolis in the delta. In Cyrene (modern Libya), the refugee sicarii were led by a weaver called Jonathan, who seems to have captured the imagination of some of the poorer local Jews by taking them out into the desert and promising 'signs and apparitions', much as various pseudo-prophets had done in Judaea earlier in the century. The unarmed crowd was easily enough suppressed by the troops sent by the Roman governor of the province, Catullus, but Jonathan's impact was much increased by his allegation to Catullus that he had been instructed in his actions by 'the wealthiest of the Jews', giving the governor an opportunity to kill all three thousand well-to-do Jews and confiscate their property to the imperial exchequer. Josephus alleges that the charges were entirely fraudulent,

and that Carullus was motivated by a desire that 'he too might seem to have won a Jewish war'. But Josephus' reliability in this particular part of his narrative is suspect, since, among the others of 'the most respectable of the Jews in Alexandria and Rome' charged with sedition by Jonathan and his accomplices, was Josephus himself. In his autobiography Josephus reports that the accusation, which specified that he had provided Jonathan with weapons and money, came before the emperor Vespasian himself in Rome, but that the emperor dismissed the allegation as fabricated. In the *Jewish War* the intercession of Titus on behalf of the accused was said to have been decisive. The whole episode had clearly been traumatic. If even a Jew like Josephus, whose interests were so closely bound up with those of the new emperor, could be plausibly accused of plotting sedition, no Jew was safe from suspicion. It is significant that the governor Catullus, who according to Josephus had corruptly put to death thousands of respectable Jews of Cyrene, suffered nothing worse than a reprimand.¹⁷

All Jews in the Roman empire might now feel under threat. In Antioch the resident Jews were accused in 70 by their gentle neighbours of incendiarism when a fire burned down part of the centre of the city. They were rescued from a pogrom only by the firm action of the Roman authorities on the spot. It emerged on investigation that the fire had been started by debtors seeking to destroy the evidence of what they owed by setting fire to the marketplace and public records. In Antioch, as in Rome, the constant fear that a backlash against Jews would be directed at them must have been intensified by the presence in the city of large numbers of captives from Judaea sold in the slave market. When Titus visited the city after the fall of Jerusalem he was met by massed crowds demanding that the local Jews be expelled, to which he replied (all too accurately), that this was impossible because 'their own country to which, as Jews, they ought to be expelled, has been destroyed, and no other place would receive them'. A further request that at least the privileges of the Jews of Antioch, inscribed on bronze tablets, should be revoked, was similarly turned down. Josephus tells the story of these events in order to demonstrate the good will of Titus, but the story also reveals the vulnerability of these Jews to local hostility, expressed both by mass meetings and by the official council of the city.¹⁸

About the vulnerability of Jews in the city of Rome Josephus is less explicit. Perhaps it seemed unwise to remind his Roman readers of his own problems of dual loyalty. But the tensions which had emerged so chillingly in Antioch in 70 will have been at least as bad in the capital city. Just a hint of the anger can be glimpsed in Josephus' brief reference to his own tribulations once he had been installed in a lodging in the house in Rome which Vespasian had occupied before he became emperor. 'My privileged position [as beneficiary of Vespasian's kindness] exacted envy and brought danger... Numerous accusations against me were fabricated by persons who envied me my good fortune.' In the time of Domitian, the emperor showed his favour to Josephus by punishing the Jews who accused him - Josephus does not say of what, but he does add that among these enemies was his son's tutor, about whom he reveals only that he was a slave and a eunuch. Clearly, one should not imagine Josephus or any other Jew managing to live in peaceful comfort in the prickly atmosphere of Flavian Rome. For a government seeking to justify the seizure and retention of power by claiming to have defeated a dangerous enemy, it might seem a positive advantage that representatives of the defeated enemy were identifiable not just on the distant frontiers of the empire but spread throughout the civilized world, including the capital city itself, able through their subjection to testify to the achievements of the new emperor. In the late fourth century CE St Augustine was to argue on similar lines that Jews should be allowed to remain in their mistaken faith within Christendom, but in a state of misery, to testify to the truth of the Church.¹⁹

'Impious Jews'

Vespasian and Titus had treated Jews as enemies of the state and Judaism as a religion no longer worthy of a Temple after 70, for propaganda reasons specific to their rule, but one might have thought that everything should have changed for the Jews once those emperors were dead. The hostility towards Egypt in the propaganda of Augustus after the battle of Actium did not continue under his successors, and even the most bitter of enemies can in time come to an accommodation,

particularly if they can remember a period when they were once at peace. But not in this case. Vespasian died in 79 and Titus, still quite young, in 81, but there was no diminution in public hostility towards the Jews. Most blatant was the continuing refusal of the new emperor, Domitian, to contemplate the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple. Later theological apologetic, even enthusiasm, for worship without sacrifices, and simply the passing of time, have deadened the responses of modern historians to this ban. In antiquity, it was outrageous. All over the empire there were myriads of shrines and altars to myriads of gods. There was nothing peculiar in Roman eyes about the sacrificial service in the Jerusalem Temple except the lack of a cult image. As the pagan emperor Julian was to expostulate in the mid-fourth century CE in his tirade *Against the Galileans* (as he called Christians), 'the Jews agree with the gentiles except that they believe in only one God ... since all the rest we have more or less in common with them - temples, sanctuaries, altars, purifications and certain precepts. For as to these we differ from one another either not at all or in trivial matters.' Everyone else in the empire was free to continue to worship in the ways hallowed by their ancestors. It would be understandable if the Romans took greater care than they had before 66 to prevent the crowds at the great pilgrim festivals in Jerusalem getting out of hand, but that precaution would hardly require the Temple site to be left altogether in ruins. Treatment so harsh and unusual must have another explanation.²⁰

It seems most likely that after 81, just as much as in 70, the explanation lay in the need of the emperor to manipulate his public image in order to ensure support for his regime; indeed, this may have been the prime cause of the maltreatment of the Jews down to the defeat of Bar Kokhba in 135. It was as much in the interest of Domitian to portray the Jews and Judaism as marginal as it had suited Vespasian and Titus, and, apart from a brief interlude in 96 on the accession of Nerva, glorification of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple remained integral to the public persona of each emperor in the following decades. Such glorification may have led, more or less directly, to the Jewish frustration which erupted in violent uprisings in 115 and 132. If this was the case, the result for Jews and Judaism was to be catastrophic, but the cause will have had less to do with the Jews

themselves than with politics at the centre of imperial power in Rome.

When Jerusalem was razed in August 70, Domitian was less than nineteen years old, so his public career had (unsurprisingly) been negligible when, a year earlier, his father in distant Judaea was acclaimed as emperor by his troops. Unlike his much older brother Titus, who won military glory as commander of one of the three legions in the Judean campaign, Domitian had remained in Rome throughout the changes of regime following the death of Nero. The bid for power by his father engendered both danger and opportunity. When troops loyal to Vitellius captured the prefect of the city, Vespasian's brother, Flavius Sabinus, on the Capitol, Domitian escaped dressed as a devotee of Isis and stayed in hiding until the Vitellian party was defeated, although Flavius Sabinus was hacked to death by the mob. When Domitian later became emperor, he commemorated his avoidance of the same fate by dedicating a great temple to Jupiter the Guardian, with his own effigy in the lap of the god. When the Flavian army arrived in Rome in the last days of 69, fresh from victory in the battle of Cremona, Domitian was immediately saluted as an important scion of the new imperial family and on 9 January 70 he presided over a meeting of the Senate. Real power in Rome, until the arrival of Vespasian from Alexandria, was vested with Vespasian's close ally Mucianus, who was supported by the large army he had brought from Syria, but the teenaged Domitian was allowed, for a few months, to enjoy the limelight, until Vespasian and Titus returned to the capital and overshadowed him. The later traditions composed after Domitian's death were universally hostile to his memory because the dynasty which replaced him needed to portray him as a tyrant, and, according to that tradition, Domitian was treated with disdain by his father and brother. But Vespasian could hardly have made clearer the importance of his younger son in his dynastic plans than by including him in the triumph in 71 which celebrated the victory over Judaea. Vespasian had good political reasons for such generosity. His bid for power had received backing from other senators like Mucianus in good part because, in Titus, he had a son suitable to succeed him as emperor, so that the state might avoid the danger of a succession crisis such as had proven the downfall of Galba. But Titus himself had produced no son, so only by signalling

the worthiness of Domitian to rule could Vespasian ensure that the regime would be seen as stable for the years ahead.

The honours for the young prince had to be carefully calibrated: his imperial role would not be taken up, Vespasian might reasonably hope, for many years, since Titus was still in the prime of life, so Domitian had to be encouraged, but not too much. Where Titus was elevated in July 71 to share tribunician power with his father and was appointed as censor, Domitian was honoured in a markedly more restrained fashion, although he too held repeated consulships and became, along with Titus, *princeps iuventutis*, 'leader of the young men'. It would not be helpful if he came to be seen as rival to Titus rather than prospective successor. Above all, he was to be given no opportunity to demonstrate his own military capacity. In contrast to the stories, faithfully relayed by Josephus, of the impressive personal bravery of Titus in the war against the Jews, Domitian's supporters could point to no such achievement. Suetonius records that the restriction chafed. Domitian in 70 'began an unnecessary expedition against Gaul and the Germanies . . . merely so that he might make himself equal to his brother in power and rank', but his father's friends dissuaded him, and 'when Vologaesius, king of the Parthians, had asked for auxiliaries against the Alani and for one of Vespasian's sons as their leader, Domitian used every effort to have himself sent rather than Titus, and because the affair came to nothing, he tried by gifts and promises to induce other eastern kings to make the same request', but without success. Throughout his reign Vespasian denied military glory to his younger son, and the manipulation of the young prince's image seems to have been successful. When Vespasian died in 79 the succession of Titus as sole ruler was seamless, and Titus could show his confidence in his brother in 80 by appointing him ordinary consul for the year. When Titus died prematurely on 13 September 81 Domitian in turn moved smoothly into power as the new emperor.²¹

In the course of the next eleven years, Domitian went on campaign four times – to Germany in 83, to the Danube in 85 and in 92, and to the Rhine and Danube in 89. He contrived twenty-three imperial salutations and at least two triumphs, taking the title 'Germanicus' in 83 for his victory over the Chatti, and setting up a plethora of triumphal arches. His need for military prestige to justify his rule could not

have been more starkly demonstrated, but in 81 these campaigns still lay in the future. When he came to power Domitian had no victories to his personal credit apart from his spurious participation, riding on a white horse, in the triumph over Judea. Thus it is less surprising than it might seem that the Jewish war continued to loom large, more than ten years after its end, during the early years of Domitian's reign. The Arch of Titus, unique among extant Roman triumphal arches in representing a triumphal procession, was finally dedicated not by Titus but by Domitian, and Domitian was still in 85 issuing coins with the caption *JUDAEA CAPTA*. According to his biographer Suetonius, writing in the 120s, in Domitian's time the treasury for Judean affairs, which collected the special Jewish tax, operated 'very fiercely', illustrated by a personal reminiscence of an evidently horrific incident which may strike the modern reader as similar to the behaviour of more recent totalitarian states enforcing a policy of racial discrimination: 'I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised.' The story suggests that Jews in Rome who reacted to the hostility pervading their society by denying their Jewishness were not allowed to escape detection and branding as members of this alien group.²²

Towards the end of Domitian's reign the emperor became increasingly tyrannical and, partly as a result, justifiably paranoid, executing at least twelve former consuls on charges of dissent or alleged conspiracy. Most prominent of these, Flavius Clemens, the consul of 95, grandson of Domitian's uncle Flavius Sabinus and husband of Domitian's niece Domitilla, was convicted of atheism because like 'many others', he was 'drifting into Jewish ways', according to Cassius Dio in the early third century. Some historians have taken the fate of Flavius Clemens as evidence that some upper-class Romans found attachment to Judaism attractive during these years, but the idea is implausible when the destruction of the Temple of the Jewish God had so dramatically put in question his power. In a polytheistic system which judged divine approval by material success, abject political defeat was evidence of religious failure. The Temple, with its awe-inspiring rituals which had encouraged Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa to make extravagant obeisance to the Jewish God in the time of

Augustus, was now in ruins. It was hardly likely that Flavius Clemens would be attracted to the peculiar customs of a people so reviled or the cultivation of a God so transparently powerless. A better explanation of the charge reported by Cassius Dio may be that an accusation of 'drifting into Jewish ways' had become a general term of opprobrium for enemies of the imperial regime or, perhaps, that defiant adoption of a 'Jewish' lifestyle had become for members of the Roman elite a symbolic way to demonstrate republican independence of spirit, like the ostentatious Stoic virtues of other senatorial 'martyrs' celebrated by Tacitus and the younger Pliny. If the latter was the case, the failure of Tacitus and Pliny to express sympathy with, or even mention, such 'Judaizers' among the elite will have been the result of self-censorship, for, by the time they were writing under the rule of Trajan, Jews, Judaism and Judaizers were all once more in disfavour.²³

Before hostility to Jews and Judaism returned in Trajan's time, there was a brief hiatus of tolerance after the murder of Domitian on 18 September 96 in a coup by a small group of those closest to him, including the praetorian prefects and, it was alleged, his own wife. The plan was put into operation by humble minions of the palace staff. Domitian had been a conscientious emperor, adopting a stance of moral uprightness and ensuring competent administration of the provinces, but he was fatally arrogant and unwilling to hide his absolute power as more tactful emperors had done since the time of Augustus. As a result he was so hated by the Roman elite that, when he died, his memory was damned by the Senate, so that his statues and votive shields were torn down and a decree was passed that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased: 'all memory of him should be obliterated'. Accordingly, his successor, the elderly aristocrat Marcus Cocceius Nerva, immediately set out to rule in a way that contrasted to the previous reign of terror. His coins advertised 'salvation', 'equity', 'public freedom'. Those on trial for treason were released. No one was tactless enough to mention it, but Nerva had done quite well through Domitian's favour, having enjoyed the special privilege of holding the ordinary consulship with him in 90 – all the more reason strenuously to distance himself now from his predecessor. Nerva's legitimacy depended on denigration of Domitian's rule.²⁴

Among the policies of the state Nerva chose to change right from the start of his reign was the treatment of the Jews. He himself had played no part in the campaign of 66–70, and had nothing political to gain from continued vilification of Jews and Judaism. The slogan inscribed on a series of bronze coins, issued in Rome by the new regime in mid-autumn and in December 96, with a third issue in the first half of 97, proclaimed a fresh start. The coins were adorned with an image of a palm tree, a type commonly found on Roman currency in or referring to Judaea. The inscription proclaimed *FISCI IUDAEICI CALUMNIA SUBLATA*, a Latin phrase too compressed for its precise meaning now to be transparent, although, like advertising slogans nowadays, its import was doubtless clear enough at the time. The most probable translation is: 'The malicious accusation [brought by] the treasury for Jewish affairs has been removed.' Such a slogan makes best sense if the reform advertised by Nerva was an end to the collection of a tax, the two-*denarii* tax imposed since 70 on every Jew as punishment for the rebellion in Judaea more than twenty-five years before, which constituted by its very existence a malicious slur on the loyalty to Rome of the whole Jewish people. The repeated issues of the slogan on low-denomination coins calculated to get into the hands of many of his subjects suggest an important change of policy which Nerva expected his subjects to greet with enthusiasm.²⁵

Distribution of Nerva's coins advertising his reform seems to have been limited to the city of Rome, where manipulation of the emperor's image for the security of his regime was most urgent, but it will not have taken long for Jews elsewhere in the empire to become aware of this effect of the regime change and their new freedom from the demeaning tax. It is easy enough to imagine their reaction to this dramatic improvement in their fortunes. After a quarter of a century of being pilloried as enemies of the state, Jews had suffered enough. It was time for the Temple to be restored. Priests like Josephus, who had served in the Temple when young, were ready and willing to play their parts again. It is probable that Josephus' treatise *Against Apion*, which so eloquently describes the essence of Judaism in unitary terms – one God, one Law, one Temple, one High Priest – was completed during this interlude of restored tolerance towards Jews and Judaism. Hence the confident bravado of his final encomium of his people:

I would therefore boldly maintain that we have introduced to the rest of the world a very large number of very beautiful ideas. What greater beauty than inviolable piety? What higher justice than obedience to the laws? What more beneficial than to be in harmony with one another, to be a prey neither to disunion in adversity, nor to arrogance and faction in prosperity; in war to despise death, in peace to devote oneself to crafts or agriculture; and to be convinced that everything in the whole universe is under the eye and direction of God?

The same spirit of optimism is reflected in the description of Nerva in the coded list of emperors which prefaces the fifth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, composed by a Jew early in Hadrian's reign: of all the emperors, Nerva alone is described in glowing terms – in contrast to 'cursed' Domitian, Nerva was 'a mortal of reverend bearing'. These Jewish hopes for the rebuilding of the Temple are reflected with markedly less enthusiasm in the polemic of the strongly anti-Jewish Christian author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, whose composition has been dated by some to the time of Nerva for precisely this reason: "See, those who have destroyed this temple will themselves build it." This is happening. For because they waged war, it was destroyed by their enemies. And now [they and] the servants of their enemies will [themselves] rebuild it.²⁶

The Jews could not know how brief the interlude of hope was to be. The series of coins proclaiming the abolition of the tax came to an end in the middle of 97. In theory, of course, this might have been the result of chance. Nerva may have felt that he had already sufficiently advertised his enlightened new policy – the minting pattern was the same as that which proclaimed ANNONA AVGVST.: 'the grain supply [ensured by Nerva] Augustus'. Later coin issues might have been minted but left no trace, although that is unlikely. But the most plausible explanation is a reversal of imperial policy in November 97 caused by Nerva's adoption of Marcus Ulpius Traianus, destined to become, in January 98, the emperor Trajan.²⁷

Before his adoption, Trajan seems to have had little contact with the elderly emperor, and selection of an heir was a necessity imposed on the childless Nerva by his political weakness. Nerva had been chosen to rule by the Senate because of his high birth, and the loyalty

of the soldiers could not be guaranteed: on Domitian's death they 'were greatly grieved and at once attempted to refer to him as divine, while they were prepared also to avenge him, if they had not lacked leaders'. The chaos of civil war in 69 was still frighteningly fresh in the memories of the older generation, including Nerva himself, whose coins asserted optimistically CONCORDIA EXERCITVM, 'the agreement of the armies', with images of clasped hands. A year after Nerva's accession, in the autumn of 97, the praetorian guard and its commander mutinied, demanding the execution of Domitian's murderers. Nerva resisted the demand, but in vain. He looked frighteningly vulnerable, like Galba in the days before Otho's coup in January 69. His solution was to select as a successor and heir a general who would be sufficiently plausible to appeal to the armies but not so popular that he would try to oust Nerva himself. Marcus Ulpius Traianus was general in command of the three legions of Upper Germany. Aged forty-four, he had control of large numbers of troops close to Rome and he had demonstrated his capacity for loyalty by marching the legion he commanded in Spain to help Domitian suppress the revolt of Saturninus in 89. He was not related by blood to any former emperor; there was thus a fair chance that he would be content to wait for Nerva to die naturally and that he would proceed peacefully to the glorious future which now beckoned. As the younger Pliny noted in his panegyric of Trajan three years later, Nerva had 'sought counsel not only of men but also of the gods', thus avoiding the disaster which had accompanied Galba's adoption of Piso in 69, which 'not only failed to check an outbreak of rebellion but actually began it'. The availability of so perfect a candidate was probably not the result of chance. Trajan's career before 97 had not included the military experience standard for a legionary command of such importance. A senatorial conspiracy to block the ambitions of Domitian's most prestigious general, Cornelius Nigrinus, governor of Syria, has been plausibly surmised. The senators in question were handsomely rewarded with consulships in the early years of Trajan's reign.²⁸

But the choice of an heir so beneficial both to Nerva's rule and to the avoidance of civil strife in Rome entailed a return to the glorification of the Judean campaign which had characterized the Flavian dynasty. Trajan's natural father, the elder Marcus Ulpius Traianus, came from

the obscure municipality of Italica (modern Santiponce, near Seville) in Spain. The first of his family to enter the Roman Senate, he owed his eventual prominence entirely to his services to Rome in the war against the Jews, in which he commanded the Tenth Legion, the *Fretensis*, from 67 to 69. Traianus' link to the Flavian campaign could hardly have been closer. Of the two other legions deployed against the rebels in Jerusalem, one had been commanded by Titus. The close relationship between the two generals, and Traianus' tact in dealing with Vespasian, emerged in the course of the siege of a town in Galilee called Iapha in mid-67. Traianus had already more or less captured the place, with huge losses ('twelve thousand') on the Jewish side, but judging that the city was bereft of combatants or that any who still remained within would be paralysed by fear, he decided to reserve for his general the capture of the place. He accordingly dispatched messengers to Vespasian, requesting him to send his son Titus to complete the victory. The general, conjecturing that some work still remained to be done, sent with his son reinforcements consisting of five hundred cavalry and a thousand infantry. Titus rapidly marched to the city, drew up his troops for battle, posting Traianus on the left wing, and, himself taking command of the right, led them to the assault. . . . For six hours the contest was maintained; the more efficient combatants were at length exterminated, and the rest of the population was then massacred in the open or in their houses, young and old alike. For no males were spared, except infants; these, along with the women, the Romans sold as slaves. The slain, whether in the city or in the previous action, amounted in all to fifteen thousand; the captives numbered two thousand one hundred and thirty.

If Josephus paid special attention to the narrative of this engagement, it may be because at the time he was writing, in the mid-70s, Traianus was at the height of his impressive career under Flavian patronage. He could not, of course, have guessed the glorious future which awaited Traianus' son.²⁹

Traianus would have been one of the generals who urged Vespasian to march against Jerusalem in 68, since he was still in command of the Tenth Legion in 69, when he was involved in constructing a road from Caesarea to Scythopolis: he put up a milestone in the name of Vespasian some time in the second half of this year. Why he was no

longer in post in Judaea in 70 and had been replaced by a new general is unknown. His fellow general, the commander of the Fifth Legion, Sextus Verulenus Cerealis, served from 67 until the completion of the siege and even remained in Jerusalem after Titus' departure in 70 as commander of the garrison troops (as we have seen, Traianus' old unit, the Tenth Legion). Perhaps Traianus was ill or otherwise incapacitated. In any case, his loyalty to the new Flavian regime was not in doubt, for he was granted a consulship, probably in 70, and patrician rank, and from 73 to 77 or 78 he was an energetic governor of Syria, receiving triumphal ornaments for his success against the Parthians. It seems very likely from these marks of high favour that Traianus' support was vital in Vespasian's successful bid for imperial power in mid-69. The 'spontaneous' proclamation of Vespasian as emperor in July by his troops in Judaea had been the result of gatherings of his officers as well as the junior ranks. Of the three legionary commanders, Titus was obviously an interested party, but the willingness of Cerealis and Traianus to risk their lives for Vespasian could not at all be taken for granted, and deserved reward when it proved successful. It is curious that Tacitus, composing the narrative of the civil war in his *Historiae* during the first decade of Trajan's reign, does not mention Traianus by name in his account of the vital role played by Vespasian's officers and friends in strengthening Vespasian's resolve, but Traianus' contribution may have been largely passive, allowing himself to be carried along by the ambitions of his troops and his commander-in-chief, and, for Tacitus, the complex relationship between Vespasian and his main supporter and erstwhile rival, Mucianus, governor of Syria, allowed the portrayal of more dramatic tensions.³⁰

It is not certain whether Traianus was still alive when Trajan was adopted by Nerva in November 97. If he was, he would have been very old. More certain is Trajan's emphasis on his natural father's achievements as justification of his own elevation to the principate. Unlike previously adopted emperors, Trajan did not upon adoption transfer to Nerva's *gens*, preferring to retain his Ulpiian lineage – hence the name of the Basilica Ulpia in Trajan's forum in Rome. The frequent references to the elder Traianus in the carefully crafted panegyric of the emperor delivered by the younger Pliny in 100 must reflect the

image that Trajan wished to project: 'Posterity may find it hard to believe that one whose father was a patrician and of consular rank and won a triumph, who was himself in command of a mighty army of brave soldiers devoted to their general' would wait meekly for his obedience to Nerva's orders to enable him to become emperor rather than seize power for himself. Trajan had been too modest to decline a third consulship as urged by the Senate: 'Can a third consulship really be promotion for the son of a consular father granted a triumph? Is it not rather his due, his proper reward, if only as a member of a distinguished family?' Near the end of the speech, Pliny apostrophizes first the deceased 'divine Nerva' – 'what happiness you must feel today, on beholding him whom you judged the best candidate for your choice proving that he is best' – and then 'father Traianus': 'for you too, though not raised to the stars, must surely occupy the nearest place [and] must know such delight when you see [from heaven?] your son who was tribune and soldier under you now risen to be supreme commander and emperor, when you enter into friendly rivalry with his adopter so as to determine where the greater glory must be assigned – to his begetter or to the one who made him his choice.' In evoking military glory Trajan could more easily boast about his real than his adoptive father, since Nerva had achieved little of his own to impress. Nor could Trajan claim victories of his own, since he had as yet done little – the frantic campaigning which marked his rule may illustrate his need to establish, like the emperor Claudius before him, a military reputation to justify his hold on power. The glorification of Traianus, already conspicuous in these early years of Trajan's rule, was to increase rather than diminish with the passage of time, as Trajan turned his close relatives, including his wife, sister, niece and even great-nieces into a new royal family celebrated on coins and sculptures. In 112 Trajan sealed the significance of his natural father to the new regime by his deification.³¹

Thus it was in the interest of Trajan that the Flavian view of the Jewish war as a great triumph for Rome, and of the Jews as the natural enemies of the Roman state, should be quietly resumed: this was one alleged aberration of Domitian which it had been unwise of Nerva to repudiate. Certainly, if the collection of the Jewish tax at Edfu had indeed stopped in the reign of Nerva, it had recommenced within

months of Trajan taking power. Nerva succumbed to fever on 27 January 98. On 28 June of the same year a Jew named Dosarion son of Iesus was given a receipt for nine drachmai two obols 'in respect of the Jewish tax for the 1st year of our lord Trajan'.³²

The tax receipts from Edfu can reveal no more than the bald fact that Jews continued to pay this poll tax in the years following. What they thought about Rome after their hopes had been raised by Nerva, only to be so crushed so soon, can only be imagined. They could hardly appreciate the nuances of the new emperor's public image. For them, the dashing of expectations after so brief a glimpse of future felicity, or at least normality, without Jews anywhere having acted against Rome, must have seemed arbitrary, monstrous and tyrannical. What could they do? So far as is known, all that the Jews did at first was to wait and hope, and grow more despairing with the passing years. None of the extant Jewish writings preserved by either Christians or rabbinic Jews can be shown to have been written while Trajan was emperor, so Jewish sentiment can only be surmised from the violence of the uprising when it came, in 115 or 116. There is no particular reason to suppose that Jews stopped writing in the first decade of the second century CE, or seeking for a theological explanation of their uniquely demeaning state of subjection; that what they wrote does not now survive is the result only of the hazards of preservation. The earliest extant rabbinic compilations were put together a whole century later, providing only scanty testimony to the disputes among rabbinic sages in this period. And Christians, who had up to c. 100 CE used and copied religious writings in Greek by non-Christian Jews, from around this date ceased to treat with reverence texts composed by non-Christians, now that the Church had expanded sufficiently to produce its own literature.

There is no particular reason to suppose that Trajan took any further action against the Jews after the tax had been reinstated, and the principle thus implicitly confirmed that the Jerusalem Temple would not be rebuilt – it will be recalled that the tax had been instituted as a means to transfer to Jupiter in Rome funds which would once have been paid for the upkeep of the Temple of the Jewish God. Trajan was fully engaged in establishing a great military reputation for himself, both in order to ensure the support of his