

LIBRIS

We know
books

A HISTORY OF THE JEWISH WAR

A.D. 66–74

STEVE MASON

University of Groningen



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
PART I CONTEXTS	I
1 A FAMOUS AND UNKNOWN WAR	3
2 UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: JOSEPHUS' JUDEAN WAR IN CONTEXT	60
3 PARTHIAN SAVIOURS, SIEGES, AND MORALE: ANCIENT WARFARE IN HUMAN PERSPECTIVE	138
PART II INVESTIGATIONS	197
4 WHY DID THEY DO IT?: ANTECEDENTS, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND "CAUSES" OF THE REVOLT	199
5 NERO'S WAR I: THE BLUNDER OF CESTIUS GALLUS?	281
6 NERO'S WAR II: FLAVIANS IN GALILEE	335
7 JERUSALEM I: JOSEPHUS AND THE EDUCATION OF TITUS	402
8 JERUSALEM II: COINS, COUNCILS, CONSTRUCTIONS	466
9 A TALE OF TWO ELEAZARS: MACHAERUS AND MASADA	514
CONCLUSIONS	576

<i>Appendix</i>	591
<i>Bibliography</i>	595
<i>Bibliographical Abbreviations</i>	633
<i>Index of Modern Authors</i>	635
<i>Index to Historical Persons, Groups, and Places</i>	643
<i>Index of Texts, Inscriptions, and Papyri</i>	655

LBRIS

We know
books

PART ONE

Contexts

CHAPTER ONE

A FAMOUS AND UNKNOWN WAR

Ambition sighed: she found it vain to trust
The faithless column and the crumbling bust, . . .
Convinced, she now contracts her vast design,
And all her triumphs shrink into a Coin.
A narrow orb each crowded conquest keeps,
Beneath her palm here sad Judaea weeps.

Alexander Pope, *To Mr. Addison*,
Occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals ll.19–26

Of all the scents, the balsam is the best. The only land to which it has been given is Judaea, where formerly it grew in two gardens. . . . This tree was displayed to the city [of Rome] by the *imperators* Vespasian and Titus. . . . This tree is now enslaved, and pays tribute along with the nation to which it belongs. . . . The Judaeans used to vent their fury on this tree, just as on their own lives. The Romans defended it against them, and battles were fought on behalf of a tree!

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 12.111–13

A provincial revolt in Roman Judaea and the campaign that suppressed it in A.D. 67–70¹ received unprecedented publicity. The modest achievements of Vespasian and Titus in Judaea came at an unusually dangerous period for the capital. In the domestic turbulence that followed Nero's suicide (June 68), their claim to have conquered a foreign enemy gave them unique *bona fides* as men capable of uniting Rome in peace. Their supporters promoted this

¹ Although we usually date the revolt from 66 to 73 or 74 (the fall of Masada), for Flavian Rome the war began with the Flavians' arrival (spring 67) and ended with Jerusalem's fall in September 70.

narrative with tireless energy. In the eighteenth century still, Alexander Pope could assume his readers' familiarity with the coins issued to celebrate Jerusalem's defeat: *Iudaea Capta!*

The Flavians and their backers left no stone unused in publicity. But was any of this meant to help people understand what had happened over there? Soon after he arrived in Rome, Pliny's younger contemporary Flavius Josephus began complaining about an inverted fame-to-ignorance ratio: so much fuss, so little truth (*War* 1.1–8). The remaining chapters of this book will explore what lay beneath the fuss: what really happened in the war. In this first chapter we need to understand the fuss itself. It began in Josephus' day and has continued well into modern times.

The outcome of the Judaeo-Roman war affected the course of Western history in three quite different ways. Jewish responses were the most complex, because the loss of mother-city and temple required the reshaping of Judaeo culture with a vitality that would enable its survival, eventually as *Juda-ism*, through the centuries ahead.² In Rome, the Flavians' exploitation of success in Judaea was critical to the establishment of their regime, which laid the foundation for a peaceful succession through the second century. Most consequentially, early Christian groups quickly assimilated Jerusalem's fall into their self-understanding and self-representation. Of these three directions of impact, Jerusalem's destruction was of course felt most keenly by Jews, but they did not celebrate and propagate it. We shall focus here on the two groups that did.

I. FLAVIANS DEFEAT THE EASTERN MENACE! FAME ESTABLISHED

There used to be a monumental arch in Rome's greatest entertainment facility, the Circus Maximus, southwest of the Palatine Hill and Forum. If a ninth-century visitor copied it accurately, it honoured the emperor Titus (ruled A.D. 79–81) in the following terms:

The Roman Senate and People:

for the *Imperator* Titus Caesar Vespasian Augustus, son of the Deified Vespasian,

Pontifex Maximus, with *tribunicia potestas* for the tenth time, *imperator* for the seventeenth, Consul for the eighth, *pater patriae*, their *princeps*,

Because on the advice and counsel of his father, and under his auspices, he subdued the nation of the Judaeans (*gentem Iudaeorum domuit*). The city of Jerusalem, either attacked in futility or left entirely untried by all the leaders, kings, or nations before him, *he destroyed (urbem Hierosolymam . . . delevit)*.³

² On the rabbis and the temple, see Cohn 2012. On Titus, see e.g. *b. Gitt.* 56b.

³ *CIL* 6.944. As I write, Tommaso Leoni (York University Toronto) is completing a PhD dissertation on this arch. In the meantime see Ciancio Rossetto 2000: 1.108–9.

Every informed person knew that the last lines were nonsense. To speak only of Roman conquerors: Pompey the Great besieged and occupied Jerusalem in 63 B.C. A generation later (37 B.C.) Gaius Sosius, Syria's governor under Marc Antony, repeated the exercise to remove Jerusalem from the Parthian sphere and install King Herod. Both generals received triumphal processions, memorialized on a marble record in the Roman Forum, fragments of which survive.⁴ Pompey's abundant coins featured Judaea's submission alongside that of other nations in Syria, and Antony's coins proudly co-opted Sosius' victory.⁵ Those were only the *Roman* conquerors. Half a millennium earlier, the neo-Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem, and between 586 and 63 B.C. Jerusalem had passed to Persian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid imperial powers before Rome's. Titus was very far, then, from being Jerusalem's first conqueror. Yet he was still being feted as such in the 90s: "By war he destroyed the fierce tribes of Palestine!" (Silius Italicus 605–606).

Overdone rhetoric was hardly rare when it came to emperors' achievements. A lost arch created for Claudius boasted of his British campaign (A.D. 43): "[H]e first brought the barbarian peoples across the Ocean under the authority [or sway, *indicio*] of the Roman people."⁶ Writing just before that triumph, Pomponius Mela professed joy at *finally* being able to describe Britain accurately: "Look: the greatest of emperors is opening up what for so long lay closed, the conqueror of nations that were previously not only ungovernable but indeed *were unknown!*"⁷ But Britain's tribes had been clients of Rome for decades before Claudius,⁸ and Pomponius' accuracy was not noticeably improved by Claudius' invasion. Then again, Silius Italicus flatters Vespasian as the first to open up "unknown" areas of Britain (597–98), while Tacitus claims that his father-in-law was the first to subdue Britain properly (*Agr.* 10). The model emperor Augustus had set the pace for such exaggerated claims to primacy: "The Pannonian peoples, whom before I was first citizen the army of the Roman had people never approached, were conquered . . ." (*RG* 30).⁹

⁴ In the *fasti triumphales*. See Degrassi 1954: 108 for Pompey's triumph (61 B.C.), 110 for Sosius' (34 B.C.). In Pompey's case time has effaced the wording, but the context makes his record clear. For cautions in using the *fasti* generally, see Beard 2007: 61–80.

⁵ See Hendin 2010: 404–5. ⁶ Barrett 1991: 12.

⁷ 3.49: *quippe tandiu clausam aperit ecce principum maximus, nec indo-mitarum modo ante se verum ignotarum quoque gentium victor*. Roemer (1998: 2–3) proposes a pun on Claudius' name in the participle of *claudio* (*clausam*): "closed."

⁸ See Strabo 4.5.3; several decades earlier, recounting relations with Rome after Julius Caesar's British small conquests (55 B.C.), celebrating the wealth that has flowed in trade duties from what is "virtually Roman property."

⁹ The Pannonians were an Illyrian (Balkan) tribe, and Illyria had been among Rome's first concerns in its eastward expansion. Although the Pannonii were somewhat inland, south of the Danube in the Sava and Drava river valleys (toward Budapest), the Romans had engaged them militarily from the late second century B.C., and the governor of Macedonia may have encountered them when he fought in the region between 75 and 73 B.C. (see *OCD*³ "Pannonia").

People cannot remember everything, and Rome's residents were accustomed to giving rhetoric a wide berth. It is not shocking that the Senate of the 70s would invite the populace to imagine Titus' Jerusalem victory as unprecedented. It only hurt if one thought about it.

In the absence of modern-style media, Rome's leaders had three principal means for advertising their achievements:¹⁰ a magnificent procession for the home constituency (senators and people); the construction of public monuments, arches, statues, temples, and public facilities, ostensibly funded from the new wealth generated by the foreign conquest; and an empire-wide distribution of coins. Literary propaganda was also possible, but lengthy historical narratives were not well suited to that task, being open to varied and uncontrollable interpretations and risking mischief on the part of clever authors or audiences.¹¹ For the simple points that needed making, spectacles of overwhelming impact, along with images and brief statements on stone and coin-metal, were most reliable.¹²

Even before Jerusalem's fall, the Flavians and their supporters began exploiting all three media. Monuments and celebratory coinage they took to with an energy matching that of predecessors who had actually conquered large new territories. Building and minting coins required no evidence from the conquered territory. These were zones of free creativity; the Flavians could craft any imagery that suited them. Only the triumph, in principle, required material from the conquered territory. In the second century B.C. Polybius, a long-time Greek resident of Rome, explained triumphs as occasions on which "the vivid representation of the deeds of the generals, accomplished by their hard labours, is brought to the citizens by way of this spectacle" (Polybius 6.15.8). Consuls who had made conquests in far-off lands demonstrated their achievements by placing before Rome's populace the captured royals, soldiers, weapons, and piles of wealth that were now at their fellow-citizens' disposal. In theory, success justified such display. Mary Beard wryly comments, however: "The triumph was about display and success – the success of display no less than the display of success."¹³

Triumphs in context: foreign conquest versus civil war

In the passage just cited, Polybius was explaining the Republican Senate's power to award triumphs. By the time of this ninth emperor, however,

¹⁰ See Hart 1952; Hölscher 2006; Vasta 2007.

¹¹ Stover 2012 interprets Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* as a reconfiguration of familiar myth in the service of the new regime. Convincing though the study is, it illustrates the complexity of interpreting literary texts: Stover must argue even for a Vespasianic date. On the perils of interpreting texts under autocracies, see Rudich 1993, 1997.

¹² E.g., Favro 1996, 2005; Galinsky 1996; Wallace-Hadrill 2005: 78–81; Beacham 2005.

¹³ Beard 2007: 31.

experience had taught senators that it was in their interest to enable each new autocrat. The formal role senators retained in awarding triumphs took the edge off the perception of autocracy, leaving the senators crumbs of status in a mutually beneficial back-scratch. The august chamber still had to vote the honours, and a curmudgeon or two could get away with grumbling about it *in camera*, as long as the monarch's requirements were met.

As soon as it was clear that Vespasian's forces had defeated those of Vitellius (December 69), and months before the commander would arrive personally in Rome, a Senate wearied by years of civil turmoil eagerly recognized his supremacy by issuing a *Law concerning the Imperium of Vespasian (lex de imperio Vespasiani)*.¹⁴ This was a series of ostensible "permissions," which amount to *carte blanche*: Whatever the dear leader does, says, thinks, orders, or has done is valid and excellent. One of the few specific privileges granted Vespasian in this document was the right "to extend and move forward the boundaries of the *pomerium*" whenever he should see fit.¹⁵ The *pomerium* was Rome's sacred boundary, the delimited zone creating a *templum* in which auspices – reading omens from the flight of birds – could legitimately be taken.¹⁶ It was marked by small inscribed stones, or *cippi*. Altering it did not affect the city's walls, but given the importance of augury (taking auspices) to Rome's public life, being one of the few men ever permitted to extend the sacred boundary was a huge honour for Vespasian. This right was extended to a conqueror as a local miniature representation of his expansion of Rome's power (*imperium*) abroad through the capture of foreign territory.¹⁷ Triumph and extension of the *pomerium* were thus a natural pair. They had most recently been granted to Claudius for Britain, and the grant to Vespasian cites Claudius as most relevant precedent. That is particularly fitting also because Vespasian had played a pivotal role as legionary commander in Claudius' invasion. Now the protégé was receiving the honour for provincial Judaea's (still-imminent) "conquest."¹⁸

¹⁴ *CIL* 6.930. For the date see Hellemis 1902: 2; Levick 1999: 85–86.

¹⁵ This bronze-tablet inscription, which is missing text at the beginning and may be the second of two parts, was discovered in fourteenth-century Rome. It is published as *CIL* 6.930 (among other places); English translations are in Hellemis 1902: 3–6; Sherk 1988 no. 82.

¹⁶ Aulus Gellius 13.14; Platner and Ashby 1929: s.v. "Pomerium."

¹⁷ Tacitus is speaking of Claudius when he says that, by ancient custom (though one hardly used before), "to those who expand the *imperium* it is given to extend the limits of the city" (*Ann.* 12.23). Cf. Aulus Gellius in 13.14.3: "[T]hey had the right to enlarge the *pomerium* who had increased the [space of] the Roman people *with land taken from enemies*."

¹⁸ Some scholars have linked the *pomerium* grant to another achievement, apparently because a connection with (already provincial) Judaea would stretch credulity. Levick (1999) is hesitant even to connect the *triumph* with Judaea for that reason ("Probably the suppression of the Jewish revolt was the main theme," p. 71, emphasis mine). As justification for the *pomerium* grant, she proposes "Q. Petillius Cerialis' campaigns in Britain" (p. 71) and "[s]uccesses, probably those that continued Claudius' work in Britain" (p. 130). Because Levick agrees with the standard dating of the *lex* to early 70 (pp. 85–86), before those successes, she seems to

Several discovered *cippi* show that Vespasian exercised this privilege in A.D. 75, the same year in which he dedicated the Temple of Peace, also largely in celebration of Judaea (below).¹⁹

On hearing of Jerusalem's eventual fall to Titus (September A.D. 70), the Senate went farther and authorized commemorative arches in anticipation of the two men's arrivals and the extravaganzas to follow.²⁰ These arches have disappeared with time, although a decorated arch depicted inside the southern relief panel of the standing Arch of Titus, built a decade later (Fig. 1), may be one of them.²¹

The arches, triumph, and *pomerium* grant show the Senate's collusion in the pretence that suppression of a provincial disturbance could be reckoned a new foreign conquest.²² Roman tradition was clear about what constituted a proper war (*bellum iustum*). A special college of priests, the *fetiales*, had the principal task of making treaties and declarations of war, both of which were possible only with foreign peoples not already part of Rome's empire.²³ In spite of Josephus' incidental remark that Vespasian landed in Syria when "war had been declared" (*War* 7.46), it seems impossible to imagine this fetial process having been conducted in the case of Judaea, which had been part of Roman Syria since Pompey's famed conquests.²⁴

Scholars' efforts to find a loophole for the Flavians by suggesting that Judaea had become effectively independent, and the Flavians "had reconquered a small rebellious province,"²⁵ founder on the definition of *Judaea*. If there had been a province of Judaea before the Flavians, its capital would have been

mean that the Senate made the grant as a wild card, interpreting the word "as/when he saw fit" (*censebit*) to include both justification and timing. But the right seems to assume a one-time extension (Why would the Senate say: for any pretext you like, but *once only*?), and Vespasian's grant is compared with Claudius', which was based on alleged conquest. Irrational though it may be, the centrality of the Judean victory for the Flavians is overwhelmingly attested. Cf. Newton 1902: 5.

¹⁹ See Newton 1902: 4–5. ²⁰ Dio 65/66.7.2 (Epitome).

²¹ So Kleiner 1990: 130. Its upper decoration, with two triumphal chariots and a figure on horseback, matches Josephus' description of the later joint triumph, with young Domitian alongside (*War* 7.152). Or perhaps it was the standing Triumphal Gate. See the discussion in Davies 2004: 184–85 n. 30. See Pfanner 1983: plates 54–56 for gate detail. An engraving by P. S. Bartoli showing the detail still visible ca. 1685 is at http://bellori.sns.it/bellori//TOC_1.html (= Bartoli and Bellori 1685: *Arco di Tito, Pompa Trionfale* plate 5).

²² Mommsen 1894: 5.538–39 ("such an inevitable victory over a tiny, long-subjected people," my translation); Mattern 1999: 191–94; Millar 2005: 102; Goodman 2007: 438–44.

²³ Wiedemann 1986 assesses the college's functions to the late Republic. See Augustus *RG* 7.3 for his membership, and Dio 50.4.4–5 with Suetonius, *Aug.* 31, as context for his revival of many old rituals and priesthoods.

²⁴ Josephus' language perhaps reflects the fact that the Flavians had declared this a *war* when they became involved. The unsystematic nature of such language is clear from *War* 2.284, which dates *the beginning of the war* to Artemisius/Iyyar in the spring of 66, two months before even Cestius' tribune visited and reported on the city's peaceful disposition (Chapter 5).

²⁵ Levick 1999: 71; cf. 2: "Judaea was still in revolt."

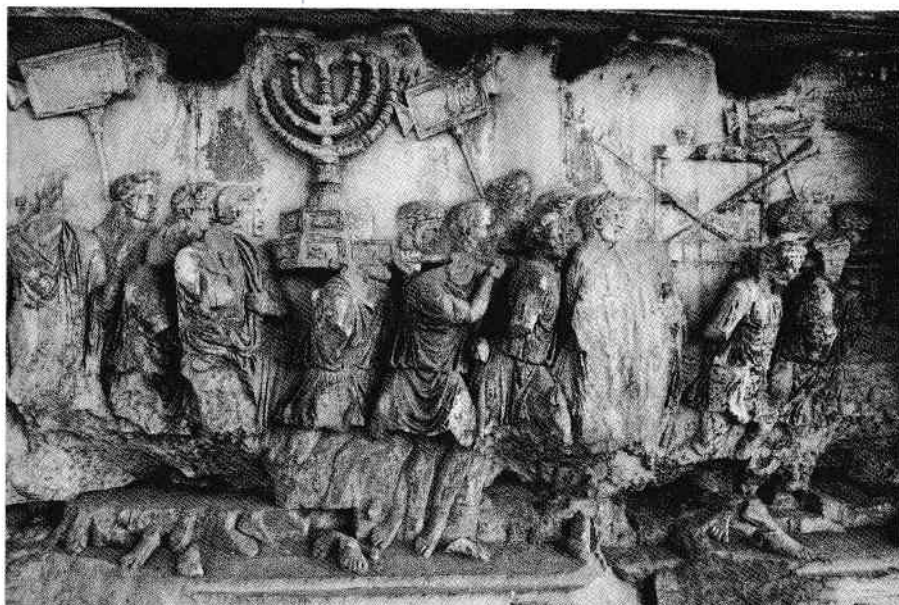


FIGURE 1. Spoils relief in the south panel as it looks today. Courtesy of the Arch of Titus Digital Restoration Project, Director Professor Steven Fine. Note the arch being entered to the right.

coastal Caesarea, and it would have included Samaria, western Galilee, and some of the coastal plain. During the Flavian conflict, however, those regions remained steadfastly loyal. The Judaea in question, evidently, was the ethnic hinterland of Jerusalem and not a formal province (Chapter 4). On any account the Flavians were engaged in political malarkey. But malarkey was the order of the day in political life. How much has changed in that respect, readers may decide.

Many questions about Roman triumphs remain uncertain, and no ancient guide survives. The processions we hear about are described in vague and contradictory ways, usually by writers remote from the events.²⁶ If we assumed a coherent system, we might well ask: What did someone *do* to earn a triumph? But evidence from the Republic shows that senators debated the merits of each case, sometimes denying a triumph even to a great conqueror because of political conditions, or changing their minds, or forcing the man to choose between a triumph and a consulship, or offering a compromise that fell short of a full triumph.²⁷ The criteria that some scholars have proposed are

²⁶ Beard 2007 (e.g., 57–58, 72–106) gleefully dismantles common perceptions. On the remoteness of our accounts see Itgenshorst 2005: 13–41.

²⁷ Pelikan Pittenger 2008. Livy 22.21 describes the denial of a triumph to M. Claudius Marcellus, a great hero who had triumphed twice, personally killed an enemy chief, and (211 B.C.) taken much of Sicily from Carthaginian sympathizers (cf. Plutarch, *Marc.* 21–22). Livy 28.9 describes a compromise: A joint triumph was awarded to deserving generals, but only

merely cobbled together from those debates over particular cases, but already in the Republic it is easy to find exceptions to any imagined rules.²⁸ Even the eminent Cicero could not contrive a triumph for himself.²⁹ Under the Empire, autocratic rulers basically did as they pleased, although to be sure they must have weighed considerations of prestige, seemliness, and political need – or what they could get away with – in consultation with advisors.

The Imperial triumph seems to have retained faint overtones of a boundary-crossing purification ritual. In Republican times the event had supposedly welcomed back citizens-in-arms from wild territory abroad to the world of order inside Rome's sacred boundary.³⁰ Purification may sound primitive, but a modern military analyst laments the absence of such rituals today. It is important, he maintains, "to purify the warriors or soldiers so as to help their transition back from a situation in which almost anything was permitted to one in which a great many things are not."³¹ If the purificatory idea still applied to the armies of the early Empire, however, it could have done so only abstractly. The legions that had fought in Judaea, for instance, did not "return" to Rome, but were ordered back to their bases on the empire's northern and eastern frontiers.³² Overtones of purification may have retained important symbolic meaning for the commanders themselves and a token parade force, signifying that the bloodshed was over.

The components of the triumph most famous from historical dramas (red-painted faces, a slave reminding the general to remember his humanity) are among the elements most open to doubt. We can say, at least, that it was

one was permitted to ride in the chariot. Even Pompey was turned down at first by the Dictator Sulla, who later yielded to the young man's intimidation (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 14).

²⁸ For a neat list see Zaho 2004: 14 ("specific qualifications had been laid down: a just war . . . originally sanctioned and declared as a war . . . must have killed at least five thousand . . . must return with prisoners and trophies . . . war must have been brought to a complete end"). For demolition see Beard 2007: 200–14.

²⁹ Cicero, *Ad Fam.* 15.1–6 describes the rhetorical dance between a proud man obliquely requesting a triumph and the upright Cato the Younger obliquely denying it.

³⁰ So the second-century Festus, *Lexicon* (epit. Paulus), "Laureati" (p. 104 L) with Laqueur 1909; Ehlers 1939: 495–96. A Republican rule required that returning generals not cross the *pomerium* until they had gone through the ritual (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 44.1). Pliny reports (disagreeing) the notion that the triumph's laurel wreaths were chosen "for fumigation and purification after the slaughter of the enemy" (*Nat.* 15.135); cf. Laqueur 1909: 226–36; Warde Fowler 1913: 49–51; Zaho 2004: 13–14. Bonfante Warren (1970: 49) thinks the triumph developed from a purification ritual to a "purely honorific ceremony" focused on the *auctoritas* of the victor. Versnel (1970: 152–63) rejects the purification model, asking why only those victorious in war would have needed purifying. He sees the triumph as an entry-rite evolved from Greek ceremonies for welcoming home victorious athletes; cf. Künzl 1988: 42–44. Beard (2007: 246–47, 332–33), without discounting purificatory overtones, proposes that the ritual had come to mean many things at once. Esler (1995: 239–58) emphasizes the honour–shame dialectic that played out in a triumph, with useful observations on the Flavian event.

³¹ van Creveld 2008: 161. ³² Josephus, *War* 7.5, 18–19, 117.

normal for the procession to form up in the military zone northwest of the city called the Field of Mars (Campus Martius). After prayers and sacrifices, the parade passed through a ceremonial gate and wound its way through Rome's public spaces. The procession displayed foreign rulers and generals, enemy soldiers, Roman dignitaries, artistic representations of the foreign countryside and battle scenes, and representative legionary units. The day-long event might culminate with the execution of an enemy general. It concluded with a solemn sacrifice outside the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline hill, overlooking the Forum. Joyous feasting for the populace, with a rare meal of excellent roasted meat, concluded the festivities.

In planning their big event Vespasian and Titus had glorious precedents to live up to. Leaving aside the luminaries of the distant past, there was the unavoidable shadow of Pompey the Great, the man who really had brought Judaea under Rome's *imperium*. Pompey celebrated a triumph for each continent (i.e., Africa/Numidia, Europe/Spain, Asia/Syria) – a veritable world conqueror and arguably Rome's greatest general.³³ His last triumph, held over the two days that included his birthday in 61 B.C.,³⁴ celebrated his eastern victories: defeat of Mithridates VI of Pontus and the conquest of some fourteen nations in Syria, including the Judaeans.

Plutarch relates of Pompey's triumph that, "even though it was divided into two days, the time was still insufficient and most of what had been prepared had to be excluded from the spectacle" (*Pomp.* 45). Although he had enough plunder for several days, Pompey held back for decency's sake. Large inscriptions nevertheless listed the newly subject territories: "Syria, Cilicia, Mesopotamia, the area around Phoenicia and Palestine, Judaea, and Arabia, as well as the whole pirate operation he had dismantled by war." Pompey claimed to have seized more than a thousand fortresses and nearly 900 cities. Income from the provinces had previously amounted to 50 million drachmas, but inscriptions explained that "just from what he had acquired for the city, they would now receive 85 million drachmas, *and* he was bringing into the public treasury 20,000 talents [524,000 kg, 1.155 million lbs] in silver and gold coin and vessels." Appian writes in a glowing tone: Pompey's last triumph saw 700 enemy ships brought to Rome's harbour and more than 75 million drachmas of silver coin, along with assorted enemy kings including the Judaeans Aristobulus (*Mithr.* 116–17).

Pompey halted his conquests at Egypt's frontier. This left the completion of the Mediterranean circle to Augustus as a function of his war with Cleopatra and Antony. His triumph was another precedent that the Flavians could hardly ignore. From August 13 to 15, 29 B.C., two years before he accepted the title

³³ Deutsch 1924.

³⁴ On this paradigmatic and much-discussed event see Beard 2007:7–41.

Augustus, Octavian held a three-day triumph for, respectively, Dalmatia/Illyricum (35–33 B.C.), the defeat of Cleopatra at Actium (31 B.C.), and the annexation of Egypt (30 B.C.).³⁵ Dio writes (51.21.7): “Also the other [two days’] processions were resplendent *because of the spoils from there [Egypt]*: they were so plentiful as they were accumulated that they were enough for all the [three] processions, but the day for Egypt itself was by far the greatest in the display of wealth and magnificence.” The dearth of plunder from Actium’s naval battle and the rough tribal areas of Illyricum was masked by the eye-watering wealth of Egypt.

From Augustus’ time onward, triumphal spectacle was too potent to be permitted a general other than emperor or his approved family members. A man capable of flooding Rome with new wealth from foreign conquest would certainly become the city’s darling, building new temples, monuments, and public structures with the proceeds. Whereas the Republican system had enabled Rome’s leading men to compete for such glory, under the monarchy such rivalry would put the top man’s pre-eminence at risk and so could not be tolerated.

Even in the Republic there had been no simple correlation, we have seen, between battlefield success and triumphal honours. Imperial rule severed even a notional link.³⁶ Some impressive successes, such as that of Corbulo over the Parthians in A.D. 63, went without a triumph (Chapter 5). A successful general might be given the “ornaments” of triumph or a low-key *ovatio* in quiet gratitude for his deeds, but the spotlight had to remain on the emperor. The *ovatio* was a triumph-lite, lacking the crucial display of domination that underpinned the grander event.³⁷ Claudius’ commander in the British campaign, Aulus Plautius, deserved a triumph if anyone did. He had conquered foreign nations and created a province in the feared island “across the Ocean.” But the emperor, with no skin in the game, stole a march and triumphed before Plautius returned to Rome, leaving the general the consolation of an *ovatio*.³⁸ At least he had the grace to walk beside Plautius in that ceremony.

³⁵ Gurval 1995: 25–31. ³⁶ Hölscher 2006 has many astute observations.

³⁷ Plutarch (*Marc.* 22) traces the *ovatio* to Latin *ova* (sheep), arguing that the sacrificial animal – over against the ox in a triumph – determined the name. He also proposes that the *ovatio* signifies a conflict won by strategy and persuasion, rather than by direct force and bloodshed as in the triumph. Four times the *fasti* mention a triumph “on Mt. Alban,” an even lower-key, quasi-private ceremony conducted outside Rome.

³⁸ Suetonius, *Claud.* 24 and Dio 60/61.30.2. According to both Tacitus (*Ann.* 11.20) and Suetonius (*Claud.* 24.3), Claudius was over-generous with triumphal *honours*, handing them out to a future son-in-law while still a lad and to commanders who had undertaken engineering works (including Corbulo, later denied a triumph by Nero for serious military success). The future emperor Galba received triumphal honours from Claudius for two years of dogged effort in repelling attacks from across provincial Africa’s frontier (Suetonius, *Galb.* 7–8.1), Pomponius Secundus for opposing foreign invaders (the Chatti) from across the Rhine (Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.27–28).

What had the Flavians actually achieved for Rome? Their enablers declared the Judaeans a foreign enemy, whose mother-city had finally been conquered. In reality, Judaea had for more than 130 years belonged to Roman Syria. Nero sent Vespasian to Syria only because his legate there, Cestius Gallus, had lost the emperor's confidence (*War* 3.1–5; see Chapter 5). Had Cestius been successful, in either the brief expedition he undertook or a planned follow-up, *he* could not have triumphed. Nor do we have reason to suppose that Nero, who did not triumph even for Corbulo's settlement of Armenia, would have done so for Judaea. One of Nero's successors in 68–69, Galba, Otho, or Vitellius, might have held a triumph, in a desperate effort to shore up their teetering regimes – if Vespasian had been willing to serve them and completed the Judaeian campaign before they died. But if they had done so, it would have been an obviously desperate move, given that there was no foreign people, army, or king to be conquered in Judaea, certainly no new wealth to be brought home.

Why, then, all the fuss? The simple if shocking answer is that Vespasian needed this. He had achieved a much more important military victory for Rome, but it was one that dared not speak its name: in the *civil war* following Nero's death. That was of far greater concern to Romans than anything happening in Judaea, 2,500 km (1,500 mi) away, on soil that few Romans would ever see or care about.

We call A.D. 69 “the year of the four emperors,” but just as impressively it was the year of at least fifteen consuls. Consuls held the highest magistracy in Rome, and their office was vital to the city's functioning. In the Republic the consulship was an annual elected magistracy of great prestige, and the two consuls were memorialized by giving their names to the year. The early Empire began to see truncated terms, with replacements (“suffects”) installed part-way through to expand the sphere of imperial patronage. But a year with fifteen or more consuls revealed deep divisions, as each new *supremo* installed himself alongside a friend, and each Senator tried to align himself with changing realities.³⁹ Rome was in chaos. That civil war witnessed the mutilation and beheading of 70-year-old Galba in Rome's Forum, of his 30-year-old successor Piso at the entrance to the temple of Vesta, and of Vespasian's older brother Sabinus in front of Vitellius' palace. Vespasian's immediate predecessor Aulus Vitellius was killed on the very Capitol steps, from where his killers dragged his remains by hook to the Tiber River for disposal.⁴⁰ Warring Romans also burned down the city's most revered temple, for Jupiter Best and Greatest.⁴¹

³⁹ Townend 1962.

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Galb.* 19–20; *Otho* 9–11; *Vit.* 16–18; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.18–44; 2.56, 60; 3.21–22, 27, 32–34, 55, 83–86. For detailed analysis, see Wellesley 2000; Morgan 2006.

⁴¹ Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.71–73.

Open warfare inside Rome's sacred boundary was rare, the presence of armed units inside the *pomerium* being forbidden. Tacitus' account of this period reflects his distaste for the mob, so disgustingly fascinated with the bloodshed around them as though it were entertainment. They gawked at the violence while scoffing down meals and enjoying the baths undeterred (*Hist.* 3.83). Josephus claims that Vitellius "made all of Rome into a military camp and filled every house with armed soldiers" – in improvised billets. Having never seen the delights of such a city, his German soldiers allegedly went wild with violence and rapine (*War* 4.586–87). As well as terrorizing the city of Rome, the civil war had brought legions into direct conflict on Italy's battlefields, costing tens of thousands of citizen lives. Dio's figure of 80,000 casualties in just the first Battle of Cremona must be a considerable exaggeration (*Epit. Dio* 63/64.10.3), but losses from the repeated clash of these professional armies surely exceeded by far those in Judaea, where Flavian legions faced minimal resistance and the conflict amounted to a series of sieges (Chapter 3). Anyway, hardly any of the Judaeans dead were Roman citizens.

Vespasian's decisive victory in the civil war was therefore what really mattered in Rome. The problem was that removing Vitellius and his Roman army furnished no glorious basis for a claim to power. In Graeco-Roman thinking, civil strife was the most detestable political disease.⁴² As Vespasian's immediate predecessors had shown, victors over fellow senators were unavoidably covered in the mire. Further challenge and conspiracy from rivals and aggrieved supporters of their victims were unavoidable. A strong man might suppress this for a while, as L. Cornelius Sulla and Octavian (Augustus) had in the previous century, but the lingering bitterness of senatorial rivalry and divided armies would likely result in further bloodshed. Public celebration for a victory in a civil war would have been unseemly, a triumph out of the question.⁴³

The only safe way to disperse the adrenaline and war-weariness, to unite the Roman community after years of deep partisan hatred and fear, was to funnel that destructive energy onto a foreign scapegoat. (The tactic has not lost its appeal.) The legions existed to secure Rome's *imperium* and conquer foreign enemies, under commanders who should be duly rewarded for their perils, not

⁴² Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 3) attacks the much-admired Thucydides for his choice of subject, a shameful war among Greek *poleis* (a war that should never have happened and a shameful story best left untold) in contrast to the morally uplifting story of Herodotus, concerning Greeks against barbarians. On *stasis* in general as the worst political disease, see Thucydides 3.82–4 (at Corcyra); Herodotus 1.59.3, 60.2, 150.1; 3.82.3; 5.28.1; 6.109.5; Isocrates, *Paneg.* 4.79, 114, 174; Plato, *Leg.* 1.628c, 629c–d; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 5.2–3; 13.1; *Pol.* 1265b; Diodorus 9.11.1; 11.72.2, 76.6, 86.3, 87.5; Plutarch, *Mor.* 16.813a, 32.823f–825b; Dio Chrysostom, 1 *Regn.* 1.82; Pausanias 3.2.7; 4.18.3; Lintott 1982; Gehrke 1985; Molyneux 1993; Henderson 1998.

⁴³ Cf. Beard (2007: 123): "a triumph in civil war . . . was a contradiction in terms."

to fight each other. A real triumph, for a foreign victory, could put a line under civil conflict and thus put the exhausted city on a path toward reconciliation. It was all the better if the conqueror had not personally been present in Italy during the bloodbaths, but away fighting the foreigners. These political imperatives in Rome from December 69 were not shaped by anything happening on the ground in Judaea. No one cared what had caused the upheavals *there*. Politicians are not historians.

As with most aspects of Roman politics, Augustus had shown the way. Everyone knew that his rise to power brought an end to devastating civil wars: between Julius Caesar and his rivals, between Caesar's assassins and his friends, and between two leaders of that circle friends, Octavian and Antony.⁴⁴ Yet in the celebrations that inaugurated Octavian's bright new day, those internal-Roman hostilities went carefully unmentioned.⁴⁵ Dio comments that he flooded Rome with so much money and promise of well-being that "the Romans forgot all the disagreeable events and looked on his victory with pleasure, as if those who had been defeated had all been foreigners" (51.21.4). His triumph had to focus on foreign conquests, especially on Egypt's Cleopatra, *sans* Antony, and the resulting acquisition of Egypt's wealth. Cleopatra foresaw the humiliation in store for her and killed herself to evade it, but Octavian needed her too badly to accept that. He had her children brought to Rome along with her own royal couch, which could carry a mannequin of the deceased queen in his triumphal procession (Dio 51.21.8). The foreign enemy was indispensable as a conduit for popular hatred.

Only near the end of his long rule would Augustus acknowledge that his accession had ended *both* external and civil war, although still without naming Antony (RG 1-4).⁴⁶ Decades later Seneca could write for his young ward Nero about Augustus' clemency – *after* he had filled Actium's waters with citizen blood and exhausted himself in murdering Romans. Nero should pass over that bloody phase and move straight to the clemency.⁴⁷

So compelling was the scapegoat tactic that during the civil strife of 69 Vitellius tried to co-opt Vespasian's Judaeian campaign as *his* foreign war.⁴⁸ Vitellius' coins intersperse messages of peace, concord, and the "agreement of the armies" with images of Victory fastening her shield to the palm

⁴⁴ The classic study is Syme 1939; Eck 2003: 16–23, 34–45 is a readable overview, and Levick 2010 is particularly sharp on the image/reality distinction.

⁴⁵ See Gurval 1995: 25, 28.

⁴⁶ Cf. Velleius Paterculus (writing under Tiberius) 2.89.3–4 on Augustus' ending of civil strife, and Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.

⁴⁷ Seneca, *Clem* 1.11.2–3 with Braund 2009: 61–63.

⁴⁸ According to Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.4), by the spring of 69 the war was essentially over, delayed only by Jerusalem's topographical situation and the population's irrational persistence. The survival of more than one issue of Vitellius' "Judaeian" coins suggests that some appeared after July 1 and Vespasian's acclamation by eastern legions.

tree that symbolized Judaea.⁴⁹ This was chutzpah, but born of political necessity. Vitellius had also needed a distraction from Roman bloodshed, and the dispatch of a multi-legion Roman force to deal with a conflict on the eastern periphery offered as good a prospect as any.

Vespasian, having been entrusted with the campaign by Nero, was happy to continue under his first successor, the aged blueblood (and anti-Nero) Galba, whom he knew from Claudius' court (Chapter 5).⁵⁰ But when Galba was murdered after just a few months, Vespasian was not at all ready to yield the precious commodity of this rare military campaign to young Otho, Nero's former friend and cuckold; much less to Vitellius, recent commander of legions in Germany, also his junior and widely seen as a repugnant fellow riding a distinguished father's coat-tails.

When Vespasian's partisans had finally done away with Vitellius (December 69), he reused Vitellius' coin types, declaring to the capital that the genuine article – the real commander whose glory Vitellius had tried to steal – was about to arrive in person.⁵¹ While Otho and Vitellius were busy killing other Romans, Vespasian had been risking his life against real, foreign enemies. (It was inopportune to bring up the devastation wrought by his armies against Vitellius' legions on Italian soil.) His was the kind of old-fashioned virtue that Rome needed. He was not going to let this message be lost.

By a happy coincidence, the Flavian celebration in the summer of 71 fell in the hundredth year after Augustus' triumph in 29 B.C.⁵² Centenaries were and remain heavy with potential meaning.⁵³ Septimius Severus would delay his triumph for Parthia by a couple of months (to 28 January, A.D. 198) so as to have his son Caracalla acclaimed co-emperor on the centenary of Trajan's accession.⁵⁴ The century from Augustus to Vespasian, although we hear nothing of it in ancient sources, must have attracted notice. Counted exclusively, a century from Augustus would have fallen in 72, but that would have been too late for the urgently needed triumph for Judaea. Vespasian reached Rome only in October A.D. 70, although the Senate had confirmed his

⁴⁹ E.g., the coins ref. 1920,0325.7, 1933,0711.1, and R.10275 in the British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org).

⁵⁰ Josephus, *War* 4.498–99, and Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.10; 2.1–4.

⁵¹ See Hart 1952: 191–92 and coin ref. 1872,0709.482 in the British Museum.

⁵² On Augustus' exploitation of victory see (from an ocean of studies) Sutherland 1951: 14–26; Kellum 1982; Zanker 1988; Gurval 1995; Castriota 1995; Galinsky 1996; Eck 2003: 46–54; Rich 2009; Hölscher 2009. On the Flavians and Augustan resonances see Boyle & Dominik 2003: 1–68 et passim; Panzram 2002: 170–71 (who, unusually, notes the century); Millar 2005.

⁵³ E.g., Feeney 2007: 145: “the century of one hundred years was a crucial link in the chains of significance that were forged between past and present.” The interval from –29 to +71 is not a full 100-year span because there is no “Year 0” in the alignment of the Roman-Julian calendar with our Gregorian.

⁵⁴ Lusnia 2006: 294.

supreme power in December 69. And he antedated his reign to July 1, 69, retrospectively erasing most of Vitellius' term (from 16 April). The inclusive century from Augustus' triumph would therefore have to do. It was close enough for providential reverberations.

Imperial triumphs: performance anxiety and sham

To understand the Flavian triumph itself, we need to bear in mind the great models, especially the two mentioned above, which must have been in the minds of Flavian planners and informed Romans alike. Our reports of the Republican events should not, of course, be mistaken for factual reporting. They likely include false memories of "the good old days" and various kinds of literary embellishment long after the fact. But they are still valuable for giving a sense of what a proper Roman triumph was imagined to be.

Describing Aemilius Paullus' big event after defeating Perseus of Macedonia in 167, Plutarch has him begin in grand style, sailing to Rome in Perseus' magnificent galley with sixteen banks of oars (*Aem.* 32.4–34.1). Then:

The procession being allotted three days, the first hardly sufficed for the captured statues, paintings, and colossal figures, brought along on 250 chariots, which made quite a show. On the next day the finest and costliest of the Macedonian weapons were presented in many wagons [carefully arranged to look terrifying]. . . . After the weapon wagons walked 3,000 men carrying coined silver in 750 three-talent [80-kg, 276-lb] containers, each carried by four men; others had silver wine-bowls, drinking horns, bowls, and cups. . . . On the third day . . . came those bringing the gold coin, distributed in three-talent containers like the silver, though the number of these containers was only 77. . . . Following all these were the chariot and the weapons of Perseus, and his diadem sitting on top of his weapons. . . . Behind the children and their attendants walked Perseus himself. . . .

After the bar had been raised even higher by the monumental triumphs of Pompey and Augustus, first-century emperors understandably felt performance anxiety. Their withdrawal of triumphs from field commanders who might become rivals, politically necessary though this was, placed enormous pressure on themselves. Each man had to appear supremely deserving of all the honour he was hoarding. But what could a serving emperor triumph *for*? Going to war could get him killed. Second-century emperors would decide they had no choice but to become a "fellow-soldier" if they hoped to keep the army's loyalty and pre-empt challenge from popular commanders,⁵⁵ but the Julio-Claudians had not yet embraced this reality. Tiberius had commanded

⁵⁵ Campbell 1984: 49–55, 65–69.