

were actually fighting each other for the loot; and I have little doubt that if capture had not forestalled it, their utter bestiality would have made them get their teeth into the very corpses.

Owing to the steep approach on every side it was not feasible to master the Upper City without platforms, so on the 20th of Loös Caesar divided up the work among the troops. It was difficult to transport the timber since, as mentioned before, all the neighbourhood for over eleven miles had been stripped bare for the earlier platforms.<sup>33</sup> The four legions raised their earthworks on the west side of the City opposite the Palace, while the whole body of allies and the rest of the army worked near the Gymnasium, the bridge and Simon's tower, built during the struggle with John as a stronghold for himself.<sup>34</sup>

At this time the Idumæan chiefs at a secret meeting discussed the question of piecemeal surrender, and sent five men to Titus to implore his protection. Hoping that the party chiefs too would give in if they lost the support of the Idumæans who had made so large a contribution to the war, Titus hesitated at first, but finally granted them their lives and sent the men back. But as they got ready to go, Simon saw what was afoot, immediately put to death the five who had gone to Titus, seized the chiefs of whom the most prominent was Jacob, son of Sosas, and threw them into prison. On the Idumæan rank and file, at a loss without their leaders, he kept a careful eye, posting more efficient sentry-groups along the wall. However, the sentries were unable to cope with the deserters: though many were killed, far more got away. The Romans received them all, Titus through kindness of heart disregarding his earlier proclamation, and the men holding their hands because they were sick of killing and hopeful of gain. For only the townsmen were kept back – all the rest were sold along with the women and children, the retail price being very low, as supply was far in excess of demand. In spite of his earlier announcement that no one must desert alone, but must bring his family with him, he nevertheless received such people; but he appointed officers to separate from them anyone deserving punishment. The number sold was enormous: the number of townsmen spared was over 40,000; these were free to go wherever they thought fit.

During this same period a priest named Jeshua, son of Thebuthi, obtained from Caesar a sworn guarantee of safety on condition that he should hand over some of the sacred treasures. He came out and

handed over from the Sanctuary wall two lampstands closely resembling those kept in the Sanctuary, as well as tables, basins, and cups, all of solid gold and very heavy. He also handed over the curtains, the vestments of the high priests with the precious stones, and many other articles required for the Temple services. In addition the Temple treasurer Phineas, when taken prisoner, produced the tunics and girdles of the priests and a large supply of purple and scarlet kept in store for repairing the great curtain, together with cinnamon in bulk, cassia, and quantities of other spices, which were blended and daily burnt as incense to God. He handed over many of the other treasures too, with Temple ornaments in abundance, thus earning though a prisoner the pardon granted to deserters.

In eighteen days the platforms were ready for use, and on the 7th of Gorpaios the Romans brought up their engines. Some of the partisans, already despairing of the City, withdrew from the wall to the Citadel, while others plunged into the sewers; but many ranged themselves along the ramparts and tried to repulse the crews of the battering-rams. These too the Romans overwhelmed by numbers and by force, and above all by confidence in face of despondency and half-heartedness. When a section of the wall was broken through and some of the towers gave way before the assault of the rams, there was an immediate flight from the battlements, and even the party chiefs were filled with terror unjustified by the situation: before the enemy got through, they were stunned and ready to fly, and men once arrogant and bragging about their ungodly deeds could now be seen abject and trembling, insomuch that even in these vile scoundrels it was pitiful to note the change. Their one desire was to dash for the wall that shut them in, repulse the guards and hack their way through to safety; but when their old faithful supporters were nowhere to be seen – they had been forced to scatter in all directions – and when runners announced that the whole west wall was down, or that the Romans had broken in and were just round the corner seeking them, while others blinded by terror declared that from the towers they could actually see the enemy, they fell on their faces bewailing their own insane folly, and as if hamstrung were incapable of flight.

What happened would serve as an object-lesson, showing both the power of God over the wicked and the luck of the Romans. For the party chiefs divested themselves of their safety, and of their own accord came down from the towers<sup>35</sup> on which they could never

have been subdued by force but only by starvation; and the Romans, who had toiled so hard to break through the weaker walls, captured by sheer luck those which their engines could not touch; for no mechanical device could have made any impression on the three towers described elsewhere. Abandoning these, or rather driven down from them by God, they took refuge for a moment in the ravine below Siloam; later, when they had recovered somewhat from their terror, they made a dash for the nearest section of the circumvallation. But their strength was broken now by terror and disaster, and their courage could not rise to the occasion; so they were repulsed by the guards, scattered this way and that, and plunged into the sewers.

Masters now of the walls, the Romans set up their standards on the towers and with clapping and singing celebrated their victory, having found the end of the war much easier than the beginning. They had surmounted the last wall without losing a man – it seemed too good to be true – and when they found no one to oppose them, they could make nothing of it. They poured into the streets sword in hand, cut down without mercy all who came within reach, and burnt the houses of any who took refuge indoors, occupants and all. Many they raided, and as they entered in search of plunder, they found whole families dead and the rooms full of the victims of starvation: horrified by the sight, they emerged empty-handed. Pity for those who had died in this way was matched by no such feeling for the living: they ran every man through whom they met and blocked the narrow streets with corpses, deluging the whole City with gore so that many of the fires were quenched by the blood of the slain. At dusk the slaughter ceased, but in the night the fire gained the mastery, and on the 8th of Gorpaios the sun rose over Jerusalem in flames – a city that during the siege had suffered such disasters that if she had enjoyed as many blessings from her foundation, she would have been the envy of the world, and a city that deserved these terrible misfortunes on no other account than that she produced a generation such as brought about her ruin.

When Titus entered he was astounded by the strength of the city, and especially by the towers which the party chiefs in their mad folly had abandoned. Observing how solid they were all the way up, how huge each block of stone and how accurately fitted, how great their breadth and how immense their height, he exclaimed aloud: 'God has been on our side; it is God who brought the Jews down from these

strongholds; for what could human hands or instruments do against such towers?' At that time he made many such remarks to his friends, and he set free all persons imprisoned by the party chiefs and found in the forts. Later, when he destroyed the rest of the City and pulled down the walls, he left the towers<sup>36</sup> as a monument to his own luck, which had proved his ally and enabled him to overcome impregnable defences.

As the soldiers were now growing weary of bloodshed and survivors were still appearing in large numbers, Caesar gave orders that only men who offered armed resistance were to be killed, and everyone else taken alive. But as well as those covered by the orders the aged and infirm were slaughtered: men in their prime who might be useful were herded into the Temple and shut up in the Court of the Women. To guard them Caesar appointed one of his freedmen, and his friend Fronto<sup>37</sup> to decide each man's fate according to his deserts. Those who had taken part in sedition and terrorism informed against each other, and Fronto executed the lot. Of the youngsters he picked out the tallest and handsomest to be kept for the triumphal procession<sup>38</sup>; of the rest, those over seventeen were put in irons and sent to hard labour in Egypt, while great numbers were presented by Titus to the provinces to perish in the theatres by the sword or by wild beasts<sup>39</sup>; those under seventeen were sold. During the days in which Fronto was sorting them out starvation killed 11,000 of the prisoners, some because the guards hated them too bitterly to allow them any food, others because they would not accept it when offered; in any case there was not even enough corn to fill so many mouths.

All the prisoners taken from beginning to end of the war totalled 97,000; those who perished in the long siege 1,100,000.<sup>40</sup> Of these the majority were Jews by race but not Jerusalem citizens: they had come together from the whole country for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and had suddenly been caught up in the war, so that first the overcrowding meant death by pestilence, and later hunger took a heavier toll. That so many could crowd into the City was shown by the census held in Cestius' time. Wishing to bring home the strength of the city to Nero, who despised the nation, Cestius instructed the chief priests to hold a census of the population, if it was possible to do so. They chose the time of the Passover Feast, at which sacrifice is offered from 3 to 5 p.m., and as it is not permissible to feast alone, a sort of fraternal group is formed round each victim, consisting of at least ten adult

males, while many groups have twenty members. The count showed that there were 255,600 victims; the men, reckoning ten diners to each victim, totalled 2,700,000,<sup>41</sup> all ceremonially clean; for persons suffering from leprosy, venereal disease, monthly periods, or any form of defilement were debarred from participation, as were the foreigners who came from abroad in large numbers to be present at the ceremonies.

But now fate had decreed that one prison should confine the whole nation and that a city solid with men should be held fast in war's embrace. No destruction ever wrought by God or man approached the wholesale carnage of this war. Every man who showed himself was either killed or captured by the Romans, and then those in the sewers were ferreted out, the ground was torn up, and all who were trapped were killed. There too were found the bodies of more than 2,000, some killed by their own hand, some by one another's, but most by starvation. So foul a stench of human flesh greeted those who charged in that many turned back at once. Others were so avaricious that they pushed on, climbing over the piles of corpses; for many valuables were found in the passages and all scruples were silenced by the prospect of gain. Many prisoners of the party chiefs were brought up; for not even at their last gasp had they abandoned their brutality. But God rewarded them both as they deserved: John, starving to death with his brothers in the sewers, after many scornful refusals at last appealed to the Romans for mercy, while Simon after battling long against the inevitable, as will be described later,<sup>42</sup> gave himself up. John was sentenced to life-imprisonment, but Simon was kept for the triumphal procession and ultimate execution. The Romans now fired the outlying districts of the town and demolished the walls.

So fell Jerusalem in the second year of Vespasian's reign, on the 8th of Gorpaios, captured five times before and now for the second time utterly laid waste. Shishak king of Egypt,<sup>43</sup> followed by Antiochus, then Pompey, and after that Sosius and Herod together, captured the City but spared it. Earlier on the king of Babylon had stormed it and laid it waste 1,468 years and 6 months from its foundation.<sup>44</sup> It was originally founded by a Canaanite chieftain called in the vernacular 'King of Righteousness', for such he was. On that account he was the first priest of God and the first to build the Temple and in its honour to give the name of Jerusalem to the City, previously called

Salem.<sup>45</sup> The Canaanite inhabitants were driven out by the Jewish king David, who settled his own people there; then 477 years and 6 months after his time it was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians. From King David, the first Jew to reign in it, to the destruction by Titus was 1,179 years.<sup>46</sup> But neither its long history, nor its vast wealth, nor its people dispersed through the whole world, nor the unparalleled renown of its worship sufficed to avert its ruin. So ended the siege of Jerusalem.