

JEWS AND ROMANS*

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I

Josephus writes in the preface to his *Jewish War* (hereafter *JW*) as follows, “I cannot conceal my private sentiments, nor refuse to give my personal sympathies scope to bewail my country’s misfortunes. For, that it owed its ruin to civil strife (*στάσις οἰκεία*), and that it was the Jewish tyrants who drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration, is attested by Titus Caesar himself. . . . Indeed . . . the misfortunes of all nations since the world began fall short of those of the Jews; and, since the blame lay with no foreign nation, it was impossible to restrain one’s grief.” (I 10–12).¹ Falling into line with this statement Hengel writes, “. . . versucht Josephus, sein Volk . . . dadurch zu verteidigen, daß er als eigentliche Urheber des Unglücks nur eine kleine Minderheit von ruchlosen Fanatikern anklagt, während er die große Masse des Volkes als deren passive Opfer entschuldigt”.² This observation is not false but only half-truth. Every reader of *JW* can perceive that in that part of *JW* II, where the events of the pre-war decades are reported, at least some Romans are made responsible for having worsened the relations between the two nations and for the outbreak of the great war. Recently Cohen writes, “They (=small band of mad fanatic Jews) and not the Romans were responsible for the destruction of the temple (thus Josephus apologizes to the Jews for the Romans).”³ and further, “BJ had contended that the isolated individuals from both sides were responsible for the outbreak of the war, although it assigned far greater guilt to the Jewish bandits than to the Roman procurators.”⁴ It is true that after about *JW* III 409, especially after IV, the battle is between “good” Romans and “bad” Jews, and the words of Josephus in the preface and of Hengel and Cohen quoted above fit well in this context. But they do not fit well in that part of *JW* II, where the events of the pre-war decades are reported. Cohen confuses or makes no distinction between the different parts of *JW*.

According to my preliminary observation, *JW* has a clear plan well thought and well worked out. Book I is a long, introductory history up to the death of Herod the Great. In the description of the great war proper in Books II–VII, we can discern three stages of progress. The first stage, II 1—around 512, is the period of “bad” Romans and their puppets

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¹ English translation is that of Thackeray in Loeb edition.

² M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten*, 2. Aufl. (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p. 11.

³ Sh. J.D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*. (Leiden: Brill, 1979), p. 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 236f.

or supporters. The second stage, around II 513—around III 408, is a kind of interlude, where Josephus is the leading figure, whose brilliant activities and dramatic vicissitudes attract the reader. The third stage, after around III 409, is the period of “bad” Jews and “good” Romans, the latter overcoming the former. The main theme of the whole *JW* is repeated in the epilogue or finale, after VII 437, where “bad” Romans together with “bad” Jews again threaten the peace and order of Roman Empire, and plot the downfall of “good” Jews including Josephus, while Vespasian and Titus, representatives of “good” Romans, baffle the plot and exterminate the conspirators, both Roman and Jewish.

Cohen confuses or makes no distinction between the first and the third stages. This confusion prevents the full and correct understanding of the construction of *JW* and the intention of the author.

In this article I will investigate the description of the first stage and characteristics of Josephan vocabulary and examine the pertinency of my observation stated above, for the present, about the first stage.

II

JW II begins with the report of Archelaus' management of disorders after the death and funeral of Herod the Great. In the episode of 5-8, “those who were bent on revolution (οἱ νεωτερίζειν προσηρημένοι)” (5), “the rebels (οἱ νεωτερίζοντες)” (8), “the ringleaders of the sedition (οἱ ἐξάρχοντες τῆς στάσεως)” (11)—hereafter simple numbers in brackets denote section numbers of Book II—are not painted totally black, although these Greek words are used for “bad Jews” afterward. They are even praised. They assembled for the purpose of bewailing the fate of those sage-martyrs who were punished by Herod because they had defended “the laws and the Temple” of the country. They demand the deposition of the high-priest appointed by Herod and the appointment of “a man of greater piety and purer morals.” Their calmness and piety is reported intentionally (12)⁵ and the cruelty of Archelaus is stressed in contrast (12f.). Archelaus is repeatedly accused of his inappropriate and cruel management, and those slaughtered by him are justified at the trial before Augustus (*consilium principis*. II 23—38, 80—92). Archelaus, who was appointed ethnarch by Augustus with the promise of promotion to kingship, if he proved himself worthy to be a king, was sent to exile as early as the ninth year of his rule, being accused of his cruel rule, which demonstrates the rightness of the accusations at the *consilium principis*. There is no description of his activities in his nine-year administration, the episode concerning Archelaus next to the story of his appointment being that of his banishment.

Sabinus, the procurator of Syria, was the next object of Josephus' reproach (chapters 2,3,5). He “gave the Jews an occasion for insurrection,” plundering the Temple treasury and making an exacting search of royal treasury out of “avarice” (41). Josephus implies that those Jews who stood against him should be praised as defenders of the interests of Rome and her puppet kingdom. Two thousand people were crucified by Varus (75) in addition to the three thousand victims of Archelaus (13)—five thousand martyrs in a few months! The number speaks not the historical facts but the intention of the author eloquently. Jose-

⁵ The same topos as I 148–150.

phus wants to say that such unwise managements by the rulers contribute to nothing but instigation of anti-Roman sentiment among the Jewish people.

Such maladministrations naturally induce "number of persons to aspire sovereignty." (55). But the report of four rebel groups (55—65) are short and schematic. A very short mention of Judas the Galilee (118) contains no concrete revolutionary activities. Such concise description of Jewish rebels is a great contrast to that of bad rulers.

Worse than his predecessors is Pilate, the fifth praefectus of Judaea (A.D. 26—30), who trampled the Jewish laws under foot, hurt the national feelings badly and beat large numbers of Jews to death. As to the expenditure of the sacred treasure which caused the uproar, Pilate may possibly have thought that it was under his control. Moreover, the purpose of the expenditure was the construction of an aqueduct, a public enterprise. Therefore Josephus could justify Pilate's deeds, if he would. But he only reproaches Pilate bitterly. It is clearly stated that Tiberius sent Pilate to Judaea, and this statement confirms the responsibility of the Emperor.

The next short episode of the downfall of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee (181—183), leaves on readers' minds the impression that a puppet ruler of Rome also was not suited for his post. We cannot but connect the episode with the worsening of situation in Galilee.

Even emperor Gaius himself is made the object of attack. "The insolence with which the emperor Gaius defied fortune surpassed all bounds" and "his impiety extended even to Judaea." (184). His impious order to install statues of himself in the sanctuary of Jerusalem made resistance inevitable. The scenes of resistance are Ptolemais and Tiberias, both of which are said to be Galilean (188 and 193). God did not overlook such impious instructions, Josephus says (186). In fact, a military collision between Jews and Romans was miraculously avoided by the emperor's sudden death. The impiety of the Roman emperor is impressively contrasted with the piety of Jews.

It is under the administration of procurator Cumanus (A.D. 48—ca. 52) that "disturbances broke out, resulting in another large loss of Jewish lives." Misgovernments of the procurator and misdeeds of Roman soldiers can by no means be vindicated. They are responsible for "disorders originating with brigands" (228) and for "robbery, raids and insurrections" (238). The whole affair was carried before emperor Claudius. Cumanus was banished and Celer, his right hand *tribunus militum*, was delivered over to Jewish outrage. The emperor himself admitted the misgovernment in public.

It was trickery of Agrippina that made Claudius leave Nero as his successor (249). The result of her artifices had a great influence on Palestine. "All the outrageous acts in defiance of fortune," writes Josephus, "of which Nero was guilty . . . being so hackneyed, I propose to pass over. . . ." (250f.). Under his administration the situation of Judaea became more threatening and the great war broke out. It is true that in the rest of the chapter 13 (253—270) activities of rebellious, anti-Roman Jews including brigands, sicarii, "deceivers and impostors," and a false prophet are reported. But the episodes of these groups are put together in a single chapter and the long history of Roman maladministrations precedes them. Felix, the first procurator (A.D. 52—ca. 60) under Nero oppressed these movements repeatedly (253, 260, 263, 269f.) and his successor Festus (A.D. ca 60—62) took over his policy (271). But such rule of might and oppression could not calm the unstable situation but only caused the worsening of condition, as we can easily imagine (264f., 269). Josephus does not re-

proach these two procurators explicitly,⁶ but by reporting their power politics he implies that they deepened the confusion and inflamed the anti-Roman feelings among the Jews. Perhaps there was no need for him to reproach them explicitly, at least Felix, because his readers, especially Romans, knew well of their (or his) bad names (or name), as Tacitus' reports imply.⁷

III

A new stage begins at 272. From there on Josephus' attack on the Roman rule gains much more bitterness and becomes more direct and sharp. Not only maladministration and misgovernment but wickedness and villainousness of procurators are reported in detail and with eagerness. There was no form of villainy which Albius, the procurator (A.D. 62—64) who followed Festus, omitted to practise (272). He released any prisoners, accepting ransoms. As its natural result, revolutionary and seditious spirits flamed up and "from this date were sown in the city the seeds of its impending fall." (276). The responsibility of Albinus is very serious and decisive.⁸

Florus, the last procurator (A.D. 64—66), made Albinus "appear by comparison a paragon of virtue" (277), writes Josephus. He "abstained from no form of robbery or violent" (278) and "almost went the length of proclaiming throughout the country that all were at liberty to practise brigandage, on condition that he received his share of the spoils." (278). He was even "contemplating the prospect of war with the nation" to cover up "his own enormities" (282) and oppressed Jews "in order . . . to produce an outbreak of the nation" (283). Bloodthirsty massacre ordered by him included the cruel crucifixion of peaceful people and even of "men of equestrian rank," which none had ever ventured before (308).⁹

Nero's misjudgment was added to the misgovernment of Florus. In relation to the strife between Greeks and Jews in Caesarea (266—270), Nero gave the former the government of Caesarea. "They brought with them the text of the decision, and it was now that the war opened" (284), and "the ostensible pretext for war was out of proportion to the magnitude of the disasters to which it led." (285). The responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict in Caesarea, which directly led to the first Jewish War, was, according to Josephus, wholly on the part of Nero, Florus and the Greeks and Syrians of Caesarea, and Jews were victims from every point of view.

Contrary to Romans, Jews are very gentle and reasonable. Jewish leaders heartfully desired peace and ordinary people followed their persuasion (293, 297, 300, 302—305 (Josephus speaks through the mouths of leading Jews), 315—325, 336—342, 402, 405).

⁶ In *Jewish Antiquities* XX 162ff. Josephus paints Festus black thoroughly and reproaches him bitterly. This contradiction between *JW* and *Jewish Antiquities* should be explained from the view point of literary technique of Josephus.

⁷ *Hitoriae* v, 9: ". . . Claudius made Judaea a province and entrusted it to Roman knights or freedmen; one of the latter, Antonius Felix, practised every kind of cruelty and lust, wielding the power of king with all the instincts of a slave."; *Annales* xii, 54: "Felix . . . considered that with such influences behind him all malefactions would be venial."

⁸ In *Jewish Antiquities* XX 204 Josephus writes, "When Albinus reached the city of Jerusalem, he bent every effort and made every provision to ensure peace in the land by exterminating most of the sicarii." On this contradiction the same explanation may be made as I have written in note 6 above.

⁹ Cf. M. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, (SCM: London, 1977), pp. 39ff.

It is only after repeated villainies of Romans and peacemaking mediation by leading Jews that obstinate and continuous revolutionary activities are introduced suddenly (Chapter 17. 406ff.), without clearly mentioning the failure of mediation.¹⁰ The history of Jewish War reaches a new phase and henceforth the revolutionaries are clearly distinguished from the ordinary people—a kind of transition from the first stage to the second. Both characters, good and wicked, of both camps, Roman and Jewish, appear side by side. The censure of Romans is weakened relatively by the growing reproach against Jewish rebels, but Josephus' pursuit of the responsibility of Romans is not relaxed.

Florus is described to have been still "determined to kindle the war"(420) and was closely connected with the general massacre of Jewish residents by Caesareans ("within one hour more than twenty thousand were slaughtered") (457). Varus, one of Agrippa's friends, whom the King had left in charge of the government while he was on journey, "impiously" "massacred the whole deputation" of seventy persons from Batanaea, moved by "unbounded avarice" (481—3).

The situation in Palestine became so unstable and threatening that a large-scale military intervention was inevitable, and Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, raised army to put down the disturbance in Judaea finally. Incredible as it is, he lost the golden opportunities to capture Jerusalem. "Had he, at that particular moment, decided to force his way through the walls, he would have captured the city forthwith, and the war would have been over" (531f.), and again, when the rebels were seized by a terrible panic and the pro-Roman Jews were about to open the city gates, to welcome Gallus, he "suddenly recalled his troops, renounced his hopes, without having suffered any reverse, and, contrary to all calculation, retired from the city"(540). His sudden flight revived the dying enemies and his army suffered a crushing blow from pursuing rebels. "Had he but persisted for a while with the siege, he would have forthwith taken the city"(539), grieves Josephus, putting the decisive responsibility for the outbreak of great war on the Roman side.

IV

The research of Josephan vocabulary will support and reinforce our observation above. Here I divide Josephan vocabularies in *JW* Book II chapter 1-19 (the first stage. Hereafter abbreviated as I) as follows. A: Words used to reproach Romans and their friends. B: Words used to reproach Jewish rebels or anti-Roman groups in Palestine. C: Of A or B, words used to reproach Jewish rebels in the third stage (after Book III chapter 9. Hereafter abbreviated as III). The following word list shows to what group(s) the word belongs.¹¹

¹⁰ The long speech of King Agrippa (345—401) plays an important part. It gives us the impression that the political situation of Judaea was becoming much more threatening and fanatic activities of revolutionaries were about to ruin the fatherland. Contrary to this, the historical narratives immediately preceding the speech tell us about the gradual restoration and pacification of the situation. The speech was indispensable to introduce the revolutionaries.

¹¹ Following words are omitted because they appear in the second stage but not in the first stage: ἀφροσύνη, δόλος, ἐπιβουλή, ἐπίβουλος κακούργημα. One example (278) of πανουργέω belongs to A but πανουργία and its related words are used affirmatively to describe activities of Josephus himself and Roman soldiers. Josephus uses also ἀπατάω, ἀπάτη, δόλος, στρατήγημα to boast his own works. Special characteristics of these words in relation to the literary technique of Josephus will be the subject of another article.

ἀναιδής	A	λυμαίνομαι	A,B,C
ἀπατάω	B,C	λυμεών	A,C
ἀπατεῶν	B,C	μῆσος	A
ἀπάτη	A,C	παρανομέω	A,C
ἀπόνοια	B,C	παρανομία	A,C
ἀσέβεια	A,B,C	παράφρονέω	A
ἀσεβέω	A,C	πλεονεξία	A,C
ἀσεβής	B,C	τυραννέω, ~εύω	B,C
ἄφρων	B	τυραννίς	A,B,C
δήμιος	A	τύραννος	A,B,C
διεορπάζω	A,B,C	ὑβρίζω	A,B
δόλιος	B,C	ὑβρίς	A,B
ἐξυβρίζω	A,C	φθόνος	A,B,C
ἐπιβουλεύω	B,C	φίλαργυρία	A
ἐπιβουλή	A,B,C	φρενοβλάβεια	A,C
ἐπιθυμία	A,C	χαλεπός	A,B
θρασύς	A,B,C	ὠμός	A,C
κακουργέω	A	ὠμότης	A,B,C
κακουργία	A,C	ὠμῶς	B,C
κλέπτω	A		

Following is the result of research:

- (1) A=30
- (2) A and B=12
- (3) A and B, but not C=3
- (4) A, but not B=18 (= (1)-(2))
- (5) A and C=20
- (6) A and C, but not B=11 (= (5)-(7))
- (7) A and B and C=9 (= (2)-(3)=(5)-(6))
- (8) A, but neither B nor C=7 ((1)-(3)-(5))
- (9) B=21
- (10) B, but not A=9
- (11) B, but not C=4
- (12) B, but neither A nor C=1
- (13) B and C=17
- (14) B and C, but not A=8 (= (13)-(7))
- (15) C=28

Meanings of the above numbers:

(2), (4): Many of the words of reproach against Romans in I are not used to reproach Jewish rebels in I.

(3): Many of the words of reproach both against Romans and against Jewish rebels in I are used to reproach Jewish rebels in III.

(5): Two thirds of words of reproach against Romans in I are used to reproach Jewish rebels in III. The comparison of (5) with (2), and (6) with (3), clearly shows

some similarity between A and C. Cf. (8).

(9): Words of reproach against Jewish rebels in I are only two thirds of those used to reproach Romans in I.

(10): Words of reproach against Jewish rebels in I but not used to reproach Romans in I are 9/21. Cf. (2), (4).

(11): Almost all the words which belong to B also belong to C.

(12): Words of reproach exclusively used to reproach Jewish rebels in I is only one. Cf. (8).

From above, we can conclude that in I Josephus uses much more words of reproach against Romans than against Jewish rebels. We can also see a tendency to discriminate between two sets of vocabularies in I, those against Romans and those against Jewish rebels, and also a tendency to use a group of same words of reproach against "bad Romans" in I and against Jewish rebels in III.¹²

V

Our observation in parts II—III above and our research of Josephan Vocabulary in part IV above denote the same thing. Josephus insists intensely in the first stage of *JW* that for the outbreak of the great war between Jews and Romans, the latter and their friends in Palestine are incomparably more responsible than the anti-Roman, rebellious groups in Jewish people, and that Roman maladministration made unrest and threatening movements among Jewish people grow into a full-scale revolt.¹³ In the preface to *JW* writes Josephus, "The Romans had their own internal disorders. The Jewish revolutionary party . . . seized the occasion of the turbulence of these times for insurrection." (I 4). Thackeray comments on this sentence: "As Reinach points out, this is exaggerated. At the outbreak of war the Roman Empire was free from disorder." I cannot agree with them on this comment.¹⁴ But whether the content of the comment is right or not, is not our problem in this article. Here matters the intention, not the exaggeration, of Josephus. Here he clearly implies what we have confirmed in the above investigation.

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¹² These two points will be investigated in another article.

¹³ This is not the last word of Josephus. Of course Josephus does not acquit the rebellious groups in Jewish people of their crime. In the end in the whole *JW* he absolves both Jews and Romans of their responsibilities through the theological interpretation of the whole event that all happened through God's providence (cf. *JW* I 390, II 360f., 390, 539, III 293, 354, V 367—8 and my commentaries to some of these places in my Japanese translation = *Yosefusu Zenshū*, 1, 2 = *Yudayassenki* I, II—III (Tokyo: Nihonkirisutokyōdan Shuppankyoku, 1982, 1985). Moreover he introduces repentance and heroic deeds of rebellious people with which they expiate their crimes. Cf. my "Rekishika Yosefusu no Tanjō" (= "Birth of Historian Josephus"), *Seisho to Kyōkai*, (Oct. 1981) pp. 8—13.

¹⁴ See my commentary to the place in my Japanese translation (n. 13 above).