

The Physical, Human, and Moral Geographies of Judaea in Tacitus's *Histories* and Josephus

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Classics and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: 5/13/16

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## Abstract

“The Physical, Human, and Moral Geographies of Judaea in Tacitus’s *Histories* and Josephus” concerns the reputation of Judaea and the Judaeans within the texts of Tacitus and Josephus, and specifically how both of these authors use the environs, settlement patterns, and city layouts within Judaea to describe the relative piety or impiety of the Judaeans. Topics discussed include: supernatural providence within the natural landscape of Judaea, the persistent nomadism of the Judaeans, and the system of morality suggested by the structure of Jerusalem.

## Acknowledgements

Foremost thanks must be sent to Dr. Anthony Corbeill for overseeing this project (and for applying his critical eye to my unwieldy drafts). Also much thanks is given to my readers, Dr. Michael Shaw and Dr. Emma Scioli, for their insightful comments. A quick word of thanks should not be spared to Dr. Heather Vincent for introducing me to discourses of ancient ethnography, nor to Dr. Noel Lenski, who suffered through my first attempts at translating Tacitus.

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## Introduction

In Tacitus's *Histories* 5.5, the author describes the first lessons of a convert to Judaism:

*transgressi in morem eorum idem usurpant, nec quicquam prius  
imbuuntur quam contemnere deos, exuere patriam, parentes  
liberos fratres vilia habere.*

Those who have converted into the way of those people take up this practice [circumcision], nor are they steeped in any lesson earlier than **to condemn the gods, throw off their fatherland, and hold their parents, children, and siblings as cheap.**<sup>1</sup>

This *imbuuntur*—to steep, to stain, to instruct—suggests an active and intentional befouling, a transfer with three lessons: condemn the gods, throw off the fatherland, disdain your family.

Nestled within a list of Jewish customs Tacitus finds objectionable, these active instructors of impiety are the Judaeans themselves. The three-fold impiety requested of the convert maps onto Tacitus's perception not only of Jewish identity, but also of Jewish space. Josephus, likely using many of the same sources and writing in both the same city and time period, presents an opposing view: a pious Jewish identity and space, singular from origin to—as part of the diaspora—post-70 CE survival.

Identifying the sources of Tacitus and Josephus, and any possible overlap, has been a favorite activity of scholars for centuries. Though some recent and daring scholars have suggested Tacitus directly made use of Josephus as a source,<sup>2</sup> I will take the conservative route

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus text: Teubner (1989) ed. Wellesley. Josephus text: Weidmann (1892) ed. Niese. Biblical Hebrew text: Westminster Leningrad Codex. English translations are mine throughout.

<sup>2</sup> Shahar (2004).

in this regard, assuming that Tacitus likely did not have access to Josephus's texts, with the possible exception of the *Jewish Wars*. This argument hinges on the (somewhat tenuous) dating of the authors' respective texts. Jonathan Edmondson argues for a dating of the *Jewish Wars* between 78 and 81 CE and the *Jewish Antiquities* more firmly to 93-94 CE (2005: 4-5). The essential texts to this conversation, Josephus's *Against Apion* and Tacitus's *Histories*, provide a troubling overlap, both tentatively dated around 100 CE (Edmondson 2005; Conte 1999: 530). While Josephus spends the majority of *Against Apion* arguing with information regarding Jewish origins also present in Tacitus's *Histories*, there seems to be very little evidence that either Tacitus or Josephus would have had access to the other's newly written treatises, even were they simultaneously disseminated. The similarities between these two texts seems, instead, to be spurred by similar shared source material. It has been posited that both authors made use of Pliny the Elder, Strabo, the war accounts of Vespasian and/or Titus, and possibly Posidonius, among other sources.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to say that if Tacitus did have access to Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, the depictions of the Jews found in the *Histories* suggest Josephus's insights into the subject matter were ignored. However, the issue at hand is not the effect of Josephus upon Tacitus, but the divergent responses both authors gave to similar source and subject material while describing Judaea and the Judaeans.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I begin (as Tacitus did) with the widest scope: the connection between the physical geography of Judaea and the supernatural. The descriptions of natural landscape in both Josephus and Tacitus borrow heavily from geographers inclined to *mirabilia* and Josephus connects certain golden age motifs with a land (Judaea) that is clearly defined, divinely-granted, and still under divine control. Tacitus, on the other hand, downplays

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<sup>3</sup> Rajak (2002); Edmondson (2005); Villalba (1986).

accounts of a providential land, redirecting any suggestion of divine intervention as profiting not the Jews, but the Romans.

In chapter two, I, following Tacitus's second injunction to "throw off the fatherland," examine the human geography, the settlement patterns, of Judaea in the depictions of both Tacitus and Josephus. Tacitus begins his Jewish excursus (*Histories* 5.2-13) with six origin accounts of the Jews, emphasizing their initial transience, and continues to describe the Jews as nomadic, that is, incapable of forming a settled and self-governing society. Josephus, who goes to great lengths to disprove certain origin myths that Tacitus includes, presents an established and eminently lawful Judaea.

The third and final chapter analyzes the layout of the city Jerusalem itself as representing a sort of moral geography. Just as Tacitus divides the injunctions to converts (included above) into three realms of impiety, Tacitus divides the city by means of three concentric circles of walls, also ultimately representing three realms of impiety. The innermost walls protect the temple, the mid-level protect the government, and the final protect the common households/the rest. While this ordering could suggest a laudatory outlook on Jewish priorities of piety, Tacitus hollows all three levels: the temple is empty, the people respect no governance and have no concern for their families. Josephus, on the other hand, suggests that the Jewish piety in all three realms (to the divine, to the country, and to one's family) is represented by Jewish adherence to the divinely-bestowed law.

Ultimately, the framework of the texts in question defines their purposes: Tacitus, including a Jewish excursus before representing the fall of Jerusalem to Titus, describes a Judaea worthy of Roman capture, while Josephus, in his variety of apologies, describes a Judaea worthy to be returned to a state of autonomous rule and a Jewish people safe to resettle. To do so, they

must identify what land (if any) constituted Judaea, what people (if any) settled there, and what virtues (if any) the populace embodied.

## Chapter One

### χώρα θαυμαστή: Physical Geography and the Supernatural

Whereas in the works of Josephus depictions of the natural world strongly imply or explicitly establish divine intervention, Tacitus uses his geographical chapters in the Jewish excursus so as to deny a continued divine presence in Judaea. In this chapter, I hope to show that despite many overlapping depictions of the natural environment of Judaea,<sup>4</sup> these authors are at counterpurpose: Josephus uses both the divine conferral of Judaea upon the Jews and the continual natural providence of Judaea to suggest the subjugation of the land occurred only through divine will, while Tacitus balances depictions of providential landscape in Judaea with the destructive landscape of the same country so as to downplay supernatural influence on the land and, thus, the war. Specifically, both Josephus and Tacitus use and augment images of golden-age landscape<sup>5</sup> to exculpate Judaea from its destruction, in the case of Josephus, or design a land incapable of relying on divine aid, in the case of Tacitus.

The writings of Josephus cannot be considered monolithic by any terms, and such is the case with his geography. The three Josephan texts included in this chapter, *Jewish Wars*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Against Apion*, span different genres and sometimes contain factual

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<sup>4</sup> Yuval Shahar has traced instances of overlap in (2004) 246-261, and though he finally comes to the conclusion Tacitus is using both Strabo and Josephus as sources (252), this is a rare stance. The more popular view is that Tacitus and Josephus shared common source material, likely Strabo, Poseidonios, and Vespasian (the military commentaries). However, in the case of Josephus, Per Bilde has made a case for reinterpreting the Josephan geographical material as highly edited/more original than previously considered (1994).

<sup>5</sup> I here am using Golden-Age imagery to discuss both an ideal and (potentially) unrealizable state, sometimes called utopia. The quintessential form could be the “isles of the blessed” in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (170-174). As these features are used typically to describe mortal spaces outside the traditional *oikumene*, or inhabited world, some of the best depictions of this golden-age imagery appear in James Romm’s *Edges of the World in Ancient Thought* (1992). He discusses key distinctions of golden-age landscapes such as isolation (125-127), an ignorance of seafaring (74-75; this is especially relevant considering Josephus’s denial of Judaea’s coastline), and boundless productivity of resources without labor (51-52; 60-61; 162-164).

contradictions regarding the nature and boundaries of Judaea. In *Against Apion*, for instance, when Josephus insists that the Jews do not inhabit a country by the sea (1.60: Ἡμεῖς τοίνυν οὔτε **χώραν** οἰκοῦμεν **παράλιον**), he is arguing that the Jews both have not been corrupted by foreign license and were too remote to appear in Greek histories. This claim stands in direct contradiction with three earlier accounts within the Josephan corpus: one in which he draws attention to Judah (son of Jacob) gaining the ocean-adjacent settlements of Ashkelon and Gaza by lot (*JA* 5.81: ἐν δὲ τῷ κλήρῳ τούτῳ πόλεις ἦσαν Ἀσκάλων καὶ Γάζα), another while discussing Judaea's continued control (in the Roman period) of the port-city Jaffa (*JW* 3.419), and finally while describing the new and flourishing city of Caesarea Maritima. Josephus describes Caesarea Maritima as a great city of the Judaeans on the coast, using the same term for seaside-dwelling, **παράλιον**, which he later makes use of to explicitly negate a seaside-existence in *AA* (*JW* 3.409: Τετάρτη δὲ Πανέμου μηνὸς ἀναζεύξας εἰς Πτολεμαῖδα κάκειθεν εἰς τὴν **παράλιον** ἀφικνεῖται **Καισάρειαν**, μεγίστην τῆς τε Ἰουδαίας πόλιν). Whenever Josephus is laying borders or emphasizing the great extent of Judaea, therefore, the coastline is included, but at the time Josephus is arguing for a Judaea unpolluted by foreign influence, the coastline disappears.

This is not to claim that Josephus had little concern for geographic accuracy. The opposite seems to be the case (except where it was rhetorically expedient, as in *Apion*, above); Josephus, as Strabo and Pliny the Elder before him, held geographic accuracy as a mark of a good historian, or at least of a good eye-witness account.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Josephus not only produces very exact borders of Judaea (*JW* 3.35-58 and elsewhere), but also emphasizes the necessity of

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<sup>6</sup> Shahar (2004) 192-193 has highlighted many instances in which Josephus castigates other historians for sloppy reporting of locales. On a very detailed source of the relationship between the work of Josephus and Strabo, see same work pg. 238-256, "Josephus' Hidden Dialogue with Strabo."

*fair* and *unchanging* borders. In relating the Jewish laws set down by Moses, Josephus includes this admonition concerning personal boundary markers:

“Ὅρους γῆς μὴ ἐξέστω κινεῖν **μήτε οἰκείας μήτ’ ἀλλοτρίας πρὸς οὓς ἐστὶν ὑμῖν εἰρήνη**, φυλαττέσθω δ’ ὥσπερ θεοῦ ψῆφον βεβαίαν εἰς αἰῶνα κειμένην ἀναιρεῖν, ὡς πολέμων ἐντεῦθεν καὶ **στάσεων γινομένων** ἐκ τοῦ πλεονεκτοῦντας προσωτέρω χωρεῖν βούλεσθαι τῶν ὄρων: **μὴ γὰρ μακρὰν εἶναι τοῦ καὶ τοὺς νόμους ὑπερβαίνειν τοὺς τὸν ὄρον μετακινούντας.**

Let it not be allowed to move the markers of land, **neither ours nor those of others with whom we are at peace**, but guard from lifting them up as if they were a decision firmly **set by God to remain throughout the ages**, for from this willingness of the greedy to reach beyond their boundaries **comes war and sedition; there is a thin line between overstepping the law and transgressing borders.**

(JA 4.225)

The highlighted portions are the major points of Josephus’s account not included in the Tanakh.<sup>7</sup>

Twice this law appears in Deuteronomy, an extremely short version in 27:17 (ארור מסיג גבול רעהו):

Cursed are they who remove the landmarks of their neighbors) and a slightly longer version in

19:14 (לא תסיג גבול רעך אשר גבלו ראשנים בנחלתך אשר תנחל בארץ אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך לרשתה): Do not

remove the landmark of your neighbor within the land, your long-established inheritance, which

you will gain, as your God gives it to you to possess). While this last version includes a mention

of the divine, it is clearly within the relative clause describing the land (ארץ), not the marker

(גבול). Only Josephus’s version posits God as the allotter of the divisions of land, rather than

simply of the land itself. Moreover, the boundaries are eternal (εἰς αἰῶνα). When construed as the

impetus for wars and rebellions (πολέμων ἐντεῦθεν καὶ στάσεων), these additions (to a text

written for a non-Judaeian readership) cannot but remind of the recent war against the Jews. Two

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<sup>7</sup> The Tanakh can be understood as the canonical “Jewish Bible,” or Christian Old Testament. Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* is often thought to be a retelling of the Tanakh for a non-Jewish audience. Thackeray (1930, reprint 2001) describes Josephus’s Biblical and non-Biblical sources in his introduction (viii-xiv).

possibilities for the inclusion of these emendations present themselves: Josephus could be implying that, when proceeding lawfully, the Jews are not a threat for (another) rebellion, since war and rebellion is presented as the punishment for unjust action and hence to be avoided. Alternatively, he could be suggesting that although the land belongs to the Judaeans in perpetuity, if the Romans allowed them to self-govern, they would not need to fear any border encroachment. That is to say, he claims the Jews' land is established (non-expanding) and they have no desire for colonizing or outreach, recognizing this to be a path to war.

Having established what makes Josephus's borders unchanging, we move to why they could be considered fair. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus relates the story of the portioning of the land of Canaan:

Καὶ Ἰησοῦς μὲν τούτους ποιησάμενος τοὺς λόγους συγκάταινον ἔσχε τὸ πλῆθος καὶ ἄνδρας τοὺς ἐκμετρησομένους τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν ἐξέπεμψε παραδοὺς αὐτοῖς τινὰς γεωμετρίας ἐπιστήμονας, οὓς τάληθές οὐκ ἔμελλε λήσεσθαι διὰ τὴν τέχνην, ἐντολὰς δοὺς ἀποτιμήσασθαι τῆς τε εὐδαίμονος ἰδία τὸ μέτρον γῆς καὶ τῆς **ἥσσον ἀγαθῆς**. ἡ γὰρ φύσις τῆς Χαναanaίων γῆς τοιαύτη τίς ἐστιν, ὡς ἴδοι τις ἂν πεδία μεγάλα καὶ καρποὺς φέρειν ἰκανώτατα καὶ **συγκρινόμενα μὲν ἑτέρα γῆ πανευδαίμονα νομισθησόμενα**, τοῖς δ' Ἰεριχουντίων χωρίοις παραβαλλόμενα καὶ τοῖς Ἱεροσολυμιτῶν τὸ μηδὲν ἀναφανησόμενα: καίτοι παντελῶς ὀλίγην αὐτῶν εἶναι τὴν γῆν συμβέβηκε ταύτης δὲ ὄρεινὴν τὴν πολλήν, ἀλλ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς καρπῶν ἐκτροφὴν τε καὶ κάλλος οὐκ ἀπολέλοιπεν ἑτέρα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τιμητοὺς μᾶλλον ἢ μετρητοὺς τοὺς κλήρους εἶναι δεῖν ὑπέλαβε πολλάκις ἐνὸς πλέθρου κἂν χιλίων ἀνταξίου γενομένου.

And Joshua, having made his speech, gained the approval of the majority and sent, for the purpose of measuring the land, some men possessing the knowledge of geometry (so that the true nature of the land would not escape the notice of their skill), having given them commands to set a valuation on the measure of the land which was blessed, according to its particularities, and of the land which was **less good**. For this is the nature of the land of Canaanites, that one could see fields great and sufficient for fruit, and **comparing these to other portions of the land, consider them all-blessed**, but throw them side-by-side against the lands of Jericho or Jerusalem and they look like nothing; and yet (even

though) this part stood as an especially small land and much of it mountainous, it bore an excess of fruit and with respect to beauty would not give way to any other place. And so Joshua took up the notion that the lots needed to be divided by value, rather than measure, since it happened often that one plethron was equal to a thousand.

(JA 5.76-79)

The comparable passage in Joshua 18 contains only the command of Joshua for the men entering the uncharted lands of Canaan to map and describe it to him so that he could cast lots (18:8), followed by the immediate obedience of those explorers (18:9). The insistence on exact measure (geometry and the appearance of truth) and the competing valuations of quantity and quality are explicit only in Josephus's account. Josephus reorients the allotment, while maintaining the seemingly haphazard medium of casting lots, to display the Jewish faith in learning, ability to reason, and attention to equity. While doing so, he is simultaneously singing the praises of his homeland. For, though the land is being divided by quality, no piece of the land is regarded negatively. The portions not reaching the grandeur of the hills around Jerusalem or Jericho are not bad (κακὸν), but less good (5.76: ἥσσον ἀγαθῆς) and, to those not in-the-know, seemed exceedingly good in comparison with other land (5.77: συγκρινόμενα μὲν ἑτέρα γῆ πανευδαίμονα νομισθησόμενα). The adjective here, πανευδαίμονα<sup>8</sup> is a more emphatic version of that adjective used to describe the lush portions of Canaan: εὐδαίμων.

Upon reaching the land of Canaan, Josephus has Moses use the same adjective, εὐδαίμων, while addressing the assembled wanderers: “Two good things have been chosen by God to be granted to you, he says: freedom and the possession of a blessed land; one you have

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<sup>8</sup> A term most often seen in the works of Lucian, once—within *Hermotimus*—in reference to an ideal (utopic) city without race or creed, though likely humorously reported. though it also appears in one instance within Plutarch's *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*, describing the wise man as blessed, all-happy, and free from dangers (καίτοι ὁ μὲν σοφὸς ὄλβιος μακάριος πανευδαίμων ἀσφαλῆς ἀκίνδυνος), whereas (Plutarch claims) the foolish man is miserable, even if venerated by the stoics.

already been given, the other you will soon take up” (JA 3.300: ‘δύο, φησί, τοῦ θεοῦ κρίναντος ἡμῖν παρασχεῖν ἀγαθά, **ἐλευθερίαν** καὶ γῆς κτήσιν **εὐδαίμονος**, τὴν μὲν ἤδη δόντος ἔχετε, τὴν δὲ ἤδη λήψεσθε’). These words of Moses have no precedent in the parallel accounts of either Numbers or Deuteronomy. Especially Josephus’s use of **ἐλευθερίαν** is pointed when used in conjunction with the blessed land for a text written not so long after the Judaeans lost both simultaneously to the Romans. Josephus uses the term **ἐλευθερία** liberally, well over a hundred times in this text, and not limited to the sections detailing the Exodus where it could be expected for the subject material, but throughout the twenty books of the *Jewish Antiquities*. Nor does he shy from using it regarding the Romans, but claims in 14.77:

Τούτου τοῦ πάθους τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις αἴτιοι κατέστησαν Ἵρκανὸς καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος πρὸς ἀλλήλους στασιάσαντες: **τὴν τε** γὰρ **ἐλευθερίαν** ἀπεβάλομεν καὶ ὑπήκοοι Ῥωμαίοις κατέστημεν **καὶ τὴν χώραν**, ἣν τοῖς ὅπλοις ἐκτησάμεθα τοὺς Σύρους ἀφελόμενοι, ταύτην ἠναγκάσθημεν ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς Σύροις.

The responsible parties for this suffering inside Jerusalem were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus fighting each other in factions: we both lost **our freedoms** and rendered **our land** subject to the Romans, that land which we acquired by war with the Syrians, and were forced to give back to the Syrians.

Here again **ἐλευθερίαν** and **χώραν** are paired, both lost and gained in tandem. Note also that Josephus provides as the cause of war (and Pompey’s subsequent conquering of Judaea) not the Romans, nor anything to do with the Romans, but the infighting of two priest-kings. However, even this damning quarrel is not free from divine retribution. Earlier in the same book (14.41) it is noted that the people rebuffed both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus because, although both had been descended from priests, both sought to supplant the priestly government established by God and set up a monarchy.

In Josephus’s works, supernatural forces produce most, if not all, natural-appearing

destruction of land. Take, for instance, the reckoning brought upon the land of Ashdod once its inhabitants stole the ark:

καὶ τελευταῖον ἀπέσκηψεν εἰς τὴν τῶν Ἀζωτίων πόλιν καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν φθορὰν τὸ θεῖον καὶ νόσον... τὰ δ' ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας μυῶν πλῆθος ἀνελθὸν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κατέβλαψε μήτε φυτῶν μήτε καρπῶν ἀποσχόμενον.

And finally [God] **hurled down** a divine destruction and a plague on the city of Ashdod and land of [the Philistines]... and concerning the lands, a hoard of mice emerged upon the ground and destroyed it, keeping away from neither plant nor fruit.

(JA 6.3)

The verb ἀποσκήπτω seems to have two regular uses: when describing Zeus, hurling lightning, as in Herodotus 7.10, and to describe an onrush in war, as in Polybius 9.9, when discussing Hannibal. In either case, the φθορὰν τὸ θεῖον καὶ νόσον makes immediately clear to the reader that Josephus attributes these events to divine retribution. However, the inhabitants of the Philistine cities are divided in opinion over whether or not these troubles have a divine origin. Only one portion of them recognize these miseries as supernatural vengeance, using the hapax legomenon ὑπερεκδικέω, to exact extreme judgement, to describe the god's actions, while the other portion argued that the changes were natural occurrences (7.8-9). The ruin is primarily located against vegetation, a move against cultivation which would have effects extended beyond one planting season. However, while for the Philistines these effects were temporary, removed upon the relocation of the ark, some divine acts in Josephus are sufficiently severe as to leave permanent mark. Such is the scenario of Sodom and Gomorrah, with which Josephus regales us at JA 1.195:

χαλεπήνας οὖν ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ θεὸς ἔγνω τιμωρήσασθαι τῆς ὑπερηφανίας αὐτοῦς καὶ **τὴν τε πόλιν αὐτὴν κατασκάψασθαι καὶ τὴν χώραν οὕτως ἀφανίσει**, ὡς μήτε φυτὸν ἔτι μήτε καρπὸν ἕτερον ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀναδοθῆναι.

Therefore, having been provoked to anger against those men, God determined to exact vengeance for their arrogance and **to raze that city and obliterate the land**, so that **neither plant nor fruit** grew from that land, and still does not.

The twin focus on the city and on the land and the double emphasis on produce remain, and Josephus uses a verb nearly synonymous with ἀποσκήπτω, κατασκάπτω.<sup>9</sup> In many ways the more descriptive text in terms of geography, the *Jewish Wars* tells of the present scenario of the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, as suggested by the ἔτι signifying a past action with continuing effects:

γεινιᾶ δ' ἡ Σοδομίτις αὐτῇ, **πάλαι μὲν εὐδαίμων γῆ καρπῶν** τε ἔνεκεν καὶ τῆς κατὰ πόλιν περιουσίας, νῦν δὲ κεκαυμένη **πᾶσα**. φασὶ δὲ ὡς δι' ἀσέβειαν οἰκητόρων κεραυνοῖς καταφλεγῆναι: ἔστι γοῦν **ἔτι** λείψανα τοῦ θεοῦ πυρός, καὶ πέντε μὲν πόλεων ἰδεῖν σκιάς, **ἔτι** δὲ κὰν τοῖς καρποῖς σποδιὰν ἀναγεννωμένην, οἱ χροιάν μὲν ἔχουσι τῶν ἐδωδύμων ὁμοίαν, δρεψαμένων δὲ χερσὶν εἰς καπνὸν διαλύονται καὶ τέφραν.

Bordering [Lake Asphaltitis] is Sodom, **long ago a land blessed on account of its fruits** and the wealth of each city, now everything has been scorched, they say on account of the profanity of the inhabitants it was struck by lightning bolts: there are **still** remnants of the fire of God, and you can see the phantoms of the five cities, and **still** ash grows in the fruits, those fruits having the appearance of being edible, but when plucked by hand, they dissolve into smoke and cinder.

(*JW* 4.483-484)

Here again we find the descriptor εὐδαίμων, specifically in reference to fruit. The double ἔτι makes clear that, unlike the episode with the Philistines, the effects of this destruction are retained in Judaea to the present time, even in such fleeting modes as vestiges (λείψανα),

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<sup>9</sup> The etymology of the latter contains σκάπτω, to dig, so likely the cities here were “torn out to the roots,” whereas σκήπτω is more generally to fall or hurl. But Josephus uses κατασκάπτω almost synonymously and much more often for the total destruction of cities by a god, as in 1.195, 5.248, and 10.112, perhaps distancing the destructive abilities of the Judaeian god with the lightning associated with Zeus/Jupiter or assuming the words to be etymologically related.

phantoms (σκιάς), and ash (σποδιάν). An interesting retained element is the five cities allegedly destroyed, which seems to be a conflation of the temporary destruction of the five cities of the Philistines with the permanent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is sometimes collected into a set of five with Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. But only the account of Deuteronomy 29:23 alleges Admah and Zeboim were destroyed, and by every account Zoar was spared. Why should this matter? By aligning the destructions of Sodom and Gomorrah so closely with those of the Philistines, a common enemy of the Judaeans, Josephus creates inside the territory of Judaea a monument both to the importance of abiding by moral law and to the ruin of an ancient civilization presented as an enemy to the Judaeans. This in turn reinforces Josephus's presentation of the Jews as hyper-aware of the punishments associated with breaking laws, an aspect likely desirable among client states for Romans, while also providing a tacit threat against the enemies of the Jewish God.

In fact, like Josephus's account of the allotment of the land, the depictions of the land of Judaea (especially in the *Jewish Wars*) tend to be exceedingly positive, even regarding Lake Asphaltitis, normally presented as a pestilence (as in Pliny *NH* 5.72). For, while he does admit the waters are bitter and barren (*JW* 4.476: πικρὰ καὶ ἄγονος), the change of color (due to the sun shining from different directions during the day) is marvelous (4.478: ἔστι δ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ καὶ ἡ τῆς χροῆς μεταβολὴ θαυμάσιος). And the lake is presented as a benefit to the surrounding Judaeans, through the production of bitumen which is used for the building of ships and the restoration of health, and so included in many medicines (4.481: καὶ χρήσιμος δὲ οὐ μόνον εἰς ἀρμονίας νεῶν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄκεσιν σωμάτων: εἰς πολλὰ γοῦν τῶν φαρμάκων παραμίσγεται).<sup>10</sup> Josephus presents the lake as a danger only to one sort of person: those traveling with Vespasian. He

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<sup>10</sup> An interesting comparison is the bitumen allegedly found from the ark which averts dangers according to *JA* 1.93.

recounts that Vespasian commanded some people who didn't know how to swim to be bound and tossed into the depths (4.477: Οὐεσπασιανὸς ἐκέλευσέ τινας τῶν νεῖν οὐκ ἐπισταμένων δεθέντας ὀπίσω τὰς χεῖρας ῥιφῆναι κατὰ τοῦ βυθοῦ), and these people (as had been rumored) floated. The lake (and the Judaeian landscape on the whole) intends no destruction on humans, whether Roman or Judaeian—though Vespasian himself might; the text is not clear as to the nationality of the human guinea pigs.

Josephus provides his most positive example of Judaeian geography in the lands surrounding Lake Gennesar (the Sea of Galilee, or the Kinneret in modern-day Israel), claiming that the land that lies alongside the lake of the same name is wonderful in nature and beauty (3.516: Παρατείνει δὲ τὴν Γεννησάρ ὁμόνυμος χώρα θαυμαστὴ φύσιν τε καὶ κάλλος). He lists an assortment of plants produced there before turning to the heart of the marvel using symbolic language:

φιλοτιμίαν ἂν τις εἴποι τῆς φύσεως βιασαμένης εἰς ἓν συναγαγεῖν  
τὰ μάχισμα καὶ τῶν ὥρων ἀγαθὴν ἔριν ἐκάστης ὥσπερ  
ἀντιποιουμένης τοῦ χωρίου: καὶ γὰρ οὐ μόνον τρέφει παρὰ δόξαν  
τὰς διαφοροὺς ὀπώρας ἀλλὰ καὶ διαφυλάσσει.

This could be said to be the pinnacle of nature, for it forces together warlike enemies, a positive struggle of seasons, as if each were laying claim to their region: for it not only bears a variety of autumn fruits beyond expectations, but guards itself as well.

(*JW* 3.518)

Here again we have the otherwise warlike and negative (μάχισμα καὶ ἔριν) rendered for the good (ἀγαθὴν). What's more, the land overcomes expected natural barriers such as native habitation and time to create a φιλοτιμίαν, an ideal scenario.

This preference for peace ahead of war displays another use of geography for Josephus: to present a Judaea so peaceable, self-dependent, and self-constrained that left independent and

self-legislating, could live in unthreatening harmony with Rome. Both the depictions of altered or ruined landscape and the provisional natural resources, on the other hand, recall the deity through whom the land was provided and through whom it was dispossessed.

In the *Histories*, Tacitus does not even name the country Judaea except in the context of foreign invasions. The borders of Judaea are hastily sketched not at the beginning of the ethnographic account, as could be expected,<sup>11</sup> but in the middle. Once inside the land, Tacitus demystifies the depictions of Judaea among his predecessors, who were interested in the exceptional *mirabilia* in the landscape, using three strategies: stressing the similarities with Italian landscape, pairing incredible images with unsavory images, and relying on interpretations of so-called natural wonders so as to discredit the possibility of their divine origin. In doing so, Tacitus draws a land which: 1) only exists as a discrete territory when it is a reward or hindrance to powerful countries, 2) contains sufficient natural resources to provide incentive (other than the political) for complete Roman assimilation, and 3) lacks supernatural providence, making the superstitious Judaeans both easy to conquer and without hope of retribution against the Romans.

Tacitus brackets his ethnographic account of the Jews in *Histories* 5.2-13 with the character of Titus positioning himself for an attack on Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of book five, Titus has been chosen by his father to subjugate Judaea (5.1: *perdomandae Iudaeae delectus a patre*). This first mention of Judaea as a territory is therefore in the context of its necessary conquering by the Romans. The second mention, in the same section, are of those three legions, already in Judaea, which fell in with Titus (5.1: *tres eum in Iudaea legiones ...*

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<sup>11</sup> For the normal structure of ethnographic interruptions and the importance of reordering in the Jewish excursus in particular, see Bloch (1999) 42-47.

<sup>12</sup> For all depictions of geography in *Histories* 5 as politically motivated, see O’Gorman (1995).

*excepere*). Here, too, Judaea exists as a land already besieged by troops. A third time in the same section we get a suggestion of the *gens Iudaei* existing in a specific, bordered land, but only inasmuch as their surrounding countries hate them. After listing the legions in the surrounding provinces of Syria and Alexandria which join Titus, as well as those troops of Agrippa and Antiochus's which join out of allegiance, Tacitus speaks of a band of Arabs who join by their own choice, because they are "hostile toward the Judaeans with that usual hatred among dwellers-by," (5.1: *solito inter accolas odio infensa Iudaeis Arabum manus*).<sup>13</sup> So, in the frame narrative to the excursus, Judaea exists as a discrete territory in that it is on the one hand a land currently and about to be besieged by the Romans and on the other hand, surrounded by enemies.

In his introductory sentence to the excursus proper, Tacitus seems to reduce the territory to the singular city that would likely have been the focus of the end of book 5. (5.2: But because we are about to relate the final day of a famous city, it seems agreeable to make plain the origins of **that city**. *Sed quoniam famosae urbis supremum diem tradituri sumus, congruens videtur primordia eius aperire.*) The pronoun *eius* here refers back to the city, but the accounts Tacitus provides afterward seem more fitting descriptions of the people or the land as a whole. Only two of the six origin stories make any reference to Jerusalem, once obliquely to the generals Hierosolymus and Judah, the second time explicitly, as the Solymoi gave their own name to their established city Hiersolyma (5.2: *...conditae urbi Hierosolyma nomen e suo fecisse*). Judaea, the territory, is not explicitly mentioned again until 5.8, entirely absent from the geographic discussion in 5.6 where it is relegated to:

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<sup>13</sup> In the earlier books of the *Histories*, Tacitus seems to prefer forms of *vicinus* to describe neighboring peoples. *Accolae* begin to appear in books four and five, appearing only five times and always in a "barbarian" context: once in reference to those the Garamantes pillage (4.50), once of peoples around Egypt (4.83), and thrice concerning the Jews. For this reason I'm understanding *accolas* as those "dwelling nearby," as opposed to *vicinos*, a more positive "neighbors."

Terra finesque qua ad Orientem vergunt Arabia terminantur, a meridie Aegyptus obiacet, ab occasu Phoenices et mare, septentrionem e latere Syriae longe prospectant.

The land and borders which turn to the east are bound by Arabia; Egypt lies on the south; the Phoenicians and the sea on the west; and the land and borders lie on the north for a long way on the side of Syria.

Other than *Phoenices*, which refers to the Phoenician people rather than the land, Tacitus defines the borders of his unnamed territory (*terra finesque*) through named countries/provinces: Arabia, Egypt, and Syria. Tacitus is willing to name every other province than Judaea.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth pointing out, too, that this sketch has none of the exactitude of Josephus's measurements, and outside of the cardinal directions, *longe* is our only descriptor of this spatial plane. When Tacitus turns to the social and political space in 5.8, a discrete Judaea reappears, albeit in parts. "A great part of Judaea is sprinkled with hamlets, they also have towns" (*magna pars Iudaeae vicis dispergitur, habent et oppida*). In a different sense, Judaea remains a "part" as Tacitus discusses the political situation of the territory, that is into which hands the land fell as empires rose and fell. "While the East was under the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, [this was] the most contemptible part of those being subjected" (*dum Assyrios penes Medosque et Persas Oriens fuit, despectissima pars servientium*). Far from being a fully-realized country, or even a complete territory, this was merely a much-scorned corner of great empires. It may be that the *pars* refers not to the land at all, but the people; in the next overthrow of an empire, Tacitus says that after the Macedonians took power, king Antiochus attempted to improve the "most loathsome people," (*taeterrimam gentem*), and no mention of the land is made. For the first time

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<sup>14</sup> While it may be argued that this is due to the relative size of the larger kingdoms as opposed to small Judaea, the primacy of Judaea within *this* narrative suggests instead Tacitus either names the surrounding nations to 1) emphasize provinces over which Rome has some control (as these are lands from which Vespasian and Titus have drawn troops) or to 2) emphasize the number and importance of Judaea's neighboring enemies.

in the section, the people become “Judaeans” again when they (briefly, and to disastrous result) take up power, naming their own kings in the absence of a larger governing power (*tum Iudaei Macedonibus invalidis, Parthis nondum adultis (et Romani procul erant), sibi ipsi reges imposuere*). The four demonyms are, on one hand, unbalanced: the Judaeian kingdom cannot be seen to compete with powers of the Macedonians, Parthians, or Romans, but on the other hand, the cases provide a pleasant chiasmic structure (nom., abl., abl., nom.) which would suggest a balance. Immediately afterward, however, the kings are removed from power by the fickleness of the people, who have been demoted to *vulgus (qui mobilitate vulgi expulsi)*, no longer attached to any collective descriptor, in keeping with the mob mentality. In essence, the land exists in the *Historiae* as a discrete (and disgusting) part of larger empires, but not (or at least, not long) on its own, and is often understood merely as its occupants.

Were Tacitus to present Judaea merely as an abominable land, hateful to every empire who encompassed it, the argument for its retention in the Roman Empire would be somewhat harder to manage. Besides, it may have appeared disingenuous to those Romans who had read descriptions of a productive land in the works of Tacitus’s predecessors, such as Pliny and Strabo. Instead, Tacitus presents a Judaea of moderate production. The bodies of the people are healthy and used to labor (5.6: *corpora hominum salubria et ferentia laborum*), and while rains are rare, the soil is fertile (*rari imbres, uber solum*). The simplicity of the verb-less phrases matches the understated descriptions. Tacitus continues: “The fruits that grow bountifully are alike to ours, except the balsa and palm” (*exuberant fruges nostrum ad morem praeterque eas balsamum et palmae*). Here, the verb which would suggest exceptional produce (*exuberant*) is tempered to a commonality with Roman produce (*nostrum ad morem*). The plants which are the exceptions, unavailable in Rome, are themselves balanced: the palm is tall and decorous, the

balsa a small tree (*palmetis proceritas et decor, balsamum modica arbor*), and only the latter produces a material Tacitus finds worthy of note: a discharge used in medicines. In Tacitus's account, the exports of Judaea, even if growing or appearing without human effort, require labor to become worthwhile. The balsa may sprout without human planning, but its veins must be opened by stone fragments or pottery (*fragmine lapidis aut testa aperiuntur*). Lake Asphaltitis discharges bitumen unhelped (*certo anni bitumen egerit*), but in order to be used, it must be dragged to shore, dried out, and cut into pieces with axes and wedges. Finally, in a less violent but still manual effort, the sands around the mouth of the river Belus are collected, mixed with nitrum, and then melted into glass. (5.7: *lectae harenae admixto nitro in vitrum excoquantur*). Far from a self-provident land suggested in places by Josephus, these resources (much like the land itself) must be labored after.

Tacitus retains some aspects of the self-providential landscape, which do not lend themselves easily to balance. For instance, Tacitus reuses the adjective *modicus*, previously used to describe the balsa, to contain the shore on which the glass-worthy sand appears, but at the same time the shore is inexhaustible for those carrying it away [its produce] (5.7: *modicum id litus et egerentibus inexhaustum*). *Inexhaustum/modicum* may not be an oxymoron, but it is not entirely congruent either. *Inexhaustus*, if taken literally, implies an unnatural natural phenomenon, an unmeasurable and unceasing supply.<sup>15</sup> While the word *inexhaustus* appears rarely in Latin, the idea of an unceasing natural resource appeared quite frequently in golden age motifs, which posited a natural world abundant with goods, no human labor required. Some golden age motifs looked into the periphery of the *oikumene*, either because at the edges of the

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<sup>15</sup> Which (unnatural/natural) is an oxymoron, I know. I'm still working on how to talk about natural phenomena without calling them natural or phenomena.

world lived beings closer to those of previous eras or because the edges of the world were sometimes closest to the gods.<sup>16</sup>

Now, while Judaea is by no means on the literal edges of the inhabited world, —Tacitus has already shown it surrounded by Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and the Phoenicians—the Jewish excursus, and especially chapter 5.6, presents the land as containing some peculiarities more befitting the fringes than the interior of the empire. This is nowhere more prominent than regarding Lake Asphaltitis:

lacus immenso ambitu, specie maris, sapore corruptior, gravitate odoris **accolis pestifer**, neque **vento impellitur** neque **piscis aut suetas aquis volucris patitur**. **inertes undae** superiacta **ut solido ferunt**; **periti imperitique nandi perinde** attolluntur.

The lake has an immense circumference, looks like the sea, but with a more spoiled taste, with a severe odor **destructive to those nearby**, and **it is not pushed around by the wind** nor does it **allow fish or the usual birds in its waters**. The **motionless waves** bear up anything having been thrown [upon it] **as if on solid land**; **experienced and inexperienced swimmers** are raised up **alike**.

Physically, Lake Asphaltitis defies every expectation of its category:<sup>17</sup> it's large enough to be a sea, with water less-potable than that of the sea, and a smell noxious to those surrounding it, instead of the life-giving fresh waters expected of an inland lake. The depiction gets stranger as it continues: it is not working in concert with the surrounding environment (pushed around by the wind) nor assuming its accustomed tasks/occupants (providing the ecosystem for birds and fish). Where the lake defies not only usual ecosystems, but also the very essence of materials, is in the next line: *inertes undae superiacta ut solido ferunt*. The use of *inertes* with *undae* seems bizarre;

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<sup>16</sup> On the golden-age and fringe motifs predicated on closeness to divinity, see Romm (1992) 50-51. On primitivism, Romm (1992) 67-69, 74.

<sup>17</sup> Rene Bloch uses the example of Lake Asphaltitis, on the contrary, as creating a type-pattern which forecasts the destruction of Jerusalem and, in the Lake's negative qualities, emulates Jewish character (1999) 43.

while *iners* is used with *aqua* to suggest stagnant water, *undae* require a notion of motion. The adjective is often used as the antithesis to fluid movement, as in Vergil’s *Georgics* 4.25: “*seu stabit iners seu profluet umor...*” The only use of *iners* + *undae* (which I could find) other than in this depiction of Lake Asphaltitis is found in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* 6.106-7: But the enemy, free in the spacious hills of the land, were vexed by neither dank air, nor by still waves (*At liber terrae spatiosis collibus hostis / aere non pigro, nec inertibus angitur undis*). Here an illness pollutes both air and water until these human necessities are the means of human death. Tacitus takes this reversal a step further, however, suggesting the *inertes undae*, when tested, act as a solid (*ut solido*). While solid waters have literary precedence as ice, as a non-ice water/solid combination, Asphaltitis is unique. The most similar circumstance, with the merging of different forms of matter, is that of legendary island of Thule, where, according to Strabo (retelling a story of Pytheas), distinct air, water, and land cease to exist, and a mixture of these elements is formed.<sup>18</sup> Whereas for Pytheas, this makes the land/water/air untraversable, for Tacitus this makes it traversable to all. In fact, the waters seem to wipe away differentiation in humans, too, allowing to float those experienced and inexperienced in swimming alike (*periti imperitique nandi perinde*). Tacitus reorients readers from the realm of the miraculous and supernatural in the Asphaltitis by, as we’ve seen, emphasizing the physical labor associated with the production of bitumen. Tacitus also balances by following an account of what could appear like divine providence (the production of the bitumen) with one of (potential) divine destruction.

Directly after the account of Asphaltitis, Tacitus describes a plain of destroyed cities:

Haud procul inde campi quos ferunt olim **uber**es magnisque  
urbibus habitatos fulminum iactu arsisse; et manere vestigia,

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<sup>18</sup> *Geography* 2.4.1: ...προσιστορήσαντος δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς Θούλης καὶ τῶν τόπων ἐκείνων, οἷς οὔτε γῆ καθ’ αὐτὴν ὑπῆρχεν ἔτι οὔτε θάλαττα οὔτ’ ἀήρ, ἀλλὰ σύγκριμά τι ἐκ τούτων πλεύμονι θαλαττίῳ ἐοικός, ἐν ᾧ φησι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλατταν αἰωρεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ σύμπαντα, καὶ τοῦτον ὡς ἂν δεσμὸν εἶναι τῶν ὄλων, μήτε πορευτὸν μήτε πλωτὸν ὑπάρχοντα.

**terramque ipsam**, specie torridam, **vim frugiferam** perdidisse. [...] ego sicut inclitas quondam urbis **igne caelesti** flagrasse **concesserim**, ita **halitu lacus** infici terram, corrumpi superfusum spiritum, eoque fetus segetum et autumnus putrescere **reor**, solo caeloque iuxta gravi.

Not at all far from there they say there are plains, once bearing **fertile** habitations with many cities, burnt by the strike of lightning bolts; and vestiges remain, and **the land itself**, scorched in appearance, lost its **productive power**. [...] **I will concede** that long ago, famous cities were burnt up **by heavenly fire**, but in this case **I think** the land was poisoned **by the breath of the lake**, and the breeze pouring over [the land] was spoiled, and in this way the shoots of grain and of autumn crops are ruined, with the soil and air equally unproductive.

(5.7)

By combining the initial fertility of the land (*uberes*) and the modifier *olim*, which could suggest mythic time, Tacitus may be referring to an initial divine providence, but this is relegated to a clause inside the lightning-based destruction. While the cities are ostensibly wiped out, in the first narrative they seem almost collateral damage, with the land itself and the fruit-producing power the prioritized victims, due to the plethora of crop terms. Tacitus obliquely offers the divine interpretation by suggesting that other famous cities were destroyed by fire from the heavens (*igne caelesti*), but contrasts this with another ablative of means (*halitu lacus*) and his first-person singular opinion (*reor*). Tacitus reports an account relying on divine providence before realigning the discussion to non-supernatural causes. He suggests, far from being uniquely provident, the land of Judaea contains locations opposed to human development, even if those discussions are couched in golden-age utopian terms or sources.<sup>19</sup>

Nowhere does Tacitus make the absence of the Jewish deity clearer than in the final section of the excursus, where he discusses the prodigies occurring that the Jews refused to

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<sup>19</sup> It has been argued that Tacitus does not feature religion to any substantial degree in the *Histories* (Liebeschuetz [1969]), though Morgan (1996) makes a strong case for understanding the importance of prodigies within the *Histories*.

interpret and the prophecies that they misinterpreted. The existence of the prodigies is never in question:

Evenerant prodigia, quae neque hostiis neque votis piare fas habet  
gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa. visae per caelum  
concurrere acies, rutilantia arma et subito nubium igne conlucere  
templum.

Prodigies had happened, which the people considered right to atone for neither with sacrifices nor with vows, since—though addicted to superstition—they are opposed to religious duties. Battleline visions and reddening armies raced through the sky, and the temple was lit with the clouds aflame.

(5.13)

By the nature of their failed expiation of the gods, Tacitus shows a Jewish people incapable of taking advantage of divine prosperity and aid, were they to have it (which they do not). He writes off their intense focus on a god as superstition, which cannot be acted upon even if nature gives proofs of the future. However, as in the previous examples throughout this chapter, Tacitus does not completely eradicate a divine influence, and the possibility of a previous protection for Judaea from deities, though he does mitigate their power against the Romans. After the temple is lit, “the doors of the temple unexpectedly opened and a voice greater than human was heard saying that the gods have departed” (*apertae repente delubri fores et audita maior humana vox excedere deos*). While this statement disregards the monotheism Tacitus has already acknowledged in 5.5, for a more recognizable polytheism, it implies that (if the prodigy is being reported accurately) the gods had been occupying the temple in Jerusalem up to this point. The leap between close proximity of the gods and flourishing or provident lands is not a far one; consider, for instance, the Ethiopians and the table of the gods.<sup>20</sup> But for Tacitus’s purposes, the

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<sup>20</sup> This is largely borrowing from Herodotus’s presentation of the amazing health and stature of the Ethiopians, related to their frequent interactions with the divine. Romm summarizes the relationship between the Ethiopians, the Olympians, and golden age motifs (1992) 49-53.

significant detail is not the gods' previous encampment but their *departure*, paving the way for a Roman victory at least unhampered by divine intrusion, at best aided by some turncoat deities. The soldiers need not call out the gods with a formal *evocatio* as they did at Veii (Livy 5.21.1-3; 5.22.3-8); they had already left willingly.<sup>21</sup> That these deities have Rome's best interests at heart is further suggested by the misinterpreted prophecy of the Jews' ancient texts, which the Jews believe presage a rise to power of Judaea, but really point to Vespasian and Titus, according to Tacitus (5.13: *ambages Vespasianum ac Titum praedixerat*).

Even if, to Tacitus, the land of Judaea is fertile and strangely self-productive enough to suggest a divine presence, he downplays divine intervention in Judaea by familiarizing the produce, tempering beneficial natural elements with harmful, and using prodigies to suggest divine displeasure with the Judaeans. By describing the Jews as incapable of winning back the favor of the deities, Tacitus opens up the land for subjugation without fear of retribution, entirely the opposite stance of Josephus, who emphasizes the divine retribution on enemies and occupants of Judaea alike. By displaying familiar produce in Judaea to his Roman audience, Tacitus both provides incentive and an assurance for maintaining Judaea as a homogenized piece of the Roman empire, while Josephus sees Judaea as unique and uniquely peaceful, able to exist in harmony as a separate territory. By refusing to lay strict borders upon Judaea, Tacitus sets the land as a pawn on the chessboard of larger kingdoms, available to those of the greatest power at the time. By defining the borders of Judaea as eternal, Josephus enforces his view of Judaea as a distinct entity, whether in its previously autonomous state, in its current state of Roman rule, or in its potential future independence. As we shall see in the chapters to come, Tacitus's choice to

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<sup>21</sup> This could be a necessary change of procedure; *evocatio* seems to be followed with a ceremonial removal of the icons of the god for replacement in Rome, as in Livy 5.22.3: *cum iam humanae opes egestae a Ueiis essent, amoliri tum deum dona ipsosque deos, sed colentium magis quam rapiendum modo, coepere*. While the accoutrement of the temple was removed to Rome, no icons of the god were available.

reject a distinct country and challenge the presence of a providential deity reinforces his presentation of the Judaeans as a non-settled (and non-civilized) people and a people without the protection of a divine defense. On the other hand, Josephus's divinely granted borders and providential landscape help his case to define the Judaeans as an ancient, settled, and god-fearing people.

## Chapter Two

### *indigus agrorum populus*: Human Geography and Nomadism

Having discussed already the physical geography of Judaea in both Josephus and Tacitus, I turn now to the human geography of Judaea as represented in the texts of these authors. By no means should physical and human geography be considered completely distinct categories, as humanity can never be absent from conceptions of physical geography.<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, human geography will be understood as the branch of geography concerning human interaction with the environment and specifically the formation and maintenance of settlements. In the list of lessons that he supposes to be essential to a new convert into Judaism, Tacitus includes as the second item “[the convert is taught] to throw off the fatherland” (5.5: *exuere patriam*). A question arises: is the convert expected to renounce an old national loyalty to adopt a new nation or to discard the idea of nationhood and citizenship entirely? Even if a convert did desire to accept a new allegiance, the point may be moot. For whether in the face of the recent destruction of Jerusalem, in the case of Tacitus, or Greek and Roman invective against Jews, in the case of Josephus’s *Against Apion*, the identity or even possibility of a Jewish state was fodder for argument between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. In the *Histories*, Tacitus presents the Jews not as a self-sustaining people nor Judaea as an established nation-state, but the Jews as continual itinerants or failed civilizers and Judaea as an indistinct and mostly uninhabited land. He makes use of common literary tropes surrounding nomadism (lawlessness, licentiousness, supreme

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<sup>22</sup> As discussed by Rhiannon Evans, concerning Pliny the Elder’s attempt to write his geographic chapters absent of mentions of humanity (2005) 47-74.

separation) and supplies as a foundation for these associations accounts of the origins and rituals of the Jews. Josephus, in his *Against Apion*, responds to critiques like those of Tacitus by establishing that the Jewish people exist even in his day with Judaea as a homeland, diaspora notwithstanding, that they did not self-define as migrants, and that they were supremely lawful and capable of self-governance. So when considering the human geography as represented in each of these texts, the essential first step is not to identify what kind of settlements the Jews inhabit, but whether or not they have settled at all.

In his article, “Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk’: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad,” Brent D. Shaw analyzes not the archaeological and anthropological conceptions of nomadism, but the literary ideology of pastoral nomadism that became so prevalent as to overtake other systems of describing barbarianism.<sup>23</sup> The basic tenets of this ideology are two-fold: characteristic difference between barbarian and civilized peoples, who are directly opposed and a total separation between the “human types” of nomads and sedentarists (6). These concepts would seem to presuppose that societies could not contain “nomadic attributes” unless the constituents were absolute itinerants, that is to say without any permanent habitation, but Shaw points out that these seemingly strict divisions between nomadic and civilized over time also applied to characteristics not necessarily connected with actual transient peoples, but in fact “...any removal from the aura of civilization almost invariably brought in its train the stain of nomadic barbarism” (12). And, though aspects such as division from ‘civilized society,’ lack of fixed settlements, and means of sustenance came to represent the nomads most strongly, nomads can also be defined, in Shaw’s paradigm, by the lack of civilizing aspects, such as laws, a system of justice, rulers, and more generally, a “political” city (12, 24). While Shaw

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<sup>23</sup> Shaw (1982) 5-31. For his argument concerning nomadism overtaking other polarities that would constitute the Civilized vs. Barbarian divide, see especially pg. 8.

does not include Tacitus in his textual examples of nomadism in Greek and Roman texts, the essentializing separation of the Jews and either their disinterest or failure to achieve a “political” civilization inside *Histories* 5 coheres to his paradigms.

Klaus Karttunen, in his “Ethnography of the Fringes,”<sup>24</sup> employs the concentric circles of civilization model proposed by Rosselini and Saïd in 1978, in which Greece stands as the center of civilization and distance from this axis in any direction leads to progressively more foreign (and hence less civilized) barbarians. Karttunen describes the nomads, especially Scythian nomads, of Herodotus as a “middle layer” between civilization and the mythic/monstrous fringes, assigning or detailing more aspects expected of nomadism in addition to Shaw’s: burial practices (simple, but present), food source (shepherding), marriage practices (irregular and licentious, but present), and their governance (few laws and simple monarchy at best), among others.<sup>25</sup> These literary symbols of nomadism can be traced through both the works of Josephus and Tacitus regarding the Jews, though in the former case the symbols are recalled so as to be flouted, and in the latter recalled so as to condemn the Jews.

In *Against Apion* Josephus includes in his text criticisms from Greek and Egyptian historians, specifically claims that the Jewish nation was young, which is to say not established in their concept of antiquity, and that the Jews themselves originated not merely as itinerants from Egypt, but as diseased exiles who may or may not have been outsiders even within Egypt (arguments which resemble those of Tacitus, hence perhaps Romans, quite closely).<sup>26</sup> Josephus, in opposition, adopts a historical argument regarding the Jews’ wanderings: that the Jews long ago were nomads who came to power within Egypt before deciding by their own volition to

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<sup>24</sup> Karttunen (2002) 457–474.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 461–463.

<sup>26</sup> The lack of explicit Roman critiques of the Jews in Josephus has been discussed in many sources, as in the scholarship of Cotton & Eck (2005) and den Hollander (2014).

leave and found Jerusalem, which they still possess uninterruptedly and with a supreme lawfulness that is also uninterrupted, both as regards time (the unchanging nature of the law) and space (the universality of the law in the face of diaspora). From the very first sentence of the text, Josephus establishes the longevity and present state of Judaea:

Ἰκανῶς μὲν ὑπολαμβάνω καὶ διὰ τῆς περὶ τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν συγγραφῆς, κράτιστε ἀνδρῶν Ἐπαφρόδιτε, τοῖς ἐντευξομένοις αὐτῇ πεποιηκέναι φανερόν περὶ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὅτι καὶ παλαιότατόν ἐστι καὶ τὴν πρώτην ὑπόστασιν ἔσχεν ἰδίαν, καὶ πῶς **τὴν χώραν ἣν νῦν ἔχομεν** κατόκησε; πεντακισχιλίων ἐτῶν ἀριθμὸν ἱστορίαν περιέχουσιν ἐκ τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν ἱερῶν βιβλῶν διὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φωνῆς συνεγραψάμην.

I suppose that, through my writings on *Antiquities*, most excellent Epaphroditus, to those reading, I have made clear that the Judaeans, our people, are most ancient and possessed a foundation of their own from the beginning, and how they colonized **the land we are now possessing**; for I compiled a history encompassing 5,000 years from our holy books through the Greek language.

(1.1)

Here he emphasizes the extreme antiquity (παλαιότατόν) of the people, its non-Egyptian heritage (ὑπόστασιν ἔσχεν ἰδίαν), and most importantly for our purposes, that the Judaeans settled (definitively with the aorist κατόκησε) a land which they (even at the time of writing, likely some twenty years after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem) still hold (χώραν ἣν νῦν ἔχομεν). Josephus here leaves no room for misinterpretation as to whether the Jews established a homeland; it is, despite the upheavals and wars of millennia (the sort of which he presents in *Jewish Antiquities*), still present. John Barclay, in his comments on this sentence, suggests that “the emphatic present-tense statement (“we now possess”) is striking from a long-term resident in Rome. Although he is fully conscious of the Diaspora in this treatise... Josephus makes remarkably frequent reference to Judaea as the land *presently* possessed or inhabited by

Judaeans” (4 n.10). In Josephus, therefore, an ancient history of transience does not remove the possibility of long-lasting settlement, nor ought it to define the country once established.

Whether he would wish it or not, Josephus cannot slip the contention that the Jews were, at one point, wanderers. He has, as stated in the first sentence of *Against Apion*, already written the *Jewish Antiquities*, which contains accounts of the Exodus. Instead of denying what he has made obvious, Josephus instead redefines the effect of these nomadic tendencies by on the one hand suggesting a certain universality to nomadic ancestors (that is to say, other firmly established civilizations, including Rome, had integral migration origin myths) and on the other by ennobling nomadism as a source of power. In his proofs contained within *Against Apion* concerning the antiquity of the Jewish people, Josephus cited an Egyptian author named Manetho who wrote about Egyptian history and, especially relevant to Josephus, the Hyksos, a foreign people who ruled northern Egypt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So as to align the Jewish nation with the Hyksos, Josephus identifies in the name the roots for “king” and either “captive” or “shepherd,” (1.82-83) before claiming:

ἐν ἄλλῃ δέ τιτι βίβλω τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν Μάνεθως τοῦτό φησιν τὸ ἔθνος τοὺς καλουμένους ποιμένας αἰχμαλώτους ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς αὐτῶν βίβλοις γεγράφθαι λέγων ὀρθῶς: καὶ γὰρ τοῖς **ἀνωτάτω προγόνοις** ἡμῶν τὸ **ποιμαίνειν** πάτριον ἦν καὶ **νομαδικὸν ἔχοντες τὸν βίον** οὕτως ἐκαλοῦντο ποιμένες.

In another of his books of *Aegyptiaca*, Manetho says that this people, being called “shepherds,” are called in their sacred books “captives,” speaking rightly. For to our **earliest ancestors** there was a custom **to tend flocks** in the fatherland; and **having a nomadic way of life**, thus they were named shepherds.

(1.91)

He goes on to connect the alternative “captive” etymology to the entrance into Egypt of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers (1.92). A few things to note: this is the only instance in which Josephus makes use of a derivation of νομάς in *Against Apion*, and here it is referring to

not the recent past, but the most distant ancestors (τοῖς ἀνωτάτω προγόνους). Barclay suggests, I think rightly, that the use of the superlative ἀνωτάτω intentionally distances both the ancestors and the practice of nomadism from the present Judaeans: “The reference to ‘our earliest ancestors’... smuggles in the conclusion that Josephus’ weak argument attempts to demonstrate; a nomadic way of life could hardly become a distinctive *label* of a whole people unless it was a unique or highly unusual characteristic” (60 n. 329). The necessity of that distancing seems to be the negative connotations of shepherding as nomadism in Greek and Roman contexts;<sup>27</sup> the Jewish scriptures (and thus some of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*) on the contrary show a marked preference for shepherding, from both “the earliest ancestors” and Abel’s sacrifice of lamb chosen over Cain’s grains<sup>28</sup> to the early occupation of Israel’s favorite monarch, King David.<sup>29</sup> Here, too, with the concession of the “earliest ancestors,” shepherds (and nomads) are connected with a ruling class. Through establishing the Hyksos as Jewish ancestors, Josephus abrogates the Greek critiques suggesting that the Jews were a weak and undesirable element within Egypt. On the contrary, to Josephus they were a force from without who rose to overtake that nation. What’s more, Josephus uses the ambiguous origins of the Hyksos to his advantage, rerouting the expected origins of the Jews even farther.

The Greek authors with whom Josephus argued considered the Jewish people to be young, in part because they could not argue any element of autochthony from any particular land. In addition to his fuller argumentation about Jewish writings predating the earliest writings of the Greeks considerably, Josephus insinuates that the Jews are autochthonous after all.

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<sup>27</sup> As described in Shaw (1982) 8.

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 4:2-5; *Jewish Antiquities* 1.53-54, esp.: Ἄβελος μὲν γὰρ ὁ νεώτερος δικαιοσύνης ἐπεμελεῖτο καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πραττομένοις παρεῖναι τὸν θεὸν νομίζων ἀρετῆς προενόει, ποιμενικὸς δ’ ἦν ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Samuel 16:11-13; *Jewish Antiquities* 6.163-164, esp: φήσαντος δὲ εἶναι Δαβίδην τοῦνομα, ποιμαίνειν δὲ καὶ τῆς τῶν βοσκημάτων φυλακῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι κελεύει καλεῖν αὐτὸν ἐν τάχει...

Perhaps paradoxically, he accomplishes this by doubling the journey of the Jews, emphasizing the *entrance* into Egypt along with the exit (1.223). By focusing on the arrival, he presents a need for a new origin point and finds one exactly in the land the Judaeans occupy in the Roman era.

Ἴδωμεν δὲ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ τὸ πρῶτον μεγαλεῖον: ἐκεῖνος γὰρ τοὺς προγόνους ἡμῶν, ἐπεὶ περ ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἐκλιποῦσιν ἐπὶ τὴν πατριον γῆν ἐπανιέναι, πολλὰς τὰς μυριάδας παραλαβὼν ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ ἀμηχάνων διέσωσεν εἰς ἀσφάλειαν...

Let us perceive the first magnificent display of the deeds of [Moses]. For he preserved our thousands of people without any means from many terrible ordeals, when they thought **to return to the land of their fathers**, abandoning Egypt.

(2.157)

So, not only are they returning (*ἐπανιέναι*) of their own volition (*ἔδοξεν*), they are returning to their fatherland (*πάτριον γῆν*). The verb *ἄνειμι* with the *ἐπί* prefix is used elsewhere in Josephus referring specifically to a return to a starting point, such as describing that Alexander returned to Judaea, having completed three years of campaign (*JA* 1.105: *ἐπάνεισιν εἰς Ἰουδαίαν, τρία πληρώσας ἔτη τῆς στρατείας*). Josephus reintroduces the possibility of autochthony, the likelihood of antiquity, and the concept of an established nation. To make absolutely clear that this was, at least from the time of the Exodus on, a people that governed themselves with established laws, and not merely an association of wanderers, Josephus compares the Jewish style of governance to all others and claims that Moses, the lawgiver (*νομοθέτης*), established a government (*πολίτευμα*) based on theocracy (*θεοκρατία*; 2.165).

The lawlessness, or inferior laws in Karttunen's system, that typifies nomadism is thus emphatically denied. In fact, Josephus insists that the law (and hence God) is at the center of Jewish life in every regard (2.171-178; 2.277), which will be considered more thoroughly in Chapter Three of this work. Suffice to say here that those aspects of nomadism considered by

Karttunen (food, marriage, etc.) are so thoroughly conscripted to law as to make ridiculous any claim of lawlessness in regards to Josephus's works.

Josephus does not deny that the Judaeans practice ritual separation, an important condition of nomadism (according to Shaw's dichotomy) and a common accusation of Josephus's Greek critics. For while Judaea does not contain those physically impassable borders which often surround nomadic peoples in ancient texts,<sup>30</sup> the Judaeans do separate themselves on the precept of the purity of their maintained laws. Josephus attributes the following condemnation to Apollonius Molon:

ὧν οὐδέν λογισάμενος ὁ Μόλων Ἀπολλώνιος ἡμῶν κατηγορήσεν,  
ὅτι μὴ παραδεχόμεθα τοὺς ἄλλαις προκατειλημμένους δόξαις περὶ  
θεοῦ μηδὲ κοινωνεῖν ἐθέλομεν τοῖς καθ' ἑτέραν συνήθειαν βίου  
ζῆν προαιρουμένοις.

Not having consulted [the laws of Moses], Molon Apollonius alleged that we do not admit others, prejudiced against those with other opinions about God, and that we do not wish to intermingle habitation with those who preferring to seek a different life.

(2.258)

Josephus cannot claim that the allegations have no merit, but defends this Jewish distance by comparing a more excessive Greek separation: the Greeks deport foreigners; the Jews do not (2.259). While admitting that they themselves do not emulate the customs of others, Josephus supplies conversion as one Jewish alternative to isolation (2.261: “Though we do not consent to emulate things of others, however we welcome pleasantly those wishing to partake in our things.” ἡμεῖς δὲ τὰ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζηλοῦν οὐκ ἀξιοῦμεν, τοὺς μέντοι μετέχειν τῶν ἡμετέρων βουλομένους ἡδέως δεχόμεθα).

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<sup>30</sup> Especially in texts describing geography and ethnography, natural boundaries are described as separating civilized and less civilized peoples. This is described in Shaw concerning Herodotus (11-15, with helpful diagrams at 10 and 16), and is evident in Pliny the Elder as well (as in the Numidian *nomades* in *NH* 5.22, circumscribed by rivers and the Mediterranean) but can be seen in a lesser degree even with more and less civilized sedentarists at the beginning of the *Germania* (1.1).

So, in the *Against Apion*, Josephus defines a long-established and lawful Judaea while responding to ancient critiques to the contrary, which are tinged with nomadic associations, focused on the wanderings, lack of history, lawlessness, and separation from civilized societies of the Jews. The aspects he cannot deny, he attempts to redeem (the shepherding with the Hyksos; the separation with the conversions). But whereas Josephus argues firmly that any Judaeian nomadism gave way to an established, self-governing, and ancient society, Tacitus argues that endemic nomadism pervades every characteristic of the Jews, and thereby there is no (or ought not be a) country for the Jews. No Judaea.

Indeed, as Rene Bloch (2000) points out, "...at the beginning of his chapters on Judaeian geography, and right after the chapters on Jewish customs, Tacitus does not explicitly say what country he is writing about: *Terra finesque* he simply says, 'land and borders.' But land and borders of what?" (50). While we have seen in the first chapter of this work how Judaea is defined vis-à-vis its neighboring countries, it is important to reiterate here that Tacitus ignores, and thereby denies, a clearly defined political country, Judaea, though he outlines the space the Judaeians were thought to inhabit. Whereas for Bloch, this "geography without territory" is a consequence of the spread of the diaspora throughout many provinces, I will argue that Tacitus's depictions of the Jews as transient peoples with regards to origins, settlements, rituals, and governance aid Tacitus in depicting Judaea as either a non-civilized territory or a failed civilized territory, with either scenario promoting the narrative of Jerusalem's capture in the missing portion of book five. Which is to say, by suggesting that the Jews not only arise from, but worship, dwell, and govern in a state of persistent nomadism, Tacitus makes use of familiar ethnographic paradigms to shape his representation of the Jews as a people necessarily,

deservedly, and inevitably brought under the reign of Flavian Rome for their failure to settle into stable civilization.

The Jews are immediately presented in Tacitus's Jewish excursus as a people chronically displaced. He gives no less than six origin accounts for the Jews, only one of which could possibly contain intimations of autochthony.<sup>31</sup> Feldman (1996: 385-6) believes the number of accounts represents their relative importance, in that nations with few origin accounts are not much discussed in literature, which is especially relevant if the source chapters of the excursus are, as Tacitus suggests, a compilation.<sup>32</sup> Bloch considers that because geography sections are normally forefronted in ethnographies, Tacitus's positioning of that section into the middle portion of the excursus occurred for literary purposes, standing as an emphasized midpoint forecasting the destruction of Jerusalem. I agree both with Feldman, that the multiple origin accounts are significant, and with Bloch that the placement of sections is for literary effect. The importance, however, in their number and in their position in the excursus may be that beginning the excursus with a preponderance of escape and exile accounts emphatically announces to a reader that migration is a consistent characteristic of the people, even in those cases when the people themselves are not being described.

Consider the preponderance of terms detailing movement in these origin accounts.<sup>33</sup> In 5.2, Tacitus describes the Jews as exiles (*profugos*) during the time when Saturn ceased his rule, pushed out of his kingship by the power of Jupiter (*qua tempestate Saturnus vi Iovis pulsus cesserit regnis*). This origin account also gives us the only instance of Tacitus using a form of *barbarus* in connection with the Jews, though only in its association with language, claiming that

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<sup>31</sup> The possibly autochthonous account is the fifth, describing the Solymoi.

<sup>32</sup> 5.2: *memorant... quidam... plerique... sunt qui tradant... alii...* 5.3: *Plurimi auctores consentiunt...*

<sup>33</sup> These are also compiled in the appendix as Table 1.

the term *Iudaeos* derived from a foreign lengthening (*aucto in barbarum cognomento*) of an adjectival form of Mt. Ida. The military connotations of *profugos* (as refugees or the departed vanquished) when paired with the concurrently departing and vanquished Saturn suggests the Jews, like Saturn, fell on the wrong side of a just (and permanent) regime change. The great antiquity of the Jews (or at least the Jews as a people established in Judaea) is belied by their squatting (*insedis*) on the coast of Libya, implicit in which is at least one more trek into Judaea.

The second account describes the Jews as a multitude overflowing throughout Egypt (*exundantem per Aegyptum multitudinem*) who eventually discharge into the surrounding territories during the time of Isis. While the concept of the Jews as excess people appears less hostile, the Jews are presented as less than human and more as a directionless force of nature (*exundantem*). They are also presented as detrimental to their newly occupied lands (*proximas in terras exoneratam*), the participle clearly emphasizing their lack of agency (in the sense of their being unloaded burdens).

The third account assigns a more malicious cause to the wandering, saying that the Jews were an offshoot of the Ethiopians<sup>34</sup> who were forced to change their abodes due to fear and hate in the rule of Cepheus (*prolem, quos rege Cepheo metus atque odium mutare sedis perpulerit*). That they ran so afoul of a famous king of Greek myth (Cepheus) as to cause fear and hate suggests a social ostracization, as opposed to the ostracization caused by physical disease in account six. This is also the only account not to provide an exact destination, making unclear (and perhaps suspicious) whether or not they continued in their transience or immediately moved to Judaea.

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<sup>34</sup> Tacitus makes use of the term *Aethiops* a single time, which is contained in this account.

The fourth account provides the most traditionally nomadic-sounding descriptions through its vocabulary and sense of wandering menace. It begins: “there are authors who transmit that the Jews were Assyrian vagabonds, a people in want of land” (*sunt qui tradant Assyrios convenas, indigum agrorum populum*). While the term *convenas* has no precedent in Tacitus, in Livy it often appears alongside *pastor*, as in 2.1.4, *illa pastorum conuenarumque plebs*, where Livy posits a dystopian vision of a Rome without rule of law and *conuenae pastoresque* in 5.53.9, where he discusses how a pre-civilized state is preferable to statelessness. In Sallust’s *Letter of Mithridates*, Mithridates uses the term to disparage the Romans, calling them long ago vagabonds without a fatherland or parents, formed as a blight upon the whole world (17: *convenas olim sine patria parentibus, pestem conditos orbis terrarum*). By this time, the meaning of the term seems to have centered on vagrancy and a group lacking the trappings of civilization, rather than a collection of strangers. On first glance, the addition of a term such as *agrorum* would seem to limit all possible reference to nomadism when used with the “desirous” meaning of *indigum*. In Tacitus, that generic “lands” can refer both to arable fields or pasturage. If we assume the latter, there is no issue, and the term coincides with the frequent association of *convenae* with *pastores*, and nomads more generically. However, the former scenario, of people wishing to farm, does not completely undercut presumptions of non-agrarianism. Considering the lack of successful produce and farmers in the rituals, habits, and geographic section, if this is an attempt at landed farm life, it is a failed attempt, perhaps more condemning than a failure to attempt. Whether or not this account represents an attempt at agrarianism, the Jews are presented as a detriment to their neighbors: the Jews have, like raiders, stolen a section of Egypt (*parte Aegypti potitos*) to form their own cities (*proprias urbes*). The use of *proprias* could be used to show the isolation of the Jews evident in later sections, “their own, particular (exclusive) cities,”

though it is also simply a pleasant alliteration with *propiora*, five words away.

The fifth account is the only without any discussion of movement or exile, instead populated with positive modifiers (*clarus, celebratus*) and an established, eponymous city.<sup>35</sup> The *clara initia* and allusions to Homer suggest that the Judaeans might inhabit not only an old nation, but one which has stayed in its designated place since the time of Homeric epic. It is clear there is a time before the city was founded, in that the people already had a name (*conditae urbi Hierosolyma nomen e suo fecisse*), but it is unclear whether Tacitus considered the Solymoi native to the Middle East.

The final account, which fills *Histories* 5.3, shows the previous account to be anomalous, returning to the repeated exile narrative and discussing the purging (*purgare*) of the Jews, a race hateful to the gods (*genus hominum... invisum deis*), who are carried into other lands (*alias in terras avehere*) so as to stop a plague. Tacitus begins this account “many authors agree” (*plurimi auctores consentiunt*), and indeed, this is an origin story with which Josephus contends many times in *Against Apion*. The divine mandate to rid the land of Jews (as revealed both by the oracle of Hammon and the description of the collected mob as *genus hominum... invisum deis*) and the plague causing a necessary physical ostracization (as opposed to social, in account 3) are unique to this account. Similar, though, is the lack of agency as evidenced by the passive form *relinquo* in describing the crowd, abandoned in the desert (*vulgus ... vastis locis relictum sit*). As exiles they both were sent out with no destination in mind (*alias in terras*) and began to wander with no destination in mind (*ignari fortuitum iter incipiunt*) suggesting an incapacity to choose

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<sup>35</sup> Though this is the only account with positive modifiers, Feldman (1996) notes, and rightly so, that these accounts are not as wholly negative as has been supposed, specifically because they locate the Jews in extreme antiquity (in the days of Saturn, Isis, and Cepheus, for example: 390; 394; 396).

a habitable location. When they do find land (by following an animal, not believing it to be *sent* by a god [as in Greek tales] but to *be* a god, in parody of the Greek), similar to account four, they acquire the land by pushing out the current inhabitants (*pulsis cultoribus obtinere terras*).

The descriptions of the rituals of the Jews presented by Tacitus in later sections refer back to these origin narratives and the conception of wandering as intrinsic to the Jewish character. At question here is not the reliability of his depictions of Jewish ritual, but his selection bias. In section 5.4 of the *Histories*, every ritual selected by Tacitus recalls the transience of the Jews. The portion begins with a damning motive for the particular rites of those leaving Egypt, continuing where the last origin account left off.

*Moyses quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus indidit. profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursus concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta.*

Moses introduced rites new and contrary to the rest of humanity, by which he could establish the people as his into the future. [In Judaea] everything is unholy which is sacred to us, and on the other hand, they allow to themselves whatever is impious to us.

The choice of this adjective *novus*, especially paired with *contrarius*, can have many connotations. On the most basic level, these are new to the people; these are not rituals established in the time of Saturn, but much more recent creations. This angle is not wholly satisfactory, however, since 5.5 begins by defending the rituals by their antiquity (*Hi ritus quoquo modo inducti antiquitate defenduntur*). *Novus* could also refer to the uniqueness of these institutions, but the addition of *contrarius* seems to suggest a more derisive ‘strangeness’ felt by the other surrounding peoples at the time of the rituals’ establishment and, perhaps, in the time of Tacitus’s writing. Within the motive of Moses for the institution of the rituals, not only the substance of the rituals is in defiance of Roman tradition, but also their extenuating circumstances; they were not, as other rites, instituted at the behest of gods or due to either

divine or heroic intervention into human life, but through the personal ambitions of one mortal. The following sentence further delineates the perversion of the Roman system of beliefs by the Jews suggested in the first sentence (with the isolation of the rituals of the Jews from every other people [*contrariosque ceteris mortalibus*]) by creating a polarity between Jewish and Roman beliefs, reinforced by the chiasmic *profana... sacra // concessa... incesta*. Both the isolation of Jewish rites from Roman rites and the perversion of the Roman system of virtues by Jews cohere to the common descriptions of nomads Shaw suggests Greek and Roman authors employ.

The ethnographic material that follows, while no longer treating origins directly, nevertheless consistently alludes to the wandering of the Jews, most (but not all) following from the final origin account in 5.3. The first example, the setting up of a statue to an animal (5.4: *effigiem animalis, quo monstrante errorem sitimque depulerant, penetrali sacravere*), very directly recalls the final origin tale, in which the Egyptian exiles are led to a source of water (and thereby salvation) by a herd of asses after having been commanded by Moses to take as a divine leader anything which could push off their current troubles (5.3: *sibimet duce caelesti crederent, primo cuius auxilio praesentis miserias pepulissent*). Even the Jews' separation from wandering and hunger, in both examples, makes use of a verb repeatedly employed to describe exile and deportation. While the example of the ass contains within it the associations with wandering, the next two examples, concerning the sacrifices of certain animals, do need their parallel tales for context. The Jews are presented as sacrificing rams so as to affront Hammon and to burn cows because Egypt worshipped Apis (5.4: *caeso ariete velut in contumeliam Hammonis; bos quoque immolatur, quoniam Aegyptii Apin colunt*). These reactionary motives degrade the Jewish rites in a similar mode as did the insertion of Moses's motives by assigning the institutions of the rites to a non-divine (and actually antagonistic human) origin. The sentence also ties in the forced

departure from Egypt, since their removal stemmed from King Bocchoris’s advice from the oracle of Hammon, specifically (5.3). Tacitus records the Jews’ avoidance of pork, connecting this also with the exit from Egypt, but assigning the origins of the ritual explicitly, as with the ass (5.4: *sue abstinent **memoria cladis**, quod ipsos scabies quondam turpaverat, cui id animal obnoxium*). Their fasting and eating of unleavened bread are similarly tied to their immediate departure from Egypt and time spent starving in the wild (5.4: *longam olim famem crebris adhuc ieiuniis **fatentur**, et **raptarum frugum argumentum panis Iudaicus nullo fermento detinetur***). The acknowledgement of the long ago hunger by frequent fasts is in reaction to the starvation recalled in 5.3, but the origins of matzah (*panis Iudaicus*)<sup>36</sup> are recalled only here, described as an explicit sign (*argumentum*) recognized by the Jews as to their hurried seizing of grain. Finally, in the one explicit ritual of the section not tied to the final origin account, Tacitus equates the Sabbath rest to the Idaei worship of Saturn, alongside whom they were expelled before founding the Iudaeoi (5.4: *quos cum Saturno **pulsos et conditores gentis accepimus***), clearly recalling the very first origin (and expulsion) account of the Jews in 5.2.

The second list of traditions in 5.5 may not have its origins in the displacement accounts, but does read like a series of typical nomadic characteristics. As with the previous section, this section begins with an illustration of the depravity of the Jews in reference to the expectations of the Romans. Instead of a series of chiasmic phrases, there is a condensed oxymoron to the same effect (5.5: *cetera instituta, sinistra foeda, **pravitate valere***). The money and goods of the very worst of people travel to be collected by the Jews without any labor on their part (*nam pessimus*

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<sup>36</sup> The presence of any sort of bread would seem to belie the equating of Jews with nomads, nomads being in most manifestations meat eaters and milk drinkers, directly opposed to the sedentary lifestyle which allowed for farming. However, as in other instances of Jews engaging in good “civilized” practices, i.e., founding cities and electing officials, they can never do it quite correctly—as in here, their bread is malformed by the lack of leavening. Their attempts at civilization are, at best, poor ones.

*quisque spretis religionibus patriis tributa et stipes illuc congerebant*). The Jews are not described as having the agency either to convert or to collect the money. This abstention from labor is not merely a golden age motif, but is connected to nomads as they are often seen as less industrious than their sedentary peers.<sup>37</sup> Curious in Tacitus's account is the lack of description of the labor/industry of the Jews, which is a common *topos* of ethnographic accounts.<sup>38</sup> They are neither shepherds, as we might expect from Josephus's accounts, nor are they explicitly farmers. Tacitus comes closest to describing the labors of the Jews in highlighting the elements of Judaeen geography which create product, the sap of the balsa (5.6: *ut quisque ramus intumuit, si vim ferri adhibeas, pavent venae; fragmine lapidis aut testa aperiuntur; umor in usu medentium est*) and the bitumen from the Dead Sea. (5.6) Tacitus still avoids aligning this work with the Jews, using instead second person and anthropomorphized third plurals in the condition "*si vim ferri adhibeas, pavent venae*" as well as a passive (*aperiuntur*). Even the use is not specified to a location or people, but simply the vague "*in usu medentium*." Similarly, the Dead Sea account makes use of obscure agents even when describing individuals pulling the bitumen from the sea (5.6: *hunc manu captum, quibus ea cura, in summa navis trahunt*). The unnamed people are specified only by body part and the excessively vague relative clause. In this way, the vestiges of Jewish labor appear throughout the text, but Tacitus never assigns focus to them.

Rather than stress the work undertaken by the Jews, Tacitus chooses to lavish attention on a Jewish self-isolation from the rest of humanity, especially an antagonistic lack of hospitality (5.5: *et quia apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu, sed adversus omnis alios hostile odium*). The separation extends into the domestic sphere (*separati epulis, discreti cubilibus*) and through their lack of intermarriage, although they are seen as uncontrollably

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<sup>37</sup> Shaw (1982) 12-13, esp. 18-19. Karttunen (2002) 462, 464.

<sup>38</sup> A discussion of the missing *topoi* of Histories V occurs in Bloch (1999) 45-47, with concluding analysis 49-52.

lustful (*proiectissima ad libidinem gens, alienarum concubitu abstinent*) which is itself another common attribute attested in ancient authors describing liminal peoples.<sup>39</sup> As opposed to a potentially humorous scenario, this tendency towards hypersexuality is construed as dangerous, an intentional lack of societal self-control.

*augendae tamen multitudini consulitur; nam et necare quemquam ex agnatis nefas, animosque proelio aut suppliciis peremptorum aeternos putant: hinc generandi amor et moriendi contemptus.*

Nevertheless the increasing of their multitude is kept in mind; for they consider it unlawful to kill any late-born child and consider eternal the souls of those cut down in battle or by the executioner: **hence their love of producing and contempt of dying.**

Intertwined are the ideas of procreation and war, positing that the proliferation of the Jews is dangerous in even a martial sense; over-population and aggressive military action are connected closely not only here, but also in the earlier origin accounts. In at least two of the origin accounts (4 & 6), the Jews are seen as ousting other inhabitants from their homes so as to make room for themselves. In a third (3), they are clearly burdensome to those around, and a fourth (1) compares the departure of the Jews with the violent departure of Saturn from the heavenly hierarchy. In sections to come as well as the larger structure in which the Jewish excursus appears, the Jews are obviously construed as a threat in war. However, the above example makes clear that at least a portion of their threat is contained in characteristics of their nature as a people. Tacitus does not shape them as a people ashamed of their differences, but knowingly shameless (*inter se nihil inlicitum*) as well as intentional concerning their differences (*circumcidere genitalia instituerunt ut diversitate noscantur*).

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<sup>39</sup> As in Karttunen (2002) 461. Benjamin Isaac discusses briefly various interpretations of the perceived sexuality of the Jews in (2004) 453 & 472-473.

Whereas the ritual chapters of Tacitus's excursus deploy descriptions of the Jews familiar to those accustomed to accounts of nomads, the portions of the excursus dealing with the habitations, and particularly the cities, of the Jews pose a new problem. Permanent settlement is antithetical to nomadism. However, the earlier distinction between an ideal nomadism and nomadism as failed civilization comes into play. Tacitus does mention cities possessed by the Jews, but at no time are these cities representative of a stable, permanent,<sup>40</sup> and fully-political civilization.

For instance, Tacitus rejects indications that Judaea is a country established with many cities. The existence of Jerusalem itself cannot be denied, both for its fame and Rome's imminent conquest within the narrative. However, in describing the layout of Judaea, Tacitus stresses that the majority of human enclaves were little villages, with some towns added and a single capital, later referred to as an *urbs* (5.8: *Magna pars Iudaeae vicis **dispergitur**, habent et oppida; Hierosolyma genti caput*). If one gives any credence at all to Josephus's depiction of Judaeian geography in the Jewish War 3.54-56 (or the archaeological data coming out of Israeli digs), there is a significant shrinking of the number of established cities occurring in the *Histories*. The choice of verb in the previous example is particularly evocative, for *dispergo* can contain not only the sense of spread about, but also (through its prefix *dis-*) haphazardly scattered, as in without an internal or intentional order. Tacitus also avoids describing the domestic housing of the Jews, with the only building spoken of at any length being the Temple of Jerusalem. As in the example of the missing labors of the Jews, the depictions of houses can be considered a regular *topoi* of an ethnographic encounter, making its absence anomalous.

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<sup>40</sup> The absolute permanence of a self-ruling, unconquered Jerusalem in particular is impossible in the context of the *Histories*. The excursus as a whole begins with the fatality of the city in mind (5.2: *Sed quoniam **famosae urbis supremum diem** tradituri sumus, congruens videtur primordia eius aperire*).

Bloch connects the lack of domiciles with the nature of diaspora (as in, Jews in different parts of the empire occupy different types of abode; 2000: 46-47). A possibility more consistent with my larger reading of Tacitus's ethnography suggests instead that, as the Jews cannot maintain a *polis*, neither can they maintain recognizable households. This parallel failure will become essential to our understanding of individual relations in the third chapter of this thesis.

In three situations, Tacitus does suggest the presence of cities other than Jerusalem in Judaea. Each can be seen as describing a different representation of a failed Jewish state: a backwards state, a disappeared state, and a destroyed state. The backwards state appears in 5.5. While describing further traditions of the Jews, Tacitus described their non-represented deity and follows with "therefore they set up no representative images in their cities, much less in their temples. Not as a flattery to kings, nor as an honor to Caesar" (*igitur nulla simulacra urbibus suis, nedum templis sistunt; non regibus haec adulatio, non Caesaribus honor*). Here the absent representations of gods create both temples and cities that could be considered incomplete in their honors and inclusions, flouting a political as well as a heavenly hierarchy. This is the state which is diametrically opposed to the current Roman scenario, without either the presence of divinity or ruler, the backwards state.

After detailing the noxious lake Asphaltitis, Tacitus describes a field, once fertile and filled with great cities, which burned due to a lightning strike (5.7: *Haud procul inde campi quos ferunt olim uberes **magnisque urbibus** habitatos fulminum iactu arsisse*). This is the disappeared state. The *olim* seems to suggest mythic time, but Tacitus in the following lines refuses to concede this destruction to a divine act, blaming instead the inhabitable location beside the infected lake. That this is his own interpretation, opposing a view held by others, is evident by the beginning *ego sicut inclitas quondam urbis igne caelesti flagrasse concesserim*, and his

inclusion of *reor* near the end of his contradicting environmental explanation. Josephus holds the opposite view, discussing these cities (representing the lands of Sodom and Gomorrah) as undoubtedly ruined through divine intervention (*Jewish Wars* 4.484: φασὶ δὲ ὡς δι' ἀσέβειαν οἰκητόρων κεραυνοῖς καταφλεγῆναι: ἔστι γοῦν ἔτι λείψανα τοῦ θείου πυρός... They say that through the impiety of the inhabitants, [the cities] were burned with lightning bolts, and indeed there is yet a remnant of that godly fire...). The destruction of these lands to Tacitus may represent a failure of the Jews to choose a logical place for settlement. They built cities liable to natural and well-known poisons. The land also produces nothing, or more exactly, it turns everything worth growing into ash (*cuncta sponte edita aut manu sata... atra et inania velut in cinerem vanescunt*). Here, there is no difference between the (failed) attempts of the (anonymous, but probably Jewish) people to grow crops or those which grow on their own. The land and the attempted sedentary profession of the Jews are equally inefficient and unproductive. Using this disappeared state, with ash in place of habitation, Tacitus suggests the inability of the Jews to provide a reasonable and sustainable civilization for themselves.

The final depiction of Judaeen cities outside of Jerusalem has very little to do with Judaea at all. In 5.10, Tacitus returns to the narrative at hand, describing the recent history of the Jewish Wars under Vespasian.

*Qui [Cestius] ubi fato aut taedio occidit, missu Neronis  
Vespasianus fortuna famaue et egregiis ministris intra duas  
aestates cuncta camporum omnisque praeter Hierosolyma urbis  
victore exercitu tenebat.*

When Cestius died, by fate or by loathing, Vespasian, by the command of Nero, and by fortune, reputation, and by his many excellent subordinates, in less than two years through military victories held the entirety of the Judaeen plains and all cities except Jerusalem.

The presence of these other unnamed cities within the Jewish Excursus speak less to the cultivation of Judaea than to the talent of the conquerors of Judaea. They are mentioned in conjunction with *cuncta camporum*, and thus may depict the concept of the entirety of Judaea, with Jerusalem as the only, though important, exception. Besides this, both the word order (the *duas aestates* in which they fall precede them in the sentence) and the verb tense (the imperfect *tenebat*, held in the past and still held inside and outside the narrative) allow the cities to appear only after they have been taken. This is the destroyed state, a Judaea populated by cities only mentioned so as to be razed by the Romans, for Roman glory. This Judaea is certainly incapable of maintaining a society, as its defining feature is its ability to be assailed. So, Tacitus is by turns denying and downplaying a developed and settled Judaea outside of the one city essential to his narrative. Both the lack of cities and the disappeared cities suggest an innate incapacity of settlement, while the apolitical and razed cities make suspect the sustainability of any established Jewish territories.

But even if the Jews were capable of erecting temporary cities, this ability did not necessarily allow them, in Tacitus's rendering, to maintain a *polis*, or the governable, political entity at the center of city life. The Jews are portrayed as incapable of self-governance from origin forward. To take one example, as we saw in 5.3, Moses is displayed as the uniquely ambitious (and self-serving) exile who manages to take action, as opposed to all the rest of the Jews, who are stupefied in their mourning (*ceteris per lacrimas torpentibus*). Even upon taking up Moses's instructions, they begin their journey without a plan (*adsensere atque omnium **ignari fortuitum** iter incipient*), in direct opposition to the intense planning and reconnaissance we see on the part of Titus and the Romans in 5.1 and 5.13. Instead of planned action, hierarchical dynamics, and intentionality, the exiles wander trusting in nothing but chance (*fortuitum*).

Tacitus replays this lack of self-governance in 5.8, where the Jews find themselves in a position to take power through accident or the misfortunes of others. Having first been ruled by the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, when the Macedonians were waylaid in their plans to civilize the Jews due to the wars with the Parthians, the Jews filled a power-vacuum by electing their own kings. Immediately upon electing these rulers, the populace expels their newly elected kings and throws its nation into civil war and every kind of domestic and civil depravity. (*sibi ipsi reges imposuere; qui mobilitate vulgi expulsi, resumpta per arma dominatione fugas civium, urbium eversiones, fratrum coniugum parentum neces aliaque solita regibus ausi superstitionem fovebant...*) While more will be said in the coming chapter concerning those personal foibles which made certain Jews incapable of rule, here it is most important to note the immediacy with which the system of governance was rejected. Tacitus's Jews can only take an action toward independence during a complete dearth of authority, but immediately upon receiving that independence, created not only civil war but a slew of other crimes the Romans find particularly objectionable. In that he describes the Jews as both extremely willing to go to war and also self-destructive, Tacitus both anticipates a contention to his Jewish Wars (that the Jews could have been left to self-rule) and rejects it in the same stroke. In this construction, it would serve neither Rome (against whom the Jews were liable to rebel again) nor the Jews (who would cause themselves harm in attempting and failing to create a stable political sphere) to stop short of complete victory in this war or cede any power or authority back to the Judaeans after the war was won.

Tacitus's displacement of the Jews, therefore, is occurring not only in the origin accounts, but also in reenactment rituals, vanishing dwellings, and the inability to establish a stable sovereignty. The line between literary depictions of true, domicile-less nomadism and failed

civilization thins before an inevitable reaction to both scenarios: the necessity of a fuller conquest by the Romans.<sup>41</sup> For whether Tacitus's Jews are innately incapable of settlement or incapable of designing a non-destructive settlement, even non-Romans recognized this most abominable people had to be changed for the better (5.8: *rex Antiochus demere superstitionem et mores Graecorum dare adnissus, quo minus taeterrimam gentem in melius mutaret...*). As nomads or as failed civiliziers, they proved an aberration within the structure of the Roman provinces and, Tacitus would argue, the last hurdle between the Flavians and an empire-wide peace (5.10: *augebat iras quod soli Iudaei non cessissent*). Nomadic-resembling peoples were especially dangerous in their exceeding of borders (5.2: *exundantem... multitudinem*), their unpredictable paths (5.3: *fortuitum iter*), their seeping influence among outsiders (5.5: [of converts:] *spretis religionibus patriis*), and their unwillingness or incapacity to settle into anything resembling Roman values (5.4: *profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta*). Combining these dangers with a characteristic belligerence and regeneration of the Jews, Tacitus tacitly presents the Romans three options: reform the Jews into Roman-style sedentarists, destroy the Jews, or be always burdened by their presence. In the words of Shaw, speaking of a prototypical Roman barbarian generally, “[they] failed in the Roman mental world to attain to civilization, and were therefore the proper object of conquest, seizure, resettlement, and where necessary, death.”<sup>42</sup> So too the Jews. By suggesting that the Jews not only arise from, but worship, dwell, and govern in a state of persistent nomadism, Tacitus makes use of familiar ethnographic paradigms to shape his representation of

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<sup>41</sup> As opposed to the measure of independence bestowed on the province before the wars. Goodman (2004) 4-8 shortly discusses Judaea's relationship with Rome until 70 CE.

<sup>42</sup> (2000) 378.

the Jews as a people necessarily, deservedly, and inevitably brought under the reign of Flavian Rome.

### Chapter Three

## The Judaeian Interior: Moral Geography and Jerusalem

After the contemning of the gods and dismissal of the fatherland, the final precept taught to the convert to Judaism, argues Tacitus, is to hold parents, children, and siblings as worthless (5.5: *parentes liberos fratres vilia habere*). Having moved from the universal to the specific, the nonexistence of the nuclear family in the Jewish excursus reflects a complete lack of *pietas* among Tacitus's Jews. This national deficiency of *pietas* shows itself even in the geography of Jerusalem, in which three sets of walls defend least the city, with its fortifications, then the royal residence, and finally, in the most-defensible center, the temple (5.8: *primis munimentis urbs, dein regia, templum intimis clausum*). While the ordering may seem to suggest proper pious priorities, no matter which level Tacitus presents as most honored, they are each of them, in the *Histories*, empty. Absent are discussions of the domestic sphere, the respect for laws, and an authentic religiosity to a present deity, this last aspect replaced by rituals created to spite other nations, created by a people dedicated to superstition, but averse to religious rites (*gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa*). In Josephus's understanding, on the other hand, the Jews are not only full of piety on the familial, national, and religious levels, but these three aspects of piety are joined as one ultimate and nation-defining precept: a God-given, generation-linking law.

If nuclear families of citizens existed, in the Jewish excursus, they would occupy that outermost, least-protected layer of Jerusalem. However, Tacitus never describes the domestic sphere of the Judaeans, outside of the segregation of the sexes within the home as seen in 5.5: *separati epulis, discreti cubilibus*. As far as children, they are present only in that the Judaeans

are “mindful of the increase of their multitude” (5.5: *augendae tamen multitudini consulitur*). A discussion of gender roles and relations is relegated to one comment, an image of the defeated after the siege of Jerusalem, which seems to elide men and women:

multitudinem obsessorum omnis aetatis, virile ac muliebre secus, sexcenta milia fuisse accepimus: arma cunctis, qui ferre possent, et plures quam pro numero audebant. **obstinatio** viris feminisque **par**; ac si transferre sedis cogerentur, maior vitae **metus** quam mortis.

We heard that the amount of blockaded peoples, of every age and of both male and female sex, was six hundred thousand: all who were able to bear arms did, and more than that number dared. There was **equal resolution** in women as well as men; because if they were forced to leave their dwellings, they would have a greater **fear** of life than of death.

(5.13)

The *obstinatio par* could refer to a shameful equality of the sexes in hardship and warfare, but the siege scenario probably allows for the inversion of the expected societal roles. However, where we might expect to see some complaint about the desire to protect the family in wartimes, or about the fear surrounding the inability to protect a family in defeat, there is no indication that the *metus* of 5.13 is at all communal, let alone familial. The group seems to have en masse picked up weapons from their own individual desire not to be enslaved. Indeed, Tacitus never shows us family bonds, structures, respect, or affection; in contrast, we see a number of instances of individual greed and ambition.<sup>43</sup>

The middle layer of the Jerusalem battlements (*dein regia*) mirrors the second layer of Jewish impiety: the Judaeans have no loyalty to a government. (In keeping with the previous chapter, I would argue that Tacitus designs his Judaeans to be *incapable* of loyalty to a

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<sup>43</sup> Consider both the intentions of Moses in 5.3 to gain personal power by enforcing new (and perhaps dangerous) rituals and the failed attempt at government in 5.8, in which the attempt at monarchy turned into civil war.

government.) Tacitus makes this clear both in the failed attempt of Judaeian independence in 5.8 (when the Judaeans *sibi ipsi reges imposuere*, analyzed in chapter two) and in the general lawlessness of the people. Indeed, Tacitus mentions no *leges* anywhere in book five, let alone in the Jewish excursus. Instead (and perhaps in keeping with the Jews' centralization of religion in place of government, which I will turn to next), Tacitus uses the terms *ritus* and *instituta* (5.8) to discuss the people's customs. *Instituta* in particular seems to be used frequently with non-Romans in the *Histories*; Tacitus places in the mouth of a Tenceteri envoy in book four the command to "take back up the institutes and culture of your fatherland" (4.64: *instituta cultumque patrium resumite*) while throwing off the authority of the Romans. *Ritus* on the other hand occurs only five times in the *Histories*, three times in the Jewish excursus and twice earlier. The first appearance occurs when Titus, making his way to Syria, stops by *templum Paphiae Veneris* and Tacitus pauses to discuss the beginning of the religion, the ritual of the temple, and the appearance of the goddess (2.2: *initia religionis, templi ritum, formam deae*). The second occurrence is during the first iteration of the Batavian revolt, when Civilis bound all the foreigners around him with barbarous ritual and the oaths of their own fatherland (4.15: *barbaro ritu et patriis execrationibus universos adigit*). At the very least, then, *ritus* seems restricted to instances of non-Roman civilization. What's more, Tacitus makes clear that the institutes and rites the Judaeans do make use of are contrary to Roman customs and inherently negative. As mentioned in chapter two, the Jewish rites are presented as *novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus* as well as *incesta* to the Romans in particular (5.4). And the other customs (the list at 5.5, not directly linked with the Egyptian exodus) are repulsive vices, valued for their wickedness (5.5: *cetera instituta, sinistra foeda, pravitate valere*). And of those institutes that follow, none seem to contain a social constraint or penalty. Using third-person plural verbs such

as *abstinent* and *instituerunt*, Tacitus promotes the idea that the prohibition against intermarriage and the decision to circumcise are communally agreed upon, or at least consistently observed, precepts. In fact, what typifies most of these precepts is not constraint but license, rendered by Tacitus with “among themselves nothing is illegal” (5.5: *inter se nihil inlicitum*). Perhaps this license more than the flutes and drums, a suggestion of “some” (5.5: *quidam arbitrati sunt*), explains the correlation between the Jewish customs and Father Liber as well as why Tacitus finally dismisses the connection because Liber’s rites are happy and joyful, whereas the manner of Jewish worship is worthless and disgraceful (5.5: *Liber festos laetosque ritus posuit, Iudaeorum mos absurdus sordidusque*).<sup>44</sup>

The innermost walls of Jerusalem’s layout in the *Histories* contain the temple (5.8: *templum intimis clausum*). This most defensible position represents the central position of religion in Tacitus’s Jewish society and, due to its alleged importance, the most striking form of Jewish impiety. That is, the Judaeans of the *Histories* present themselves as fundamentally religious, with religion in the center of their city, but due to the emptiness of both their rites and their temple, that religiosity reads as hypocrisy. A multitude of explicitly religious rituals populate sections 5.4 and 5.5 particularly, and while the direct correlation between *religio* (which can connote duties outside of modern derivations) and religion would be anachronistic, it’s worth tracing how Tacitus largely withholds the term *religio* from Jewish custom, offering it only once to positively describe Jewish manners and twice to distinguish non-Judaeans from those of the Jews. For the former scenario, Tacitus suggests the origins of the Sabbath (seventh day rest) were either transmitted by the Idaeans (*seu principia religionis tradentibus Idaeis*) or gotten by astrology (5.4). Here, since the religious ritual (potentially) has its origins outside of Jewish

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<sup>44</sup> Although admittedly conjecture, it is a more satisfying hypothesis than Chilver and Townend’s (1985: 93) note on *vitis aurea* that Bacchus’ inclusion is “another fantasy of T.’s source.”

culture, and was only adopted, it may still constitute a non-Jewish use of *religio*. The two negative uses of *religio* (as in, those used to distinguish non-Judaean religious rites from Judaean rites) are much clearer.

In 5.5, Tacitus describes the very worst of other peoples sending money to the Jews, after these converts had rejected their national religions/religious duties (*spretis religionibus patriis*). When in the final section of the excursus Tacitus turns to the prodigies, he makes quite clear why the prodigies were either misinterpreted or intentionally ignored: “Prodigies had happened, which the people considered right to atone for neither with sacrifices nor with vows, since—though addicted to superstition—they are opposed to religious duties” (5.13: *Evenerant prodigia, quae neque hostiis neque votis piare fas habet gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa*). In this juxtaposition, *superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa*, Tacitus explains the seemingly haphazard nature of Jewish religion throughout the excursus: it was not religion at all, but a series of superstitious choices codified out of either ignorance or antagonism. Take, for instance, the donkey supposedly set up in the temple. The origin for this pseudo-deity is Moses’s insistence to the exiled Judaeans not to expect help from either gods or humans, since they were deserted by both (5.3: *...monuisse ne quam deorum hominumve opem expectarent utrisque deserti*). Instead, he asks them to take as leader that individual who leads them out of trouble, likely implying that he himself should be chosen, but replaced by a *grex e pastu* instead of a *deus ex machina*. The sacrifices of the Jews are derived not from a positive interaction or desire to assuage deities, but from an animosity for both the foreign divinity and the human populations that ejected them (5.4: *caeso ariete velut in contumeliam Hammonis; bos quoque immolatur, quoniam Aegyptii Apin colunt*).<sup>45</sup> For all that the Judaeans lavish the temple with wealth (5.8:

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<sup>45</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two.

*immensae opulentiae templum*) then, the worship found within it is founded on happenstance and antagonism, and void of any piety to true gods. The triviality of their “religion” Tacitus extends with an invisible god:

Iudaei mente sola unumque numen intellegunt: profanos qui deum  
imagines mortalibus materiis in species hominum effingant;  
summum illud et aeternum neque imitabile neque interiturum.

The Judaeans understand by the mind alone one deity: and they consider profane anyone who shapes images of the god with mortal materials into human likeness; they consider that that highest and eternal god can neither be represented nor destroyed.

(5.5)

Though to say that this representation, especially the last line, is an extension of triviality is somewhat untrue. Tacitus is depicting a religion without material proofs, but it is not the first so described, nor is this lack of materiality itself disdained. In book two of the *Histories*, Vespasian seeks out an oracle on Mt. Carmel, which Tacitus claims is the name also of a god, who has no image or temple, only an altar and reverence (2.78: *est Iudaeam inter Syriamque Carmelus: ita vocant montem deumque. nec simulacrum deo aut templum—sic tradidere maiores—: ara tantum et reverentia*). On the one hand, the oracle at Carmel gives an accurate prediction of Vespasian’s good fortunes and is explained with the serious term *reverentia*, and would thus seem to be an example of an invisible god of substance. However, this section is introduced by a series of less serious oracles and a suggestion of Vespasian’s personal tendency toward superstition. “After the speech of Mucianus, the rest circled Vespasian daringly, exhorting him, and relating to him the messages of prophets and the movement of the constellations. Nor was Vespasian untouched by this sort of superstition.” (2.78: *Post Muciani orationem ceteri audentius circumstiterent, hortari, responsa vatum et siderum motus referre. nec erat intactus tali superstitione*). While the lack of physical form of Carmel might, then, prove a comparison for

the also formless Judaeian deity, the context of the oracle prevents wholly positive interpretation. The lack of material form may not connote the insubstantiality of the Judaeian religiosity as represented by Tacitus, but the emptiness of the temple forms a hollow center at the heart of Jerusalem.

Romanorum primus Cn. Pompeius Iudaeos domuit templumque iure victoriae ingressus est: inde vulgatum **nulla** intus deum **effigie vacuam sedem** et **inania arcana**. muri Hierosolymorum diruti, delubrum mansit.

Pompey first, of the Romans, subdued the Jews and entered the temple by the right of victory: from him it was divulged that, with **no image** of the gods inside, the **place** was **empty** and the **mysteries non-existent**. The walls of Jerusalem were demolished, the shrine remained.

(5.9)

With the repetition of words denoting emptiness and worthlessness (*nulla, vacuam, inania*), the temple becomes little more than an echo chamber.<sup>46</sup> The *vacuam sedem* on its own could merely repeat the absent statues discussed earlier, only now providing a source for the information (*inde vulgatum*). However, the inclusion of *inania arcana* seems to further the insignificance of the “religion” as a whole, carrying no secret depths. The following line (*muri Hierosolymorum diruti, delubrum mansit*) I included to postulate a connection. Some may say that to dismantle places of religious significance would be inauspicious, no matter the relevance of respective deity, and thus the shrine was not destroyed (*delubrum mansit*). However, the opposite may be true: the edifice which posed a problem to continued Roman control (the walls, an essential military defense, as seen in the later siege) was destroyed, while the empty shrine, no threat to Rome, could remain.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> I set aside the contradiction between this section and 5.4 concerning the existence of a donkey statue in the holy of holies. If interested, see Bar-Kochva (1996).

<sup>47</sup> It would be interesting also to consider whether the use of *delubrum* for *templum* is a downgrade in status or merely a reference to the innermost portions where Pompey walked, metonymy for the whole.

The three walls of Jerusalem in Tacitus's account, therefore, reflect the three avenues of piety which the convert to Judaism is taught to renounce in order to become Judaeans. Tacitus's Judaeans do not possess identifiable familial piety, do not act in accordance to national piety, and hold superstition and rites designed to spite their neighbors in place of religious piety. This triplicate of impiety creates in Tacitus a people easily dismantled without fear of divine repercussion. While Josephus would agree that the Judaeans were easily dismantled by the Romans, in his works the destruction came about due to the importance of piety within their nation. That piety is represented not as a series of loyalties, but one loyalty to a divine Law which incorporates the familial, national, and religious interests. Likewise, Josephus presents Jerusalem not as a triplicate of walled zones, but a complex city with one united civilian body.

Josephus spends nearly half of book two of his *Against Apion* (2.145-296 [end]) confuting the claims of Tacitus's sources, reiterated by Tacitus himself. Having moved from a long discussion of the eponymous Apion, Josephus turns to other critics, though the discussion quickly moves to a general apology for Jewish law. The section begins:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Μόλων καὶ Λυσίμαχος καὶ τινες ἄλλοι τὰ μὲν ὑπ' ἀγνοίας, τὸ πλεῖστον δὲ κατὰ δυσμένειαν περὶ τε τοῦ **νομοθετήσαντος** ἡμῖν Μωσέως καὶ περὶ τῶν **νόμων** πεποιήνται λόγους οὔτε δικαίους οὔτε ἀληθεῖς, τὸν μὲν ὡς γόητα καὶ ἀπατεῶνα διαβάλλοντες, τοὺς **νόμους δὲ κακίας ἡμῖν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἀρετῆς φάσκοντες εἶναι διδασκάλους**, βούλομαι συντόμως καὶ **περὶ τῆς ὅλης ἡμῶν καταστάσεως τοῦ πολιτεύματος καὶ περὶ τῶν κατὰ μέρος** ὡς ἂν ὃ δυνατὸς εἰπεῖν. οἶμαι γὰρ ἔσεσθαι φανερόν, ὅτι **καὶ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ πρὸς κοινωνίαν τὴν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ πρὸς τὴν καθόλου φιλανθρωπίαν** ἔτι δὲ πρὸς δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πόνοις καρτερίαν καὶ **θανάτου περιφρόνησιν** ἄριστα κειμένους ἔχομεν τοὺς **νόμους**.

Because Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus, and various others, either out of ignorance, or (more likely) out of ill-will, set down neither justly nor with veracity arguments concerning Moses, who **set down laws** for us, and concerning the **laws** themselves, slandering

Moses as a cheat and a scoundrel and **alleging the laws to be teachers of wickedness and nothing virtuous**, I wish concisely to speak **on the whole of our instituted government and the divisions**, as I am able. For I expect it will then be clear that we have **laws** best established for **piety, for communion with each other, for goodwill to all humanity**, justice, endurance in toil, and **contempt of death**.

(2.145-147)

Josephus's claims will then contradict those of Tacitus in all but one element, the contempt of death (θανάτου περιφρόνησιν), reminiscent of Tacitus's *morandi contemptus* (5.5), discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Josephus's repetition of νόμος and related terms reinforces their existence, though he does not explicitly counter a claim of lawlessness, but of laws (νόμους) that are teachers of wickedness and of nothing virtuous (κακίας ... οὐδεμιᾶς ἀρετῆς... διδασκάλους). Having spent the previous book and a half arguing for the origins of Judaea and its antiquity (despite claims that the country does not appear in ancient Greek texts), he now must argue for the quality of the people and country he has established in his arguments. Indeed, Josephus explains very clearly that Judaea was 1) a country and 2) a lawful country simply in his phrase *περὶ τῆς ὅλης ἡμῶν καταστάσεως τοῦ πολιτεύματος*, which John Barclay takes to be a clever appropriation of Greek governing terms, seeing as Judaea did not organize via a πόλις structure (249 n. 534). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Josephus uses forms of πόλις liberally to discuss the Jewish state within not only *Against Apion*, but also the *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities*. Unlike in Tacitus, where the lawlessness of the Judaeans displays a lack of loyalty to a government, in Josephus the laws are the foundation of all piety: piety toward the divine (εὐσέβειαν) and toward one's familiars and fellow citizens (κοινωνίαν τὴν μετ' ἀλλήλων), extending even so far as to humanity toward all (καθόλου φιλανθρωπίαν). The condemnations of Tacitus I listed above concerning converts to Judaism (the negligence toward families, the

lawlessness, and the unfounded religiosity) are in Josephus all subsumed under the concept of the divinely granted Law, maintained from generation to generation.

Josephus remarks that this Law is not only beneficial and compatible with religion, but that it is perfect, since it derives from religion. This view of theocracy is especially clear in 2.185, when Josephus asks “and could something be better or more just than [our law], giving over the entirety of power to god” (καὶ τίς ἂν καλλίον ἢ δικαιοτέρα γένοιτο τῆς θεὸν μὲν ἡγεμόνα τῶν ὅλων πεποιημένης)?

The link between divine mandate and law continues in Josephus’s descriptions of nuclear families. The separations between spouses, mentioned in Tacitus 5.5, are represented as divinely mandated purifications (2.198). Josephus also discusses whom and how one can marry (2.199-200) before turning to gender relations. Absent or somewhat perverse in Tacitus, Josephus’s presentation of gender relations has its roots in the divine law:

γυνὴ χείρων, φησίν, ἀνδρὸς εἰς ἅπαντα. τοιγαροῦν ὑπακουέτω, μὴ πρὸς ὕβριν, ἀλλ’ ἵν’ ἄρχηται: θεὸς γὰρ ἀνδρὶ τὸ κράτος ἔδωκεν.

It is said woman is weaker than man in all things. Accordingly let her submit, not by violence, **but in order that he should govern: for god granted authority to men.**

(2.201)

Though these lines have been the subject of much debate,<sup>48</sup> nevertheless it is clear that the connection between household roles, the law, and the gods is made explicit by the discussions of authority and divinely legislated hierarchy. Josephus does not leave out the raising of children, and again connects proper nurturing with the proper promotion of the law:

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<sup>48</sup> Many editors suspected these lines to be later interpolations due to their resemblance to “New Testament household codes” (Barclay [2007] 284 n. 805 contains the arguments for and against). I am following Barclay and the manuscript tradition in including them as authentic.

καὶ γράμματα παιδεύειν ἐκέλευσεν τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόμους καὶ τῶν προγόνων τὰς πράξεις ἐπίστασθαι, τὰς μὲν ἵνα μιμῶνται, τοῖς δ' ἵνα συντρεφόμενοι μήτε παραβαίνωσι μήτε σκῆψιν ἀγνοίας ἔχωσι.

And the written accounts command us to teach [our children] to know the laws and the actions of their ancestors, so that the children might imitate their actions and so that, growing up beside the laws, they neither transgress them nor have the pretense of ignorance.

(2.204)

Thus Josephus intertwines raising children and obeying the divine law, presenting the Jews as having households ordered so as to maintain the law and thus, religion.

For any who maintain that a deity without form does not exist or is inessential, Josephus insists:

πρώτη δ' ἡγεῖται ἡ περὶ θεοῦ λέγουσα, ὁ θεὸς ἔχει τὰ **σύμπαντα παντελῆς** καὶ μακάριος, αὐτὸς **αὐτῷ καὶ πᾶσιν** αὐτάρκης, ἀρχὴ καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος οὗτος τῶν **πάντων**, **ἔργοις μὲν καὶ χάρισιν ἐναργῆς** καὶ **παντὸς οὐτινος φανερώτερος**, μορφὴν δὲ καὶ μέγεθος **ἡμῖν ἄφατος**

The first [law] begins speaking about god: god contains **all things absolutely** and is blessed, that god is self-sufficient for himself and **for all**, god is the start, middle, and end **of all things**, he is **palpable in deeds and in favors and more manifested than everything else**, even though in the form and majesty he is **unspeakable to us**.

(2.190-191)

In this way, the religion of Josephus's Jews is not empty or baseless ritual, but the foundation of their reality. Villalba traces in Josephus's historical works these continual aetiologies from both natural circumstance and metaphysical interactions (40-63; 40-41 esp.). The proliferation of παν-roots especially suggests an all-encompassing force, which seems to include both physical and metaphysical universe, according to the last two phrases (ἔργοις μὲν καὶ χάρισιν ἐναργῆς καὶ παντὸς οὐτινος φανερώτερος, μορφὴν δὲ καὶ μέγεθος ἡμῖν ἄφατος). The first phrase (ἔργοις ... φανερώτερος) provides the visual proofs, the effects of the god in the physical realm, Josephus

needs to argue for a god existing in the physical realm, the second providing the justification for the god's lack of defined physical form, with terms like μέγεθος suggesting that the metaphysical realm humans either can't perceive or can't reproduce with representation (ἡμῖν ἄφατος).

Josephus reports uniquely of the temple of Jerusalem in *Against Apion* that it must be one temple, held in common so that the god also is held in common (2.193).<sup>49</sup> However, Josephus includes a much fuller description of Herod's temple in *Jewish Antiquities* 15, and the layout of Jerusalem itself in *Jewish Wars* 5. As in Tacitus's depiction, Jerusalem is fortified by three walls (JW 5.136: Τρισὶ δ' ὠχυρωμένη τείχεσιν ἡ πόλις), but at no time do these walls correspond with social sectors (civilians vs. government vs. temple) as in Tacitus. Quite the opposite, the walls are described by name, building authority, and physical sectors of the city. The oldest wall (first) was the hardest to assail (5.142: Τῶν δὲ τριῶν τειχῶν τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον ... δυσάλωτον ἦν), built by David and Solomon (5.143: Δαυίδου τε καὶ Σολομῶνος), began in the North from the Hippicus tower and extended to the Xustos (5.144: ἀρχόμενον δὲ κατὰ βορρᾶν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰππικοῦ καλουμένου πύργου καὶ διατεῖνον ἐπὶ τὸν ξυστόν). Josephus goes on to trace the walls through towers, monuments, and neighborhoods, at no time distinguishing sectors except by new and old (for instance, the third wall is built by Agrippa to add to the old city some new developments which lay outside all walls; 5.148). Herod's temple receives an equally detail-oriented description, encompassing all of 15.380-425 of the *Jewish Antiquities*. The passage begins with Herod's reasoning for the project, including some authorial insertion which praises it in retrospect, saying that Herod took on the task, "considering that accomplishing the temple project would be more notable than any other scenario [for gaining glory] (which it was [adds Josephus])" (15.380: ἡγούμενος ἀπάντων αὐτῶ τῶν πεπραγμένων περισημότερον, ὥσπερ ἦν).

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<sup>49</sup> For a fuller discussion of the place of the temple in *Against Apion*, see Bauckham (1996).

Josephus finely details not only the dimensions but the decorations, alluded to by Tacitus's *immensae opulentiae templum*. I will myself elide a discussion of these, but suffice to say the details of the temple are, according to Josephus, amazing to those who saw them, both for their grandiosity and their workmanship (15.395: θαῦμα καὶ τοῦ μεγέθους καὶ τῆς τέχνης τοῖς ἰδοῦσιν). Instead of the triplicate walls around the city, Josephus emphasizes the triplicate gates around the holy courts of the temple. These are represented as a series of exclusions, with Judaeans men and women allowed past the first gate, Judaeans men into the second, and only the priests into the third (15.417-420). Interestingly, though many think of these courts as the temple complex, Josephus makes clear that the temple could only be understood as the building within the final court where the sacrifices occurred (ὁ ναὸς ἐν τούτῳ καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ βωμὸς ἦν, ἐφ' οὗ τὰς θυσίας ὀλοκαυτοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ), and whereas when speaking of the temple and Solomon's temple, Josephus distinguished the "Holy of Holies" (innermost sanctum; discussed in JA 3 and 8, respectively), Josephus does not describe this portion of Herod's temple. But, though the "seat of god" is not explicitly discussed, the end of the Temple description makes clear that the deity was still involved and approving of this venture:

λέγεται δὲ κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν οἰκοδομουμένου τοῦ ναοῦ τὰς μὲν ἡμέρας οὐχ ὕειν, ἐν δὲ ταῖς νυξὶ γίνεσθαι τοὺς ὄμβρους, ὡς μὴ κωλυσιεργεῖν. καὶ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον οἱ πατέρες ἡμῖν παρέδωκαν, οὐδ' ἐστὶν ἄπιστον, εἰ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας ἀπίδοι τις ἐμφανείας τοῦ θεοῦ.

It is said that at that time of the temple construction, it did not rain through the days, but storms occurred in the nights, so as not to interfere. Our fathers transmitted this story to us, and it is not incredible, if one should consider the other manifestations of god.

(15.42)

To Tacitus, the empty temple reflected the empty religiosity of the Jews,<sup>50</sup> itself matched by the empty loyalty to a non-existent state and the empty devotion to households either non-existent or not worthy of mention. This compounded depravity of the Jewish character was written into not only the depictions of Judaeen geography on the large, national scale, but represented even in the division of Jerusalem, Tacitus's one described Judaeen city. For Josephus, on the other hand, there is no neat triplicate division for Jerusalem and no neat separation of familial, government, and religious space within Jerusalem. In Josephus's writings, the Law encompasses the spheres of family, governance, and religion, just as one god holds sway over all realms.

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<sup>50</sup> To recap: the rituals of 5.4, discussed in chapter two, are founded either out of animosity toward other gods (Hammon; Apis) or negative traits (*ignavia*), and described on the whole as *profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursus concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta*. Even the most complimentary of lists of Jewish rituals (5.5) are prefaced as *cetera instituta, sinistra foeda, pravitate valere*. And to begin the final portion of the excursus, the Judaeans are called *gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa*.

## Conclusion

In Tacitus's account of the build-up of the Jerusalem siege, we have an excellent opportunity to review those depictions of the Jews and Judaea identified so far.

The first chapter contained discussions of the physical landscape of Judaea and in what respects the land received divine providence. After briefly describing the temple/citadel of Jerusalem, Tacitus provides another balancing act between natural providence and human labor: [the temple complex contains] a fountain of never-ending water, mountains excavated under the earth and fish ponds and cisterns for the collecting of rains (5.12: *fons perennis aquae, cavati sub terra montes et piscinae cisternaeque servandis imbribus*). The suggestion of the natural providence (*fons perennis aquae*) is immediately followed by the depiction of human labor (*cavati*). Even if the fountain were a symbol of divine providence, the preparations of Jerusalem benefit the Judaeans in no way, as Tacitus foreshadows in his prelude to the excursus, describing the final day of the famous city (5.2). Immediately after the passage quoted above, Tacitus turns (5.12: *...imbribus. providerant conditores...*) from potentially supernatural providence to certainly human preparations by describing the actions of the founders. This brings us to chapter two.

Chapter two discussed Tacitus presenting the Jews as continual itinerants, recognized both through their history of wandering and their intentionally differentiating mores. Continuing the account at 5.12, Tacitus suggests that the Judaeans were not only aware of their differences and that they could cause warfare, but had been since the beginning: the founders had anticipated frequent wars due to the contrariety of their customs (*providerant conditores ex diversitate*

*morum crebra bella*). However, this realization does not lead to practical preparations without a misstep by the Romans. The Jews were able to rebuild, and hence reinforce, the wall around the temple only due to the greed rampant during Claudian times (*per avaritiam Claudianorum temporum*), suggesting as before that the Jews can only take control during a power vacuum. Too, Tacitus replays the original wandering with new commentary when discussing how Jerusalem swelled in size during the siege:

*magna conluvie et ceterarum urbium clade aucti; nam  
pervicacissimus quisque illuc perfugerat eoque seditiosius  
agebant.*

By the great outrush and by the destruction of the rest of the cities  
[the population] had grown; for everyone most headstrong fled  
there, and for this reason more sedition occurred.

The language used retains similarities to the origin stories and subsequent rituals of the wandering Judaeans. Consider the similarities between *magna conluvie* and the *exundantem multitudinem* of 5.2, describing the multitude of excess peoples pouring out of Egypt and into neighboring lands; or the fleeing verb *perfugerat* and the *profugos* of 5.2, describing the Jews as exiles pushed out of Crete at the same time Saturn (by violence) was driven from his authority; the *clade aucti* and the *abstinent memoria cladis* of 5.4, which denotes the rationale behind Jewish abstention from pork, in memory of the national disaster/plague. While not all of the origin accounts equate the wandering with a negative result on the newly occupied lands, Tacitus here, by using the term *seditiosius*, displays here a more definitively sinister result of migration.

The actions of these newly acquired wanderers reinforce chapter three, concerning the relationship between lawlessness and impiety. Tacitus continues:

**tres duces, totidem exercitus:** extrema et latissima moenium  
Simo, mediam urbem Ioannes quem et Bargioram vocabant,  
templum Eleazarus firmaverat. multitudine et armis Ioannes ac  
Simo, Eleazarus loco pollebat: sed proelia dolus incendia **inter**

**ipsos, et magna vis frumenti ambusta. mox Ioannes, missis per speciem sacrificandi qui Eleazarum manumque eius obtruncarent, templo potitur. ita in duas factiones civitas discessit, donec propinquantibus Romanis bellum externum concordiam pareret.**

There were three leaders, and as many armies: Simo secured the farthest and highest walls, Ioannes (whom they used to also call Bargiora) the middle of the city, Eleazar the temple. Whereas Ioannes and Simo prevailed in number and weapons, Eleazar held the stronger position: but there were battles, deceit, and fires even among themselves, and a great amount of grain burnt. And then Ioannes became master of the temple, with men sent who cut to pieces Eleazar and his band under the pretense of sacrificing. Thus the state split into two factions, until with the Romans at their doorstep, foreign warfare yielded concord.

(5.12)

The correlation of *tres duces, totidem exercitus* turns from a critique of individuals to the condemnation of the people. So too does *in duas factiones civitas discessit* place blame on the collective, *civitas*, which seems to divide of its own will. The collective, then, is responsible for the battles, deceit, and fires *inter ipsos*, among one another, a tendency for civil war even when faced with a greater enemy. This directly counters Josephus, who sees the civil discord inside Jerusalem as a virus of outsiders attacking the peaceful collective. For Josephus, the initial civilian population of Jerusalem is set upon by ambitious and despicable Judaeans from outside the city, who trail bellicose followers, as opposed to Tacitus's generals, who are not differentiated from natives of Jerusalem.<sup>51</sup> The population of Jerusalem is described as a human body, afflicted by some violence from an external force: "with the city being engaged in warfare on every side by the treacherous mobs, the deme in the middle was torn to pieces like one great body" (*Jewish Wars* 5.27: Πανταχόθεν δὲ τῆς πόλεως πολεμουμένης ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπιβούλων καὶ συγκλύδων μέσος ὁ δῆμος ὥσπερ μέγα σῶμα διεσπαράσσετο). For Josephus, the damage to the

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<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in some ways the Galileans and Zealots seem to be described as non-Judaeans. For the socio-political and ethnic stratification of the various rebelling sects, see Zeitlin (1962), Miller (2001), and Rajak (2001).

city is done by Judaeans themselves long before the Romans return to their siege, and the downfall of Jerusalem predicted years before the Roman march. In response to the gate to the inner court of the temple becoming near impossible to shut, both the common and the learned Judaeans recognize this as a prodigy:

πάλιν τοῦτο τοῖς μὲν ἰδιώταις κάλλιστον ἐδόκει τέρας: ἀνοῖξαι γὰρ τὸν θεὸν αὐτοῖς τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν πύλην: οἱ λόγιοι δὲ λυομένην **αὐτομάτως** τοῦ ναοῦ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν ἐνενόουν, καὶ **πολεμίοις δῶρον** ἀνοίγεσθαι τὴν πύλην, δηλωτικόν τε ἐρημίας ἀπέφαινον ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸ σημεῖον.

Again this seemed to the commoners a wonderful omen—for god had laid open for them the gate of good things—but the learned understood that the safeguard of the temple was loosed **of its own free will**, opening itself as a **gift to their enemies**, and they proclaimed it was a clear sign of the desolation to befall them.

(6.295)

Whereas for Josephus, the Romans are the passive agents receiving an unearned gift, in Tacitus's view, the Romans are the active proponents of peace through their warfare, as the Jews were absolutely incapable of making a peace or deciding a victor of their civil discord until compelled by the conquerors on their doorstep (*donec propinquantibus Romanis bellum externum concordiam pareret*). And, though the temple is venerated as the holiest place in Jerusalem, the Judaeans prove willing to not only pollute it with violence, but to do so against their fellow citizens and through the guise of sacrificing (*per speciem sacrificandi*).

The final phrase of this episode (*donec propinquantibus Romanis bellum externum concordiam pareret*) encapsulates Tacitus's approach to the Jews within the excursus: the only path to peace is Roman victory. Josephus comes to the same conclusion, albeit over several books rather than a paragraph, while considering the civil hostilities in Jerusalem before and during the siege:

τί τηλικούτον, ὃ τλημονεστάτη πόλις, πέπονθας ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων, οἷ σου τὰ ἐμφύλια μύση πυρὶ καθαροῦντες εἰσηλθον: **θεοῦ μὲν γὰρ οὔτε ἤς ἔτι χῶρος οὔτε μένειν ἐδύνασο**, τάφος οἰκείων γενομένη σωμάτων καὶ πολέμου τὸν ναὸν ἐμφυλίου ποιήσασα πολυάνδριον: δύναιο δ' ἂν γενέσθαι πάλιν ἀμείνων, εἴγε ποτὲ τὸν πορθήσαντα θεὸν ἐξιλάσῃ.

What so great a thing, O most miserable city, did you suffer from the Romans, who came in order to cleanse your kinship defilement with fire! **For you no longer belonged to god nor were you able to remain**, you made a tomb for the bodies of your family and having made the temple the collective burial mound during this civil conflict: but you may return again stronger, provided that at some time you propitiate the god who has destroyed you.

(5.19)

The land, designated by God for the Jews, has been abandoned by him and the Jews forbidden to remain (θεοῦ μὲν γὰρ οὔτε ἤς ἔτι χῶρος οὔτε μένειν ἐδύνασο). The connection between the Jews and the land is cemented by the term οἰκείων, describing the inhabitants with a term of familiarity. The bonds of the law (the representative or substitute piety) have been broken with unlawful desecration of the temple by unlawful sacrifice and with unlawful murder, doubly heinous against kin (τάφος οἰκείων γενομένη σωμάτων καὶ πολέμου τὸν ναὸν ἐμφυλίου ποιήσασα πολυάνδριον). The correct punishment, according to Josephus, is conquest, assigned by God, with the Romans as weapon. However, just as the last line of the hostilities in Tacitus revealed a motive, so too does Josephus's account. While Tacitus has designed his excursus to prove that Jerusalem was necessarily taken for the good of Rome and the Judaeans themselves, Josephus suggests that, should the Jews propitiate their God, a return to Jewish autonomy in the land is possible (δύναιο δ' ἂν γενέσθαι πάλιν).

On the base level, both Josephus and Tacitus include depictions of Judaea as a means of furthering or decorating their narratives. But with those depictions, both authors create a mirror for the people within, Tacitus's aimed to reflect the hostile origins, continued struggle to civilize,

and empty virtues that shape an enemy worthy to have been assailed, and Josephus's aimed to reveal the specter of the civilization that emerged earlier than Roman recollection, the failed theocracy that led to the downfall, and the specter of the Judaea that could be, were his Roman audience inclined to see the province self-govern again.

## Appendix

Table 1:

#	Origin	Section	Destination	Expulsion terms	Key distinctions
1	Crete	5.2	Libya	<i>profugos; vi Iovis pulsus cesserit regnis</i>	Military connotations, <i>profugos</i> , expulsion of Saturn. At least two journeys, to and away from Libya.
2	Egypt	5.2	Neighboring lands	<i>exundantem per Aegyptum multitudinem</i>	Directionless force of nature, detrimental to their newly occupied lands ( <i>proximas in terras exoneratam</i> ).
3	Ethiopia	5.2	Not specified	<i>prolem... metus atque odium mutare sedis perpulerit</i>	Fear and hate suggests a social ostracization, the only account without exact destination.
4	Assyria	5.2	A portion of Egypt nearby Syria	<i>convenas, indigum agrorum populum</i>	Most typically nomadic. Perhaps a failed attempt at agrarianism. Stealing a section of Egypt ( <i>parte Aegypti potitos</i> ).
5	Solymoi	5.2	Jerusalem <sup>52</sup>	None.	<i>clara initia</i> and allusions to Homer, seems autochthonous
6	Egypt	5.3	Unnamed, but implied to be Judaea	<i>alias in terras avehere, vastis locis relictum sit, exulum, utrisque deserti, omnium ignari fortuitum iter incipient</i>	Divine mandate to rid the land of Jews, plague causing a necessary physical ostracization. Sent out with no destination in mind, acquire the land by pushing out the current inhabitants ( <i>pulsis cultoribus obtinere terras</i> ).

<sup>52</sup> Jerusalem is perhaps not to be considered a destination either because 1) it is a place of origin, suggesting autochthony or 2) there is no journey or travel mentioned, let alone emphasized.

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