The Fall of Yodfat and Flavius Josephus

The siege of the Israeli town Yodfat, led by Roman General Vespasian and his son, Titus, took place during the Great Jewish Revolt against the Roman Empire in 67 AD.

On the 47th day of the siege, the day when the ramp surpassed the walls, a deserter went over to the Romans and disclosed the dire situation within Yodfat. Few defenders had remained, and these, worn out by their perpetual fighting and vigilance, usually slept during the last watch of the night.

At dawn on the very next day, a band of Romans reportedly led by Titus himself stealthily scaled the walls, cut the throats of the watch and opened the gates, letting in the entire Roman army. Taken by surprise, the Jews were furthermore confounded by a thick mist, and the Romans quickly took hold of the summit, pursuing the inhabitants down the eastern slope.

And for the Romans, they so well remembered what they had suffered during the siege, that they spared none, nor pitied any, but drove the people down the precipice from the citadel, and slew them as they drove them down; at which time the difficulties of the place hindered those that were still able to fight from defending themselves; for as they were distressed in the narrow streets, and could not keep their feet sure along the precipice, they were overpowered with the crowd of those that came fighting them down from the citadel.

— Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews
According to Josephus, **40,000 were slain or committed suicide and 1,200 women and infants were taken into slavery, while the Romans suffered but a single fatality.** Vespasian ordered the town demolished and its walls torn down. The Romans prohibited burial of the fallen and it was only a year or more later when Jews were allowed to return to bury the remains in caves and cisterns.

**Yosef Ben-Matityahu** had hidden in one of the caves that litter the site, along with **40 other prominent citizens of Yodfat.** Although Ben-Matityahu was in favor of surrendering to the Romans, the majority of his comrades opted to kill themselves rather than fall into Roman hands. As suicide is considered sinful, they decided to draw lots to kill each other. Ben-Matityahu and another man, however, were the last to survive, and both resolved to give themselves up.

Taken to see the Roman general, **Ben-Matityahu prophesied that Vespasian would one day become emperor.** Vespasian subsequently spared the rebel leader, who began collaborating with the Romans. At first a slave, he would later be freed and be granted Roman citizenship as **Flavius Josephus.**

**Flavius Josephus**

**Titus Flavius Josephus** (37 – c. 100), born **Joseph ben Matityahu** was a first-century Roman-Jewish scholar and historian who was born in Jerusalem—then part of Roman Judea—to a father of priestly descent and a mother who claimed royal ancestry.

He initially fought against the Romans during the **First Jewish–Roman War** as head of Jewish forces in Galilee, until surrendering in **67 AD** to Roman forces led by Vespasian after the six-week siege of Jotapata (Yodfat).
Josephus claimed the Jewish Messianic prophecies that initiated the First Roman-Jewish War made reference to Vespasian becoming Emperor of Rome. In response Vespasian decided to keep Josephus as a slave and interpreter.

After Vespasian became Emperor in 69 AD, he granted Josephus his freedom, at which time Josephus assumed the emperor's family name of Flavius.

Flavius Josephus fully defected to the Roman side and was granted Roman citizenship. He became an advisor and friend of Vespasian's son Titus, serving as his translator when Titus led the Siege of Jerusalem, which resulted—when the Jewish revolt did not surrender—in the city's destruction and the looting and destruction of Herod's Temple (Second Temple).

The extant manuscripts of the writings of the 1st-century Flavius Josephus include references to Jesus and the origins of Christianity.

Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, written c. 94 AD:

“About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks.

He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

*Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews*

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