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Josephus

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DOI
10.1163/9789004224384_012
Publication date
2012
Document Version
Final published version
Published in
Space in ancient Greek literature

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Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Huitink, L., & van Henten, J. W. (2012). Josephus. In I. J. F. de Jong (Ed.), *Space in ancient Greek literature* (pp. 199-217). (Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative; Vol. 3), (Mnemosyne. Supplements; Vol. 339). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004224384_012

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CHAPTER TEN

JOSEPHUS

L. Huitink and J.W. van Henten

Introduction

This chapter focuses on *The Jewish War*, one of the two major histories written by Flavius Josephus. References to *The Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus' other major historical work, are added where they are relevant for our discussion of the *War*. Already at the outset of the *War*, Josephus-the-narrator claims a special knowledge of his subject, the war between the Jews and the Romans in 66–70 CE that ultimately led to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. He refers to this knowledge by emphasising his position as 'a Hebrew by birth and a priest from Jerusalem' and as one who 'at the opening of the war myself fought against the Romans and in the sequel was perforce an onlooker' (*BJ* 1.3).[1] The narrator's knowledge extends to the actual theatres of war, a detailed description of which is announced in the proem, together with the major battles and related events in this work. Josephus promises his narratees a description of 'the extent and nature of both parts of the Galilee [i.e. Upper and Lower Galilee], the borders of Judaea, the special features of the country, its lakes and springs' (1.22), and in particular Jerusalem, with its 'triple line of walls and their dimensions; the defences of the city and the plan of the Temple and sanctuary, the measurements of these buildings and the altar being all precisely stated' (1.25–26).

The narrator does indeed offer descriptions, often detailed ones, of locations in several extended passages of *The Jewish War* (likewise in *The Jewish Antiquities*), which are usually clearly marked off because

[1] According to the reading of most of the manuscripts. Like Polybius and Strabo Josephus emphasised the importance of eyewitness evidence; see Shahar 2004: 192–195. All translations from *The Jewish War* are those by H.S.J. Thackeray (Loeb), with some modifications.

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they form a pause within the narrative.[2] Given the frequency and length of such passages, these set descriptions are the most obvious and most important way in which Josephus engages with the narratological category of space. They usually take a panoramic point of view and are focalised by himself as narrator, thus underscoring his claim to *akribeia*[3] and bringing out his special qualifications as a Jewish priest from Jerusalem and a former general of the Jews. The fact that they are often so clearly set apart from the main narrative may at first give the impression that they have been included for their own sake. The painstaking detail that characterizes the most elaborate description of all, that of Jerusalem and its Temple (5.136–247), can at least in part be explained by the assumption that Josephus nostalgically wanted to preserve the memory of a city and a monument which had, by the time of writing, been razed to the ground. However, a closer analysis of relevant passages suggests that his handling of space has important literary and thematic implications, so that the descriptions take on narrative functions well beyond the establishment of the narrator's apparent wish to display his knowledge. The set descriptions in Josephus' historiographical works exhibit a varied range of techniques and registers, while the narrator also devotes some attention to space outside the set descriptions. This chapter will explore a number of narrative techniques for handling space, and will link these to the functions of space within the larger context of Josephus' narrative.

Topographical Description and Narrative

As stated above, many of Josephus' descriptions are presented in separate blocks of the narrative. They are usually told in simultaneous narration,[4] thus creating a pause in the narrative. They are mostly focalised by the narrator, who takes a panoramic viewpoint. This applies, for example, to the descriptions of Jotapata/Yodfat (3.158–160), Joppa (3.419–421), the Lake of Gennesareth and the area surrounding it (3.506–521), Gamala

[2] Sometimes the distinction between narrative and description is difficult because Josephus combines narration with description (for example in the section about Herod's construction of Caesarea Maritima in *AJ* 15.331–341 and his renovation of the Temple in 15.380–425).

[3] See *SAGN* 2: 213–214.

[4] See *SAGN* 2: 218. The main exception is the description of Jerusalem in book 5 of the *War*, for reasons explained below.

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(4.5–8), Jericho and its vicinity (4.451–485) and Masada (7.280–294).[5] However, despite the fact that these descriptions are clearly marked off from the surrounding narrative, they also interact with the narrative in interesting ways, which highlight some of Josephus' narrative goals in relating the war.[6]

The description of Gamala at the beginning of book 4 is a good example to subject to a more detailed analysis. It is embedded in war narrative and followed by further brief descriptive passages, as salient points of the initial description are taken up again in the narrative of the fighting (4.4–8, 54–55, 74; see below). In a brief survey of the cities around the Sea of Galilee, which took the side of the Romans and King Agrippa II (ca. 50–92/3 CE)[7] after the fall of Jotapata/Yodfat (4.1–4), Josephus notes that the town of Gamala deserted King Agrippa and joined the rebels together with the cities of Tiberias and Tarichaea. The description of Gamala in 4.4–8 links up with Josephus' explanation of Gamala's desertion: it is introduced by a sentence that mentions Gamala's refusal to surrender and artfully connects it with the main narrative indicating that the town relied upon its inhospitable location: 'But Gamala refused to surrender, relying even more confidently than Jotapata upon the natural difficulties of its position' (4.4).

Like most descriptions of towns in the *War*, the description also coincides with the moment the Roman troops, here led by Vespasian, are about to march on it. This presentation reminds one of (→) Herodotus, but there is at the same time an important difference: Herodotus usually takes a broad geographical interest in the locations which he describes, while Josephus here and often elsewhere focuses on the features which make Gamala easy to defend, a military focus which is closely connected

[5] There are, of course, exceptions: Josephus' passage about Caesarea Maritima in *AJ* 15.331–341 highlights the location of the Temple for Augustus in this city by taking the viewpoint of people on a boat sailing into Caesarea's harbour (15.339), which echoes (→) Herodotus' geographical style.

[6] Shahar 2004: 208–209. The interconnections with the narrative hold true for the *Antiquities* as well; see, for example, Josephus' elaborate description of the Herodian Temple in *AJ* 15.380–425, which forms the conclusion of book 15 and highlights the magnificence of the Temple as well as Herod the Great's role as a builder king.

[7] The Jewish King Agrippa II is an important character in the *War* narrative. He was appointed King of Chalcis by Claudius in 50 CE and also received the right to nominate and depose high priests. In 53 CE he received as replacement of the Kingdom of Chalcis the tetrarchy of Philip (Batanea, Trachonitis and Gaulanitis). Nero added the cities of Tiberias, Tarichea and Julias to his territory.

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with Josephus' own status as a former general in this war.[8] The description starts as follows:

> From a lofty mountain there descends a rugged spur rising in the middle to a hump, the declivity from the summit of which is of the same length before as behind, so that in form the ridge resembles a camel. (4.5)

The comparison of a camel in this description is adequate if one knows this location, but its point concerns those who do not: it enables those unfamiliar with the location to visualise the scene. The narrator uses this technique more often,[9] but here there is an additional motive for the simile. *Gāmāl* means 'camel' in Hebrew, so that the comprison also offers an aetiological explanation for the city's name. Having mentioned the broadest features of the landscape, the narrator gradually zooms in on the town itself: first to the ravines that surround it on all sides, partly made deeper by the besieged people themselves under the leadership of Josephus; then to the houses 'built against the steep mountain flank and astonishingly huddled together', and finally to the southern part of the city, which, by virtue of its greater height, forms a citadel. Then follows another awe-inspiring piece of figurative language: the city 'seems (*eoikuia*) to be suspended in air and to be falling headlong upon itself' (4.7). The narrator also reveals that there is a spring inside the town and, picking up the narrative with an analepsis, he rounds off with the statement that 'Josephus had fortified it with walls and secured it still further by mines and trenches' (4.10).

The description of Gamala is thus clearly selective, as it mainly focuses on the defences of the town and its ability to withstand a siege: since Josephus-the-narrator had himself been in charge of the defences, he looks at Gamala from a general's-eye perspective. At the same time, the narratees get a depiction of the city that may make them agree with Vespasian's assessment that 'the complete investment of the city in such a situation was impossible' (4.12). This observation closely follows

[8] Josephus is often selective in his topographical descriptions, which Shahar 2004: 227 connects with Polybius' and Strabo's descriptions.

[9] Cf. other comparisons: the Temple to a snow-clad mountain (*BJ* 5.223); the location of the Temple precinct in relation to the city of Jerusalem to the form of a theatre (*AJ* 15.410); the triumphal procession to a flowing river (*BJ* 7.134, below); the fortress of Herodium to a woman's breast (*AJ* 15.324); two hills close to each other near Baaras/Baaru east of the Dead Sea to the shape of female breasts (*BJ* 7.189).

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upon the description. Although the description itself is not focalised by Vespasian, the Roman general and Josephus clearly notice the same features.[10]

Unsurprisingly, what follows after the description of Gamala in 4.4–8 is a drawn-out siege, in which both sides sustain considerable losses. At several points in the narrative of the siege features from the description are mentioned again. For example, when the Romans enter the lower quarter of the city, the inhabitants take refuge high up on the citadel, while the Romans have nowhere to go but to the rooftops of the houses, which after all were built so closely together and which now collapse under their weight (4.22–25). It is clear, then, that the narrator stresses exactly those elements of the topography of Gamala that facilitate the narratees' understanding of the subsequent narrative in military terms.[11] While Josephus partly attributes the Romans' initial failure to capture Gamala to a temporary loss of military discipline (4.17–30; cf. 4.33, 39), he also connects it explicitly with the town's topography (4.44). The end of the story (4.70–83) in particular highlights the military prowess of the Romans: they manage to overcome the impossible geography of the land, and the narratees should admire this feat.

Description, Drama, Message

One of the narrative functions of descriptions in Josephus concerns the articulation of the narrator's message for his narratees in dramatic terms. The back-references to elements from the initial description of Gamala in the subsequent narrative of the siege do not only serve to make sense of the Romans' strategic and military difficulties, but also contribute to the articulation of the motif of tragic reversal, which is a prominent theme in Josephus' narrative. Thus, when the siege begins to weigh heavily on the inhabitants, the earlier picture of a city in which the houses are huddled together is evoked again and contributes to the feeling of chaos in this part of the narrative, where the people 'ran hither and thither in great trepidation' (4.66). Things change even more dramatically when Roman discipline is restored after Titus' return from a visit to Syria

[10] Interestingly, in a number of descriptions, especially of locations where he was not present himself, Josephus explicitly takes the perspective of the Roman commanders; see Shahar 2004: 195–198.

[11] Shahar 2004: 215–219.

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(4.70). Several elements in the finale of the report of Gamala's capture (4.70–83) cohere closely with the narrator's earlier description of its location and defensive features, in ways which now also give significance to the plight of the Jews. For what follows is a highly dramatic scene, which describes the wholesale slaughter following the capture of the town. First, the mountain flanks on which the houses are built are mentioned again, when the narrator describes how 'the whole city was deluged with blood pouring down the slopes' (*to haima pasan epekluze tēn polin kata pranous kheomenon*, 4.72). Josephus' phrase here can be associated with the image of a sacrificial altar,[12] which adds pathos as well as a symbolic meaning to the narrative. In another complete and bitterly ironic reversal of fortune, the ravines which, the narratees are once more reminded, 'had been excavated to a vast depth beneath the citadel' (4.79) in order to be able better to defend the town, now become a deadly trap and in fact cause the death of many inhabitants, when they plunge into them with their wives and children rather than surrender themselves. This collective suicide caused more than 5,000 casualties, which is actually more than the 4,000 victims that resulted from the fighting itself (4.79–80). The suicide is highlighted by a brief description of the top of the hill on which Gamala was located, which was stony and impassable, and 'towering to an immense height and surrounded with precipices' (4.74). Part of the vocabulary of the description returns in the dramatic brief report about the suicide and together they signal the utter despair of the defeated Jews at Gamala. Thus, the ingredients of the cool description of the advantageous position and defence works of Gamala, the conquering of which brought glory to the Romans, now forms the backdrop to the Jews' misfortune in a scene in which *akribeia* gives way to *enargeia*. No doubt every narratee will be moved by the shocking fate of the Jews, which matches the purpose of a narrator who had made it clear that he would not conceal his own feelings but asked 'indulgence for my compassion' (1.11) with his compatriots.

It has been argued that *The Jewish War* belongs to the 'dramatic', as opposed to a 'pragmatic', tradition of historiography, which can perhaps be traced back to Duris of Samos.[13] And Josephus' descriptions do more often resonate with his interest in dramatic and tragic reversals in ways which suggest that his handling of space is designed to underline this

[12] So Parente 2005: 46.

[13] Cf. Chapman 1998 and Parente 2005 on the importance of this tradition to Josephus.

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motif. A further example which is worth considering in this context is the elaborate description of the Lake of Gennesareth and the surrounding district. Not only does this description help to glorify Vespasian's and Titus' achievement, but it also plays on the theme of reversal in an innovative way by combining Herodotean and Thucydidean ingredients. The initial description itself reminds one of (→) Herodotus' descriptions of exotic and strange countries or regions. Josephus draws attention to the unique species of fish that live in the lake and to the strange fact that the river Jordan runs straight through the middle of it (3.508–509). Josephus even includes a short excursus on the sources of the river Jordan at this point. The surrounding district, which is 'remarkable for its natural properties and beauty' (*thaumastē phusin te kai kallos*, 3.516), supplies all kinds of fruit for no less than ten months a year and is being watered by a spring which some hold to be a branch of the Nile (3.519–520). The appeal to marvels (*thaumata*) and the source-reference to the Nile may build on Herodotus' description of Egypt.[14]

The Herodotean flavour of the description of Lake Gennesareth, highlighting its unique features, is especially relevant in connection with Vespasian's role in the pacification of the Jewish territory. It strengthens the impression that Vespasian managed, through an important war of conquest, to turn an exotic nation at the edge of the inhabited world into a well-ordered Roman province. Such a conquest considerably furthered Vespasian's claim on the imperial throne. The Flavian triumph celebrated afterwards in Rome is well-known from another passage in Josephus as well as other sources.[15] The erection of several buildings in Rome, including two triumphal arches and the Temple of Peace, made that the victory was commemorated by many up to the present day.

However, after this initial description, in which the lake is described in terms of a *locus amoenus* of sorts, the lake assumes an altogether different and contrasting significance, as it highlights the misery of the conquered Jews. For in the next section of the narrative a full-scale naval battle is fought on Lake Gennesareth (3.522–531), which is described in terms which are, perhaps, reminiscent of Thucydides. The lake now forms the backdrop to the greatest horrors (3.529–531) and an anonymous witness

[14] Josephus underpins this connection by referring to the coracin fish (*korakinos*), which was also found in the 'See of Alexandria' (i.e. Lake Mareotis; *BJ* 3.520; likewise Strabo 17.2.4). The Nile is prominent in the description of Egypt in Herodotus' book 2 (see especially 2.1–34; Egypt is 'the gift of the river', 2.5; cf. 2.14, 17).

[15] *BJ* 7.123–157; Suetonius *Vesp*. 8.1; *Tit*. 6.1; Cassius Dio 66.7.1. See Beard 2003 and Millar 2005.

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is invoked to take in the scene: 'one could see (*ēn … idein*) the whole lake red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped' (3.529).[16] As in similar pathetic scenes, Josephus uses *opsis* and *thea* vocabulary to make his narrative as vivid as possible.[17]

What is noted of Lake Gennesareth is also true for the entirety of the Galilee: when Vespasian advances from Antioch to the Galilee at the beginning of the war, this district, and, less extensively, Peraea, Samaria, Judaea and the Kingdom of Agrippa are described (3.35–58). Josephus acknowledges that his description is 'as brief as possible' (*hōs enēn malista suntomōs*, 3.58), but from what he does include the narratees get the impression of a fertile land, abundant with crops and people. The narrator's sense of pity and loss is palpable when 'Galilee from end to end became a scene of fire and blood' during the war (3.63).

Contrasting Romans and Jews through Space

The preceding discussion has already suggested how Josephus as narrator often handles space in order to articulate the contrast between the two opposing sides in *The Jewish War*. One particular motif connected with space, Roman discipline, helps to underpin this contrast. Roman discipline, a running theme in the *War* together with the contrasting motif of civil discord among the Jews (e.g. *BJ* 1.10, 25, 27, 31),[18] strongly contributed to the final outcome of the war in Josephus' presentation. In a long excursus on the organization of the Roman army (*BJ* 3.64–109), Josephus elaborates on the set-up of the Roman camp. Its orderly appearance is emphasised more than anything else in this description and since Josephus is prone to deduce the character of people from what they have built, the passage clearly has a characterizing function:

> The interior of the camp is divided into rows of tents. The exterior circuit presents the appearance of a wall and is furnished with towers at regular intervals (*ex isou diastēmatos*) … In this surrounding walls are set four gates, one on each side … The camp is intersected by streets symmetrically (*eudiathetōs*) laid out; in the middle are the tents of the officers, and precisely in the centre (*mesaitaton*) the headquarters of the commander-in-chief. (3.79–82)

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[16] For naval battles in Thucydides, see e.g. Hirschfeld 1996. The narrative of the battle in the great harbour of Syracuse (Th. 7.69–72) is also partly focalized through witnesses, viz. the armies on shore (71).

[17] See Chapman 2005 for a thorough study of this aspect of *The Jewish War*.

[18] Price 1992: 1–27; S. Mason 2005: 76–78.

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The orderly behaviour of the Romans also becomes apparent from the narrative itself, for example from the description of Titus' army as it marches on Jerusalem (5.47–50). From a fixed scenic standpoint, the narrator describes the train of the army as it passes by, each division in turn. Another glance of the Roman army in all its splendour is offered when Titus orders a review of the troops in order to intimidate the besieged inhabitants of Jerusalem:

> The area in front of the city gleamed far and wide with silver and gold, and nothing was more gratifying to the Romans or more awe-inspiring to the enemy than that spectacle (*tēs opseōs ekeinēs*). For the whole of the old wall and the north side of the Temple were thronged with spectators, the houses across the wall were to be seen (*ēn … huperidein*) packed with craning heads, and there was not a spot visible (*diephaineto*) in the whole city which was not covered by the crowd. (5.351–352)

Again, the narratees are told what they could have seen, if they had been there and taken the narrator's panoramic view of the opposing sides on the plain and in the city. He does not have the description focalised by the people on the walls (cf. Homer's teichoscopia), but the dismay felt by the onlookers is mentioned immediately afterwards.

Contrasted with these displays of Roman military discipline is the factitiousness of the besieged inhabitants of Jerusalem.[19] One faction within Jerusalem, the Zealots, takes control of the Temple precinct as their base of operations. Josephus accuses them of 'turning the Temple of God into their stronghold and refuge from popular upheavals, and making the Holy Place the center of their tyranny' (4.151). In Josephus' eyes the improper use of the Temple is blasphemous and contributes to the downfall of Jerusalem. For during the civil strife, the Temple is 'defiled with carnage at every corner' (5.10) and the victims 'sprinkled the altar with their own blood' (5.17). Josephus even addresses Jerusalem directly in an indignant apostrophe in which he once again contrasts Romans and Jews:

> Most wretched city! What have you suffered from the Romans to compare with this, when they entered the gates to purify with fire the abominations of your sons? For you were no longer the dwelling place of God, nor could you continue after you became a cemetery for the bodies of your own sons and the Temple had been transformed into a burial ground for the victims of civil war! … (5.19)

[19] See *SAGN* 2: 217.

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Elsewhere, too, Josephus shows himself sensitive to the improper use of places, and associates this with the theme of civil discord.[20] The association of a central city with an army camp is also found in *BJ* 4.586, where Josephus notes that Vitellius 'turned the whole of Rome into an army camp and filled every house with armed men'. It can hardly be a coincidence that Vitellius is later murdered 'in the heart of Rome' (*epi mesēs tēs Rōmēs*, 4.652). An implicit parallel between the civil strife in Rome and Jerusalem is also drawn when Sabinus, Vespasian's brother, fights 'from the temple' on the Capitol—the only hill of Rome mentioned by Josephus—, only to lose the hill to Vitellius and his German soldiers (4.648). The mirror image of the Jews fighting the Romans from the Temple in Jerusalem is hardly auspicious. By contrast, Vespasian's rapturous reception in Rome, elicits a different and more favourable comparison from the narrator: 'The whole city was filled, like a temple, with garlands and incense' (7.71).

Perspective: The Centrality of Jerusalem

Let us return to Josephus' picture of Jerusalem as it used to be before the war broke out and before it was turned into 'a desolate no man's land' (5.25). The description of Jerusalem in book 5 of the *War* (5.136–247) is the most elaborate description in Josephus. As in the case of Gamala, it is presented when Titus and his army have advanced to the city. However, unlike other descriptions of cities in Josephus, the description of Jerusalem appears in the past tense. This tense is probably selected to indicate that the city described does not exist anymore at the time of narrating, but at the same time it enables us to interpret the passage as a frame, conveying a personal memory of Josephus himself (5.182).[21] This implies that Josephus' motivation for relating it goes beyond the aim to provide the narratees with the necessary background information about the upcoming battle, although it does fulfil that function too, especially its first part. The description starts in a way that can also be observed

[20] E.g. *BJ* 2.15, 42–44, 47–50; *AJ* 17.259–264. Other authors, too, emphasise the unnatural behaviour of space when the proper order is upset; cf. Hom. *Il.* 21.218–221, where the river Scamander complains about his lovely streams being defiled by corpses, or the messenger-speech on the murder of Neoptolemus in the temple of Delphi in E. *Andr.* 1085–1165.

[21] Similarly in Josephus' brief description of the Temple in *Against Apion* 2.102–109 (102–107). See also *SAGN* 2: 214 and cf. the use of the imperfect in (part of the) descriptions in (→) Homer, (→) Apollonius of Rhodes, (→) Herodotus.

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elsewhere in Josephus: the narrator starts with the periphery and moves over to the centre.[22] Josephus first mentions the geographical setting of the city on two hills and a valley in between (5.136) and then continues to outline the circuit of its three walls.[23] This section stands out because the description is told in great detail. The first and oldest wall, for example, is described as follows:

> Beginning on the north (*kata borran*) at the tower called Hippicus, it extended to the Xystus, and then joining the council-chamber terminated at the western portico of the Temple. Beginning at the same point in the other direction, westward (*kata thatera … pros dusin*), it descended past the place called Bethso to the gate of the Essenes, then southwards (*pros noton*) above the fountain of Siloam; thence it again inclined to the east (*ekklinon pros anatolēn*) towards Solomon's pool and after passing a spot which they call Ophlas, finally joined the eastern portico of the Temple.
> (*BJ* 5.144–145)

One function of the wealth of details with which this wall is described is that it affords Josephus the possibility to introduce a number of topographical spots which will be the focal points of the fighting in the continuation of the narrative. The mention of such clearly recognizable spots from time to time gives a Homeric touch to the narrative. For example, when the Romans retreat after one of their assaults, 'the Jews still followed and kept them under fire as far as the tomb of Helena' (5.119). One may compare the retreat of the Trojans (*Il.* 11.166–168): 'The Trojans swept back over the middle of the plain, past the grave-mound made in the olden days for Ilus son of Dardanus and past the wild fig-tree'.

Upon this outline of the walls follows a description of the three biggest towers in the wall. Here, the rhetoric of the passage starts to become more obvious. The towers have been built by king Herod and they are 'for magnitude, beauty and strength … without equal in the world' (5.161).[24] Like the Roman army camp, the towers are indicative of their builder's character, who projected onto them 'his innate magnanimity and his pride in the city', and naming them after his brother, his wife and a friend, 'gratified his private feelings' by building them (5.162). The identification

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[22] See the description of Gamala discussed above. Josephus' description of the Temple in *AJ* 15.380–425 displays a more complex technique, going from the centre to the periphery and vice versa. Cf. Shahar 2004: 232–235.

[23] The organization of the entire description closely matches (→) Herodotus' survey of Babylon.

[24] Cf. Josephus' claim that Caesarea's harbour was bigger than the harbour of Piraeus (*BJ* 1.410; see n. 30). For Herod as builder, see Roller 1998 and Netzer 2006.

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between the buildings and the persons after whom they are named is made explicit in the case of the tower Mariamme, which Herod meant to 'surpass in decoration those named after men, as they outdid the woman's tower in strength' (5.170–171). More superlatives are used when the narrator moves to the buildings within the wall, first of all Herod's palace. In explicit comments we are told that 'it baffled all description' (*pantos logou kreissōn*, 5.176), that 'the interior fittings are indescribable' (5.178) and that 'it is impossible adequately to delineate the palace' (5.182), a forceful proliferation of the 'indescriptability' topos. When the narrator reflects how all this beauty was lost in a fire started by conspirators within the walls, 'the memory is harrowing' (*pherei basanon hē mnēmē*, 5.182).

Finally, the narrator turns his attention to the Temple itself and the attached fortress of Antonia, where the fire that destroys it will start. He describes it at the height of its splendour, as it appeared after Herod had rebuilt it.[25] Gradually zooming in, the narrator guides an anonymous witness (cf. 5.193 *proïontōn*, 'when people go in') from the outer courts through the inner courts and finally into the Temple itself. He ends with a description of the altar, the officiating priests and even the high priest's garments. Measures are given throughout, the functions of each part are clarified and the costly materials are mentioned time and again, with an emphasis on colour and the shining of metal surfaces. For example, the exterior of the Temple which 'wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye' is said 'to have appeared to approaching strangers from a distance like a snow-clad mountain', while people close to it had to avert their eyes because they were blinded by the gleaming gold with which it was covered (5.222–223).

The function of the elaborate description of Jerusalem in book 5 is to enhance the narratees' awareness of the magnitude of the insurgents' crimes in defiling the Temple, of what is at stake when the siege of Jerusalem begins and of what was lost when the Temple burnt down because of a fire started by the Jews themselves. Josephus has at least preserved its memory. The final glimpse in *The Jewish War* that we get of the city, now razed to the ground by Titus, also contrasts its former grandeur with its pitiable present state. It is offered in a flashback of Titus (7.112–113), one of the few instances where space is focalised by a character in the *War*:

[25] Cf. Josephus' descriptions of the Temple in *AJ* 15.380–425 and *Against Apion* 2.102–109.

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> On his way he [Titus] visited Jerusalem, and contrasting the sorry scene of desolation before his eyes with the former splendour of the city, and calling to mind the grandeur of its ruined buildings and their pristine beauty, he commiserated its destruction. (7.112)

In this brief frame Titus sees the ruins, but also recalls Jerusalem's former splendour.

Obviously, Jerusalem is of central importance in Josephus' narrative for thematic reasons, but the city also forms the centre of Josephus' geographical system. Josephus underpins the centrality of Jerusalem by using space as a narratological tool and by differentiating between profane and sacred space. The description of the Temple in *AJ* 15.380–425 is a case in point. Josephus' description moves from the periphery to the centre and back, and indicates in this way that the area of the sanctuary of 'the greatest God' (15.385) within the Temple precinct is the most holy place in the world. First he takes a panoramic viewpoint on the Temple as if he was standing on one of the hills nearby and then he zooms in on the Temple's highlights, starting with the foundations of the sanctuary and a description of this building (15.391–395). Then he moves over to the outside of the complex with the double porticoes along the exterior walls, 'the greatest work heard about by humans' (15.396). In 15.397 he once again changes the perspective by focusing on Herod's adaptation of the Temple Mount in order to create several platforms, moving from the outside to the inside again, the area around the sanctuary (15.397–401). At 15.402–417 Josephus' focus is on the exterior Temple complex (note the switch in the vocabulary from *naos* to *hieron* in 402), describing the outside from various angles: the Antonia fortress at the northwest corner, the west side with its four gates as well as the south side with its two gates and Herod's magnificent Royal Portico, described in great detail (15.411–416). From 15.417 Josephus zooms in once again, moving from one precinct to the other towards the sanctuary at the centre, going from one concentric circle to another and ending with the Priestly Court in front of the sanctuary, where the sacrifices took place. This zooming-in by the narrator goes hand in hand with a differentiation of levels of holiness of the spaces referred to, which implies that the sanctuary itself was the most holy place (417–419): '… Further within this precinct [i.e. the area within the walls around the sanctuary] was the sacred area (*to hieron*), which was inaccessible to women. And deeper inside this precinct was a third precinct, into which only the priests were allowed to enter. The sanctuary was within this (precinct) and in front of it was an altar on which we used to bring the burnt-offerings to God.'

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The notion that the sanctuary of Jerusalem's Temple was the most holy centre of a series of concentric circles of holiness is also reflected by other passages in Josephus. In *BJ* 5.207 Josephus indicates that the sanctuary was roughly in the middle of the Temple complex (*ho naos kata meson keimenos*) and in *Against Apion* 1.198 he notes that the Temple was 'roughly in the middle of the city' (*kata meson*), which must be taken symbolically.[26] The final part of the Temple section in *AJ* 15 expresses Josephus' theological claim implied by this geographical universe. Josephus reports that the sanctuary was rebuilt in one year and five months (15.421), an amazingly short time made possible because God prevented rainfall during the day (15.425). This ties in with the narrator's message, implicit in the *War* and explicit in the *Antiquities*, that God ultimately determines the course of events in Josephus' narrative. Jerusalem with God's Temple is the centre of Josephus' universe even after the city's actual destruction.

Rome in Judaea, Judaea in Rome

Disappointingly for modern historians, Josephus devotes only half a sentence to the formation of the Roman province Judaea in 6 CE (*BJ* 2.117).[27] But this does not mean that Josephus does not regard this moment as a crucial change in the history of the Jews; he devotes ample attention, for example, to the corrupt behaviour of several of the Roman governors of Judaea as a factor which contributed to the outbreak of the war. And it can indeed be argued that in the first book of the *War* Josephus has already told the story of the romanisation of Judaea in a much more evocative way than a detailed digression on its new legal status ever could—through space. Towards the end of the first book (1.401–428) Josephus surveys the realm of king Herod the Great. This passage is found when Herod is at the height of his power, after he has supposedly been installed as procurator of Syria by Augustus and has been assigned in addition all the territory between the Trachonitis and the Galilee.[28] The passage is introduced by a chronological marker referring to Herod's 15th year of reign, which is followed by a brief report

[26] See also *BJ* 5.227; *Against Apion* 2.102–104; also *Mishna Tractate Kelim* 1.6–8.

[27] Cf. *AJ* 17.355; 18.1–2, where Josephus states that Judaea became an annex to the province of Syria.

[28] Cf. *AJ* 15.360. Several scholars doubt the historicity of Herod having acted as a procurator.

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about Herod's renovation of the Temple (1.401). At first sight, the passage, focalised by the narrator, takes us in a seemingly haphazard fashion from Jerusalem to other inland places in Judaea, Samaria and the Galilee, to the coastal towns and then to more remote places within Herod's realm, which reminds one of the description of the Persian empire that Herodotus offers after Darius has taken over the Persian throne (3.89 ff.), and Josephus' occasional switch into the present tense gives the passage the air of an excursus. It is significant, however, that the passage focuses not so much on the extent of the realm as on Herod's building activities. After the reference to the Temple, the centre of Josephus' geographic construction of the world, he continues by listing other building activities by Herod, mixing the narrative with descriptive elements. Josephus clearly lumps all of Herod's building activities together.[29] His purpose in doing so becomes clear when one realizes that the Herodian buildings to which Josephus devotes most attention are those that have clear Roman connotations: he mentions temples, theatres, the institution of athletic games and numerous buildings that are named after members of the Roman imperial household. The building of Caesarea Maritima, at the location of Straton's Tower, is a case in point (1.408–415). The largest tower of its hypermodern harbour was named Drusium after Augustus' stepson (1.412).[30] On a mound opposite the harbour was Augustus' temple located, remarkable for its beauty and size (1.414). The other building projects, comprising an amphitheatre, a theatre and market places, were built in 'a manner worthy of the city's name [i.e. Caesarea]' (1.415). 'In short', Josephus concludes, 'one can mention no suitable spot within his realm, which he [Herod] left destitute of some mark of homage to Caesar' (1.407). The narrative suggests in this way that already long before the Roman invasion of Vespasian and Titus typically Roman spaces had entered the Jewish territories.[31]

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[29] This is very different from the Herod narrative in books 15–17 of the *Antiquities*, where Herod's building activities and descriptions of these buildings are interspersed among the narrative sections.

[30] Josephus compares the size of Caesarea's harbour with the harbour of Piraeus (*AJ* 15.332), which reflects an Aegean perspective, cf. (→) Herodotus. In *BJ* 1.410 he indicates there that Caesarea's harbour was even bigger than Piraeus, which is a gross overstatement.

[31] The question remains whether Herod's kingdom in its entirety was considered Jewish territory by Josephus. In *BJ* 1.407 Josephus notes that Herod filled his homeland with temples. In the *Antiquities* Josephus seems to have a more nuanced view on this, because in 15.328–329 he suggests that Caesarea and Banias were not part of the Jewish territories because the Jews would not have tolerated Herod building non-Jewish sanctuaries.

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The narrator suggests in this way that the beginning of the war is in no small measure the follow-up of an ongoing romanisation started by Herod and carried through by later administrators. Pontius Pilate aroused the anger of his Jewish subjects by introducing Roman standards with effigies into Jerusalem, the most holy part of the Jewish territory (2.169–174; cf. *AJ* 18.55–59).[32] Caligula went even a step further by demanding that statues of himself be placed in the sanctuary of the Temple (*BJ* 2.185). The theme of the improper use of space returns here.

At the very end of the war, after the Jews had been defeated, the process is reversed and Judaea enters Rome. Nowhere is this clearer than in the elaborate description which perhaps more than any other passage earns Flavius Josephus a place in a history of the use of space in ancient Greek literature: the ekphrasis of the triumphal celebrations over the capture of Judaea by the newly installed Flavian dynasts—the most detailed description of a triumph to have survived from antiquity (7.123–157).[33] Except for the beginning and the end (123–130; 153–157), where the narrator directs his gaze to the starting and end point of the parade respectively, he takes his place among the crowds in 'the theatres' (*tōn theatrōn*), from where 'the view' (*hē thea*) is easiest (7.131). Even from this fixed scenic standpoint he finds it 'impossible to give a satisfactory account' (7.132) of all that passes before him, 'like a flowing river' (7.134). By far most space is devoted to the stages passing by and finally to the spoils of the Jerusalem Temple. The passage is worth to be quoted at length:

> For many [of the stages] were enveloped in tapestries interwoven with gold, and all had a framework of gold and wrought ivory. The war was shown by numerous representations (*mimēmatōn*), in separate sections, affording a very vivid picture (*enargestatēn opsin*) of its episodes. Here was to be seen (*ēn … horan*) a prosperous country devastated, there whole battalions of the enemy slaughtered; here a party in flight, there others led into captivity; walls of surpassing compass demolished by engines, strong fortresses overpowered, cities with well-manned defences completely mastered and an army pouring within the ramparts, an area all

[32] According to Josephus, the Jews were most sensitive to the introduction of foreign religious practices in Jerusalem, as the narrative about Herod's building of a theatre with trophies in honour of Augustus in Jerusalem suggests (*AJ* 15.267–291); see van Henten 2008.

[33] Cf. Eberhardt 2005; Millar 2005. Both consider the description in connection with what is known from other sources about the religious and topographical aspects of the ceremony.

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> deluged with blood, the hands of those incapable of resistance raised in supplication, temples set on fire, houses pulled down over their owners' heads, and, after general desolation and woe, rivers flowing, not over a cultivated land, nor supplying drink to man and beast, but across a country still on every side in flames. For to such sufferings were the Jews destined when they plunged into the war; and the art and magnificent workmanship of these structures now portrayed the incidents to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes (*tois ouk idousi ginomena tot' edeiknuen hōs parousi*). … The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem: a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lampstand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern of those we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of each branch; of these there were seven, indicating the honour paid to that number among the Jews. After these, and last of the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law. (*BJ* 7.141–150)

Part of the spoils of the Temple are then placed in the newly constructed Temple of Peace, alongside those from other conquered nations, so that at a single glance visitors can see objects for the sight of which they previously had to travel across the world. Another part of the spoils is taken to the palace for safekeeping (7.160–162). The placing of holy objects from the Temple in Jerusalem in a temple in Rome and in the palace marks the completion of the conquest with a poignant finality: the remnants of Jerusalem and its Temple from now on only exist in Rome itself,[34] just like Titus was the only character in *The Jewish War* to preserve the memory of Jerusalem apart from the narrator.

The *tableaux vivants* presented in the procession may be interpreted as the visual counterpart of Josephus' story: in a summary form, the narratees are reminded of all the walls, fortresses, cities and features of the conquered land about which they have just been reading. Specific references may perhaps be found in the tableau on which is depicted 'an area all deluged with blood' (*panta phonou plēthonta*), which may remind the narratees of Josephus' own graphic description of the conquest of Gamala.[35] And the 'country on every side in flames' is reminiscent of

[34] Cf. Eberhardt 2005 on the relevance of the statement that some of the Temple spoils were 'kept safe' in the palace.

[35] Cf. also *BJ* 6.259, where a stream of blood flows down from the steps of the sanctuary.

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the way the narrator described the fate of the Galilee. The emphasis on spectacle and the use of vocabulary denoting visual sensation also return here, just like in crucial places in the narrative: the Roman spectators in the theatre may be emotionally affected by the *tableaux* to the same degree as the narratees by Josephus' narrative, 'as if they had been there themselves' (7.146).

Yet, despite these parallels between Josephus' own narrative and the description of the triumph, some readers have been struck more by the discrepancies between the two: the rather elated, indeed 'triumphal', tone dissonates with the pity for his fellow Jews and the fate of their Temple which Josephus musters elsewhere. While in administering blame Josephus is normally careful to differentiate between several groups of Jews, here the entire nation is blamed for plunging the country into war; Josephus even refers to the Jews collectively as 'the enemy' (*polemiōn*, 7.143).[36] However, a different interpretation of Josephus' apparently aloof attitude is also possible. According to this view, the narrator does not merely sit beside the Roman spectators, but has them focalise the objects carried during the triumphal procession. Not only his use of 'the enemy' is consistent with such a focalisation, but also the lack of specificity with which places in Judaea are singled out. We hear of 'a city' and of several 'temples', but nothing of Jotapata, Gamala or Jerusalem, or of *the* Temple: the Romans were perhaps not quite familiar enough with the topography of Judaea to see more clearly what exactly was depicted.[37] The focalisation by the Roman audience may also apply to the description of the spoils from the Temple. At least, the idea that the seven lamps branching off the menorah 'indicate the honour accorded to that number by the Jews' is vague enough to give the impression that this is the kind of rumour about 'strange' Jewish habits that may have been current among the Roman populace. At any rate, in Josephus' own description of the Temple, he is much more specific, and claims that the seven lamps of the Menorah 'symbolised the planets' (5.217). In turn, the descriptions of the Menorah focalised by the Roman populace and by the narrator both contrast with the description of the same object focalised by

[36] Cf. especially Rajak 2002: 218–219.

[37] The pictures themselves were presumably specific: cf. the depicted incidents of the civil war in Caesar's triumph as narrated by Appian: the Romans were capable of recognizing Caesar's Roman adversaries—and disapproved (App. *BC* 2.101). We see here, then, the return of the presentation of the war against the Jews as a war of foreign conquest.

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Pompey, who more than a century before was the first Roman to lay eyes on it: he had entered the Temple and 'gazed' (*etheasato*) at what was inside: a lampstand and lamps, a table and vessels for libation and censers, all of solid gold, a mass of spices and of consecrated money amounting to two thousand talents' (1.152). The Roman general does not know at all how to interpret the objects.

We still need to explain why Josephus allows this hostile perception of the Jews to take up so much space in his narrative. Perhaps, Josephus-the-narrator wishes to suggest that the Romans have a lot to learn from his account of the war: his Roman narratees may—in that case—have grasped the significance of what happened and understood better what they may have seen during the triumph after reading Josephus' *Jewish War*. From this perspective, the description of the triumphal procession indirectly establishes Josephus' authority as narrator.

Conclusion

Josephus mainly engages with the narratological category of space in set descriptions, which are often set apart from the narrative, but sometimes Josephus intermingles narrative and description. By being selective in his descriptions and by applying several registers belonging to military and ethnographic historiography, he makes these descriptions relevant to the surrounding narrative. Descriptions are furthermore used to emphasise certain thematic strands of the narrative, like the military genius of the Romans, the civil discord among their Jewish adversaries, and the theme of tragic reversal. An interesting motif in this respect is that the character of people can be deduced from the spaces they are involved in or even create. The full significance of descriptions often becomes clear only as the narrative moves along and several details from the descriptions are picked up again. Josephus on the whole describes space from his own point of view, thus enhancing his authority, and he does this mostly from a panoramic standpoint. However, a small number of highly significant descriptions are focalised by characters, while at crucial moments in the narrative Josephus often takes trouble to invest his narrative with *enargeia*, using vocabulary related to visual perception and having recourse to figurative language and anonymous witnesses to describe places.

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