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Josephus on the Destruction of Jerusalem

The Jewish Roman historian Josephus claims to have been present (among the Romans) when the siege of Jerusalem came to an end in 70 CE and the city was destroyed. He offers this account of the events:

While the holy house was on fire, every thing was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity, but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests were all slain in the same manner . . . the people also that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under; the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill. And besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed, when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries again. . . . Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did no where appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over

heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.

(*Jewish War* 6.5.1.271–6)

Josephus, *Jewish War*, trans. William Whiston, available online through Project Gutenberg at www.josephus.org.