

LOVE AND TITUS' MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN JOSEPHUS' JEWISH WAR

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Summary: This paper, inspired by the scholarship of Mogens Herman Hansen, identifies fatherly love as expressed by the Greek verb *agapaō* (ἀγαπάω) as a principle of transformational leadership that Titus developed and expressed in his evolution as the ultimately successful commander of Roman forces in the Jewish War as described by Josephus in his *Bellum Judaicum*. Twentieth-century CE instances of the employment of this theme in transformational military leadership in US and British forces are cited to support the enduring power of this principle in motivating troops facing grave dangers in war.

The theme of this contribution honoring Mogens Herman Hansen connects to his article 'The Battle Exhortation in Ancient Historiography: Fact or Fiction?' There, he posed the 'general question whether the Greek and Roman commanders did address their armies before battle in the way pretended by the historians.' And he gave a firm answer: 'The battle exhortation in ancient historiography is a literary composition and not the historians' report of a speech which had actually been made.' In short, 'the whole genre was a literary and rhetorical fiction, not a historical fact.'¹

It seems fair to say that scholars today usually conclude at the very least that the reports in ancient historians of exhortation speeches, especially those delivered during action on the battlefield, should not be

- 1 Hansen 1993: 162, 172, 180. Boren 2018 discusses an acoustics experiment related to Hansen's doubts that such speeches could be heard by very large gatherings of troops. On exhortation speeches that were reportedly delivered in a diversity of chronological and physical settings, see Albertus 1908; Kagan 1987: 55-57; Pritchett 1994; Ehrhardt 1995; Marincola 2007; Zoido 2007; Anson 2010; Lendon 2017; Sanders 2021. On speeches in Josephus, see Runnalls 1997; van Henten 2005; Lavan 2007; Price 2007; Mason 2011; Mason 2013; van Henten & Huitink 2021; Mason 2022: 96-97 n. 670; Mason 2023; Duncan 2023.

taken as verbatim versions of what was said.² And it is certainly true that historians past and present often have reworked the material in their narratives, with battlefield speeches surely being no exception. At the same time, it is also true that effective military commanders over the ages have sought to motivate and discipline their troops not solely with coercive punishments but also with persuasive words advocating courageous action. Exhortation, however delivered, was and is an essential element of effective military leadership.

This contribution aims to supplement Hansen's work by discussing three exhortation speeches attributed to Titus in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* (hereafter *BJ*), with reference also to one delivered by his father Vespasian (*BJ* 4.39-48).³ Hansen's article does not refer to Josephus and therefore does not report that Josephus was accompanying Titus as an assistant at the time of Titus' reported second and third exhortations. Josephus was therefore an eyewitness to whatever was actually said on those occasions. And though Josephus could not himself have heard the first speech because he was not present (see below), it seems likely that subsequently, when he began to accumulate material for composing his history of the war, he would have at least tried to learn whatever he could about its contents from those who had heard it. Given these circumstances, we hope to show that, even if it is likely that Josephus as author shaped the words and the length of Titus' speeches, the evidence from the Greek texts of Josephus' works strongly suggests that Josephus' report of Titus proclaiming his love for his troops at *BJ* 7.10 reflects the sentiment that Titus actually expressed and was not an invention by Josephus.⁴ We in fact argue that Josephus was documenting Titus as employing a powerful technique employed by perceptive military leaders that has persisted through modern times.

- 2 See, for example, the summaries by Marincola 2007: 120-27 and Duncan 2023: 28-44.
- 3 For reasons of space, this piece will not cover other speeches in Josephus' *Jewish War* that might be deemed exhortations, nor can every point made by Titus in his exhortation speeches be discussed here. Perhaps the best-known exhortation speech in the *BJ* is that by Herod at *BJ* 1.373-79. See van Henten 2005.
- 4 At the same time, we cannot know with any certainty how faithfully Josephus' versions in Greek reproduce what Titus actually said, or whether he spoke to the troops

Of the three substantial speeches that Josephus presents Titus as delivering to his troops at crucial points during the Roman military campaign in Judea that concludes with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the first two (*BJ* 3.472-84 and 6.34-53) are customarily categorized as exhortations because they are delivered in the midst of active battlefield action. The third speech occurs not on an active battlefield but instead immediately after Titus' forces have completed the razing of Jerusalem (*BJ* 7.6-12), but it can also be seen as an exhortation because the soldiers whom Titus is addressing are not on their way home to resume a non-military life – they are going to be posted to new locations in hostile regions where war could break out any time. These men therefore need to be exhorted to show continued valor in their continuing exposure to danger in the field.

In Titus' three speeches, Josephus reveals the approach that the Roman commander employs to try to motivate his troops to fulfill their duties as combatants on active duty in wartime. This motivation is crucial especially because Josephus' account also documents that a substantial number of men in the Roman army at the siege of Jerusalem could be undisciplined or even disobedient in action. The argument here is that Josephus depicts Titus as over time modifying his approach to exhortation of his troops in the course of his experience as a military leader who had become a commander in the Jewish War when he was still not yet thirty years old.⁵ In sum, Titus' military leadership evolves

in Greek or Latin. Greek seems perhaps more likely because many of the men serving in Titus' force in Judea would have understood Greek, whether they were ethnic Romans or auxiliaries from the eastern Mediterranean, and Titus was fluent in Greek (Suetonius, *Life of Titus* 3). Josephus as an educated Jew of his era would also have had knowledge of Greek; see, for example, Hadas-Lebel 1993, 44-49. If Titus spoke in Latin, interpreters would have been necessary for many of those listening; see Speidel 2023. Josephus could have acquired some knowledge of Latin during his diplomatic mission to Rome in the time of Nero (*Vita* 13-16; *Antiquities* 20.189-95), but most likely he conducted that mission using Greek. On Josephus' knowledge of Latin over time, see Ward 2007.

- 5 Titus was born in 39 CE (Murison 2016: 76-77). Josephus, born 37/38 CE, was of the same age group. On Titus' poorly documented early career, see Jones 1984: 12-17, Murison 2016: 77, and Tarel 2016: 73-78. See Davies 2023: 143-53 on his career as a commander.

so that he employs to a significantly greater degree an emphasis on praise and encouragement for his troops in order to direct their behavior in battle, rather than relying predominantly on criticism and punishment for misbehavior and rewards for compliance with orders.

In terms of contemporary social science analysis of military leadership, these two contrasting approaches to motivation are categorized as ‘transformational’ and ‘transactional’. Transformational leadership focuses on ‘idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration,’ while transactional leadership depends on ‘coercion through punishments and rewards contingent on meeting goals or standards,’ meaning that ‘in essence it relies on positional power.’ Moreover, the transformational approach provides for the troops ‘an example [i. e., a leader] to emulate.’⁶

The evolution in Titus’ leadership presented in Josephus’ history culminates in the final speech that the commander delivers at *BJ* 7.6-12. There, for the only time in the work, Josephus reports that Titus concludes his exhortation by telling his men that he ‘loves’ them (*BJ* 7.10).⁷ While Titus in this speech does refer briefly to possible criticism of some of his troops, Josephus makes it unmistakable that now Titus chooses to try to influence them all going forward by expressing congratulatory and inclusive aspects of his leadership more than by using a threatening or ‘payment for services rendered’ approach. Above all, Titus’ choosing to use such an emotionally charged concept as a source of motivation in war shows that he grasps the value for his leadership created by his declaration of love for his men.

The argument here will then culminate by describing two well-documented examples from 20th-century warfare, one from the US Marine Corps and one from the British infantry that reveal commanders explicitly expressing their love for their troops. This modern-era evidence suggests that Josephus representing Titus at the conclusion of the Ro-

6 Reilley et al. 2018: 40, 46-47; see Burns 1978 for the initial impetus for the much-discussed idea of transformational leadership and Manning & Robertson 2022: 119-23 for recent analysis.

7 See below on the particular context of ‘love’ that is expressed by the Greek verb (ἀγαπάω) used in this passage.

man victory at Jerusalem as using transformational leadership's emphasis on love in order to motivate his army to manifest loyal and courageous service is a depiction of a psychological technique of military leadership whose effectiveness has been recognized by commanders both past and present.

To turn to the *Jewish War*, Vespasian and Titus gain the positions of military leadership described by Josephus when previous Roman efforts fail to suppress the burgeoning Jewish rebellion in Judea that reaches full force in 66 CE. This situation leads Nero to appoint Vespasian as the overall commander in 67 CE; Titus' role at this point is to be a general leading missions ordered by his father (*BJ* 3.1-8).⁸ In his descriptions of Vespasian and Titus as military commanders in Judea, Josephus from early on emphasizes the crucial role that emotion plays in motivating the Roman army. At *BJ* 3.236-39, for example, Vespasian's troops see him bleeding from an arrow wound in his foot during the Roman attack on Jotapata in 67 CE. They, along with Titus, are so distressed and scared that they abandon their posts for besieging the city to rush to their leader. The mass of the soldiers, Josephus explains, was distraught from their goodwill for Vespasian and the distress shown by his son at his father's injury. Vespasian rouses them to action, however, by overcoming his pain so as to show himself to them. In response, they rush back to battle encouraging one another to be the avenger of their leader. An unmistakable implication of this episode as narrated by Josephus is that emotion exerts great influence on troops facing mortal dangers. Effective wartime exhortation speeches, Josephus demonstrates, must address this salient aspect of leadership.

When during the Roman attack on Taricheae in that same year Vespasian instructs Titus to lead a band of cavalry against the enemy forces gathered outside the city's walls, Titus delivers his first exhortation speech (*BJ* 3.472-84).⁹ Titus, having seen that the Jewish rebels outnumber his men, had previously sent a message to Vespasian asking for reinforcements. He then discovers that some of his troops are eager to

8 On the war, see Mason 2016; Price 1992; Sheppard 2013.

9 Josephus, captured at Jotapata (*BJ* 3.392-408), is at this point still a Roman prisoner and therefore presumably not present to hear Titus.

engage the enemy immediately despite the latter's numerical superiority, but others by contrast feel panic at the immense number of the Jews opposing them. Titus therefore finds a location from which he can give an exhortation that will reach all his troops.¹⁰

He begins by addressing them as 'Roman men' (ἄνδρες Ῥωμαῖοι).¹¹ This identification both expresses his emotional sense of belonging with them, while also setting up his following comments on the superiority in war of Romans over Jews. This claim immediately leads to the negative point that it would therefore be terrible if his men become weak. He then says that he sees some of them clearly displaying their zeal for fighting, but that he is afraid that some of them are experiencing a hidden terror. This latter point is a serious criticism of those troops who had motivated him to speak. In this way, Titus is employing transactional leadership, expressing his power of blame to imply the possibility of imposing punishment for failure to fight bravely.

Titus then stresses that his force's advantages begin with their excellence (ἀρετή), obedience to orders (εὐπειθεία), and nobility (τὸ γενναῖον), as compared to the emotions of the Jews in their daring (τόλμα), audacity (θράσος), and rashness (ἀπόνοια, *BJ* 3.479). As a result, he says, his men also have a greater motivation to win because their fame and their dominion over the local inhabitants mean that they cannot possibly want to be seen as equivalent to the Jews. He adds that although they can expect reinforcements from Vespasian, their success will be greater if they prevail without that help. Here then, in this speech at the start of Titus' experience as a commander in the Jewish War, he emphasizes transactional leadership by emphasizing shame as the outcome for his men if they fail to fight bravely.

What is now at stake, Titus next declares, is whether Vespasian will be regarded as still deserving of his past victories, whether Titus him-

10 *BJ* 3.471. This detail explicitly noted by Josephus is relevant to Hansen's concern (1993: 168-69) that an ancient general could not have successfully been heard while addressing all his troops at once on a battlefield. Josephus' narrative by contrast suggests that doing so could be feasible if the circumstances allowed, as described at *BJ* 7.6. On this issue of audibility, see Anson 2010; Boren 2018.

11 On the identity of legionary cavalry at this period, see Dixon & Southern 1992: 27-30.

self deserves to be recognized as his father's son, and whether 'You deserve to be my soldiers!' (*BJ* 3.482). Moreover, since winning is Vespasian's habit, Titus as his son could not bear to return defeated to his father, and they his soldiers would be ashamed if they lose the battle when their commander is braving the way into danger at their head. And lead them he will, Titus declares. He then concludes by beginning with a negative command to his troops that he immediately contextualizes with two positive contexts: 'Do not let me down, you being persuaded that God (θεός, *BJ* 3.484) as my ally encourages my initiative, and you clearly anticipating that we will have more success than only in this battle outside the city's walls.' In his conclusion, therefore, Titus adds aspects of transformational leadership by declaring himself an example to his men and encouraging a positive attitude about their anticipated success. In this way, he has now combined aspects of both approaches to military leadership, but transactional statements still predominate.

This speech succeeds: immediately following, a 'demonic zeal' (προθυμία δαιμόνιος) possesses Titus' cavalry as they follow him into battle; his men even regret the arrival of the predicted reinforcements because they do not want to share the victory (*BJ* 3.485-96). Titus keeps his promise by leading the way on the battlefield, and once his forces break through the fortification walls and the town's residents begin to show their enmity toward the rebels, he shouts out to his original force that they must hurry to victory before necessity unites their enemies and prevents them from taking the city by themselves. During this critical situation, Titus shows that he has a sense of belonging with his men by calling them 'fellow-soldiers' (συστρατιῶται, *BJ* 3.494). He then again leads by example by being the first to enter the enemy city, thereby sparking the Roman victory. This dramatic success, Josephus' readers can conclude, therefore enables Titus to realize clearly the value of the transformational leadership that he so successfully displays.

Josephus in his following narrative of the battle for Gamala later in 67 CE shows that the course of events in the war continues to present challenges to Vespasian's and Titus' leadership (*BJ* 4.11-48). Indeed, during the siege, the Roman forces struggle so badly that Vespasian barely escapes with his life from the battlefield. Realizing that his army feels

disheartened and ashamed, Vespasian himself then gives an exhortation speech (*BJ* 4.39-48) – the only one by him that Josephus includes in the *BJ*, and one that is shorter than either of Titus’ two battlefield exhortation speeches.¹²

Vespasian’s goal in his speech is to offer his troops consolation and encouragement, which he attempts to do by telling them to bear misfortune manfully and by blaming them for undisciplined initiative. They need, he adds, to rely on their own excellence (ἀρετή) and ‘show fury’ (θυμοῦσθαι, *BJ* 4.46). Following this criticism of his troops, Vespasian in his conclusion changes the tone of his exhortation by telling them he will in every battle advance toward the enemy ahead of them and will be the last one to leave the field. This pledge from their commander to lead from the front revives his troops’ spirits to fight on until the town is captured.

Vespasian in his speech therefore expresses both transactional and transformational leadership. While he criticizes his men for not acting bravely or showing initiative, he also stresses their qualities for combat. Above all, he motivates them by leading from the front. This tells his men that, by making himself an example of courage in the face of danger, he cares more about inspiring them than about his own safety. And this transformational leadership approach brings success for everyone, troops and commander alike.

As mentioned previously, Titus was not present to hear his father’s speech at Gamala because Vespasian had sent him on a mission to Syria, and Josephus does not report whether Titus was subsequently informed of the precise contents of his father’s speech.¹³ But given Titus’ concern to be supportive of his father’s goals, it seems likely that he would have sought to hear reports of what his father had said by querying officers who had been present. In any case, he would certainly have been cognizant of the ongoing necessity of knowing how to motivate and discipline his troops. Overall, it seems quite likely that Titus would have heard reports of how his father had successfully used transformational

12 See Mason 2022: 33-40 and 2023: 9-14 and 25-26 for discussion and English translation of this speech.

13 *BJ* 4.32 and 70. Josephus also likely could not have heard Vespasian’s speech because he was still a prisoner.

leadership by leading the attack that secured victory in a perilous situation.

Josephus' account proceeds to demonstrate how soldiers in the Roman army in the Jewish War continue to require this high level of effective leadership. In fact, Josephus emphatically reports how the troops can not only show a lack of discipline, they can even be disobedient to the point of threatening violence against their leaders. This latter dramatic incident occurs in the context of the chaos created by the violent struggle that erupts over who would become emperor of Rome after the downfall of Nero in 68 CE (*BJ* 4.585-605).

According to Josephus, Vespasian becomes enraged at Nero's would-be successor Vitellius, but in the end he cannot bring himself to put Fortune to the test by seeking imperial power for himself. When his officers and troops learn of his decision, they vigorously urge him to pursue that goal. He nevertheless refuses to change his mind, even when his officers keep insisting that he take the risk to preserve Rome's dominion. The soldiers at this point draw their swords, threatening to kill their supreme commander if he fails to 'be willing to live worthily' (ζῆν ἀξίως, *BJ* 4.603). When Vespasian's repeated reasons for not seeking to become emperor fail to convince these potentially murderous troops, he finally gives in.¹⁴

Although this is by far the most startling instance of the possible level of defiance of the Roman force in Judea to their leaders' decisions, Josephus goes on to provide still more examples following Vespasian's departure to start his journey back to Italy to pursue ruling power. Since Vespasian is leaving the war in Judea, he sends Titus as commander to take Jerusalem (*BJ* 4.630-58). This decision turns out to be a severe test of Titus' military leadership. For example, soon after beginning this campaign, he castigates his troops for their unmanliness (*BJ* 5.81). Despite this rebuke, they run away when the Jewish rebels attack, abandoning their commander with only a few men left to help defend him. Finally, when Titus does not retreat from the battle, shame (αἰδώς) motivates those who had fled to return to the fight (*BJ* 5.94).

Next, when the rebels trick the Roman forces at Jerusalem, some soldiers rush to the attack, thereby getting themselves into deep trouble

14 Mason 2022: 275 n. 2315 implicitly accepts this startling account as true.

(BJ 5.115-29). Shame and fear motivate them to fight, but they still retreat under heavy fire. Titus, in furious remarks to his officers, angrily rebukes his troops for the whole army abandoning their position, lamenting over what Vespasian will think of this episode and preparing to punish his disobedient men. When some of them beg him to spare their 'fellow-soldiers' – thereby using the same term of belonging that Titus had employed in the final successful charge at Tarichaeae that he led – he grants their request, while also warning them to be more thoughtful.

This instance of transactional leadership in action, however, is matched and even exceeded at crucial points by Titus' use of a transformational approach. Above all, Titus always comes to help his troops when they face special dangers, especially when the Jews' daring and rashness prove superior to the discipline of the Romans (BJ 5.281-287). In fact, Josephus goes on to show that Titus' successful leadership in motivating his troops to act with manliness results from his 'always being present everywhere for everyone' (BJ 5.309-16). Indeed, Titus once even prevents his soldiers from being killed by calling for archers and standing his ground with a legionary tribune while the arrows fly; he subsequently launches a successful new attack, leading 'nobly' (γενναίως, BJ 5.340-46). And once the Roman attack focuses on figuring out how to ascend the Temple Mount by scaling the massive Antonia Tower fortification, when Titus reprimands his troops severely for having put themselves and their fortifications in jeopardy by thoughtless actions, the troops now obey, motivated by their regard for glory, their army's honor, and especially for Titus, who puts himself foremost in danger (BJ 5.488).

As the siege of Jerusalem continues to grow in intensity, Josephus is therefore describing Titus' leadership as relying on both transactional and transformational aspects: to deal with the continuing unreliability of his soldiers' conduct under pressure, he on the one hand presents himself as his troops' superior who can both denounce thoughtless initiatives and also bestow commendations for valor, while on the other hand his soldiers cannot bear to be weak when he leads by example by fighting alongside them, demonstrating how greatly he values their safety.

Titus' second exhortation speech then takes place in the context of his evolving leadership during a crucial episode at the beginning of the final attack to take the Temple Mount (*BJ* 6.1-33).¹⁵ When the Romans complete their earthworks in preparation for this assault, the defensive wall built by the rebels to protect the Antonia tower suddenly collapses, but this accident reveals that the rebels had providently erected a hidden second wall that the Romans now see standing behind the fallen ruins of the first wall. This unexpected impediment so deeply stuns the attackers that no one from the Roman army dares to climb the new wall because the first to ascend will surely die. To respond to his troops' refusal to do their duty, Titus decides to address a group of specially chosen troops (ἄλκιμοι, *BJ* 6.33).¹⁶ Josephus explains that Titus believes he will motivate his men by hope (ἐλπίς) and reason (λόγος) as well as exhortation (προτροπαί) and promises (ὑποσχέσεις, *BJ* 6.33).¹⁷

This combination of leadership techniques appears clearly in Titus' speech (*BJ* 6.34-53). He begins by addressing this elite group with the same term 'fellow-soldiers' (συστρατιῶται) that repeats the sense of belonging that he shouted to his men on the battlefield at Tarichaeae and that members of his force used in appealing to him for leniency to their comrades at Jerusalem. He then explains that he realizes delivering an exhortation is disgraceful both for troops and their commander when no great danger is present; it is only fitting for difficult situations such as the one they now face in having to get over the wall blocking their path up the Antonia. Therefore, he says, he has three points to make: that dealing with obstacles is what men do who aim at achieving excellence (ἀρετή), that it is a fine thing to die with renown (εὐκλεία), and that the nobility (τὸ γενναῖον) shown by those leading the charge will not be 'unfruitful' (ἄκαρπον, *BJ* 6.36).

15 Josephus, having previously been freed by Vespasian (*BJ* 4.622-29), is accompanying Titus at this point. See den Hollander 2014, 139-99 on the relationship between Josephus and Titus.

16 Herod's men selected for especially difficult missions are also described with this term (*BJ* 1.267, 311).

17 On this occasion, Josephus does not mention that Titus seeks out a position from which he can be heard by all, perhaps because he is addressing a select and therefore smaller group, in contrast to his first and last speeches.

His first point, in keeping with what he had said previously about the implications of lineage for his troops, stresses that it would be contemptible to be outfought by those of less quality than themselves, especially now that God has come over to their side. It would definitely, he adds, bring great shame for Romans to be outdone by Jews. Titus' further elaboration of this strong criticism characterizes the majority of the initial section of his speech, expressing a form of transactional leadership in its emphasis on the negative consequences of failure. At the end of this section, however, he does tell these men that they can succeed in everything and that by reaching the top of the tower they will win a total victory in a short time. Titus therefore concludes this portion of his exhortation by attempting to inspire his subordinates, an approach consonant with transformational leadership principles.

In the next part of the speech, Titus offers a striking description of the favorable fate of those who are killed in battle and how it is much to be preferred over that of those who die from illness in peace. (He makes no reference to the possibility that fatal diseases can be painful.) The souls of these warriors, he says, are lifted up into the ether among the stars and transformed into good supernatural beings and kindly heroes that show themselves to their own descendants. Those dying of sickness, by contrast, fall into oblivion. Therefore, he asks, would it not be ignoble not to give to duties what we must give to what is required? These remarks intended to spur the men to action despite the peril of the mission align with the goal of transformational leadership to inspire rather than to coerce.

The final section of Titus' second exhortation speech switches to the possibility of surviving the assault on the Antonia if the soldiers encourage each other and summon their courage. Titus concludes by promising to reward whoever leads the assault by promoting him over the others of his current rank, while also repeating his point that those who die in the effort will receive monuments of valor. These pledges of recompense for valor from the men's commander therefore reflect a tenet of transactional leadership.

This speech combining elements of transactional and transformative leadership at a supremely critical moment in a dangerous military situation nevertheless fails to motivate the great majority of the army

– here evidently meaning the ethnically Roman soldiers – but a member of an auxiliary company does rise to the challenge (*BJ* 6.54–67).¹⁸ Josephus takes care to describe this man carefully: ‘Sabinus by name, Syrian by lineage, a man in hand and soul manifestly the best.’ However, Sabinus’ appearance makes him seem not even qualified to be a soldier, as his skin is black in color and his body is thin and shrunken – but he is heroic in his soul (*BJ* 6.54–55).

Sabinus makes clear that he will head up the assault because Titus has inspired him; no mention is made of the effect of tangible rewards on offer: ‘I enthusiastically give over myself to you ... I pray that your luck (τύχη) will accompany my strength (ισχύς) and resolution (γνώμη) ... If nemesis should begrudge my initiative (εἰ δὲ νεμεσηθείην τῆς ἐπιβολῆς), know that ... I on purpose choose death on your behalf’ (*BJ* 6.56–57). These impassioned comments by Sabinus clearly stress that he is going to expose himself to the ultimate danger because his commander’s actions and words are inspirational. Once in action, Sabinus awes the rebels with his power and the courage of his soul, but his luck (τύχη, *BJ* 6.66) nevertheless causes his death as he leads eleven companions who, we can assume, are similarly inspired to follow Sabinus up the Antonia. Josephus therefore in his presentation of this dramatic episode emphasizes that the response to his commander’s exhortation is literally motivated by inspiration – and therefore in modern terminology the result of transformational leadership.

This conclusion in turn prepares the way for the unique way in which Titus uses the same approach in his third exhortation speech in Book 7, his final one of the *BJ*. *BJ* 7 is usually studied today for its descriptions of the triumph in Rome celebrating the victory of Vespasian and Titus and of the siege of Masada that leads to its defenders’ massive suicide. It is the very start of Book 7, however, that presents the evidence generating the title of this essay: Titus’ reference to love in his words to his troops as reported in *BJ* 7.6–12.

The setting for this speech is the immediate aftermath of the Roman army’s victory over the Jewish rebels at Jerusalem and Titus’ order to complete the razing the city and the Temple; all that he leaves erect are

18 See Martin 2024 on this episode.

three towers and a section of the city wall (*BJ* 7.1-2).¹⁹ This is the only one of Titus' exhortation speeches that Josephus presents entirely in indirect discourse, but, given the inevitable uncertainty about the *ipsis-sima verba* of all speeches presented in ancient historians, this choice does not rule out using Josephus' version of Titus' words as evidence of his having employed the special theme of love as exhortation. And we should remember that Josephus was present on this occasion to hear what was actually said.

Josephus introduces this speech by stating that Titus aims to praise the entire army for its success and bestow fitting rewards on those who had performed the best. Accordingly, Titus has a platform built so that everyone in the army can hear him.²⁰ He then opens his remarks in a transformational style by telling the men how grateful he is for their goodwill towards him, as a result of which they show obedience to his command and manliness. Indeed, he adds, they show everyone that Roman excellence overcomes all and any obstacles no matter how fearsome. It is a fine thing, Titus goes on to say, to have won such a war, but even better is the all-encompassing support they express for those whom they had propelled to become the leaders of the rule of Romans – meaning, of course, Vespasian and himself.

As his climax of these words of praise, Titus declares to the troops that he admires (θαυμάζειν) them all – and that he loves (ἀγαπᾶν) them (*BJ* 7.10)! He explains his feelings by saying he knows that none of them in the fighting fell short in their zeal (προθυμία) for what each one is capable of achieving. The love that Josephus reports Titus as declaring for his men is the special type of love expressed by the Greek verb *agapō* (ἀγαπάω). This term specifically indicates the strong attachment

19 Josephus explains that the wall section was to be retained for the camp site of the garrison Titus was leaving in place in Jerusalem, while the towers were kept to remind people what sort of city Jerusalem had been and what sort of defenses the manly quality of the Romans had overcome.

20 As with Titus' first exhortation speech, this detail included by Josephus addresses the issue of audibility of battlefield speeches that Hansen raises in his article and that Boren 2018 considers.

and affection that should bind family members; it does not usually apply to sexual or romantic love.²¹ Its power to convey the notion of an especially 'marked' category of love in Josephus' era is vividly documented by its use in the Septuagint and the New Testament to express the concept of fatherly love, both by human beings and by God.²²

In this case, Titus is therefore expressing fatherly love for his soldiers regarded emotionally as his sons. It is significant to point out that, of the multiple uses of this verb in the *BJ*, this is the only instance of its being expressed by a military commander to his troops.²³ This unique usage seems to suggest that Josephus here is actually recording that it was Titus who expressed this striking sentiment and that Josephus as author did not subsequently invent it for use in his narrative of the speech. Further support for this suggestion also seems possible from the striking fact that, according to a search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* database for *thaumazō* and *agapaō* used together to express 'admiration' and 'love', this is the first attested example in Greek literature of this collocation of these words in the context of military leadership.

As his remarks continue, Titus adds that those troops who performed especially strongly in the conquest of Jerusalem, thereby showing their excellence and also making his generalship more brilliant, will be rewarded and honored. Indeed, no one who did better than his colleagues will be overlooked. Titus ends by stressing that he himself will take special care to confer awards for bravery on those who are 'fellow-soldiering', and that he is much more focused on that than on punishing those 'falling short of the mark'.

In this final exhortation, Titus' language of praise and affection therefore reveals that he is aiming to exploit the inspirational motivation that comes from transformational leadership, leading to his dramatic culmination of expressly proclaiming his familial-type love for his fellow-soldiers. It is of course also telling in the context of Josephus' nuanced depiction of Titus' leadership that even when Titus seeks to

21 Unlike English, Greek has other verbs that indicate sexual or romantic love, such as *eraō* and *phileō*.

22 See, for example, Genesis 22.2 and John 3.35.

23 See Rengstorf 2002: vol. 1, 5 for the references in the *BJ* (and 5-6 for Josephus' later works).

motivate his troops through inspiration rather than his power over them as their commander, he cannot completely divorce himself from the transactional criticism of soldiers who in his view fall short in the execution of their military duty. Indeed, the final words of his exhortation refer to those who falling short in their duties. Nevertheless, Titus' evolution toward preferring transformational leadership seems unmistakable in Josephus' representation of this speech, above all in Titus' choice to say that he *loves* his men – a unique instance in the *BJ* of a Roman using this term to express the kind of strong love that is the ideal of a relationship between father and sons.²⁴

Following the conclusion of his speech, Titus bestows material rewards and promotions on the men judged to have achieved something distinguished and celebrates with them (*BJ* 7.13-20). He offers prayers for the entire army and oversees thanksgiving sacrifices for the victory amid cheers from his troops, with meat from sacrificed oxen supplying a feast that lasts for three days before he re-assigns the various legions to their new posts.

While the prizes and promotions that Titus gives out after his speech conform to the dictates of transactional leadership by a commander demonstrating his power to reward or to punish his subordinates, his exceptional reference in the conclusion to his exhortation to his fatherly love for his men markedly associates his approach to military leadership with the tenets of transformational leadership. This emphasis in the final exhortation that Titus delivers in *BJ* accordingly shows that Josephus is describing an evolution in the young commander's approach to leadership following the harrowing violence and danger to his troops during the siege of Jerusalem. Aligning in his actions with what Onasander wrote in his manual for the instruction of generals finished perhaps some fifteen years before Josephus' *BJ*, Titus now understands the exceptional benefit of leading by building troops' inspiration and group spirit and not simply by stressing rewards and punishments.²⁵

In a remarkable demonstration of the exceptional advantage created for military leadership by this approach, this same association between

24 For non-Romans and this term in the *BJ*, see 1.71-72, 211, 544, 581, 2.359-60.

25 Onasander, *Strategikos (logos)* aka *The General*. 14.3-4, 33.6, 34.1-5, 36.3-6.

the meaning of 'to love' that ancient Greeks expressed with the verb *agapaō* and the tenets intrinsic to transformational leadership receives significant emphasis in modern military leadership in the United States military, specifically in the Marine Corps.²⁶ Key points in this association emerge distinctly from the leadership of the famous 13th Commandant of the Corps, Major General John A. Lejeune (1867-1942).²⁷ As the Marines' Commandant, General Lejeune was in charge of the entire corps following the end of World War I, a transitional period for this special segment of US military forces. Lejeune sought to transform the Marine Corps into an organization distinguished by high trust among its members and effective leadership so that it could function in a new environment of war involving fast-paced and autonomous amphibious assaults.²⁸ Otherwise, its small, independently operating units had little chance of succeeding in their missions.

In seeking to build a close relationship between officers and troops, which is especially necessary for small-unit operations, Lejeune had been influenced by his experiences in World War I. When he took command of his division in France, he remarked that 'Miracles must be worked if victories are to be won, and to work miracles men's hearts must needs be afire with self-sacrificing love for each other, for their units, for their division, for their country'.²⁹ On another occasion when Lejeune was visiting a military hospital, an injured soldier told him the dramatic story of how their Captain had told his men that he was going to lead an attack that required them to expose themselves to danger by crossing a river. The soldier added, 'What could we do but go across too? Surely we couldn't let him go by himself; we love him too much for

26 'Agapaō leadership', as it is called, also features prominently in contemporary Christian discussions of transformational leadership. See, for example, Winston 2008 and Winston 2025. On love in 'servant leadership', see Patterson 2010. Love as part of leadership can also feature in leadership in contemporary professional sports. See, for example, <https://www.barstoolsports.com/blog/3543432/joe-mazzulla-explained-he-was-just-trying-to-convey-love-when-he-screamed-for-jayson-tatum-to-get-up-after-his-hard-fall-in-game-1>.

27 Bartlett 1991 provides a concise modern biography of Lejeune; Lejeune 1930 is his autobiographical memoir.

28 Hemler 2023.

29 Lejeune 1930: 307

that'. Lejeune later wrote that he had always felt that this story 'gives one a better understanding of the meaning and the practice of leadership than do all the books that have been written, and all the speeches that have been made on the subject.'³⁰ Like Titus, Lejeune learned on the field of battle the power of expressing *agapaō* as a leadership principle, both on the part of the officer and the enlisted man, and implemented his changes for the Corps accordingly. As Maurice Buford has said, 'For Lejeune, the above story epitomizes the essence and the practice of leadership – love'.³¹

These experiences clearly informed Lejeune's goals in instituting a series of measures for leadership by Marine commanders. Especially significant in this context was Marine Corps Order Number 29, an official directive setting out standards for the duties and behavior of Marine officers.³² Still taught to Marine leaders in training at Officer Candidates School (OCS), this order functions as a foundational leadership doctrine in the Marine Corps. In this order entitled 'Relations Between Officers and Men', Lejeune sets out new expectations for officers, from lieutenants to generals. He stresses that the relationship between officers and enlisted men should not be that of 'superior and inferior' but instead 'should partake of the nature of the relation between father and son, to the extent that officers, especially commanders, are responsible for the physical, mental, and moral welfare, as well as the discipline and training of the man under their command'. In this way, Lejeune is directing Marine officers to exercise transformational rather than transactional leadership, especially in terms of what, from the perspective of Josephus/Titus, can be called the type of love appropriate for a military 'family' of commander and troops. This standard indeed still underpins the leadership of Marine officers today. At Officer Candidates School, the first lesson in leadership comes directly from Order Number 29, and officer candidates are tested on their understanding of what is thereby expected of them as leaders of Marines.

To give a second example of the expression father love as documented in modern US military leadership, the continuing importance

30 Lejeune 1930: 406.

31 Buford 2019: 17 [e-book].

32 Lejeune 1920.

of this particular transformational leadership approach is explicitly underlined by the speech, well known in the contemporary Marine Corps, that Captain Ryan Cohen of Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines – an infantry regiment frequently deployed to combat – delivered to his troops in 2010 in anticipation of a very dangerous foray in the war in Afghanistan.³³ As the company commander, he gave the speech to a group of approximately 150, a number that recalls Titus addressing a select group of soldiers at the foot of the Antonia Tower (*BJ* 6.33). Like Titus, Cohen had to motivate his marines to fight insurgents who used surprising guerilla tactics, as had the Jewish rebels at Jerusalem who at times confounded their Roman opponents with their unexpected actions in battle.

Captain Cohen's exhortation focuses on duty, violence, and – expressly – love. Like Titus, he fully acknowledges the dangers his men face in following the command to 'Kill the enemy!', but he reinforces their resolve through expressions of confidence and emotional solidarity: 'You will feel fatigue, you will feel fear ... at the end of the day, you will continue to breathe fire, good to go!' He emphasizes the mutual responsibility of comrades-in-arms, urging them to 'protect those who need to be protected' and 'protect and serve the Marine on the left and right flank of you 24/7', and reassures them that they 'will always be supported.' His promise that 'we will all come home together' expresses a powerful sense of belonging, while his declaration that they will make both their unit and country proud reflects his use of transformational leadership to inspire unity and self-sacrifice under fire.

Cohen's insistence on transformational exhortation then climaxes with his declaration reminiscent of Titus' expression of fatherly love in *BJ* 7: 'I love you, and I mean it when I say I love you as your parents love you'. This direct expression of love in Cohen's leadership encapsulates his embrace of the approach to command demanded of him by the 21st-century US Marine Corps – a transformational leadership approach that Josephus portrays Titus as having learned from his wartime experience in Judea that he needed to embody in his development as a successful military leader.

33 Cohen 2010.

The instances of the expression of fatherly love by Lejeune and Cohen as manifested in military leadership in the modern era of war are not unique to US forces. To conclude with another moving example, we cite the poem *In Memoriam*, composed by Lieutenant Ewart Alan Makintosh of the British army in the First World War, who died at the age of 24 during a battle in 1917.³⁴ After having led a raid on a German position, he dedicated the poem to ‘Private D. Sutherland killed in action in the German trench, May 16, 1916, and the others who died.’ In the poem’s second stanza he says ‘You were only David’s father/But I had fifty sons/When we went up in the evening ...’ A bit further on, Makintosh refers to the men as “More my sons than your fathers’ ‘, and he concludes the poem with the explicit description ‘For they were only your fathers/But I was your officer.’

These final words declare Makintosh’s belief that the depth of love of a commander for his troops surpasses even the familial love of a genetic father. This emotional declaration of love as a crucial component of combat leadership dramatically underlines the power of Lejeune’s directives to US Marine leaders that they must show love for their men if they are to be effective commanders. In a certain sense, then, Titus’ declaration of love for his troops in the *Bellum Judaicum* proclaimed a principle of transformational leadership that the bloody experience of battle clearly reiterated two millennia later for Lejeune, Cohen, and Makintosh—and that has no doubt influenced countless other successful military leaders over the centuries from then until now.

As said at the start, it is impossible to establish with certainty the degree of literalness of Josephus’ account of the words and physical settings Titus used to exhort his troops in the Jewish War. At the same time, the remarkable overlap between the depiction by Josephus as historian – and, crucially, eyewitness observer – of the nature of Titus’ evolving military leadership and the ideal of leadership embodied in the directives to modern US Marine Corps commanders encourages us to contemplate the millennia-long persistence of fatherly love expressed by military commanders who have come to understand the value of transformational leadership as an effective motivation for their troops when terrifying danger threatens.

34 Makintosh 1917: 40–42.

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