

= Tiberius Julius Alexander =

Tiberius Julius Alexander (fl . 1st century) was an equestrian governor and general in the Roman Empire . Born into a wealthy Jewish family of Alexandria but abandoning or neglecting the Jewish religion , he rose to become procurator of Judea (c . 46 ? 48) under Claudius . While Prefect of Egypt (66 ? 69) , he employed his legions against the Alexandrian Jews in a brutal response to ethnic violence , and was instrumental in the Emperor Vespasian 's rise to power . In 70 , he participated in the Siege of Jerusalem as Titus ' second @-@ in @-@ command .

= = Early life = =

Tiberius Julius Alexander was probably born early in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (14 ? 37) . His father was Alexander , an Alexandrian Jew who held the office of Alabarch ; the exact meaning of this term is debated , but it may have denoted a senior customs official . The older Alexander enjoyed Roman citizenship , a rare privilege among the Jews of Alexandria , and therefore passed it to his sons . He also had business connections both with Agrippa , grandson of Herod the Great , and with Antonia , mother of the emperor Claudius . Another prominent member of Tiberius Alexander 's family was his uncle , the philosopher Philo .

Tiberius ' younger brother Marcus Julius Alexander would follow their father into business , becoming a partner in an import @-@ export firm . Marcus Julius Alexander was the first husband of Herodian Princess Berenice . Marcus died in 43 or 44 , leaving no children . Tiberius himself decided differently , setting out upon a military and administrative career in the service of the Roman Empire . When introducing Tiberius , the Jewish historian Josephus condemns him for his impiety and explains that he " did not remain in his ancestral customs " . This has traditionally been taken to mean that he became an apostate from Judaism at an early age , a view which finds some support in his appearance as a character in two of Philo 's philosophical dialogues , making arguments against divine providence which Philo attempts to refute . However , some more recent scholars believe that Josephus is criticizing Alexander simply for his decision to take up the service of Rome , placing the interests of the Empire above the Jewish religion .

He nevertheless continued to benefit from his family 's connections , which were enhanced after the Emperor Claudius came to power in 41 . Agrippa had helped to secure Claudius ' accession after the assassination of Caligula , and was appointed king of Judea . Tiberius ' father , who had been imprisoned by Caligula , was released on Claudius ' orders , and his younger brother Marcus became first husband to Agrippa 's daughter Berenice .

= = Career until 63 = =

Despite the disadvantages posed by his Alexandrian and Jewish origin , Tiberius Alexander was evidently well enough connected for an equestrian career in Roman public life . The first position he is known to have held , beginning in about 42 , was that of epistrategus of the Thebaid , one of the three regions into which the Roman province of Egypt was divided . This was an administrative and judicial post involving no military command . He could have maintained contact with his brother Marcus , who was trading in the same area until his premature death in 43 or 44 .

A promotion came in c . 46 , when Alexander was appointed procurator of Judea by Claudius . The province had returned to direct Roman rule only after the death of Agrippa in 44 , and the tenure of Alexander 's predecessor Cuspius Fadus had been marked by unrest , so Alexander 's Jewish background may have marked him as a more acceptable governor . Less trouble is attested during his office , although he did condemn James and Simon , sons of an earlier rebel named Judas of Galilee , to crucifixion . It was also at this time that Judea was afflicted by a severe famine . In 48 he was succeeded by Ventidius Cumanus .

Alexander 's subsequent activities are unknown until the reign of Nero , when he served as a staff officer under the prominent general Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo during campaigns against Parthia . In 63 he was dispatched along with Corbulo 's son @-@ in @-@ law to escort the Armenian king

Tiridates to the Roman camp , on the first stage of his journey to receive the status of client king from Nero .

= = Prefecture of Egypt = =

In May 66 , Nero appointed Alexander as Prefect of Egypt , one of the two most prestigious posts available to an equestrian along with Prefect of the Praetorian Guard . He may have benefitted from a philhellenic tendency in equestrian appointments under Nero , but his experience of Egypt must also have commended him . However , any hope that he would be able to quell the recurring conflicts in his province between Greek and Jewish populations proved to be short @-@ lived . The year he assumed office saw the outbreak of the First Jewish @-@ Roman War in Judea , and aggression inevitably spilled over into the large Jewish community of Alexandria . An outbreak of ethnic violence during a Greek assembly escalated when the Greeks took prisoners , leading the Jewish side to threaten to burn the assembled Greeks to death . Alexander sent mediators to calm the Jews , warning he would have to use the Roman legions if violence continued . The threat was ineffective , and Josephus describes the outcome :

A less violent side to Alexander 's government is demonstrated by other evidence . Over a century after his time , his administrative decisions were still being cited as precedents . Some of these are known from a surviving edict issued on July 6 , 68 , less than a month after Nero 's death . This denounces , and introduces measures against , a variety of abuses including inaccurate tax assessments , malicious prosecutions and the imprisonment of debtors by private creditors . The edict 's only allusion to the chaotic political situation comes as a call for trust in the benevolence of the new Emperor , Galba , and his ability to put right the wrongs of the past . Alexander was making representations to Galba on behalf of the provincials , presumably representing the desired reforms as the price of loyalty from this vital grain @-@ producing province .

Neither Galba nor his successor Otho survived long in office . In April 69 , Vitellius was recognized as Emperor by the Roman Senate , but his opponents were beginning to rally behind Vespasian , commander of the Roman forces conducting the war in Judea . The loyalties of Alexander , who commanded two legions and had control of the grain shipments from Alexandria to Rome , were of crucial importance . Fortunately for Vespasian , Alexander was willing to correspond with him secretly ; go @-@ between suspected by modern historians include Berenice (soon to be lover of Vespasian 's son Titus) , and an Egyptian official named Basilides . On July 1 Alexander became the first to make a decisive move against Vitellius : on receipt of a letter from Vespasian , he instructed his forces to take the oath of allegiance to Vespasian as Emperor . His lead was followed by legions throughout the eastern Empire , and the anniversary of Vespasian 's accession was later celebrated on this date .

= = Siege of Jerusalem = =

Vespasian moved rapidly to Egypt , leaving the Jewish war under the command of Titus . At the same time Alexander , as a proven commander with experience of Jewish affairs , was sent by Vespasian to join Titus as his chief of staff and adviser , second only to Titus himself . By April 70 , Jerusalem was under siege by four legions , and even after the city walls were overcome , the defenders held out in the Temple . Alexander , the offspring of a pious Jewish family , whose own father had donated the gold and silver for the Temple gates , now found himself in a position of command against his former brothers in that very sanctuary .

Despairing of any siege operation against the Temple 's massive walls , Titus had the gates burnt down . At the ensuing council of war , when it was debated whether to destroy the entire Temple , Alexander voted with the majority who favored preservation . In the event , this made no difference ; as the fighting raged on the following day , a Roman soldier hurled a burning brand into a chamber of the Temple itself . The Temple was consumed by the flames .

= = Later career = =

By this time , Vespasian 's position in Rome was secure . The details of Alexander 's career under the new emperor remain unclear . A damaged papyrus refers to Alexander as holding the position of " Praetorian Prefect " , which is open to two interpretations . It could indicate his rank during Titus ' campaign in 70 , which would mean that he held his own independent imperium (commanding authority) . According to another view , it means that he became Prefect of the Praetorian Guard at Rome , which in later years became a common position for former Prefects of Egypt . In either case , Alexander attained a position in the Roman Empire that was unparalleled for a man of Jewish birth , not to mention one who suffered from the further stigma of an Egyptian origin . The xenophobic speaker of Juvenal 's first Satire , composed in the late 1st or early in the 2nd century AD , complains of passing the Forum 's triumphal statues , " where some Egyptian Arabarch 's had the nerve to set up his titles . At his image it 's right to do more than piss ! " This is very likely a reference to Alexander .

= = = Ancient = = =

= = = Modern = = =