

THE ROMAN ARMY: BY JOSEPHUS

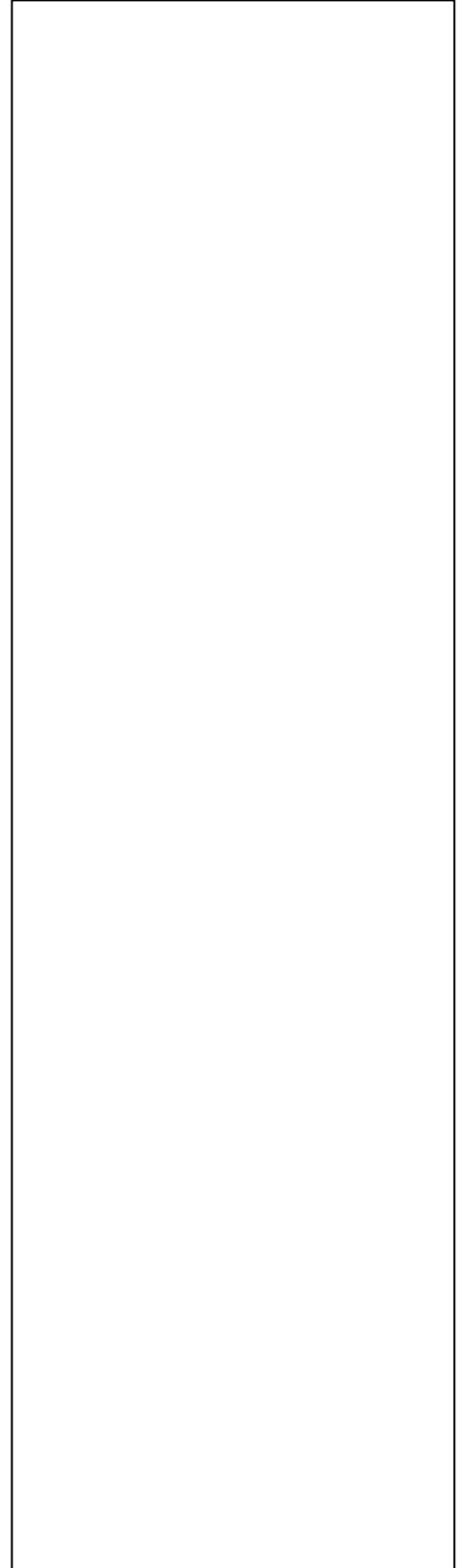
BOOK 3: CHAPTER 5: DESCRIPTION OF THE ROMAN ARMIES AND ROMAN CAMPS

One must admire the precaution of the Romans...for their military practices do not differ at all from their wartime tactics, but soldiers are trained every day, consistently, as if Rome were in a time of war, which is the reason why the soldiers are able to deal with the fatigue of battles so easily; because one battle cannot remove them from their purpose, nor can fear scare them out of it, nor can labor tire them. It is their discipline and training that allows them to overcome their enemies that do not possess the same discipline. As soon as they have marched into an enemy's land, they do not begin to fight until they have searched all areas completely and build a camp; nor are the walls they raise for the camp poorly made, the camp that is constructed is first leveled and carpenters are ready, in great numbers, with their tools, to build the defenses for them.

As for what is within the camp, it is set up with many tents, and the outer perimeter resembles a wall, that is guarded by towers at equal distances. Between the towers stand the engines for throwing arrows and darts, and for slinging stones, and stores the larger siege weapons, all ready for Rome's many military operations. They divide the camp into streets, for convenient use, and place the tents of the commanders in the middle and at the center of the entire camp is the general's tent. The camp, and all that is in it, is surrounded by a wall that was built quickly by the multitude and the skill of the laborers; and, if necessary, a trench was made around the entire wall, whose depth is four cubits (12 feet), and the width of the trench was equal to its depth.

When they have secured themselves, they live together by companies, with quietness and decency, as are all of their affairs managed with good order and security. Each company has their wood, food, and water brought to them when needed. Their times for sleeping, watching, and rising are given to them beforehand by the sound of trumpets; everything is done with such order routinely. In the morning the soldiers report to their centurions, and the centurions to their praetors to salute them; with whom all the superior officers go to the general of the whole army, who then gives them orders, to be followed by all that are under Rome's command. After the orders are given the soldiers turn themselves about quickly and carry out their orders.

Now when they are to leave their camp, the trumpet gives a sound, at which time nobody lies still, but at the first order they take down their tents, and all is made ready for leaving; then the trumpets sound again, to order the soldiers to get ready for the march; then they lay their baggage suddenly upon their mules, and other beasts of burden, and stand ready to march. The soldiers will also set fire to their camp



because it will be easy for them to build another camp when they stop, and that it may never be of use to their enemies. Then the trumpets gives a sound for the third time, the orator that stands at the general's right hand asks the men three times if they are ready to go out to war? To which the soldiers reply with a loud and cheerful voice saying, "We are ready."

The soldiers are moreover hardened for war by fear; for their laws inflict capital punishments, not only for soldiers running away from the ranks, but for laziness and inactivity, though it is a lesser motivator because their generals are more giving than their laws, for they prevent any of those crimes from happening by the great rewards they give to their soldiers. The readiness of obeying their commanders is so great that when they come to a battle, the whole army is but one body, so well coupled together are their ranks, so sudden are their actions, so sharp their hearing as to what orders are given them, and so quick are their hands when they set to work; whereby it comes to pass that what they do is done quickly, and what they suffer they suffer with the greatest patience. There are few examples if any where they have been conquered in battle, when they came to a close fight, either by the multitude of the enemies, or by the strategy of their enemy, or by the difficulties in the places they were in, for their victories have been surer to them than fortune could have granted them.

