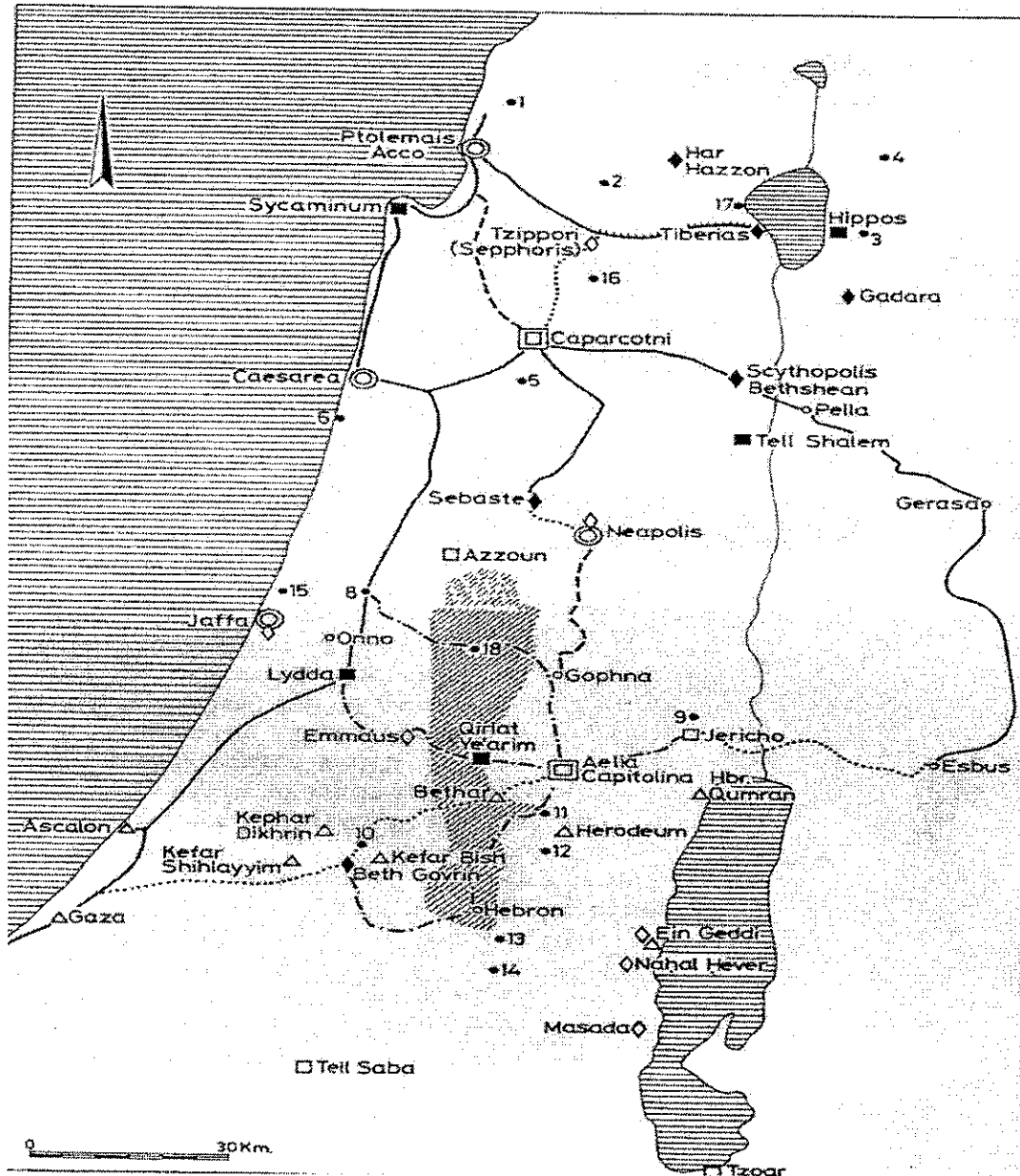


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# The 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish Revolt:

## Cassius Dio Revisited



HST499 Senior Seminar

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In the year 132ad the rebel leader Ben Kosiba otherwise known as Bar Kokhba, lead the people of Judea in revolt against their overlords the Romans. The Roman Legions under the leadership of Julius Severus, appointed by the Emperor Hadrian, defeated the Jewish revolt ending their chances for an independent Jewish state. Severus massacred the Jewish population, and according to Dio, Severus had fifty fortresses and nine hundred and eighty-five of the Jews most famous villages razed to the ground. He goes on to say that five hundred and eighty thousand men were killed thus ensuring that the Jews could not revolt again. This victory did not come without extreme losses on the Roman side as well. After suppressing the revolt, Severus, was given the governorship of Bithynia, an extremely wealthy province, as a reward for his work in Judea. The Jews lost control of their Holy city of Jerusalem and their Temple. When one reads Dio's Roman History VIII, they find the largest written account of the revolt, all of two small pages. It is with Dio's short account of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judean revolt, which we must work with. For by looking closely at Dio's short account of the war, we are able in conjunction with other evidence to find out exactly what occurred during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judean Revolt.

Originally there were thought to be three causes of the Jewish revolt of Bar Kokhba. The Roman Emperor Hadrian had ordered to turn Jerusalem (The religious center of Judaism) into a Roman colony, his Aelia Capitolina. It has also been assumed that the Jews revolted because the Temple to the one god was rededicated to Jupiter. Also, by imperial mandate, circumcision was prohibited and this was thought to be a cause of the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt.<sup>1</sup> The real reason for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish revolt was that when the Emperor Hadrian announced that he was going to supplant Jerusalem with his Aelia Capitolina, the Jews of Imudea (southern Judea) were already in the process of starting the rebellion, and the announcement gave them the allegiance of the Galilean Jews. For of all of Hadrian's acts, it is the desecration of the Holy city of Jerusalem which would unite the Jews in the north with the current rebellion that was already underway in Imudea. By looking closely at Cassius Dio, and other evidence we can make the case that the Jews were fully prepared for the revolt and that it had started much earlier than has been previously accepted and that the Romans suffered far more damage than they have admitted. To support these claims it must also be shown that the Romans were prepared for the war as well. We can see in the early deployment of Legions in the East that the revolt was expected by the Emperor but not admitted to, until 132ad when Hadrian declared the war official.

Now, the Emperor Trajan owed part of his failure in the war against the Parthians to the first Diaspora revolt in 66ad. Trajan had to expend no small effort

to suppress the rebellion. In this time period, Hadrian served as a Legate in control of one of Trajan's Legions, and it has been argued that while fighting the Jews in the Diaspora revolt Hadrian developed a personal resentment towards them. To support this claim we must look at Hadrian's actions in Cyprus where he was dispatched in order to subdue the Jewish rebels. After Hadrian defeated the rebels, he faced a major problem in that Cyprus had suffered greatly at the hands of the Jewish rebels. In fact, after the suppression of the revolt any Jew who came to the island was immediately seized and executed. According to Simon Applebaum it is here that "Hadrian acquired an abiding distaste of the Jews as a destructive and seditious group, whose treasonable activities belonged to no one province and spanned farther than the empire."<sup>2</sup> Hadrian was a well experienced officer of the Roman world and had traveled much in the Middle East on campaigns and duties. His knowledge of the fragmented peoples of the east should have given him insight into how to control the population, and it seems to be implied by Dio that the Jews were widely discontented throughout the east and it was not Hadrian's fault but a mutual hatred.

Hadrian is the *Legatus* of Syria when Trajan dies in 117, and Hadrian proclaims himself as Emperor in Antioch, yet it will take him more than a year to reach Rome as he must first deal with the legions in the eastern provinces that Trajan left in his control. His reign is unique in that so much of it was spent on touring the provinces. More importantly it was his inspection and reform of the

legions that has had the most impact.<sup>3</sup> Hadrian's policy in the frontiers was that of defense, he saw that Rome had expanded too far and as a result he decided to concentrate on improving his empire. This idea is continued after Hadrian by Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius<sup>4</sup> Hadrian abandoned many of the conquests won by Trajan, and destroyed Trajan's theater on the Campus Martius. These acts made Hadrian unpopular at home for the Romans hated to lose their victories, and blamed Hadrian even though he tried to do it secretly by saying that Trajan had told him to do it before his death.<sup>5</sup> His reform of the legions was primarily that of accounting. He did away with much of the bribery among the troops and made it so that only the older men could be tribunes. He put age limits on the army, banning those too young and retiring those who were too old to serve anymore. He inspected the accounts of the legions to make sure they were properly armed and supplied as well replacing old arms with new; he also would not allow unserviceable weapons in the legion.<sup>6</sup> It should be known that the Emperor Hadrian had a reputation as a builder and as a restitutor in the ancient world. In Judea he is linked with two Hadrianeion's located in Caesarea and Tiberias respectively. He also had his legionaries build an aqueduct in Caesarea, however, along with roads; aqueducts are almost always built by the legions as they require knowledge beyond what might be found in the provinces. The Legions did these works as a possible way to justify their being present in a "peaceful" province, as well as creating goodwill with the local populace. Hadrian's biggest project in Judea is of course the reconstruction of Jerusalem, his 'Aelia Capitolina'.<sup>7</sup>

It is said that Hadrian had prohibited circumcision among all provinces of the empire. The only two provinces that cite this prohibition as a problem and they are among two groups that practice circumcision and also became rebellious. The Nabateans had been rebelling against the Romans since their annexation by Rome. This forced the Romans to purge the Nabateans and they used the excuse that all people who were circumcised had broken they law and the Nabateans were slaughtered. The Jews also had the prohibition put upon them, but it seems unlikely that it would have provoked the revolt, because the Egyptian priests who were peaceful puppets of Rome were allowed to continue practicing circumcision.<sup>8</sup> So while the Jews were peaceful it seems likely that they would be allowed to continue their religious observances. Just like the Nabateans though, as soon as they rebelled the Romans would enforce the circumcision law and thus providing an excuse for violently suppressing the revolt and any Jewish civilians they might wish too include. The actual Roman law was against castration, although it could be warped to include circumcision when the Romans needed it to. One of Hadrian's first actions as Emperor was to depose the governor of Judea and have him executed. Hadrian did this for political reasons, but it is an interesting fact that the governor, Lusius Quietus, had been a successful general in suppressing the Diaspora Jewish uprising in Mesopotamia. Though this execution was obviously for political motives it could not have come at a worse time, right when the Jews were preparing for their second revolt. The removal of Quietus

could have been a move to placate the Jews who remembered him as an enemy, yet the Jews would also remember any Roman as an enemy.<sup>2</sup>

The economic condition in Judea was also very poor since the first Jewish revolt failed, and the rebels were punished through the loss of land. After the first Jewish revolt, any of the rebels who were caught had their land seized. The Jews of the Diaspora revolt also had their land seized and the Romans would often confiscate land on mere rumor of rebellious intent. Also the Roman government wished to stabilize the region and thus offered land grants to soldiers and gave large estates to aristocrats who supported the Roman regime. It was against the law for a Jew to buy the confiscated land of another Jew, thus ensuring that the majority of the land that was taken by the Roman government remained in loyal Roman hands. It is evident that much wild and unregulated land seizures took place after the first Jewish revolt along with considerable state confiscation and distribution to Roman citizens. Many soldiers who took up residence on land could obtain confirmation of title from the local government. This seizure policy is supported by the documents found during Bar Kokhba's brief reign where Jews went to court to reclaim their seized land.<sup>10</sup> In the urban centers life was very different for the Jews. Often referred to as Hellenized Jews they represent the Jewish population who would have the most to gain by supporting Hadrian. These Hellenized Jews are the merchant class, who if Judea were to become a colonial province then the tax burden upon them would lessen and the rate of merchant

exchange would go up, they are also the Jews who would benefit the most from Hadrian's building program. These Jews would explain the up side to Hadrian being praised in the Sibylline Oracles. Also these would be Jews that had fought as legionaries and received citizenship. As Roman citizen they received lower taxes, were treated better in the courts and enjoyed all the benefits befitting a Roman. These quislings no doubt became the worst enemy of the Bar Kokhba revolutionaries and earned the spite of the Rabbis. It also represents a split between the Jewish population that further separated the rural Jew from the Urban Jew and would also be a factor in why more urban centers did not join the revolt outright.<sup>11</sup>

Bar Kokhba's kingdom lasted for three and a half years or so we are to understand in the Talmud. If that is true then how did Bar Kokhba, raise an army, gather funds, build over fifty fortresses, and carve out a kingdom from the Roman military machine in only two and a half years? The answer must be that it taken longer. That would mean that the revolt movement would need to be in a state of secret revolt or guerilla warfare at least as early as 130ad (if not earlier), if it was to be stopped in the fall of 134ad or the spring of 135ad. This version of the time line would better fit the statements of Cassius Dio who said that "At first the Romans took no account of them...giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans partly by secret..."<sup>12</sup> The above quote from Dio gives the impression that the Jews were in a state of warfare before the Romans were willing to admit it.



The time line of events shows that a guerilla war campaign had been in effect before open war was declared between Rome and the Bar Kokhba revolutionaries. This would also prove to Hadrian that stricter measures would be needed to suppress the Jews, but his methods only drove more people into fighting for Bar Kokhba and making the revolt more costly for the Roman Legions.

Alexandrian coins from the years 130-131ad have Emperor Hadrian as a man of war standing at the helm, stamped into them. These coins recognize that there was a state of war going on in Judea. The legion stationed in Palestine was the Leg. X Fretensis, as the permanent legion. It received re-enforcements sometime before 130ad apparently due to the need for additional soldiers. In 127ad the Roman legion needed to import military uniforms from Egypt apparently because Judea could no longer provide them. Also the Leg. XXII Deiotariana was replaced by the Leg. II Traiana in Egypt. How ever there is no evidence that the Deiotariana was disbanded it may be possible that it was sent north from its base to support the tenth legion as it was during the first Jewish revolt in 69-70ad. The last positive date for the XXII Dieotariana is in 119ad in Egypt, as it does not appear on the list of legions rolls in 146ad. There is also some evidence suggesting that the Legion may have been based at Caparcotna in the Galilee. Since we no longer hear of the twenty second legion after its firm date in Egypt, it is plausible that the legion could have been destroyed by the Jews on its way through Imudea. Additional evidence supporting the possibility that the Jews destroyed the twenty second legion is found in a letter from Fronto to Marcus Aurelius about 161ad. Fronto

comforts the Emperor for his losses in the Parthian war, by reminding him of Hadrian's losses in Judea. During the Parthian war the legion of Aelius Severianus was completely destroyed, this leads us to believe that the war in Judea was even more devastating for the Romans than the loss of one Legion. Bowersock argues that if an entire legion were wiped out then there would be more documentation, as it would have been a big event during the war.<sup>13</sup> However if one were to examine an aqueduct that was built in Caesarea which bares the marks of the II Tra., VI Ferr. and the X Fret. Legions dedicating the aqueduct to the Emperor Hadrian. A fourth mark has been carefully erased as shown by the diagonal chisel marks left. Of the thirteen other inscriptions of this type found, none have similar erase marks, leading some to speculate that it could have been the Leg. XXII who were disbanded in disgrace. With the connection to the Hadrianic date of the inscriptions strongly suggest a connection with the second revolt.<sup>14</sup>

I would argue that the twenty second legion was probably ambushed or somehow their numbers were greatly reduced and when they finally joined the other two legions in Israel, who since, they had probably suffered troop loss themselves split the twenty second legion up and took three short legions and turned it into two full strength legions. This would explain why the twenty second legion is no longer mentioned and why they were not reported as being destroyed in the war, since they may have suffered a defeat but not lost their standards; they would be in disgrace but the defeat might not be well publicized. There is also

documentary evidence supporting the fact that there were several Syrian legions in Palestine, namely the Leg. III Gallica, before the coming of the twenty second Legion. The sixth Syrian legion, Ferrata, was apparently remaining permanently in Palestine. It is also apparent that this particular legion acted as shock-troops and was sent to particularly troublesome provinces that had started or were likely to rebel. If this is true, then the sixth and tenth legion had failed to quell the rebellion and the twenty second legion was called in as support. This supports the idea that the revolt had been making progress for longer than is previously thought, maybe even from 125 or 126, instead of 130ad.<sup>15</sup> The legions presence in Judea are concurrent with the evidence that about the year 127ad or a little before that, Judea had changed status from a praetorian ranked governor to a consular governor. The governor of Judea, Tineius Rufus, received a salary of a *ducenarius*, which is typical of the salary of consul. This raise in salary suggests that in all probability a consul was governing Judea about the time of the revolt, which is necessary if there are two legions there to suppress the guerilla war campaign of Bar Kokhba.<sup>16</sup>

It is during Hadrian's tour of the East, when he stopped in Jerusalem and ordered the construction of his first Roman colony, the '*Colonia Aelia Capitolina*' to be founded in order to replace Jerusalem, that we find that Judea is most probably elevated from a single legion *legatus* province commanded by an ex-praetor to a two legion province under an ex-consul. This occurs before the rebellion officially starts in 132ad, not necessarily under the Emperor Trajan,

which has been argued by G.W. Bowersock, but certainly by the 120s<sup>17</sup> when we see that Q. Tineius Rufus who had been a suffect consul in 127ad is appointed to be governor of Judea. Since Rufus is appointed in the year 132ad at the start of the war and he already had two legions waiting for him it would be logical to conclude that the province had to have been elevated in status before Rufus took over. By examining the milestones found along the road from Caparcotna to Diocaesarea we find inscriptions that read as follows:

*Imp(erator) Caesar Diui / Trai(a)ni Parthici /*

*fil(ius) Diui Nervae nepos / Hadrianus Aug(ustus) pontif(ex)*

*iiii co(n)s(ul) iii fecit / V/*

This inscription is confirmed by another fragment and in addition there is another milestone on the same road which reads

*Im[p(eratori)] / [Ca]esa[ri Diui Traiani Parthici f.] /*

*[Di]ui Nervae [n(epoti)] / Traiano Hadr[iano] /*

*Aug(usto) pontif(ici) [max(imo)] /*

*trib(unicia) potest(ate) [---] co(n)s(uli) /*

*iii p(atri) p(atriciae) / VI //*

The later milestone marks the sixth mile from Caparcotna on the road to Diocaesarea. Both the inscriptions and the shapes of the stones mark them as belonging to different series recording the repair of the road under the Emperor Hadrian. Other milestones in the area bearing the same inscription and style are dated to 129 and 135. This means that the road was probably originally constructed about 120 and was repaired ten years later in the 130's still under The Emperor Hadrian. In both milestones we find that Caparcotna served as the head road and not Diocaesarea. This means that Caparcotna served as a military base in the 120s serving as a Galilean command for the second legion that must have been stationed in Judea.<sup>18</sup> Although we can not prove which legion it was the presence of two Roman legions in Judea in the 120s gives us a sure sign that the Romans were experiencing difficulties if not suspecting outright hostility from the natives. Stationing the mystery legion in Caparcotna would put a legion in control of the Valley of Jezreel, which is a vital link as it also controls the road from the coast through the valley to Damascus and from Damascus to the Euphrates, and from there to India, a very vital road indeed as Hadrian would have learned in Trajan's Parthian campaign.

We can also find legionary presence at Neapolis which controls the crossroads to Jerusalem and the coastal plain. There is evidence of the legions stationed in Judea about the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt. A) a fragmentary inscription mentioning a *tribunis* and a *primus pilus* or *praepositus*. B) countermarks of the

XII Fulminata on coins struck up to 86/7. The coins were countermarked after ad 86/7 and probably before 156/7 which leads one to believe that the legion was based in Neapolis in 115-17 or 132-5. We also find the tombstone of Ulpus Magnus, a centurion of the V Macedonica, dated to the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt. We also find a monumental inscription at Samria-Sebaste, (ancient Shomron) built by a vexillation of the Leg. VI Ferrata.<sup>19</sup>

The campaigns of guerilla warfare seem to have their beginnings in the rural areas of Judea. There is a story of two brothers of Kefar Harubba who slew every Roman who went past their village. When the Romans came near to them they would shout their intention to take the crown from Hadrian's head and set it on the head of Simon. There is another story that explains the destruction of Bethar as resulting from a clash between the Emperor's daughter and the villagers. It was a local custom to plant a cedar tree when a boy was born and to plant a pine tree when a girl was born. When a couple got married they were to use the trees to construct the bridal canopy. The emperor's daughter happened to be passing by when the axle of her carriage broke and her servants cut down a cedar tree to fix the carriage. Upon finding the tree cut down the Jewish peasants beat the servants and when the daughter returned home she told the emperor that the Jews had risen.<sup>20</sup> These stories may be nothing more than propaganda but they have a feeling of truth in them. The anger that the Jews felt, because they were being mistreated by the Romans who had no respect for their traditions, enraged much of

the Jewish country side and turned any Jew who attacked a Roman into a patriot. Rural people are also the most sensitive to land grabbing and interference of the Roman leaders and it would make sense for them to get angry faster than city dwellers, who would have more at stake to lose because they live next door to the Romans. The important idea to get from these stories is that the majority of the insurgents are rurally located. The character of the uprising of Bar Kokhba is that no major towns or cities except Jerusalem are mentioned, meaning that the revolt was made up of mostly peasant class farmers and dissidents.<sup>21</sup> It is believed that Jerusalem itself did not join the rebellion due to the lack of the Bar Kokhba coins found within the city, but which are found in high quantity throughout southern Judea. This is particularly important when one considers the character of the revolt. For it is much easier for a rural farmer to hide in the country when Roman legionnaires are searching for him than it is for a urban Jew in Jerusalem who would have all his possessions in one location and no place to run to.

Although banditry was common in Judea between ad70-132, the “bandits” are really more akin to guerilla fighters than common thieves. The son of R. Hanania ben Teradion (the wealthiest man in the Galilee and treasurer of a fund for the poor), joined a band of *listim* or “bandits” and later betrayed them to the Romans. The band discovered him as a traitor and killed him. After three days the bandits gave the body back to his family out of respect for the traitor's father; however, when the family received their son back, they cursed him. R. Hanania

was executed by the Romans after the revolt of Bar Kokhba. This leads me to believe that the band of *listem* must have been guerilla fighters because a wealthy man's son doesn't need to join with a band of common brigands, and secondly what kind of bandits would return a traitor to his family out of respect for the father. Finally since the Rabbi was executed after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish revolt as one of its rebel leaders it would only be logical to assume that he must have been working with the *listem* before the open rebellion began. Another source tells us that in the same period a couple of Galileans were rumored to have murdered a man for political reasons and in order to escape justice they fled to Lydda and there appealed to R. Tarphon to hide them. R. Tarphon was very influential before the revolt amongst both Jews and Romans, and though he did not hide the murderers, he also did not turn them over to the Romans authorities.<sup>22</sup> Therefore we can conclude that these *listem* were an organization of guerilla fighters who were fighting the Romans and were actively being supported not just among the poor and disenfranchised but by the elites in the Jewish communities.

The existence of guerilla fighters has been supported by archaeological discoveries in the last decade. Many of these are hidden in village centers behind cisterns and fit with the hiding places of Bar Kokhba's men as described by Cassius Dio. They are found mostly in the western and south-west foot-hills of Judea, although there have been some found in the lower Galilee. These subterranean structures contain store rooms, ventilation shafts and even wall



niches for oil lamps. connected by horizontal passages and vertical shafts connecting multiple levels.<sup>23</sup> Caves in the middle east have long been used by bandits and others as hiding places and even store houses for food and weapons, however, most of the new discoveries are not natural caves but man made and cut from the rock and some in villages meaning a concentrated effort by a village population in a time frame when much of the west and south participated in guerilla warfare.

The Jewish revolt could not have started with open war. If it had, the Jews would have lost, because without weapons or supplies their army would not survive against the well organized and disciplined troops of the Roman legions. As we have seen, there are at a minimum of two legions stationed in Judea, but more probably three to four are all within striking distance, under the command of a decent leader in the guise of the governor Tineas Rufus. The Jews have on their side a bunch of farmers and discontented bandits who are typically raiders. The weapons most commonly used by these guerillas are short spears, and slings. The Jews lack the armor and the quality weapons wielded by the Roman legionnaires. Also the Jews lack the central leadership and the ability to properly supply a standing army in the field. This is not to say the Jews can not fight merely that they would have had to pick their battles, a hit and run strategy becomes more important than a pitched battle. A lack of armor can mean an increase in mobility, as well as a lower demand for supply. Though the Jews lacked the quality arms

that the Romans had, we find in Dio's History that the rebel Jews were stealing the Roman weapons from their own munitions factories.

So in about the year 125ad open guerilla war was in progress, meaning that prior to that the Jews must have prepared. These preparations went unnoticed by the Romans according to Dio. Dio describes the way in which Jews acquired weapons, by injecting faulty weapons in among the orders of the Romans, this way the Jews were able to take weapons off the top. They also built and stocked underground supply depots for weapons and grain. The construction of tunnels and the effort of labor lead to impression that Bar Kokhba's soldiers were well organized and trained. All of this building and stocking and training must have taken years before the Jews were ready for the revolt against the Romans. Even once the revolt was under way, open warfare could not be risked until the revolutionaries had the support of the urban centers. Once the Jews over ran the legions and chased them from Judea they had to build fortified cities around the new fortresses, and according to Dio and the Talmud more than fifty such fortified cities were built. All of these accomplishments required a large amount of time money and support.<sup>24</sup> The Jews who were dispersed among other provinces could very well have shipped money and supplies to the revolutionaries. The urban dwelling Jews who could or would not fight the Romans openly might have donated to the cause as well.

Many of the coins that were struck by the Bar Kokhba kingdom were over old Roman coins large stores of money have been found in Jerusalem, meaning that at one point Bar Kokhba was there or that a Jewish mint was working in the city for Bar Kokhba and shipping it out to him for redistribution as part of his propaganda machine. The coins that have been positively identified with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish revolt can be used as a dating measure for when the fighting stopped being guerilla warfare and instead went into a mainstream revolt. The first coin is a silver tetradrachms, with the Temple on the obverse, along with the word “YRWSLM” and on the reverse a palm branch and citrus fruit with the words “SNT 'HT LG'LT YSR'L”, year one of the redemption of Israel. On other coins in the year one group are named Elazar the priest which might be Eleazor of Modin, who was the Uncle of Bar Kokhba and of course the leader of the revolt Simeon, prince of Israel, “SM'WN NSY' YSR'L”. All the details need not be looked at, however, it must be noted that in the year two coins, there appears the words “For the freedom of Jerusalem or of Israel”. The numerous documents found tell us that the war lasted some three and a half years in an official manner, from the spring of 132 to the fall of 135.<sup>25</sup>

Emperor Hadrian’s decree against circumcision was likely made under martial law. Like all decrees against the Mizwot, it was a tactic to force the Jews to submit to Roman authority. The state of guerilla warfare in Judea gave the commanding officer of the region complete control in his effort to subdue the

populace. His decrees were imposed sporadically throughout Judea and the Galilean Jews felt it more heavily than others, since the Romans believed them to be the fomenters of the rebellion. The Romans felt that the Galilean Jews needed to be shown the brutality they would incur for their insubordination. Once the Romans realized that they were facing an organized revolt they probably issued decrees in an effort to flush out the revolutionaries from the bystanders. The first thing to go was public assembly, this is standard practice as now any gathering of Jews is to be treated as rebels the Romans can isolate them. The prohibition on circumcision was probably an early decree as well because Romans could kill any Jew and not get in trouble because they were breaking the decree. It was an excuse to kill and frighten the Jews into submission. The Romans also abolished the Jews right to ordination, as it gave them judicial power. This no doubt caused the disappearance of the offices of the Sanhedrin, and the Nasi. These decrees would only outrage the Jewish population more and force them to join Bar Kokhba in righteous anger over the Roman persecution. Once the revolt became more intense and certainly once it became open war the decrees against many of the Jews religious laws would become terrible. The lighting of the Menorah, weddings on Wednesday, etc. all the Jewish rituals seem to be prohibited in punishment for the revolt.<sup>26</sup> The Building of the Aelia Capitolina would be pointless during a revolt as it would cost too much and just enrage the Jews further in their fight. Once the revolt was suppressed, however; the building of the *Aelia Capitolina*, would serve as punishment for the rebellion. What is likely to happen here that some call the

compromising of history is that the *Aelia Capitolina* was ordered to be built before the war but the outbreak ceased its construction and after the revolt was put down the Romans started to build again.

According to the Midrash, Emperor Hadrian at first permitted the rebuilding of the Jewish temple but then revoked his decision and the Jews were disappointed. This legend may be dismissed as a fantasy but I would point out that the Jews would not give even a half compliment to Hadrian who they referred to as “the wicked” or “may his bones rot” in their literature. The real reason for the Jewish revolt was that during the early part of Hadrian’s reign, Hadrian released the conquests of Trajan beyond the Euphrates. The political liberation of the Armenians, Parthians, and Assyrians left the Jews in a state of exhilaration at the thought that they might know freedom from the Romans. When they learned that they were not to be released the Jews once again felt bitterness at Emperor Hadrian. The stories in the Midrash and Haggadah represent the hard feelings of the Jews toward Hadrian. It is more than Hadrian’s failure to build the temple, but his failure to liberate Palestine which earns Hadrian the enmity of the Jewish people. The Jews above all else despised slavery and subjection, and Simeon Bar Kokhba was an heir to the Temple revolt and the fight for the cause of the Hasmoneans.

Many similarities exist between Bar Kokhba and the old rebels of the Temple days. Most notable are the resemblances between the coinages. Both

Hasmonean and Bar Kokhba coins have the symbols of Ethrog and Lulab to recall dedication of the Temple after their victory. Also, a palm branch with clusters of dates to represent the land of Israel is found. The vine which represents the people of Israel, of Jerusalem, Sanhedrin and the Sages of Israel; and finally the jug which represents the Hanukkah miracle are found on coins from both periods. The messages also are similar in each period; freedom and redemption of Israel and Jerusalem are found in both. The first revolt served as an example of the heroics for the second revolt. One of the main driving motives that gave Bar Kokhba the leadership position was the belief that he was the messiah that was destined to lead the Jews to freedom. Even after the rebellion is put down Bar Kokhba is still respected, as he lacked only one aspect to be the true messiah, according to the Talmud, in that he was not able to smell if a litigant was telling the truth or not. Bar Kokhba's advantage over self proclaimed messiahs is that he was proclaimed messiah by the Sages of Israel, although the Great Sanhedrin of seventy one never met to give Bar Kokhba the title King he was proclaimed Nasi by his followers as shown by the letters found in the Wadi Murabba'at cave that states, "On the twentieth of Shebat, year two of the redemption of Israel by the hand of Simeon Bar Kokhba, the Nasi of Israel." This claim to be the Prince of Israel rather than the king is a wise move for Bar Kokhba, because he adheres to the Jewish elders and shows subordination to the sages, he earns their respect and support. Had his Kingdom lasted longer I believe without a doubt that Bar Kokhba would have been proclaimed king.

Bar Kokhba's revolt took its roots from the country side and from the humble beginnings as poor tenant farmers dissatisfied with the Roman elitism. The Jews started to take back what they believed was theirs. It started with simple things, an argument with a soldier, a few meetings and scrapes and as the Romans continued their unrelenting bullying of the people, and banditry focused solely on the Romans and their supporters. Small scale warfare erupted between legionnaires and the Jews, when the "bandits" in the south started attacking small groups of soldiers. These small confrontations culminated into a full blown revolution led by a man who had set himself up as the promised messiah of the Jewish people, the one who would lead the Jews to freedom. Bar Kokhba's revolt took many years to organize and did not appear fully formed and ready to go in 132ad but must have been started much earlier, in about 125ad. The support from the Diaspora Jews cannot be ignored as it is likely that they too, desired a free Judea for the Jews. Ironically without the Romans actions in trying to rebuild Jerusalem the Jews in the North may never have joined the revolt. By using the Work of Cassius Dio and modern archaeology we can now tell fact from fiction and fill in the holes from the written works of Dio. We now see that the Romans as well as the Jews were prepared for the war, because they both started to rally in Judea about 125ad.

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