

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. What was the direct cause of the Bar Kochba rebellion?
2. What critical world event(s) preceded the revolt?
3. Who was the Roman Emperor that crushed the revolt?
4. How long did the revolt last?
5. Why did Rabbi Akiva assume that Bar Kochba was Moshiach? What was his error?

This and much more will be addressed in the first lecture of this series: "The Revolt".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it as well as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series III Lecture #1

REVOLT!

I. Trajan and the Destruction of Egyptian Jewry

A.

תניא רבי יהודה אומר מי שלא ראה דיופלוסטון של אלכסנדריא של מצרים לא ראה בכבודן של ישראל אמרו כמיין בסילקי גדולה היתה סטיו לפנים מסטיו כפלים כיוצא מצרים והיו בה ע"א קתדראות של זהב כנגד ע"א זקנים כל אחת ואחת אינה פחותה מעשרים ואחד ככרי זהב ובימה של עץ באמצעיתא וחזן של כנסת עומד עליה והסודרין בידו וכיון שהגיע לענות אמן הלה מניף בסודר וכל העם עונים אמן. ולא היו יושבין מעורבין אלא זהבין בפני עצמן וכספין בפני עצמן ונפחין בפני עצמן וטרסיים בפני עצמן וגרדיים בפני עצמן. וכשעני נכנס שם היה מכיר בעלי אומנתו ונפנה לשם ומשם פרנסתו ופרנסת אנשי ביתו. אמר אביי וכולהו קטלינהו טרכינוס. מ"ט איענשו משום דעברי אהאי קרא לא תוסיפון לשוב בדרך הזה עוד ואינהו הדור אתו. סוכה נא:

It has been taught (in a Braiisa), Rabbi Yehudah stated, "He who has not seen the double colonnade of Alexandria of Egypt has never seen the glory of Israel." It was said that it was like a huge basilica, one colonnade within the other, and it sometimes held twice the number of people that went forth from Egypt (1,200,000). There were in it seventy one cathedras (thrones) of gold, corresponding to the seventy one elders in the Sanhedrin, not one of them containing less than twenty one talents of gold, and a wooden platform in the middle upon which the attendant of the Synagogue stood with a scarf in his hand. When the time came to answer Amen, he waved his scarf and all the congregation duly responded. They moreover did not occupy their seats randomly, but goldsmiths sat separately, silversmiths separately, blacksmiths separately, metalworkers separately and weavers separately, so that when a poor man entered the place, he recognized the members of his craft and on applying to that quarter obtained a livelihood for himself and for the members of his family. Abaye stated, "Trajan slew them all. Why were they so punished? Because they transgressed this verse: 'You shall henceforth return no more that way.' (Deuteronomy 17:16) and they did return." **Sukkah 51b**

B.

בימי טרוגיינוס הרשע נולד לו בן בתשעה באב והיו מתענין מתה בתו בחנוכה והדליקו נרות ושלחה אשתו ואמרה לו עד שאתה מכבש את הברבריים בוא וכבוש את היהודים שמרדו בך. חשב מייתי לעשרה יומין ואתא לחמשה. אתא ואשכחון עסיקין באורייתא בפסוקא ישא ד' עליך גוי מרחוק מקצה הארץ וגו'. אמר לון מה הויתון עסיקין אמר ליה הכין וכן. אמר לון דהוא גברא הוא דחשב מייתי לעשרה יומין ואתא לחמשה והקיפן ליגיונות והרגן. אמר לנשיהן נשמעות אתם לליגיונתי ואין אני הורג אתכם אמרין ליה מה דעבדת בארעייא עביד בעלייא ועירב דמן בדמן והלך הדם בים עד קיפריס. באותה שעה נגדעא קרן ישראל ועוד אינה עתידה לחזור למקומה עד שיבוא בן דוד. ירושלמי סוכה ה:א

It came to pass in the days of the wicked Trajan that a boy was born to him on the ninth of Av while the Jews were fasting. His daughter died on Chanukah and they lit lamps. His wife sent to him [a message]: Instead of conquering the barbarians, go and conquer the Jews that have rebelled against you. He thought to arrive in ten days but he came in [only] five. He came and found them engaged in the study of Torah [studying] the verse, "G-d will lift up a nation from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies" (Deuteronomy 28:49). He asked them: what are you engaged in? They replied: Such and such. He said them: I am the man that Scripture is referring to. I thought to come in ten days and I've arrived in only five [like the proverbial eagle]. He [eventually] surrounded them with legions and killed them. He then said to their wives: You had better heed [the desires of] my legions so that I won't have to kill you. They replied: What you've done to those on the ground do as well to those above. And so their blood became mixed with their blood and the blood went as far as Cyprus. At that time the horn (pride) of Israel was severed and it is not destined to return until the coming of the son of David.

Yerushalmi Sukkah 5:1

C.

רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר. מזמור לאסף באו גוים וגו' בא אדריאנוס [טרוגיניוס] קיסר ותפס אלכסנדריא של מצרים שהיו בה מאה ועשרים ריבוא בני אדם. פיתא אותן בדברים ואמר להון צאו ועמדו בבקעת ידים שלא תהא אומה זו שולטת בכם. יצאו ועמדו בבקעת ידים והעמיד עליהן חמשים אלף אחוזי חרב מאחוריהם והרגום עד שלא נשתייר מהם אחד שנאמר שפכו דמם כמים וגו'. אמרו חכמים שלשה נחלי דם היו מושכין ויוצאין מבקעת ידים והולכין לים הגדול. שיערו חכמים מימי ים הגדול ונמצא שלשה חלקים דם ואחד מים. ויש אומרים שבע שנים בצרו אומות העולם את כרמיהן מדמן של ישראל. תנא דבי אליהו כ"ט
(ל)

Rabbi Eliezer the Great said, "A song of Asaph. The nations have come . . ." (Psalms 79:1) Hadrian [Trajan] came and conquered Alexandria of Egypt. They had a population of one million two hundred thousand. He deceived them by telling them: Go out and stand in Bikaas Yadaim (the Field of Hands) so that this nation (the Egyptian Greeks) should not dominate you. They went out and stood in Bikaas Yadaim and they (the Romans) placed fifty thousand troops with swords in their hands behind them and slaughtered them so that not one of them was left as it is stated, "They spilled their blood like water" (Psalms 79:) The Sages said: Three rivers of blood flowed out from Bikaas Yadaim and into the Mediterranean. The Sages estimated the waters of the Mediterranean and found it to be three parts blood to one part water. Some say that the Gentiles harvested their vineyards for seven years using the Jewish blood [instead of fertilizer].

Midrash Tana D'Vai Eliyohu 29, 30

D. But the calamities of the Jews also continued to grow with one accumulation of evil upon another. The emperor was now advancing into the eighteenth year of his reign, and another commotion of the Jews being raised, he destroyed a very great number of them. For in Alexandria and rest of Egypt, and also in Cyrene, as if actuated by some terrible and tempestuous spirit, they rushed upon seditious measures against the Greeks of the same place. Having increased the insurrection to a great extent, they excited no inconsiderable war the following year, when Lupus was governor of Egypt.

And in the first conflict, indeed, it happened that they prevailed over the Greeks; who retreating into Alexandria, took and destroyed the Jews that were found in the city. But the Jews of Cyrene being deprived of their assistance, after laying waste the country of Egypt, also proceeded to destroy its districts, under their leader Lucuas. Against these the emperor sent Marcius Turbo, with foot and naval forces, besides cavalry. He, however, protracting the war a long time against them in many battles, slew many thousand Jews, not only of Cyrene, but also of Egypt, that had joined them, together with their leader, Lucuas. But the emperor suspecting that the Jews in Mesopotamia would also make an attack upon those there, ordered Lucius Quietus to clear the province of them, who also led an army against them, and slew a great multitude of them. Upon victory, he was appointed governor of Judea by the emperor. These things are recorded by the Greek writers of the day, in nearly the same words. **Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History Book IV:2**

D. Meanwhile (116 CE) the Jews in the region of Cyrene had put a certain Andreas at their head and were destroying both the Romans and the Greeks. They would cook their flesh, make belts for themselves of their entrails, anoint themselves with their blood, and wear their skins for clothing. Many they sawed in two, from the head downwards. Others they would give to wild beasts and force still others to fight as gladiators. In all, consequently, two hundred and twenty thousand perished. In Egypt, also, they performed many similar deeds, and in Cyprus under the leadership of Artemio. There, likewise, two hundred and forty thousand perished. for this reason no Jew may set foot in that land, but even if one of them is driven upon the island by force of the wind, he is put to death. Various persons took part in subduing these Jews, one being Lusuis, who was sent by Trajan. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXVIII, 32**

E. [In the year 116,] the Jews who are in Lybia fight against other aliens dwelling there. Likewise in Egypt and in Alexandria. In Cyrene and the Thebaid, they rush into a great rebellion, but in Alexandria, the side of the pagans triumphs.

When the Jews of Mesopotamia rebelled, Emperor Trajan orders Lysias Quietus to exterminate them from the province. After Quietus prepares an army against them he kills thousands of them; and because of this, he is appointed procurator of Judea by the emperor.

[In the year 117] The Jews destroy Salamis, a city of Cyprus, after having killed the pagans there.

Eusebius, Chronicon

F. Lusius Quietus was a Moor, himself a leader of the Moors, and belonged to a troop in the cavalry. Condemned for base conduct he was temporarily relieved of his command and dishonored; but later, when the Dacian war came on the army stood in need of the Moorish alliance, he came to it of his own accord and gave great exhibitions of prowess. For this he was honored, and in the second war performed far greater and more numerous exploits. Finally he advanced so far in bravery and good fortune during this war which we are considering that he was enrolled among the ex-praetors, became consul, and governed Palestine. To this chiefly was due the jealousy and hatred felt for him and his destruction. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXVIII, 18.**

G. For, during the time that he was sailing down the ocean and returning from there again, all his conquests were thrown into tumult and revolted. And the garrisons placed among the various peoples were in some cases driven out and in others killed.

When therefore he ascertained it, he sent Lusius and Maximus against the rebels. The latter perished after a defeat in the field; but Lusius was generally successful, recovering Nisibis, besieging Edessa, and plundering and burning. Seleucia was also captured . . . and burned. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXVIII, 30.**

H.

בפולמוס של קיטוס (טיטוס) גזרו על עטרות כלות ושלא ילמד את בנו חכמת יונית. סוטה מט.

During the war of Quietus (Titus) they decreed against the use of crowns worn by the bride and that nobody should teach his son Greek wisdom. **Sota 49a**

I. But for Alexandria, the sedition of the people of the place against the Jews was perpetual, and this from that very time when Alexander (the Great), upon finding the readiness of the Jews in assisting him against the Egyptians, and as a reward for such their assistance, gave them equal privileges in this city with the Grecians themselves;— which honorary reward continued among them under his successors, who also set apart for them a particular place, that they might live without being polluted (by the Gentiles), and were thereby not so much intermixed with foreigners as before: they also gave them this farther privilege, that they should be called Macedonians. Nay, Caesar, nor any one that came after him, thought of diminishing the honors which Alexander had bestowed on the Jews. But still conflicts perpetually arose with the Grecians; and although the governors did every day punish many of them, yet did the sedition grow worse; but at this time especially, when there were tumults in other places also, the disorders among them were put into a greater flame; for when the Alexandrians had once a public assembly, to deliberate about an embassy they were sending to Nero, a great number of Jews came flocking to the theatre; but when their adversaries saw them, they immediately cried out, and called them their enemies, and said they came as spies upon them; upon which they

rushed out and laid violent hands upon them; and as for the rest they were slain as they ran away; but there were three men whom they caught, and hauled them along, in order to have them burnt alive; but all the Jews came in a body to defend them, who at first threw stones at the Grecians; but after that they took lamps, and rushed with violence into the theatre, and threatened that they would burn the people to a man and this they had soon done, unless Tiberius Alexander, the governor of the city, had restrained their passions. However, this man did not begin to teach them wisdom by arms, but sent among them privately some of the principal men, and thereby entreated them to be quiet, and not provoke the Roman army against them; but the seditious made a jest of the entreaties of Tiberius, and reproached him for so doing.

Now when he perceived that those who were for innovations would not be pacified till some great calamity should overtake them, he sent out upon them those two Roman legions that were in the city, and together with them, five thousand other soldiers, who, by chance, were come together out of Libya, to the ruin of the Jews. They were also permitted not only to kill them, but to plunder them of what they had, and set fire to their houses. These soldiers rushed violently into that part of the city which was called Delta, where the Jewish people lived together, and did as they were bidden, though not without bloodshed on their own side also; for the Jews got together, and set those that were the best armed among them in the fore-front and made resistance for a great while; but when once they gave back they were destroyed unmercifully; and this their destruction was complete, some being caught in the open field, and others forced into their houses, which houses were first plundered of what was in them, and then set on fire by the Romans; wherein no mercy was shown of the infants, and no regard had to the aged; but they went on in the slaughter of persons of every age, till all the place was overflowed with blood, and fifty thousand of them lay dead upon heaps: nor had the remainder been preserved, had they not betaken themselves to supplication. So Alexander commiserated their condition, and gave orders to the Romans to retire; accordingly, these, being accustomed to obey orders, left off killing at the first intimation; but the populace of Alexandria bare so very great hatred to the Jews, that it was difficult to recall them; and it was a hard thing to make them leave their dead bodies. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews II 18:7, 8**

II. The Era of Hadrian

A. [In the year 118,] Hadrian rebuilds Alexandria at public expense, it having suffered damage from the Jews.

Hadrian overcomes the Jews who are rebelling against the Romans a second time.

[In the year 121,] Hadrian sends colonies to Libya, which had been laid waste by the Jews.

Eusebius, Chronicon

B.

בימי רבי יהושע בן חנניה גזרה מלכות הרשעה שיבנה בית המקדש הושיבו פפוס ולוליאנוס טרפיזין מעכו עד אנטוכיא והיו מספקין לעולי גולה כסף וזהב וכל צרכם אזלין אלין כותאי ואמריין ידיע להוי למלכא דהדין קרתא מרדתא תתבנא ושוריא ישתכללון מנדה בלו והלך לא כיתנון מנדה זו מדת הארץ בלו זו כפרובגירון והלך אנגרוטינה ואמר להון מה נעביד וגזרית אמריין ליה שלח ואמר להון או ישנון יתיה מאתריה או יוספון עליה חמש אמין או יפצרון מיניה חמש אמין מן גרמיהון אנון חזרין בהון והוון קהליא מצתיין בהדא בקעתא דבית רמון כיון דאתון כתיבא שרון בכיין בעיין לממרד על מלכותא אמריין יעול חד בר נש חכימא וישדך צבורא אמריין יעול ר' יהושע בן חנניא דהוא אסכולוסטקיא דאורייתא עאל ודרש ארי טרף טרף ועמד עצם בגרונו אמר כל דאתי מפיק ליה אנא יהיב ליה אגריה אתא הדין קורא מיצראה דמקוריה אריך יהיב מקוריה ואפקיה אמר ליה הב לי אגרי א"ל זיל תהא מלגלג ואומר דעילת לפומא דאריה בשלם ונפקת בשלם כך דיינו שנכנסנו לאומה זו בשלום ויצאנו בשלום. בראשית רבה סד:י

In the days of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, the evil empire (Rome) decreed that the Temple (Bais HaMikdash) should be rebuilt. Papus and Lulianus set up a system of offices from Acco to Antioch to provide gold, silver, and all the other needs to all those that were coming in from the Diaspora to rebuild the Temple. The Samaritans, however, went to the emperor and told him, "The Emperor should be aware that this city (Jerusalem) is a rebellious city. If it will be rebuilt, and the walls finished, neither the property taxes, head taxes, nor tithe taxes of produce will ever be paid." He replied, "What can I do? I have already decreed [that the Temple be rebuilt]." "Send them the following message: Either change the place of the Temple [and keep the original dimensions] or [make the following change:] increase it by five cubits or reduce it by five cubits [so that the new structure will be different from the original]." As a result of the influence of the Samaritans (Greeks) the project was halted.

There was a communal meeting regarding the building of the Temple that was being held in the valley of Bais Rimon. When the [official] correspondence came [regarding the Emperor's decision], they started to cry. [At that point there was a group that] was planning to revolt against the government. [Some of the leadership then made the suggestion and] said, "We should bring in some wise individual who will be able to quiet down the crowd." [Another group] said, "Let us bring in Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania because he is the dean of the Yeshiva [and will know how to effectively deal with them]." He (Rabbi Yehoshua) came up and delivered the following discourse: Once, the lion after eating his prey, got a bone stuck in his throat. [Unable to remove it himself,] he promised [the other animals] that the one who removes [the bone] will be rewarded. [Whereupon,] an Egyptian stork stuck its long beak in to the lions mouth and extracted [the bone]. The stork then asked the lion for its reward. The lion replied, "[Your reward is that now] you will be able to tell everyone that you put your head in the lion's mouth and you came out in one piece." [Continued Rabbi Yehoshua,] "It is enough for us to have come in [to the mouth of] this nation (Rome) and to have gone out in peace." **Midrash Beraishis Rabbah 64:10**

C. At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of G-d he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXIX 12**

III. Religious Coercion

A. Meverunt ia tempestate it Judaei vellum, quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia. Spartianus, Hadrian, 13

The reason a war broke out with Judea was because of a prohibition about mutilating the genitals (circumcision). **Spartianus, Hadrian, 13**

B.
פעם אחת גזרו המלכות שלא ישמרו את השבת ושלא ימולו את בניהם ושיבעלו את הנדות. מעילה יז.

Once, the government (of Rome) decreed that they should not observe the Sabbath, they should not circumcise their sons, and they should have marital relations with their wives while being in a state of Nidah (menstrual impurity). **Meilah 17a**

C.
אמר רבי מאיר פעם אחת היינו יושבין לפני רבי עקיבא בבית המדרש והיינו קורין את השמע ולא היינו משמיעים לאזנינו מפני קסדור אחד שהיה עומד על הפתח. תוספתא ברכות ב:יג

Rabbi Meir said: Once we were sitting before Rabbi Akiva in the Bais Medrash (Study Hall) and we were reciting the "Shma" but we didn't recite it loud enough for our ears to hear because of a Roman officer that was standing by the doorway. **Tosephta Berochos 2:13**

IV. The Revolt Begins

A. [122 CE] On reaching Greece he became a spectator at the Mysteries. After this he passed through Judea into Egypt and offered sacrifice to Pompey.

At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of G-d he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. So long, indeed, as Hadrian was close by in Egypt and again in Syria, they remained quiet, save in so far as they purposely made of poor quality such weapons as they were called upon to furnish, in order that the Romans might reject them and they themselves might thus have the use of them; but when he went farther away, they openly revolted. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXIX 11, 12**

B.

חמשים ושתים שנה עשתה ביתר אחר חורבן הבית. מדרש איכה ב:ד.

Fifty two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Betar began to be destroyed [literally was made]. **Midrash Eichah 2:4**

C. To be sure, they did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field, but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed, and might meet together unobserved under ground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light.

At first the Romans took no account of them. Soon, however, all Judaea had been stirred up, and the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance, were gathering together, and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans, partly by secret and partly by overt acts; many outside nations, too, were joining them through eagerness for gain, and the whole earth, one might almost say, was being stirred up over the matter. **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXIX 12**

D.

אשקא דריספק חריב ביתר דהווי נהיגי כי הוה מתיליד ינוקא שתלי ארזא ינוקתא שתלי תורניתא וכי הווי מינסבי קייצי להו ועבדו גננא יומא חד הוה קא חלפא ברתיה דקיסר אתבר שקא דריספק קצו ארזא ועיילו לה אתו נפול עלייהו מחונהו אתו אמרו ליה לקיסר מרדו בך יהודאי אתא עלייהו. גיטין נ"ז

Through the shaft of a litter Betar was destroyed. It was the custom when a boy was born to plant a cedar tree and when a girl was born to plant a pine tree, and when they married, the tree was cut down and a canopy made of the branches. One day the daughter of the Emperor was passing when the shaft of her litter broke, so they lopped some branches off a cedar tree and brought it to her. The Jews thereupon fell upon them and beat them. They reported to the Emperor that the Jews were rebelling, and he marched against them. **Gittin 57a**

V. Ben Koziba - Bar Kochba

A.

אמר ר"י ר' היה דורש דרך כוכב מיעקב אל תקרי כוכב אלא כוזב. ר"ע כד הוה חמי ליה להדין בר כוזיבא הוה אמר היינו מלכא משיחא. א"ל ר' יוחנן בן תורתא עקיבא יעלו עשבים בלחייך ועדיין אינו בא. מדרש איכה ב:ד

When Rabbi Akiva beheld Bar Koziba he exclaimed, "This is the king Messiah!" Rabbi Yochanan bar Torta retorted: "Akiva, grass will grow in your cheeks and he will still not have come!" **Midrash Eichah Rabbah 2:4**

B. The rebellion of the Jews once more progressed in character and extent, and Rufus, the governor of Judaea, when military aid had been sent him by the Emperor, moved out against them, treating their madness without mercy. He destroyed in heaps thousands of men, women and children, and, under the law of war, enslaved their land. The Jews were at that time led by a certain Bar Chochebas, which means "star", a man who was murderous and a bandit, but relied on his name, as if dealing with slaves, and claimed to be a luminary who had come down to them from heaven and was magically enlightening those who were in misery. **Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, IV. 6**

C.

והריחו ביראת ד' אמר רבי אלכסנדרי מלמד שהטעינו מצות ויסורין כריחיים רבא אמר דמורח ודאין דכתיב ולא למראה עיניו ישפוט ושפט בצדק דלים והוכיח במישור לענוי ארץ בר כוזיבא מלך תרתין שנין ופלגא אמר להו לרבנן אנא משיח אמרו ליה במשיח כתיב דמורח ודאין נחזי אנן אי מורח ודאין כיון דחזיוהו דלא מורח ודאין קטלוהו. סנהדרין צג:

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the L-rd. Rabbi Alexandri said: This teaches that he loaded him with good deeds and suffering as a mill is laden. Raba said: He smells a man and judges as it is written, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, yet with righteousness shall he judge the poor. Bar Koziba reigned two and half years, and then said to the Rabbis, "I am the Messiah." They answered, "Of Messiah it is written that he smells and judges: Let us see whether he can do so." When they saw that he was unable to judge by the scent, they slew him. **Sanhedrin 93b**

D.

אין מחללין על מעות שאינם יוצאות כיצד היה לו כוזביות ירושלמיות או של מלכים הראשונים אין מחללין. בבא קמא צז:

Redemption of the second tithe cannot be made by means of money which has no currency as for instance if one possessed "koziba" coins of Jerusalem or of the earlier kings; no redemption could be made by these. **Bava Kama 97b**

E.

אמר אביי בקשו לגנוז דינרא הדרייאנא טוריינא שיפא מפני טבעה של ירושלים עד שמצאו לה מקרא מן התורה שהוא מותר ובאו בה פריצים וחללוה. עבודה זרה נב:

What the Rabbis aimed at doing was to store away every Hadrianic and Trajanic denarius which had become worn by use because it was coined from metal captured from Jerusalem; until they discovered a verse of the Torah according to which it was permitted, viz. "And robbers shall enter into it and profane it." (Ezekiel 7:22) **Avodah Zarah 52b**

VI. The Testimony of the Coins

A.

(1) לחרות ירושלים, (2) ש. ב. לחרות ישראל, (3) שמעון, (4) לחרות ירושלים, (5) שמעון, (6) שמעון

1) Of the freedom of Jerusalem, 2) Year 2 of the freedom of Israel, 3) Shimon, 4) Of the freedom of Jerusalem, 5) Shimo(n), 6) Shimon

B.

(1) שמעון, (2) ירושלים, (3) ש. ב. לחרות ישראל, (4) שמעון (5) אלעזר הכהן, (6) לחרות ירושלים

1) Shimon, 2) Jerusalem, 3) Year 2 of the freedom of Israel, 4) Shimon, 5) Elazar the priest, 6) Of the freedom of Israel.

C.

(1) שמעון נשיא ישראל, (2) לחרות ירושלים, (3) לחרות ירושלים, (4) ירושלים, (5) שמעון נשיא ישראל, (6) לחרות ירושלים

Shimon, President of Israel, 2) Of the freedom of Jerusalem, 3) Of the freedom of Jerusalem, 4) Jerusalem, 5) Shimon, President of Israel, 6) Of the freedom of Jerusalem

VII. The Legacy of Shimon ben Kosiba

A. "Shimon bar Kosiba, President of Israel to Yehonasan and Masabala, peace. [My order is] that you search and seize the wheat which is in the possession of Hanun son of Yishmael ... And if you do not accordingly you shall be punished severely.

Concerning every man of Tekoah who will be found at your place - the houses in which they dwell will be burned and you too will be punished. And seize Yeshua bar Tadmoraya and send him to me in safe custody and do not neglect to take off his sword."
From the collection of letters discovered in Nahal Hever

B. "Shimon bar Kosiba to Yehonasan bar Be'ayan and to Masabala bar Shimon. [My order is] that you will send to me Eleazar bar Hitta immediately, before the Sabbath. The wheat and fruit should be confiscated and if anyone oppose you, send him to me and I shall punish him. . . . And as for the spice orchard, let no one get anywhere near it."

From the collection of letters discovered in Nahal Hever

C. "Shimon to Yehudah bar Menashe to Qiryas Arabaya. I have sent to you two donkeys that you shall send with them two men to Yehonosan bar Be'ayan and to Masabala in order that they shall pack and send to the camp, towards you, palm branches (lulavin) and citrons (esrogin). And you, from your place, send others who will bring myrtles (hadasin) and willows (aravin). See that they are tithed and send them to the camp. [The request is made] since the army is big (**בדיל דאוכלסא סגי**)". **From the collection of letters discovered in Nahal Hever**

D. "On the twentieth of Shevat, Year Two of the liberation of Israel by Shimon ben Kosiba, President of Israel. In the camp which is at Herodium, Yehudah ben Rabbah said to Hillel ben Garis: I of my own free will, have leased from you today the land . . . which you leased from Shimon ben Kosiba, Prince of Israel. This land I have leased from you as from today until the end of the eve of the Shemittah, which are five complete years, that is harvest-fiscal years." **From the collection of letters discovered in Nahal Hever**

VIII. Betar

A. Then, indeed, Hadrian sent against them his best generals. First of these was Julius Severus, who was dispatched from Britain, where he was governor, against the Jews. Severus did not venture to attack his opponents in the open at any one point, in view of their numbers and their desperation, but by intercepting small groups, thanks to the number of his soldiers and his under-officers, and by depriving them of food and shutting them up, he was able, rather slowly, to be sure, but with comparatively little danger, to crush, exhaust and exterminate them. Very few of them in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate, a result of which the people had forewarning before the war. For the tomb of Solomon, which the Jews regard as an object of veneration, fell to pieces of itself and collapsed, and many wolves and hyenas rushed howling into their cities. Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, 'If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health.' **Roman History, Dio Cassius, LXIX 12**

B. The war reached its height in the eighteenth year of the reign of Hadrian in Beththera, which was a strong citadel not very far from Jerusalem; the siege lasted a long time before the rebels were driven to final destruction by famine and thirst and the instigator of their madness paid the penalty he deserved. **Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, IV. 6**

C. אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל עיר שאין בה שנים לדבר ואחד לשמוע אין מושיבין בה סנהדרי ובביתר הווי שלשה וביבנה ארבעה רבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ור"ע ושמעון התימני דן לפניהם בקרקע. סנהדרין יז:

Rav Yehuda said in Rav's name: A Sanhedrin must not be established in a city which does not contain two who can speak [all seventy languages] and one who understands them. In the city of Betar there were three and in Yavne four: Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Akiva, and Shimon the Temanite, who used to discuss before them sitting on the ground. **Sanhedrin 17b**

D. א"ר יוחנן הקול קול יעקב קול אדריאנוס קיסר הרג בביתר שמונים אלף רבוא בני אדם ושמונים אלף תוקעי קרנות היו צריין על ביתר והיה שם בן כוזיבא והיו לו מאתים אלף מקוטעי אצבע. שלחו לו חכמים עד מתי אתה עושה לישראל בעלי מומין אמר להם והיאך יבדקו אמרו לו כל מי שאינו עוקר ארז מלבנון אל יכתב באסטרטיא שלך והיו לו מאתים אלף מכאן ומכאן ובשעה שהיו יוצאין למלחמה היו אומרים לא תסעוד ולא תסכיף הדא הוא דכתיב הלא אתה אלקים זנחתנו ולא תצא אלקים בצבאותינו ומה היה עושה בן כוזיבא היה מקבל אבני בליסטרא באחד מארכובותיו וזורקן והורג מהן כמה נפשות ועל זה א"ר עקיבא כן. מדרש איכה ב:ד

Rabbi Yochanon said: "The voice is the voice of Jacob" (Genesis 27:22) The voice (of distress caused by) the Emperor Hadrian who killed at Betar eighty thousand myriad people. Eighty thousand trumpeters besieged Bethar where Bar Koziba was located who had with him two hundred thousand men with an amputated finger. The Sages sent him the message, "How long will you continue to make the men of Israel blemished?" He asked them, "How else shall they be tested?" They answered, "Let anyone who cannot uproot a cedar from Lebanon be refused enrollment in your army." He thereupon had two hundred thousand men of each class; and when they went forth to battle they cried, "(O God,) neither help us nor discourage us!" That is what is written, "Hast not Thou, O God, cast us off? And go not forth, O God, with our hosts." (Psalms 60:12). And what used Bar Koziba to do? He would catch the missiles from the enemy's catapults on one of his knees and hurl them back, killing many of the foe. On that account R. Akiba made his remark. **Midrash Eichah 2:4**

E.

שלוש שנים ומחצה הקיף אדריאנוס קיסר לביתר והיה שם רבי אלעזר המודעי עסוק בשקן ובתעניתו ובכל יום ויום מתפלל ואומר רבש"ע אל תשב בדין היום ולבסוף נתן דעתו לחזור אתא חד כותאי ומצאו ואמר לו אדוני כל יומין דהדא תרנגולתא מתגעגע בקיטמא לית את כביש לה אלא המתן לי דאנא עביד לך דתכבישנה יומא דין מיד עליל ביה בכוביה דמדינתא ואשכחיה לר"א דהוה קאים ומצלי. עבד גרמיה לחיש באודניה דר' אלעזר המודעי אזלון ואמרון לבר כוזיבא חביבך ר' אלעזר בעי לאשלמא מדינתא עם אדריאנוס. שלח ואתייה לזהווא כותאי א"ל מאי אמרת ליה א"ל אין אנא אמר לך מלכא קטיל ליה לזהווא גברא ואין לית אנא אמר לך את קטיל ליה לזהווא גברא אבל מוטב ליקטליה ההוא גברא לגרמיה ולא תתפרסין מיסטירין דמלכותא. בן כוזיבא סבר בדעתיה דבעי לאשלמא מדינתא כיון דחסל ר' אלעזר צלותיה שלח ואייתיה א"ל מה אמר לך הדין כותאי. א"ל לית אנא ידע מה לחיש לי באודנאי ולא שמעת ליה כלום דאנא בצלותי קאימנא ולית אנא ידע מה הוה אמר נתמלא רוגזיה לבן כוזיבא יהב ליה חד בעיטא ברגליה וקטליה יצאתה בת קלו ואמרה הוי רועי האליל עוזבי הצאן חרב על זרועו ועל עין ימינו אמרה לו אתה סימית זרוען של ישראל וסימית עין ימינך לפיכך זרועו של אותו האיש יבש תיבש ועין ימינו כהה תכהה. מיד גרמו עונות ונלכדה ביתר ונהרג בן כוזיבא ואיתאיו רישיה לגבי אדריאנוס אמר מאן קטליה לדין אמר ליה חד גונתאי אנא קטלתי לדין א"ל זיל ואייתיה לי. אזל ואייתיה ואשכח עכנא כריכא על צואריה א"ל אילו לא אלהיה קטליה לדין מאן הוה יכיל ליה וקרא עלוי אם לא כי צורם מכרם. מדרש איכה ב:ד

For three and a half years the Emperor Hadrian surrounded Betar. In the city was Rabbi Eleazar of Modi'in who continually wore sackcloth and fasted, and he used to pray daily, "Lord of the Universe, sit not in judgment today!" so that (Hadrian) thought of returning home. A Cuthean went and found him and said, "My lord, so long as that old rooster wallows in ashes you will not conquer the city. But wait for me, because I will do something which will enable you to subdue it today." He immediately entered the gate of the city, where he found Rabbi Eleazar standing and praying. He pretended to whisper in the ear of Rabbi Eleazar of Modim. People went and informed Bar Koziba, "Your friend, Rabbi Eleazar, wishes to surrender the city to Hadrian." He sent and had the Cuthean brought to him and asked, "What did you say to him?" He replied, "If I tell you, the king will kill me; and if I do not tell you, you will kill me. It is better that I should kill myself and the secrets of the government be not divulged." Bar Koziba was convinced that Rabbi Eleazar wanted to surrender the city, so when the latter finished his praying he had him brought into his presence and asked him, "What did the Cuthean tell you?" He answered, "I do not know what he whispered in my ear, nor did I hear anything, because I was standing in prayer and am unaware what he said." Bar Koziba flew into a rage, kicked him with his foot and killed him. A Bas Kol issued forth and proclaimed, "Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye" (Zech. II: 17). It intimated to him, "Thou hast paralysed the arm of Israel and blinded their right eye; therefore shall thy arm wither and thy right eye grow dim!" Forthwith the sins (of the people) caused Betar to be captured.

Bar Koziba was slain and his head taken to Hadrian. "Who killed him?" asked Hadrian. A Cuthean said to him, "I killed him." "Bring his body to me," he ordered. He went and found a snake encircling its neck; so (Hadrian when told of this) exclaimed, "If his God had not slain him who could have overcome him?" And there was applied to him the verse, "Except their Rock had given them over" (Deuteronomy 32:30). **Midrash Eichah 2:4**

F.

שני אחין היו בכפר חרובא ולא הוון שבקיין רומאי עבר תמן דלא הוו קטלי יתיה אמרי כל סמא דמילה ניתי כלילא דאדריאנוס וניתיב בראשו של אלו שמעון דהא רומאי אתון מן דנפקין פגע בהון חד סבא אמר להון ברייא בסעדיכון מן אלין. אמרו ליה לא נסעוד ולא נסכיף מיד גרמו עונות ונהרגו. ואייתאו רישיהון לגבי אדריאנוס אמר מאן קטיל אלין א"ל חד גונתאי אנא קטילת להון א"ל זיל אייתי לי פיטומייהו. אזל אשכח עכנא כריכא על צואריהון אמר אילו אלההון דאלין לא קטיל להון מאן הוה יכיל למיקטלינון וקרא עליהון אם לא כי צורם מכרם. מדרש איכה רבה ב:ד

There were two brothers in Kefar Haruba who did not allow any Roman to pass there but they killed him. They said, "The conclusion of the whole matter is that we must take Hadrian's crown and set it upon our own heads." They heard that the Romans were coming towards them; and when they set out against them an old man met them and said, "May the Creator be your help against them!" They retorted, "Let Him neither help us nor discourage us!" Their sins immediately caused them to be slain (in the battle). Their heads were brought to Hadrian, who asked, "Who killed them?" A Cuthean replied, "I slew them"; and the king ordered him to fetch their bodies. He went and found a snake encircling their necks; so (Hadrian when told of this) exclaimed, "If their God had not slain them who could have overcome them?" And there was applied to them the verse, "Except their Rock had given them over" (Deuteronomy 32:30). **Midrash Eichah Rabbah 2:4**

IX. The Massacre

A.

היו הורגים בהם עד ששקע הסוס בדם עד חוטמו והיה הדם מגלגל אבנים של ארבעים סאה והולך בים ארבעה מילין ואם תאמר שקרובה לים והלא רחוקה מן הים ארבעה מילין וכרם גדול היה לו לאדריאנוס שמונה עשר מיל על שמונה עשר מיל כמין טבריא לציפורי והקיפו גדר מהרוגי ביתר ולא גזר עליהם שיקברו עד שעמד מלך אחד וגזר עליהם וקברום. ר' הונא אמר יום שניתנו הרוגי ביתר לקבורה נקבעה הטוב והמטיב. הטוב שלא הסריחו והמטיב שנתנו לקבורה. מדרש איכה ב:ד.

They slew the inhabitants until the horses waded in blood up to the nostrils, and the blood rolled along stones of the size of forty se'ah and flowed into the sea (staining it for) a distance of four miles. Should you say that (Betar) is close to the sea; was it not in fact four miles distant from it? Now Hadrian possessed a large vineyard eighteen miles square, as far as from Tiberias to Sepphoris, and they surrounded it with a fence consisting of the slain at Betar.

Nor was it decreed that they should be buried until a certain king arose and ordered their interment. R. Huna said: On the day when the slain of Betar were allowed burial, the benediction 'Who art kind and dealest kindly' was instituted - 'Who art kind' because the bodies did not putrefy, 'and dealest kindly' because they were allowed burial. **Midrash Eichah 2:4**

B.

אמר רבה בר בר חנה א"ר יוחנן ארבעים סאה קצוצי תפילין נמצאו בראשי הרוגי ביתר רבי ינאי ברבי ישמעאל אמר שלש קופות של ארבעים סאה במתניתא תנא ארבעים קופות של שלש סאין ולא פליגי הא דרישא הא דדרעא אמר רבי אסי ארבעה קבין מוח נמצאו על אבן אחת עולא אמר תשעת קבין. גיטיין נז:-נח.

Rabba bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Forty Se'ahs of phylactery boxes were found on the heads of the victims of Betar. Rabbi Yannai son of Rabbi Yishmael said there were three chests each containing forty se'ahs. In a Baraita it was taught: Forty chests each of three Se'ahs. There is, however, no contradiction; the one was referring to the phylactery of the head, the other to that of the arm. Rabbi Assi said: Four kavs of brain were found on one stone. **Gittin 57b-58a**

C.

א"ר יוחנן שלש מאות מוחי תנוקות נמצאו על אבן אחת מאה קופות של קצוצי תפילין נמצאו בביתר וכל אחת ואחת מחזקת שלש סאין וכשאתה בא לחשבון אתה מוצא שלש מאות סאין. אמר רבן גמליאל חמש מאות בתי סופרים היו בביתר וקטן שבהם לא היה פחות משלש מאות תינוקות והיו אומרים אם יבואו השונאים עלינו במכתבין הללו אנו יוצאין ודוקרין אותם. וכיון שגרמו העונות ובאו השונאים כרכו כל אחד ואחד בספרו ושרפו אותם ולא נשתייר מהם אלא אני וקרא על עצמו עיני עוללה לנפשי וגו'. מדרש איכה ב:ד

Rabbi Yochanan said: The brains of three hundred children (were dashed) upon one stone, and one hundred baskets of capsules of phylacteries were found in Betar, each basket being of the capacity of three se'ah, so that there was a total of three hundred se'ah. Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel said: There were five hundred schools in Betar, and the smallest of them had not less than three hundred children. They used to say, "If the enemy comes against us, with these styluses we will go out and stab them!" When, however, (the people's) sins did cause the enemy to come, they enwrapped each pupil in his book and burnt him, so that I alone was left. He applied to himself the verse, "Mine eye affecteth my soul, because of all the daughters (i.e. inhabitants) of my city" (Lamentations 3:51). **Midrash Eichah 2:4**

D.

בתשעה באב ... נלכדה ביתר. תענית כו:

On the ninth of Av ... Betar was captured. **Taanis 26b**

X. Aelia Capitolina

A. At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. **Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, IV. 6**

B. Hadrian then commanded that by a legal decree and ordinances the whole nation should be absolutely prevented from entering from thenceforth even the district round Jerusalem, so that not even from a distance could it see its ancestral home. Ariston of Pella tells the story. Thus when the city came to be bereft of the nation of the Jews, and its ancient inhabitants had completely perished, it was colonized by foreigners, and the Roman city which afterwards arose changed its name, and in honour of the reigning emperor Aelius Hadrian was called Aelia. The church, too, in it was composed of Gentiles, and after the Jewish bishops [ceased to serve in that capacity], the first [non-Jew] who was appointed to minister to those there was Marcus. **Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, IV. 6**

C. Hadrian's Year 18 (AD 134), Armenian Version: Year 19; (AD 135) The Jewish War that was conducted in Palestine reached its conclusion, all Jewish problems having been completely suppressed. From that time (on), the permission was denied them even to enter Jerusalem; first and foremost because of the commandment of G-d, as the prophets had prophesied; and secondly by authority of the interdictions of the Romans.

In Jerusalem the first bishop was appointed from among the gentiles, since bishops ceased to be appointed from among the Jews.

Hadrian's Year 20 (AD 136) Aelia was founded by Aelius Hadrianus; and before its gate, that of the road by which we go to Bethlehem, he set up an idol of a pig in marble, signifying the subjugation of the Jews to Roman authority. **Eusebius, Chronicon**