

The Bar-Kokhba Revolt – Part 1 – Is He the Messiah in Daniel’s Timeline?

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Previous name: Simon bar Kokhba The Messiah or Ben Kusiba The False Messiah

12th day of the 10th month 5847 years after the creation of Adam

The 10th Month in the Second year of the third Sabbatical Cycle

The Third Sabbatical Cycle of the 119th Jubilee Cycle

The Sabbatical Cycle of Earthquakes Famines, and Pestilences.

January 7, 2012

Shabbat Shalom Brethren,

Simon Bar-Kokhba The Messiah became known as “Ben-Kusiba The False Messiah

This week and next I want to discuss the infamous Bar kokhba Revolt that changed everything. Many of you have just finished celebrating the Maccabees Chanukah celebrations and have little understanding of all that went on in 165 BC. You say you do but in reality, you do not, and I urge you to study this subject in greater detail over the coming year.

But fewer still know and understand what took place in 135 CE and all the ramifications that came as a result of the failure of this revolt. For some of you this will be boring. But for others you will learn why the new year was moved to Tishri and why the shemitah year was changed and then dropped from being used. So much happened at this time it is unbelievable, but it did happen and we all need to understand it. So, I hope you will read through in spite of what you think of history.

The Bar Kokhba revolt 132–136 CE;[2] Hebrew: ??? ?? ?????? or mered bar kokhba) against the Roman Empire, was the third major rebellion by the Jews of Judaea Province being the last of the Jewish-Roman Wars. Simon bar Kokhba, the commander of the revolt, was acclaimed as a Messiah, a heroic figure who could restore Israel. The revolt established an independent state of Israel over parts of Judea for over two years, but a Roman army made up of six full legions with auxiliaries and elements from up to six additional legions finally crushed it.[3] The Romans then barred Jews from Jerusalem, except to attend Tisha B’Av.

Tisha B’Av (Hebrew: ????? ????? or ?? ???, “the Ninth of Av,”) is an annual fast day in Judaism, named for the ninth day (Tisha) of the month of Av in the Hebrew calendar. The fast commemorates the destruction of both the First Temple and Second Temple in Jerusalem,

which occurred about 655 years apart, but on the same Hebrew calendar date.[1] Although primarily meant to commemorate the destruction of the Temples, it is also considered appropriate to commemorate other Jewish tragedies that occurred on this day, most notably the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.[2] Accordingly, the day has been called the “saddest day in Jewish history”.[3]

Tisha B’Av falls in July or August in the western calendar. When the ninth of Av falls on Sabbath (Saturday), the observance is deferred to Sunday the tenth of Av. While the day recalls general tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people over the ages, the day focuses on commemoration of five events: the destruction of the two ancient Temples in Jerusalem, the sin of ten of the twelve scouts sent by Moses, who spoke disparagingly about the Promised Land, the razing of Jerusalem following the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman Empire.

The fast lasts about 25 hours, beginning at sunset on the eve of Tisha B’Av and ending at nightfall the next day. In addition to the prohibitions against eating or drinking, observant Jews also observe prohibitions against washing or bathing, applying creams or oils, wearing leather shoes, and engaging in sexual activity. In addition, mourning customs similar to those applicable to the shiva period immediately following the death of a close relative are traditionally followed for at least part of the day, including sitting on low stools, refraining from work and not greeting others.

The Book of Lamentations is traditionally read, followed by the kinnot, a series of liturgical lamentations. In many Sephardic and Yemenite communities, and formerly also among Ashkenazim, it is also customary to read the Book of Job.

Although Jewish Christians hailed Yehshua as the Messiah and did not support Bar Kokhba, they were barred from Jerusalem along with the rest of the Jews. The war and its aftermath helped differentiate Christianity as a religion distinct from Judaism. The rebellion is also known as The Third Jewish-Roman War or The Third Jewish Revolt, though some historians relate it as Second Jewish Revolt, not counting the Kitos War, 115–117 CE.

(The author here is assuming all christianity is the same as those who followed Yehshua and kept the Torah. They are not. For those who followed Yehshua kept the Torah and were called Notzris The Jerusalem Church (Yerushalayim Ecclesia) was recognized as the Mother Church of what would later become Christianity. In fact, the whole concept of the Jerusalem Church is a misnomer, as in the culture of first century Judaism there were no churches. The various groups of Sabbath worshippers met together in congregations called ecclesias, worshipped in the synagogues or the Temple of Herod in Jerusalem. The Jewish followers of Jesus were called for the next few centuries, the Notzri, and the congregation of Notzris was called the Nazarenes. As such the official name for the Jerusalem Church was the Hebrew (Kahal) Nazarene Congregation (Ecclesia) of Israel (Yisra’el).

See article on my web site called Christian, Jew or Notzrim, www.sightedmoon.com/?

Act 11:26 And finding him, he brought him to Antioch. And it happened to them a whole year they were assembled in the church. And they taught a considerable crowd. And the disciples were first called Christian in Antioch.

Before this they were known as Notzri or followers of the Way.)

After the failed Great Jewish Revolt in 70 CE, the Roman authorities took measures to suppress the rebellious province of Iudaea. Instead of a procurator, they installed a praetor as a governor and stationed an entire legion, the X Fretensis. Because the Great Revolt of 70 CE had resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Council at Yavne provided spiritual guidance for the Jewish nation, both in Judea and throughout the Jewish diaspora. The tensions continued to build up in the consequence of the Kitos War, the second large-scale Jewish insurrection in the Eastern Mediterranean, which final stages were fought in Iudaea.

Multiple reasons have been offered for the beginning of the Bar Kokhba revolt. One interpretation is that in 130 CE, Emperor Hadrian visited the ruins of the temple. At first sympathetic towards the Jews, Hadrian promised to rebuild the temple, but the Jews felt betrayed when they found out that his intentions were to build a temple dedicated to Jupiter upon the ruins of the Second Temple.[4] A rabbinic version of this story claims that Hadrian was planning on rebuilding the Temple, but a malevolent Samaritan convinced him not to.

An additional legion, the VI Ferrata, was stationed in the province to maintain order, and the works commenced in 131 CE after the governor of Iudaea Tineius Rufus performed the foundation ceremony of Aelia Capitolina, the city's projected new name. "Ploughing up the Temple" was a religious offence that turned many Jews against the Roman authorities. The tensions grew higher when Hadrian abolished circumcision (brit milah), which he, a Hellenist, viewed as mutilation.[5] Subsequently, it is known that a Roman coin inscribed Aelia Capitolina was issued in 132, right with the revolt beginnings.

Revolt

The Jewish sage Rabbi Akiva (alternatively Akiba) indulged the possibility that Simon Bar Kosiba (Bar Kokhba) could be the Jewish Messiah, and gave him the surname "Bar Kokhba" meaning "son of a star" in the Aramaic language, from the Star Prophecy verse from Numbers 24:17: "There shall come a star out of Jacob"[6]

At the time, Jewish Christians were still a minor sect of Judaism, and most historians believe that it was this messianic claim in favor of Bar Kokhba alienated many of them, who believed that the true Messiah was Yehshua, and sharply deepened the schism between Jews and messianic Jews.

The Jewish leaders carefully planned the second revolt to avoid numerous mistakes that had plagued the first Great Jewish Revolt sixty years earlier. In 132, a revolt led by Bar Kokhba quickly spread from Modi'in across the country, cutting off the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.

Roman reaction

The outbreak took the Romans by surprise. Hadrian called his general Sextus Julius Severus from Britain, and troops were brought from as far as the Danube. The size of the Roman army amassed against the rebels was much larger than that commanded by Titus sixty years earlier. Roman losses were very heavy – XXII Deiotariana was disbanded after serious losses.[7][8] In addition, some argue that Legio IX Hispana disbandment in the mid-2nd century could also have been a result of this war.[9]

The struggle lasted for three years before the revolt was brutally crushed in the summer of 135 CE. After losing Jerusalem, Bar Kokhba and the remnants of his army withdrew to the fortress of Betar, which also subsequently came under siege. The Jerusalem Talmud relates that the numbers slain were enormous, that the Romans “went on killing until their horses were submerged in blood to their nostrils”.^[10] The Talmud also relates that for seventeen years the Romans did not allow the Jews to bury their dead in Betar.

“The Era of the redemption of Israel”

A sovereign State of Israel was restored for two and a half years that followed. The functional public administration was headed by Simon Bar Kokhba, who took the title Nasi Israel (prince [lord, president] of Israel). The “Era of the redemption of Israel” was announced, contracts were signed, and coins were minted in large quantity in silver and copper with corresponding inscriptions (all were struck over foreign coins).

It has been argued that attempts were made to restore the Temple in Jerusalem, but the evidence—letters written in Jerusalem and dated to the revolutionary era—has turned out to belong to the revolt of 66–70.

Outcome of the war

According to Cassius Dio, 580,000 Jews were killed, and 50 fortified towns and 985 villages razed.^{[11][12]} Cassius Dio claimed that “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 army are in health.’”^[4]

Hadrian attempted to root out Judaism, which he saw as the cause of continuous rebellions. He prohibited the Torah law and the Hebrew calendar, and executed Judaic scholars. The sacred scroll was ceremonially burned on the Temple Mount. At the former Temple sanctuary, he installed two statues, one of Jupiter, another of himself. In an attempt to erase any memory of Judea or Ancient Israel, he wiped the name off the map and replaced it with Syria Palaestina (after the Philistines, the ancient enemies of the Jews) supplanting earlier terms, such as “Judaea” and Israel. Similarly, he re-established Jerusalem but now as the Roman pagan polis of Aelia Capitolina, and Jews were forbidden from entering it, except on the day of Tisha B’Av.^[13]

According to a Rabbinic midrash (the Ten Martyrs), in addition to Bar Kokhba the Romans executed ten leading members of the Sanhedrin: the high priest, R. Ishmael; the president of the Sanhedrin, R. Shimon ben Gamaliel; R. Akiba; R. Hanania ben Teradion; the interpreter of the Sanhedrin, R. Huspith; R. Eliezer ben Shamua; R. Hanina ben Hakinai; the secretary of the Sanhedrin, R. Yeshevav; R. Yehuda ben Dama; and R. Yehuda ben Baba. The Rabbinic account describes agonizing tortures: R. Akiba was flayed, R. Ishmael had the skin of his head pulled off slowly, and R. Hanania was burned at a stake, with wet wool held by a Torah scroll wrapped around his body to prolong his death.[14]

By destroying association of Jews to Judea and forbidding the practice of Jewish faith, Hadrian aimed to root out a nation that engaged heavy casualties on the Empire. Yet, Hadrian's death in 138 CE marked a significant relief to the surviving Jewish communities. Rabbinic Judaism had already become a portable religion, centered around synagogues, and the Jews themselves kept books and dispersed throughout the Roman world and beyond.

Long-term consequences and historic importance

Constantine I allowed Jews to mourn their defeat and humiliation once a year on Tisha B'Av at the Western Wall. Jews remained scattered for close to two millennia; their numbers in the region fluctuated with time.

Modern historians have come to view the Bar-Kokhba Revolt as being of decisive historic importance. The massive destruction and loss of life occasioned by the revolt has led some scholars to date the beginning of the Jewish diaspora from this date. They note that, unlike the aftermath of the First Jewish-Roman War chronicled by Josephus, the majority of the Jewish population of Judea was either killed, exiled, or sold into slavery after the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, and Jewish religious and political authority was suppressed far more brutally. After the revolt the Jewish religious center shifted to the Babylonian Jewish community and its scholars. Judea would not be a center of Jewish religious, cultural, or political life again until the modern era, though Jews continued to live there and important religious developments still occurred there. In Galilee, the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in the 2nd–4th centuries. Eventually, Safed became known as a center of Jewish learning, especially Kabbalah in the 15th century. [15]

Historian Shmuel Katz writes that even after the disaster of the revolt:

“Jewish life remained active and productive. Banished from Jerusalem, it now centered on Galilee. Refugees returned; Jews who had been sold into slavery were redeemed. In the centuries after Bar Kochba and Hadrian, some of the most significant creations of the Jewish spirit were produced in Palestine. It was there that the Mishnah was completed and the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled, and the bulk of the community farmed the land.”[16]

Katz lists the communities left in Palestine:

“43 Jewish communities in Palestine in the sixth century: 12 on the coast, in the Negev, and east of the Jordan, and 31 villages in Galilee and in the Jordan valley.”[16]

The disastrous end of the revolt also occasioned major changes in Jewish religious thought. Messianism was abstracted and spiritualized, and rabbinical political thought became deeply cautious and conservative. The Talmud, for instance, refers to Bar-Kokhba as “Ben-Kusiba”, a derogatory term used to indicate that he was a false Messiah. The deeply ambivalent rabbinical position regarding Messianism, as expressed most famously in the Rambam’s (also known as Maimonides) “Epistle to Yemen”, would seem to have its origins in the attempt to deal with the trauma of a failed Messianic uprising.[17]

In the post-rabbinical era, however, the Bar-Kokhba Revolt became a symbol of valiant national resistance. The Zionist youth movement Betar took its name from Bar-Kokhba’s traditional last stronghold, and David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, took his Hebrew last name from one of Bar-Kokhba’s generals.

A popular children’s song, included in the curriculum of Israeli kindergartens, has the refrain “Bar Kokhba was a Hero/He fought for Liberty” and its words describe Bar Kokhba as being captured, thrown into a lion’s den but managing to escape riding on the lion’s back.[18]

Further relations between the Jews and the Roman Empire

Main articles: Jewish revolt against Gallus and Revolt against Heraclius

In 351–352 CE, the Jews launched yet another revolt, provoking once again heavy retribution. [16]

In 438 CE, when the Empress Eudocia removed the ban on Jews’ praying at the Temple site, the heads of the Community in Galilee issued a call “to the great and mighty people of the Jews” which began: “Know that the end of the exile of our people has come!”[16][19]

During the 5th and the 6th centuries, a series of Samaritan insurrections broke out across the Palaestina Prima province. Especially violent were the third and the fourth revolts, which resulted in almost entire annihilation of the Samaritan community. It is likely that the 4th Samaritan Revolt was joined by the Jewish community, which had also suffered a brutal suppression of Israelite (Mosaic) religion.

In the belief of restoration to come, the Jews made an alliance with the Persians who invaded Palaestina Prima in 614, fought at their side, overwhelmed the Byzantine garrison in Jerusalem, and for five years governed the city.[16] However, their autonomy was brief: with the withdrawal of Persian forces, Jews surrendered to Byzantine forces in 625 CE and were consequently massacred by them in 629 CE. The Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) control of the region was finally lost to the Muslim Arab armies in 637 CE, when Umar ibn al-Khattab completed the conquest of Akko.

We have shared this brief history of the Jews from the times around the Bar Kokhba Revolt so you can understand what was going on at that time. Next week I will show you how Rabbi Yose and the Seder Olam play a significant role in changing the Sabbatical year and the start of the year.

This will show you why Judah today keep the Sabbath years one and a half years before the actual Sabbath year which was the way it was kept from the time they were first taught it.