

9.6 THE BAR KOKHBA REVOLT

9.6.1 Dio Cassius, *Historia Romana* LXIX, 12–14: A Roman Account of the Bar Kokhba Revolt¹³¹

In his account, Dio Cassius says that the building of the Temple of Jupiter was the cause, rather than the result, of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Bar Kokhba himself does not appear in this account. The author knows of the hideouts built by the Jews, some of which have been excavated in Israel recently. In addition, Dio Cassius records the advance preparation of weapons, indicating that this was a planned uprising.



(12:1) At Jerusalem [Hadrian] 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. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, (2) 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. (3) 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.

(13:1) At first the Romans took no account of them. Soon, however, all Judea 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; (2) 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. 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. (3) Severus did not venture to attack his oppo-

131. Trans. Cray, pp. 447–51.

nents 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. (14:1) 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 who perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. (2) Thus nearly the whole of Judea was made desolate, a result of which the people had 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 the cities. (3) 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."

9.6.2 Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* IV, 6: A Christian Account of the Bar Kokhba Revolt¹³²

Eusebius (260–339 C.E.), bishop of Caesarea, writing in the first quarter of the fourth century, relates the story of the revolt. According to him, Bar Kokhba was executed by the Romans and the building of the Roman temple in Jerusalem was a result of the war, rather than a cause. He notes that another consequence of the war was that henceforth the bishop of Jerusalem would be a Gentile Christian as the Romans prohibited Jews from living in the holy city.



6 The rebellion of the Jews once more progressed in character and extent, and Rufus,¹³³ 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

132. Trans. K. Lake, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 311–13.

133. Tinneus Rufus, Roman governor of Judaea at the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 132 C.E.