

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

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. The war reached its height in the eighteenth year of the reign of Hadrian in Beththera,¹³⁴ 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. Hadrian commanded that by a legal decree and ordinances the whole nation should be absolutely prevented from entering from henceforth even the district round Jerusalem, so that not even from a distance could it see its ancestral home. Ariston of Pella¹³⁵ 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 the honor of the reigning Emperor Aelius Hadrian was called Aelia. The church, too, in it was composed of Gentiles, and after the Jewish bishops the first who was appointed to minister those there was Marcus.

9.6.3 The Bar Kokhba Letters: Day-to-Day Conduct of the Revolt

One of the most dramatic archaeological discoveries is the letters written by Bar Kokhba himself (whose real name was Simeon bar Kosiba) during the revolt. They are, for the most part, military dispatches and they confirm the historicity of the revolt while casting light on the nature of the administration of Judea by the rebels.



Simeon Bar Kosiba to Yehonathan and to Masabala, a letter:

That every man from Tekoa and from Tel Adirin who is with you, you shall send them to me without delay. And if you shall not send them, let it be known to you, that I will exact punishment from you.

Salisa [son of] Yose, wrote it.¹³⁶

Simeon, son of Kosiba, the ruler over Israel, to Jonathan and Masabala, peace!

134. Hebrew, Betar.

135. A mid-second century Christian author whose work is not preserved.

136. Trans. J. Fitzmyer, D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), p. 161, no. 59 with restorations from K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), p. 216.