Revolts in Judaea and Diaspora (66–135 CE)

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- Revolts in Palestine
  - The “Great Revolt” against Rome (66-70)
  - The Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135)
- Revolts in Diaspora 115–117
- Significance

Palestine: The “Great Revolt,” 66-70 CE (i): Duration, Causes

- Duration: 66–70, with final suppression of Masada in 74
- Multiple causes
  - Bad Roman governance in Judaea
    (Tacitus: “Antonius Felix, ... exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave”)
  - Religious unrest, sectarian conflict
  - Failure of Judaean elite as "Roman" aristocrats; some may instead have backed "traditional" causes
  - Perceptions of Roman corruption, weakness
Palestine: The “Great Revolt,” 66-70 CE (ii): Scale, Outcome

- Scale of the Revolt
  - Emperor Nero dies June 68
  - Succession struggles (“Year of four emperors;” Vespasian becomes emperor) means that Vespasian spends much of 68 and 69 waiting
  - Also means that new emperor/dynasty needs a “triumph”
  - (Josephus, too, stresses major significance ...)
- Outcome: Destruction of Jerusalem, Temple

Palestine: The Bar Kokhba Revolt, 132-135 CE

- Unlike 1st revolt: few literary sources; but there are documents
- Our sources understand this revolt as having messianic implications.
- Leader: real name Simon Kosiba
  - Jewish sources S. Koziba (“the liar”)
  - Christian sources S. b. Kokhba (“son of a star,” implied also in Jewish sources)
- Probably smaller in scope and scale that revolt of 66
Revolts in Diaspora 115–117

- Carryover from last time: Cultural dimensions of Diaspora
- Revolts in Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus
- Uprising of Mesopotamian Jews

Cultural Dimensions of Diaspora

- Highly varied histories, levels of communal centralization
  - Egypt: some evidence for politeuma (semi-autonomous governing body)
  - Some communities (Rome, e.g.) may have been more decentralized
- "Hellenization": Conflict or cultural enrichment?
  - Greek language, translation of Bible
  - First synagogues (in Egypt called proseukhe, pl. proseukhai) attested in diaspora, look like voluntary religious associations
  - Differing strategies, standards, on participating in wider Greek civic culture (e.g., Claudius letter: Jews aspiring to "be" Greek)

Jewish Revolts in Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus, 115–117

- Based on limited accounts, connected:
  - Begin in Cyrene, spill over into Egypt, Cyprus
  - (Also: historically, all former Ptolemaic territories)
- Cassius Dio: Rebel Jews a barbarian mirror image of "civilization" or Roman rulers
  - They would eat the flesh of their victims …; many they sawed in two, from the head downwards; others they gave to wild beasts, and still others they forced to fight as gladiators.
- Eusebius: Leader, Lucuas, was their "king": messianic motivation?
Uprising of Mesopotamian Jews, 115–117

- Timing suggests connection with Egypt etc.
- Circumstances: Trajan’s conquest of Mesopotamia. Jews in Parthian territory rise up against Trajan
- Lusius Quietus, general in Mesopotamia made governor of Judaea
  - Punitive
  - Possible “spillover” in Judaea as well? (The “War of Qitos” in Jewish sources)

Significance of Revolts: Summary

- In Palestine
  - Final collapse of Judaean “Temple State”
  - Demographic changes: by fourth century: contraction of Jewish population, concentration in Galilee and South
- In Diaspora
  - where there were revolts, possible decimation of Jewish populations
  - But note: elsewhere (Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy (!)), continued peaceful coexistence
- Period of restrictive laws on Jews, Judaism
  - Temple donation now a tax to Jupiter Capitolinus
  - Restricted settlement in environs of Jerusalem
  - Later Jewish traditions remember a period of prohibition of religious practices in Palestine after B-K revolt