

# The Question of the Conquest of Jerusalem by the Bar Kokhba rebels

Yehoshua Zlotnik

zlotniky@bezeqint.net

May 2006

*The article will focus on the question whether according to historical sources and arguments one can assume that Aelia Capitolina – Jerusalem was conquered by the Bar-Kokhba warriors, until its conquest and re-establishment by the Romans, or whether it remained an active (Roman) city during the second revolt?*

## Introduction

The Bar-Kokhba revolt, unlike the The Jewish War Against Rome, where the historian Josephus Flavius documented the war, is characterized with few written sources and those are short, partial and do not allow a general focus on the entirety of events as they transpired during the three and a half years of the revolt. The remainder of the historic sources, including archaeological excavations, the numismatic findings and Bar-Kokhba scrolls found the desert enable an anecdotal look at a situation or events of the second revolt.

The results of the revolt are well known and catastrophic, but the processes during the three and a half years of the revolt are lacking information in general and about the goings on in Aelia Capitolina in particular. We do not have direct testimony regarding the conquest of Jerusalem by Bar Kokhba, only indirect testimony. We have in our disposal on the one hand data concerning the starting point of founding Aelia Capitolina and establishing Jupiter's temple according to Cassius Dio, in the brief written by Xiphilinus and in the other data on the finish point, as expressed in Eusebius's source quoting Ariston of Pella. There may be a similarity between these two points, in respect to the re-founding of Aelia Capitolina. The space of information between these two points should be filled with content supported by findings and based or proven hypothesis.

We have at our disposal additional sources referring to Jerusalem – Aelia Capitolina including: a second essay by Eusebius and an essay by Epiphanius who lived at the time and testimonials from additional sources from the rabbinic literature concerning Jerusalem and the settlements surrounding it, under Bar-Kokhba's rule. There are additional numismatic sources of this period, including: 1) Bar-Kokhba coins, some of which are dated and those that aren't are attributed to the third year of the revolt; 2) 9 types of Aelia Capitolina coins that aren't dated exist; 3) bronze city coins, especially coins from Gaza and Ashkelon that were in circulation at the time of the revolt, because of their financial activity with the regions included in the revolt. These coins are dated according to the number of towns and were found in hoards along with Bar-Kokhba coins.

We also have at our disposal a variety of archaeological findings, among them the ruins of settlements that were under Bar Kokhba's rule and contained secret caves. In order to situate the

distribution of the settlements during the revolt we will mainly refer to the findings of secret tunnels in which Bar Kokhba coins were discovered. We will also take into account the finding of the well fortified administrative center which was taken from the Roman's – The Herodium, whose findings are important to concluding about the goings on during the second revolt. And finally, Beitar and Jerusalem. Beitar was not excavated but only surveyed and therefore does not assist in promoting the research on the revolt issue. As for Jerusalem, a number of discoveries were made concerning the second revolt, among which are numismatic findings in several locations in the city. Among others, decorated candles, referred to as "Bar Kokhba candles" were discovered in the Southern wall of Temple Mount excavations, they were quite common in Judea during the revolt close to a Bar Kokhba year 2<sup>1</sup> coin. A number of archaeological findings were also discovered from Hadrian's time in the northern part of the old city but almost no excavations can be conducted today for religious reasons. There are also, no reports of excavations conducted in the 19th century in this part of the city.

Therefore, to promote the research in the issues at hand, we must conclude about the goings on in Jerusalem through a general "birds eye" view, as implied by all the sources detailed here with a broad aspect of all data at our disposal as one and not through the narrow aspect of the picture, while focusing on some of the data and ignoring the rest.

The research refers according to the numismatic finding to the question of who ruled Jerusalem during Bar-Kokhba's time in 132-135BC? Was it under the control of Bar-Kokhba's rebels or was the city (Roman) independent?

In addition we will refer to the 3 historical sources at our disposal to examine this question:

- 1) Written historical sources
- 2) Numismatic findings
- 3) Archaeological findings

Using these three sources we will present proof to the speculation that Bar-Kokhba ruled Jerusalem.

#### Chronological processes in Jerusalem from Titus to Hadrian

At the end of the war in 70 BC, Titus conquered Jerusalem from the rebels and brought about the end of the great revolt. Titus ordered Jerusalem to be destroyed along with the Temple and leave a number of public buildings among them the great towers: The Tower of David-The Citadel, the Ficus and Miriam and some of the city's western wall (in the area of the Jaffa gate), to be used as barricades to the tenth legion commander fretensis who took part in the oppression of the great revolt and at the end of which serves as the garrison of Judea and Jerusalem. A number of cavalry units and infantry units were attached to the legion. The base of operation was in Jerusalem. Its goal was to execute military activities in the region and prevent the Jews from returning to Jerusalem. The Romans left Jerusalem in ruins, aside from the tenth legion camp that was established in Jerusalem in 70 BC.

The population that resided in Jerusalem after the devastation was comprised of the tenth legion soldiers who stayed in camps in and around Jerusalem and civilian population that was settled

---

<sup>1</sup> B. Mazar, *Antiquity*, year 5, manual 3-4 (19-20) 1972, "The digging near the Temple Mount", p. 74-90.

nearby. Among them were: veterans of the legions that settled in Jerusalem after being retired (according to headstones discovered in the city) and Greek, Jewish and Christian residents.

In 130 BC Hadrian visited the area, during his trip from Syria to Egypt. He was an avid supporter of Hellenistic culture and worked at the time to reestablish cities and temples in Europe, Asia and Africa. He re-founded in the region Acre – Ptolemais, Caesarea and the Aelia Capitolina colony. Hadrian built temples in Tiberius, Gaza, Caesarea, Jerusalem and other places.

One of the cities Hadrian re-founded during his visit to Erets Israel in 129-130 was Jerusalem. He named it Aelia Capitolina and it was built as a new Roman city instead of the one that Titus destroyed in 70 BC. On the temple mount he built a temple for Jupiter. The city was inhabited by foreigners. This decision to build in the holy city, Jerusalem, a city for foreigners and in place of the Jewish temple on temple mount build a temple for Jupiter awoke a discontent among the Jews because this was going to create an irreversible situation for the Jews in Jerusalem in a way that they would not be able to rebuild their holy city nor the temple in the future. The religious leadership, headed by Rabbi Akiva, therefore decided to choose Bar-Kokhba to lead the revolt that was also referred to as the second revolt against the Romans. The revolt took place between the years 132-135 BC.

The Jew's ambition was to liberate Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Their aspiration was expressed upon coins that were inscribed with the model of the temple in Jerusalem and the inscription "For the freedom of Jerusalem". This was a countermeasure to the Jupiter temple coins that Hadrian minted in the city. Aelia Capitolina was established in an ancient Roman ceremony of marking the boundaries of the city called in Latin *sulcus primigenius* and the description on the coin we see two cattle being led by Hadrian and in the background the *vexillum* of the tenth Roman legion.



Hebrew legend around:

"For the freedom of Jerusalem"

"Year two of the freedom of Israel"

During the first stage of the revolt, the rebels were successful in causing damages and significant losses to the Romans. Some description exists with the historian Cassius Dio and the Roman

historian Fronto<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup>According to most contemporary researchers based on the testimony of Cassius Dio and Fronto, that the rebels inflicted great losses on the Romans and since the focus of the battles were adjacent to Aelia, it is likely that the tenth legion suffered most of the losses which caused the weakening of the legion in Aelia in a way that enabled the conquest of the colony by the rebels. It is not likely that Bar Kokhba within his strategy not take this opportunity. It is also not likely that Bar Kokhba who ruled the settlements surrounding Jerusalem from the north and west among them: H. Akad Tell el Fakhariya, Qiryat Sefer (where Bar-Kokhba coins were discovered from all the years of the second revolt) . G. Bijovsky "The coins from Khirbet Badd Isa – Qiryat Sefer" / "Isolated coins and Two Hoards dated to the Bar Kokhba revolt") where coins from the second revolt were discovered. **And took control of territories in a way which left Jerusalem surrounded by settlements under his control shall not conquer Jerusalem – Aelia Capitolina. It must be noted that Bar Kokhba coins were discovered in digs in Tel Michal in Hertzelia. Kindler 1989: No. 160 and a Bar Kokhba coin was discovered in Kibbutz Ma'abarot. Appelbaum 1985: 271 (G. bijovsky "The coins from Khirbet Badd Isa – Qiryat Sefer) and another coin was discovered in Caesarea**

The tenth legion, which resided mostly in Jerusalem took the brunt of the losses. According to archaeological and numismatic finding and written historical sources, it seems the rebels took control over a number of territories in Judea.

The revolt included in the south Mt. Hebron and Be'er Sheba, in the west the plain of Judea, Beit Govrin and in the northern Judea a number of settlements north to Jerusalem until Modi'in- Beit El. In the east the Judea desert, the southern Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

From the ancient literary, numismatic and archaeological sources it seems that Jerusalem was cut off and surrounded by settlements under the rebel's control. Information regarding the revolt in written sources and archaeological findings is sketchy but intriguing. Because of the very little information we have we deduce about the goings on in Jerusalem from a "bird's eye view" when we rely on the sources: written historical, numismatic findings and archaeological sources.

From the written sources we can learn about the goings on in Jerusalem during the period above mentioned when according to Cassius Dio, a senator and Roman historian (164-235 BC) who wrote about 100 years after the revolt, Hadrian's decision to rebuild Aelia Capitolina and the Jupiter temple are the reasons for the outbreak of Bar-Kokhba revolt while according to Eusebius who was the bishop of Caesarea (260-340 BC) who wrote about 200 years after the revolt – the building of Aelia Capitolina was the result of the revolt.

These two written sources are not the only written sources referring to Jerusalem. There are two other written sources: Appian, who lived during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, Eusebius another source "proof of the validity of church" (a complementary source who is not taken into account), Tanhuma (a later source) and Mishna Ta'anit ( a source written a few dozen years after the revolt). A small measure is given to the additional sources like the second source of Eusebius about the conquest and destruction of Aelia Capitolina in the siege by Hadrian and Appian's source which mentions that in his days, Jerusalem which was rebuilt, was destroyed again by Hadrian.

In terms of the information we have on the Bar Kokhba revolt unlike the great revolt against the Romans where Josephus the historian documented its events, it is characterized by few written sources and these are short and partial and do not allow a general focus on the entirety of events as they transpired during the three and a half years of the revolt. The remainder of the historical sources, including the archaeological excavations, the numismatic findings and the Bar-Kokhba

scroll found in the Judea desert, give a narrow outlook on the situation and events during the second revolt and about the situation in Jerusalem, so that period is mysterious in terms of information we have and so a "bird's eye view" is required as mentioned and will include the 3 sources: written, numismatic and archaeological.

What numismatic finding exists from the time of the second revolt?

The numismatic finding in the region during the Bar Kokhba revolt includes: a) Bar Kokhba coins, some of which are dated and some are not but are associated with the third year of the revolt; b) 9 types of Aelia Capitolina coins exist. None of them are dated; c) bronze city coins, in particular coins from Gaza, Ashkelon and Caesarea that were in circulation at the time of the second revolt due to the economic activity with the regions under the revolt. These coins are dated according to the number of cities (Caesarea coins are not dated) and were discovered in hoards along with Bar Kokhba coins. The coins from Gaza and Ashkelon were also used to mint Bar Kokhba coins.



There are a number of sources and archaeological findings at our disposal among which are relics from settlements under Bar Kokhba's rule, where secret caves were revealed. The situation can be viewed according to maps showing the deployment of the settlements during the revolts among which secret caves were discovered as well as Bar Kokhba coins. The cave in the Judea desert and a few monumental relics in Jerusalem (for example the victory arch in the Via Dolorosa – Ecce Homo) and the relics of the Roman camps in Jerusalem along with shingles with inscriptions of the legion, columns inscription of stone and more.

According to current perceptions in research, most contemporary researchers accept the original version of Cassius Dio that building the pagan city and the Jupiter temple in Jerusalem are the reason that brought about the Bar Kokhba revolt. Researchers assume that Cassius Dio's source is more reliable. A minority of researchers accept Eusebius' version that the pagan city Aelia Capitolina was built because of the revolt.

#### Researcher's views who support the idea that Aelia Capitolina was under the rule of the rebels

Aelia Capitolina fell into the hands of the rebels for some time. There wasn't enough time to build the city and what was completed was destroyed by the rebels

1. Dr. Kindler claims that the coins bearing the inscription "Jerusalem" are rare and in fact bear the name of the minting authority and that the Jews minted coins in Jerusalem while it was under their control
2. Other researchers claim that the conquest of Jerusalem was the goal of the revolt – to liberate Jerusalem. It is likely that the city was conquered and the minting of "Jerusalem" on Bar-Kokhba coins marks the conquest of the city

3. The city was conquered by the rebels but they did not build the temple

#### Researcher's views that Aelia Capitolina continued as a Roman city throughout the revolt

1. A lack of numismatic finding. If Bar Kokhba had conquered Jerusalem a larger amount of coins would have been found
2. Hadrian did not have enough time to rebuild it and the legion was encamped
3. Bar Kokhba would not have taken the chance fighting the tenth legion
4. Attacking the legion would have caused a disaster that would have been mentioned in Roman or Rabbinical sources
5. Cassius Dio does not write about the conquest of Jerusalem by Bar Kokhba

An assumption exists about the Romans intent with regards to the Bar Kokhba revolt and the goings on about it, that this is some sort of propaganda activity. There is a Roman tendency for silence with regards to Bar-Kokhba. It pertains throughout the Roman-pagan period, to anything relating to Bar-Kokhba, and may very well likely attest to the reason and necessity to forget his memory and achievements. We see this tendency come into play with Cassius Dio and Appian who are silent in their essays according to this tendency in regards to mentioning the history of Aelia Capitolina as well and the possibility of the conquest of Aelia Capitolina by Bar Kokhba or its re-founding. The silent tendency however, stopped with the beginning of the rise of Christians to rule the empire. Eusebius that was the bishop of Caesarea and lived 100 years after Cassius Dio shows more transparency with regards to the events during the revolt and details in a hostile way the history of Bar Kokhba and the fall of Beitar

#### A new concept of Aelia Capitolina – 4 stages

##### **The perception and supportive sources:**

- During the first stage, Jerusalem that was rebuilt as a colony by Hadrian in 129-130 and called "Aelia Capitolina", was spread over half the ruined city in Titus' days. The rebuilding of the city and the Jupiter temple on temple mount could have the cause to the outbreak of the revolt by Bar Kokhba. The city was founded in an ancient Roman ceremony called *sulcus primigenius* in Latin
- And is described as a pair of oxen on the face of coins minted by Hadrian in Jerusalem. Its residents were of Roman citizenship and received a tax exemption.
- Source 1 – Cassius Dio

1. "At Jerusalem, Hadrian founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground<sup>1</sup>, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the [Jewish] god, 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<sup>2</sup>"

- 

- Source 2 – Eusebius

2. "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<sup>3</sup>"

- "

- During the second stage, the same part that was built was conquered by the rebels. There aren't any sources describing their activity in Jerusalem directly.

- It may well be that the city was developed or extended by the rebels at that time

- During the third stage, the city was destroyed again in 134-135 during Hadrian's siege and conquering it from the rebels

- Source 3 – Appian

3. "...to the sieges under Nero, Titus and Vespasian,...all kind of successive calamities, as you may gather from the history of Flavius Josephus<sup>4</sup>. It is probable that half the city that time perished in the siege,...And not long after, in the reign of Hadrian, there was another Jewish revolution, and the remaining half of the city was again besieged and driven out, so that from that day to this the whole ."<sup>6 5</sup>Titos) (place has not been trodden by them.

---

In Titus' era. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* (Roman history) 69.12.1-14.3. in an epitome by Xiphilinus. Ed. Boisskevain, p, 232.

<sup>3</sup> Ariston of Pella. Eusebius, *History of the church* 4.6.1-4.

<sup>4</sup> (supra note 22).

The section of Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar extends throughout the central-southern portion of the <sup>5</sup> old city, in contrast with the city Titus destroyed, which extends throughout the entire old city of today. Josephus, *The "Wars of the Jews"*, 7, A, 1-2, Caesar gave order that they should demolish the entire city and temple but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency: that is Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne: and so much of the wall as enclosed the city west side.

<sup>6</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, "Demonstratio Evangelica" Tr. W.J. Ferrar (1920).. What is meant is that half of Jerusalem that was rebuilt by Hadrianus and destroyed during the siege on the rebels. It is probable that what was

•

Source 4 – Eusebius "

4. *"Pompey conquered...and destroyed their greatest, and to them holiest, city, Jerusalem, as Ptolmey...had formerly done. It was afterward rebuilt and Vespasian destroyed it again<sup>7</sup>, and Hadrian did the same in our time<sup>8</sup>".*

• Source 5 – Tanhuma

5. *"When Hadrian the evil conquered Jerusalem he would proudly exclaim by force I ."<sup>9</sup>have taken Jerusalem".*

•

• During the fourth stage Aelia Capitolina was rebuilt in a *sulcus primigenius* ceremony. Setting the boundaries of the city, by Hadrian, which was meant to symbolize the founding of a new Roman city and is depicted on the faces of coins minted by Hadrian in Aelia and in the background the *vexillum* of the tenth legion. On one of the models of the city founding coins appears the *vexillum* of the V. Macedonica legion.

• At the same time an order to disqualify all Bar Kokhba coins was issued.

• Source 6 – Mishna Ta'anit

\* 6. *"...the first and second Temples were destroyed , Beitar was captured and."the city was plowed." , <sup>10</sup>*

---

destroyed again, should have been initially rebuilt. In contrast with the other half of Jerusalem that remained destroyed since Titus' era. Eusebius, who delved in geography somewhat, gives a fairly accurate account.

<sup>7</sup> Note the terminology of the quote; such was probably the parlance at the time.

<sup>8</sup> Appianus, Syriacus Liber(the Syrian wars), 50:252 (no. 343). Greek historian from Alexandria, fl. Bar-Kochba rebellion. It should be noted that Justinus Martir, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century church priest notes in his "Discussion with Tripon" the war during 132-135 at the start, and thereafter alludes to the expelling of Jews from Jerusalem as punishment and the rebuilding of Aelia Capitolina; R. Harris in Harv. Theol. Rev. xix (1926) – this issue is still under examination.

ז , <sup>9</sup> Tanhuma. הוספה לפי דברים,

. The chronological sequence of the text as the events occurred, i.e. "the city was ... Taanit, 4,6,<sup>10</sup> Mishna plowed", referring to the Pomerium rebuilding of Aelia Capitolina by the Romans, was executed after the capture of Beitar.

•

• Source 7 – Eusebius

7. *"...so that from that day to this the whole place has not been trodden by ."<sup>11</sup>them."*

*"...and the Roman city which afterward arose changed its name, and in honor of the reigning emperor Aelius Hadrian was called Aelia<sup>12</sup>[13]. The Church, too, it was composed of gentiles, and...the first who appointed to those...14*

•

• Source 8 – Mishna Kelim 12:7. Mishna Ma`aser Sheni 1:2 . BT Baba Qama

• "False Jerusalem coins " disqualified dinar", "danger money"

The numismatic finding that were found in Jerusalem from Bar Kokhba and Hadrian's time:

\* Details of bar Kokhba coins found in Jerusalem

Bar Kokhba coins supportive of stages 2 and 3

- During the second stage, that same part that was built was conquered by the rebels. There aren't any sources describing their activity in Jerusalem directly
- It may well be that the city was developed or extended by the rebels at that time
- During the third stage, the city was destroyed again in 134-135 during Hadrian's siege and conquering it from the rebels
- The numismatic finding of Bar Kokhba coins found in excavations in Jerusalem attest to the conquest
- The following is a description on locations they were found and quantity:
- 2 coins were found in the southern wall of the Temple Mount excavations.
- 1 coins in the Citadel.

---

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius. Response of Biblical for truth of Christianity.

Eusebius uses the term "Aelia" for Jerusalem, as the city was referred to during his time and during the byzantine empire, instead of "Aelia Capitolina" as the city is referred to by Cassius Dio. It should be stated that there is a misquoting by M. Stern in that Eusebius changed Jerusalem's name to "Aelia Capitolina".

Quotation of Ariston of Pella, Eusebius, History of the Church' 4.6.1-4. <sup>14</sup>

- 1 coin near Ramat Rachel
- 1 coin in Talpiot
- A number of coins were found in the Sukenik excavations at the "Third Wall"
- Some researchers claim that the small amount of bar Kokhba coins found in excavations versus the quantity of other coins show that the city was not conquered by Bar Kokhba



IAA 85461

IAA 44738



Ariel 1982:293

IAA 5566

*The Finds of Bar Kokhba Coins in Jerusalem*

### The Bar Kokhba numismatic finding significance

Some researchers believe that the small number of coins found in the city in relation to the 17,000 other coins found, shows that Bar Kokhba did not conquer or hold Jerusalem because if he did conquer it a larger quantity of coins would have been found. They do not mention in their claim (based on the numismatic findings in Jerusalem) all of the Bar Kokhba coins in all the excavations and for some reason do not take into account the quantity of Aelia Capitolina coins found in Jerusalem.

In order to examine if this claim is substantial, the author looked at 2 aspects: on the one hand Bar Kokhba rule in Jerusalem or on the other a Roman control over Jerusalem and took surveys to examine the findings, meaning the number of Aelia coins from Hadrian's days that were found in excavations in Jerusalem in comparison to Bar Kokhba coins found in excavations in Jerusalem.

The general idea was that if Bar Kokhba did not rule Jerusalem – then Jerusalem should be an active Roman city minting a lot more coins than Bar Kokhba coins found in digs in Jerusalem.

The results and examining the findings show that the quantity of Aelia Capitolina coins is almost identical to the quantity of Bar Kokhba coins found in Jerusalem.

Aelia Capitolina coins supportive of stages 2 and 3:

- During the second stage, that same part that was built was conquered by the rebels. There aren't any sources describing their activity in Jerusalem directly
- It may well be that the city was developed or extended by the rebels at that time
- During the third stage, the city was destroyed again in 134-135 during Hadrian's siege and conquering it from the rebels
- The following is a description on locations they were found and quantity: 6 in Jerusalem, 1 in Tzuva, 2 in Shuafat, 1 in Tiberius and 1 in Caesarea. A total of 9 coins.
- The following is a detailing of the 6 coins found in Jerusalem: a/b the front of the Jupiter temple with Jupiter, Minerva and Yono
- c/d a wild boar to the right
- h- the image of Hadrian and Antonius Pius
- e – a galley with oars to the right



*The Finds of Aelia Capitolina Coins in Jerusalem*

Conclusion: we can therefore conclude that the city was active as a Roman city from the first time it was built, a period over two years. During the next period, in one of the early stages of the revolt, the city was conquered and controlled by the rebels, who caused great losses to the Tenth Roman legion, according to Cassius Dio and Fronto. After the re-conquering of Aelia Capitolina towards the end of the revolt, it was controlled by the Romans. The data matches the few numismatic findings that refer to the 2 military factors: the Romans and the rebels. There is no data on Bar Kokhba coins found in Jerusalem outside of regulated

excavations. The numismatic findings in Jerusalem do not support the claim that discovering a small quantity of coins in regulated excavations is proof to the claim that the rebels did not control Jerusalem, meaning Aelia continued acting as an independent Roman city.

Does the small quantity of Aelia coins in excavations show that Roman Aelia still did not exist<sup>4</sup>? Or did Aelia exist as a Roman city during part of the second revolt and that the Bar Kokhba rebels were present in the city during part of the revolt!

Another issue relating to the quantity of Bar Kokhba coins in Jerusalem is the significance of disqualifying them according to numismatic finding in Jerusalem.

According to sources from the Mishna and Rabbinical sources, the written sources referred to the disqualified Bar Kokhba coins as "false Jerusalem coins<sup>5</sup>", "a disqualified dinar<sup>6</sup>", "danger money<sup>7</sup>". Disqualifying the coins was done by the Roman authority and it was forbidden to hold them as coins. This was done because the Bar Kokhba rule ceased to exist and after the oppression of the revolt the Romans did everything they could to remove his coins from circulation and obliterate his memory. Most of the silver coins were melted and recycled and anyone that continued to hold them as decoration punched holes in them or chopped them to disqualify them.



disqualified coin

---

<sup>4</sup> the conclusion is that there is a contradiction to Cassius Dio's testimony which is accepted by most researchers

<sup>5</sup> BT Baba Qama 97b.

<sup>6</sup> Mishna Kelim 12:7.

<sup>7</sup> Mishna Mawaser Sheni 1:2.

This phenomenon also contributed, among other things, to the small quantity of numismatic findings that were discovered in regulated excavations in Jerusalem. There are coins that broke or split into two parts. These may also be disqualified coins<sup>8</sup>.

Considering the fact that keeping these coins constituted a danger to the holder, in particular in Jerusalem, as the Romans were strict about upholding this order, who probably pertained to the entire population including the gentiles, as Jews were not allowed to reside in Jerusalem after its re-founding, and the gentiles who lived there were not sentimental about keeping them as mementos, not to mention the risk of holding on to the coins, the

chance of finding Bar Kokhba coins in Jerusalem is significantly low. This is the reason on a few Bar Kokhba coins were found in Jerusalem.

#### The significance of numismatic finding of Hadrian's Aelia Capitolina coins in Jerusalem

According to the survey of coin findings, the author held in the Israel Antiquities Authority data base<sup>15</sup>, that were found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem, it seems that 6 Aelia Capitolina coins from Hadrian's time were found including 4 type out of 9. The city `foundation` type was also found in the Mazar excavations in the Southern wall of the Temple Mount<sup>9</sup>.

It is the author's view that a lot of Aelia Capitolina coins from Hadrian's time exist in collections and museums. In evidence there is a group of coins for documentation, including 23 coins of the `foundation` type of Aelia Capitolina from Hadrian's time, undated, that the author gathered from various sources. The conclusion from the small quantity of Aelia coins found in excavations is that the city was an active Roman city only during part of the second revolt. Therefore it is also likely that Bar Kokhba warriors were present during the remaining time until the re-conquering of Jerusalem by Hadrian or that the city was not yet founded before the revolt according to Cassius Dio's version but after it.

The conclusions from having more than 2 models of Aelia founding coins, since the founding of Aelia Capitolina is dated in two different times, when the first according to Cassius Dio, refers to the date before the revolt began and the second according to Eusebius refers to the date the city was founded following the revolt at a later date. The author preferred to examine the founding coins from Hadrian's time. The author notes that no Aelia founding type coins were discovered in excavations in Jerusalem. The author presents 23 examples of city `foundation` type<sup>10</sup>, which is a significant quantity.

---

<sup>9</sup> B. Mazar. "The excavation in the old city of Jerusalem near the temple mount, report of the second and third season 1969-1970. Jerusalem

<sup>10</sup> in this research I referred to the back of the coin – the city boundaries ceremony and not the face of the coin – the image of Hadrian, to compare the models which were minted on a number of dies for the `foundation` type since the models on the backs of the coins are unique and were created for the founding of the city. The dies that were used to mint Hadrian's portrait are not unique and the minter could have borrowed make use of used or old dies that were used to mint coins of other cities who used Hadrian's die to same on expenses or since they were more available.

The city `foundation` type during Roman times were used to commemorate the city boundaries ceremony and were issued appropriately, in our case, to the needs of Aelia Capitolina citizens, to be used in the city area and regions under the city control. It is likely that the city minted other coins for daily use.

---

My thanks to Donald T. Ariel for his help in accessing this material. <sup>15</sup>

The issue of whether the colony Aelia Capitolina was in economic or political connection with its surrounding was examined and the answer is no. according to a survey of 'foundation' type findings and its other coins, none of the city coins were found in the surrounding and it seems there was no use of the city coins in commerce in these regions as is accepted in cities and colonies that minted founding coins. The significance of the finding, that Aelia Capitolina minted a small number of coins is that because of the revolt constraints and the restriction on necessary amount for internal use by the colony that no more than 2 dies were used.

With regards to the 23 Aelia Capitolina 'foundation' type according to the number of models, it seems that there are a number of dies for the city founding models. There are also different types. Some of the coins bear the *vexillum* of the legion in the background and belong to the tenth legion but one of the coins is a different model and bears the inscription of the V Macedonica legion *vexillum* that participated in the attack against the rebels in Jerusalem after the siege on Beitar<sup>11</sup>.



LE V. the Fifth Legion

According to the findings, the situation shows that most Aelia Capitolina coins were discovered in non regulated excavations. Only one 'foundation' type from Hadrian's time of Aelia Capitolina founding was discovered in the excavation in Al-Jai cave during an archaeological survey. All types of Aelia Capitolina coins from Hadrian's time were discovered and are in collections and museums. This situation is similar and parallel to the relation between Bar Kokhba coins of unknown origin to the few Bar Kokhba coins that were discovered in regulated excavation in Jerusalem.

The Aelia founding coin types are characterized by differences between coin types. Like we said one of the coins bears the V. Macedonica inscription. The fact that Hadrian minted a founding coin bearing the fifth legion inscription may attest to its re-conquest by this legion and not the tenth legion that was supposed to be in his main camp in the fortress in Jerusalem and suffered great losses.

---

<sup>11</sup> I. Meyshan "The legion which re-conquered Jerusalem in the war of Bar Kochba (132 5A.D)"

PEQ 90 (1958) pp. 19-26 The numismatic evidence regarding the legion V Macedonica – Essays in Jewish numismatic (1968) PP 143-150, has published a foundation coin of Aelia Capitolina with the legend "LE V". it may be that the V. Macedonica legion conquered Jerusalem after having participated in the battle of Beitar where a Latin inscription bearing the name of the legion was discovered. The coin was examined by Y. Meshorer before he published his book "The coinage of Aelia Capitolina (1989) p. 21. According to his conclusion in the English version he can't see the inscription on the *vexillum* of the legion.

Another inscription of the fifth legion that mentions the fifth legion and the eleventh legion auxillary force that executed the siege on Beitar was discovered in Beitar. There may be a connection that according to the source – Mishna Ta'anit "...and the city was ploughed...", show after "Beitar was taken... <sup>12</sup>

This means that the V Macedonica legion, after assisting in the capture of Beitar, see the inscription above, was transferred to Jerusalem to participate in the re-conquering of it. While it was re-founded the legion participated in the ceremony "...and the city was ploughed" as the founding coins show.



There are apparently other differences between the Aelia Capitolina `foundation` type that we know of. They are: a) on coin number 5 we can see the inscription COL EL KAPIT/COND and not COL AEL KAPIT/COND which is the common inscription on the Aelia Capitolina founding coins; b) on the back of some of the founding coins, the 4 front legs of the ox's are straight in a standing position, meaning they stand during ceremony and in others one of the front legs is in walking position; c) another difference is the legion's *vexillum* appearing in the background in different locations. The flag appears under different letters of the COL AEL KAPIT inscription; d) other differences are the tenth legion *vexillum* shapes. Some of the coins have wicks at the bottom of the *vexillum*, some are rectangular and straight and some are trapeze; e) another difference is the letters CO (part of the expression COND). Some are identical and in some the C is bigger; f) in some of the coins the letters PIT are raised in relation to other parts of the coin. And in some of the coins the image and Hadrian's position is different.

To illustrate the difficult description of Aelia surrounded by rebel settlements we can look at the maps attesting to the state of Jerusalem, meaning maps of coin distribution<sup>13</sup> and secret caves surrounding Jerusalem.

The additional significance rises from the void numismatic finding of Aelia Capitolina coins in the areas surrounding it. In addition to the survey the author held regarding Aelia Capitolina coins discovered in Jerusalem, he also conducted a survey through the Judea and Samaria officer regarding Aelia Capitolina coins from Hadrian's time that were discovered in areas under Bar Kokhba's control in the territories. The purpose of the survey was to examine, according to the findings, the economic activity between Aelia Capitolina and these regions. Was there a reciprocal relationship between Aelia Capitolina and the settlements around it? And to compare the quantity of coins there to the Aelia coins found in regulated excavations

in Jerusalem. The findings show a lack of Aelia Capitolina coins in the regions of the revolt, aside for a Aelia founding coin discovered in the cave. This meant that Aelia Capitolina did not have any trade or other relationships with these regions, in comparison to the relationship of Bar Kokhba controlled regions with the cities

Of Gaza , Ashkelon at the time.

---

<sup>12</sup> Mishna Ta'anit D & F. the chronological order of the text according to the events, meaning the quote "the city was ploughed", which means marking the boundaries of the city Aelia Capitolina *sulcus primigenius* by the Romans, was done after Beitar was captured.

<sup>13</sup> G. Bijovsky. Map 1. Distribution of Bar Kokhba coins

This attests to a condition of siege. A city besieged from all sides by the rebels, unable to exist economically, without sustaining sources, food or water supply or that it was conquered by the rebels.

In reference to additional findings of Bar Kokhba coins in Jerusalem to attest to the conquest of the city, one must take into account other preventative limitation in finding additional findings in Aelia in the old city of Jerusalem. These limitations are:

1. At this stage of the research it is difficult to attribute a particular building style to the rebels. It is more than likely that if the rebels conquered Aelia Capitolina they had more than enough building materials from relics left behind. They don't seem to have extended the existing building or develop Jerusalem or build the temple again. They most likely destroyed pagan temple erected by the Romans to turn it into a Jewish city and resided in existing buildings. The Romans acted similarly when they took apart relics of ancient buildings to build Aelia Capitolina and some researchers claim they took apart the "third wall" to build the new city.
2. It must be noted that the Christian quarter in the old city is built entirely on Aelia Capitolina. The status quo is strictly kept for religious reasons so that it is not possible to dig in parts of the quarter. There are also no records or documentation of findings discovered in the excavation for the infrastructure of the extensive building done in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That building combined relics of ancient buildings with new buildings and other buildings from Hadrian's time were taken down without record or documentation that could have shed some light of the period and assist in this research.

## Conclusion regarding the economic and security condition of Aelia Capitolina and reciprocal relations with its surroundings during the revolt

1. The city was cut off from water supply and sources. A new city built cannot be cut off from daily supply of goods and food for its residents, civilians and tenth legion soldiers. There is a need for water, to sustain the life in it and the rebels controlled the water sources brought to the city from Solomon's pools near Bethlehem which was under the rebel's control. The Roman citizen lost their privileges like the tax exemption. The citizens of the colony were given for their status of Roman citizens a tax exemption as an encouragement to settle in Aelia Capitolina during Hadrian's time. If the Roman citizens had no earnings, living in Aelia Capitolina the tax exemption had no value. They would abandon the city quickly. They are new citizens regardless of the city. If they have no use, privileges, living and personal security why would they stay there?
2. Unstable security for the city residents. Some may claim that Aelia Capitolina resident were safe, because the tenth legion, whose main headquarters were in the city protected it. That is true, but this legion that sent most of its units to fight the rebels lost a lot of its warriors dealing with the areas around Jerusalem and could not be trusted to defend them. The legion suffered losses, according to the testimonies mentioned in Roman sources of Cassius Dio and Pronto, to the rebels in its attempt to act and cope and its combat and defensive capabilities were significantly damaged.

## Conclusions

The conclusions arising from most written sources that Jerusalem was conquered by Bar Kokhba and the end of the revolt was re-conquered by Hadrian who destroyed it in a siege. He later re-founded the city in an old Roman ceremony. The sources refer to the founding of the city before the revolt and its re-founding after it. All sources are silent in regards to Aelia Capitolina and its history during the second revolt. It may well attest to its conquest or abandonment. Withholding information by the Roman sources seems like an attempt to erase the memory of its conquest by the rebels. On the other hand, the rabbinical sources also ignore the city during Bar Kokhba's time. Why? The reason is most likely because of the terrible results of the revolt which most of the Talmudic sources authors write about in their referral to Bar Kokhba. The conclusions arising from the numismatic findings tend to show the conquest of Jerusalem by Bar Kokhba for several reasons:

The "small" quantity of Bar Kokhba coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem is almost identical to the "small" quantity of Aelia coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem and in fact attest that Aelia existed before the beginning of the revolt and its activity as a city stopped at the beginning of the revolt while it was conquered by the rebels who controlled it for two and a half years. Each side left a number of coins that were lost and revealed in regulated excavations or that the Roman city was founded after the second revolt in contrast to Cassius Dio's version and in that the claim that Aelia Capitolina existed as a Roman city throughout the second revolt must be refuted. The Aelia Capitolina founding coin bearing the inscription LEV, meaning the fifth legion, which assisted in conquering the

city, shows that it was held by the rebels initially. In addition the disqualifying of Bar Kokhba coins created a ban on keeping them and caused the small quantity of coins discovered in Jerusalem.

## Summary

The author believes that the findings he has brought as an example, alongside historical sources, stand on their own and prove that Jerusalem – Aelia Capitolina was conquered by Bar Kokhba rebels and refute the possibility that Aelia Capitolina was an active Roman city during the revolt and therefore Jerusalem can be included in the second revolt.

From reviewing contemporary research in regards to the scope of the revolt it seems that in recent years a dramatic change occurred in discoveries which now allow us to gradually complete the information based on new findings, including the discovery of the Bar Kokhba scroll. Coins and weights that were used in administration were revealed in areas north of Jerusalem and south to Mt. Hebron and the discovery of new secret caves. All these add links that were missing in the research chain of the second revolt.

The numismatic revelations and secret caves found North West of Jerusalem allow the significant extension of the scope of the revolt north and west of Jerusalem to Beit El-Shoam and beyond it. The archaeological discoveries and enlargement of the area of discoveries of the numismatic findings in south Mt. Hebron and the valley of Be'er Sheba allow us to enlarge the scope of the revolt further south into the valley of Be'er Sheba.

A central link is needed to complete the picture of the scope of the second revolt and that is whether to include Jerusalem – Aelia Capitolina, that seems like a lonely island in the map of the rebel controlled settlements, in the scope of the revolt. The issue of conquering Aelia Capitolina by Bar Kokhba, during the second revolt, constitutes a disagreement between researchers who partly believe should not be included in the scope of Bar Kokhba's region of control. The author has examined Jerusalem's status from 2 aspects: on the one hand to what scale can we assume, according to historical sources that Aelia Capitolina was conquered by the rebels until its re-conquest by Hadrian and on the other did Aelia Capitolina remain an active Roman city during the second revolt, despite Bar Kokhba's actions as implied by the historical sources including an indirect reference by the written sources to the issue and considering the findings of recent years. The author did not find in current research a research that examines the existence of Aelia Capitolina as an active Roman city during the second revolt.

In this subject, the author left no stone unturned in areas where other researchers have not yet done so, among others, a complete review of Aelia Capitolina coins from Hadrian's time that were discovered in regulated excavations in Jerusalem and its surroundings and that were controlled by the rebels and examined the significance of these facts. A re-examination of all the historical sources referring to Jerusalem during the revolt as a whole, while incorporating them. A different referral to the perception that views scorning of a small quantity of Bar Kokhba coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem while comparing

them to the number of Aelia Capitolina coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem. A referral to the numismatic sources of disqualified coins of Bar Kokhba and their significance to the small number of Bar Kokhba findings in Jerusalem. The use of multiple types of Aelia Capitolina founding coins, undated and their significance to the re-founding of Aelia Capitolina and more.

The purpose of this paper is to present the current research and suggest innovative ways to solve the issues at hand so that they allow future researchers to develop these ways and continue and develop the ideas brought here.

A new perception regarding to processes occurring in Jerusalem in Hadrian's time were brought up. During the first stage Aelia Capitolina was founded in a *solcus primigenius* ceremony by Hadrian and the building of Jupiter's Temple on temple Mount. During the second stage the rebels conquered the city and the city was not extended. During the third stage the city was destroyed in the siege and conquered by Hadrian. During the fourth stage the city was re-founded in an ancient Roman ceremony.

The conclusions rising from the research findings from the written sources, even though they are indirect sources. On the one hand we can assume that the significance arising from most of the written sources attest to the possibility that Jerusalem was conquered by Bar Kokhba and at the end of the revolt Hadrian re-conquered it and destroyed it during the siege. Later on he re-founded the city in an ancient Roman ceremony. On the other hand the sources refer to the founding of the city before the revolt and the re-founding after it. All sources are silent in regards to the existence of Aelia Capitolina during the second revolt. It may well attest to its conquest or abandonment. Withholding information by the Roman sources seems like an attempt to erase the memory of its conquest by the rebels and the Rabbinical sources disregard to it most likely because of the terrible results of the revolt which most of the Talmudic sources authors write about in their referral to Bar Kokhba.

The author has examined archaeological relics of Aelia Capitolina from Hadrian's time in old Jerusalem who apparently are not date, some were erected after the revolt and among them are victory arches for Hadrian. These findings do not contribute to the issue in any aspect.

The author believes that the findings he has brought as an example, alongside historical sources, stand on their own and prove that Jerusalem – Aelia Capitolina was conquered by Bar Kokhba rebels and refute the possibility that Aelia Capitolina was an active Roman city during the revolt and therefore Jerusalem can be included in the second revolt.

## REFERENCES

Alon G. 1970. *The History of the Jews in Israel in the Period of the Mishna and the Talmud*.  
Tel Aviv (Hebrew).

- Applebaum S. 1976. *Prolegomena to the Study of the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135)* (BAR Suppl. Series 7). Oxford.
- Ariel D. 1982. A Survey of the Coins in Jerusalem (Until the End of the Byzantine Period). *LA* 32:273–326.
- Barag D. 1980. A Note on Geographical Distribution of Bar Kokhba Coins. *INJ* 4:30–33.
- Eshel H. and Zissu B. 2000–2002. Coins from the el-Jai Cave in Nahal Mikhmarsh (Wadi Suweinit). *INJ* 14:168–175.
- Fronto, M.C. 1988. *Epistulae*. Michael P.J. van den Hout ed. Leipzig.
- Isaac B. and Oppenheimer A. 1998. The Revolt of Bar Kokhba: Ideology and Modern Scholarship. In B. Isaac. *The Near East under Roman Rule: Selected Papers* (Mnemosyne, Suppl. 177 ). Leiden. Pp. 225–256.
- Kadman L. 1956. *The Coins of Aelia Capitolina* (CNP 1). Jerusalem.
- Kindler A. 1974. *Coins of the Land of Israel: Collection of the Bank of Israel: A Catalogue*. Trans. R. Grafman. Jerusalem.
- Kindler A. 1988. The Coins of Israel and the War of Bar Kokhba. *Cathedra for the History of Eretz Israel and its Yishuv* 49:37–61 (Hebrew).
- Kindler A. 2000–2002. Was Aelia Capitolina Founded before or after the Outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War? A Numismatic Evidence. *INJ* 14:176–179.
- Mazar B. 1971. *The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Near the Temple Mount: Preliminary Report of the Second and Third Seasons 1969–1970*. Jerusalem.
- Meshorer Y. 1985. *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period*. Jerusalem.
- Meshorer Y. 1989. *The Coinage of Aelia Capitolina*. Jerusalem.
- Meyshan J. 1968. *Essays in Jewish Numismatics* (Numismatic Studies and Researches 6). Tel Aviv.
- Mildenberg L. 1980. Bar Kokhba Coins and Documents. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 84:331–335.
- Mildenberg L. 1984. *The Coinage of the Bar Kochba war* (Typos 6). Frankfurt am Main.
- Oppenheimer A. 1982. The Bar Kokhba Revolt. In Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafir and M. Stern eds. *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest*. Jerusalem (Hebrew). Pp. 40–74.
- Reifenberg A. 1947. *Ancient Jewish Coins*. Jerusalem.
- Rosenberger M. 1972. *The Rosenberger Israel Collection. Containing Aelia Kapitolina, Akko, Anthedon, Antipatris & Ascalon*. Jerusalem.
- Rosenberger M. 1975. *City-Coins of Palestine (The Rosenberger Israel Collection) 2. Caesarea, Diospolis, Dora, Eleutheropolis, Gaba, Gaza & Jaffa*. Jerusalem.
- Rosenberger M. 1978. *The Coinage of Eastern Palestine and Legionary Countermarks, Bar-Kochba Overtrikes*. Jerusalem.

Stein A. 1990. *Studies in Greek and Latin Inscriptions on the Palestinian Coinage under the Principate*. PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv.

Sukenik E.L. and Mayer L.A. 1930. *The Third Wall of Jerusalem*. Jerusalem.

Zissu B. and Eshel H. 2001. The Coins of the Bar Kokhba Revolt – Geographical Update: What was Renewed in the Last Twenty Years (1980 – 2000). In H. Eshel ed. *Innovation in the Research of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion*. Ramat Gan. Pp. 17–40.